

2021



REUNIFICATION OF CRIMEA WITH RUSSIA:
HISTORICAL AND LEGAL GROUNDS

2021

REUNIFICATION OF CRIMEA WITH RUSSIA: HISTORICAL AND LEGAL GROUNDS



**REUNIFICATION
OF CRIMEA WITH RUSSIA:
HISTORICAL AND LEGAL GROUNDS**

Multi-Authored Monograph

*Publishing Editor
Professor A. A. Vlasov,
Doctor of Law*

Simferopol
2021

Unification of Crimea with Russia: historical and legal grounds.

Multi-authored monograph – 2021. – 460 p.

Published for non-commercial purposes by decision of the Working Group for International Legal Issues of the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Crimea under the President of the Russian Federation.

Publishing editor:

Prof. A. Vlasov, Doctor of Law

Editorial Board:

G. L. Muradov, PhD in Historical Sciences,

A. V. Molokhov, PhD in Historical Sciences,

Prof. V. A. Tomsinov, Doctor of Law,

V. I. Kononenko, PhD in Law,

Prof. P. A. Khrienko, Doctor of Social Sciences,

I. V. Evtyushkin, senior lecturer at the Kazan Federal University, Simferopol City Council deputy

Reviewers:

V. M. Shumilov, Head of the International Law Department at the All-Russian Academy of Foreign Trade, Doctor of Law, Professor, Honoured Lawyer of the Russian Federation;

M.P. Zhuravlev, Doctor of Law, Professor, Honoured Lawyer of the Russian Federation, Honoured Worker of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR

This multi-authored monograph is a collection of speeches, articles, and interviews in which well-known scientists, lawyers, political analysts, philosophers, sociologists, government officials, and public figures, as well as ordinary citizens, provide an in-depth analysis of the origin and unfolding of 2014 “Crimean Spring” events, which led to the independence of Crimea and its subsequent reunification with Russia, as well as the Crimeans’ unconditional right to self-determination in the context of the implementation of the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights enacted on December 16, 1966 and the Declaration on the Principles of International Law dated October 24, 1970, in the Republic of Crimea in general and in the city of Sevastopol in particular.

This book also contains unique regulatory acts concerning the history of the legal and political status of Crimea. The book is written for non-specialist readers who are keen on the history and legal grounds for Crimea’s unification with Russia.

The Editorial Board is not accountable for the papers’ content. The Editorial Board may disagree with the authors.

CONTENTS

Instead of a preface. The speech of the Russian President Putin V. V. in the Kremlin on 18 March 2014.....	5
S.V. Aksenov The Crimean people have always perceived themselves to be an integral part of the Russian world and believed it was the utmost injustice for Crimea to be included in Ukraine’s territory	16
V.A. Konstantinov A Long Way Home	20
G.L. Muradov International activities of the Republic of Crimea as an essential resource for the recognition of the Russian status of Crimea.....	27
S.P. Tsekov. The Crimean Spring events as a logical outcome of development of the Russian movement in Crimea.....	33
A.A. Vlasov The thorny path of Crimean self-determination	69
V.A. Tomsinov Secession Referendum in Constitutional and International Law (2014 Crimean Referendum in Terms of Law).....	73
V.G. Vishnyakov Nikita Khrushchev announced the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine to the Members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on their way to the canteen	90
S.A. Efimov The history of the referendum held on January 20, 1991 on the territory of Crimea for the reestablishment of the Crimean ASSR as a constituent entity of the Soviet Union and a Member of the Union Treaty.....	99
S.V. Yurchenko To the native harbour: the Crimean Spring and Crimea’s reunification with Russia.....	108
G.N. Nuryshev, V.G. Kogut The Crimean Spring: geopolitical outcomes and challenges..	126
A.V. Molokhov The Crimeans’ right to self-determination in the United Nations Convention context on the Right to Development of 1986	137
O.A. Kotolupov, P.A. Khrienko State identification of Crimea: History and contemporary realities.....	143
V.I. Kononenko On the question of the unlawfulness of the transfer of Crimea to Ukraine.....	156
S.V. Shitkov Self-determination of the peoples or the state territorial integrity?	160
P.V. Tarusin The “Crimean Spring”: choosing the path to the historical homeland of the state	168
I.A. Chikharev Self-determination of the Russian Sevastopol. Preconditions and consequences of the Russian Spring for the hero city.....	190
A.R. Nikiforov The Crimeans’ electoral consistency is proof of the steadfastness of their political choice	202
A.S. Kiselev, N.V. Kiseleva Crimean referendums (20.01.1991–16.03.2014): a long journey home.....	207

V.M. Pavlov Historical and international legal aspects of Crimea's implementation of its right to self-determination	216
I. V. Evtyushkin At the origins of the Crimean Spring. Peculiarities of development of the Russian movement in Crimea.....	231
V.G. Zarubin The Crimean autonomy reconstruction in 1991.....	260
I.V. Ostrovsкая Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia: How it all started.....	268
P.A. Khrienko An analytical summary of the referendums held in Crimea (1991–2014).....	279
Analytical report “On legitimacy of the All-Crimean referendum”	282
Appendix: Laws and Regulations	290

INSTEAD OF A PREFACE

THE SPEECH OF THE RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN AT THE KREMLIN ON 18 MARCH 2014 ON THE ISSUE OF CRIMEA¹



On March 18, 2014, Vladimir Putin addressed the deputies of the State Duma, members of the Federation Council, and regional leaders who Gathered in the Kremlin.

Good afternoon, esteemed members of the Federation Council, esteemed deputies of the State Duma!

Esteemed representatives of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol – they are here, among us, citizens of Russia, residents of Crimea and Sevastopol!

Esteemed friends! We have gathered here today to discuss a vitally important issue, a historically important issue for us all. On March 16, a referendum took place in Crimea, which was held in full compliance with the democratic procedures and the provisions of international law.

The voter turnout was over 82 per cent. More than 96 per cent of the voters supported the reunification with Russia. The figures are utterly convincing.

This choice can be easily explained if you are acquainted with the history of Crimea and know what Russia and Crimea used to mean and still mean for each other.

¹ www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/d/20603.

The entire Crimea is literally permeated with our common history and pride. Crimea means the ancient Chersoneses where Prince Vladimir was baptized. His religious deed - turning to Orthodox Christianity - defined the common cultural, value, and civilization grounds that unite peoples in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus. It is in Crimea that the graves of Russian soldiers whose courage brought Crimea under Russian rule in 1783. Crimea means Sevastopol, a legendary city, a city of glorious fate, a fortress city, and the Motherland of the Russian Black Sea Military Fleet. Crimea means Balaklava and Kerch, the Malakoff mound, and Mount Sapun. These are sacred places, symbols of the Russian military glory and unparalleled bravery.

Crimea is a unique fusion of different nations, cultures, and traditions. And in this way, it is so similar to the big Russia where over the centuries not a single ethnic group has either disappeared or dissolved. The Russians and the Ukrainians, the Crimean Tatars and the representatives of other nations had been living and working together on the Crimean land and managed to preserve their identity, traditions, language, and faith.

By the way, today among 2 million 200 thousand inhabitants of the Crimean Peninsula, there are nearly one and a half million Russians, 350 thousand Ukrainians, who mainly consider the Russian language to be their native language, and about 290–300 thousand Crimean Tatars, among which a considerable part, as the referendum has shown, are also oriented towards Russia.

Yes, there was a period when the Crimean Tatars, as well as some other peoples of the USSR, suffered severe injustice. I will say one thing: many millions of people of various nationalities suffered from the repressions back then, and above all, of course, the Russian people. The Crimean Tatars returned to their land. I believe that all the necessary political and legislative decisions should be taken to complete the people rehabilitation process of the Crimean Tatars, decisions that will fully restore their rights and their good name.

We deeply respect the representatives of all the nationalities in Crimea. This is their common home, their Motherland, and it is only right – I know that the Crimean people support this idea – that there shall be three equal official languages in Crimea: Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar.

Dear Colleagues,

In the people's hearts and minds, Crimea has always been and still is an integral part of Russia. This conviction, based on truth and justice, was unshakable, passed down from generation to generation. Time and circumstances were powerless against it, just like all the dramatic changes that our country and we experienced throughout the twentieth century.

After the revolution, the Bolsheviks, for various reasons, may God be their judge, incorporated large areas, which historically belonged to Southern Russia into the Ukrainian SSR. This was done without taking into account the local national composition, and today it is the South-East of modern Ukraine. Back in

1954, they declared a decision to transfer the Crimean Region to the Ukrainian Union Republic. They did the same with Sevastopol, although the city used to be of the union subordination. The initiator was Khrushchev personally, the Soviet Union Communist Party leader. Whether he was driven by a desire to gain the Ukrainian nomenclature's support or to make amends for his mass repressions in Ukraine in the 1930s is for historians to decide.

For us another problem is important: this decision was clearly made against the constitutional norms that were valid even at those times. The issue was resolved behind the scenes, at a private meeting. Naturally, in that totalitarian state nobody asked the opinion of Crimea and Sevastopol residents. They were simply made face the facts. And at that time people, surely enough, wondered why Crimea turned out to be a part of Ukraine. But, by and large, we should state that clearly – we are all aware that this decision was actually perceived as some formality because it dealt with transferring territories within one big country. Back then, one could hardly imagine that Ukraine and Russia could be disintegrated and become different states. But this happened.

Unfortunately, something that seemed to be impossible came to reality. The USSR disintegrated. The events progressed so quickly that no one could understand the drama of those events and their implications. Many people both in Russia and Ukraine, as well as in other Republics, hoped that the newly established Commonwealth of Independent States would become a new form of the common statehood. They were promised to have a common currency, a single economic space, and joint military forces, but those were just promises, while a huge country disappeared. And it was when Crimea suddenly turned out to be in another state, that Russia felt that it had been not just deprived of a part of its territory but robbed.

At the same time, we must also frankly admit that Russia itself, having launched a parade of sovereignties, contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and in the process of the formalization of the disintegration, Crimea and the main base of the Black Sea Fleet – Sevastopol – were forgotten. Millions of Russians went to bed in one country to wake up the next morning in a foreign country, having overnight become the national minorities in the former Union Republics, while the Russian nation became one of the largest divided nations in the world, if not the largest one.

Many years have elapsed since then, and recently I have heard the Crimeans say that back then, in 1991, they were passed over from hand to hand just like a sack of potatoes. It is hard to disagree with that. But what about the Russian State? What was Russia's response? Russia stood with its head low and came to terms with it, having swallowed its pride. Back then, our country experienced hard times, so it just was not able to protect its own interests. But people could not accept such an outrageous historic injustice. All those years, both citizens and many public activists have raised this issue repeatedly. They said that Crimea is indigenously Russian while Sevastopol was originally a Russian city. Indeed,

we all knew that pretty well, we felt it with our heart and soul, but we had to consider the established realities and to start developing good neighbourly relations with independent Ukraine. And the relations with Ukraine and our brotherly Ukrainian nation have been, remain, and will always be most important for us, without exaggeration.

Today we can speak openly, and I want to share some details of the negotiations that were held in the early 2000s. Back then, Mr Kuchma, President of Ukraine, asked me to speed up the delimitation of the Russian-Ukrainian border. Up until then, this issue had not been dealt with. Russia intended to recognize Crimea as a part of Ukraine, but no negotiations concerning the border delimitation had been held. I was aware of the complexity of this issue but, nevertheless, I immediately instructed the Russian governmental agencies to start this process by preparing the delimitation documents. To make it clear, if we were to agree with the border delimitation, then we would recognize Crimea to be a Ukrainian territory *de facto* and *de jure*, thus closing this issue once and for all.

We met Ukraine halfway about Crimea and such an extremely controversial issue as the demarcation of the water area in the Sea of Azov and the Kerch Strait. What were our assumptions? We believed that good relations with Ukraine were a top priority for us, and they should not be confined within dead-end territorial disputes. However, we definitely hoped that Ukraine would be our kind-hearted neighbour, that the Russians and Russian-speaking citizens in Ukraine, especially in its South-Eastern part and in Crimea, would live in a friendly, democratic, and civilized country, and that their law-based interests would be observed according to the provisions of international law.

But the situation followed a different scenario. There were several attempts to deprive the Russians of their historical memory and sometimes even their Russian language and to forcefully assimilate them. The Russians and other citizens of Ukraine definitely suffered from an ongoing political and state crisis that has been disturbing Ukraine for more than 20 years.

I understand why people in Ukraine were looking for changes. They were, so to say, fed up with the years of nativism policy, independence, authority. They were sick of them. Presidents, Prime Ministers, and the Rada deputies kept rotating, but their attitude to their country and their people did not alter. They “milked” Ukraine, fighting for power, assets, and financial flows. Yet, little did powers-that-be know about the life of common people and why millions of Ukrainian citizens saw no prospects in their Motherland and had to move abroad as day labourers. I would like to stress that it was not some Silicon Valley they fled to but to become day labourers. In Russia alone, almost 3 million of them were employed last year. Some estimates show that they earned about 20 billion dollars in Russia in 2013, which is about 12 per cent of the Ukrainian GDP.

Let me say once again that I clearly understand those who came out on Maidan with peaceful slogans and protested against corruption, inefficient state

management, and poverty. The right to peaceful protest, democratic procedures, and elections exist for the sole purpose of replacing the authorities that people do not approve of. But those who stood behind the recent events in Ukraine had other aims: they were preparing just another coup; they wanted to seize power and would stop short of nothing. They resorted to terror, murder, and riots. Nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russia-haters, and anti-Semites put the coup into action. It is they who continue to shape the life in Ukraine today.

The first thing the new so-called authorities did was to introduce a scandalous bill to revise the language policy, which directly infringed on the rights of national minorities. However, it should be said that they were immediately “disciplined” by the foreign sponsors of these present-day lawmakers. They are smart people, you have to hand it to them, and they understand what the attempts to build an ethnically pure Ukrainian state will lead to. The draft law was put aside, but just to wait for proper time. Today, nobody mentions it; they probably believe that people tend to have a short-term memory. However, everyone can clearly see and predict further scenarios of the Ukrainian followers of Bandera, a Hitler’s henchman during the Second World War.

It is also clear that up until now, Ukraine has no legitimate executive power, and there is no one to talk with. Impostors usurp many government bodies. Although they do not control anything in the country, I would like to emphasize that they are more often than not controlled by radical groups. Even to get an appointment with some ministers from the present-day government, one should seek approval from Maidan fighters. This is not a joke, this is reality.

Those who resisted the coup were immediately threatened with reprisals and punitive operations. Crimea (the Russian speaking Crimea) was definitely the first in line. In this regard, the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol appealed to Russia to protect their rights and life itself, to prevent what was happening, and is still happening in Kiev, Donetsk, Kharkov, and some other cities of Ukraine.

It goes without saying that we could not but respond to this appeal, we could not leave Crimea and its residents in danger, or it would have been an act of betrayal. The first thing to do was to provide proper conditions for peaceful, free will expression so that the Crimean people could narrate their story for the first time in their history. But what do we hear today from our colleagues in Western Europe and in North America? They say we violate the provisions of international law. First of all, it is great that at least they remember that there is such a thing as international law, thanks for that; it is better late than never.

Secondly, the key point: what exactly do we violate, as they term it? It is true that the Upper Chamber of the Parliament invested the President of the Russian Federation with the right to use the Military Force in Ukraine. But, strictly speaking, this right has not been exercised yet. The Military Forces of Russia did not enter Crimea; they were deployed there under the international treaty. It is true that we bolstered our forces, but I would like to stress it so that everyone hears

it and knows about it, we did not exceed the standard staff number of military servicemen in Crimea, which is set to be up to 25 thousand people. There simply was no such need.

Further. When the Supreme Council of Crimea declared its independence and scheduled the Referendum, it referred to the Charter of the United Nations that states the nations' right to self-determination. By the way, I would like to remind you that when Ukraine announced its secession from the USSR, it did the same, using nearly the same words. Ukraine exercised this right, while the Crimean people are deprived of it. Why?

Besides, the Crimean authorities also referred to a well-known Kosovo case that was set by our Western partners with, so to say, their own hands. This case is identical to the Crimean situation but Kosovo's secession from Serbia was recognized to be legitimate, and it was proven that a unilateral declaration of independence needed no approval from the main powers of the country.

The UN International Court supported this action under Clause 2 of Article 1 of the UN Charter and announced its decision as of 22 July 2010 as follows. I quote verbatim: "No general prohibition against unilateral declarations of independence derives from the practice of the Security Council," and further: "General international law contains no applicable prohibition against declarations of independence. It is plain as day.

I do not like to resort to quotations, but still, I cannot but quote another extract from another official document, this time the US Written Memorandum of 17 April 2009, submitted to this very International Court of Justice in connection with the Kosovo proceedings. I will quote again: "Declarations of independence can, and often do, violate domestic law. However, that does not mean that there has been a violation of international law." End of quote. They wrote it, trumpeted it all around the world, and now they are filled with indignation. Why? The Crimean people did everything strictly in accordance with this, so to say, instruction. Why is it so that the Albanians in Kosovo (and we respect them) are allowed to do things that the Russians, Ukrainians, and Crimean Tatars in Crimea are forbidden? Here is a question again: why?

The United States of America and Europe often tell us that Kosovo is a kind of special case. What is so special there, as our colleagues believe? The Kosovo conflict turns out to be special because the conflict brought many casualties. Is this a legitimate argument? The resolution of the International Court contains no information about it. You know, these are not even double standards anymore. This is a kind of primitive and straightforward cynicism. One cannot openly consider one's own interests only, and assign different names to the same object. It follows from this that any conflict should reach the point of casualties, shouldn't it?

Let me be honest with you: unless the local self-defence forces of Crimea had taken the situation under control, there could also have been casualties. And thank God, that did not happen! Crimea saw no armed clash and no casualty. Why

do you think it was so? The answer is simple: it is difficult or almost impossible to fight against the people and their will. And in this regard, I want to thank the Ukrainian servicemen, and this is a considerable contingent – 22 thousand fully armed people. I want to thank those Ukrainian soldiers who have not gone in for bloodshed and have not stained themselves with blood.

This, naturally, raises other thoughts as well. We are being told about some kind of Russian intervention in Crimea, about aggression. This sounds strange. I cannot recall any case from history when an intervention took place without a single shot being fired and without a single person suffering.

Dear Colleagues,

The situation around Ukraine has mirrored the current state of affairs in the world and what has happened over the last decades. The bipolar system vanished and took the stability away. Key international institutions are not getting stronger; on the contrary, they, in many cases, are sadly degrading. Our Western partners led by the United States of America prefer to be guided in their practical policies by the rule of the gun rather than international law. They believe to be privileged and exceptional, that they can decide the destinies of the world, that only they can ever be right. They act as they wish: here and there, they use force against sovereign states and build coalitions based on the principle “if you are not with us, you are against us.” To make this aggression look legitimate, they force the desired resolutions from the international organizations, and if this does not work for some reason, they simply ignore the UN Security Council and the UN overall.

This happened in Yugoslavia back in 1999, we remember that pretty well. It was hard to believe, even seeing it with my own eyes, that at the end of the 20th century, one of the European capitals – Belgrade – was under missile attacks for several weeks, and then came the real intervention.

Was there a UN Security Council resolution which approving such actions? Nothing of the kind.

Then followed Afghanistan, Iraq, and outrageous violations of the UN Security Council resolution with regard to Libya, where instead of ensuring a so-called no-fly zone bombardment started. There was also a series of controlled

colour revolutions. It is clear that people in those countries got tired of tyranny, poverty, and lack of prospects, but their feelings were just cynically exploited. Standards were imposed on these countries that did not correspond in any way to their way of life, traditions, or these nations’ cultures. As a result, there was chaos, outbreaks of violence, and a series of coups instead of democracy and freedom. The Arab Spring was followed by the Arab Winter.

A similar scenario unfolded in Ukraine. Back in 2004, the third round of the presidential election was invented to push the necessary candidate through, though law did not provide it. It was an absurd travesty of the Constitution. But now they have thrown in a properly trained and well-equipped army of militants.

We understand what is going on, and we understand that these actions are aimed against Ukraine and Russia, and against Eurasian integration. This is being done at a time when Russia is sincerely seeking a dialogue with our colleagues in the West. We are constantly proposing cooperation on all key issues, we want to strengthen our level of trust, and we want our relations to be equal, open and honest. But we saw no reciprocal steps.

On the contrary, we have been deceived many times; they made decisions behind our backs and presented us with a *fait accompli*. The same happened with NATO's eastward expansion and the deployment of military facilities near our borders. We kept telling us the same thing, "Well, this does not concern you." That is easy to say.

It happened with the deployment of a missile defence system as well. In spite of all our apprehensions, the project is working and moving forward. The same happened with the endless foot-dragging in the visa negotiations, promises of fair competition, and free access to global markets.

Today, we are being threatened with sanctions, but we are already living under restrictions that are considerable for our economy, our country, and us. For example, back during the Cold War, the USA and later other countries introduced an embargo on the USSR against the transfer of an extensive list of technologies and equipment by creating the so-called Coordination Committee for Multilateral Export Control lists. Today, they have formally been abolished, but only formally; in reality, many of the restrictions are still in place.

In short, we have reasons to believe that the notorious containment policy towards Russia, which was exercised in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, is still practised today. We can constantly observe attempts to corner us for our independent viewpoint, for our persistence in adhering to this viewpoint, for calling it like it is, and for not engaging in hypocrisy. But everything has its limits. In the case of Ukraine, our Western partners have crossed the line, were rude, irresponsible, and unprofessional.

They were fully aware that millions of Russians lived in Ukraine and in Crimea. They must have lost their political intuition and common sense not to foresee all the implications of their actions. Russia found itself in a position it could not retreat from. If you compress a spring all the way to its limit, it will snap back hard one day. It should always be borne in mind.

Today, we must stop the hysteria, leave the Cold War rhetoric behind, and to admit an obvious fact: Russia is an independent and active participant of the international life; like all the other countries, it has its own national interests that should be taken into account and respected.

At the same time, we are thankful to those who expressed understanding towards our steps in Crimea. We appreciate the people of China and its leaders who viewed and still view the situation around Ukraine and Crimea taking into consideration its entire historical and political background, and we deeply value India's reserve and impartiality.

Today I also want to address the people of the United States of America, people who, since the founding of their state and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, have taken pride in the fact that freedom is above all. Isn't the desire of Crime's residents to freely choose their destiny the same value? Try to understand us.

I am sure that the Europeans, first and foremost, the Germans, will understand me. Let me remind you that in the course of political consultations with regard to the unification of West and East Germany, which were held at the expert, though very high, level, many countries that were then and are now Germany's allies did not support the mere idea of reunification. And our country, on the contrary, unequivocally supported the Germans' sincere and unstoppable desire for national unity. I am sure that you have not forgotten this, and I hope that the citizens of Germany will also support the strive of the Russian world for the restoration of the unity of historical Russia.

I also wish to address the people of Ukraine. I sincerely want you to understand us: we do not want to harm you in any way or hurt your national feelings. We have always respected the territorial integrity of the Ukrainian state, unlike the ones who sacrificed Ukraine's integrity for their political ambitions. They flaunt slogans about a great Ukraine, but they are the ones who did everything to divide the country. Today's civil confrontation is entirely on their conscience. I want you to hear me, dear friends. Do not trust those who are trying to frighten you with Russia and who loudly proclaim that other regions will follow Crimea. We do not want Ukraine to disintegrate, we do not need it. As for Crimea, it belonged and still belongs to the Russians, the Ukrainians, and the Crimean Tatars.

Let me repeat it, it will be a home for all the nations who live there, just as it was for centuries. But it will never follow Bandera's example!

Crimea is our common heritage and a crucial factor of stability in the region. And this strategic territory should be part of a strong and stable sovereignty, which today can only be Russian. Otherwise, dear friends (I am addressing both Ukraine and Russia), we – the Russians and the Ukrainians – could lose Crimea completely, in this could happen in the near historical perspective. Please, think about it.

Let me also remind you that Kiev has announced that Ukraine is going to join NATO soon. What would that mean for Crimea and Sevastopol? It would mean that NATO's Navy would come to the city of Russia's military glory and would pose a threat for the whole South of Russia – not just an imaginary threat, but a real one. This could have become reality, if it were not for the Crimean people's choice. Let us thank them for that.

By the way, we are not against our cooperation with NATO, far from it. We mind having a military organization (and NATO, despite all its internal processes, remains a military organization) operate outside our fence, next to our homes, or on our historical territories. You know I cannot even imagine that we go to Sevastopol to visit NATO Navy officials. By the way, the majority of them are great people, but we would rather welcome them here in Sevastopol than be their guests.

Let me be frank: our hearts are full of sorrow for everything that is happening now in Ukraine, for the people who are suffering and do not know how to live today and what will happen tomorrow. And our concern is understandable because we are not just close neighbours; we are in fact, as I have said many times, a single people. Kiev is the mother of Russian cities. The Kyevan Rus is our common cradle, and we will never be able to live without each other.

And here is one other thing, too. Ukraine is and will be home for millions of Russians and Russian speaking people and Russia will always protect their interests with political, diplomatic, and legal means. However, Ukraine itself should be keen to ensure the rights and interests of these people. This is the main prerequisite for the stability of the Ukrainian statehood and the country's territorial integrity.

We want to be friends with Ukraine; we want it to be a strong, sovereign, self-sufficient state. We see Ukraine as one of our leading partners, we have numerous joint projects, and I believe in their success against all odds. And most importantly, we want Ukraine to find peace and harmony, and we are ready to work together with other countries to do everything we can to facilitate and support it. But as I said: only Ukraine's citizens can put their fatherland in order.

Dear residents of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol!

The entire Russia admired your courage, dignity, and bravery. You are the ones who defined the destiny of Crimea. These days, we were close as never before and we supported each other. This was our sincere feeling of solidarity. It is at historic turning points such as these that a nation demonstrates its maturity and strength of spirit. And the people of Russia showed such maturity and such strength, having supported their compatriots with their unity.

The robustness of Russia's foreign policy relies on the will of millions of people, national unity, and support of the leading political and public powers. I want to thank everyone for this patriotic move. Everyone, with no exception. But it is important that we continue to maintain the same consolidation in order to meet the challenges that Russia faces.

We will definitely face external resistance but we must decide whether we are ready to be persistent in protecting the national interests or we will always betray them and step back God knows where. Some Western politicians are already threatening us with sanctions and possible exacerbation of the domestic problems. I would like to know what they have in mind exactly: the activities of some fifth column – various kinds of national betrayals – or they hope to worsen the social and political situation in Russia so as to provoke public discontent. We consider these statements irresponsible and clearly aggressive, and we will respond to them accordingly. At the same time, we will never seek confrontation with our partners in the East or the West. On the contrary, we will do everything we can to build civilized good-neighbourly relations as one is supposed to in the modern world.

Dear Colleagues,

I understand the Crimean people who put the question at the referendum very directly and clearly: either Crimea should be with Ukraine or Russia. There is no doubt that in the process of formulating the referendum question, the leaders of Crimea and Sevastopol and the deputies of the legislative authorities set aside group and political interests and focused on the people's fundamental interests only. Any other plebiscite option, however attractive it might seem at first glance, would, due to the historical, demographic, political, and economic peculiarities of this region, have been transitory, temporary and fragile, would have inevitably led to further escalation of the situation around Crimea, and would have had a detrimental effect on people's lives. The Crimean people raised the question in a tough, uncompromising manner with no roundabouts. The referendum was open and fair, and people in Crimea expressed their will quite clearly and convincingly: they want to be with Russia. Russia is also about to make a hard decision, taking into consideration all the domestic and external factors. What is people's opinion in Russia? Like any other democratic society, the Russian people have various opinions, but the stance of the overwhelming majority of citizens – I would like to emphasize that – is absolutely clear.

You know about the latest sociological surveys that were carried out in Russia recently: about 95 per cent of the citizens believe that Russia must protect the interests of the Russians and representatives of other nationalities who live in Crimea. 95 per cent. And more than 83 per cent of the citizens believe that Russia should do this, even if this decision would complicate our relations with other states. 86 per cent of our citizens are convinced that Crimea is still a Russian territory, a Russian land. And here is one more important number that completely correlates with the referendum in Crimea – about 92 per cent support Crimea's reunification with Russia.

Thus, the majority of the Crimean residents and the absolute majority of the citizens of the Russian Federation support the reunification of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol with the Russian Federation. Not is up to Russia to make its political decision. And it can only be based on the people's will because the people are the only source of any power.

Dear members of the Federation Council! Dear deputies of the State Duma! Citizens of Russia, residents of Crimea and Sevastopol! Today, based on the referendum results that took place in Crimea and on the will of the people, I am submitting to the Federal Assembly and asking it to consider the Constitutional Law on the inclusion of two new constituent entities to the Russian Federation: the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, as well as to ratify the Treaty on the Inclusion of the Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation which is prepared for signing. I have no doubt you will support them!

THE CRIMEAN PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS PERCEIVED THEMSELVES TO BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE RUSSIAN WORLD AND BELIEVED IT WAS THE UTMOST INJUSTICE FOR CRIMEA TO BE INCLUDED IN UKRAINE'S TERRITORY

Sergey V. Aksenov,
Head of the Republic of Crimea (Simferopol)

Sergey V. Aksenov, Head of the Republic of Crimea, answers the questions of A.A. Vlasov, Publishing Editor, Doctor of Law, Professor at the MGIMO University, for the multi-authored monograph to be written.

Sergey Valeriyevich, what prompted you to create the All-Crimean public and political movement Russian Unity? What were the goals of this public organization?

The Crimean people have always perceived themselves to be a part of the Russian world, a part of Russia's civilizational space. We considered the fact that Crimea was part of Ukraine to be the greatest injustice. However, Russian organizations that were operating across the peninsula were scattered and disjointed. There was an enormous need to unite all viable forces for which the necessity to protect the Russian language and Russian culture and to strengthen ties with Russia in all the spheres was a sincere conviction, not a populist slogan.

At the end of 2009, we founded Russian Unity (Russian Unity), a Crimean public political movement, which managed to consolidate pro-Russian forces for the first time in 20 years. And in September 2010, the Russian Unity political party was registered. The party immediately joined the election campaign for the Supreme Council of Crimea and local power bodies.

In spite of having no political experience and no time for media "promotion" and in the presence of informational and administrative opposition, the party overcame the entrance barrier to the republican parliament and won a total of about a hundred mandates in the city, district, and village councils. Bakhchysarai residents elected a representative of the Russian Unity to be the Mayor of the city.

People proactively supported the policy-making principles of the Party, including, first of all, our efforts to protect the Russian language, culture, and canonical Orthodoxy, and initiatives aimed at unifying with Russia. By the way, the Russian Unity was nearly the first political power in Ukraine that publicly spoke about the threat of reviving Nazism in this country and the Nazis overture strategy implemented by the then ruling Party of Regions.

What role did the Russian Unity political party play in protecting the rights of Crimea's Russian-speaking population from 2010 to 2014? What

difficulties have you encountered as the leader of the Russian Unity party in the process of achieving its goals and objectives?

Almost all the legal acts of the Crimean parliament aimed at protecting the rights of Russian-speaking Crimeans were initiated and passed with the participation of deputies from the Russian Unity and the Russian Community of Crimea, which was (and still is) headed by Sergey Tsekov. Today, he represents our Republic in the Federation Council.

It should be noted here that with regard to the protection of the Russian language, promotion of the Russian culture, and preservation of historical memory, we have always been on the same page and received total support of Vladimir Konstantinov, Head of the Supreme Council, as well as of many other deputies. This became the main ground for the unity, which played a life-changing role at the time of the Crimean Spring.

Since 2010, the Russian Unity has been participating in the organization and holding of the "The Great Russian Word" International Festival, dedicated to the annual Pushkin Days, which is still held every year on the Crimean land. The Festival became one of the symbols of the Slavic peoples' unity and the Crimean people's fight for their right to speak the Russian language.

The same year, on the initiative and with the support of the Russian Unity, the "The Roads of Victory" patriotic campaign was launched to mark the 65th anniversary of the Great Victory. The campaign started in Sevastopol on April 3 and finished in Moscow on May 9. Over this period, five car teams consisting of 14 citizens of Ukraine and Russia covered 18 thousand kilometres. The Roads of Victory symbolically connect 13 hero-cities, 35 cities of military glory, and 10 cities awarded the I Degree Patriotic War Medal on the territory of Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, and Transnistria.

The campaign attracted public attention and was made an annual event. Back in 2011, the Russian Unity activists and the Great Patriotic War veterans from Lviv paraded along Lviv's streets and spread the Victory Banner on the Glory Hill in spite of the opposition of the Nazis. The Crimean people had to protect the veterans from the attacks of Bandera's followers. As it turned out later, the worst was yet to come.

As for the difficulties, the main problem was the duplicitous position of Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich and his Party of Regions, which was the ruling party at the time. Yanukovich won the election with the support of the Russian-speaking population, to whom he promised an improvement of the Russian language status and rapprochement with Russia. However, the President betrayed his electorate and started to "making overtures" with the nationalists. The Ukrainization continued, although, unlike under Yushchenko, it was not aggressive and straightforward; Crimea's proposals kept being blocked, and pro-Russian forces suffered from the information, political, and administrative pressure. In other words, the policy practised by all the Ukrainian presidents essentially continued to be exercised.

How would you describe the confrontation of the so-called Euromaidan and Crimea's Russian community? In what ways did the events in Kiev from the end of 2013 to March 2014 affect the situation in Crimea? What was the Crimean population's reaction to these bloody events? What did the Crimean people think about the toppling of the constitutionally elected President Yanukovich by Maidan militants? What work has the Russian Unity political party and you, as its leader, been doing to prevent a recurrence of the Kiev events in Crimea and to protect civilians? What role did self-defence play in protecting the rights of the Crimean people?

In fact, this was a conflict of values that have civilizational roots. The values practised by Maidan supporters with their euro-rage and the cult of Nazi executors and betrayers were unacceptable for both the members of Crimea's Russian community and the Russian Unity and the overwhelming majority of the Crimean people. That is why Euromaidan faced large-scale resistance. Kiev rioters were only supported by the Mejlis followers (Russia considers this organization to be extremist) and by some members of grants-fed public structures and "orange" parties. But they made no difference.

The peninsula's residents supported Mr Yanukovich as a legitimate head of the state in spite of his inconsistency and hypocrisy, because they understood that undisguised anti-Russian and pro-Nazi forces were seeking to seize the power in Kiev.

In late 2013 and early 2014, a number of massive anti-Maidan rallies were held in Simferopol with the participation of the Russian Unity activists as well. The Supreme Council of Crimea issued a number of statements in which the deputies called on Mr. Yanukovich to ensure the constitutional order, even if it required imposing emergency rule, and asked the Crimean people to stand up and to protect their Republic if necessary. These statements fully reflected the people's mood.

Let me note here that not a word was said about the Referendum and Crimea's reunification with Russia. These processes were triggered by the coup in Kiev. After Yanukovich had run away, the Crimean people realized that they could rely on themselves only.

Two events significantly affected people's mood.

The first one is the guerrillas' armed attack on a column of buses with the Crimean people returning from anti-Maidan campaigns in Kiev. They were attacked in the Korsun-Shevchenkivsk area of the Cherkassk region, with several victims and casualties.

The second event is paying last respects for Berkut fighters killed on Maidan, which took place on February 22 in Simferopol. Thousands of people came to the city's central square. Berkut fighters who protected the constitutional order in Kiev were greeted as national heroes.

Those days, the Russian Unity was probably one of the key consolidating forces of the people's protest. A meeting held by the Party on February 23, 2014,

near the Supreme Council building announced the establishment of the volunteer corps. More than two thousand people joined these corps within a few hours. Pro-Russian militia, whose number in the life-changing moments of the Crimean Spring exceeded 10 thousand volunteers, played a huge role in maintaining peace and stability on the Crimean land. They protected the Crimean borders, helped blocking Ukrainian military forces, patrolling the streets, and preventing provocations.

When the Mejlis extremists tried to seize the Supreme Council on February 26, the members of the Russian Unity were in the middle of it and, among the Parliament defenders, did everything they could to protect it and to prevent bloodshed. People did not walk away in spite of a real threat to their lives and health.

And finally - how would you describe the Crimean Spring events from today's perspective? Do you have regrets or no? What is your understanding of the further development of Crimea within Russia?

Definitely not, I do not feel sorry for anything. We did everything right. Crimea's reunification with Russia prevented the war and bloodshed. Historical justice was restored. The Crimean people gained their freedom and identity. Huge, just unimaginable changes occurred. Who could have thought about six years ago that the Crimean Bridge could be built? Or an ultramodern airport terminal? Or new power stations? Who could have thought that there would be dozens of new kindergartens, schools, rural first-aid stations, and sports facilities in Crimea? I guess no science fiction writer could have ever imagined this. And these are only the first steps.

Our path is the path of freedom, peace, and development, and our strategic goal is to turn Crimea into a prosperous and self-sufficient Russian region. I am sure this is what will be our reality.

A LONG WAY HOME²

Vladimir A. Konstantinov,

Chairman of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea (Simferopol)

There is much speculation now that we allegedly had some kind of arrangement with Moscow, some kind of Crimea annexation plan, which had been elaborated in advance by insidious Kremlin strategists. Total nonsense! There was no crafty plan. Indeed, the idea of unification with Russia existed in Crimea since the first years of Ukraine's independence. And it is common knowledge that the overwhelming majority of Crimeans supported this idea.

During the January Referendum back in 1991 – the first referendum held on the territory of the united country – the overwhelming majority of the Crimean people voted for the reestablishment of Crimea's autonomy within a renewed USSR. In fact, they voted for the unification with Russia.

It is symbolic that the results of the two referendums, separated by years of Ukrainian agony, are almost identical – 93% voted cast for the Republic of Crimea to become part of the Soviet Union in 1991 and almost 97% for the reunification with Russia in 2014.

Crimea has always remained a part of Russia – historically, spiritually, and mentally, – and the Ukrainization could not change that in any way. It only produced a backlash, causing irritation and repulsion, because you cannot force someone to love you. We did not invite Ukraine to our Crimean home. It arrived on its own accord, having forgotten that when in Rome, do as the Romans do. Over all these 23 years, we have been asking the Ukrainian authorities to leave Crimea alone and just to give us the opportunity to speak and write our own language, to respect our own heroes, and our own past. Have not we warned Kiev that we would never ever honour fascists and executors? Have not we called for respect towards our Orthodox church and asked not to damage our cathedrals? But for all these 23 years, the Ukrainian leaders have kept repeating with their blank eyes: “united Ukraine,” “common language,” “common church.”

A patriotic impulse. Highlighting the role of patriotic education in preparing

2 V. Kostantinov. To walk our own path. Simferopol. SALTA OOO LTD. 2017. 256 p. Vladimir A. Konstantinov, Chairman of the State Council of the Republic of Crimea, wrote a book about The Crimean Spring and named it “To walk our own path.” Konstantinov writes: “The Crimean Spring was a life-changing milestone, a historical crossroad when the events could follow any scenario – from the most favourable one to the most terrible and blood-stained one. All those days, the peninsula's fate hung by a thread... Bluntly speaking, our chances to win were one in a million. And we managed to use this chance... Everyone involved in the Crimean Spring events – from protest leaders and deputies to militia and ordinary Crimeans, and of course, the “polite people” – happened to be in the right place at the right time. Everyone played their unique role and fulfilled their task.” The book is based on the author's bright, personally and emotionally coloured memories and reflections on the events in Crimea, Russia and Ukraine, covering the period from autumn 2013 to March 18, 2014. Here are the most interesting extracts from V. Konstantinov's book published with the author's consent.

the ground for the Crimean Spring and uniting the Crimeans around common goals and values, it should be noted that every working meeting in the Supreme Council of Crimea used to begin with a discussion of patriotic education and restoration of monuments and obelisks dedicated to the Great Patriotic War. We also came up with an idea to build a memorial complex on the site of a concentration camp that, during the Crimea occupation, was located on the territory of the former state-run farm called Krasny in the Simferopol region.

Patriotic work united both the deputies and the Crimean community. For me, and for tens of millions of people in Russia and across the former Soviet Union, the theme of war has a deeply personal meaning. This is not an abstract story; it is something we have a blood tie with. My father was a prisoner in Sachsenhausen concentration camp in Germany, then he went to war, was severely wounded, and he felt the aftermath of his wound until the end of his life. Hence, war memory and rejection of Nazism are part of my DNA, as it is the case with the overwhelming majority of the Crimean people.

The Crimeans' patriotic impulse was particularly evident in the formation of the Crimean People's Militia on February 23, 2014. More than two thousand people joined the volunteer corps in the first hours, and at the height of the Crimean Spring, their number exceeded ten thousand. Those were the people of various nationalities, ages, and social statuses, both men and women.

Absolute evil. A state coup in Kiev and a risk of civil war transfer to Crimea triggered the events of the Crimean Spring. Crimean Berkut fighters were killed in Kiev Maidan, the Nazis attacked a bus with the Crimeans in the Cherkassk region, leaving seven people died and more than 20 missing, and the Mejlis (an extremist organization that is banned in Russia) kept making threats and ultimatums. It became clear that the country had no authorities, and that only Russia could save Crimea from bloodshed.

The overwhelming majority of the peninsula's residents associated Kiev with anarchy, Bandera principles, war, blood, and absolute evil. We did not want, and could not, live in SUCH A COUNTRY.

My family and I, we kept being threatened by the criminals who had seized power and their associates, while enemies spread rumours that the head of the Crimean Parliament had already fled Crimea.

I was persistently recommended to take my family and to leave this place. I was given five days to make all the necessary arrangements. For example, I received a phone call from a famous Ukrainian politician whom I knew quite well.

"Volodia, I beg you, do go away, – this person told me. – I have heard they have plans to bring you to Kiev in a car's boot. They are crazy, tomorrow they can elect Hitler to be their honourable chairperson. Go away!"

But I was firm in my decision to stay. I am Crimean to the core. How could I leave the people who believed me and supported me?... I took part in a rally and said that I had no intention to go away. My parents are buried here; I might be

burnt, poisoned in a gas chamber, or shot, but I will stay with my fellows' right to the end.

Enemies' promises. Threats, bribes, and promises were all brought into play. For example, Igor Kolomoysky called and promised to flood Crimea with investments in exchange for not holding a referendum.

I replied that the decision had been made and that we were not going to cancel anything. But he continued to pour out his promises as if he did not hear my words. Some people believe that money can buy anything and that the only problem is to agree on a price.

During his visit to Simferopol on February 28, 2014, President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko had a meeting with the Head of the Crimean Parliament, proposing to hold a plebiscite instead of a referendum.

This might have been an idea suggested by his American advisors who realized that the decision made at a referendum would be legally binding, and that the authorities would have to observe it, while the results of a plebiscite are mere recommendations. The rest turned out to be identical to the talk with Mr Kolomoysky: the same promises of investments and of a land of milk and honey. That is why my answer remained the same: the decision had been made, and we were not going to introduce any changes.

The same day, the Crimeans ousted Poroshenko from the peninsula. By the way, Boris Filatov, one of Mr Kolomoysky and Poroshenko's associates, did not even conceal the other side of these promises' coin. In early March of 2014, he made the following post on his page in a social network,

“This scum should be given promises, guarantees, and any concessions. And hung... They should be hung later”. This is a word-by-word quotation.

The word “scum” in Filatov's post referred to the Crimean people and Donbas residents.

A letter to V. Putin. Meanwhile, the situation continued escalating, with Kiev trying to seize control over the security forces in Crimea. On the night of March 1, the officers of the Security Service of Ukraine tried, though with no success, to storm the buildings of the Council of Ministers and the Crimean Parliament that the “polite people” controlled. That night I held a meeting with Sergey Aksyonov and Oleg Belaventsev in my office in the Supreme Council. We made a historical decision to appeal to the President of Russia Vladimir Putin for help.

The ones who defended the buildings recommended not to turn on the light and to draw the curtains tight because of the snipers. We were reflecting on how to gain control over the situation again. We should keep trying until the very end, take the power in our hands, and disable all Ukrainian security authorities. Otherwise, it could have ended very badly. Having discussed everything, we decided to write a letter to the President of Russia and to ask for help in maintaining peace on the territory of Crimea. We drafted it literally on a napkin.

It is here, in Crimea, that the idea to appeal to Putin appeared. It is not we

who proposed it. This demand had been repeatedly voiced at rallies and numerous meetings with people. We just executed the will of Crimea's inhabitants.

At 5 a.m. on March 1, Sergey Aksyonov recorded a video message in the Supreme Council conference room, addressing it to the peninsula's citizens, Crimean security forces, and Russian President, and temporarily reassigned the security services, making them subordinate to himself.

That was a life-changing moment.

Life after Ukraine's 'death'. Particular attention was paid to the legal aspects of Crimea's reunification with Russia, so the Crimean parliament acted in strict accordance with the Crimean Constitution that was then in force and with the provisions of international law.

The UN Declaration states that peoples' right to self-determination is a fundamental principle of international law, along with the principle of the territorial integrity of states. These principles together with the obligations taken under the UN Charter must be respected and fulfilled by any state. It is my firm belief that the principles of international law cannot be enforced selectively. The principle of territorial integrity cannot be upheld when a coup d'état has taken place in a country and when impostors have seized power, trampling on the constitution and the citizens' rights and subjugating the law enforcement and justice systems.

The 1998 Crimean constitution provided for the right to a referendum, but in practice, the Crimeans could exercise their right to secede from Ukraine and return to Russia only if the Ukrainian state legally ceased to exist. Surprisingly, this opportunity – an incredible, unique one – was given to us by the rioters themselves! A successful coup and a run-away of the legally elected President Yanukovich meant a legal death of Ukraine as a state established in 1991 on the ruins of the Soviet Union. The Constitution was trodden to pieces, a legal collapse occurred. There was no President and no government, and the team that seized the power was illegitimate... On the one hand, this situation threatened Crimea with chaos and war, but, on the other hand, it opened up a real opportunity to legally depart from the Ukrainian coast that was embraced by a Nazi revolt and to beach the Russian shores.

And the Crimeans grasped this opportunity.

The Light Path. The Referendum held on March 16 became the climax of the Crimean Spring. Voters started queueing at the polling station right from the early morning. No other election in Ukraine could boast such an electoral activity. Even wheelchair users, people on crutches, and senior citizens refused to vote at home and found a way to arrive at a polling station to cast their ballot with the mark "for Russia" in it. I voted in Simferopol, at the polling station arranged in a music school. I clearly remember that the next day I came to my home village of Naychny, near Bakhchysarai, where I had graduated from school and where my father had lived and worked for many years. People congratulated me and told me that it was a great pity that Andrey Sergeevich did not live to see this. And I

recalled having discussions with my father, dedicated to historical cycles, when we used to agree that Crimea would inevitably return to Russia, but this might not be in the near future...

The next day, the Crimean delegation went to Moscow to sign a historic treaty on the peninsula's reunification with Russia. I would describe this a path of light. And then there was the glittering magnificence of St George's Hall in the Kremlin, and we had a tremendous feeling of witnessing the history and being closely involved in this process. By the way, I had never before visited the Kremlin, even as a tourist... The three of us – Sergey Aksyonov, Aleksey Chaly, and I – signed the treaty. The President shook our hands.

At the "We're Together!" rally at which thousands of people gathered to support Crimea's reunification with Russia, the President said the words which have now become a catchphrase: "After a long, difficult, exhausting voyage, Crimea and Sevastopol are returning to their native harbour, to their native shores, to their port of permanent registration – to Russia!".

Five years later. Today, after having lived within Russia for five years already, we can safely say that our choice saved us from a bloody scenario and that it was the only right choice that opened up previously unimaginable prospects for Crimea.

Time flies. We have gone a long way that could have taken many decades, be it at other times and with other prerequisites. We have demonstrated an unprecedented speed of integrating a new constituent entity in a federation. We did this in a manner that was very comfortable and painless for the Crimeans. We can say that we managed to achieve a lot with no major distresses. But in my opinion, the most important thing is that the integration has occurred in the people's minds as well. Today, the Ukrainian period is perceived as a remote past.

In spite of the Ukrainian blockade and Western sanctions, we managed to preserve the largest enterprises, working places, and businesses, and to achieve stable economic growth.

The meetings I held with many foreign delegates who visited the Russian Crimea convinced me that people in the West are moving towards understanding our uniqueness and the legitimacy of our Referendum. Tectonic shifts are taking place in the world geopolitics; the leading Western politicians declare their readiness to acknowledge the peninsula is being a part of Russia. I think the global international acknowledgment is not that far off.

We have walked our path together. We will certainly create Crimea of our dream!

Those days, I recalled the words that are attributed to St. Francis of Assisi, "Start by doing what is necessary, then what is possible, and suddenly you are doing the impossible." Indeed, we started by doing what was necessary to protect Crimea from the Ukrainian Nazism, chaos, and war. Then we did everything possible to find ways for Crimea's peaceful and legal reunification with Russia.

And, finally, we did the impossible: the historical reunification occurred! It is a pity my parents did not see that bright day.

The decision to appoint Sergey Aksyonov as the prime minister... was kind of an insight. Mr Aksyonov followed his uneasy path in the pro-Russian movement, was consistent in his multi-year fight for the Russian idea... And he certainly proved to be a real leader in those February days. People believed him, followed him... This was a historical decision that largely contributed to defining the events that followed. Crimea needed nobody else except Mr Aksyonov with his determination, management skills, and ability to arrive at unusual decisions. No one but him could bear this responsibility and this burden.

Russian social standards appeared to be favourable for the peninsula's population since they are higher than Ukrainian ones. Hence, the living standards of the majority of the Crimean people have increased, though, of course, no one thought about that in the days of the Crimean Spring. Our choice was not money-motivated. The peoples in Crimea did not fight for a large piece of a pie with its benefits and preferences. Instead, they fought for their freedom and dignity, for peace and harmony on our land, for our spiritual and moral values, and for the right to be just them. It was Russia that gave us all this.

Since the Kiev regime seized the power, they have been using Bandera's methods, and they do not even hide this fact. On the contrary, they are proud of it. Yesterday we had Babi Yar, Katyn, and Volhynia massacres, and today we have Odessa and Donbas. This blood-stained succession is very clear. Crimea could also have been on this terrible list unless Russia had protected it. It was Kiev's crazy actions and its reluctance and inability to negotiate that ultimately convinced Moscow believe that there was but one way to maintain peace on the peninsula and save peoples' lives – by taking Crimea within the Russian Federation.

Crimean character and Crimean mentality are not just eloquent words to puff up at rallies. This is reality. The history of the peninsula has its impact on the people, very often at the subconscious level. For centuries, Crimea had been at the forefront of the Russian world, and the President said that it was "literally permeated with our common history and pride." This created a unique spiritual environment that Ukraine could not destroy. The Crimean people had never felt to be Ukrainians. Metaphorically speaking, we had always synchronized our watches with the Clock on the Kremlin's Spasskaya Tower. This unity was the key factor of our victory.

Early in the morning on February 27, I received a phone call from my assistant who told me that the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Crimea had been seized by armed people. I understood that after everything that had happened only our people could have got hold of the building. It was the signal. We had to walk our own path. No one could do this for us – neither Moscow nor anybody else. People who controlled the building were properly armed and equipped, their faces covered with masks. At the same time, they behaved extremely tactfully.

They did not interfere in the work of the MPs and civil officers, did not threaten them, did not give any orders. In short, they were very polite. Their behaviour clearly showed that they had got control over the building to prevent its seizure by the extremists and to ensure proper work of the parliament.

INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA AS AN ESSENTIAL RESOURCE FOR THE RECOGNITION OF THE RUSSIAN STATUS OF CRIMEA

Georgy L. Muradov,

PhD in Historical Sciences, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea - Permanent Representative of the Republic of Crimea under the President of the Russian Federation (Simferopol - Moscow)

Kiev Maidan introduced significant changes to our relations with the Western partners. They ceased to be our partners and turned into our opponents and adversaries. Their original reliance on Russia's inaction with regard to an armed coup in Kiev was detached from the understanding of Russia's international and geopolitical realities. Russia could not but support the democratic expression of will by the Crimean people and was ready to save them from war and ethnic cleansing.

This reasonable and fair decision dramatically changed the vectors of the international politics. It provoked the West's aggressive informational, political, and economic pressure on Russia with the aim to make Russia abandon the idea of protecting its national interests, to sabotage its social and economic development, and to make the state collapse in the future. The scale of this aggression in terms of its treachery, hypocrisy, blunt lies, and falsifications, greatly exceeded that of the period of the Cold War against the USSR.

And although six years have passed since Crimea reunited with Russia, it is evident that these plans failed, still one might expect in the near future that the illegitimate strategy of introducing sanctions against Russia (and Crimea in particular) will be pervasively imposed on the Europeans against their interests. This can be supported by the spirit and wording of the American Sanction Act (PL 115-44) which legally defines Russia as a US adversary. It prescribes to counteract Russia and to exert an overall pressure on the country. Moreover, one cannot fail to notice Washington's brutal pressure on the Europeans to improve "Euro-Atlantic solidarity" against the Russian Federation and the Russian status of Crimea.

In fact, Act PL 115-44 provides the benchmark for the American policy towards Russia and essentially excludes any possibility of partnership and meaningful cooperation with Moscow. The next portion of anti-Russian acts is grouped in the section PL 115-04 "On Counteracting Russia's Influence in Europe and Eurasia". Here, the law binds the US Government to play the role of "a protector" of the sovereignty and security of all countries in Eurasia, including our allies, of course, who, as the document states, are or can be the "victims" of Russia's influence. It is this logic that accompanied a visit of M. Pompeo, the US State Secretary, to Belarus and Kazakhstan at the end of January 2020. Besides, the

implementation of the policy in this area implies the large-scale use of “soft power” towards Russia’s closest allies with the involvement of US and European non-profit organizations.

The overall strategic purpose of this policy is to damage the Russian economy and social stability, which could make our country’s leaders dramatically change their international strategy, and big businesses – assume a negative attitude towards their activities in Crimea and shut down their companies in the Russian economic space.

Therefore, we believe there is a need to mobilize “Eurasian solidarity”, firstly, around Crimea, with the partners of Russia in EAEU, CSTO, and the Union State of Russia and Belarus (the latter is rather ambiguous when one part of the State acknowledges Crimea, while the other part postpones the decision). During the sessions of OSCE, Council of Europe, UN General Assembly, and other international platforms, more often than not the EAEU and CSTO delegates and NGOs do not support Russia and prefer to keep silent or not to participate in these sessions. Such an attitude makes us wonder whether our allies recognize the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation in its contemporary borders.

The opening of the Crimean Bridge was an extremely important event that strengthened the status of Crimea and demonstrated this status to the entire world. Its rail and road traffic capacity is designed for tens of millions of tonnes of freight and many millions of passengers, including the foreign ones. Crimea’s geographical location defines the prospects for the future large-scale access of the Russian goods to the global market. Having spent more than 200 bln roubles on such an enormous infrastructure facility, we should look further. What is the purpose of these initiatives? The development of the Crimean ports and navigable cargo and passenger routes in the basins of the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea is a reasonably crucial area for further work of both Russia and our partners in the Eurasian Economic Union. That is why the disregard towards Crimea will inevitably damage their own interests.

Besides, Russia has its priority partners outside the EAEU, including the countries which are facing the same aggressive economic and sanction confrontation as Crimea. These are, first and foremost, Syria and Iran. For example, it is quite easy for us to build relations with Syria because it is not afraid of any sanctions, just like Crimea. What is important, it is seeking our cooperation and does not resist it. Trade and logistics are the main areas of cooperation here. Crimea is Russia’s geographically closest region to Syria. That is why the development of marine shipments between Crimean and Syrian ports is a relevant and evident need that meets the interests of both Crimea and the entire Russia. The Republic of Crimea has six ports. The seventh one is in the city of Sevastopol. They are under loaded and ready for active and intensive international cooperation. We are interested in this. There are Syrian goods that are in demand in the Russian market, and there is a huge amount of Russian cargo intended for a recovering Syria.

In the case of trade with Syria and Iran, the ban on foreign ships entering Crimean ports, instigated by Ukraine, the US, and their allies, is unrealistic. The same is true for air communications.

The Europeans were the first to realise that the Western countries were damaging themselves and the international cooperation in general with their anti-Crimean sanctions. When they come to Yalta International Economic Forum, they almost always raise the issue of the dead-end nature of the anti-Crimean restrictions. Previously, this discontent was spread among the businessmen, while now it is reaching out to parliaments and governments. Everything suggests that they are thinking of abandoning this harmful policy. The Austrians, Hungarians, and Italians are gradually moving towards this decision. The Cyprus Parliament, the French Senate, and the legislative bodies of several European regions have already stood up against anti-Russian sanctions. Growing civic and political circles in foreign countries empathize with the Crimeans and openly support the choice they made in 2014. For example, three years ago, the International Association of Friends of Crimea was established at Yalta International Economic Forum, and the Friends of Crimea proposed to the Russian leadership to open a “Crimean window”. The food commodities that are banned to be imported into Russia due to our counter measures are offered to be exported via Crimea. Thus, the Russian status of Crimea can be acknowledged by the European businesses *de facto*. And here “the ball is in our court”, so to say.

The breach of the previously existing long-term and mutually beneficial contracts with Crimea causes discomfort to Europe. The public exerts increasing pressure on the authorities and call on them to abandon this dead-end policy.

Crimea is the place where different cultures and civilisations are interconnected. Today, this is the home for the communities from European and Asian countries and the place where the cultural heritage of many peoples is preserved and multiplied. The Russian civilization is linked to the Byzantine civilisation, which in turn is linked to the ancient Greek civilization.

This platform on which a part of humanity evolved is very close to us. The notion of civilization succession gave birth to the idea to establish the International Association of Ancient Heritage Cities that was voiced at the “Bosporus Agons” Festival of Ancient Arts that was held in Kerch in 2019.

This year, Yalta International Economic Forum is going to be dedicated to the discussion of the organization of this international association with the representatives of the ancient cities. Partners from the Balkans, the Black Sea region, and the Mediterranean countries are going to be invited. The Association has no political tasks. Its activities are based on a growing public interest towards the study of the common history and cultural heritage of our countries and peoples. Many of our civilizational values are rooted in ancient times. Crimea, Greece, Italy, Bulgaria, Abkhazia, Armenia, and the Middle East countries own many important monuments of the ancient heritage. They should be, first and foremost,

preserved for the future generations, for the world culture. Being an example of people's democracy, this project will provide true information about the Republic of Crimea to the residents of foreign countries.

Even now, the peninsula regularly welcomes cultural figures, scientists, and members of the public from various countries. They note that Crimea differs from what is shown by the Ukrainian and Western politicians and the mass media they control. Over 800 foreign delegations have visited Crimea in 5 years. The year 2019 turned out to be a record in terms of tourism: out of 7 million people who visited Crimea, the number of foreign citizens, 90% of whom were residents of Ukraine, exceeded 1.1 million people. In general, it should be stressed that Crimea's public, informational, cultural, and scientific ties with foreign partners have never, by and large, been interrupted.

The maintaining of a deep connection with the Ukrainian people is another very important task of the modern civic society of Crimea. The peninsula has always been an example of the centuries-long coexistence of fraternal Russian and Ukrainian peoples within one space. The Ukrainian language is acknowledged one of the official languages in Crimea, and the Ukrainian culture is being supported. If Ukraine wants to be with Crimea, which is constantly being proclaimed by the Kiev authorities, then let it return to the family of the fraternal peoples, and then it will certainly be with Crimea. And if it breaks away from its civilization, it can only provoke disaster and the destruction of its own national identity, which was built along with the Russian identity.

Official Kiev and its Western patrons continue playing their rather dangerous game in the international relations field, welcoming any manifestations of extremism in Crimea among the Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars. For example, at the West's behest, in January this year R. Chubarov, a leader of an extremist group named Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, which is illegal and banned in Russia, informed the Ukrainian TV about the preparation of the next provocative (in fact, extremist) campaign to be held on May 2, 2020 – the so-called “March towards Crimea”, aimed at demonstrating allegedly non-violent resistance to Crimea's reunification with Russia. And, as it is often the case with similar provocations, he did not deny a possibility of a power scenario to penetrate the peninsula. The extremists are thinking to name this campaign “The World Against Violence and Invasion. March of Dignity” and are planning to invite the representatives of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, PACE, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

The UN and OSCE venues where the Western countries and their satellites have consolidated into a group of about 60 countries approve – by a minority vote out of nearly two hundred UN member states – the anti-Crimean and anti-Russian resolutions based on fictitious or distorted facts and events. For example, they claim that Russia allegedly violates the rights of the Crimean Tatars. However, it is widely known that everything that the Crimean Tatars had gained over the

decades was returned to them after Crimea's reunification with Russia. The Crimean Tatar language was given the status of one of the Republic's official languages. The education system was developed, and mass media stable broadcasting in the Crimean Tatar language was ensured. Three hundred fifty mosques were legalized, since back at Ukrainian times, the majority of them had not registered their land and construction rights. The Crimean Tatars expanded their ties with the foreign spiritual Muslim centres, they enjoy the opportunity to make their pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Great Mosque in Simferopol has entered into the final stage of its construction. Our key task here is to continue providing true information about the Crimean Tatar events on the peninsula.

130 years ago, Ismail Gaspyraly (Gasprinskyi), the Mayor of Bakhchysarai and a notable son of the Crimean Tatar people, wrote the following:

“The Russians, the most numerous and main nation of Russia, are endowed with a rare and blessed trait – to live with other tribes in peace and friendship. Envy, animosity, and hostility to foreigners are not in the nature of a Russian person. This good trait is certainly a guarantor of greatness and serenity of Russia.”

This is the uniqueness of our Motherland – the unifier of nations, the keeper of their languages and culture, and their protector against wars and destruction that, being the richest country in the world ensures their opportunities for long-term prosperity.

I see one real way of solving this problem that will allow removing the Crimean issue, which remains the hot news in the Western mass media, from the political agenda. I mean a more decisive counteraction against Kiev's anti-Russian policy. In the current circumstances, we have no right to say that we will continue providing Ukraine with everything it needs for the sake of affection for the Ukrainian people, considering the fact that the Ukrainian authorities still maintain the total blockade and sanctions with regard to Crimea. Tough actions aimed at forcing Ukraine to acknowledge the Crimean reality need to be taken against Ukraine because there are enough people there, both in the centre and in the regions, who wish to live a different life, to return back to their civilization and to their roots, and to restore good relations with Russia, including Crimea.

These initiatives, first of all, should be aimed at making Ukraine recognize the legitimacy of the 2014 Crimean Referendum and the Crimeans' secession actions in the context of the Kiev coup and Ukraine's efforts to implement a tough policy to suppress Crimean autonomy and the rights of the Russian and Russian-speaking population of the peninsula.

The crimes of Turchinov and Poroshenko's regimes must be disapproved of by the Ukrainian society itself.

Ukraine's policy aimed at joining NATO and its refusal to use the Russian language (the mother tongue for half the country's population), which have been recently enshrined in Ukraine's Constitution, are unacceptable for Russia and contradict the spirit of the Belovezhky agreements with respect to Donbas.

Taking this into consideration, a question concerning the recognition of the Donbas People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic should be raised if the above-mentioned amendments to the Constitution are not withdrawn within several months.

What is important today is not to lose time and to prevent full "re-framing" of the public consciousness in Ukraine, making the Ukrainians understand that Crimea and Donbas show the path towards restoring our common historical background with the Ukrainian people and towards our unity that, actually, opens up the prospect of mutual development.

As for the other states representing the world society, we see that the results of the voting on the Crimean resolutions at the UN General Assembly sessions are gradually turning in favour of Russia, which demonstrates that the anti-Russian coalition is a clear minority. These resolutions are passed only due to the imperfect and largely obsolete voting procedures. At the same time, Crimea, not being an independent state, does not require any special international acknowledgment. In this case, we are dealing with another matter: are our opponents ready to take active actions against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Russia with Crimea as its part? It is evident that they are trying to figure out how decisive Russia's actions will be. That is why I am sure that our will, determination, and power are the key factors that will define our further behaviour.

To sum up, let me emphasize that currently the main goal of the international activities of the Republic of Crimea should be, first and foremost, to persuade our closest allies and then our opponents into acknowledging Crimea's Russian status. Everyone in the world should clearly understand that no one has the right to impinge upon our sovereign rights on land, at sea, or in the air, as it happened, for example, during an incident in the Kerch Strait. But, at the same time, we should be more active in solving the problems related to Crimea's social and economic development and its transformation into a model constituent entity, which is the aspiration of not only the Crimeans, who unanimously voted for the reunification with Russia, but also of the entire Russian population. Our opponents must see and become aware that we have the will for self-mobilization. Then comes the awareness, including among our Western opponents, that Crimea will stay with Russia forever, that the Crimeans have legitimately, independently, and irrevocably returned to their historical Motherland, that Russia is a unified country, sovereign in its decisions, a strong state with the right to its historical and civilizational place and an ability to ensure its future wellbeing.

THE CRIMEAN SPRING EVENTS AS THE LOGICAL OUTCOME OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE RUSSIAN MOVEMENT IN CRIMEA³

Sergey P. Tsekov,

Chairman of the Russian Community of Crimea, the Republic of Crimea's member of the Federation Council of the Russian Federal Assembly (Simferopol)

Sergey Tsekov was interviewed and recorded by Sergey Sapel'nik.

Mr Tsekov, you said that you would like to say an introductory word before we start our interview.

There has always been pro-Russian sentiment in Crimea. Let me emphasise it: not only Russian but pro-Russian sentiments. The ties between the Crimeans and Russia have never been cut off. These ties remained even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Up until 1991, the residents of the peninsula had not thought much about Crimea's identity since we all used to live in the same country. Back in 1954, the decision to transfer the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was made without regard as to the opinion of the peninsula's residents, while Pavel Titov, head of the Crimean Regional Party Committee, dared object Nikita Khrushchev and was removed from office the following day. As for the hero city of Sevastopol, it was not even transferred to the Ukrainian SSR de jure because it had been a city of republican subordination (RSFSR) since 1948 and did not belong to the Crimean Oblast.

The Crimeans protested against the policy conducted by Ukraine in Crimea – both actively and passively. What was a passive protest like? Crimea essentially did not implement Ukraine's decisions aimed at forcibly imposing Ukrainization, re-writing the history, and distorting the events of the Great Patriotic War. After the Soviet Union's collapse, the local population felt the injustice towards Crimea and Sevastopol becoming a part of independent Ukraine. And many people protested. Some of them protested at home, among their family members and friends, others did so at work. Ukrainization activists did not managed to implement in Crimea everything that had been planned: no matter how hard they tried to impose their initiatives using a top-down approach, the Crimean civil officers pretended “snapping a salute”, but acted rather reluctantly. There was an active protest too. The representatives of the pro-Russian organisations in Crimea protested by openly and publicly defending the rights of Russian Crimeans and those local inhabitants who were Russian in terms of their culture.

The second thing I want to emphasize is the position of Russia and Ukraine with respect to Crimea. The Russian society has always felt concerned about the

³ The interview is published in Russian Community in Crimea: A Road to Russia. Part 1. Memoirs of the Community's veterans: Compiled by I.V. Evtushkin V. Simferopol: GAA DEC I. Gasprinskyi Mediacenter, 2018. 176 p.

loss of Crimea. It regularly conducted sociological surveys that revealed that the majority of the Russians regretted that Crimea was not a part of Russia and believed that the decision to transfer Crimea to Ukraine was unfair. The Russian authorities were aware of the political context associated with the Soviet Union's collapse and expressed their regret as well but in a cautious manner. In the 1990s, Russia's leaders recognized, in fact, all the borders that appeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The same referred to Ukraine's border between Crimea and Russia. Yet, Russia still believed Crimea to be its own territory that by chance had turned out to be outside its borders. The Russians and pro-Russian organizations in Crimea openly spoke about it. They said that Crimea was an integral part of the great Russian world.

Ukraine, in its turn, subconsciously believed Crimea not to belong to it. Ukraine has always understood that the Crimeans have a unique mentality and unique interests. At the same time, Ukraine was striving to prove that the Crimean territory belonged to Ukraine. However, the Ukrainian authorities were not quite good at it. Making political statements is one thing, but explaining to the Crimean people what Crimea means to Ukraine is a totally different matter. They failed to do this. The Ukrainian leaders were even suffering from a kind of "Ukrainian Crimea" syndrome. They understood that, for example, their verbal statements that Sevastopol is a city of "Ukrainian glory" lacked, mildly speaking, any grounds. But they were persistent in proving this by concocting various myths. Some strenuous Ukrainian historians wrote scientific papers and proved that, for instance, during the Great Patriotic War the Southern coast of Crimea hosted territorial divisions of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army.

The Ukrainian authorities have not learnt to perceive Crimea as it is. They were betrayed by their non-love towards the Russian Crimea. Ukraine referred to the peninsula as something foreign, not as its own territory. Here comes an association with a mother and its stepson. Russia, on the contrary, has always referred to Crimea as its own child.

These differences became clear in the context of the Euro-Maidan state coup in Ukraine. Pro-Russian sentiments of Crimea's residents; Russia's understanding that Crimea is its own historic territory; Ukraine's perception that Crimea is foreign to it. Besides, there was a completely illegal and unprecedented situation in Kiev and in the Western regions of Ukraine created by the Ukrainian nationalists and their American curators. All these factors concentrated in one place at one time, having enhanced the Crimeans' pro-Russian approach and transformed Russia's position towards Crimea.

The third aspect refers to the activities of the Russian and pro-Russian organizations in Crimea. The evaluation of their initiatives requires creating a particular logical chain. First, one should answer the question "When the Russian movement was born?".

Some believe that it dates back to the 1990s, when the Soviet Union had just collapsed. I tend to think that it appeared in the late 1980s. In 1989, the law “On the languages in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic” was adopted, under which the Ukrainian language was declared the only official language in the Ukrainian SSR. Back then, a feeling appeared that Ukraine and the Soviet Union would face complicated destructive processes.

How was the pro-Russian movement in Crimea born? I think it appeared spontaneously, as an autonomist movement. Back in 1989-1990, during the spread of the nationalist atmosphere in Ukraine, the Crimeans started increasingly supporting the idea of restoring the autonomy that was voiced during the 1990 elections to the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union and local Councils. In 1991, the Crimean Regional Council successfully held a Referendum dedicated to the re-establishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. At that time, the republican idea in Crimea was closely related to the pro-Russian idea. This is how the “January 20” movement appeared. The August of 1991 brought the Republic Movement of Crimea (RMC) once the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine was adopted. In 1992, the Republican Party of Crimea (RPC Party) was established. In 1993, the Russian Community of Crimea was initiated by the RPC Party and the RMC. Thus, the pro-Russian movement in Crimea developed in an evolutionary and progressive way.

Today, the Russian Community of Crimea is a legal successor in developing the Russian and pro-Russian movement on the peninsula. Some critics of the Community disagree with this statement and try to prove their importance, but this is pointless. They lack this logical chain and have very few concrete actions, while their impact and their role in the historical process should be backed up by their initiatives rather than words. Only the Russian Community of Crimea actually demonstrated specific actions, systematic work, and human rights-related activities. Nearly all the regulations aimed at protecting the Russian language, culture, and national history were initiated by the MPs who represented the Russian Community of Crimea and the predecessor organizations and were approved by the Supreme Council of Crimea. All the festivals and memorable dates associated with the history of Russia and widely celebrated in Crimea were established by the Russian Community of Crimea. The Russian Community of Crimea was one of the founders of the Russian Unity movement and the eponymous political party and, together with the Russian Unity, played the key role in the Crimean Spring events.

I am introducing you to this topic to explain the logic of our discussions, which is as follows: many people who are trying to belittle the role of the Russian Community of Crimea in terms of protecting the rights of the Russians in Crimea and those Crimea’s inhabitants who are culturally Russian and to raise their importance, used to be some insignificant elements of this chain in particular periods of time and occasionally dropped out of it. Also, I would like to point out that many

other organizations that voiced back then and voice now their allegedly true love for Russia and for the Russian citizens backed their affections by nothing else than words. They did not participate in any serious political processes. When there arose a need for actions – to hold mass campaigns, resist the Ukrainian nationalists, and support human rights activists persecuted by the Ukrainian authorities, everyone appealed to the Russian Community of Crimea for help. The Community was known for its true involvement, real actions, material resources, and its representatives in the power authorities. Not only did the Community speak about the Russian movement but was engaged in organizing it as well. Today, after Crimea's reunification with Russia, the Community continues its work for the benefit of Russia and the Russian Crimea. Let me emphasize that all the members of the Russian Community's Presidium entered the key legislative and executive bodies.

Today, the Russian Community of Crimea, just like it did in the past, participates in the real political processes and has an opportunity to influence the political decisions with due regard to the protection of the rights and interests of the Russians in Crimea and culturally Russian Crimeans.

Tell us about the start of your political career, your MP's path in the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR, and your personal contribution to Crimea's pro-Russian movement.

My political career started back at the Soviet times. It all happened quite naturally. I graduated from the Crimean Medical Institute and believed that my life would be connected with surgery and that I would build a career of a surgeon. But in the early 80s, I unexpectedly became Secretary of the Komsomol committee of the Saki district medical association, as I was working in the Saki central district hospital. In 1985, perestroika started, a priority was given to nominating young people, and this is how I was elected Secretary of the Komsomol committee of the Saki district medical association. As for the first step in my political career outside the hospital and the medical association, it was when I participated in the election to the Supreme Councils of the Soviet Union and the Ukrainian SSR.

That was back in 1988-1989. The Saki district medical association nominated me as a Soviet Union deputy candidate. But the system of selecting candidates was complicated; I did not manage to go through the election cycle to the end and pulled out at the stage of holding general pre-election meetings. This turned out to be a good experience. A year later, the election to the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR was announced. I was ready for them. The employees of the Saki district medical association nominated me as people's deputy of the Ukrainian SSR. I won against nine other candidates in the district. Back then, it was quite realistic for a rank-and-file doctor to be elected to the Ukrainian parliament. Later on, this was a rather rare occasion.

In Soviet times (end of the 1980s and early 1990s,) the competition at the elections was open and free. A lot depended on your ability to cover the whole

constituency, on how quickly you could get publicity, and how convincing the meetings with voters were. My meetings turned out to be very convincing. The first round gave me 37%, the second round brought more than 60% of votes, and I became a people's deputy of the Ukrainian SSR's Parliament.

During the election campaign, the deputy candidates voiced in their speeches the idea to re-establish the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialistic Republic. Back then, there were certain signs that something wrong was happening in the Soviet Union. We sensed that self-styled, separatist sentiments (for us the word "separatism" was not yet completely clear) were increasingly making themselves felt in the Soviet Union's republics. Some separatist events took place in Georgia, Lithuania, and in other Republics. A law "On the languages in the Ukrainian SSR" was adopted, which gave the Ukrainian language the status of the only official language in Ukraine. A week later, when I was elected a deputy of the Ukrainian Parliament, I received a letter of congratulation in the Ukrainian language. Then the documents in Ukrainian arrived. I was not impressed by that. Although, honestly speaking, I was forced to find a Russian-Ukrainian dictionary immediately and to master the Ukrainian language in a short period. In fact, there is no significant difference between the Russian and Ukrainian languages. Even today, when some Russian-speaking people in Crimea say that they do not understand Ukrainian, I do not believe it. I do not think that we are not smart enough to understand the Ukrainian.

On the other hand, the Ukrainian language was forcibly introduced in various spheres of public life by means of suppressing the Russian language. Russian kept being gradually ousted from office work, education, health care, legal proceedings, and so on. This was a direct violation of the rights of the Russians and of the Ukrainian citizens who were Russian in terms of their culture. And by the end of the 1980s, this trend turned out to be ubiquitous.

That is why I had a protest mood even before I arrived in Kiev in May 1990. In the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR, right from the doorway, so to say, I faced Ukrainian nationalism and separatism in their full manifestation. From the very beginning, the Ukrainian Supreme Council worked in the presence of the strict imposition of the Ukrainian language as the only language for record keeping. Crimean deputies tried to ask for some documents in Russian but they refused to do so since all the documents were provided in Ukrainian only.

Back then, a new election system brought many notorious people to the Ukrainian Parliament, including such Ukrainian dissidents as Chernovol, Luki- anenko, Khmara, and others. They pathetically declared that Ukraine was a centuries-old state that deserved more independence than it owned at the time. I clearly remember the words of Viacheslav Chernovol who said that the Russians should be persuaded into a confederation. He believed that the Soviet Union could not remain a federation.

Initially, the key task of the Ukrainian separatists was the adoption of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine. They kept insisting on the need to elaborate and adopt such a document. Back then, few people could truly comprehend the idea behind the Declaration adoption. However, many said that the declaration was a non-binding statement of intent that carried almost no importance since the main legal framework was represented by the Constitution and the laws. Today, it is clear that such an opinion was wrong.

In 1990, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR still had some communistic sentiments because the majority of the deputies were communists. At the first stage of work of the Supreme Council, the Central Committee of Ukraine's Communist Party invited all communist deputies. I was invited too. But there was no unanimity among the communists. There appeared democratic platforms headed by Vladimir Filenko from Kharkov, Sergey Sobolev from Zaporozhye, and others. The communists did not actually exercise full control over the situation.

On the other hand, the deputies from the Western regions were very consolidated and self-confident. They were clearly focused on Ukraine's secession from the Soviet Union, promoting the idea of confederation at the first stage. They established the Narodna Rada group. Only once did I visit their meeting, just out of curiosity. I did not like the atmosphere and the statements of Narodna Rada. Originally, I did not support any actions aimed at weakening the Soviet Union, to say nothing of dissolving it, though the Soviet Union actually collapsed because of the mistakes made by its central leaders and personally Mikhail Gorbachev. Due to his sheer ignorance, the head of the Soviet Union kept rocking the country's vertical of power. Unsurprisingly, the nationalistic forces in the Republics and the local party members felt the weakness of the Centre and used it to their benefit.

How was the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Ukraine adopted?

The Ukrainian SSR's independence started with the Declaration of State Sovereignty. A great deal of preparatory work was carried out before its adoption. The deputies had been discussing it for two or three months. I was a newly elected deputy back then and did not have experience in working with such documents. At first, I tried to contribute to the process by sharing my opinion and suggesting some ideas. But the more I realized the key point in the Declaration, the more doubts I had about whether it should be adopted. I started consulting my colleagues and found out that the majority of the deputies from Crimea were not quite enthusiastic about it. In their discussions, they resented: "This is a destruction of the Soviet Union; the adoption of such a Declaration is absolutely unacceptable since this document plays into the nationalists' hands!". When it came to the public speeches, they were usually indifferent and carried no message. It was also clear that the nationalists were at odds with the leaders of the Ukrainian parliament who were cautious and restrained when it came to the adoption of the Decla-

ration but were in fact “blowing the same horn” as the nationalists, figuratively speaking. They, the Ukrainian communists, dreamed of creating a party member’s heaven in Ukraine. Their logic was as follows: the situation in the Soviet Union, is fragile and unstable, the country is going to collapse. But if Ukraine becomes independent, then we will continue to govern Ukraine as we used to do before, but with more power and more authorities.

Finally, there came the day of the final voting on the Declaration of State Sovereignty. I remember the roll call voting and my conversation with the Crimean deputies in the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR. There were 24 people in total, including the ones from Sevastopol. We were in the airport on our way to vote in the Parliament. I could not but raise this issue: the voting procedure was ahead of us, we had no moral right to vote, this was an outrageous document that meant the collapse of the Soviet Union. They all said in unison: “Yes, Sergey, you are right, the Declaration must not be supported in any way, we must vote against it”. They inspired me: “Thank God, we are not alone. In any case, the Crimean deputies are unanimous.” The next day, July 16, 1990, was the Declaration voting day. A roll-call vote. I remember it very well: 355 votes in favour and 4 against, with 1 abstention. Only 4 people voted against! That was a shock to me because several dozen must have voted against the Declaration.

There were more than 20 Crimean deputies, and we agreed about how to vote. I immediately took the results of the roll-call vote. I wanted to know which Crimean deputies, except me, voted against. It turned out that I was the only Crimean deputy to have voted against. Three remaining votes against were cast by Mr Romanov, a deputy from Odessa, Mr Prichkin, a deputy from Zaporozhye, and some other deputy who later cancelled his vote because somebody had pushed the button “against” for him (either Mr Prichkin or Mr Romanov). Therefore, only three deputies of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR openly stood up against the Declaration of the State Sovereignty of Ukraine. It should be noted that Vladimir Terekhov was not present at the voting, being on sick leave.

Why did that happen? How do you explain it?

I think that people who gain power believe that they are given a kind of gift. And many people accept this gift, but they do not accept the responsibility that is the backside of the power. They become self-centred and do as is convenient for them. It is clear that it is not convenient to vote against in a roll-call vote when everyone else votes in favour. And you would feel this inconvenience very soon. Many people would know that you voted against and start treating you in a corresponding way at different levels of power and social life. It is clear that the nationalists could treat people rather cruelly. I want to emphasize that many deputies who accepted the power as a gift exploited this gift with no problem at all; they did not agree with the situation but somewhere deep inside their hearts. They came up to me, shook my hand and said: “Well done, Sergey, you did everything

right.” I asked one of them: “Why didn’t you vote against?” And he said, “I have certain circumstances – I just couldn’t be against. Besides, the Declaration is just a piece of paper, it means nothing.” A double-faced opinion it was. That voting ultimately compelled me to break up the relations with the Communist Party and to cancel my membership.

In other words, those voting results were quite illustrative, were not they?

Yes, this was very important to me. The same can be observed in my notes. I kept my diary quite accurately in the first four years of my political career.

What was the Crimeans’ opinion on the situation?

The Crimeans got it right. The work of the Supreme Council of Ukraine was broadcast, and it puzzled Crimeans a great deal. What was happening in the Soviet Union, in Ukraine, and in Russia raised a lot of questions.

Russia, by the way, had adopted the Declaration of Sovereignty a month earlier, on June 12. This date is now referred to as the Russia Day.

In the situation when the Soviet Union was going to collapse, the Crimeans were aware that they were being torn away from Russia. Back then, Crimea experienced outbursts of Russian and pro-Russian sentiments. First, these sentiments led to the autonomist movement. It was a unifying factor: the mood of Crimea’s residents, deputies of the Crimean Regional Council, and members of the Crimean Regional Committee of the Communist Party coincided. The Crimean Communists tend to support Russia. The Crimean Regional Committee of the Communist Party gravitated more Moscow rather than Kiev. In the early 1990s, there were a lot of talks about Crimea as a ‘Red’ region, a Communist ‘conservation area’, etc. But still, in my opinion, it was not about preserving the communist system, but rather supporting the USSR as a large union state headed by Russia. Like the majority of the Crimeans, the highest Crimean authorities did not want the Soviet Union to collapse. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Crimean politicians and the local population viewed the autonomist republican movement as protection against the wave of Ukrainian nationalism that was sweeping Crimea.

In 1990, specific activities to restore the autonomy were launched. Having assessed the situation correctly, the deputies of the Crimean Regional Council made a very important decision – to hold an all-Crimean referendum. This decision showed that the Crimeans not only were worried about the events in Ukraine but also were going to protect their law-based rights and interests. They chose the right and efficient protection form – all people will expression. By the way, this was the first referendum in the Soviet Union. The referendum posed a question about the restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialistic Republic as a constituent entity of the USSR and a member of the Union Treaty. That was very important. It is evident that the referendum held on January 20, 1991, created the

legal grounds for conducting another Crimean referendum concerning Crimea's reunification with Russia that was held on March 16, 2014.

By 1990, pro-Russian organizations only started emerging. At that time, Crimea was known for an active work of the electorate clubs. It was a fashionable trend: the electorate used to hold meetings, assess the work of the deputies, offer their own ideas, and give instructions. Many politicians and civil activists contributed to the work of such clubs and can recall their activities today. The electorate clubs were non-official. Being a people's deputy of the Ukrainian SSR from the city of Saki and the Saki Region, I mainly worked in the Saki electorate club. I participated in the club's meetings, which were held in other Crimean cities, and in the sessions of the Crimean Regional Council. Gradually I established contacts with the Simferopol autonomists.

In other words, initially, the Crimean autonomism was spontaneous, and then it became structured, right? For example, the "January 20" movement appeared...

Yes, this was when organizations began to appear. The "January 20" movement was one of the first pro-Russian organizations. Already at that time, the pro-Russian idea was closely intertwined with the republican idea. The referendum held on January 20, at which the Crimeans obtained a great result, became the starting point for the development of the republican idea in Crimea.

Valery Sagatovskiy, a professor at the Simferopol State University, who, unfortunately, had died two days before the 2014 Crimean Referendum, headed "January 20" movement. Anatoly Zhilin, our close associate, participated in the work of this movement. He joined the Russian Community of Crimea in 1994, and still remains faithful and loyal to it. As for me, I heard about the "January 20" Movement and used to be in touch with V. Sagatovskiy, but was not a member of this organization.

And then more influential political organizations were established, for example, the Republican Movement of Crimea. Why was it started?

After the referendum held on January 20, the Crimeans were vigorously restoring the autonomy; there was a considerable improvement in the public mood, and Crimea's population remained united with the local leadership. Legal documents were being prepared, and the work was being done on elaborating the hymn, the coat of arms, and the flag of the Republic, as well as many other things. We started everything from scratch because there was no underlying regulatory system. It was nearly the same as in 2014, but the scenario was much worse. Today, there are experienced professionals in Crimea, and we get support from Russia, which also has the relevant experience. Back then, we did everything on our own.

Everything went well. But then came the putsch of August 1991 – a desperate attempt by members of the State Committee on the State of Emergency to remove

Gorbachev from power and preserve the USSR. But this attempt failed. After these events, the Soviet Union actually collapsed. The Soviet Republics started declaring their independence. On August 24, 1991, the Act of Ukraine's Declaration of Independence was adopted. I did not vote for the Act. I left the room and was absent during the voting on the Act of Independence. I think I was the only one who left the room when the voting started. There was such a mess there that I had no desire to participate in it. I remember walking along the corridor alone, while the deputies shouted in the room, and the mob rejoiced and made noises in the street where the followers of the independent Ukraine gathered. Later on, I was the only deputy of the Ukrainian SSR who publicly persuaded the Crimeans into voting against the referendum on Ukraine's independence. My address to the Crimeans was published in the "Crimean Truth" newspaper two days prior to the voting day.

The events that happened in August of 1991 and actually destroyed the Soviet Union led to the establishment of a strong pro-Russian organization in Crimea. It was just a matter of several months for Ukraine to leave the Soviet Union. Ukraine was persistently trying to keep Crimea among its constituent entities. President Boris Yeltsin, who was very busy with fighting against the union authorities, did not consider Crimea and Sevastopol to be the main issue on the agenda. Many were surprised to hear him saying that the problem of Crimea was an internal affair of Ukraine.

The activities aimed at creating the real pro-Russian movement in Crimea started in late August of 1991. Officially, this movement was a Republican one, but in fact, it was a pro-Russian movement. Today, some activists of the pro-Russian movement claim, "Back then, you voted for the independence of Crimea, while I supported the Russian Crimea!". This is a wrong understanding of the situation. I have already noted that the pro-Russian and republican ideas intertwined into a single whole. But there were various interpretations of the stages of Crimea's path to Russia. Many people believed that you could not just go to Russia straight away, because this would mean a conflict between Ukraine and Russia, or even a war. Such speculations had some grounds.

It is necessary to recall the sentiments that existed in the Ukrainian society at that time. South-Eastern regions also supported Ukraine's secession from the Soviet Union and voted for independent Ukraine. They also believed that the Ukrainian language should be the only official language. At the same time, they spoke Russian. They discussed the independence with the following logic: "We are strong, Ukraine is great and rich. Why should we share our wealth with Moscow and the Soviet Union?". In other words, the consciousness of the political and administrative leaders in East Ukraine focused on their own interests. The contradictions between the Western and Eastern regions were revealed much later. That is why the state machine switched quite easily to the idea of independence. Civil officers in all Ukrainian regions hurried up to snap a salute.

It was in Crimea that the independence advocates faced some problems. The Ukrainization of the military forces did not go smoothly. Once the Act of Independence was adopted, the military groups deployed in Crimea were forced to swear an oath of allegiance to Ukraine. Military men were given to the mercy of fate, started manifesting unrest, and split. This situation turned out to reveal a lot of betrayers. For example, a unit commanding officer was loyal to the oath given to the Soviet Union. His deputy, in order to become a commander, started “splitting” the unit, making the military officers swear allegiance to Ukraine. The Ukrainian leadership used to take advantage of such activities and promised promotion to such officers. Then, some of those who swore allegiance to Ukraine but were not given the desired position left Russia, started receiving the Russian retirement benefit, became the veterans... Yet, overall, the military forces in Crimea showed predominantly pro-Russian sentiments. This was especially true for the Black Sea fleet.

The tense and conflict-prone situation of the armed forces deployed in Crimea convinced an active part of the Crimean population of the necessity to gradually implement the Russian idea in Crimea. The first stage was to obtain autonomy, then – become an independent state, and finally – reunite with Russia. In fact, an autonomous republican movement in Crimea was pro-Russian. It could be called a separatist movement, but this word does not describe the situation accurately. The expression “irredentist movement” is more appropriate here. What does separatism mean? It means disconnection. While irredentism means reunification. You can agree with me here, these are different things. I have said that many times, and I will repeat it again that the key separatists can be found in Ukraine’s Supreme Council. It is they who had destroyed our united Motherland.

The above-mentioned events triggered the establishment of a new public organization in Crimea – the Republican Movement of Crimea (RMC).

How was the RMC established?

The Conference on the foundation of the Republican Movement of Crimea was held in September 1991. The organization was initiated by Valery Averkin and several Afghan war veterans (Vladimir Klychnikov, etc.). Yuri Meshkov was invited to work for the RMC. Viktor Mezhak, a deputy of the Supreme Council of Crimea, contributed a lot to the establishment of the organization. The Republican Movement of Crimea focused on expanding its influence both in Simferopol and in the cities and districts of Crimea. At the first stage, I was not among the central leaders of the RMC; I worked in the Saki Region.

The RMC ideas matched the sentiments of the overwhelming majority of the Crimeans. The RMC’s influence in Crimea increased, and it established ties with the politicians and social activists in Russia who pursued a patriotic policy.

Much to our regret, Russia did not fight for Crimea. It did not consider the issue of Crimea and Sevastopol to be a prerequisite for Ukraine’s secession from the Soviet Union. The results of the referendum on Ukraine’s independence,

which was held, including Crimea, on December 1, 1991, were rather discouraging. At the referendum, more than 54% of the Crimean voters supported the Act of Independence of Ukraine. This was the minimal figure, compared to other Ukraine's regions, where the average result was 90%. But still, the referendum's results provided Ukraine with certain competitive advantages in its fight for Crimea.

The political immaturity, including that of the RMC representatives, had its impact. Many Crimeans boycotted the referendum and did not participate in it. In absolute terms, only one third of the Crimean residents voted, with this figure being even smaller if the visitors are included. A boycott approach to the referendum was completely wrong. I told about it in my statement "Boycott is not the best way to protest" on the eve of the referendum. The statement was published in the "Crimean Truth" (the most popular and influential newspaper in Crimea) on November 29, 1991. I addressed the Crimeans, asking them to go to the referendum and vote against Ukraine's independence. It is highly likely that if the RMC had been more energetic in persuading the Crimeans into going to the referendum and voting against Ukraine's independence, the referendum's results would have been more favourable for us, that is, less than 50%. However, even in this case, Ukraine would hardly have given Crimea up. In early 1992, the Republican Movement of Crimea started collecting signatures in favour of the referendum on the state independence of Crimea.

Now, let us talk about Yuri Meshkov. How did it happen that he gained popularity so quickly? There were other influential politicians, were not they? What was so appealing about him?

And here is a question – were there more influential and more popular Crimean politicians? There was an influential organization – the Republican Movement of Crimea – and Yuri Meshkov happened to be its leader.

Why him?

As a member of the Crimean Parliament, Yuri Meshkov fought very hard for the Russian status of Crimea, revealing a very good political grasp. He not only rebelled against the unfair transferral of Crimea to Ukraine but also tried to counteract this action. The founders of the Republican Movement of Crimea were looking for this type of person, and they took Yuri Meshkov to the top. However, if, instead of Mr Meshkov, they had taken any Tom, Dick, or Harry, they would still have had the same chance as Mr Meshkov had. The most important feature of any popular large-scale movement is the idea and people's active approach towards implementing this idea. A public movement rises from these two things. And then the leaders appear who should be famous, outstanding personalities. The voters support those politicians who reflect their interests. At the same time, they tend to vote for a personality who is at least familiar to them. This personality might not be completely understood but it should be familiar.

Back then, in the post-Soviet space, there were many politicians who like Yu. Meshkov, came up out of nowhere. For example, Mr Gamsakhurdia in Georgia or Mr Alchebei in Azerbaijan, etc. Mr. Meshkov simply happened to be at the right time in the right place, so to say.

In other words, he reflected the Crimeans' sentiments, did not he?

Yes, he did. He was a well-known person, backed by a strong influential organization. At least, before he became President of the Republic of Crimea in January of 1994. Then, due to objective and subjective reasons, Yuri Meshkov stopped focusing on the RMC and the Republican Party of Crimea (RMC Party) which was established in October of 1992. I believe that he successfully passed the test related to his work in the opposition. But unfortunately, Mr Meshkov did not pass the test of power.

What happened in Crimea and in the Republican Movement of Crimea once Ukraine declared its independence?

The fight for Crimea's Russian status was not easy and straightforward. Originally, the RMC had great hopes for the referendum on the status of Crimea. In May of 1992, the movement's activists collected 246 signatures in various regions in favour of the referendum on the state independence of Crimea. And these are just officially registered signatures. In fact, there were many more of them. On May 5, 1992, based on the results of the collection of signatures, the Supreme Council of Crimea adopted the Act on the proclamation of state independence of the Republic of Crimea and a resolution on holding an all-Crimean referendum, according to which the Republic of Crimea was to become an independent state. On May 6, 1992, the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea was adopted, which made us actually independent.

However, in summer of 1992, the leadership of the Supreme Council of Crimea started its political games with the Ukrainian authorities. Kiev asked Crimea to establish a moratorium on holding the referendum and promised a fortune to Nikolay Bagrov. Knowing that Bagrov had presidential ambitions, the Ukrainian authorities began to support the introduction of the institution of presidency in Crimea. The Republic was promised to adopt a law on the separation of authorities between the governmental bodies of Ukraine and the Republic of Crimea. The law was adopted on June 30, 1992, but predictably turned out to be fictitious since it was to enter in force after the Crimean legislation would be aligned with the Ukrainian one. And that was totally impossible.

Eventually, Kiev made its point – the deputies of the Crimean Parliament controlled by Nikolay Bagrov supported the introduction of an indefinite moratorium on holding the referendum. Then, in September 1992, amendments to the Crimean constitution dated May 6, 1992, were adopted.

All these events were a severe blow the RMC. Disputed started on the future development of the movement. The opinions divided. Valery Averkin, the RDC

founder, became the leader of the “Mensheviks”, so to say. But the majority of the RMC (let us conventionally call them “Bolsheviks”) chose to establish a political party. This group was headed by Yu. Meshkov. I also contributed a lot to creating a party that was to become a legal successor of the RMC. The Party called “The Republican Party of Crimea (RMC party)” was registered in October of 1992. We clearly understood that the RMC would strengthen its positions only if it participated in the government elections in the Republic of Crimea.

At that time, first interpersonal confrontations emerged within the RMC. I find it very hard to judge them. Valery Averkin and I were not close friends: I used to meet him, speak to him, say “Hello” and “Goodbye”. But still, I would like to share my opinion. Mr Averkin was a rich man at the time, a so-called *nouveau riche*. Having established the RMC, he started providing financial support to the organization. He paid for transportation, catering, publishing activities. However, quite soon some problems emerged which Mr Averkin had to dedicate all his time to. I cannot say that the Russian and pro-Russian idea was not important for him. Yet, Mr Averkin, who initially had engaged in politics thanks to his money, did not assign primary importance to the Russian idea. At the same time, committed people (and they were the majority of the RMC members) established the Republican Party of Crimea (RMC Party) and decided to move further. The Party enthusiastically started preparing for the elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea.

Mr Averkin did not participate in selecting members of the RMC Party; he had some misunderstanding with Mr Meshkov. Averkin established the Russian-speaking movement of Crimea (RsMC). Its members included, among others, Mikhail Bakharev, editor of the *Krymskaya Pravda*, and his deputy Tatiana Ryabchikova, who can tell us more about the organization.

Once the Republican Party of Crimea was established, it took about a year to discuss the programme of the Party and its forms and methods of work. I think it was a right decision to organize the Russian Community of Crimea. Its constituent meeting was held in October of 1993 at a session of an enlarged Coordination Council of the Republican Party of Crimea (RMC Party). Vladimir Terekhov, who had been initiated the establishment of the Russian Community of Crimea, was elected chairman of the Community, and I was elected deputy chairman.

In 1993, Viktor Mezhak and Vladimir Klychnikov, two RMC members who were close to Valery Averkin and had not joined the Republican Party of Crimea, established the People’s Party of Crimea.

In early 1994, on the eve of the presidential elections, the preparation to which started in the end of 1993, and the elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea, we managed to reunite the two parts of the once-divided Republican Movement of Crimea. Mr Averkin was not among the members of this Movement but his associates Mr Mezak and Mr Klychnikov agreed on the need to form a single electoral bloc. In the end of 1993, the Russian Bloc was established. It was the electoral bloc of the Republican Party of Crimea and the People’s Party

of Crimea. In fact, the Russian Bloc was joined by everyone who had founded the Republican Movement of Crimea, except for Mr Averkin.

The Crimeans supported this union of the pro-Russian forces. In the first half of 1994, the Russian Bloc achieved impressive results, having won the presidential elections and the elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea. Mr Meshkov was elected President of the Republic of Crimea, and I took over as the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea.

Why did everything collapse so quickly in spite of such outstanding results and public support?

There were and are now various explanations. Yuri Meshkov, for instance, blames me for everything. It is easier to blame someone else than to acknowledge your own mistakes. I think the misfortunes that the Russia Bloc faced in 1994 had their objective and subjective causes.

The subjective causes are interpersonal conflicts. In the first half of 1994, these conflicts arose between the newly elected President and the RPC leaders. Many RPC representatives said back then that their relations with the President of Crimea Yuri Meshkov appeared to have encountered a kind of barrier. It turned out that the President's team included very few representatives of the Republican Party of Crimea. He kept appointing people we knew little about. According to the Constitution of Crimea adopted on May 6, 1992, the President had a wide range of powers. I think that Mr Meshkov experienced what can be called "dizziness from power".

Overall, the leaders of the Russian Bloc achieved success and showed excellent political results, but they made certain mistakes as well. More often than not, a revolution bestows success on people who might not be entirely ready for it. The revolution in Crimea (the Russian Bloc's victory was a revolutionary event for the Crimeans) was not organized by one united and solid team. Thanks to a good idea, people who were devoted to it came to power. But there were very few skilled professionals to handle this power in the right manner and to keep the promises given to the Crimeans. It should be noted that the Republic of Crimea was not an independent state but a part of Ukraine, which tried to weaken us in every possible way, so to say, to multiply our initiatives by zero.

The Russian Bloc that came to power due to the ample public support faced severe political reality right from the get-go. We were dreamers, which is not good in politics. Sometimes, when we fought for the truth, we threw out the baby along with the water. Today, when I have become experienced enough, I clearly understand that in politics, one should be able to step back and to find allies rather than to spawn enemies.

I would also like to point out that the conflicts among the branches of power in Crimea and the conflict between the President and the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea resulted from lack of political experience among the representatives of the Russian Bloc and from our mistakes.

Failures of the pro-Russian forces in Crimea in 1995 were caused by external factors as well which we could not control. First of all, the conflict was fuelled from Kiev by the team of Ukraine's President Leonid Kuchma who relied on a well-known principle: "divide and rule."

Our opponent was a mature Ukrainian state that had developed all the power attributes: government machine, Security Service, police forces. In March-April 1994, the Ukrainian authorities re-organized the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Crimea and moved them under Kiev's control. Later on, the two ministries served as the basis for establishing the Chief Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine in Crimea. They also created the Chief Department of the Security Service in Crimea. Heads of the Chief Departments used to be appointed by Kiev. And the work of these structures was naturally aimed at suppressing "separatist" moods in Crimea. At the same time, Kiev leaders were supported by heads of administrations in nearly all the cities and districts of Crimea.

Secondly, it was Russia that could actually protect and support us. But back then, Russia did not give us any substantial support. Some advisers of Russia's President Boris Yeltsin (for example, the notorious Emil Pain) gave him advice on how to fight against us, the Crimean separatists. I believe that both the President of Russia and his team thought that the Union collapse was a temporary phenomenon. Their logic was as follows: the Soviet Union collapsed, we established the CIS, and we will find a new union association on new terms, without the Communist Party and without M. Gorbachev.

Besides, in the middle of the 1990s, Russia was moving towards building capitalism with giant strides. Back then, many people were more concerned about dividing the property or how to earn their living. In other words, people had other things to worry about.

Let me sum up: numerous random people, lack of experience, significant pressure from the Ukraine, and no support from Russia resulted in the Russian Bloc's defeat.

At that time, we had no other chances to win. In any case, we were doomed to failure. But this failure could have happened in a more decent manner. Unfortunately, there were many mistakes on the President and the Supreme Council's sides that did not improve the overall situation.

However, if we look back at that time from today's perspective: could that have been prevented?

No way, we would still have lost it. But if we with our present-day experience had returned to that day, many mistakes would have been avoided. I learnt a lot during those passed days of political life. Taking into consideration the acquired experience, I would have chosen a more flexible and more accommodating line with regard to the President and the Government of the Republic of

Crimea, although, I still believe that they made a lot of mistakes. But I would have perceived these mistakes in a more reserved manner. But at that time, I thought that it was important to act because the fundamentals of the parliamentarianism were being violated in Crimea. The powers of the Supreme Council of Crimea were ignored, and so were the fundamental principles of the Crimean Republic. The President of the Republic could not dissolve the Parliament, in circumvention of the Constitution and without regard to the opinion of the Russian Bloc. My decisions on the position of the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea and the actions of the Russian Bloc deputies in the Supreme Council of Crimea were aimed at preserving the rule of law. But in fact, our actions, apparently right in terms of their nature and moral grounds, only aggravated the conflict. Figuratively speaking, both sides – the President and the Supreme Council of Crimea – were trying to extinguish the fire with kerosene. Let me repeat it, Kiev skilfully exploited this situation being guided by a well-known principle “divide and rule”.

In other words, back then, Kiev had already had all the relevant opportunities.

Yes, it had, I have already talked about that earlier. Kiev, which exploited the political crisis in Crimea, started breaking the Crimean autonomy over its knee. In March of 1995, the Supreme Council of Ukraine abrogated the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea, as well as over 40 other laws and regulatory acts of the Republic of Crimea, abolished the Presidency in Crimea, and banned the Crimean political parties. This was the hardest period in the history of the Russian and pro-Russian Movement in on the peninsula.

To fight against us, they used corruption, bribing the deputies and civil officers. The Ukrainian authorities and the Crimean appointees did everything possible with the support of criminal groups to establish the controlled majority in the Supreme Council of Crimea. Eventually, they managed to achieve their goal. In spring of 1995, Yuri Meshkov left Crimea. In July of the same year, after numerous attempts, I was dismissed from the position of the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea.

Some politicians of that time claim that back then Crimea’s reunification with Russia was only possible in theory. What do you think?

You should not forget about the objective geopolitical factors that defined the situation around Crimea. Let us assume that the Russian Bloc, the President, and the Supreme Council of Crimea had been solid and united. Would Crimea have become a part of Russia? This would have been possible if Russia had supported the Crimeans. Let me repeat it – this did not happen. At that time, Russian leaders did not possess enough political will to settle the Crimean issue. In all fairness, President Yeltsin and his entourage had no wish to do so either.

Let me remind you that the Russian Block ran for the elections with the idea to hold a referendum on the status of Crimea, which seemed to be impossible

because the heads of the cities and districts of Crimea refused to participate in organizing the referendum. Even if we had held the referendum, its results would have had to be implemented anyway. We also could not do that without Russia's support.

In April of 1995, being the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea and addressing Russia's State Duma with my report on the situation in Crimea, I informed the Russian MPs about the violation of the Crimeans' rights and about the restriction of the powers of the Republic of Crimea imposed by Kiev. I was expecting some political support. I did receive support, but only a moral one.

The situation could theoretically have followed a different scenario, similar to that of Transnistria, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia. We would have gone through a war and a severe crisis in international relations. Crimea is very unfavourable in this regard. It is highly likely that there would have been a serious confrontation between Ukraine and Russia. And peaceful, law-based tools for Crimea's reunification with Russia would not have worked here.

I want to emphasize that we learnt a lot from the political crisis of the mid-1990s. If during the 2014 "Crimean Spring" Crimea had not had the experience it gained in the first half of the 1990s, it would probably have not been able to reunite with Russia so easily.

How did your associates and you go through this period of apathy? Many got disappointed and left the Russian Community of Crimea, which had already been established at that time.

Any crisis is a kind of a litmus test. Such situations clearly show the true nature of people who used to go hand in hand with you. Many people joined the Russian Bloc during its rise, but how many of them were left in the end? After the crisis, we established the Republican Party of Crimea (RMC Party) in Crimea's Supreme Council with as few as 10 people. That is, the Russian Bloc numbered over fifty people, while there were only ten members left in the Republican Party. The RPC Party/RMC was desperately trying to keep the Party afloat. By that time, the Crimean political parties had already been banned by Ukraine. Only factions with the name of the respective parties were allowed to be preserved, which we did not. There were more than fifteen RPC/RMC activists in the Russian Community of Crimea.

In 1995, when the Republican Party of Crimea was dissolved, the Community became the basis for the Russian Movement in Crimea. It inherited RPC/RMC traditions and brought together true enthusiasts.

I clearly recall the accusations and insults that we faced after having lost the 1998 elections. Back then, only one deputy from the Russian Community of Crimea, Oleg Rodivilov, managed to enter the Supreme Council of the Republic. However, from 1998 to 2002 the Russian Community of Crimea showed a stable growth.

Why?

Being in the opposition, the Russian Community of Crimea did not become weaker; on the contrary, it became stronger. When we lost power and found ourselves with nothing, a lot of random people left the Community. This allowed forming a good team and creating a friendlier and more comfortable atmosphere in the Community. These were the people who were really devoted to the Russian idea. The Community's veterans, including Vladimir Terekhov, Anatoly Zhilin, Aleksandr Shevtsov, Stanislav Matveev, Oleg Kucherenko, Natalia Krasnovskaya, Mariya Poddubnaya, Vladimir Pinchuk, etc., now served the Russian idea in a new context, having actually neither power nor anything else.

They managed to keep the old staff and to attract new people. In 1998, Natalia Lantukh and Larisa Chulkova joined the Community. In the early 2000s, Andrey Kozenko, Vladimir Bobkov, Viktor Afanasiev, Aleksey Kipa, and other young people became its members. They ensured smooth work of the Russian Youth Centre of Crimea – a youth wing of the Community. Many other activists pioneered the Community. Some of them left the organization; some of them died (Lev Abramenko, Boris Bakulin, Vladlen Korolev, etc.).

Valery Ilichev, Nina Tsykunova, Galina Kobernik, Lyudmila Korshunova, and many others intensified their activities in Crimea's regions.

The Russian Community of Crimea strengthened in terms of its ideology and organization. The Community made it a rule to celebrate the holidays and memorable dates related to the history of Russia and started holding human rights-related events and rallies. The Community was engaged in making decisions aimed at protecting the rights of the Russians and the people who were Russian in terms of their culture. In retrospect, let me remind you that back in 1997, the deputies – members of the Community – initiated the Resolution of the Supreme Council of Crimea on conducting obligatory surveys for selecting the teaching in Crimean schools. This regulatory act helped preserve the Russian-language education in Crimea. We adhered to it and were enthusiastically fighting for its implementation. This fight became particularly fierce after the so-called Orange Revolution took place in Ukraine.

The Community managed to establish partner relations with the authorities of the Russian Federation and the Moscow Government. At the end of the 1990s, the Consulate General of Russia was opened in Simferopol, and since then, the Russian Community of Crimea maintained friendly partner relations with all Consuls General of Russia in Crimea – Aleksey Sviridov, Aleksandr Nikolaev, Igor Astakhov, Vladimir Andreev, and Viacheslav Svetlichny.

When in 1999 Vladimir Putin was elected President of Russia, we were inspired by Russia's success and felt a growing pride in our Motherland.

At the end of the 1990s and in the first half of the 2000s, Moscow-Crimea Fund headed by Oleg Kotolupov helped the Community a lot.

I should note that there was another pro-Russian force in Crimea that was really efficient at the time. I am talking about the Russian Movement of Crimea. It was established in the early 2000s. The Movement was headed by Aleksandr Chernomorov, with Oleg Sliusarenko being his deputy.

In 2003, we managed to unite our efforts. Yet, it was not just about uniting: the Russian Movement of Crimea merged with the Russian Community of Crimea.

How was this merge organized? Who offered taking this step?

In the course of our communication, Aleksandr Chernomorov used to claim that the Russian Movement of Crimea was a strong and powerful organization, and we used to parry that it was the Russian Community of Crimea. In the end, we decided to hold a joint meeting by inviting the key members of both organizations. And then it became clear that the Russian Community of Crimea was more organized and numerous.

The 2002 elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea were very challenging. The candidates' financial opportunities came into play. It was not easy for dedicated candidates but we managed to run the election with the support of the Moscow-Crimea Fund. Three members of the Russian Community of Crimea (Oleg Rodivilov, Galina Grzhibovskaya, and I) were elected deputies of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Aleksandr Chernomorov was elected deputy from the Russian Movement of Crimea. He was aware of the need to merge and was supported by the members of the Council of the Russian Movement of Crimea. Eventually, in 2003, the Russian Movement of Crimea merged with the Russian Community of Crimea on the basis of individual membership. The leaders and activists of the Movement applied for the membership and joined the Community. Aleksandr Chernomorov became first deputy chairman of the Russian Community of Crimea. Later on, Oleg Sliusarenko became the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Russian Community of Crimea. Having merged with the Russian Movement of Crimea, we had four votes in the Supreme Council of Crimea.

At the time, the Community started cooperating with the Russian and pro-Russian organizations which were functioning on the territory of Ukraine. In the early 2000s, the Russian Community of Ukraine and the Russian Movement of Ukraine were established, and a bit later Aleksandr Svistunov, Head of the Russian Movement of Ukraine, registered the Russian Bloc Party. I was one of the founders of the Russian Bloc and worked as deputy chairman of this party in 2003-2005. Besides, I was also deputy chairman of the Russian Community of Ukraine and a member of the Presidium of the Russian Movement of Ukraine until 2010.

In Russia, the Community continued developing its cooperation with the Moscow Government. The Moscow-Crimea Fund supported us. The Russian Community of Crimea had friendly relations with the Institute of CIS States and its head Konstantin Zatulin. I have been acquainted with Mr Zatulin since 1994.

Over these years, we have had several disputes but, being committed to the same idea, we have always managed to put our communication back on track. It was the Ukrainian nationalists who could not find any common grounds with the Community and had irreconcilable relations with it. Over 23 years, they had not managed to hold a single rally or march in Crimea in the memory of Bandera, Shukhevich, and other similar leaders. All these plans were disrupted by the representatives of the Russian Community of Crimea and other pro-Russian organizations.

The Russian Community of Crimea have always had complicated relations with the so-called Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People who tried to introduce the ideology of Crimean Tatar national uniqueness in Crimea and to prove that they were the indigenous people in Crimea and, therefore, were entitled to have special rights.

How did the members of the Russian Community of Crimea respond to the events of the so-called 2004-2005 Orange Revolution in Ukraine?

Their reaction was negative. Was there any other way they could respond to it? The Russian and culturally Russian citizens of Ukraine were challenged. The 2004 Presidential Election fundamentally changed the political situation in Ukraine and in the society in general. The South-East of Ukraine, together with Crimea, declared its Russianness.

At first, the 2004 presidential campaign resembled another stage of the fight for power in Ukraine. That is why when we started the presidential campaign, we did not support anyone: neither Viktor Yushchenko or Viktor Yanukovich, nor other candidates. They all looked the same to us. No candidate was seen to be pro-Russian because neither main candidate actually planned to build their politics together with Russia.

That is why before the first round of the presidential election, the Russian Community of Crimea declared that it did not support any presidential candidate of Ukraine. However, after the first round, Mr Yanukovich changed his programme and made several important statements – about the Russian language as a second official language and about the all-embracing cooperation with Russia. And Russia supported Viktor Yanukovich.

Eventually, prior to the second round, we announced our support for Mr Yanukovich. At that time, his programme largely matched the programme of the Russian Community of Crimea.

The second round was followed by a severe political crisis in Ukraine. It was for the first time when the phenomenon of Maidan policy came on stage. Mass campaigns and support from Kiev and Western Ukraine helped the Ukrainian nationalists blackmail the whole country. Under pressure of Maidan, Mr Yanukovich showed his weakness that later on turned out to be a typical feature of his personality. Yanukovich agreed to hold the third voting round.

At the most critical moment, the Party of Regions, which was Yanukovich's party, began to dissolve, including in Crimea. They fled like rats from a sinking

ship, which is the best metaphor here. Back then, the Party of Regions clearly demonstrated to be a political force that lacks ideology and, most importantly, is not pro-Russian. They believed they could use the pro-Russian slogans to come to power and earn money, doing nothing else. That is why they did not fight for their beliefs. But we were faithful to our ideology. When the Crimean members of the Party of Regions fled, the representatives of the Russian Community of Crimea and other Russian organizations remained the only ones who supported Viktor Yanukovich. Although, objectively, other Russian organizations had no significant impact on the situation. The Community could conduct large-scale campaigns in an organized manner. We held mass rallies to which thousands of people came, and stood at the Lenin square in Simferopol after both the second and the third voting rounds.

And our actions drew attention: both in Russia and of Mr Yanukovich.

“For Yanukovich!” political bloc was the next step. Why was this alliance essentially possible and why was the decision taken to go for an alliance with the Party of Regions?

In April of 2005, with assistance from Konstantin Zatulin I was acquainted with Viktor Yanukovich. He acknowledged our work. Mr Yanukovich believed that, unlike his Crimean associates, the Russian Community of Crimea was the real political force.

Yanukovich suggested that I joined the Party of Regions and, what is more, became the head of the Party’s office in Crimea. The choice was very difficult for me. Being a member of the Russian Bloc party, I had close contacts with Aleksandr Svistunov – the Party’s Chairman – and was among its leaders; nearly all our activists were members of this Party. That is why I proposed to Mr Yanukovich that an electoral bloc “For Yanukovich!” should be established in Crimea. Vasily Kiselev who continued being the head of the Crimean office of the Party of Regions was our ally in establishing this Bloc. He was among the few who kept making turnarounds but did not leave the Party.

V. Kiselev and I managed to persuade Mr Yanukovich to set up the

“For Yanukovich!” bloc. Crimea became the only Ukraine’s region where an alliance was established between the Party of Regions and another party. I am talking about the Russian Bloc. We agreed that one third of the candidates’ lists for the elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea and the local councils would include the representatives of the Russian Community of Crimea, while two thirds would be represented by the members of the Party of Regions. This enabled us to bring 14 representatives of the Community into the Supreme Council of Crimea (the total number of deputies in the Crimean Parliament is 100).

In early 2006, during the electoral campaign in the Crimean Parliament, there appeared, out of the blue, Anatoly Gritsenko and his support group represented by Kiev associates of Mr Yanukovich. The situation aggravated dramatically. That

is why, for the sake of keeping the list unchanged and preserving the team of the Russian Community of Crimea, we decided to give Mr Gritsenko the first place in the list and, therefore, appoint him the Chairman. I was the second on the list, and later on, I was elected the first deputy chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea. As it turned out later, this was the right decision.

For Mr Yanukovych, the 2006 Parliamentary elections in Ukraine started in Crimea. The Russian Community of Crimea invited him to Simferopol to celebrate the Russia Day. That was on June 12, 2005. Actually, on that day the Party of Regions and the “For Yanukovych!” bloc launched their campaign for the elections to the Supreme Council of Ukraine and, therefore, for the Supreme Council of Crimea and the local councils.

Can we say that this event was a landmark for Mr Yanukovych, and it was then that he believed in himself?

Yes, it can be said so. I recall Mr Yanukovych’s sentiments. This was one of the first events when he saw the massive support towards him personally and the Party of Regions overall. When more than ten thousand people gathered on the square, it really impressed Mr Yanukovych. He pointed out the way people greeted him and their incessant chanting “Yanukovych, Yanukovych!”. After the rally, we had an informal talk, at which we were also joined by Konstantin Zatulin. His suit had been ripped during the rally, and Mr Yanukovych gave him his suit.

The Crimeans sincerely supported Mr Yanukovych. He felt it. The representatives of the Party of Regions, who had been “on a stakeout” up until then, became aware that the Party had good chances to win at the election and began their fight against us. The end of January of 2006 was a very crucial period when the “For Yanukovych!” bloc seemed doomed to failure. But we managed to save it.

If we sum up the period of our union with the Party of Regions, how would you describe this period? Was it constructive, non-constructive or something else?

This period was challenging. On the one hand, we understood that the Party of Regions was burdened by the pro-Russian slogans. And even Mr Yanukovych in his pre-election non-public talks did not reveal any pro-Russian feelings or views. The same could be said about those who were proposed in Crimea as the heads, for example, Mr Gritsenko’s ideas were even closer to Mr Yushchenko than to Mr Yanukovych. Later on, his relations with Mr Yushchenko, too, were friendlier.

On the other hand, we needed support from the Party of Regions with regard to the protection of the rights of Russian and culturally Russian Crimeans. We definitely had difficult times. But we achieved a lot.

What exactly did you manage to achieve?

Viktor Yushchenko’s presidency triggered Kiev’s pressure on the Russian language, Russian culture, and Russian historical and spiritual values. That is why, back then; the Russian Community of Crimea was mainly engaged in human

rights protection activities. The Community firmly counteracted the Ukrainization attempts in school and university education.

In 2005, during a short period when the Council of Ministers of Crimea was presided by “orange” chairmen, the members of the Russian Community of Crimea stood up to protect the students of the Gymnasium school n.43 in the Komsomolskoye village outside Simferopol and their right to be taught in the Russian language. When the school management faced the protests, they were constrained to arrange for classes with Russian as the teaching language.

In 2008, we called on the board of the Ministry of Education and Science of Crimea not to carry out the orders of the “orange” Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine, Ivan Vakarchuk, to start teaching university students in Ukrainian. The representatives of the Community initiated the adoption of the regulation of the Supreme Council of Crimea that contested the orders of the Minister of the Education and Science of Ukraine with regard to the Ukrainization of the peninsula’s schools and universities.

Teaching staff and students participated in the day-to-day initiatives aimed at protecting the Crimean universities from the Ukrainization – for example, in the Crimean Medical University it experienced a particularly strong pressure.

Anatoly Zhilin, Oleg Rodivilov, Larisa Chulkova, Aleksandr Shevtsov, and Oleg Sliusarenko showed enthusiasm towards the protection of the Russian language and Russian culture in Crimea. Andrey Kozenko was acquiring political experience (at the time, he was the youngest deputy in the history of the Crimean Parliament).

Deputies of the Supreme Council of Crimea – members of the Russian Community of Crimea – initiated and approved the plan of annual events dedicated to free development and use of the Russian language. The broadcasting of the “Russian World” TV programme was arranged by the “Crimea” State TV and Radio Broadcasting Company, and the funds allocated for the support of several Russian-speaking print media were increased.

In 2007, we managed to establish and hold a very important event – the “Great Russian Word” International Festival of Russian Culture in Crimea. The Festival became an important platform for the protection of the Russian language and Russian culture in Crimea and other regions in Ukraine. Initially, the “Great Russian Word” festival was perceived with certain scepticism by, for example, Anatoly Gritsenko, but later on, in 2009, he was the one who headed the Organizing Committee of the Festival.

In 2008, the members of the Community initiated the approval of the statement to the Supreme Council of Ukraine concerning the disapproval of Georgia’s aggressive actions towards South Ossetia and the statement of the Supreme Council of Crimea concerning the acknowledgement of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states.

We cultivated closer ties with Russia where an active consolidation of the Russian compatriots was taking place. After the third World Congress of the Russian Compatriots, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia established the Compatriots Department. First, the Department formed the Coordination Council and then the World Coordination Council of the Organizations of the Russian Compatriots. In 2007, I, being the Chairman of the Russian Community of Crimea, was appointed member of the World Coordination Council. Before that, I had entered the Board of the International Council of the Russian Compatriots that had been initiated by the Moscow Government.

The attention paid by the Russian leaders to Crimea can be proved by the fact that, for example, being a member of the World Coordination Committee of the Organizations of the Russian Compatriots, I was invited to the receptions held by the President of Russia on the occasion of the National Unity Day seven times. These receptions traditionally take place in St George's Hall in the Kremlin.

The organizations of the Russian compatriots were consolidating in Ukraine as well. In 2008, the All-Ukrainian Coordination Council of the Russian Compatriots was established, and Vadim Kolesnichenko – a people's deputy of Ukraine, was appointed its head. The Russian Community of Crimea entered the Coordination Council and nominated several of its representatives to be members of the Council. I was elected Deputy Chairman of the All-Ukrainian Coordination Council of the Russian Compatriots.

The Community organized a lot of events aimed at consolidating the compatriots in Crimea. Since early 2007, we regularly invited the heads of the organizations of the Russian compatriots of Ukraine to stay in the "Rossiya" sanatorium in the city of Yalta.

My position as the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea provided me with great opportunities for expanding cooperation with various Ukraine's regions, including the South-East. Through the Party of Regions, I started establishing ties with its leaders in Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkov, Zaporozhye, and other cities. Starting from 2008, the "Great Russian Word" International Festival annually welcomes the chairpersons of the majority of the regional Councils from South-East Ukraine.

There appeared an opportunity to improve the position of the Russian Community of Crimea at the international level. In December 2008, I took part in the "European Union and Russia: New Challenges" International Forum held in Brussels. In my speech, I said the following: "Here is a question – if a state commits violence against a part of its territory, if a state undermines the dignity and ignores globally recognized human rights and the citizens' interests, and follows the policy of ethnocide over its territory, can we say that separatism is a bad thing? Separatism is a defence reaction, a response to the centre's violence against the region. After all, why is separatism of former republics of the Soviet Union (which committed no violence against its republics) a good thing, while

separatism of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia that unleashed several wars against autonomies is a bad thing? Why does Kosovo have its right for independence, while Crimea whose population is by three quarters Russian in terms of its nationality, native language, and culture, does not have such a right?”. In other words, one cannot speak about territorial integrity only and forget about the right to self-determination.

Later, in 2010, I participated in the presentation of the International Council of the Russian Compatriots in the UN Headquarters. In my presentation, I noted that in Ukraine for over two centuries one half of the country’s citizens – the Ukrainian-speaking ones – had been perpetrating violence against the other half of the citizens – the Russian-speaking ones. This led to a split and a permanent conflict in the Ukrainian society. I expressed hope that the international society would finally pay attention to the position of the Russians and the Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine.

Counteractions against the NATO expansion over the territory of Crimea were an important part of the Russian Community of Crimea’s activities. It was back in late 1990s and early 2000s that the Anti-NATO movement had started to gain strength on the peninsula. The situation escalated in 2006, when American soldiers came to Crimea under the pretence of military training exercises. Having failed to deploy in Alushta, where a protest was organized by the city residents, including, first and foremost, the members of the Russian Community of Crimea, the NATO members went to Feodosia. A NATO warship entered the port of Feodosia to deliver engineering and construction equipment and weapons. This fact aroused a large-scale protest among the Crimeans. No one believed the official explanation according to which the Americans came there for military training exercises. It was assumed that they intended to set up a military base. An indefinite picket against the attempts to establish a NATO military base in Crimea was organized at the gates of the Feodosia trade port. The representatives of the Russian Community of Crimea took an active part in anti-NATO events held in Feodosia. Eventually, the American marines left Feodosia in disgrace.

Since 2007, the members of the Russian Community of Crimea used to hold campaigns against the annual Sea Breeze navy training exercises near the Novoozerno settlement on the Donuzlav Lake in Crimea. The US Ministry of Defence was one of the organizers of these exercises. Their programme included the landings on the shores of the Donuzlav Lake with the participation of military units of NATO member states. In July of 2008, during a naval phase of the Sea Breeze exercises on the Donuzlav Lake, participants of anti-NATO protest campaign who tried to prevent a training landing on the Crimean coast clashed with the police officers. Eventually, since 2009, the Ukrainian authorities have refused to conduct the Sea Breeze exercises on the Donuzlav Lake and changed their location in favour of the Odessa region.

Since that time, the Russian Community of Crimea holds an annual youth patriotic anti-NATO tent camp “Donuzlav” near the Novoozerno village. Unfortunately, former members of the Community who have already left the organization try to present these campaigns as their own idea, but this is not true. The camp was initiated by the Russian Community of Crimea. All the holidays and memorable dates established by the Community and the decisions made by the Supreme Council of Crimea were initiated by particular individuals though the Russian Community of Crimea overall took all the credit for their approval and implementation.

For example, the Memorial Day of Soldiers killed during the Crimean War of 1853-1856 was initiated by Natalia Krasnovskaya and her assistants, while the respective resolution of the Supreme Council of Crimea used to be approved of and implemented by the Russian Community of Crimea annually since 1996.

Here is another example that was crucial for Crimea – a resolution on establishing a Memorial on the place of a Fascist concentration camp, which existed during the Great Patriotic War on the territory of the Krasny state farm near Simferopol. This idea appeared in 2009-2010. During one of the volunteer weekend cleanings on the place of the former concentration camp, whose territory had been illegally occupied by the Mejlis representatives, Oleg Rodivilov said that it was necessary to erect a memorial on this territory. Igor Evtyushkin prepared the first draft resolution. The implementation of this initiative became a task for all the Russian Community of Crimea. Later on, in 2011, the Russian Unity group in the Supreme Council of Crimea improved the resolution of the Crimean Parliament on establishing a memorial on the territory of the former Fascist concentration camp located on the Krasny state farm. Simultaneously, a resolution on creating a memorial in Laki – a Greek village burnt by the fascists in 1942 – was initiated. In May of 2011, both resolutions were approved by the Crimean Parliament. However, the resolution on the Krasny state farm was not implemented until 2015, and it happened thanks to Vladimir Konstantinov’s active participation.

In 2006-2010, numerous other initiatives were proposed, but it was difficult to submit them for approval in the Supreme Council of Crimea, especially when the “For Yanukovich!” bloc actually was dissolved in 2009.

Did the members of the Russian Community of Crimea and the Russian Unity movement, which was established in December of 2009, support Viktor Yanukovich in his run for the presidency during the 2010 presidential elections?

By that time, the members of the Russian Community of Crimea had seceded from the Party of Regions and the “For Yanukovich!” bloc. In 2009, I left the Party and stepped down from the office of the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Oleg Rodivilov and Anatoly Zhilin left the Presidium of the

Supreme Council and their positions. Other members of the Presidium of the Community left the Party of Regions as well.

However, having weighed all pros and cons of supporting Mr Yanukovych or Ms Timoshenko, we decided to support Mr Yanukovych. Besides, we had recommendations from the Russian politicians whom we deeply respected.

After his victory in the presidential election, Mr Yanukovych initiated a “correction of errors” in Crimea. Anatoly Gritsenko was dismissed from the office of the Speaker. Vladimir Konstantinov with whom I had long-term friendly relations was elected Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Vasily Dzharty became the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Crimea. However, the Supreme Council of Crimea was still experiencing some turmoil since there was Gritsenko’s group, Melnik’s group, and other groups of influence within it.

Due to the inter-party conflict and the fact that the Russian Community of Crimea supported Mr Yanukovych in his presidential election, we were asked to appoint new leaders of the Supreme Council of Crimea. As a result, I was again elected First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea, Andrey Kozenko – Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Crimea, and Larisa Chulkova – Chairwoman of the Republican Committee for Religious Affairs.

But you did not work together for long, did you?

We worked independently and did not grovel to anyone. In 2010, the Community participated in establishing the Russian Unity Political Party. Sergey Aksyonov – a young and promising politician – became the leader of the Russian Unity.

Despite the fact that in 2009, the Russian Community of Crimea and the Party of Regions parted ways, we still maintained collaborative relations with the members of the Party of Regions. In the mid-200s, Mr Konstantinov, being a pro-Russian politician, used to offer financial help to the Russian Community of Crimea. There were also efficient relations with Prime Minister Vasily Dzharty.

Mr Dzharty did not oppose the registration of the Russian Unity Party, which enabled the Party to run the elections for the local government, although he had the authority to prevent this after Mr Yanukovych was elected President.

Why did they let the Russian Unity participate in the elections? What is your opinion?

There was some logic there. If we had not taken part in the elections, our votes would have gone to other parties, which the Party of Regions did not consider its allies. The Russian Unity stood apart, but, as I have already said, we had good relations with the members of the Party of Regions. They needed the allies who represented the pro-Russian sector.

The Russian Unity was registered as a party only two weeks before the elections and did not make in time to establish its offices in all Crimean regions. In the 2010 electoral campaign, the party occupied its own niche. At that time, many Crimeans started getting disappointed in the Party of Regions.

Since we have already touched upon the Russian Unity, how and in what circumstances did you meet Sergey Aksyonov and why did you decide to become allies?

We first met his father, Valery Aksyonov, member the Russian compatriot movement. He was head of the Russian Community of the Moldovan city of Beltsy. I was acquainted with him at one of the events that the Russian compatriots held in Moscow. I found out that his relatives lived in Crimea. Later on, Valery Aksyonov moved to Crimea and joined the Russian Community of Crimea. One of his close relatives is Valery Ilyichev – the chairman of the Simferopol organization of the Russian Community of Crimea who is highly regarded in the community.

Valery Aksyonov actively joined the activities of the Russian Community of Crimea and used to help it solve many issues. For example, there was a need to print out the Charter of the Community – and after a while, Valery Aksyonov brought 1,000 copies. He did not say how he had managed to do this. Only afterwards, we learnt that his son Sergey had helped him. In 2009, I was acquainted with Sergey Aksyonov in person.

As I have already said, in 2009, a conflict between the Russian Community of Crimea and Anatoly Gritsenko emerged. Initially, it was triggered by the situation in the Simferopol City Council, where the city land was not allocated free of charge but sold far and wide. The greediness of Gritsenko's subordinates was so huge that they started selling places in the kindergartens. The representatives of the Russian Community of Crimea had many questions to the Party of Regions itself. The "Regions" did not fight for the state status of the Russian language, for the preservation of history, or for a union with Russia. When we left the "For Yanukovych!" bloc, we came to the conclusion that the Russian Community of Crimea shall establish an independent political force that was truly Russian and pro-Russian.

My acquaintance with Sergey Aksyonov revealed that we had common views. He believed that it was necessary to unite pro-Russian forces in Crimea and that Russian and pro-Russian organisations should defend not only the human but also the social and economic rights of Crimean residents. At that time, Sergey Aksyonov was de facto head of the Civil Activist Group of Crimea. This public organization was in the public eye and actively defended justice, purity of power, and fight against corruption. Mr Aksyonov was the kind of person who did not want to give bribes and believed that the public servants involved in corruption had no right to hold the power. Mr Aksyonov used to openly voice his opinion.

The Civil Activist Group of Crimea regularly held campaigns against the actions of the Simferopol City Council and against the corruption among certain Crimean members of the Party of Regions, which was now increasingly associated with Anatoly Gritsenko.

Thus, on the one hand, there was the Russian Community of Crimea, which supported Russia and the Russian language and had political experience,

including, first and foremost, the experience in protecting the humanitarian rights of the Russian and culturally Russian Crimeans. On the other hand, there was the Civil Activist Group of Crimea, which advocated economic recovery of Crimea, social justice, and the fight against corruption.

Sergey Aksyonov and I became friends. My initial impression of Mr Aksenov who seemed to be a smart, energetic, and honest man turned out to be right. At first, we had some disagreements about the strategy of our mutual work but then we agreed about the main thing – establishing the Russian Unity as a pro-Russian independent political force that would not depend on the Party of Regions. At the first stage, we planned to establish an electoral bloc which would include the Russian Bloc (back then, political blocs were allowed). Aleksandr Svistunov, Chairman the Russian Bloc, supported our actions aimed at breaking the relations with the Party of Regions and with Mr Gritsenko. We believed that he would be with us. We had to find another party to set up an electoral bloc with a Russian and pro-Russian focus and started negotiating with the Slavic Party of Ukraine.

In the summer of 2010, 3-4 months prior to the elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea and local councils, electoral blocs were banned. According to the new law, only parties could participate in the elections. We failed to attract the Russian Bloc since Aleksandr Svistunov had proposed unacceptable financial terms. We decided to create a new party. Mr Aksyonov negotiated with a Ukrainian Party, which was then called Avangard, and they handed over all their founding documents. The Avangard Party was renamed into the Russian Unity Party.

In December of 2009, before the establishment of the Russian Unity party, the Russian Unity all-Crimean movement was created, which started out as an attempt to unite even small and scandalous Russian and pro-Russian organisations in Crimea. A coordinating council of public organisations was set up with the name “For Russian Unity”. It soon turned out that it was impossible to bring everyone together. For the Russian Community of Crimea, this was a well-known situation since it had previously tried to conduct similar uniting meetings. At first, the leaders of the often-mythical organisations manifested good intentions but, after several meetings, controversies inevitably arose, resulting in making claims against the Russian Community of Crimea. We decided that we would continue our work on our own and invite those who were ready to work fruitfully for a union. At the time, Sergey Shuvaynikov joined the Russian Unity.

The unification on the basis of the Russian Unity party with the involvement of Sergey Shuvaynikov, who was better known than all other leaders of the Russian organisations, allowed forming a single pro-Russian political environment in Crimea.

In the course of the 2010 local elections in Crimea, the Russian Unity Party managed to pass the 3 percent threshold in the elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea and the local councils in the majority of the cities and districts of the

autonomy. Three members of the Russian Unity Party – Sergey Aksyonov, Sergey Shuvaynikov, and myself – became deputies of the Crimean Parliament.

How did the name “Russian Unity” appear?

A survey was conducted among Crimea’s residents, with several names being proposed. About 70% of the respondents chose the Russian Unity. Besides, our coordination council of the pro-Russian organizations was called “For the Russian Unity”. So, the name appeared quite naturally, though some members of the coordination council claim to take all the credit. Other names that were suggested included “The Russian Forces of Crimea”, “The Russian World”, etc.

Political strategists designed a well-known logo of the Russian Unity with two eagles on it. We liked the logo. But many paid attention to the fact that the eagles appeared to look rather angry. We were often asked: “Why does the Russian Unity’s logo look so aggressive – evil eagles?”. We used to parry: “Have you ever seen kind eagles?”.

Let us return to the political situation in Crimea after the 2010 elections. Is it possible to say that by that time your triumvirate had been formed: cooperation with Sergey Aksyonov within the party and with Vladimir Konstantinov within the Parliament?

Both the Party’s and the Parliament’s opportunities helped the Russian Community of Crimea maintain its political influence. The cooperation with Sergey Aksyonov and the establishment of the Russian Unity Party were fundamental. The Russian Community of Crimea and the Russian Unity complemented each other. Having joined their efforts with the Russian Unity, the Community preserved its representation in the power authorities, though not to the same extent as during the previous electoral campaign. In its turn, the Russian Unity relied on its staff and organizational capacity and on the influence of the Russian Community of Crimea as the leading Russian organization on the peninsula.

Friendly relations with Vladimir Konstantinov helped the Russian Community of Crimea fulfil its ideological tasks. The Russian Unity got only three deputy mandates in the Supreme Council of Crimea but we were offered to enter the Presidium of the Crimean Parliament. After the elections, Sergey Aksyonov and I were invited to meet Vladimir Konstantinov and Vasily Dzharty. We met in the building of the Council of Ministers of Crimea. They decided to form the leadership of the Supreme Council of Crimea not only from the activists of the Party of Regions but also from members of other parties. They asked us if we would like to join the Presidium of the Supreme Council. Aksyonov, being the party’s leader, refused to do so. I could have headed the Healthcare Committee because of my medical education. But Mr Konstantinov and Mr Dzharty persuaded me, saying the following: “You protect the Russian language and the Russian culture. It is important for Crimea. Choose this area.” We took 24 hours to think it over and then agreed. Thus, I was elected Chairman of the Culture Committee of the Supreme

Council of Crimea. Sergey Aksyonov established friendly relations with a number of leaders in the Council of Ministers of Crimea, which enabled us to work for the benefit of the Russians and the culturally Russian Crimeans. While working as a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Crimea, I became convinced that Mr Konstantinov was the man who scared our views entirely.

Mr Konstantinov's pro-Russian stance was fully manifested during the Euro-aidan coup in Ukraine and during the Crimean Spring.

In 2013, Euromaidan started in Kiev. When did you personally become aware that Crimea was way past Ukraine?

Such thoughts first came to me in late November of 2013. When the first clashes took place in Kiev, I realized that Ukraine was heading towards a serious conflict, a coup d'état. Being the Chairman of the Russian Community of Crimea, I addressed people on December 1 and expressed my approval of the police's initiatives to restore order in Kiev. It became clear that the coup in Ukraine was supported by the United States of America and the European Union. Members of the Supreme Council of Crimea, the Russian Community of Crimea, and Russian Unity have started presuming that Ukraine would become at least a federative state. Viktor Yanukovich was believed to initiate the federalization by becoming the leader of the respective movement in Ukraine's south-eastern regions. But very soon, it became clear that he would not be able to stay in power. The first warning sign came when Mr Yanukovich started "selling" his associates – A. Popov, Kiev Mayor and V. Sivkovich, Deputy Head of the Council for National Security and Defence of Ukraine. It was just a matter of time to remove Mr Yanukovich and his entourage from power. Neo-Banderites were striving for power in Ukraine, enjoying support of Ukraine's oligarchs. These forces were ready to implement an armed coup.

The Supreme Council of Crimea was closely monitoring the situation in Kiev. With the escalation of the conflict in Kiev, in particular, and in Ukraine, overall, Vladimir Konstantinov repeatedly said that the federalization of Ukraine would not save the situation and that Crimea had its own path. He definitely meant its path with Russia. We did not know what the opinion of Russia itself was, so, starting from December of 2013; we used every opportunity to go to Moscow and try to sense the mood of the Russian leadership. We met with the civil officers from the Presidential Administration, the Government, the State Duma, and other bodies. They used to talk either to all of us or to Mr Konstantinov only. There was no clarity on how Russia would behave if Crimea asked for protection. They were giving evasive answers to our questions on whether Russia would support us but at the same time, were trying to find out to what extent we were ready to take drastic action if needed. Today, it is clear that our trips to Moscow had a positive effect. The Russian leadership became confident that the Crimean Parliament could be relied upon.

Sergey Aksyonov, together with the Russian Unity and the Russian Community of Crimea, were doing a great job in consolidating the Crimeans and estab-

lishing the People's Militia (people's guards). This activity reached its peak on February 23, 2014, when an improvised review of people's guards was held in front of the Crimean Supreme Council building. On that day, Mr Aksyonov and Mr Konstantinov came to the parade and addressed the militia for the first time. Their speech appeared to be prophetic.

February 26, 2014, was the most difficult day when the clashes occurred under the building of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Many people understood that was not the end, that Mejlis and Ukrainian nationalists conducted a kind of a reconnaissance raid. The junta, which had seized power in Kiev, was preparing to send Maidan fighters to Crimea. They planned to deploy additional military units to the peninsula. But they underestimated us, and most importantly, they underestimated Russia, making the same mistake as Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili did when he carried out aggression against the South Ossetia.

Russia was aware of the prevailing pro-Russian sentiment in Crimea and knew it was possible to rely on the Crimean Supreme Council. In return, we believed that Russia would not leave Crimea and the Crimeans in danger. Let me emphasize that I could clearly understand Russia's actions in Crimea only when the flags of the Russian Federation were put up on the buildings of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Crimea.

How did you find out about it?

Late at night on February 27, I had a phone call from Aleksandr Melnyk, a Crimean deputy, who did not participate in a session that took place on February 26. He informed me that the building of the Supreme Council had been seized by strangers. I immediately phoned Sergey Aksyonov. Sometime later, he phoned back and told me about the Russian flags over the buildings of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Crimea. Early in the morning, a number of Crimean deputies gathered in the building of the Directorate-General of the Ukrainian Ministry of Internal Affairs in Crimea. Some of them believed that it was a provocative act. My opinion was that everything was fine and that it was our people who controlled the Parliament and the Government. This was confirmed within an hour or so.

What view did Anatoly Mogilev, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Crimea, hold at that time?

Until February 22, 2014, he did not recognise the Kiev coup. On February 22, representatives of the Crimean Supreme Council and local councils went to Kharkov where there was a congress of deputies from all levels of the Ukrainian government who opposed the coup d'état in Ukraine. Anatoly Mogilev participated in the congress. He flew to Kharkov with us. We returned in the evening and he stayed, and already on February 24, Mogilev made a statement, which we interpreted as an acknowledgement of those who had seized power in Kiev. The Crimean Council of Ministers supported Mogilev.

In his turn, Vladimir Konstantinov made a statement about an anti-constitutional coup in Kiev and got support from the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Once again, let me distinguish Vladimir Konstantinov who assumed a huge responsibility and was ready to lose everything. I recall the phrases he said in the morning of February 21 2014, when Maidan guerrillas shot and burnt the buses with the Crimeans, which were traveling from Kiev to Simferopol. The situation was terrible, and Mr Konstantinov was trying to handle it by phone. We were in Moscow, in the airport. He made phone calls to Mr Mogilev who seemed to be calming him down and talking him into something. Mr Konstantinov said: “I will be against everything, I will not obey anyone, and I will fight to the end.” At that time, he did not know himself where to go. Or, rather, he knew that they should go to Russia. But the situation was unclear – how, when, and at what stage Russia would support Crimea. Mr Mogilev came under Kiev’s command while Mr Konstantinov did not.

I remember how Mr Konstantinov tested the members of the Presidium and the deputies of the Crimean Parliament for tenacity. At that time, the Presidium had its sessions on a daily basis, sometimes even several times a day, trying to find the answer to the question “What is to be done?”. The Crimean government had already submitted to Kiev while the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Crimea was holding out, and so were the deputies. About February 25, 2014, Mr Konstantinov gathered the Presidium and the advisors and said:

“Having thought it through, I concluded that the game is over; there is no point to resist. We have to accept this power, obey it, and acknowledge it. There is no point to continue pretending to be revolutionaries.” And then he asked: “Who agrees with me?”. Nikolay Kolesnichenko who argued for the abolition of the 1954 Act which transferred Crimea from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR raised his hand and said: “I do.”. In his turn, Mr Konstantinov ironically said: “This was a tenacity test, we will not obey anyone, and we have our own path. The Head of the Government should be dismissed from his office because he had already obeyed the coup stagers.”. We started preparing for the Government dismissal on February 26. In those days, Mr Konstantinov firmly observed the pro-Russian line in the Supreme Council. Aksyonov worked with the Crimean people, setting up the People’s Militia, which was made up of serious, mature men and young people ready for decisive actions. The activists of the Russian Unity and the Russian Community of Crimea, Afghan war veterans, Cossacks, and common Crimeans ready to protect Crimea in the coming attack joined the People’s Militia.

We spent the whole day of February 26 trying to persuade the Deputies into coming to the Supreme Council of Crimea to hold a session. That day showed the true nature of everyone. We failed to reach the quorum for the session. Sergey Aksyonov was trying to pacify the crowd in the street. He appeared to be in the centre of the events, took the responsibility, and proved to be an excellent crisis manager. Later on, he showed himself to be very capable in calm situations as well.

Mr Aksyonov is an extraordinary person. The God bestowed on him the qualities of a leader. The People's Militia groups formed by the Russian Unity showed their aptitude in a dramatic situation on February 26. The Mejlis followers and Ukrainian nationalists met with a serious rebuff. Let me note that there were few members of the Party of Regions on the square in front of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Once inside the building, when the Mejlis followers started gathering, they asked me, "Where are your people?", and I answered by asking them back: "And where are yours?"

The next day became known for a historical session in the building of the Crimean Parliament occupied during the night on February 27. A new Government was set up.

How was Mr Mogilev dismissed from his office? He was dismissed within five minutes. How was Mr Aksyonov elected? There was opposition, a kind of confrontation. But many Deputies believed that Mr Aksyonov was the best candidate.

Who else had any chances to become the Head of the Council of Ministers, except for Mr Aksyonov?

In fact, no one. Some proposed Leonid Grach, whom we immediately rejected because of his overbearing and dubious pro-Soviet views. Let me note that after Crimea had reunited with Russia, Mr Grach criticized everything and everyone. He started speaking about Crimea's annexation by Russia and about the electoral fraud at the Crimean Referendum. Sergey Aksyonov's candidacy was supported by Vladimir Konstantinov and by the Deputies of the Supreme Council of Crimea. As a result, Sergey Aksyonov was elected Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Crimea.

So, there was no other alternative to Aksyonov besides Grach?

Rustam Temirgaliev, a deputy of the Supreme Council of Crimea, probably wished to become the Prime Minister. Aleksandr Melnyk expressed his peculiar opinion. He did not consider Mr Aksyonov to be an appropriate candidate. He tried to offer someone else but he did not truly aware of the intricacy of the ongoing events. Let me reiterate that Mr Aksyonov gave a good account of himself on February 26. At the same time, he behaved quite modestly on February 27 and in the course of discussing the election of the Crimean Council of Ministers even declared to be ready to withdraw his candidacy from the voting. We persuaded him not to do so.

Oleg Belaventsev played a great role in those events. I was acquainted with him on February 27, 2014. He actively contributed to all crucial decisions from February 27 to March 18, 2014. What was important about him was that he ensured our protection.

The President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, undoubtedly, made a decisive contribution to the Crimean Spring events. Mr Putin provided the

Crimeans with the support, which helped to take Crimea back to its Motherland – to Russia. I would like to thank him for that.

After Crimea’s reunification with Russia, has the Russian Community of Crimea fulfilled its mission.

The Russian Community of Crimea has fought for more than twenty years for the reunification of Crimea with Russia, and our dream has come true. In March 2014, the representatives of the Russian Community of Crimea actively participated in preparing the Referendum on Crimea’s status at which the Crimeans expressed their will to reunite with our Motherland.

The Community has its own mission in the Russian Crimea. We protect the interests of the largest ethnic community of the peninsula – the Russian community. At the same time, we respect the rights of other local ethnic communities. The Russian Community of Crimea deals with the issues of maintaining peace and international harmony in Crimea and preserving historical memory, carries out patriotic activities, and cooperates with the organizations of the Russian compatriots outside Russia. In February of 2015, the Community was registered as a Regional Public Organization “Russian Community of Crimea” under the Russian jurisdiction.

The members of the Russian Community of Crimea work in governmental agencies of different levels – in the Federation Council, the State Council, and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea, and in municipal bodies in the cities and districts of Crimea. Let me note that Sergey Aksyonov, Head of the Republic of Crimea, is a member of the Russian Community of Crimea. The Community cooperates with the United Russia party. Today, our common task is to integrate Crimea into Russia, to develop the peninsula’s economy, and to improve the Crimeans’ living standards. Crimea has to become a flourishing region. Crimea has reunited with Russia. And Russia has reunited with Crimea.

THE THORNY PATH OF CRIMEAN SELF-DETERMINATION

Anatoly A. Vlasov,

Doctor of Law, Professor, MGIMO University (Moscow)

Russia sees Crimea as its spiritual Motherland and the source of the Russian Orthodox Church since there, in Crimea, the Kiev Prince Vladimir⁴ was baptized somewhere around the city of Sevastopol and Chersoneses, and it is there that the Christianity started to spread all over the Ancient Rus.

Historically, it happened so that the Crimean Peninsula, Caucasus, and the Black Sea have always been and continue to be in one geopolitical group. Strange as it may seem, it must be acknowledged that the Crimean and Caucasian wars were conducted by the West according to a single design, as part of a common strategy to destroy and capture Russia. The main strategy of the West's policy has always been and, regrettably, continues to be the counteraction against the growth of Russia's strength in the world by breaking its territorial integrity, pressure, and open Russophobia, fighting against Orthodox Church, bringing animosity and discord between people, turning Russia into a Third World country, a raw-material appendage of the West. A rich history of international relations could be an illustration of that.

In terms of Crimea, the purpose of Western countries in the past and now is to prevent the strengthening of Russia's position in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean region. In its turn, Russia sees standing up for its position in the Black Sea as actually a question of life and death. This is proved by the history of the past 200 years.

For example, the heroic defence of Sevastopol during the 1853-1856 Crimean War ruined the plans of the European powers (a coalition consisting of the British, French, and Ottoman Empires, and the Sardinian Kingdom) to take Crimea and all its Black Sea coasts away from Russia.

Aleksandr M. Vasilevsky, Marshal of the Soviet Union and a prominent Soviet Commander, underlined the role of Crimea in the 1941-1945 Great Patriotic War and wrote about it in his book in a fair and precise manner: "Crimea's huge political and strategic value explains a furious fight for it during nearly all period of the Great Patriotic War. The enemy held Crimea in a strong grip until the very end. For Hitler's soldiers, entering into the possession of Crimea would have meant posing a constant threat to the entire Black Sea coast and pressurizing the politics of Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey. The Fascists used Crimea as the staging ground to invade the territory of the Northern Caucasus and to stabilize the southern wing of the front."⁵

4 Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavovich (Red Sun), the Pskov region native (Budnik village), Prince of Novgorod (970-978), Prince of Kiev (978-1015), baptizer of the Ancient Rus.

5 A. M. Vasilevsky. *The Cause of My Whole Life*. M., Politizdat. 1973.

Current events are also evidence of the West's wish not to abandon but rather to stick, unpunished, to its expansion strategy, including in Crimea.

For example, Vladimir Ogryzko, a former Head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, and Vladimir Khandogy, a former acting Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, confirmed that back in 2008 the USA planned to open its own diplomatic mission in Crimea (Simferopol and Sevastopol)⁶. The question is why? What was the purpose?

Also, in September of 2013, the USA posted information on the public procurement website that they announced a bid for a major overhaul of the School n.5 (Gymnasium at present) in 50 Simonok Str., next to Sevastopol Bay. The bid contained the respective charts, rules, and even what kind of sign would be put on the fence of this facility and where exactly. These plans meticulously describe the instructions, which should be followed during the School overhaul under all American rules. And here is one more question – what was the purpose? To subsequently deploy military marine forces in the School n.5?

But Uncle Sam's plans to construct a facility “under all American rules” were successfully frustrated by the Crimea's people in the course of the Crimean Referendum on 16 March 2014.

Thus, **in 2014, the US wanted to seize Crimea under Euromaidan cover**, but failed to do that. However, the US did not want to acknowledge and accept it. This gave rise to anger, aggression, and hysteria in the controlled mass media, waving a truncheon, introducing unilateral restrictions with no approval on the UN Security Council's side, etc.

It has to be recognized that the Americans got involved in this costly Ukrainian story, first of all, because of Crimea rather than because of Kiev's European future. They knew that this was “an unsinkable aircraft carrier” in the Black Sea. The one who owns Crimea, controls actually the situation over the whole Black Sea basin, and then comes a steady expansion to Caucasus, destruction, and, as a result, seizure of all Russia. This has been proven many times in the rich history of Crimea. Therefore, Russia could not stay aside and simply look at what was going on in Ukraine in 2013-2014.

The principle of people's self-determination is one of the principles of international law under Article 2 of the UN Charter with primacy over other International agreements. By the way, the same principle was referred to by the Supreme Council of Ukraine when they adopted the Act of Independence of Ukraine on 24 August 1991, being guided by, as it states, “the danger of death hanging over Ukraine **due to the coup** (highlighted by A.V.) in the USSR on 19 August 1991.”

Does it mean that back in 1991 Ukraine could exploit the coup as pretence for applying the principle of self-determination, while the Crimeans could not do

6 P. Grebennikova. Former Head of Ukraine shared the US plans to open a diplomatic mission in Crimea. The Evening Moscow, 29.11.2019.

the same in 2014 **because of the coup in Kiev**? Where is the logic? And again, what we have here is the double standards that the West loves so much.

By the way, this principle of self-determination was severely violated by Kiev towards the Crimeans back in 1991 when Kiev ignored the results of the January Referendum in Crimea, which revealed that 93% of the Crimeans voted for Crimea's independence as **a separate constituent entity** of the USSR and a participant of the Union Treaty. "Truth-seekers" modestly keep silence about this.

The actions of the Crimeans who conducted a very successful Crimean Referendum on 16 March 2014 fully complied with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which was adopted on 16.12.1966 by the resolution of the UN General Assembly and which ban tortures, abusive treatment that humiliates dignity (Article 7), national discrimination, animosity (Article 20) (here are the most popular slogans among the Ukrainian nationalists – "A Muscovite has to be guillotined, while a Russian has to be hung!", "Crimea must be occupied by the Ukrainians or by nobody!"). Annual torch-lit processions of the Ukrainian nationalists in Kiev and other cities of Ukraine are staged on 1 January to commemorate Stepan Bandera, a Nazi executor, and vividly evidence the righteousness of the Crimeans' actions.

Besides, on 23 February 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine hastily annulled the law "**On the Principles of the State Language Policy**" in Crimea, which actually meant a ban on using the Russian language, while in 2014 the population of the Crimean Peninsula was by more than 85 per cent composed of the Russian-speaking and culturally Russian citizens, although the Article 26 of the above-mentioned International Covenant proclaims the equality of all people in the eyes of the law, non-discrimination of any type, and protection against language, nationality, and political discrimination. Is not this a vivid example of a blatant Russophobia?

Under these circumstances, people of Crimea could be protected from Ukraine's abuse of power by following the principle of self-determination and reuniting with their historic Motherland which they had belonged to for more than 200 years (since 8 April 1783 when Empress Catherine II signed the Manifest "On Admitting the Crimean Peninsula, Taman Island, and All Kuban Side to the Russian Empire"). Events in Ukraine that followed proved the righteousness of the Crimeans' choice of self-determination (bloodshed events in Odessa, civil war in Donbas).

On 16 March 2014, this principle of self-determination was applied, which gave the Crimeans the opportunity to be independent and to reunite with their historic Motherland, Russia, **with no violation of the international law provisions**.

Lyle J. Goldstein, a Research Professor at the United States Naval War College, wrote in his article published by *The National Interest* that the politicians had to review their opinion about the Crimean issue and to make "a great

bargain” accepting that Crimea belonged to Russia since there is a historic link between Crimea and Russia, and that “the Russians paid it with their own blood” during the Crimean War and the Second World War.⁷

All disputes about the illegitimacy of the Referendum in Crimea and Sevastopol and about the violation of Ukraine’s Constitution are groundless because this Constitution was ignored and dumped when legally elected President Yanukovich was toppled in the course of an armed anti-Constitutional coup, and the imposters seized the power in the country.

That is why it would have been strange to take the Constitution out of the “dump” where **it remained during the Crimean Spring** and to order the Crimeans to strictly observe it...

To recap, it should be noted that any questions, including recognizing the Crimeans’ unconditional right to self-determination, should be solved on the basis of the language of law and the rules of the international law, should not ignore them, and follow hidden agenda.

⁷ N. Sidenkov. The US Declared a Need to Acknowledge a Russian Status of Crimea. *Izvestiya*, 27 November 2019.

SECESSION REFERENDUM IN CONSTITUTIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW (2014 CRIMEAN REFERENDUM IN TERMS OF LAW)

Vladimir A. Tomsinov,

Doctor of Law, Professor, Head of the Department of History of State and Law,
Law Faculty, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University (Moscow)

A referendum is one of the ways to express people's will and is, first of all, the institute of Constitutional Law. The Constitution of the Russian Federation defines a referendum and free elections as "the highest direct manifestation of people's power" (Article 3). The Constitution of Ukraine defines a referendum aimed at expressing people's will as one of the forms of direct democracy (Article 69). The acting Constitution of France refers to a referendum as a form of national sovereignty conducted by people (Article 3).

Law literature provides different opinions about this democratic procedure. Some law specialists are against its application for solving the constitutional issues and try to prove that these issues should be discussed in Parliament, which is more productive, while a referendum is a formal procedure that does not enhance participatory democracy but rather weakens it. However, the majority of the law specialists believe a referendum to be the right democratic procedure and reject any arguments against it. Dennis Mueller, a Professor of Vienna University, argues: "The belief that the citizens are too ignorant to directly vote for the questions but can elect the representatives who will make "the right" decisions for them – this is what I find very confusing. If you focus too much on electoral ignorance, then you can cast doubt on both this democratic institute and the institute of elected representatives and representative governance... All attacks on the direct democracy are ultimately the attacks on all forms of democracy."⁸

Vernon Bogdanor, a Professor at Oxford University, came to the same conclusion but in a more categorical form in his research about the role of referendums in the British politics: "Ultimately, the arguments against referendums are the arguments against democracy, while accepting referendums means a logical result of accepting the democratic forms of governance".⁹

The scientists who analyse the referendum practices in the modern era acknowledge that recently the value of this democratic institute for solving the constitutional problems has significantly increased¹⁰. It is particularly the case

8 Mueller D.C. *Constitutional Democracy*. Oxford, 2000. P. 189.

9 Bogdanor V. *The People and the Party System: The Referendum and Electoral Reform in British Politics*. London, 1981. P. 93.

10 "The past two decades an increasing number of referendums is being held in many parts of the world, their main purpose being to legitimize the constitutional changes," writes David Butler, a famous British social and political expert, who specializes in elections research (Butler D. Foreword // *Referendums Around the World. The Continued Growth of Direct Democracy* / Edited by Matt Qvortrup. London, 2014. P. IX).

for the countries where the Constitution failed to serve its purpose and where the state turned out to be extremely weak or collapsed. In this context, a referendum appeared to be heaven-sent which legitimizes the adequate and landmark solutions for people.

In his book “The Strategic Use of Referendums”, Mark Walker, an American political expert who used to study the referendum practices in the last years of the USSR and the former Soviet Republics that became independent states after the USSR’s collapse, wrote: “Old sources of power and legitimacy were discredited with the collapse of the Communist Party and Communist ideology. That is why politicians believed it was important to legitimize their political projects with the mechanisms, which legitimize free expressions of public will. The elective institutes and referendums, in particular, with their ambitions to be a procedure that determines people’s will become the voice of the people... In 1990-1997, a referendum mechanism was proposed and/or applied 152 times over the territory of the Soviet and post-Soviet states. Thus, referendums play a pivotal role in transitional political processes since they can legitimize and empower by delegating a mandate from people”¹¹.

The USSR Law No. 1409-I “On the procedure of solving the issues related to the secession of a union republic from the USSR” adopted on 3 April 1990 made a provision for applying a referendum for law-based secession of a Union Republic from the USSR and the Autonomous Republic from the Union Republic. Article 2 of this Law states: “The secession of a Union Republic from the USSR is agreed under a free expression of will by the people of the Union Republic during a referendum (people’s voting). A decision to hold a referendum is taken by the Supreme Council of the Union Republic by its own initiative or on demand signed by one-tenth of the USSR citizens continuously residing on the territory of the Republic and having the right of the vote under the USSR legislation”.¹²

Article 3 of the USSR Law “On the procedure of solving the issues related to the secession of a union republic from the USSR” regulated a possibility to quit the Autonomous Republic and Autonomous establishments from the Union Republic through a referendum. The Article states: “A referendum is held separately for each autonomy in the Union Republic with the Autonomous Republics, Autonomous Regions, and Autonomous Areas. The people of the Autonomous Republic and Autonomous establishments preserve the right for an independent decision-making about remaining in the USSR or quitting the Union Republic, as well as about their state and legal status”¹³. The final part of the Article states the rule which says that “in the Union Republic with densely populated areas where the majority of the local population is represented by ethnic minorities, the referendum results are calculated separately”¹⁴.

11 Walker M.C. *The Strategic Use of Referendums. Power, Legitimacy, and Democracy*. New York, 2003. P. 10.

12 Bulletin of Congress of the people’s Deputies of the USSR and the Supreme Council of the USSR. 1990. #15. 11 April. P. 303.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

With this rule in mind, on 13 December 1990, the Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies approved of a Temporary Provision about the Referendum and its procedure in the Crimean Oblast, including Sevastopol, and set the Referendum on 20 January 1991 by wording a question – “*Are you in favour of reconstruction of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a constituent entity of the USSR and a participant of the Union Treaty?*” The referendum coverage was 81.3% of the residents of Crimea entitled to vote. 93.2% of them gave a positive answer to this question.

The Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR recognized the Referendum results, but only with respect to the reconstruction of the Crimean ASSR. On 12 February 1991, it adopted the law n.712-XII with the following resolution: “To reconstruct the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic over the territory of the Crimean Oblast within the Ukrainian SSR”. Meanwhile, the majority of the voted for the Crimean ASSR as a constituent entity of the USSR, that is, for Crimea's secession from Ukraine.

The Law “On amendments and additions to the Constitution (Main Law) of Ukraine” adopted by the Supreme Council of Ukraine on 21 September 1994 changed the name “Crimean ASSR” to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

The Referendum conducted in Crimea and Sevastopol on 16 March 2014, despite all its peculiarities, had essentially the same meaning as the Referendum held on 20 January 1991. Like the previous referendum, this one was dedicated to the same question, namely: **Crimea and Sevastopol's secession from Ukraine.**

On 11 March 2014, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City Council approved of the Declaration of Independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol which proclaimed that “if in the course of the upcoming direct will expression of Crimea's peoples on 16 March 2014 the decision will be made that Crimea, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, shall reunite with Russia, Crimea will be announced an independent and sovereign state with a republican type of governance after the Referendum”. Under full compliance with the purpose of the Referendum, the population of Crimea and Sevastopol was given two different options of their Republic's future to choose from. The residents of Crimea and Sevastopol with their voting right had to answer the following questions: 1. *Are you in favour of Crimea's reunification with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation?* and 2. *Are you in favour of the restoration of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea and of Crimea status as a part of Ukraine?*

The referendum results revealed that 83.01% of the Crimeans with voting rights (except for the residents of Sevastopol) took part in it. 96.77% of them voted for Crimea's reunification with Russia. In Sevastopol, 89.5% of residents with voting rights took part in the Referendum. 95.6% of them gave a positive answer to the first question.

Thus, the 2014 Referendum results appeared to be the same as the 1991 Referendum results. The only difference from the previous Referendum was that the option about Crimea's secession from Ukraine was worded as a question about its reunification with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation¹⁵. At the previous referendum, this option was a question about the restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Republic as "a constituent entity of the USSR and a participant of the Union Treaty".

The 2014 Crimean Referendum had a question implying Crimea's secession from Ukraine, and that is why the fact of holding a referendum did not comply with the Constitutions of Ukraine and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. They lacked norms that would provide legal grounds for holding a referendum on the secession of any territory from the Ukrainian state. Article 73 of the Constitution of Ukraine gives a peremptory requirement: "Only Ukrainian Referendums solve the questions about the changes of Ukraine's territory."

Meanwhile, the Law of the Russian Federation adopted on 21 March 2021 "On taking the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and establishing new constituent entities within the Russian Federation – the Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol" states the grounds for accepting the Republic of Crimea into Russia and gives the first place to "the results of the Crimean Referendum conducted on 16 March 2014 in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol at which the question about Crimea's reunification with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation was supported"¹⁵. There could be endless debates about the legitimacy of the Secession Referendum in Crimea, but you cannot but accept that Crimea's reunification with Russia appeared to become possible only because the majority of the residents of Crimea, nearly all of them being Crimeans, participated in the voting procedure and used the Referendum to express their strive to leave Ukraine and to join the Russian Federation.

However, when the Western politicians, political experts, and lawyers were evaluating Crimea's reunification in terms of law, they focused more on the Russian military units deployed on the peninsula rather than on the referendum itself. This fact made them conclude that when Russia acknowledged Crimea's secession from Ukraine and accepted Crimea to the Russian Federation, it performed an act of "armed aggression" against Ukraine and "annexed" a territory of a third state. At the same time, they knew that **the Agreement about the status and the conditions of presence of Russia's Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine signed between Russia and Ukraine on 28 May 1997 provided for the presence of the Russian forces in Crimea.**

15 Other grounds for accepting the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation were as follows, "Declaration of Independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City, as well as the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea about accepting the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation and establishing new constituents in the Russian Federation"; "applications of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City with a special status for accepting the Republic of Crimea, including Sevastopol City with a special status to the Russian Federation"; "present Federal Constitutional Law".

For example, on 9 April 2014, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution (154 voted for, 14 abstained and 26 against) which states: “The Assembly regrets that democratic changes and political events in Ukraine were overshadowed with the events in Crimea. The Assembly resolutely condemns the Russian military aggression and further Crimea’s annexation, which is a direct violation of international law, including the UN Charter, Helsinki Final Act of the Meeting for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as the Charter and the key principles of the Council of Europe”.

This resolution was based on a report “Latest events in Ukraine: a threat to democratic institutes” which had been approved by the Monitoring Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe¹⁶ 8 April 2014. The 16th clause of this document argues: “The so-called referendum organized in Crimea on 16 March 2014 is non-constitutional under the Crimean and Ukrainian Constitutions. What is more, the information about its voter turnout and the results is improbable. The results of this referendum and the illegitimate annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation are not legally valid and are not acknowledged by the Council of Europe. The Assembly confirms its resolute support of independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of Ukraine”¹⁷.

Clause 79 of the above-mentioned document states: “The presence of the Russian military forces in Crimea is regulated by the base agreement between Russia and Ukraine. This Agreement allows Russia to have up to 25,000 military servicemen in Crimea. However, their movements are delimited and defined. They have to stay in their dislocation sites and can be deployed outside these sites under the direct agreement from the Ukrainian authorities, which they did not have (and still do not have)”¹⁸.

Dainius Žalimas and Erika Leonaitė, Professors at Vilnius University, specialists in international law, appeared to be very categorical in their evaluation of Crimea’s reunification with Russia. They argued in their article “The Annexation of Crimea and Attempts to Justify it in the Context of International Law” that “From the point of view of contemporary international law, the actions of the Russian Federation in the Crimean Peninsula, which is part of the territory

16 The full name of this agency is the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by the Member States of the Council of Europe.

17 “The so-called referendum that was organised in Crimea on 16 March 2014 was unconstitutional both under the Crimean and Ukrainian Constitutions. In addition, its reported turnout and results are implausible. The outcome of this referendum and the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, therefore, have no legal effect and are not recognised by the Council of Europe. The Assembly reaffirms its strong support for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine» (Council of Europe. Parliamentary Assembly. Doc. 13482. Recent developments in Ukraine: threats to the functioning of democratic institutions. The Assembly adopted the text on 9 April 2014. 15th Sitting) // <https://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=20712&lang=en>

18 “The presence of Russian troops in Crimea is governed by the base agreement between Russia and Ukraine. This agreement allows Russia up to 25 000 military personals in Crimea. However, their movements are strictly delimited and defined. They should remain in their bases of deployment and can only be moved outside their bases with the explicit agreement of the Ukrainian authorities, which they did (and do) not have» (ibidem).

of Ukraine, constitute an illegal use of force and should be qualified as aggression... Although in a general sense international law does not regulate the right to secession, the systemic interpretation of the principle of the self-determination of peoples, along with the principle of the prohibition of the threat or use of armed force and the principle of territorial integrity, determines that independence may not be proclaimed under conditions of the use of armed force by a foreign state. For this reason, the “secession” of Crimea, which took place as a result of the use of the armed force of Russia, as well as the incorporation of Crimea into Russia, is illegal in terms of international law and cannot be interpreted as a case of the realisation of the right of peoples to self-determination”¹⁹.

Three years later, Dainius Žalimas repeated this opinion in his new publication but explained his understanding of the way Russia had exploited its armed forces during the Secession Referendum. He said that Crimea’s secession from Ukraine was conducted “in the presence of the Russia-controlled illegal military and paramilitary forces who performed the actual takeover of the territory of Crimea”, who blocked “the Ukrainian armed forces and ports, in the face of wide-scope military manoeuvres of the Russian armed forces along the Ukrainian borders”, as well as the constant declarations by the Russian political leadership of “the preparedness to use force”²⁰.

This opinion is quite popular in the books and articles of the foreign law experts who write about the law-based evaluation of Crimea’s reunification with Russia. However, this opinion is not the only one. Reinhard Merkel, a Professor of Hamburg University, in his article “Die Krim und das Völkerrecht. Kühle Ironie der Geschichte” published at the beginning of April in 2014 in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* challenged the previous opinion and put forward a more reasonable view: “Did Russia annex Crimea? No. Do the referendum in Crimea and its secession from Ukraine contradict international law? No. Does it mean that they were legally valid? No, they violated the Ukrainian Constitution (but this is not the issue

19 “From the point of view of contemporary international law, the actions of the Russian Federation in the Crimean Peninsula, which is part of the territory of Ukraine, constitute an illegal use of force and should be qualified as aggression... Although in a general sense international law does not regulate the right to secession, the systemic interpretation of the principle of the self-determination of peoples, along with the principle of the prohibition on the threat or use of armed force and the principle of territorial integrity, determines that independence may not be proclaimed under conditions of the use of armed force by a foreign state. For this reason, the “secession” of Crimea, which took place as a result of the use of the armed force of Russia, as well as the incorporation of Crimea into Russia, is illegal in terms of international law and cannot be interpreted as a case of the realisation of the right of peoples to self-determination» (Leonaitė E., Žalimas D. The Annexation of Crimea and Attempts to Justify It in the Context of International Law // Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review. 2015–2016. Vol. 14. P. 62).

20 Here is a full version of the statement made by a Lithuanian expert in international law: “Consequently, the so-called “secession” of Crimea, which took place as a result of the threat and use of armed force (in the presence of the Russia-controlled illegal military and paramilitary forces who performed the actual takeover of the territory of Crimea, blocked the Ukrainian armed forces and ports, in the face of wide-scope military manoeuvres of the Russian armed forces along the Ukrainian borders, as well as the constant declarations by the Russian political leadership of the preparedness to use force) and the incorporation of Crimea into Russia are illegal in terms of international law and cannot be interpreted as the case of realization of the right of peoples to self-determination” (Žalimas D. Lessons of World II and the Annexation of Crimea // International Comparative Jurisprudence. 2017. Vol. 3. Issue 1. P. 27)

of international law). Should Russia cancel Crimea's reunification because of this violation of the Constitution? No, the Ukrainian Constitution is not legally binding for Russia. Does it mean that Russia's actions complied with international law? No, in any case, its military presence in Crimea outside the rented territories was illegal in the context of international law. Does it mean that Crimea's secession, which was possible thanks to this military presence, is invalid, and thus its further reunification with Russia was nothing but a camouflaged annexation? No".²¹

Then, the German law expert defined annexation by referring to Article 51 in the UN Charter. He said: "International law defines annexation as a forcible acquisition of the territory by another state against the will of the state which this territory belongs to. Annexations violate the inter-state ban on violence, which is the main standard for law-based world order. They are sometimes manifested as "bewaffneten Angriffs"²², which is a more serious form of inter-state law violations".²³

In terms of this definition of annexation, Reinhard Merkel comes to an actual and reasonable conclusion that the situation that happened on the Crimean Peninsula in March 2014 is nothing but secession and the adoption of the Declaration of Independence supported by the referendum, which approved of Crimea's secession from Ukraine. The referendum was followed by a request from the Crimean Autonomous Republic about its reunification with Russia, and Russia satisfied this request.

As a summary of his speculations, the German law expert allegedly responded to all those challengers who accuse Russia of annexing Crimea: "**The separatism, the referendum, and the reunification exclude an annexation, even though all these three actions violate international law**". The difference with an annexation, which you insist on, is like the difference between seizure and acceptance. **Even if the one who gives – in this case, the Government of Crimea de facto – acts illegally, they do not turn the one who accepts into the one who seizes.** This transaction can be looked upon as invalid in legal terms. However, this does not make it an annexation, an aggressive seizure of the areas by violence, or an internationally legal ground for war"²⁴ (highlighted by me – V.T.)

Rein Müllerson, President of the Law Academy at Tallinn University, Director of the Institute of International Law, also gave a balanced view on

21 Merkel R. Die Krim und das Völkerrecht. Kühle Ironie der Geschichte // Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 2014. 7. April.

22 Article 51 of the UN Charter refers to "an armed attack on a Member of the Organization" as a reason for "an undeniable right to individual or group self-defence".

23 Ibid.

24 "Sezession, Referendum und Beitritt schließen eine Annexion aus, und zwar selbst dann, wenn alle drei völkerrechtswidrig gewesen sein sollten. Der Unterschied zur Annexion, den sie markieren, ist ungefähr der zwischen Wegnehmen und Annehmen. Auch wenn ein Geber, hier die De-facto-Regierung der Krim, rechtswidrig handelt, macht er den Annehmenden nicht zum Wegnehmer. Man mag ja die ganze Transaktion aus Rechtsgründen für nichtig halten. Das macht sie dennoch nicht zur Annexion, zur räuberischen Landnahme mittels Gewalt, einem völkerrechtlichen Titel zum Krieg» (ibidem).

the 2014 Crimean Referendum. In his article “Ukraine: Victim of Geopolitics” published in 2014 in the *Chinese Journal of International Law*, he confidently acknowledged the things which those who accused Russia of annexing Crimea did not want to accept even five years later: “There is no doubt that the majority of the Crimeans, just like the majority of Russia’s citizens, welcome Crimea’s reunification with Russia. In this context, everything could be looked upon as legitimate though contradicting international law”²⁵. At the same time, the law expert from Estonia believed that it was important to note that this Referendum still violated the requirements of international law, but he felt it was so because the Referendum was held in the situation when the principle of non-use of force was violated by Russia rather than because of the violations of Ukraine’s Constitution. Rein Müllerson saw this violation in a quite legal presence of the Russian military forces in Crimea. He noted: “It should be questioned whether the Crimean Referendum could have been held on 16 March without the Russian military forces? If the answer is positive – and I believe this will be the only possible answer – Russia has to be considered a violator of international law. And this remains to be so in spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the Crimeans really chose the integration with Russia instead of staying with Ukraine”²⁶.

In fact, a completely opposite question could have been more adequate for the right evaluation of the Crimean Referendum: if “the overwhelming majority of the Crimeans really chose the integration with Russia instead of staying with Ukraine”, then why could not the referendum in Crimea have been possible without the Russian military forces? It is evident that this could only be possible in case of “any violent actions” on the Ukrainian side depriving the peoples of Crimea of their “right to self-determination, freedom, and independence”. But these actions are condemned by “the Declaration on the Principles of International Law concerning friendly relationships and cooperation among the states under the Charter of the United Nations”. Moreover, the peoples striving to use their right to self-determination and facing certain barriers on their way in the form of the Declaration are provided with the right to resist the violent actions and gain support, in this case, to use their right to self-determination and “get this support under the purposes and principles of the Charter”.

The purpose of the Russian military forces in Crimea was to save the peoples of Crimea from the violent actions on the Ukrainian side or radical nationalists who wanted to deprive the Crimeans of the Referendum. In his description of the Crimean Referendum, Reinhard Merkel emphasized: “A forced effect of the presence of the Russian forces was not aimed against the Declaration of Independence or the next Referendum. They just provided the opportunity for this event to happen; they showed no effect and influence on the outcome of the event. The

25 Müllerson R. Ukraine: Victim of Geopolitics // *Chinese Journal of International Law*. 2014. Vol. 13. Issue 1. P. 141.

26 Ibid.

threats to apply forces were aimed at the soldiers of the Ukrainian army rather than the citizens and the Parliament of Crimea. This prevented an armed intervention of the Ukrainian state to stop the secession procedure. That was the reason why the Russian armed forces blocked the Ukrainian barracks but did not control the voting stations”²⁷.

A need to use forces to provide peaceful voting procedure for the citizens of Crimea during the referendum on 16 March 2014 was determined by the situation in Ukraine after the coup on 21-22 February 2014. A series of events during and after the coup convinced the Crimeans that if they did not take firm measures for their salvation, the armed Ukrainian nationalist groups would definitely deal with them.²⁸ There was no doubt that a criminal group that seized the supreme state power after the coup in Ukraine would favour radically-minded Ukrainian nationalists who helped this group achieve their goal and use the state institutes to suppress any attempts of Crimea’s residents to protect themselves from punishment and to preserve their culture. That means that the peoples of Crimea could not think of a normal life in case of staying with Ukraine.

V.I. Churkin, a Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation at the United Nations and in the UN Security Council, in his speech on 13 March 2014 during the Security Council session devoted to the crisis in Ukraine, said, “It is clear that the implementation of the right of self-determination in the form of separation from the existing state is an extraordinary measure. In Crimea, such a case apparently arose as a result of a legal vacuum, which emerged due to the non-constitutional and violent coup d’état carried out in Kiev by radical nationalists, as well as direct threats by the latter to impose their order on the whole territory of Ukraine”²⁹.

27 Merkel R. Die Krim und das Völkerrecht. Kühle Ironie der Geschichte // Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. 2014. 7. April.

28 A massacre over the Crimeans returning from Anti-Maidan campaign on 20 and 21 February in Kiev is one of the facts convincingly illustrating a possible tragic outcome for the peoples of Crimea because of the events in February 2014 in Ukraine. Eight buses with young people who had protected the Ukrainian state, were near Korsun, Cherkassk area, were attacked by the armed Ukrainian extremist nationalists in an ambush. Later, the attacked Crimeans recollected, “They were waiting for the vehicles at hasty checkpoints, stopped the buses, threw bottle bombs and stones in the windows so that we went out from the vehicles. We did it and got straight to the hands of the real monsters. They beat us with sticks, bats, stones, tortured us if we refused to stand on our knees to sing the hymn of Ukraine, shout out “Glory to Heroes!”, if we spoke Russian, called us Muscovites and thugs. They shot our vehicles; some buses were burnt together with all our belongings and documents”. Later on, Viktor Yanukovich, a dismissed President, said, “I read the latest updates how about right buses with the residents of Crimea who had come to a peaceful campaign near Verkhovna Rada were shot. There were photos of how the buses were shot, then they were burnt. These people were beaten. One of the buses exploded a petrol tank. People took it as a chance to escape in the forest. And these radicals, masked tough people, started to chase them in the forest. People did their best to save their lives”. “Many of them died. But most of them arrived in Crimea», a former president of Ukraine finished his story. (Murders of Anti-Maidan participants near Korsun // <http://mozgovoy-center.ru/ubiystva-antimaydanovcev-pod-korsun/>. See also 31 Crimeans-anti-Maidan participants who went missing after the attack near Kirovograd / NeFact. Info. News of Crimea, Sevastopol, and others. 2014. 21 February. / <https://nefakt.info/252441/>

29 “It is clear that the implementation of the right of self-determination in the form of separation from the existing state is an extraordinary measure. In Crimea, such a case apparently arose as a result of a legal vacuum, which emerged as a result of unconstitutional, violent coup d’état carried out in Kiev by radical national-

* * *

Historical practices show that a secession – a decision of any territory and its residing inhabitant to leave the state – usually resulted from the referendum’s outcome and adoption of the Declaration of Independence. As a rule, a Secession Referendum is exclusively evaluated in terms of the state law of the country where it is conducted, and if its Constitution does not assume any possibility to conduct such a referendum, then this referendum is recognized not to comply with the respective constitutional norms and thus to be illegal. Along with that, many facts and circumstances proving that the Secession Referendum is an institute of both the intra-state constitutional and international law are ignored.

To illustrate this, we could look at the expert conclusion made on 21 March 2014 by a Consultative Body for Constitutional Law at the Council of Europe (so-called Venice Commission)³⁰ concerning the issue of whether the decision by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea about the referendum on becoming a constituent entity of the Russian Federation or restoring the 1992 Constitution of Crimea complies with the constitutional principles in Ukraine. When answering this question, the lawyers of the Council of Europe came to the following conclusions:

1) “Like other Constitutions of the member states of the Council of Europe, the Constitution of Ukraine prescribes the integrity of the country and does not assume any local referendum about secession from Ukraine to be organized. This particularly follows from Articles 1, 2, 73, and 157 of the Constitution. Together with Section X of the Constitution, these provisions show that this ban also applies to the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the Constitution of Crimea does not let the Supreme Council of Crimea set such a referendum. The Ukrainian Constitution allows only for the Consultative Referendum about a wider autonomy”.

2) “The situation in Crimea did not provide any chance to conduct the referendum under the European democratic standards. Any referendum on the status of a territory should follow serious negotiations with all parties involved. There was none”³¹.

The 22nd Clause of the main text acknowledges, “The Venice Commission did not give a multi-sided evaluation of the ongoing situation in Crimea”³². Given

ists, as well as direct threats by the latter to impose their order on the whole territory of Ukraine» (Churkin V.I. Crimea referendum opponents manipulate detached norms of international law // <https://www.rt.com/news/unsc-ukraine-meeting-crimea-694/>).

30 Venice Commission is referred to European Commission for Democracy through Law established in 1990 in Venice).

31 Opinion on “whether the decision taken by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Ukraine to organise a referendum on becoming a constituent territory of the Russian Federation or restoring Crimea’s 1992 Constitution is compatible with constitutional principles”. Adopted by the Venice Commission at its 98th Plenary Session (Venice, 21-22 March 2014). Venice, 2014. P. 6. The title page of the said document says that it was prepared on the basis of the comments from Peter Paczolay, a Hungarian lawyer, an expert in the history of comparative constitutional law; Hanna Suchocka, an expert in the constitutional law from Poland; Eugene Tanchev, a Chairperson of the Constitutional Court in Bulgaria; and Kaarlo Tuori, a professor of jurisprudence at Helsinki University (Finland).

32 Here is a full version of Clause 22 of the Venice Commission’s Conclusion, “While the Venice Commission

conclusions, support this statement: they are speculative and one-sided in their content.

When the members of the Venice Commission were discussing the question about the compliance of the constitutional principles with the decision taken by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea about the referendum of 16 March concerning the secession from Ukraine, the Venice Commission, first and foremost, had to reveal the legal nature of the Secession Referendum and decide whether it was reasonable to look at it in terms of the constitutional law only and whether it should be looked at in terms of the geopolitical interests of Russia with due regard to the history of Crimea, a cultural historical type of the Crimean society, the Crimea's' sentiments, and the status of the current Ukrainian state system. And the law-based evaluation of the Crimean Referendum will not be appropriate if we ignore its international legal aspect.

Clause 17 of the expert conclusion of the Venice Commission of 21 March 2014 states that the Constitution of Ukraine's ban to hold the Secession Referendum "in no way contradicts the European Constitutional standards. It is typical for the Constitutions of the member states of the European Council not to permit the secession".

Indeed, history knows only one case when the Constitution of a European state gave a possibility for a Secession Referendum, that is, when the secession was constitutional by nature. That was Article 60 of the Constitutional Charter of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, which came into force on 4 February 2003. It ran as follows, "After a three-year period, the member states shall have the right to initiate the procedure for changing its state status or for secession from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The referendum results shall be the grounds for the secession from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The Referendum Law shall be adopted by a member state under the internationally recognized democratic standards".

This established three-year period of the Referendum ban on secession from the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro expired on 4 February 2006. And on 2 March, the Montenegro Parliament unanimously adopted the Referendum Law, and the referendum was held on 21 May. The following question was brought up for voting: "Would you like the Republic of Montenegro to be an independent state with its full internationally legal sovereignty?". The referendum provisions stated that Montenegro required 55% of the referendum participants' voices to gain independence. On 31 May, the referendum results were finalized. It turned out that with a total turnout of 86.5%, 55.5% of the voters gave their voices for Montenegro independence³³. The Referendum results were immediately acknowl-

has not made a comprehensive assessment of the current situation in Crimea, the massive public presence of (para) military forces is not conducive to democratic decision making".

33 400,000 Montenegrins participated in the Referendum. Just 2,000 people gave half a percent of voices for the independence, which exceeded the threshold of 55%.

edged by the leading world powers. On 3 June 2016, the Montenegro Parliament adopted Montenegro's Declaration of Independence. Under the Article 60 of the 2003 Constitutional charter, Serbia became a legal successor of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

This case of a constitutional secession is exceptional since it followed a series of exceptional events. The State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was a transitional political union during Yugoslavia's collapse: originally, it was considered to be a temporary union, which is convincingly demonstrated in Article 60 of its Constitutional Charter that declares the secession procedure for Serbia and Montenegro.

An overview of the European Constitutions shows that they can proclaim a people's or a nations' right to self-determination, although this right is not somehow connected with the secession of these peoples and nations from a state³⁴. That is why we can agree with the statement of the Venice Commission that it is quite typical for the member states of the Council of Europe to face situations when the secession is not even thought of³⁵.

The Venice Commission amended this statement in Clause 18 of its Expert Report with a conclusion that "self-determination is defined as, first of all, domestic self-determination within the existing borders rather than external self-determination through secession".

This conclusion was borrowed by the authors of this document from a Report called "Self-Determination and Secession in Constitutional Law" which was approved by the Venice Commission in December 1999. Its final part states: "The term "secession", unlike the term "self-determination", is not foreign to the constitutional law. However, the constitutional law contains neither global recognition of the right to self-determination or global definition of those who acquire this right nor its content. Moreover, in the cases in which the analysed constitutions recognize the right to self-determination, they do not describe any procedure for its application. There are procedures to modify the territorial borders within a state, which is not a form of the right to self-determination"³⁶.

34 The 2010 Croatia Constitution is quite interesting in this aspect. Its preamble states about "eternal right of the Croatians to self-determination and state sovereignty, including an undeniable right to secession and association as the fundamental condition for peace and world order stability", although it also mentions that the Republic of Croatia is established as "a national state of the Croatian nation and a state of national minorities: Serbians, Czechs, Slovaks, Italians, Hungarians, Jewish, Germans, Austrians, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Bosnians, Slovenians, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Russians, Bulgarians, Polish, Roma, Romanians, Turkish, Wallachians, Albanians, and others who are their citizens". The first article of this Constitution declares that "the Republic of Croatia is a unitary and indivisible democratic social state", and Article 8 sets the rule, which states, "only Croatian Parliament can decide to change the borders of the Republic of Croatia". This is how the right to self-determination is set in legal terms only for the Croatians.

35 The 1949 FRG Constitution is interesting to look at. Its Preamble declared the right to self-determination, but it was not a legal tool for secession of any land from Federation, it was a principle aimed to unite the West Germany with the East Germany into one state. It said, "German people are called to achieve the unity and freedom of Germany under the principle of independent self-determination".

36 Self-Determination and Secession in Constitutional Law. Report adopted by the Commission at its 41st meeting (Venice, 10–11 December 1999. Venice, 1999. P. 13.

The principle of democracy is the basis of the constitution of a **modern developed state**. A referendum as a way to express people's will completely fits this type of state. It is used when there is a need to solve the issues about the ratification of important international agreements or introduction of the crucial laws or to adopt or amend the constitution. By the way, the role of this referendum in the state politics of the European countries has recently increased³⁷.

However, the European Constitution somehow bans referendums on the secession of any nation together with the territory it resides on. "In any case, the secession ban is typically inferred from the constitutional provisions concerning the values it rejects: indivisibility, national unity, and very often territorial integrity"³⁸, – says the above-quoted Report of the Venice Commission "Self-Determination and Secession in Constitutional Law".

The situation described is quite logical. The constitutional law is designed to protect the territorial integrity of a state and prevent any possibility of its collapse, i.e., secession from any territory. In this case, *any Secession Referendum does not comply with the purpose of the constitutional law and is a foreign institute to it*.

In 1999, the Venice Commission acknowledged this fact and approved of the Report "Self-Determination and Secession in Constitutional Law" which stated, among other things, that "While *secession in its general terms is foreign to the constitutional law*, the right to self-determination which is supposed to be an intra-state one is an element which is often included into the constitutional law but should be separated from secession"³⁹ (italics added by V.T.). It is evident that if secession is recognized to be a foreign institute for the constitutional law, then the Secession Referendum should be recognized as such.

It should be said that the Secession Referendum is non-constitutional by its legal nature. It does not violate a Constitution because its non-constitutional nature is its inner attribute.

The Expert Report by the Venice Commission of 21 March 2014 concerning non-compliance of the Referendum about Crimea's secession from Ukraine with the Ukrainian and Crimean Constitutions just supported the fact of its non-constitutional nature by law.

Unlike the referendums concerning the adoption of laws or socially important political decisions, the Secession Referendum has an international legal nature: it

37 This is evidenced by, for example, a Constitutional Law adopted in France on 23 July 2008 which introduced a number of amendments into the Constitution of the French Republic and significantly changed the content of Article 11 authorizing the President "to put any draft of law concerning the authorities to the referendum which could give permission or approve of the ratification of agreement which could have affected the work of the state institutes without any violation of the Constitution" (Constitution of the Fifth Republic. 4 October 1958 // Reader in history of state and law of foreign countries. Modern and Contemporary Times / Compiled by V.A. Tomsinov. Moscow, 2012. P. 376). Now, The Article gives the President of France power to put drafts of law to a referendum "about reforms in economic or social policy of the state or its policy in environment protection and public services supporting this policy".

38 Self-Determination and Secession in Constitutional Law. Report adopted by the Commission at its 41st meeting (Venice, 10–11 December 1999. Venice, 1999. P. 13.

39 Ibid.

has to be acknowledged as an institute of international law. It is this type of referendum, which triggers the procedure for the nation to apply its right to self-determination by secession from a state.

The Referendum held in Crimea on 16 March 2014 was the ground for the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to join Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation. This fact became one more reason to look at it and to evaluate it in terms of, first and foremost, **international law** rather than the Constitution of Ukraine.

Christian Walter, a Professor of Law Faculty at Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich⁴⁰, who specializes in analysing the issues of self-determination, examined the legal nature of the Crimean Referendum and came to the following interesting conclusion:

“For the sake of clarity, it should be emphasized that the fact that any community expresses a wish to join another state does not exclude its requirements from the self-determination institute. However, in this case, the situation is not typical because one should consider the international legal obligations of the third state. Integration into the neighbouring state inevitable results in changes of the borders between two states. The thing, which is taken from Ukraine, is given to Russia. As for the claims for secession to gain independence, then in terms of international law, it’s better to focus on the relations between the secession community and its parent state (in other words, the issue which precedes the secession appears to be internal by nature). On the contrary, the secession claims for later integration into another state also concern the international law relations between two respective states. This type of relations should be the focus of the analysis connected with Crimea”⁴¹.

The international legal nature of the Secession referendum is backed up by the practices of international relations, which show that this type of referendum is rarely initiated by the UN Security Council. For instance, on 27 June 1990, this international agency adopted a resolution n.658, which recommended stopping war actions between Morocco and the Polisario Front, and proposed an UN-controlled referendum for the people of the Western Sahara to choose between independence and entry into Morocco⁴².

The Resolution of the Security Council of 11 June 1999 initiated the Secession Referendum of East Timor from Indonesia⁴³. It was conducted on 30 of August the same year and attracted 78.5% out of 439,000 people with voting righ

40 Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München

41 Walter Ch. Postscript: Self-Determination, Secession, and the Crimean Crisis 2014 // *Self-Determination and Secession in International Law*. Oxford, 2014. P. 298.

42 This referendum has not been held up until now.

43 Since 1702, East Timor is a colony of Portugal. On 28 November 1975, it was officially recognized to be an independent state, but 9 days later - 7 December - it was exposed to aggression from Indonesia and joined it as a province.

for independence⁴⁴. As a result, on 2 May 2002 East Timor was declared to be a sovereign state – the Democratic Republic of East Timor.

The international legal nature of the Secession Referendum does not give any possibility to regulate it with the constitutional law only. However, international law does not contain any proper legal mechanism to apply the people's right to self-determination by secession from the state where the people reside. "Modern international law does not provide any right to a unilateral secession, although it does not reject this right"⁴⁵. This conclusion was unanimously arrived at by the attendees of the American Regional Conference "Secession and International Law" held in Santa Clara University from 31 January to 2 February 2001.

When the 2014 Crimean Referendum is evaluated in terms of law, it should be kept in mind that despite all its legal drawbacks, **it provided a peaceful resolution of the conflict, which could not be settled with the Constitutional Law of Ukraine and international law.**

This conflict was not born in 2014 but rather at least a quarter of a century earlier. And it was triggered by the USSR's collapse in late 1980s. The Crimean Referendum of 20 January 1991 can be the evidence of it. The question which was put to a vote (*Are you for restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a constituent entity of the USSR and a Participant of the Union Treaty?*) clearly pointed to Crimea's secession from Ukraine. It was validated by the USSR Law of 3 April 1990 "On the procedure of solving the issues related to the secession of a Union Republic from the USSR" and recognized to be lawful by the state power of Ukraine. Crimea gained the status of an Autonomous Republic, although it was not allowed to be a constituent entity of the USSR, in spite of the wish manifested by the overwhelming majority of the Crimeans.

The 2014 Crimean Referendum actually repeated the 1991 Referendum, while Crimea's subsequent secession from Ukraine and its reunification with Russia continued the USSR's collapse. If the Crimean Referendum was recognized to violate the Constitutional Law of Ukraine and international law, then the Ukrainian Referendum on 17 March 1991 with the question "Do you support the Declaration about State Sovereignty of Ukrainian SSR of 16 July 1990?" would have to be recognized as an anti-constitutional one violating international law (the referendum was conducted together with the Union Referendum).

44 For a 25-year occupation period of East Timor, Indonesia's leaders had been following the genocide policy (supported by the USA) towards the aborigines. The Referendum was followed by violent repressions against the supports of East Timor independence from the Indonesian army. In his article with an interesting title "Independence of East Timor: A Threat to Indonesia Unity", Martin Ortega, a researcher from the Institute for Security Studies in West-European Union, claimed that the first month after the Referendum took the lives of about 30,000 residents of East Timor, 130,000 were expelled from the settlements where they were residing. To responded to these excesses, on 20 September UN brought international military forces to East Timor which managed to stop the murders of the aborigines (Ortega M. *La independencia de Timor Oriental: ¿Peligra la unidad de Indonesia // Política Exterior*. 2000. Vol. 14. No. 73. P. 37)

45 Conclusions and Recommendations of the Americas Regional Conference // *Secession and International Law. Conflict Avoidance: Regional Appraisals*. Prepared under the auspices of the Consortium on International Dispute Resolution, Geneva / Edited by Julie Dahlitz. New York and Geneva, 2003. P. 265–266

Adopted by the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR on 16 July 1990, the Declaration of State Sovereignty⁴⁶ declared that “the Ukrainian SSR, being a sovereign national state, is developing within its existing borders by applying the Ukrainian nations’ undeniable right to self-determination”, which was against the USSR Constitution. “The Act of Ukraine’s Declaration of Independence” adopted by the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR on 24 August 1991 also **violated the Constitution of the Soviet Union.**

The conflicts arising from the secession of any territory from a state have always been very complicated in terms of their legal evaluation and, more often than not, cannot be solved with the international legal rules⁴⁷.

Such conflicts typically carry a risk of civil and even inter-state wars and mass disasters for people, and that is why their peaceful settlement is completely reasonable in terms of the principles of international law with their key purpose being to maintain the peace on the Earth.

It is evident that a direct will expression of people striving for secession from a state for various reasons in order to create their own independent state or join another state is likely to be the only peaceful resolution of the most dangerous conflict, and that is why it has a great legal value.

Legal evaluation of the Secession Referendum has to consider the current situation when it is held. This will be the reason to justify secession. Any democratic institute has a lot of drawbacks. Parliamentary or Presidential elections rarely bring people who deserve a high state position to the power, but if they give people a chance to express their true will, then they are legally valid and justifiable in terms of the higher interests of the society and the state. The key purpose of these elections is not to select the best people to the seats of authority but rather to peacefully settle the conflict between different political parties or groups, which is inevitable in their fight for the higher state seats.

The 2014 Crimean Referendum preserved peace and gave the Crimeans an opportunity to choose the most favourable future for them. A successful development of the economy in the Crimean Autonomous Republic and an improved well-being of its citizens within the period after the Crimea’s reunification with Russia show that the population made the right choice.

Sometimes, law experts and politicians inadvertently or intentionally associate international law with intra-state law, although these two concepts significantly differ from each other.

46 Declaration of Ukraine Sovereignty // Bulletins of Verkhovnyaya Rada of the Ukrainian SSR. 1990. # 31. Art. 429.

47 In 1920, the International Commission represented by the Council of the League of Nations which was handling the dispute between Finland and Sweden about the ownership of the Aland Islands after the collapse of the Russian Empire and establishment of an independent Finnish state examined the circumstances of this dispute and came to the following conclusion: “In terms of domestic and international law, revolution- and war-driven setting up, transformation and division of the state’s result in the actual situations which **cannot be mainly solved with the standard norms of the positive law**” (highlighted by me – V.T.). See the details concerning the international law aspects of the dispute between Finland and Sweden about the ownership of the Aland Islands in V.A. Tomsinov “Crimean Law” or Legal Grounds for Crimea’s Reunification with Russian. Moscow, 2015. P. 11 - 14.

The international arena does not and cannot provide state power, which is behind the law relevant for the country. There is no legislative power in this or that state which provides one single interpretation of the international law acts. Language differences are also the barriers for universal international law documents with one single meaning. There does not exist exact translation into foreign languages, and that is why the same international regulatory documents are perceived and understood differently by the law experts and politicians from different countries, civilizations, cultures. Regulatory materials of international law greatly differ from the regulatory system of intra-state law.

That is why an attempt to evaluate the Secession Referendum, which was held at the time of a severe crisis with a possibility of war only from a positivist approach, in terms of norms and principles of international law with no regard to the historic facts, real environment, contradicts the nature and the spirit of international law.

Rudolf Jhering, a German law expert, believed a positivist approach to the legal evaluation of the public events to be wrong and distorting the real picture of law life. In his speech “Is jurisprudence a science?”, he said: “Positivism is a deadly enemy of jurisprudence because positivism brings it down to a manual toll that is why jurisprudence has to fight with positivism to the death”⁴⁸.

From the point of view of international law, a positivist approach is not just harmful but also a quite foreign methodology. The international arena is known for its frequent conflicts, which do not fit the existing norms and principles of international law and cannot be settled in negotiations between the leaders of the states. In these cases, people’s voice turns out to be the voice of God. And, being a people’s will expression, a referendum acquires its independent lawful power. People’s rule is the fundamental principle of a modern state, which assumes that people have the right to take charge of solving any questions, and conflicts, which the people in authority cannot adequately settle.

This is the upfront context, which should be used to evaluate the Secession Referendum. In terms of constitutional and international law, this institute of people’s rule plays a crucially positive role: it contributes to the peaceful handling of important problems when the state authorities appear not to be able to solve them when the state lacks any other appropriate ways and procedures to solve them. The solutions taken by people in this type of referendums, in fact, become the source of law that fills the gaps in constitutional and international law.

48 Jhering R. *Ist die Jurisprudenz eine Wissenschaft?: Jherings Wiener Antrittsvorlesung vom 16. October 1868.* Göttingen, 1998. S. 50

N. KHRUSHCHEV ANNOUNCED THE TRANSFER OF CRIMEA TO UKRAINE TO THE MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDIUM OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION ON THEIR WAY TO THE CANTEEN⁴⁹

Viktor G. Vishnyakov,
Doctor of Law, Professor (Moscow)

N. Khrushchev could have solved the task – to transfer Crimea to Ukraine – with the Constitution and law, but in that case, he would have inevitably been faced with a complicated, long, and not properly tried and tested constitutional procedure of such a transfer. And this procedure could have brought law restrictions, among other things. Moreover, they had to challenge the political opposition in the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party represented by hardliners. They were still energetic and significantly more experienced in solving state issues. They were cautious and conservative.

N. Khrushchev decided to go right through in a quick and resolute manner. One version says that he announced his decision to transfer Crimea to Ukraine to the members of the Presidium of the Party's Central Committee as if it was not a big deal – during a break at one of the Presidium sessions **on their way for lunch**. “By the way, colleagues, there is a proposal to transfer Crimea to Ukraine,” he said casually. And he explained: “That’s easier”.

“Why? What’s easier?” his colleagues were startled. “Easier, that’s it,” Mr Khrushchev answered. No one had enough courage to contradict him. A wish expressed by the First Person of the Leading Party in words typical for the Party – there is a proposal – was a law⁵⁰.

One more fact speaks for N. Khrushchev's resolute personality. Georgy Myasnikov, a former Second Secretary of the Crimean Regional Committee of the USSR Communist Party, recalls when D.S. Polyansky (a former Chairman of the Crimean Regional Executive Committee in 1954) was on the rise: Mr Khrush-

49 Paragraphs 2, 3, 5 (p. 29-88) from Chapter 1 in a book: Vishnyakov V. G. *Crimea: Law and Politics*. M., YURKOMPANI, 2011. 620 p. The book by V. G. Vishnyakov “Crimea: Law and Politics” kindly provided this material was devoted to studies into the topical problems of Crimea's and Sevastopol's law status. This book is unique because the author holistically looks at the issues of the illegal transfer of Crimea and Sevastopol from the USSR to Ukraine from 1954 up to 2010 in the context of interaction between law and political factors. This interaction is described in terms of constitutional and international law. It has been proved that the Ukrainian part lacks any law grounds at all stages of the Crimean problem, while the problems of Crimea and Sevastopol City were solved by political pressure on Russia and violation of its national interests. The book characterizes the trade-offs on the Russian side when Russia's territorial integrity was protected, as well as the strong state opinion of an MP group of the State Duma and members of the Federation Council of the RF Federal Assembly about the protection of Russia's national interests. A committed position of the population in Crimea and Sevastopol City about their status restoration as a constituent of Russia was paid great attention to. Being an MP of the State Duma of the RF Federal Assembly (1993-1999), V. G. Vishnyakov personally contributed into preparation and implementation of many regulatory documents connected with the solution of the Crimean issue.

50 <http://www.pravda.ru/world/former-usse/ukraine/19-02-2009/302213-ukraine-O>.

chev, Mr Titov, and Mr Polyansky met in Crimea. Mr Khrushchev voiced the idea of Crimea's transfer to Ukraine. Mr Titov (a former First Secretary of the Crimean Regional Committee) rejected the idea at once, while Mr Polyansky said that the idea was genius. The next day, the plenary session was convened, Mr Titov was dismissed, while Mr Polyansky was appointed Secretary of the Regional Committee" (a diary entry of 4.02.1973)⁵¹. The Crimean question was on the agenda for the Presidium of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party, session was held on 25 January 1954. G.M. Malenkov chaired the session. The session was attended by N.S. Khrushchev, K.E. Voroshilov, N.A. Bulganin, L.M. Kaganovich, A.L. Mikoyan, M.Z. Saburov, M.G. Pervukhin, the members of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party; N.M. Shvernik, P.K. Ponomarenko, the candidates for the members of the Central Committee Presidium; M.A. Suslov, P.N. Pospelov, N.N. Shatalin, the secretary of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party.

An extract from Minutes n.49 of the session of USSR Communist Party Central Committee "On the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR" was very concise:

Be it hereby resolved that:

Approve the attached draft Order of the USSR Supreme Council Presidium with the amendments agreed on at the session about the transfer of the Crimean Region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

Acknowledge that it is reasonable to organize a special session of the USSR Supreme Council Presidium about collaborative statements from the Presidiums of the Supreme Councils of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR about the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. Secretary of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party N. Khrushchev⁵².

The draft of the Order was discussed and approved without the Chairmen of the Presidium of the Supreme Councils of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR. The information about the content of the approved draft of the Order of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR and the amendments agreed on at the session remains to be unknown.

On 1 February 1954, N. Khrushchev was given a note signed by Mr Suslov and Mr Pegov for approval. It said about the procedure concerning the session of the USSR Supreme Council Presidium about "collaborative statements" from the RSFSR Supreme Council Presidium and the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council Presidium about the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. Apparently, the Presidiums of the Supreme Councils of the two Union Republics did not have enough time to prepare and approve of these statements. And the events that followed showed that they did not approve of the statements, which were not presented to the USSR Supreme Council Presidium. And

51 <http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki>.

52 ALRF.F.3.Series10.D.65 P.1,4-6. An original document.

one of the reasons that “collaborative statements” were not presented was probably that the Presidiums of the Supreme Councils of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR had to find the legal grounds for the approval of these statements. The Article 32 of the 1937 RSFSR Constitution declared that the RSFSR Supreme Council Presidium is fully accountable to the RSFSR Supreme Council. Article 33 of the same Constitution, which lists Presidium’s powers, said nothing about its right to approve of the statements (including the collaborative ones) about the areas’ transfer from the RSFSR to other Republics. This list did not even include a term “transfer” at that time. A similar situation occurred in Ukraine.

It seems that the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council had some doubts and uncertainties. On 5 February 1954, the RSFSR Council of Ministers with no power to solve territorial disputes unilaterally and hastily approved of the Resolution “On the Transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR”. The Crimean question was improperly moved from the constitutional area to the economic area. Keeping in mind “the territorial proximity” of the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR, common features of economy and close economic and cultural ties between the Crimean region and the Ukrainian SSR, the RSFSR Council of Ministers resolved as follows: they deemed to be fit to transfer the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. This was followed by a request to the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council “to review this question” and to present “the respective resolution” to the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council⁵³.

They could not do it in a simpler way. There arose some obstacles violating different constitutional procedures and law-based grounds. Moreover, the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council was prescribed to consider the resolution approved of by the RSFSR Council of Ministers and to present “the respective resolution” to the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council. Top-down relationships between the executive and legislative bodies reveals the role of each in solving the Crimean question.

The question was solved not with the Constitution but due to the territorial proximity of the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR, similar features of economies and close economic and cultural ties between the Crimean Oblast and the Ukrainian SSR. Overall, these were the factors to justify the transfer of Crimean to Ukraine.

The same day (the second half of the day, to be more exact), on 5 February 1954, the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council held its session. M.L. Tarasov presided at the session. There were Z.A. Andreeva, A.P. Danilova, M.O. Seliukin, D.D. Tsyrempilov, P.V. Shcherbakov, the deputy Chairpersons of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council; I.N. Zimin, the Secretary of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council; P.S. Buzina, P.A. Ladanov, P.L. Pantikov, K.L. Pupshova, A.G. Sokolov, K.V. Stepanov, V.S. Tsvetkova, M.A. Iasnov,

53 Central State Archive of the RSFSR. File 259. Issue 1. Dossier 645. Page 159. An original document.

members of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council; as well as A.T. Rubichev, the RSFSR Minister of Justice; S.L. Zitiukov, the Chairman of the RSFSR Supreme Court; P.V. Baranov, the RSFSR Prosecutor; T.M. Ponomarenko, the Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Crimean Regional Council of Workers' Deputies; S.V. Sosnitsky, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Sevastopol Regional Council of Workers' Deputies.

The agenda carried a question "On the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR". It was resolved: the Crimean Oblast was to be transferred from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR due to common features of economies, territorial proximity, and close economic and cultural ties between the Crimean Oblast and the Ukrainian SSR. This resolution should be presented for approval to the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council. The document was signed by M. Tarasov, the Chairman of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council, and I. Zimin, the Secretary of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council⁵⁴.

Let us note here that, unlike the resolution by the RSFSR Council of Ministers, this resolution did not say that the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council "deemed to be fit" to transfer the Crimean Oblast to Ukraine, and it was presented to the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council as an independent document rather than as a document collaboratively approved with the Presidium of the Ukraine SSR Supreme Council, which was prescribed by the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party. On 13 February 1954, the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council approved its own document and the collaborative resolution "On Submission of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council Concerning the Transfer of the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR"⁵⁵. Even the title of the resolution by the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council was distorted: Kiev Presidium called it "a submission" concerning the transfer of the Crimean Region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR rather than a resolution.

And under this "submission", the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council resolved as follows: to ask the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council to transfer the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. The resolution of the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council also said that it believed Crimea's transfer to the Ukrainian SSR "to be reasonable" due to the common features of the economies of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR, territorial proximity, and close economic and cultural ties, which did not comply with the resolution of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council which said nothing about the reasonability of Crimea's transfer to Ukraine.

It is interesting to note that on 15 February the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council received an urgent letter signed by D.S. Korotchenko, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Ukrainian Supreme Council, and V. Nizhnik, the Secretary of the

54 Central State Archive of the RSFSR. File 385. Issue 13. Dossier 492. Page 1-2. An original document.

55 RF Central State Archive. File 7528. Issue 85. Dossier 94. Page 9. Certified Copy.

Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council⁵⁶, which said that the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council did not ask the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council to transfer the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to Ukraine in the resolution approved by it on 13 February 1954, but rather submitted this question for approval of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council. The difference is fundamental.

Unlike the RSFSR Council of Ministers, which could only “ask”, the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council was authorized to submit the question for approval to the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council as a legislative initiative. Along with that, the Ukrainian title of the resolution lacked the words “on submission by the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council concerning the transfer”: the point was about a new title - “On Resolution of the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council”. Let us remind you that the resolution was independently submitted for the approval of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council. Let us emphasize that all these corrections obscuring the meaning and idea of “collaborative” resolution allegedly submitted by Ukraine were introduced in “a letter” with no appropriate legal layout and not in accordance with the established procedure.

When K.E. Voroshilov opened the session of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council, he announced a discussion, as it was prescribed by the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party, of a question about the collaborative submission of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council and the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council about the transfer of the Crimean Oblast to Ukraine. However, the members of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council were clearly divided into two groups – the one that used a phrase “collaborative submission”, and the one that spoke about “a proposal” or “a submission”. The content and the legal status of the decisions approved by the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council and the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council were respectively different.

M.P. Tarasov put forward a resolution of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council independently approved by the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council for consideration and approval by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council.

D.S. Korotchenko, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council, asked the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council to approve the wording “collaborative submission” of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council and the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council about Crimea’s transfer to the RF Ukrainian SSR. What kind of “collaborative submission” did they talk about?

“To share the proposal” of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council and to ask the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council to approve of some collaborative submission of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council and the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council are two different things. After that, they announced one decision - Resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian

56 Central State Archive. File 7523. Issue 85. Dossier 94. Page 8. Certified Copy.

SSR Supreme Council of 13 February 1954 “On Submission of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council Concerning the Transfer of the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR”. “The Bulletins...” lacked this second decision, only “collaborative submission” was left. What happened with the first “submission”? And what did they vote for: the Resolution of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council concerning the approval of the collaborative submission, the Resolution of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council of 5 February 1954, or a proposal about a transfer of the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR?

M.N. Shvernik, a candidate for a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party, was talking about “a proposal”, not about “a collaborative submission”. III. Rashidov, O.V. Kuusinen, K.E. Voroshilov referred to “a collaborative submission”. Such a diversity of the document’s titles was not accidental. Here is a question – did the document titled “A Collaborative Submission” really exist?

The analysis of the speeches delivered at the session of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council stated with a higher degree of certainty that there was no collaborative submission of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council and the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council, which was said to be one document approved of at a collaborative session of the Presidium of the RSFSR and Ukrainian SSR Supreme Councils. It was this document, which was meant in minutes n.49 of the session of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party of 25 January 1954 about the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. Let us remind you that it said about a special session of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council, which had to consider the collaborative submission of the Presidiums of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Councils. Interestingly, the text of the official notification about the session of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council of 19 February 1954 devoted to the collaborative submission of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council and the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council about the transfer of the Crimean Region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR (including the texts of the speeches) and published on 27 February 1954⁵⁷, as well as the texts of the speeches by M.P. Tarasov, the Chairman of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council, D.S. Korotchenko, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council, N.M. Shvernik, Sh. Rashidov, O.V. Kuusinen, and K.E. Voroshilov, the Chairman of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council, significantly differ from the verbatim records of the sessions of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council of 19 February 1954 published 50 years later.

These differences are unlikely to have arisen from “technical” errors or careless editing. The Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party had never made such mistakes. And even the content of the corrections showed a particular focus on evaluating the events back in 1954. And this focus at that time had the fundamental meaning.

57 *The Pravda* as of 27 February 1954, P. 2.

For example, in his speech on 19 February 1954, N.M. Shvernik emphasized that Crimea was a globally significant health resort and noted that it played a crucial role in the USSR economy and would remain to be the first-class health resort. And it was not for nothing that this statement written in the verbatim records of the session of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council on 19 February 1954 was missing from N.M. Shvernik's speech was published in the *Russian Newspaper* on 10 February 2004.⁵⁸

Therefore, let us note here that the speeches at the sessions of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council could be compared only from two official sources: Pravda newspaper of 27 February 1954 with the published material "In the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council" and the Bulletins of the USSR Supreme Council. These two sources published identical information.

Unfortunately, many media publications about the sessions of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council of 19 February referred to different "secret" versions of the verbatim records (probably, to add some thrills) of no official nature. For example, on 19 February 2004, Rosyiskaya Gazeta published an article by E. Guseinov titled Crimea went missing on the way to Communism⁵⁹. The publication was based on the materials in a journal "Historical Archive" #1, 1992, and contained a number of gross distortions in the names of the official sources. The article might not be worthy of attention but for the fact that Rosyiskaya Gazeta had the status of an official source. This source was not allowed to have these distortions found in the article by E. Guseinov.

1. E. Guseinov edits and randomly divides the text of the verbatim records of the session of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council into sections: Russia starts and loses; Crimea is transferred with the care of a man, etc. These shallow journalistic clichés are definitely not applicable to the text of the official documents.

2. E. Guseinov suppresses the following phrase from the official text of the speech by the Chairperson of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council M.P. Tarasov: "We would like to request the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council to approve of our submission concerning this question" (the question about the transfer of the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR – author's note). The word "submission" of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council in this phrase is clearly separated from a "collaborative" submission, which was allegedly presented to the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council by the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council and the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council, (that D.S. Korotchenko who gave his speech after M.P. Tarasov talked about).

3. D.S. Korotchenko's speech missed one paragraph starting with the words: "Working people of Soviet Ukraine firmly remember and will never forget for years

58 Bulletins of the USSR Supreme Council. 9 March 1954. #4 (798). P. 170.

59 Rosyiskaya Gazeta as of 19 February 2004.

to come that our friendship, assistance and support of the brotherly Russian nation and other nations of our Motherland, continuing care of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party helped the Ukrainian people achieve great success in flourishing economy and culture – national in form and socialistic in content”.

4. A phrase “this decision (about Crimea’s transfer from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. – author’s note) was welcome with gratitude and approval” missed a word “and approval”.

5. N.M. Shvernik’s speech lacked a phrase “it is for sure that for the years to come Crimea will remain to be the first-class Union health resort”.

6. The words “in our socialistic country” in O.V. Kuusinen’s speech are replaced by the words “in our country”.

7. K.E. Voroshilov’s speech missed the words: Crimea “was and will be the Soviet citadel at the Black Sea” and others.

This type of distortion carried a clear ideological nature. If the author of this book has his purpose to remove the distortions which were introduced purposefully or by mistake by the Ukrainian “data journalists” in describing those distant events, then the purpose of E. Guseinov was to ridicule the nationalism ideas which actually underlies the brotherly friendship of the Russian and Ukrainian nations in the manner of mediocre efforts to look smart. A modern liberal with his impudent cynicism cannot understand the nations’ friendship by his nature. While at that time these ideas about the friendship and cooperation defined the relationships of friendship between the nations of Azerbaijan and Armenia.

And, finally, here is one more violation of the law by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council. On 19 February 1954, it approved of the resolution with the breach of quorum: **there were only 27 members**. And again, politics prevailed over law. The Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council violated the Constitution of the Soviet Union and voted for Crimea’s transfer to Ukraine.

We believe that N. Khrushchev’s voluntarist policy towards Crimea was one of the key reasons to dismiss him from the office of the first secretary of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party in 1964. There was a favourable moment to evaluate N. Khrushchev’s voluntarism in the question of Crimea’s transfer to Ukraine, its return to Russia. Unfortunately, this did not happen (L.I. Brezhnev, an appointee of the Ukraine political elite, was elected as the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party).

Crimea’s transfer to Ukraine was given a top-secret status. The respective resolution by the Presidium of the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party was not published at all. The Order of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council of 19 February was published only on 28 February 1954. The Deputies of the respective Supreme and local councils of the working people did not participate in the discussion and approval of the solution of the “transfer”.

Thus, it was not a “transfer” of Crimea from the brotherly Russian nation to the Ukrainian nation but rather an illegal deed of the Soviet Union, RSFSR, and

Ukrainian SSR agencies in power. That was a lordly gesture of the Party sole ruler at the expense of the Russian people's interests.

That was not a transfer but rather an authoritative secession of the Crimean Oblast from Russia.

**THE HISTORY OF THE REFERENDUM HELD
ON JANUARY 20, 1991, ON THE TERRITORY OF CRIMEA FOR
THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE CRIMEAN ASSR
AS THE CONSTITUENT ENTITY OF THE SOVIET UNION
AND A MEMBER OF THE UNION TREATY**

Sergey A. Efimov,⁶⁰

a fully-fledged member of the Crimean Academy of Sciences (Simferopol)

The Crimean Regionalism in its modern form was born in Russia in the epoch of the Revolution and the 1917-1920 Civil War. That was the time when it became an unusual response of the Crimean society to the dramatic collapse of the unified state, a manifestation of searching for the place of Crimea in a new system that could have been arisen from all these historic events.

The representatives of various segments of the political area were dynamically accumulating their experience of the Crimean nation building. The Soviet Socialistic Republic of Taurida was set up in March 1918 and headed a Bolshevik socialist revolutionary Soviet People's Committee with A.I. Slutsky as the Chairman. It was followed by the first government of the Crimean region headed by M.A. Sulkevich, a former tsar's Lieutenant General, with the start of the German invasion. When the German army entered Crimea, the Crimean region was governed by the second government headed by S.S. Krymov, the Chairman of the Taurida Zemstvo Assembly. When the Bolsheviks returned to the peninsula in April 1919, they established the Crimean Socialistic Soviet Republic headed by D.I. Ulianov, a temporary acting Chairperson of Temporary Working people and Peasants Government.

A.L. Kopylenko noted that in spite of different circumstances, the Crimean SSR continued its tradition introduced by Taurida SSR and "supported" by two regional governments despite their absolutely opposite social, economic, political grounds. But, "if the leaders of the Soviet Taurida purposefully followed their line, the Sulkevich government was supported by the German army, the government of the Soviet Crimea balanced between the volunteer fighters and Antanta, then the Crimean SSR was firm in its "focus" on the Soviet Russia"⁶¹.

We would like to draw the readers' attention to the fact that the Republic set up in 1991 was called the Crimean Republic. This is fundamentally important because the name did not mention the Taurida Province, which meant a fully-fledged focus of the Bolsheviks on the fact the Berdiansk, Dneprov, and Melipotol areas belonged to the Soviet Ukraine⁶².

60 S.A. Efimov is a deputy of the Supreme Council of Crimea of the first session, the first senator in the history of Crimea, the Chairman of the Crimean ASSR in the Council of Republics of the USSR Supreme Council, one of the Referendum initiators in Crimea, a Full 1-class State Counsellor of the Republic of Crimea.

61 O.L. Kopilenko Autonomous Republic of Crimea: Issues of Legal Status. Kiev: Takson, 2002. P.52.

62 M.Iu. Krapiventsev Transformation History of Political and Legal Status of Crimea in 1917-1921: Thesis of

But state construction of the Crimean SSR was interrupted with the advance of the white army: by 26 June 1919, the united forces of Antanta and the Volunteer Army occupied all territory of the peninsula, the Crimean SSR ceased to exist⁶³.

A.I. Denikin was an advocate of “unified and indivisible Russia” and included Crimea in the re-emerged Taurida Province, which, in its turn, was included into the established Novorossiysk Region together with Kherson and Odesa Provinces. However, by autumn, the following year the pendulum of the military success swung to the Red Army, and on 16 November 1920, M.V. Frunze sent a telegram to V.I. Lenin: “Today, our cavalry seized Kerch. The Southern Front is eliminated”⁶⁴.

The Bolsheviks had to solve the problem of the administrative territorial status of Crimea for the third time. Despite having the experience of two Crimean Soviet Republics, the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) did not develop the achievements they had already had in this area and left this question open for further exploration.

The power was handed over to the Crimean Revolutionary Committee which was established two days earlier by the Revolutionary Military Council of the Southern Front and the Crimean Regional Committee of the Russian Communist Party (of Bolsheviks) and was headed by B. Kun since 16 November 1920 “up till the election of the Councils by the working people and peasants of Crimea”⁶⁵.

Only on 18 October 1921, long-term work in defining the political-legal status of Crimea was completed with the approval of the resolution of the Russian Central Executive Committee and the RSFSR Council of People’s Commissioners “On the Autonomy of the Crimean Soviet Socialistic Republic”⁶⁶. This resolution is prescribed as follows:

“1. To set up the Autonomous Crimean Socialistic Soviet Republic as a part of the RSFSR within the Crimean Peninsula with the existing districts: Dzhankoi, Yevpatoria, Kerch, Sevastopol, Simferopol, Feodosia, and Yalta”.

The comments to Article 1 of the resolution said: “To solve the question about the northern borders of Crimea, organize a committee with the representatives of the RSFSR NRVD, USSR, Crimean SSR, and Narkomnats, the decision of this committee was approved by the Russian Central Executive Committee”⁶⁷.

the PhD in Historical Sciences. Moscow, 2014. P. 126.

63 T.V. Bikova Establishment of the Crimean ASSR (1917-1921). Kiev: Ukraine History Institute NANU, 2011. P. 105-106.

64 Civil War in Ukraine. 1918-1920: Collection of documents and materials. In 3 volumes. Vol. 3. Kiev. 1967. P. 764.

65 Quoted from A.G. Zarubin, Zarubin V. G. With no winners. From the History of the Civil War in Crimea. 2nd edition, Simferopol: AntikvA, 2008. P. 669.

66 Crimean ASSR (1921-1945). Compiled by Iu.I. Gurbani. Simferopol: Taurida, 1990. P. 254-256.

67 Let us note here that even at the preliminary stage, on 25 June 1921, the Committee for developing the Constitution of the Crimean Republic states the need to attach a part of the territory directly adjacent to Crimea, specifically the Chongar Peninsula and the district to the north and west, including Genichesk City, with the total area of 89,809 arpents (1 arpent = 10 925.4 m² = 1.0925 hectares). Such an approach was explained by the need to concentrate the issues of salt mining over Sivash salt basin in the Crimean Soviet People’s Economy and the need

The 1st Founding Congress of the Councils approved the “Constitution of the Crimean Socialistic Soviet Republic” on 10 November 1921 finally established the political-legal arrangements for the third Crimean Republic⁶⁸. Let us note that the official name and the text of the Constitution lacked any sign of “autonomous” nature of the Republic, but there was a special accent on the fact that “the Crimean SSR declares its solid determination to remain one of the parts of the common federation of the great Russian Republic as a close and full political and economic union for the collaborative fight for the victory of the Communistic Revolution. It follows from this that the Crimean SSR adopts and introduces all acting legislative documents of the RSFSR which are both published or will be published later and reserves the right to change them under the conditions and features of Crimea”.

Let us also state that a widely used title “Crimean ASSR” which was indirectly distributed by many researchers during the third Crimean Republic appeared only in the second half of 1925 and was finally documents in the Constitution approved of on 5 May 1929 at VI Crimean Congress of the Councils.

During the Great Patriotic War, the Crimean Peninsula appeared to be the arena of violent battles between the Red Army units and the German and Hungarian invaders. When Crimea was freed in 1944, the Crimean Tatars and the representatives of some other ethnical groups were evicted from Crimea for their cooperation with the occupants. In a year, on 30 June 1945, the Crimean ASSR was transformed into the Crimean Oblast within the RSFSR which was against the Constitutions of the Crimean ASSR, RSFSR, and USSR, while on 19 February 1954 the Crimean Region was transferred from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR to commemorate the 300th anniversary of Ukraine’ reunification with Russia.

The next stage in the history of the Crimean statehood building was associated with the events of the late 1980s-early 1990s. Perestroika Processes in the USSR, as well as specific problems, which Crimea faced at the end of the 80s, resulted in the update of the regional agenda.

A lack of adequate balance of powers between the Union Centre and the regions could be one of the reasons for this. Let us add here that together with the absolute power of the USSR Communist Party, the situation locally worsened due to the “natural” wish of the Party members to follow mainly the orders from the Centre, which sometimes was against the actual needs of the fed territory. For example, the Crimean regional identity was predominantly developed due to the

to increase the commodity capacity of the peninsula by attaching a fertile territory. This offer from the Committee submitted for approval to the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee was not supported. One more project of the Crimean SSR expansion with the attachment of four-time larger territories of 37,500 arpents populated by up to 90,000 people was not supported as well. This project was prepared by the Commission for administrative-economic zoning established by the resolution of the Crimean Central Executive Committee and the Crimean Council of People’s Commissioners. The leaders of Soviet Ukraine firmly stuck to the III Statements of the Central Rada.

68 Crimean ASSR (1921-1945). Compiled by Yu.I. Gorbunov. Simferopol: Taurida, 1990. P. 256-262.

large-scale protest public rallies against the construction of a nuclear electro-station on the peninsula. Secondly, the Crimean Tatar repatriates extensively started to return to Crimea. This required a significant expansion of the regions' powers for a more successful solution to the problems. Finally, the Crimeans had to articulate their attitude to the national revival in Ukraine with some aspects (declaring the Ukrainian language to be the only official language, distancing from the unified cultural space, etc.) being threatening for the majority of the population in Crimea who believed the higher status of the region could guarantee the protection of their regional features and interests.

The discussions of the 1980s held by both "formal" and "informal" public organizations proposed different ideas about a higher status of Crimea. The elections to the Crimean Regional Council of the People's Deputies scheduled on 4 March 1990 and based on democratic principles for the first time for many years pushed people to start thinking about achieving actual goals rather just thinking about a higher status of the region. They proposed various forms to restore nationhood: from an autonomous region to a union republic. V.G. Zarubin, a historian, elected as a deputy of the Crimean Regional Council, noted that the idea of a region's higher status "was voiced by about 80 per cent of the deputy candidates"⁶⁹.

"Meanwhile, at the turn of the 1980s-1990s, the peninsula's Soviet Party elite did not raise any ambitious tasks. The most important thing for it was to preserve the power in the rapidly changing situation"⁷⁰. N.V. Bagrov, the due to become First Secretary of the Crimean Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, recalled: "for the first time [we] actually reached the development of the election platform, proposed the draft document to all Crimeans for discussion, took into account all opinions, and approved of it at the Plenary Assembly of the Regional Committee"⁷¹. However, let us note that, to the regret of wide strata of, including the Party active members, non-Party enthusiasts, the Crimean Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine in its election statements did not cautiously move beyond the initiative to approve of a special law about Crimea as a Union Health Resort.

The newly elected Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies moved from a theoretical task about a Region's higher status to its practical implementation. The second session of the Regional Committee established an Organizing Committee on developing and summarizing the offers about Crimea's status. The Organizing Committee consisted of the Regional Council Deputies, the USSR and Ukrainian SSR People's Deputies elected from the Crimean Region, representatives of the national cultural societies, Crimean Tatar organizations, and scientists.

The Organizing Committee proposed autonomous republic as the most adequate type of a higher status.

69 How nationhood was born. An interview with V. Zarubin and B. Kizilov. Crimean News. 1993. 12 February.

70 V.G. Grigoriants, S.S. Zhiltsov, A.V. Ishin, A.V. Malgin. Ukraine's Federalization: From Unity via Diversity. M.: East - West, 2011. P. 194-195.

71 N.V. Bagrov. Time of hopes and concerns. [No publishing location and year]. P. 70.

It was much more difficult to define the mechanism for adopting the decision. None of the deputy candidates and representatives of the academic expert community had thought about this issue during the election campaign. They just voiced their final goal (Autonomous Republic, Union Republic, etc.). The concrete offers about the mechanism for decision – at the Crimean Referendum⁷² – were given by S.A. Efimov, N.V. Kosukhin, Yu.D. Rozgoniuk, I.V. Bogadelnikov, Yu.B. Makeev (the first three of them were elected as Deputies). To show a full electoral picture, we can say that all of them, except for Yu.B. Makeev, were the members of the USSR Communist Party⁷³.

As the members of the Organizing Committee could not work out a consolidated opinion, the third session was proposed to consider the following options:

1. Via the Congress of the People's Deputies of Crimea at various levels (an offer from B.V. Kizilov and Yu. A. Meshkov, Deputies).

2. Via the Congress of Crimea's Peoples (an offer from L.I. Grach, an MP, and the Second Secretary of the Regional Committee of Ukraine Communist Party).

3. Via a collaborative Congress of the Crimean Regional and Sevastopol City Council with delegated Deputies from the local Councils and representatives of the national cultural communities.

4. Via the session of the Crimean Regional Council with the delegated Deputies from the Sevastopol City Council and representatives of the national cultural communities.

5. Via the session of the Crimean Regional Council with the invited chairpersons of the Sevastopol City and other Councils of the region and the representatives of the national cultural communities.

Let us note here that if the first offer originally referred to the Constitution of the Crimean ASSR of 1929 written before the USSR introduced the overall direct and equal voting right, then the second offer had nothing to do with the theoretical grounds of the state construction⁷⁴. The third, fourth, and fifth offers carried the burden of the drawbacks from the previous two ones.

72 I believe it is appropriate to say that the Crimeans faced the referendum issue back in 1917. The Resolution of II Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (of Bolsheviks) in Taurida Province adopted on 24 November 1917 stated:

“Considering the fact that the population in Crimea consists of different nationalities with the Tatars not being the domineering nation (only 18% from all population), the Congress assumes the Crimea's Autonomy Referendum (popular election) among the population in Crimea to be the only right decision due to the local peculiarities...” (See Fight for Soviet power in Crimea. Documents and materials. Simferopol, 1957. Volume 1. P. 118) To be honest, when the Bolsheviks came to power during the Civil War and even after irrevocable enforcement of the Soviet power in Crimea, they did not implement their decision.

73 At the time when these events were unfolding, S.A. Efimov was the Director of Taurida Simferopol Regional Centre of Scientific Technical Crafts of Youth, N.V. Kosukhin was a Mi-8 helicopter mechanic in Factory Consolidated Air Detachment (Simferopol), Yu.D. Rozgoniuk was an assistant at the Crimean State Medical Institute, a PhD (Medicine), I.V. Bogadelnikov was the first democratically elected Rector of the Crimean State Medical Institute, a Professor, a Doctor of Medicine, Yu.B. Makeev was an associate professor at M.V.Frunze Simferopol State University, PhD (Biology).

74 Ironically, L.I. Grach, the initiator of this offer, graduated from the extramural program at the law faculty of Kuban University in 1975, an extramural course at the Higher Party School at the Central Committee of Ukraine Communist Party in 1985, and managed to obtain a PhD in Historical Sciences at the time of the described events.

On the eve of the third session of the Regional Council, there was an equilibrium, which did not allow for the straightforward forecasts: Yu. A. Meshkov and B.V. Kizilov were supported by about a third of Deputies; L.I. Grach won the sympathy of a bit more than a third of the people's representatives.

Considering the fact that N.V. Kosukhin and Yu.D. Rozgoniuk joined the supporters of Yu. A. Meshkov due to some coalition and situation sentiments, then S.A. Efimov was the only one who still stuck to the idea of Referendum. However, on the eve of the session, this no-way-out power landscape among the Deputies made the author of this article be cautiously optimistic by setting for the need to continue the work aimed to explain the dead-end nature of the ways proposed by the Organizing Committee: none of them had any serious law implications. The detailed consultations with the proponents of organizing "a congress of the People's Deputies of Crimea from various levels" who promised to support the author's offer in case of a deadlock enhanced the optimism. Ultimately, this is what happened. Later, V.G. Zarubin and B.V. Kizilov, Deputies of the Supreme Council of Crimea, recalled: "During the whole day, the third session of the Regional Council (September 1990) was discussing these offers and finally rejected them as not reasonable and legitimate. The offer from S.A. Efimov, a deputy, about conducting the Crimean Referendum was accepted"⁷⁵.

Just to add, let us give you one more evidence from one of the leading Crimean political experts and at that time the Head of the Ideological Regional Council of Ukraine Communist Party A.A. Formanchuk, "...Sergey Efimov was the closest to actual understanding of the problem with Crimea's status. It was he who proposed to solve it with the Referendum, which initially was perceived by the Regional Council of the Party as an ideological heresy. At that time, it was not a common thing to admit that, it was rather unpleasant"⁷⁶.

The session also approved of the statement about the annulment of the 1945-1946 illegal acts which eliminated the Crimean ASSR and sent the statement to the USSR and RSFSR Supreme Councils: "Having the purpose to restore the historical justice and the nationhood of Crimea, the Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies declares about the need to annul the Order of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Council as of 30 June 1945 "On Transforming the Crimean ASSR into the Crimean Oblast within the RSFSR" and the Law of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialistic Republic as of 25 June 1946 "On Abolition of Checheno-Ingush ASSR and on the Transformation of the Crimean ASSR into

75 See V.Zarubin, B.Kizilov. How the Nationhood Was Born. Crimean News, 19 March 1993; V.G. Zarubin. The Crimean autonomy reconstruction in 1991. The issues of the political development of the Crimean Republic in 1991-1993. Historical Heritage of Crimea No.3-4. Simferopol, 2004. P. 93-106; B.V. Kizilov. Autonomy Restoration in Crimea. As was the case. In a Collection Autonomous Republic of Crimea in XXI century: practices, problems, development. Materials of Applied Science Conference. Simferopol: AntikVA, 2006. P. 74; V.G. Zarubin. Reconstruction of the Crimean autonomy. Problems of development of the Republic of Crimea in 1991-1993. In a Collection Autonomous Republic of Crimea in XXI century: practices, problems, development. Materials of Applied Science Conference Simferopol: AntikVA, 2006. P. 122-123..

76 A.A. Formanchuk. Crimean Men in Power (from Bagrov to Aksyonov). Simferopol: Dolia, 2017. P. 388.

the Crimean Region. **The Crimean Regional Council of the People's Deputies believes that Crimea's people should express their will about the state status of Crimea** (highlighted by the author).⁷⁷.

It seemed like everything was clear and evident. However, the Regional Committee of the Party, as A.A. Formanchuk proved that, did not see that way: they needed “profound evaluation of the experts” which P.B. Evgrafov, an associate professor at Kharkov Law Institute, was offered to conduct. A.A. Formanchuk recalls, “Just in several days, we had no doubts that setting up the Crimean ASSR by the Crimean Referendum was the only law-based option to upward the status of Crimea”⁷⁸. Later on, P.B. Evgrafov was the chief developer of A Temporary Provisions about Referendum...”.

And the Deputies in the 42nd Crimean Regional Conference of Ukraine Communist Party which was held a month and a half later had to agree with the idea of conducting the Crimean Referendum, which definitely contributed into its success. “That was the case when the Regional Party the organization could sense the people's sentiments, the general trends, not to be behind the ongoing processes (as it, unfortunately, happened with the USSR Communist Party during perestroika time) rather than just be the head of them and to govern them”, recalled N.V. Bagrov, a later First Secretary of the Crimean Regional Committee of Ukraine Communist Party, who also combined his position with being the head in the Crimean Regional Council.⁷⁹

The fourth extraordinary session of the Crimean Regional council held on 12 November 1990 successfully managed the remained technical tasks: it approved of the Temporary Provisions about the Referendum and its procedure on the territory of the Crimean Area of the Ukrainian SSR, scheduled it, and requested the RSFSR, Ukrainian SSR, Uzbek SSR, Tadjik SSR, Kyrgyz SSR, and Kazakh SSR Supreme Councils to assist in conducting the referendum among previously deported citizens from Crimea who were residing on the respective territories⁸⁰.

On 20 January 1991, the referendum that was the first on the territory of Crimea was held. The total number of citizens in the voting lists was 1,770,841,

77 Statement of the Third Session of the Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies to the USSR Supreme Council, the RSFSR Supreme Council... Administrative territorial transformations in Crimea. 1783 - 1998. Reference Book. Simferopol: Tavriia-Plus, 1999. P. 444. Let us add that on 07 March 1991, the USSR Supreme Council approved of its resolution “On annulment of the legislative acts due to the Declaration of the USSR Supreme Council as of 14 November 1989 “On Invalidating Illegal and Criminal Repressive Acts Against People Who Were Subjected to Forceful Removal and Observing their Rights” and annulled the Order of the USSR Supreme Council as of 30 June 1945 “On Transformation of the Crimean ASSR to the Crimean Region within the RSFSR”.

78 A.A. Formanchuk. Order. Collection of Works. P. 388.

79 N.V. Bagrov. Order. Collection of Works. P. 96.

80 L.M. Kravchuk, the then Chairman of the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council, participated in the work of this session and tried to persuade the Regional Council Deputies in his speech not to approve of the Referendum saying that the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council could make decisions about the restoration of the Crimean ASSR without any Referendum. In this case, it is interesting to note that it was he who specified the words in the Referendum question “...as a constituent entity of the USSR and a member of the Union Treaty” (see more about this in Taurida News. N.2, 1991).

the number of people who were given the bulletins was 1,443,260; 1,441,019 people voted (81.37% out of the listed citizens).

1,343,855 people voted for the restoration of the Crimean ASSR as a constituent entity of the USSR and a participant of the Union Treaty (93.26% out of the ones who participated in the referendum). 81,254 people were against it (5.64% out of the ones who participated in the referendum).

On 24 January 1991, the fifth session of the Crimean Regional council approved of the referendum results and offered the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council to consider and introduce the respective changes in the Ukrainian SSR Constitution documenting the referendum results, and to provide the Congress of the People's USSR Deputies with a statement about introduction of the respective changes and additions into the USSR Constitution and defining the procedure for establishing its powerful units before the Constitution of the Crimean ASSR was approved of.

An impressive result of people's will expression had its effect: on 12 February 1991, the Ukrainian SSR Supreme Council approved of the Law "On the restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialistic Republic"⁸¹. The Crimean ASSR was restored over the territory of the Crimean Oblast within the Ukrainian SSR. "Before the Constitution of the Crimean ASSR with its constitutional units in power", the Crimean Regional Council was recognized to be "the highest agency of the state power over the territory of the Crimean ASSR" and was given the status of the Crimean ASSR Supreme Council. It was prescribed to elect "the appropriate number of the People's Deputies of the Crimean ASSR to the Crimean ASSR Supreme Council from the organizations, national cultural associations and other public organizations of the deported peoples of Crimea during the regional meetings of these organizations and the appropriate number of the People's Deputies of the Crimean ASSR from the People's Deputies of Sevastopol City Council" within a month by a secret ballot procedure⁸².

Later on (on 6 June 1991), the Ukrainian SSR Parliament approved the amendment to Article 75 Chapter VIII of the Ukrainian SSR Constitution: "The Crimean ASSR is an integral part of the Ukrainian SSR and independently solves the issues referred to its competence area"⁸³.

At the end of the article, I see it appropriate to say that the restoration of the Crimean nationhood nearly immediately brought a lot of "experts" who declared and declare now about "the Communist Party" nature of the Republic restoration processes in the Ukrainian political sphere and beyond it.

In spite of the fact that this publication gives clarity to this issue, I believe it is reasonable to give the floor to N.V. Bagrov, a former First Secretary of the

81 355 out of 450 People's Deputies from the Ukrainian SSR participated in the roll call vote, 253 Deputies voted for it.

82 *The Crimean Truth*. 15 February 1991.

83 303 Deputies out of 389 attendees voted for this amendment.

Regional Committee of the Party, who headed the Supreme Council of Crimea after the reestablishment of the republic, “...one can very often face the statements that the autonomy idea in Crimea was imposed on the Crimeans by the Regional Party Organization blessed by the Central Committee of the USSR Communist Party. This conclusion, if we may say so, can be made only if a person did not know the actual situation in the early 90s in Crimea or purposefully kept silent, distorted and shuffled facts in ready-to-use scenarios. The truth was that the idea of a Republic was determined by objective reasons and did not belong to any particular person, organization, or group of people. Everyone arrived at this idea by different roads, from different angles, and this idea of setting up a Republic became a meeting point of various interests and opinions that unites the public life in Crimea”⁸⁴.

84 N.V. Bagrov. The mentioned paper. P. 95-96.

TO THE NATIVE HARBOUR: THE CRIMEAN SPRING AND CRIMEA'S REUNIFICATION WITH RUSSIA

Sergey V. Yurchenko,

Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor, Vice-rector of Crimean Federal University, Head of the Department of Political Sciences and International Relations of V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University

The events of the Crimean Spring happened, first and foremost, because the overwhelming majority of Crimea's residents extensively supported the idea of the peninsula's reunification with Russia. The Crimean Referendum held on 16 March 2014 about the future status and state ownership of the peninsula became a legitimate mechanism for exercising the right to self-determination by the Crimeans.

At the same time, Ukraine and a number of Western states headed by the USA aggressively counteracted the Crimean Referendum so that the Crimeans could not have exercised their right to self-determination without any support from Russia. When the Russian Federation supported will expression of the overwhelming majority of the population in Crimea, it faces unprecedented international pressure from the US and its allies. Russia managed to resist this pressure and took on the role of an independent centre of force in the international arena. Thus, Russia de facto cast a doubt a unipolar model of world order led by the US.

After the USSR collapse, the bipolar world was replaced with a unipolar world with the US being the only superpower having transformed the world in its own interests⁸⁵. While observing this course, the United States focused on opposing the ruling elite of the states against common people; countries agreed to be the American satellites against their regional environment; imposing "a controlled chaos" to reason the US mission as a stability guarantor. Over the post-Soviet space, Ukraine had to become one of these state satellites.

The USSR collapse brought a new balance of forces on the post-Soviet space which was determined by a clearly less important role of Russia in international affairs. Later, L.D. Kuchma, the second President of Ukraine, noted: "The point is in the opposition between America and Russia. You may not use the word "opposition". You can find another word for it. But the thing is that the Americans is pressing Russia in all areas, which is evident"⁸⁶.

The United States were striving to be a political referee in Eurasia by establishing new independent states as a factor to prevent the consolidation of the former Soviet Empire space.

Z. Brzezinski, an influential American researcher and a public official, emphasized that Ukraine "being an independent state helped transform Russia. Russia

85 Odom W. *America's Inadvertent Empire*. Odom W., Dujarric R. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004. 285 p. P. 205.

86 L.D. Kuchma. *After Maidan. Notes of the President. 2005-2006*. K:Dovira, M: Vremia, 2007. P. 260.

ceases to be the Eurasian Empire without Ukraine... However, if Moscow regains its control over Ukraine with its 52-million population and huge resources, as well as the exit to the Black Sea, then Russia will immediately get the resources to become a power Empire spreading in Europe and Asia”⁸⁷. These believes defined the USA's strive to strengthen Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic focus.

At the same time, the geographical location of Ukraine, its historical past and population's sentiments did not allow for a unidirectional nature of its foreign policy. That is why, maintaining the balance between the “Western” and

“Eastern” directions of Ukraine's foreign policy were a never-ending challenge for Ukraine. It follows from this statement that its foreign policy during its independence period focused on manoeuvring among three centres of force - the USA, EU, and Russia.

The so-called Crimean question became one of the pivotal geopolitical factors blocking the Euro-Atlantic direction in the foreign policy of Ukraine leaders. In 1991, Ukraine obtained independence together with Crimea. The leaders of the Russian Federation headed by B.N. Yeltsin did not want to get into a military-political conflict with Ukraine with the nuclear weapon on its territory during the USSR disintegration and recognized the fact that Crimea belonged to Ukraine⁸⁸. At the same time, the question of Crimea and Sevastopol City as the chief base of the Black Sea Fleet became one of the most problematic “nodes” in the Russian-Ukrainian relations in the post-Soviet period⁸⁹.

On 21 May 1992, the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation approved of a resolution “On the law-based evaluation of the decisions of the supreme agencies of the RSFSR state power towards changes in Crimea status approved of in 1954”. The Russian Parliament acknowledged as not having any legal force once the decision was approved of by the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council of 5 February 1954 “On transfer of the Crimean Region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR” as the one approved of with the violation of the RSFSR Constitution and legislative procedure⁹⁰.

Lengthy negotiations between the Presidents of Russia and Ukraine about the future of the Black Sea Fleet brought a compromise in solving the Crimean question. A juridical dispute about the territorial ownership of the Republic of Crimea was outside the negotiation agenda. The negotiations ended with the agreements between Ukraine and the Russian Federation about the separation of the USSR

87 Z. Brzezinski *Great Chessboard: (Lordship of America and its geostrategic imperatives)*. – M.: International relations, 2003. – 256 p. – P. 62.

88 V.V. Petrovs'kiy *Українсько-російські стосунки в сучасній західній науковій літературі (1991-2001)*); thesis of Doctor of Historical Sciences: 07.00.06./Petrovskii Volodimir Volodimirovich. – Kharkhiv, 2003. – 563 p. – P. 331.

89 Malgin A. *Crimean Node. Notes of Political History of the Crimean Peninsula. 1989-1999*. – Simferopol: Novyi Krym, 2000. – 161 p.

90 About the law-based evaluation of the decision taken by the higher bodies of the RSFSR state power in changing Crimea's status approved of in 1954 [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901607649>

Black Sea Fleet, about the basing of the Black Sea Fleet of Russia on the territory of Crimea. The achieved outcomes were enshrined in the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine (so-called “Big Treaty”). The Treaty was signed on 31 May 1997 in Kiev by the Presidents of L.D. Kuchma and B.N. Yeltsin⁹¹.

The Big Treaty significantly improved the Russian-Ukrainian relations. However, the agreements about the basing of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Crimea were constantly criticized by the pro-Western forces in Ukraine. The Russian military base on the territory of Ukraine was the major barrier for implementing the accession of Ukraine to NATO membership.

For Ukraine, the Crimean issue was both an international and domestic problem. The Crimean Referendum of 20 January 1991 restored the Crimean ASSR on the territory of the peninsula. The leaders of Soviet Ukraine recognized the Crimean ASSR and took resolute steps to constitute the Crimean ASSR as an integral part of the Ukrainian SSR. Later on, Ukraine with one Autonomous Republic left the USSR⁹².

Pro-Russian sentiments of the Crimeans contributed to the development of an extensive irredentist movement in the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol in the early 90s. In 1994, the pro-Russian forces united their efforts in the Russia Bloc and came to power in Crimea. However, the internal conflict between the President of the Republic of Crimea Yu. A. Meshkov and the Supreme Council of Crimea was the reason to annul the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea, the presidency, and regional political parties by Kiev⁹³. This step weakened the movement for Crimea’s reunification with Russia and deprived of very important political legal mechanisms. At the same time, the Crimeans continued to support the General Ukraine Parties speaking for the union of Ukraine with Russia, the official status of the Russian language, against Ukraine’s entry into NATO.

The events of the Orange Revolution and the Presidency of V.A. Yushchenko in 2005-2010 meant a new stage in Ukraine’s foreign policy with a sharp turn to the US and EU. The priority of the Euro-Atlantic focus in Ukraine’s foreign policy – entry into NATO – was encapsulated at the state level. President Yushchenko assisted in introducing the changes into Ukraine’s military doctrine when the policy towards the Euro-Atlantic integration and entry into NATO was officially recognized to be the crucial priority of the national and foreign policies in Ukraine⁹⁴.

The immediate situation revealed a serious problem in adjusting Ukraine’s

91 Yu. Dubinin. How the legal grounds were found for the Russian-Ukrainian relations // *International Life*. - 2008. - #7. - P. 57-76.

92 N.V. Bagrov. Political legal aspects of the development of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea // *Culture of peoples in Black Sea coastal area*. - 1998. - # 4. - P. 245-250.

93 Malgin A. The mentioned paper

94 .I. Burdyga. Ukraine and NATO: Integration in spite of public consensus // *Pogliadi*. - 2016. - No.3. - P. 2.

foreign priorities and their level of national support. The Ukrainian political elite and the society fell apart in their approach to the entry into NATO. The residents of the South-Eastern regions of Ukraine, including, first of all, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, manifested a high level of aversion towards Ukraine's entry into NATO. When V.V. Putin came to power in the Russian Federation, the Russian state significantly solidified its position in the international arena. On 10 February 2007, Mr Putin delivered a keynote foreign policy speech at Munich Conference for Security Policy Issues. In his Munich speech, the President of Russia said, "Russia is the country with more than a thousand-year history, and it practically always exploited its privilege to deliver an independent foreign policy. We are not going to change this tradition today." Mr Putin also spoke about the unacceptability of a unipolar model of global order for the modern world. He expressed his concern about the fact that "NATO is moving its advanced forces to our state borders"⁹⁵.

Meanwhile, the right nationalist forces in Ukraine after 2004 all the time raised the question about the withdrawal of the Russian Black Sea Fleet from the territory of Crimea. As a result, the President Yushchenko ordered the government of Ukraine to prepare a law project about the termination of the international agreements on the temporary stay of the Russian Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine⁹⁶. The Russian authorities were very reserved in their response to this challenge and complied with the provisions of the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

The Orange Revolution contributed to the political polarization in Ukraine concerning the question of the attitude to Russia, the Russian language, and culture. This polarization was particularly vivid in the Western and South-Eastern regions of the country. The residents of these regions perceived this question as a problem of self-identification, belonging to respective civilization⁹⁷.

Dissatisfaction from V. Yushchenko's policy among the significant amount of Ukraine's population (not only in the South-Eastern part of the country) brought the victory at the 2010 Presidential Elections in Ukraine to a leader of the Party of the Regions Viktor Yanukovich. Crimea became one of the fundamental regions of the South-East of Ukraine that provided the electoral support to Mr Yanukovich and the Party of Regions⁹⁸.

The shift in power in Ukraine opened up "a window of opportunities" to sign a new agreement about basing the Black Sea Fleet of Russia in Crimea. On 21

95 Speeches and discussion at Munich Conference on Security Policy Issues [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/24034>

96 Yushchenko sentences the Black Sea Fleet // *Nezvisimaya Gazeta*. - 2008. - 22 May [Electronic resource]. Access mode // https://www.ng.ru/cis/2008-05-22/1_yushenko.html

97 A. Nikiforov. Project of Ukraine's federalization: Perspectives and threats for the Russian world [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://c-eho.info/proekt-federalizacii-ukrain/>

98 Yanukovich's office in Crimea is pleased with the election results [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // https://lb.ua/news/2010/01/18/20669_shtab_Yanukovicha_v_krimu_dovolen_r.html

April 2010 in Kharkov, Presidents Yanukovych and Medvedev had their negotiations and signed the “Agreement between the Russian Federation and Ukraine about the Presence of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the Territory of Ukraine”, which was unofficially named “Kharkov Agreements” by the name of the place where the Agreement was signed.

The Agreement defined the extension of the existing agreements about the dates of presence of the Black Sea Fleet of Russia on the territory of Ukraine from 28 May 2017 for 25 years with a further automatic extension for the next five-year periods unless either Party informed the other Party in a written form about their termination, no later than least 1-year prior to the period completion. Thus, the presence of the Black Sea Fleet in Crimea was extended up to 2042. The document increased the rent fee for the presence of the Black Sea Fleet on the territory of Ukraine and provision of a gas price discount to Ukraine by the following formula: 100 dollars at the price of 333 dollars and higher for 1 thousand cubic meters of gas, and if the price was lower than 333 dollars, the discount was 30%⁹⁹.

Vladimir Putin, Head of the Russian Government, commented on providing discounts on gas to Ukraine by saying that this was done to solidify the platform in the relations between two countries and to strengthen the trust between nations. He emphasized, “Money, gas, and even fleet are not important. What is really important is the relations between the two nations, trust in each other, understanding common interests, and team spirit”¹⁰⁰.

Viktor Yanukovych’s time in the President Office in Ukraine resulted in the most acute political crisis for the whole history of the independent Ukraine – the so-called Euromaidan. Euromaidan was triggered by the controversial national and foreign policies of Yanukovych’s regime. The concentration of executive and legislative power in the hands of the so-called Donetsk clan escalated intra-elite controversies in Ukraine which sprang up with a growing dissatisfaction of population by oligarchizing of power, economic difficulties, and corruption scales.

These political controversies exacerbated the ethnocultural and civilizational, in a wider sense, split to the maximum in the Ukrainian society. The intra-elite fight spiralled into the fight for the country’s development vector. At the international level, Euromaidan projected a severe geopolitical fight for Ukraine between two centres of force - the united centre of power represented by the USA and the EU states, on the one part, and the Russian Federation, on the other part.

Yanukovych’s strategy aimed at improving the relations between Ukraine and Russia was chosen to be the focus of the criticism for the right nationalistic forces in Ukraine and pro-Western oligarch groups Ukraine met Kharkov

99 Agreement between the Russian Federation and Ukraine about staying of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation on the territory of Ukraine [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/902225159>

100 Chairperson of the Government of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin moderated a session of the Government of the Russian Federation [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://archive.government.ru/special/docs/10308/photolents.html>

Agreements in an ambiguous manner. The opposition blamed Yanukovich for his betrayal of the state interests and declared a partial loss of its sovereignty and a part of the country's territory¹⁰¹. Opposition forces conducted protest rallies in Kiev, Lviv, and Uzhgorod.

The president's proponents claimed that the Agreements stabilized the Russia-Ukraine relations and had a beneficial effect on complicated financial situation in the country and preserved the gas tariffs for the population. The proponents of the Russian Bloc Party organized a meeting to support the Agreements in Sevastopol. At the same time, the largest organization on the peninsula – the Russian Unity, the Crimean Public Political Movement – declared that the Agreement guaranteed the national political stability in Crimea¹⁰².

On the whole, Yanukovich's foreign policy lacked consistency. An attempt to try to have a foot in both worlds arose from his desire to win the next presidential election. Euro-optimistic sentiments were typical for the most part of the population in Ukraine, and the acting President would like to use this factor in his presidential campaign.

On 30 March 2012, the Treaty on the Association of Ukraine with the EU was initialled – preliminary signed by the initials of the officials – as a part of the strategy to get closer to Europe, and on 19 July, Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreement was initialled¹⁰³. In December, the EU Foreign Affairs Council declared that it was ready to sign the Association Agreement with Ukraine at Eastern Partnerships Summit – a program of EU ties development with Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine – which should be held in Vilnius on 28-29 November 2013.

The rapprochement between Ukraine and the EU sparked a response from Russia that warned that the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU threatens the Russian economic interests and could result in Ukraine's withdrawal from the CIS free trade zone. In summer 2013, Russia suspended the delivery of some goods from Ukraine. That is why the Ukrainian leaders again made a strategic move and declared that they were ready to become a partner of the Customs Union, and on 21 November, they said that they refuse to sign the Association Agreement as they needed extra discussion of some provisions¹⁰⁴.

But the manoeuvring possibilities between the centres of force were limited. Abrupt changes in Ukraine's strategy in the context of growing competition of the US, EU, and Russia for their influence on the post-Soviet space and social-eco-

101 Medvedev-Yanukovich Agreement is under criticism attacks [Electronic resource]. - Access mode // http://www1.rfi.fr/acturu/articles/124/article_6069.asp

102 Sergey Aksyonov: Decision on the Black Sea Fleet – this is what the Crimeans expected from Yanukovich [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2010/04/23/1110.htm>

103 Benefits of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and European Union [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://ictsd.iisd.org/bridges-news/мости/news/преимущества-соглашения-об-ассоциации-между-украиной-и-европейским-союзом>

104 Association Game [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://vz.ru/politics/2013/11/21/660711.html>

conomic split in the Ukrainian society could not but evoked the response from some populations and the competing “centres of force”, that brought a deep social and political crisis in the country.

President Yanukovich’s refusal to sign the Association Agreement with the EU triggered protests among the population in Western Ukraine which held rallies for the Agreement and against rapprochement with Russia from the middle of November 2013. On 21 November, anti-Government protests called Euro-maidan began in Kiev, their participants, mainly youth and students, protested for Ukraine’s integration with the EU, came to the Independence Square (Maidan Nezalezhnosti), and organized a tent camp there. A. Parubiy, an active participant of the Orange Revolution and a Batkivshchina deputy of the Verkhovna Rada, was its commandant. The leaders of the opposition parties A. Yatsenyuk (Batkivshchina), V. Klichko (UDAR Party), and O. Tyagnibok (Svoboda) headed Euromaidan. Radical nationalist groups united in the Right Sector Organization joined them. Similar Euromaidans were organized by the opposition activists in other cities of Ukraine.

An attempt to disperse the protest rally by force was an internal factor which accelerated the events in Euromaidan. Early in the morning on 30 November, the police demanded the protesters to vacate Maidan under the pretext of its preparation for New Year celebrations. Some protesters ignored this demand. This triggered the military operation of Berkut, a special purpose police unit that was deployed to Kiev from different regions of Ukraine¹⁰⁵. Dispersal of the tent camp was the reason to organize the National Resistance Main Office, Maidan Self-Defence, and to attack the governmental buildings, which occurred on 1 December. Kiev saw severe clashes of the protesting activists with the police and Berkut unit.

An abrupt foreign policy turn of the President of Ukraine towards Russia and partnership of Ukraine with the Customs Unions caused severe aversion in the West: Euromaidan became a de facto geopolitical tool aimed to prevent Ukraine’s partnership with the Customs Union. Washington and Brussels believed the Customs Union to be an integrating project of Moscow in the post-Soviet space.

Euromaidan events forced Yanukovich to seek assistance in Russia, which announced reduced gas prices and credited Ukraine for 15 billion dollars¹⁰⁶.

The US and its allies tried to use the Euromaidan events as a tool to replace the unwanted regime in Ukraine. Having the support from the protest supporters, Maidan was visited by the representatives of the public and official bodies of the Western states, including V. Nuland, an Under Secretary of State of the US, who was accompanied with J. Pyatt, an American Ambassador to Ukraine. Later, Mr Nuland said, “The US has invested about 5 billion dollars in Ukraine since 1991

105 Split Chronicles: what Ukraine would have been like without the dispersal of the Students’ Euromaidan [Electronic resource]. - Access mode // <https://russian.rt.com/ussr/article/454537-ukraina-maydangodovshina>

106 Mass Media Found Out about the Potential Loan of Russia to Ukraine [Electronic resource]. - Access mode // <https://lenta.ru/news/2013/12/16/ukraine15billion/>

when it has again become an independent state after the Soviet Union's collapse. This money was spent on the support of the Ukrainian nation who wish to have a strong democratic government representing its interests"¹⁰⁷.

These words, actually, characterized one of the American technologies to redesign the power in order to achieve their own geopolitical goals which they spent on under the pretext of "democracy development" – "colour revolutions". These revolutions – Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004, Tulip Revolution in Kirghizia, etc. – were the tools to unfold the pro-American regimes.

Foreign organizational and financial help to the protestors generated a powerful protest movement in Kiev, as well as in the regions of the Western and Central Ukraine. Yanukovich's regime appeared to be incapable of regulating the crisis at its bud which became a serious challenge for the Ukrainian nationhood.

On 18-20 February, Kiev witnessed military clashes. Three fighters from the Berkut group from Crimea were killed in these clashes. The number of casualties increased because of the unknown shooters. About 100 people died on both sides.

Under these circumstances, Mr Yanukovich decided to refer to the outside mediation, and on 21 February, he signed the "Treaty on Settling the Political Crisis" with the opposition which was witnessed and signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Germany and Poland, a representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France. V.A. Lukin, a Special Representative of the President of Russia, participated in the negotiations, but did not sign the document. He explained, "There were several questions which we were not given clear answers. The ambiguity refers to the subjects of the negotiations, who is going to be responsible for what"¹⁰⁸.

Ultimately, concerns appeared to be reasonable. The signed Treaty did not work. On 22 February, military groups of Maidan Self-Defence and the Right Sector started to seize the administrative buildings in the capital and took charge of the governmental facilities when the police units left Kiev's centre.

In the evening on 21 February, Yanukovich left Kiev and then Ukraine via Crimea. A. Turchinov headed the Verkhovna Rada. He was also entrusted with the powers of the President, while A. Yatsenyuk became the Prime Minister. The USA and EU acknowledged the legitimacy of a new power.

Leaders of Russia saw these events as the coup. "Russia named the events of the beginning of the year the US organized coup. And this really was the most vivid coup in the history", said George Friedman, an American political expert, the Head of Stratfor Geopolitical Intelligence Platform, in 2014¹⁰⁹.

107 Nuland acknowledged that the USA invested 5 billion dollars in Ukraine since 1991 [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://vz.ru/news/2014/4/22/683263.html>

108 Lukin explained the refusal to sign the Treaty on crisis settlement in Ukraine [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://vz.ru/news/2014/2/21/673829.html>

109 "RF and USA interests towards Ukraine are incompatible". George Friedman, the Head of Stratfor, about the root causes of the Ukrainian crisis [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2636177>

These trends help better understand the inner logic of the Crimean Spring events when the Republic of Crimea followed its path in exercising the right to self-determination. Crimean Spring was the secession of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City from Ukraine that was in deep social and political crisis which ended in the coup when the region was declared to be independent, the Republic of Crimea was set up, and Crimea reunified with Russia under the decision of the Crimean Referendum and signing the Interstate Treaty.

The regional political factors which were the driving forces for the Crimean Spring events were as follows: the leaders of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea headed by the Speaker of the Crimean Parliament V.A. Konstantinov; public organizations with their patriotic focus with the largest one being the Russian Unity Political Party (S.V. Aksyonov, the Chairman) and the Russian Community of Crimea (S.P. Tsekov, the Chairperson). But the multinational population of Crimea were the key factor for the Crimean Spring. The events in Kiev and other cities of Ukraine associated with the organization of Euromaidan, the growth of nationalist sentiments, destabilization of the political atmosphere, and the paralysis of the state government caused serious concern among the population and authorities in Crimea.

The Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was headed by A.V. Mogilev, a representative of the Donetsk elite who was elected for this office in 2011 once he had been dismissed from the office of the Minister of Internal Affairs in Ukraine. During the social and political crisis, the head of the executive power of the Autonomy was guided by the instructions from Kiev¹¹⁰.

In this situation, the Crimean political elite integrated into the system of the Ukrainian power faced a stark choice of time. Initially, the Crimean elite decided to exploit the weak position of the central Ukrainian powers and their stakeholders on the peninsula, the so-called Donetsk elite that occupied the key offices in the government agencies of Crimea.

The Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea appeared to be the main institute of the regional power which consolidated the Crimean politicians agitated about the coup in Kiev. In November 2013-February 2014, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and its Presidium approved of a number of appeals to the President and the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine aimed at placing everything in order for the country, to stop forced displacement of power in the regions, and to protect the achievements of the Crimean Autonomy. A similar scenario was unfolding in the city of Sevastopol.

Addresses and statements approved by the Crimean Parliament during the Crisis are an important source for studying the history of the Crimean Spring. They contained the requirements to protect the Russian civilized space in Crimea, as well as the political requirements.

110 Anatoly Mogilev: "I offered Kiev to introduce the military emergency or ATO in Crimea" [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://ru.krymr.com/a/anatoly-mogilev-intervyu-voennoe-polojenie-v-krimu/30092633.html>

For example, the appeal to the President of Ukraine approved of at the extraordinary session of the Crimean Parliament on 2 December 2013 stated the inadmissibility of the anti-constitutional revenge of the bankrupt political forces supporting extreme nationalism. The authors of this appeal noted that the organizers of the anti-constitutional coup “introduce satanic hatred in the political area towards everything which is connected with the civilized link between the peoples of Ukraine and Russia”¹¹¹.

As Kiev manifested more tension, the leaders and the Deputies of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea expressed more concern and tried to consolidate the population of the Autonomy. The appeal of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to the Crimea on 11 December stated:

“We are very well aware of the instigators and sponsors of this criminal scenario and are completely sure to declare that the destructive processes will, first of all, affect the autonomous status of Crimea. We are at risk to lose everything which we have achieved during the years of our Republic. We will be deprived of our right to speak, to write, to get educated in the mother tongue, Russian language, for the majority of the Crimeans”¹¹².

On 12 December, V.A. Konstantinov, the Chairman of the Supreme Council, by his decree opened a hot phone line “Crimeans, let's protect autonomy!” In three days, more than a thousand Crimeans left for Kiev to participate in the rally aimed to support the policy of the President Yanukovich. In the middle of January, Crimea started to establish people's militia units on a voluntary basis to backlash any possible attempts of the Ukrainian extremists to penetrate the peninsula¹¹³. The Russian Unity Party, the Russian Community of Crimea, Cossack organizations, and veterans of the Afghan war initiated this establishment.

The pro-Russian forces responded by resolute protest campaigns to any attempts to organize staged Euromaidans in Crimea. For example, the attempts of the pro-Maidan forces to organize Euromaidans on 26 February in Sevastopol and on 22 February in Kerch turned out to be a complete fiasco and brought a wave of people's indignation and active counteraction when the Crimeans just dispersed “the activists”. On 8 February, the proponents of the Russian Unity Political Party, the Russian Community of Crimea, and other social-political forces disrupted the so-called Euromaidan Forum in the city of Simferopol¹¹⁴. On 28-30 January, Simferopol and other cities in Crimea witnessed numerous rallies to support the constitutional system and stability in the country.

111 About the appeal of Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to the President of Ukraine V.F. Yanukovich [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://crimea.gov.ru/act/11432>

112 Address of the Presidium of Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://crimea.gov.ru/act/11485>

113 Russian Unity announced mobilization to put up security checkpoints on the entrances to Crimea and to establish the people's militia units [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2014/01/21/3373.htm>

114 Crimeans protested against Euromaidan Forum [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2014/02/08/3411.htm>

In the context of an increase of activity among the Crimeans and outbursts of the national radicals in Kiev, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea warned the country leaders that the peninsula residents would not participate in any non-legitimate elections, would not acknowledge their outcome, and “would not live in Bandera Ukraine”. At first, the Crimean parliamentarians stayed within Ukraine’s federalization in their political demands. However, very soon the agenda included a question of practical discussion of Crimea’s self-determination and its reunification with Russia. These statements could be heard from S.V. Aksyonov, S.P. Tsekov, V.N. Klychnikov, and others, together with the Deputies of the Crimean Parliament.

On February 4, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea discussed the situation in Ukraine, and S.P. Tsekov underlined that “it is the Russian Federation only that could become our guarantor and our protector in this situation”. He called the Presidium and the Supreme Council of Crimea for preparing the appropriate appeal to the Russian Federation “about support, assistance, and protection”. V.A. Konstantinov, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, asked the Front Office to explore this offer and to prepare the respective document¹¹⁵.

On February 19, 2014, when the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea conducted its session, the Head of the Russian Unity Party Sergey Aksyonov said: “If we don’t manage to restore strict order and don’t take legitimate measures towards the radicals who resisted the police officers, the state integrity will be under threat”¹¹⁶.

At that time, Konstantinov visited Moscow and met with the leaders of the parliamentary parties in the Russian State Duma and did not exclude the possibility of Crimea’s secession from Ukraine in case the situation in the country escalates. In one of his interviews, he claimed that if the central power in Ukraine is broken down, the Supreme Council of the Republic will acknowledge only its decisions to be legitimate and pointed out the possibility to denounce the 1954 decisions about Crimea’s transfer to Ukraine¹¹⁷.

On 20 February 2014, several buses with the Crimeans who were returning from the Anti-Maidan in Kiev were attacked by the armed nationalist radicals in the Cherkassk region. Four buses were burnt, while dozens of the Crimeans were beaten, humiliated, and insulted. This caused active discontent among the peninsula’s population whose sentiments affected the Crimean authorities.

The Crimeans’ sentiments were determined, first of all, by the fact that the majority of the region’s population with the Russian mindset was striving for pres-

115 The Crimean Parliament could ask Russia for support [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://rg.ru/2014/02/04/parlament-site-anons.html>

116 Crimean Spring: The idea of Crimea’s reunification with Russia was voiced in the Crimean Parliament a year ago [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://www.c-inform.info/news/id/19188>

117 The Crimean Parliament’s Speaker: Crimea could separate from Ukraine if “the country disintegrates” [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://www.interfax.ru/world/359837>

ervation and development of the relations with Russia. Hidden discontent with Kiev's policy which the population had been experiencing during the Ukrainian period of the Crimean history bursted out in crisis with an important contribution from the pro-Russian part of the Crimean intellectual class and the pro-Russian organizations – Russian Unity Party, The Russian Bloc, The Union, as well as public organizations – the Russian Community of Crimea, the Russian Community of Sevastopol, Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia People's Front, Congress of the Russian Communities of Crimea, a number of Cossacks associations, and others. These were the underlying factors of the Crimean Spring and Crimea's reunification with Russia.

On February 22, 2014, on the Lenin Square in Simferopol, thousands of people paid their last respects to three employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs – D. Vlasenko, V. Goncharov, and A. Fedyukin – killed during the mass riots in the Ukrainian capital. Simferopol residents applauded the fighters of Berkut and the national army who came to pay their last respects to their friends. Thousands of residents met the returned fighters in Simferopol. When the nationalists publicly threatened them to harm the families of the special force soldiers, the Crimeans stood up for their protection. The pro-Russian citizens who were against the coup and demanded Crimea's secession from Ukraine started their permanent protest campaign in front of the building of the Supreme Council of the Autonomy in Simferopol¹¹⁸.

On that day, Kharkov hosted a congress of the Deputies of various levels from the South-Eastern regions of Ukraine, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the city of Simferopol. Congress resolution stated that, among other things, the local self-government units would take all the responsibility in their areas until the constitutional order and legitimacy were restored in the country and the work of the central power units was legitimized¹¹⁹.

However, loud statements were not followed by resolute actions. Potentially, Kharkov congress could become the ground for counteracting the forces who exercised the coup. But the representatives of the majority of regional elite ultimately preferred to find the common grounds with a new Kiev regime to preserve their positions.

The case was different from the situation in Crimea and Sevastopol City where the citizens showed up their higher public and political engagement. On February 23, 2014 - the anniversary of the Soviet Army – there was a public rally on the Admiral Nakhimov Square in the city of Sevastopol with 20 thousand attendees. Before the rally, the City Council did not venture to take the responsibility and to establish the Executive Committee – a local self-government unit – at its extraordinary session. The Deputies decided to hold a referendum about this question. This caused indignation among Sevastopol residents. Those who came

118 Crimean Spring: documents and facts [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://crimea.gov.ru/vesna>

119 Ibid.

to the rally refused to acknowledge the resolutions of new Ukrainian authorities. They expressed their distrust to the city power and demanded Sevastopol to be returned to Russia and to protect its residents by the soldiers of Russia's Black Sea Fleet.

The attendees of the rally elected A.M. Chaly, a Russian businessman, as "people's Mayor" with popular election, announced that police would obey the new city authorities, that they refused to pay taxes to the state budget, called for establishing the people's police groups on a voluntary basis, and offered to conduct the City Referendum. In fact, the power in the city had been transferred to the Coordination Committee for establishing the Sevastopol City Division on Sevastopol Life Support. This Division was the Executive Body of the Sevastopol City Council¹²⁰. Sevastopol was the first Crimean city which resolutely stood up against a new Kiev authority and became an example for other cities to follow.

And the city of Simferopol held two parallel rallies of opponents and supporters of the events held in Kiev. The first ones supported the order restoration in-country, while the second ones were represented by the Mejlis leader R.A. Chubarov demanded the annulment of the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, approval of its new version based on the right of the Crimean-Tatar people for self-determination on "their historical territory" within Ukraine, re-election of the Crimean Parliament and demolition of V. I. Lenin Monument on the similarly-named Square in Crimean capital and monuments over the whole territory of the peninsula within ten days. Otherwise, they promised to "take actions"¹²¹.

It should be noted that the Crimean Tatar question was artificially raised in Crimea by the representatives of the Mejlis illegal ethnic unit (which is now forbidden on the RF territory) which made claims to be an ethnic power unit in Crimea. In their policy, the Mejlis leaders were focused on the union with the nationalist forces in Ukraine. In the context of active pro-Russian movement in Crimea, the Euromaidan organizer tried to use the Mejlis proponents as an opposition to the so-called Crimean separatists – pro-Russian organizations and citizens.

On 23 February 2014, pro-Russian forces held a public rally in front of the building of the Supreme Council in Simferopol where they decided to establish a company of people's volunteer corps.

Some representatives of the Crimean elite had an idea of reunification with Russia due to their refusal to accept Euromaidan, and this idea was supported by the absolute majority of the Crimeans. The Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea became the resistance centre on the peninsula with the V.A. Konstantinov being its leader. The Russian Unity Party headed

120 Sevastopol was far from Maidan. Sevastopol residents are trying to control the future of their city [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://rg.ru/2014/02/25/sevastopol.html>

121 Crimea: Mejlis demands to demolish Lenin in Simferopol and forbid PR [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://gordonua.com/news/politics/krym-medzhlis-trebuets-snosti-lenina-v-simferopole-i-zapretit-pr-11187.html>

by S.V. Aksyonov became the second integral part of the Crimean Spring team, and this Party established the people's volunteer corps to defend the peninsula. All in all, there were 10 companies of the people's volunteer corps, including a Cossack one. Women were enlisted in a medical company. The number of participants in these companies exceeded 2,000 people¹²². Later on, the number of the people's corps soldiers increased up to 11,000 people. In the context of a growing tension, the representatives of the law enforcement bodies showed detachment from the ongoing events.

In the rally in the city of Simferopol, Konstantinov claimed that he was not going to leave the peninsula in those difficult times. "Don't be afraid of anyone! We have enough strength to protect Crimea and the Crimeans, every family and every person. We will protect the Constitution of Crimea," said the Head of the Crimean Parliament¹²³. He announced the extraordinary plenary meeting of the Supreme Council on 26 February.

On 26 February 2014, two-thousand attendee rally – the proponents of the Russian Unity and the proponents of the Mejlis – gathered in front of the Supreme Council building in Simferopol. They held opposing views on the questions which were about to be discussed in the Parliament's session "On the political situation in Crimea" which was supposed to discuss Kiev events and "On the Report of the Council of Ministers in Crimea" which was about the dismissal of the government headed by A.V. Mogilev. The rally attendees clashed here and there, which escalated into mass "pushing" when the Mejlis proponents who had fears about the discussion of the question connected with the status of Crimea and its reunification with Russia tried to push back those who protected the entrance to the Supreme Council and to get into the building of the parliament.

Sevastopol and Yevpatoria residents came to support the pro-Russian Crimeans in Simferopol. Leaders of the parties – the Chairman of the Russian Unity S.V. Aksyonov and the Head of the Mejlis R.A. Chubarov – persuaded the parties to calm down. But due to a coercive confrontation, two people were killed, the Crimean Tatars broke down the doors in the building of the Supreme Council, they got inside, and the session of the parliament of autonomy was disrupted¹²⁴. However, the crowd of thousands of radical activists from the Tatar Crimean Mejlis was rebuked from seizure of the building of the Supreme Council.

S.V. Aksyonov emphasized when describing these events: "What was important was that we managed to avoid the clash with a lot of casualties among the Crimeans of different nationalities. That was the most important that we achieved at that time"¹²⁵.

122 We don't give Crimea away! [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2014/02/23/3433.htm>

123 Ibid.

124 Crimean Spring: documents and facts [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://crimea.gov.ru/vesna>

125 On the rally of 26 February last year, the Russian Unity forbid its proponents to take up arms – Aksyonov [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://www.c-inform.info/news/id/19455>

On that day, there were a lot of checkpoints in Sevastopol with the barriers and antitank hedgehogs at the entrance to the city.

The events of 26 February 2014 divided the active part of the Crimean society into two camps: pro-Russian majority that expressed the interests of the overwhelming majority of the Crimeans of different nationalities and a pro-Ukrainian minority represented by a Mejlis-controlled part of the Crimean Tatars and those who supported the idea of Euromaidan.

Early in the morning on 27 February 2014, the buildings of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea were occupied by unidentified armed people, which was followed by the Russian flags raising up over the buildings. Pro-Russian forces in Crimea badly needed the forceful support. At that time, the expression “polite people” was quite popular; the phrase characterized the actions of the Russian soldiers and was used to denote them.

“Polite people” together with the people’s volunteer corps in Crimea guarded the public order in Crimea¹²⁶. At the same time, they avoided any armed clashes with the security, defence and law enforcement agencies units of Ukraine. These actions disrupted the plans of the Ukrainian authorities to suppress the pro-Russian movement in Crimea with the help of the armed forces.

The political situation on the peninsula drastically changed. The members of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea approved of the appeal to the Crimeans: due to the non-constitutional seizure of power in Kiev, the Parliament of the Republic assumes total responsibility for the events in Crimea and calls for the Referendum on updating of the autonomy status. Parliament Deputies who gathered for the extraordinary session approved of the resolution about the Referendum on updating the status and the authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on May 25, which was later postponed to 30 and then to March 16, 2014.

Also, they approved of the resolution of mistrust to the Council of Ministers and termination of its activities. S.V. Aksyonov was elected the Chairman of the new Government by 53 votes¹²⁷. Attempts of Kiev’s emissaries who came to the peninsula to “find common grounds” with the Deputies failed¹²⁸.

S.V. Aksyonov focused his attention on the disarmament of the Ukrainian police officers and soldiers to avoid any clashes of military confrontation. Coordinated actions of the Crimean people’s volunteer corps and “polite people” in the disarmament of the Ukrainian police officers and military units helped avoid bloodshed on the peninsula. The divisions of the Crimean Berkut and pro-Russian fighters at the checkpoints on the Perekop Strait and the Chongar Peninsula

126 Way back Home – Putin disclosed the details of Crimean’s reunification with the RF [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://ria.ru/20150315/1052668652.html>

127 Aksyonov, the leader of the Russian Unity Party, became the Prime Minister of Crimea [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://www.interfax.ru/world/361702>

128 Crimean Spring: documents and facts [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://crimea.gov.ru/vesna>

controlled the roads from Crimea. The next day, the members of the Parliament were approved of, the self-defence divisions started to control the state facilities. During the night of 28 February 2014, Simferopol and Belbek airports were seized and controlled.

On 1 March 2014, S.V. Aksyonov made an appeal: "Being the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and implementing the duties imposed on me by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, I have made a decision about a temporary resubordinating of the units, branches, power structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, armed forces, Ministry of Emergency Situations, fleet, tax agency, and border patrols to myself. All Commanders must obey my orders and instructions only. Those who object may retire from the service." He also addressed the President of Russia Vladimir Putin with the request to assist in maintaining peace on the peninsula¹²⁹.

The leaders of the Russian Federation saw that the idea of returning back to Russia became a Crimean consolidating purpose in the public consciousness and supported the request of Autonomy's new authorities. On 4 March 2014, President Putin declared about the right of Russia to use all means to protect its citizens in case of threats to their lives in Crimea, about the acknowledgement of S.V. Aksyonov as a legally elected Head of the Government and underlined that

"Only citizens residing on this or that territory can and must define their future in the context of freedom of will expression, safety"¹³⁰.

A visit of the Deputies from the State Duma and Federation Council headed by V. Vasiliev, S. Mironov, V. Zhirinovskiy, and L. Slutsky became an important factor of support for the Crimeans. The Deputies claimed that Russia would protect the population from the forceful actions of the Ukrainian nationalist radicals. Many cities of Russia held large-scale rallies in support of the Crimeans¹³¹.

The USA and EU refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the planned referendum and underlined that any decision about Crimea had to be made by the Ukrainian authorities only rather than the residents of the peninsula.

On 16 March 2014, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol held the Crimean Referendum. The bulletins contained two questions in three languages – Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar: Do you support Crimea's reunification with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation? And do you support the restoration of the 1992 Crimean Constitution and the status of Crimea as a part of Ukraine?

129 Sergey Aksyonov appealed to the President of Russia Vladimir Putin for help [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2014/03/01/3445.htm>

130 President of Russia Vladimir Putin answered the journalists' questions about the situation in Ukraine [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://www.rus.rusemb.org.uk/foreignpolicy/1858>

131 Russia continues experiencing rallies to support the Crimeans [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/364268>

135 observers from 23 countries were registered for the referendum¹³². 623 journalists from 169 mass media organizations were accredited to cover the Referendum process which completely complied with the international law. As a result, 96.77% out of 83.1% of the Crimeans who participated in the Referendum voted for the reunification with Russia, while in Sevastopol 95.6% out of 89.5% of the ones who came to the voting stations voted for it¹³³.

The Supreme Council proclaimed Crimea's independence and requested Russia to include the peninsula into Russia under the people's will expression. The City Council of Sevastopol also approved of the resolution to join the RF as a separate constituent entity – the Federal City.

March 18, 2014. The president of Russia V.V. Putin, the Chairman of the City Council of the Republic of Crimea V.A. Konstantinov, the Head of the Government of the Republic S.V. Aksyonov, and People's Mayor of Sevastopol City A.M. Chaly signed the inter-state Treaty about accepting Crimea to the Russian Federation and establishing new constituent entities within it – the Republic of Crimea and the Federal City of Sevastopol¹³⁴. Many Russian cities held massive rallies with more than 600 thousand people to support the decisions made by the Crimeans and the Russian authorities. Crimea's reunification with Russia was extensively supported in the Russian society¹³⁵. Law about Crimea's accession to the Russian Federation and establishment of new constituent entities was unanimously approved of by the Russian law-makers, and the President V.V. Putin signed the laws about the accession of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City to the Russian Federation and the establishment of the Crimean Federal District¹³⁶.

However, the Crimean Referendum, proclamation of Crimea's independence and its reunification with Russia caused a controversial international response. The opinions of the representatives of the international community were split. G7, NATO, EU, Council of Europe member states believe that Crimea's reunification with Russia was a kind of annexation by nature followed by an armed intervention of RF into Ukraine's internal affairs. On 15 April, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved of the law declaring the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to be the territories occupied by Russia¹³⁷. The Russian Federation

132 EU observers highly evaluated the Referendum process in Crimea [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://ria.ru/20140317/999849681.html>

133 Crimean Spring: documents and facts [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://crimea.gov.ru/vesna>

134 Treaty on the Republic of Crimean joining the Russian Federation is signed [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20604>

135 More than 90% of the Russians agree with Crimea's joining Russia, the survey showed [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://ria.ru/society/20140317/999843494.html>

136 Constituent entities of the Federation. Vladimir Putin approved of Crimea and Sevastopol's accession to the RF [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://rg.ru/2014/03/21/zakon-putin-site.html>

137 The Verkhovna Rada approved of the Law “On providing the rights and freedoms of the citizens lawfully on the temporarily occupied territory of Ukraine” [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://portal.rada.gov.ua/ru/news/Novosty...nyya/91573.html>

justifiably and consistently insisted that the Crimean Referendum of 16 March 2014 was held under the rules of the international law¹³⁸.

The events that had happened demonstrated that the Crimeans exercised their right to self-determination in a legitimate manner. The movement for Crimea's reunification with Russia relied on a strong support from the peninsula's population. If the leaders of Russia had refused to support the Crimeans, this would have led to an armed suppression of the pro-Russian movement in Crimea by Ukraine. This circumstance could have become an ethical, geopolitical, and civilized defeat for the modern Russia. Geopolitically, the fact that the Black Sea Fleet is located in Crimea with its further impact on the Black Sea and Mediterranean region was of primary importance for Russia.

Euromaidan events were undoubtedly aimed at "strangling" Russia geopolitically with the hands of pro-Western nationalist forces in Ukraine. The Crimean Spring became a fitting reply to this challenge. In their strive to be with Russia, the Crimeans revealed themselves to be an integral part of the Russian society and state.

During the rally "Crimea for Russia" in 2014, Vladimir Putin figuratively described Crimea's reunification with Russia. "After a long, difficult, exhausting voyage, Crimea and Sevastopol are returning to their native harbour, to their native shores, to their port of permanent registration – to Russia!"¹³⁹.

138 On the legitimacy of the Crimean Referendum of 2014. Analytical Report. [Electronic resource].

– Access mode // <http://www.ppcrimea.ru/index.php/ru/ofitsialnaya-khronika/15-intervyu/459-o-legitimnosti-obshchekrymskogo-referenduma-2014-goda-analiticheskij-doklad>

139 Putin: Crimea and Sevastopol return to their home harbour – to Russia [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://ria.ru/20140318/1000079137.html>

“THE CRIMEAN SPRING”: GEOPOLITICAL OUTCOMES AND CHALLENGES

Gennady N. Nuryshev,

Doctor of Political Sciences, Professor at Saint Petersburg State Economic University

Viktor G. Kogut,

PhD in Political Sciences (Saint Petersburg)

The events called the Crimean Spring made big news in the world. The international community perceived Crimea's return as the beginning of the Soviet Union's return as a powerful, strong, independent, self-reliant Russia¹⁴⁰. Inside the country, this return was seen to be the restoration of historic justice, a colossal patriotic blast that provided the present authorities with the maximum legitimacy and could mobilize the society for non-implemented historic revenge for the previous defeats, and lead the state to a new geopolitical level.

Today, Transylvania, South Tirol, Catalonia, and Scotland start speaking about the need to consider the practices of the Crimean phenomenon to eliminate the historical injustice in their countries. These processes mean that the global society is moving to the global revolution of the regions, which some researchers believe can be reasonable to call the Revolution of Geopolitical Justice. They think it was this irredentist revolutionary spontaneous move of Crimea that was historically justifiable and determined by the people's will expression¹⁴¹.

The Crimean Spring dramatically started to change the geopolitical situation in the Black Sea region. The geopolitical status of the Circumpontic (all around the Black Sea) region which returned back to Russia is unique because this is the intersection of the geopolitical axes of Greater Eurasia that are located in a fan-shaped manner from the Black Sea. In the geopolitical system of Greater Eurasia's coordinates, Crimea is connected with the planetary mission of Russia as Heartland, which means centrality and singularity of the meridional development synonymous with the North-South geopolitical axis. In these terms, Crimea is a miniature Eurasia, because there are 130 ethnic groups there - Greeks, Germans, Bulgarians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Armenians, who believe themselves to be the Russians or the carriers of the Russian culture and civilization. So, in fact, Crimea is a prototype of the Eurasian integration¹⁴².

The geopolitical role of Sevastopol as a Southern window of Russia with a

140 A.A. Kucherenko. Crimean Spring as a wake-up for the Russian nation//Russia and World: Development of Civilizations. Phenomenon of radical political movements' development in Europe. - M., 2018. - P. 55.

141 A. Nikiforov. R. Crimean contribution into the Revolution of Geopolitical Justice and a new mission of Russia// Copybooks about Conservatism. - M., 2015. -#3.- P. 134.

142 E.V. Emelianenko Crimea as a collecting agent for Eurasia [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://ruskiymir.ru/publications/116308/> (reference date 24.10.2019).

regional forward position and being the crucial geopolitical meeting point of the marine and continental cultures is determined by an access of the Russian civilization to the global world. Epic defence of Sevastopol in the 19th and 20th centuries brought global glory to the city which is identified as a Russian one. Sevastopol is a sacred city, the centre of pilgrimage and patriotic tourism¹⁴³. Sevastopol gave Russia geopolitical advantages, an opportunity to provide a large scale and flexibility, first of all, to the regions of the entire Anatolian Peninsula. At the same time, Sevastopol is the only military and marine base with the capacity to equip and to depart the ships and military machines of the strategic purpose, which makes Russia remain a working regional force with the possibility to control the entire macro-region¹⁴⁴.

The Black Sea is attractive for Russia due to, first of all, several warm-water ports. Russia-driven measures are caused by the geopolitical value of the Black Sea, which connects the Ukrainian conflict and Syria-Iraq dynamic battlegrounds and has access to the states of Central Asia, as well as to the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. NATO countries: Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey also have access to the Black Sea. Other Black Sea region countries – Georgia and Ukraine – would also like to join this block. What is more, the region is located on the oil and gas transit routes from the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, which is why it is crucial for the European Union in terms of energetic security¹⁴⁵.

The Crimean Spring, operations of Russia in Syria strengthened the position and possibilities of the military marine base in Tartus, initiated the establishment of the security zones A2/AD in the Mediterranean region with critical support from the Black Sea¹⁴⁶. This contradicted the geopolitical ambitions of the US, which officially announced the Black Sea – the Caspian region to be the zone of their special energetic interests. It is not for nothing that a Special Department and a Special Advisor of President, State Secretary for the Black Sea – the Caspian Region, and a Special Operating Unit of the Central Intelligence Agency for Monitoring the Political Processes in Black Sea and Caspian countries started to work within the Council of National Security at the US President since 1997. For NATO, the Balkans were and are the road to the Eurasian continent, Afghanistan is a window, while Crimea is the key which unlocks all Eurasian doors¹⁴⁷.

The Western experts believe that Russia’s actions are a direct challenge to implementing the European strategy for the Southern gas corridor, Trans-Ana-

143 Chikharev I. Sevastopol: A new international status [Electronic resource]. – Access mode https://russiancouncil.ru/blogs/ivan-chikharev/sevastopol-novyj-mezhdunarodnyj-status/?sphrase_id=3216004(reference date 25.10.2019).

144 V.P. Petrov. Geopolitical value of Crimea // Bulletin of People’s Friendship University of Russia. Series: Politicalology. - M., 2018. - Vol. 20. - №1. - P.27.

145 T.S. Linnik. Ukraine and Global Geopolitics// Post-Soviet Continent. - M., 2017. - #2 (14).- P. 22.

146 Burton L. Bubble Trouble: Russia’s A2/AD Capabilities // Foreign Policy Association [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://foreignpolicyblogs.com/2016/10/25/bubble-trouble-russia-a2-ad/>(reference date 27.10.2019)

147 R.A. Abdurazakov. On the question of Crimea’s place in foreign geopolitical theory and practices of modern times// Bulletin of Dagestan Scientific centre of RAS. - Makhachkala, 2015. - #56. - P. 75-76.

tolian Natural Gas Pipeline Project (TANAP) which bypassed Russia¹⁴⁸. That is why the Crimean Spring was a jab at the Anglo-Saxon “anaconda”, at the plans to isolate Russia in the northern-east of the continent. Moreover, this was the next step in overcoming the geopolitical consequences of the Soviet Union’s collapse and collecting its geopolitical heritage¹⁴⁹. Russia’s victory in Crimea enhanced its geopolitical status as the global empire solving global-scale geopolitical problems.

During five years within the Russian Federation, the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol significantly improved their geopolitical position. Defence capability of the region has increased during these years. Crimea has become an unwinnable fortress for the geopolitical enemies of Russia. Not only the Crimea, but the Southern Russian territories as well, by the end of 2019 will be covered by the super-powered “Niobii-SV” invincible radars which can easily detect both regular and small unmanned aerial vehicles, stealth planes, and even hypersonic and cruise missiles. These systems monitor the air environment and can operate 24/7 for a long time¹⁵⁰.

For example, the National Interest assumes that the Russian large silo-based turbojet coastal missile system (LMS) “Utes” is a serious threat for the ships¹⁵¹. Besides this system, a new radar “Voronezh-M” of the missile warning system will be deployed at the site of the “Dnepr” radar near Sevastopol. This new Russian early warning and tracking radar for ballistic, cruise and other airborne vehicles¹⁵².

When Crimea reunited with the Russian Federation, Moscow completely restored the military capacity of the Black Sea Fleet and again turned the peninsula, as the West defined it, into an unsinkable aircraft carrier which can control all Black Sea region. Therefore Russia got a real opportunity to equally counteract the countries from the North Atlantic Alliance and to have an access to the Black Sea. Today, the Black Sea Fleet demonstrated its geopolitical functions both in the Black Sea and in the Eastern Mediterranean region. A significant enhancement of the Black Sea Fleet resulted in a higher geopolitical status of Russia in the region of the Black and Mediterranean Seas. A strong and highly technological infrastructure which solidifies the geopolitical space of Crimea is being developed on the peninsula.

Presently, the basis for the stable development of the region has been devel-

148 V.P. Petrov. Geopolitical value of Crimea // Bulletin of People’s Friendship University of Russia. Series: Politology. - M., 2018. - Vol. 20. - №1. - P.27.

149 R.A. Abdurazakov. On the question of Crimea’s place in foreign geopolitical theory and practices of modern times// Bulletin of Dagestan Scientific Centre of RAS. - Makhachkala, 2015. - #56. - P. 75-76.

150 Super powerful radars will appear in Crimea [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://vpk-news.ru/news/5291>(reference date 14.11.2019).

151 Stodolia R. Moscow made Crimea “an unsinkable aircraft carrier” of Russia [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://nahnews.org/1011446-moskva-sdelala-iz-kryma-nepotoplyaemyi-avianosec-rossii> (reference date 15.11.2019).

152 Construction of Voronezh Radar will start in the nearest time [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://topwar.ru/164533-stroitelstvo-rls-voronezh-v-krymu-nachnetsja-v-blizhajshee-vremja.htm> (reference date 14.11.2019).

oped. Simferopol airport was commissioned. The Crimean Bridge has become a symbol of Crimean dream and its confidence in tomorrow. A power bridge running from Krasnodar region broke through the energy blockade of the peninsula. New Taurida and Balaklava Thermal Power Stations with their full capacity did not let the region to be energy deficient and also gave opportunities to supply energy to the neighbouring constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Water blockage has been broken, and from that moment onwards, water is constantly supplied to Crimea.¹⁵³ The area of the irrigated land is growing. A part of the high-speed highway Taurida which is a completely new level of transport infrastructure of the peninsula came into use. A four-lane highway to Sevastopol is successfully being constructed. Agriculture demonstrates good achievements. Resorts and sanatoriums are being modernized. Comfortable hotels, modern kindergartens, and schools are being constructed with a good pace. In 2018, Crimea welcomed 6.8 mln tourists, which is more by 28% in comparison with the previous year and is a record for all post-Soviet years. Artek and a number of other historical monuments have been restored.

Five years in the Russian Crimea gave people more than 23 years within Ukraine. A return to Russia has significantly improved the living standards of the Crimeans, increased their income level and the quality of medical services. “And what is important is that the Crimeans got peace and protection”¹⁵⁴. The data gathered in the course of sociological surveys clearly illustrates that the region is characterized with better interethnic relations after Crimea’s reunification with Russia. 88% of those surveyed positively evaluate the interethnic relations in Crimea. The survey’s data showed a high level of tolerance in the Crimean society. Some manifestations of ethnic and religious intolerance depend on situations. The studies reveal that in the future, the relations between the Slavic and Crimean Tatar ethnic groups will play the pivotal role in the inter-ethnic relations¹⁵⁵.

The information blockade organized by the West has been broken through. Although, unfortunately, there are a lot of unbelievable rumours and speculations about Crimea abroad, but the number and the quality of the foreign delegations are growing, they personally see the situation and evaluate everything what they see in Crimea in an unbiased manner. Yalta International Economic Forum (YIEF) became a particular brand of the peninsula. In 2018, the 4th Yalta Forum was attended by 3.1 thousand people, including 612 foreign participants from 71 countries of the world¹⁵⁶.

153 Aksyonov S. Crimea as destiny [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://izborsk-club.ru/16778>(reference date 14.11.2019).

154 Arinin A. N. Crimea as a mechanism for launching the reforms in Russia and a role of the ruling elite in their implementation// Humanities. Bulletin of Financial University.-M., 2019.-n.2 (38). -P.15.

155 M.V. Somov. Republic of Crimea: Inter-ethnic portrait // Crimean Humanitarian Bulletin.- Simferopol, 2018.-P. 141-142.

156 Interethnic relations and a religious situation in Crimea. Expert report for the first half of 2018 / Edited by T.A. Senyushkina, V.V. Stepanov, R.A. Starchenko. - Moscow-Simferopol: IT ARIAL, 2018. - P.37-40.

In 2019, the 5th anniversary Yalta International Economic Forum took place, attracting 4.5 thousand attendees from 89 countries of Europe, Latin America, Arab world, Africa, and Asia. In terms of the agenda intensity, status of the guests, and the attention of the Russian and global mass media, as well as the business communities, the Yalta Economic Forum entered TOP-3 of the Economic Forums of Russia, as its participants suggest. The Forum delegates actively work on the Forum fields and, what is even more important, see personally the positive changes which are happening in the Republic. The amount of the signed agreements is the real outcome of any economic forum. 215 bln roubles of this YIEF beat the records of the previous years (162 bln roubles in 2018, 100 bln roubles in 2017)¹⁵⁷.

Apart from YIEF, Crimea successfully hosts other international forums, is visited by various delegations. For example, in 2019, the Forum celebrated its first anniversary under the topic “Peace. Russia. Crimea. New Global Reality”. The Forum welcomes about 3,000 attendees, including 338 representatives from 77 countries from all over the world¹⁵⁸. In 2019, the Crimean Peninsula welcomed a large delegation from the USA and the countries of the Western Europe – Austria, Germany, Ireland, Norway, and the Netherlands. This delegation had an opportunity to evaluate dramatic changes on the peninsula for the last five years. These visits make people in the West aware that Crimea’s reunification with Russia was performed according to the people’s will, and that the peninsula has been experiencing colossal positive changes for the past five years¹⁵⁹.

These positive changes give M. Crosston, an American expert on Russia, reasons to say: “I have read many times and publicly speak up that the West distorts the very idea of the Crimean question. For example, to put it mildly, an incorrect word “annexation” became obligatory and commonly used. At the same time, the Referendum and an active support of Crimea’s reunification with Russia among population are either ignored or presented as one more “Russian cheating”. I am convinced that Crimea has to be where its residents want it to be – within the Russian Federation. And I also hope that Russia will continue beautify this territory, just like many other its constituent entities. This is justice in terms of law and history”¹⁶⁰.

In this context, Crimea’s reunification with Russia means unavoidable geopolitical redivision of the Eurasian space. Crimean precedent changes the attraction forces between the centres of the multi-polar world. The confrontation of Russia

157 A. Shcheglakova. YIEF is in TOP-3 of the economic forums in Russia [Electronic resource]. - Access mode <https://rg.ru/2019/04/29/iamef-voshel-v-bolshuij-trojku-ekonomicheskikh-forumov-rossii.html> (reference date 14.11.2019).

158 [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/administration/54358>(reference data 16.11.2019).

159 The USA and EU delegation visits struck the most at the information blockade of Ukraine [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://nahnews.org/1013202-vizit-v-krym-delegacii-iz-ssha-i-stran-es-bolno-udarili-po-infoblokade-ukrainy> (reference date 17.11.2019).

160 Crosston M. I hope that Russia will continue to settle Crimea [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <http://realtribune.ru/news/world/2821>(reference date 18.11.2019).

and the West, especially Moscow and Washington, is the result of a deeply rooted conflict of geopolitical interests. That is why, to respond to Crimea’s reunification with Russia, the Western states inevitably introduce political and economic sanctions aimed at changing the Russian geopolitics, first of all, in the Eurasian space, which is a serious geopolitical challenge for us. That is why different political forces of the West, especially the US, stick to anti-Russian position in Crimean question¹⁶¹.

Thus, the American elite has developed an overall consensus about non-recognition of “annexation” of the peninsula by Russia with different views on solving this problem. A powerful group of neoliberal democrats (S. Talbott, G. Thornton, H. Clinton, S. Pifer, F. Hill, etc.) believes that it is better to apply active target sanctions with no pushing Russia outside the general global integration processes in the West¹⁶². Realists are another quite influential group of American elites (B. Scowcroft, K. Powell, R. Tillerson, R. Gates, R. Paul, G. Amash, Ch. Hagel, and others). This group connects the national interests of the country with the economic benefits for big businesses and believes that Russian “annexation” must be criticized, but the problem shouldn’t be solved with sanctions but with the American-Russian dialogue with due regard to the interests of Europe¹⁶³.

At first, US President Donald Trump tended to think about the positive possibility “to consider the problem” of Crimea with a realism approach, but later he had to revise his opinion under the pressure of a powerful group of the right-wingers in Congress¹⁶⁴. A group of realists is dominated by its radical wing which thinks that the Crimean problem has to be solved only within the Ukrainian topic. At the same time, the representatives of this wing offer to discuss and to formalize the fact of “occupation” of Crimea by Russia at a legislative level in the US and European Union and to promise every possible support to Ukraine, including its membership in NATO and the EU. They insist on continuous sanction pressure on Moscow and an active criticism of the Russian propaganda “myths” dedicated to the Crimean issue¹⁶⁵.

Right-wingers are the most influential group in Congress and Administration (D. Cheney, D. Rumsfeld, J. McCain, L. Graham, M. McConnell, P. Ryan, and others). They are for preserving the American domineering with the traditional geopolitical methods, including the Crimean Tatar factor, soft, hard, smart,

161 S.Iu. Shenin. Views of the American political elite on Crimea problem//History and Historical Memory.-Saratov, 2018.-#17.-P/99-108.

162 Haass R. Cold War II // Council on Foreign Relations [Electronic resource]. – Access mode [https:// www.-carnegie.org/news/articles/negative-sum-destabilization-ukraine/](https://www.carnegie.org/news/articles/negative-sum-destabilization-ukraine/)(reference date 21.11.2019).

163 Guessing Game: Decoding Trump’s Russia Policy // Carnegie Corporation of New York. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://www.carnegie.org/news/-articles/guessing-game-decoding-trumps-russia-policy/> (reference date 24.11.2019).

164 Casey M. Will Trump Recognize Russian Annexation of Crimea? [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/will-trumprecognize-russian-annexation-of-crimea/> (reference date 21.11.2019).

165 Vershbow A. Sorry, Putin. Crimea Still Isn’t Yours // Atlantic Council. [Electronic resources]. – Access mode <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/sorryputin-crimea-still-isn-t-yours> (reference date 23.11.2019).

and other types of force. They think that this could be used to promote the interests of the American corporations. At the same time, the right-wingers look at the Crimean problem as a convenient pressure factor for Russia to establish the force balance in the region which is favourable for the American business¹⁶⁶.

After the Crimean Spring, the Black Sea region was at the centre of attention of the Western countries which adjusted their plans in the dramatic changes of the power balance, restriction of the Russian geopolitical impact and expansion of their own geopolitical impact in the Black Sea region. The Western anti-Russian policy immediately affected the geopolitical position of Kiev which sharply aggravated the relations with Russia, including in the Black Sea region. Here and there, Ukraine started sparking conflicts in the region with illegal trespassing of the Russian state border, provocations with the Russian water carriers, and ships in the Azov Sea.

Kiev's anti-Russian campaign started to speculate on the protection of interests of the Crimean Tatars and headed for the destruction of the legal status of Kerch Strait and for creating a military infrastructure in the Azov region. A big part of the Ukrainian territory was used to prepare and to conduct subversive activities against Russia. These Kiev's steps are determined by the fact that Ukraine is located at the forefront of the geopolitical confrontation of thalassocratism and tellurocracy, the US and Russia.

This confrontation for the geopolitically sensitive Ukraine can have catastrophic consequences. In this context, Belarus became the key site for negotiations about the Ukrainian conflict. This brought the Minsk Protocol paving the way to the peaceful and diplomatic settlement of the situation in the South-East of Ukraine.

The US initiates the development of the military infrastructure in the Black Sea region, rearmament of the Ukrainian army, consolidation of the Black Sea countries, including with the help of Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, Black Sea Synergia Initiative, Eastern Partnership Program. Experts from RAND Corporation, an American Analytical Centre, express serious concern about the military build-up of the Black Sea Fleet and the Southern Military District and offer to counteract "a growing Russian influence" in the Black Sea region by deploying anti-aircraft defence and coastal missile systems in Romania and Bulgaria, by developing the defence capacities of Ukraine and Georgia, by expanding NATO training.

Today, these actions of the West force Russia and Black Sea countries to conduct their trade, economic, and energy cooperation under information and political pressure, that is tightening the knot of geopolitical problems in the Black Sea region. The development of the relations with Turkey in the Black Sea region

166 Mrachek A., Fredrick P., Inserra D. U.S. Is Right to Sanction Russia for Cyberattacks and Meddling // The Heritage Foundation [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://www.heritage.org/europe/commentary/us-right-sanction-russiacyberattacks-and-meddling> (reference date 14.11.2019).

is of primary importance for the RF in this geopolitical situation. But Ankara’s view on the crucial geopolitical problems balances between Washington, Moscow, and Kiev and combines the elements of cooperation and competition. Russia finds it favourable that Turkey does not wish to revise the provisions of the Montreux Convention, the regime of non-presence of the third parties in the Black Sea.

These legal grounds help hold the US geopolitical expansion in the region where the military ships are constantly present in the waters of the Black Sea. However, with Moscow’s dependence on the Turkish Stream, Ankara insists on partial localization of air defence system manufacturing in Turkey. We think that such a transfer of modern defence technologies to a NATO member does not comply with the national interests of Russia.

Moreover, Ankara started its cooperation with the US in evaluating the Russian anti-aircraft missile system C-400 and its capabilities in detecting, targeting, and destroying such targets as the fifth-generation fighter F35. This mutual work will help the American and Turkish experts find strong and weak points in anti-aircraft missile system and develop counteracting measures and attacks. A Turkish leader R. Erdogan, in his turn, emphasized at different press-conferences, including the ones with the President of Ukraine V. Zelensky, that his country has no intention to acknowledge the peninsula to be Russian. Therefore, O. Kovitidi, a member of Russia’s Federation Council from the Republic of Crimea, called these statements “a part of logical political eloquence of Ankara”, since “Crimean issue “has been discussed” with Turkey for centuries, and it is impossible to change everything at once”.¹⁶⁷

The Russian response to an aggressive line of the West arising from the Crimean Spring “could be evaluated as situational response in practical and political planes,” justifiably concludes G.L. Muradov, Deputy Chairperson of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea, a Permanent Representative of the Republic of Crimea under the President of the Russian Federation. “It is evident we need a multi-vector detailed plan of actions and to elaborate a strategy for shaping the global order which meets our interests. As I see it, we do not have such a strategy right now”¹⁶⁸.

The present-day regime with its legitimacy proven by the Crimean Spring managed to convert into a constructive upsurge, lost it significantly, and continues to spend what remained¹⁶⁹. We think this is a particular geopolitical challenge. If it is not paid attention to and is not timely counteracted, it might result in far-reaching consequences.

Some analytical experts say that major part of the population has already lost its energy charge, and the greater their hope was, the stronger their disappoint-

167 Turkish people started their cooperation with the USA in their evaluation of C-400// <https://politikus.ru/events/124250-turki-nachali-sotrudnichestvo-s-ssha-v-ocenke-s-400.html> (reference date 18.11.2019).

168 G.L. Muradov World order after the Crimean Spring. Scientific works of Independent Economic Society of Russia. M., 2018. Vol. 210. #2. P. 266.

169 V. Korovin. Why did not Putin act after the Crimean Spring? [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://izborsk-club.ru/17766>

ment was, and we believe, this is due to corruption, non-professionalism of the local authorities. By now, the region's residents do not feel they are fully valid Russians. This feeling de facto arises from a large number of companies, including public ones (e.g., Sberbank) which openly declare that they would not come to Crimea unless the Western sanctions were not lifted. Today, the Crimeans see early signs of alienation of the regional authorities and feel that the actual words do not meet the actions. This makes them draw a conclusion that "our authorities are getting fatter."¹⁷⁰ First of all, the spirit of Sevastopol, the Hero City, could not harmonically meet the spirit of many "peninsula ambassadors".

A part of the local population believes that some visiting leaders do not understand and do not want to understand the Hero City, its key idea and mindset. That is why the locals do not perceive "the ambassadors from the Continent". Scandals with the Victory Park, Matrossky Bulvar, Yuzhnyi Sevastopol Factory, and other constructions show that the historical cityscape is being ruined and that the property and the influence areas are being redivided¹⁷¹.

In this context, here is an illustrative example – the most famous and expensive historical resorts in Crimea have already been transferred to the owners from the Continental Russia. Therefore, Sevastopol residents fear that 200-300 Russian oligarchs will capture the whole coast from Balaklava to Feodosia, and most part of the coast will be occupied by luxurious villas that will destroy the cultural and historical authenticity and economic capacity of the peninsula. Some analytical experts conclude that today Sevastopol is characterized by a conflict mainly between the elites, but then there is a fear that it could involve common citizens as well. Therefore, the city inhabitants will definitely experience resentment and protesting sentiments against the land capture for the millionaires' mansions or huge egg-crates for migrants.

That is why I.V. Sitnova quite reasonably notes: "Sevastopol residents get used to resist the authoritative pressure and attempts to exploit an administrative resource in the city, and this can result in many unexpected situations. Geopolitical adversaries can easily use even minor troubles in the city to weaken Russia"¹⁷².

This will definitely reduce the geopolitical resource and state authority in the eyes of the region's residents who often ask questions: "Is Russia an independent and integral state or not? Is Crimea a fully-fledged Russian region or not?"¹⁷³.

Disbalances in the social-economic development of the region are a serious geopolitical challenge where it is extremely important to set up modern high-tech

170 The Crimeans: "Our power has accumulated fat" [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://yandex.ru/turbo?text=https%3A%2F%2F1xqn.ru%2F7610>

171 Sevastopol is transformed from being a pride to being a shame of Russia [Electronic resources]. – Access mode <https://regnum.ru/news/polit/2555437.html> (reference date 03.11.2019).

172 I. V. Sitnova. Back home: Reflection of the residents from Sevastopol after three years of the Russian Spring // Scholarly notes of V.I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University I. Vernadsky. Sociology. Pedagogy. Psychology. - Simferopol, 2018.-Vol.4(70). -£2S.-P.215-225.

173 V. Dzharaalla. Crimea: clear progress and butter failures of Russia [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://www.pravda.ru/districts/1411125-dzharalla/>(reference date 17.11.2019).

enterprises in industrial and agricultural sectors. An active growth of the banking products segment should also be in demand.

Some estimates show that the corruption inherited from the Ukrainian times surely impedes the development of economy and a strong civic society. Therefore, we believe it is a must to extensively apply the mechanisms of dismissal from the public and municipal offices and public confiscation of illegally acquired property, which are seen to be the most efficient methods to increase the responsibility of top-managers. Also, it is necessary to attract the representatives and authoritative citizens more and more to control efficiently. The modernization of the Crimean region significantly enhances the competitive and flourishing Russia which plays a huge geopolitical role in the global society¹⁷⁴.

Some kind of isolation of Crimea, lack of fully-fledged communication with the continental part, as well as the blocked Northern Crimean Channel, are geopolitical challenges for the region¹⁷⁵. Today, higher incomes among the Crimeans similar to the average Russian level started to decrease against a significant growth of the tariffs, prices for the main goods, including food, and medications. Very often, people cannot completely understand what they pay for, which causes reasonable discontent of the authorities. By now, the region is not ready to deal with the property management companies in housing and utilities infrastructure, road industry. That is why S. Aksyonov, the Head of the Republic, believes that “a liberal policy is not suitable for Crimea in today’s conditions”¹⁷⁶.

To support sustainable public and political situation in the region, it is necessary to continue developing interethnic and inter-confessional cooperation, interaction of ethnic organizations and public structures for more efficient integration into the socio-cultural space of the Russian Federation¹⁷⁷. This could result in a qualitatively higher level of a comprehensive justification of law-based righteousness and historical justice of Crimea’s return to Russia. Today, this work is stochastic: arguments proposed in favour of Russia are not united into theory-determined substantial system capable of completely neutralize the geopolitical adversaries of the Russian Crimea. We see that, to overcome the situation, it is necessary to perform meticulous and properly organized comprehensive work of the representatives of all power levels, Russian politicians, political experts, lawyers, historians, and other specialists. There is a need to establish an authoritative public expert Committee which will do this job, involve a lot of scholars from the universities and academic communities, summarize the obtained material, and

174 Arinin A. N. Crimea as a mechanism for launching the reforms in Russia and a role of the ruling elite in their implementation// Humanities. Bulletin of Financial University.-M., 2019.-#2 (38).-P.17-18.

175 V. Dzharalla. Crimea: Finishing line of integration - start of new problems [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://yandex.ru/turbo?text=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.pravda.ru%2Feconomics%2F1411123-dzharalla%2F>. (reference date 13.11.2019).

176 Aksyonov S. Crimea as destiny [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://izborsk-club.ru/16778> (reference date 19.11.2019).

177 M.V. Somov. Republic of Crimea: Inter-ethnic portrait // Crimean Humanitarian Bulletin.- Simferopol, 2018.-P. 142.

prepare a kind of a White book with all historical law, socio-political, cultural, and other conclusions and arguments in favour of absolute law righteousness and historical justice for Crimea's return to Russia. Such a status document translated into the languages of the global diplomacy significantly neutralizes anti-Russian sentiments and opens the eyes of the key international partners to the Crimean issue.

We see it very important to take other high-impact steps to revive the historic memory about Crimea's ownership, including a consistent denunciation of the decisions in 1954 about Crimea's transfer to Ukraine, and to give both law-based and historical arguments.

A question about the status of a new international identification of Sevastopol should be considered separately. Moreover, it would be right to validate and to enliven historical and cultural heritage of Russia in Crimea. Some researchers also suggest organizing a representational office in Crimea for the now living Romanovs as the first Tsar Residence near Oreanda settlement so that they could demonstrate Europe the historical ownership of the peninsula. Therefore, they thing, the Romanovs could go through their paces, as a result everyone would understand who cares about the well-being of the country in their actions, and who does the same in words¹⁷⁸.

Thus, today, it is unthinkable to preserve the geopolitical identity of Russia without Crimea. This makes us arrive at a very important conclusion that geopolitical struggle for Crimea's acknowledgement as a part of Russia is not finished yet. Even if in the future Donbas problem is somehow solved, the Crimean issue is likely to be a persistent one for the adversaries of Russia for a long time and is going to be the key message for geopolitical pressure on it.

178 Kerch crisis showed that the struggle for Crimea is not over yet [Electronic resource]. – Access mode <https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2018/11/26/kerchenskij-krizis-pokazal-chto-borba-za-krym-ne-okonchena-47190.html> (reference date 19.11.2019).

THE RIGHT OF THE CRIMEANS TO SELF-DETERMINATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 1986 UN DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Aleksandr V. Molokhov,
PhD in Historical Sciences, lawyer (Moscow)

The issue about the Crimeans' right to self-determination and further Crimea's reunification with Russia in 2014 should be looked at through the lens of those rights which are guaranteed to the peninsula's population by the UN Declaration on the Right to Development.

The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution n.41/128 of 04 December 1986 which is recorded in the Report about the voting with 146 votes against 1 (the United States of America) and 8 abstained (Denmark, Finland, Federative Republic of Germany, Island, Israel, Japan, and the United Kingdom).

It is important to note that the Declaration connects the right to development with the right to self-determination as its integral elements, which include full sovereignty over natural resources.

Providing favourable conditions for the development which contribute into exercising all human rights is one of the crucial principles of the Declaration.

Like all other human rights, the right to development has its particular definition – the right to participate in the economic, social, cultural, and political development, as well as contribute into its and enjoy its benefits". These underlying characteristics described in the Article 1 of the Declaration contain a number of integral elements which are mentioned in the text of the Declaration. For example:

- **Development of the people's interests.** The Declaration defines "a person" as the key subject, main participant and beneficiary of the development.
- **An approach based on human rights protection.** The Declaration includes a particular requirement to organize the development in such a way so that the human rights and main freedoms could be completely and fully exercised.
- **Participation.** The Declaration calls for providing an active, free, and efficient participation of people in development.
- **Justice.** Declaration underlines the need of fair distribution of the development benefits.

The provisions of the Declaration about the exercising of this right are clearly described, for example:

- Definition of the existing national and international policy in the area of development.

- Organization of the efficient international cooperation.
- Implementation of the reforms at the national and international levels.
- Removal of the barriers on the development path, including, for example, violations of the human rights, manifestations of all forms of racism, colonialism, occupation, and aggression.
- Assistance in peace consolidation and disarmament achievement, as well as the usage of the released resources due to the measures for the development.

It is known that inappropriate actions of the Ukrainian authorities being the result of their response to the peninsula's reunification with Russia in 2014-2018 were the factors contributing to the escalation of the humanitarian crisis in Crimea and lead to mass violations of the human rights in the region.

First of all, the so-called Crimean sanctions of the USA, EU, and Ukraine deprive the population of the peninsula of the access to electricity, water, and other resources, limit the freedom of their mobility.

Ukraine's actions contradict the UN Charter, the World Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Declaration on the Principles of International Law referring to the friendly relations and cooperation between the states under the UN Charter, numerous resolutions about the ban to apply unilateral sanctions and numerous resolutions about the strengthening of the international cooperation in the area of providing the human rights.

For example, on 03 March 2016, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights demanded Ukraine to investigate a statement about the violation of the human rights during Crimea's blockade.

In September 2017, Idriss Djazairi, a special UN Ambassador for the sanctions at the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, argued in his report about an adverse effect of the Crimean sanctions on the life of the peninsula's residents.

Let us give some examples:

Water supply blockade. In spring of 2014, periodic cut-offs of water supply in Crimea via North-Crimean Channel by Kiev authorities followed a shutdown of water supply to the peninsula via this Channel by a temporary dam. Before Crimea's reunification with Russia, Ukraine provided 85% of water supply to Crimea via the North-Crimean Channel running from Dnepr. Once the Republic joined Russia, Crimea was completely cut off from water supply, which adversely affected the development of agriculture.

These actions of the Ukrainian authorities are a direct violation of the right to drinking water and sanitary services, as well as the right to nutrition stated in the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

Energy supply blockade. Up to 2015, about 80% of the consumed electrical energy in Crimea ran from the united energy system of Ukraine. In spring 2014, Kiev authorities for the first time announced the possibility to halt supply of

energy resources on the territory of the Republic of Crimea, which the opponents of its secession from Ukraine had called for. On November 20, 2015, unidentified people exploded two tower supports in the Genichev and Chaplyn regions which supplied the electricity to the Crimean Peninsula. On November 22, the damaged tower supports were exploded one more time. Proponents of Crimea's blockade in Ukraine did not permit the repairmen to get to the damaged tower supports. Mustafa Dzhemilev, Refat Chubarov, the leaders of non-registered organization called the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, as well as extremist armed organizations of Ukraine – the Right Sector and fighters from the so-called Azov squadron – took the responsibility for the energy blockade of the peninsula.

As of 10.00 November 24, 2015, in the Republic of Crimea 525 settlements had no electricity, 85 thousand 412 houses with 760 thousand 467 people, which is nearly a half of the peninsula population.

Food and goods blockade. On September 20, 2015, the activists of the non-recognized Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People, soldiers from Kherson squadron, and the fighters of a nationalist organization “Right Sector” which is banned in Russia, blocked the roads for the cargo transport from Ukraine's territory to Crimea and called this campaign to be a food blockade.

In December 2015, the government of Ukraine legitimized the blockade by officially banning the supply of goods and services to Crimea. These actions of the Ukrainian authorities are a direct violation of the right to drinking water and sanitary services, as well as the right to nutrition stated by the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights.

Transport system blockade. Crimea's railway network used to be connected with the Ukrainian railway roads. That is why the first tough decision of Kiev authorities was to stop the railway communication with Crimea, which actually led to land transport blockade of the peninsula. Under the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No.1035 which came into force on January 15, 2016, the nomenclature and the amount of the socially important goods transported by the citizens from Crimea and to Crimea were limited: their total value cannot exceed 10 thousand hryvnia and 50 kg per person.

Blockade of the freedom to move. Still in March 2014, the European Union banned issuing all types of European visas, including Schengen ones, to the Russian citizens in all the Embassies and Visa Centres of the EU countries on the Russian territory. Official requirements of Ukraine to the entry to the territory of Crimea are worded in the law “On Providing The Rights And Freedoms of Citizens and Law-Based Regime on the Temporary Occupied Territory of Ukraine” (adopted in April 2014) and formalized by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers “On Entry And Leave Procedure for the Temporary Occupied Territory of Ukraine” (published on June 4, 2015). Under these documents, the foreign citizens wishing to visit Crimea have to obtain an official permit from the Public Migration Service of Ukraine and

can enter the country through the specially described checkpoints on the main territory of Ukraine. In Ukraine, entering Crimea via Russia now is a criminal offence, and if it is proven “to damage the state’s interests”, then the sentence is an eight-year imprisonment (Article 332-1 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine).

The issuing procedure for special permits to the foreigners wishing to enter Crimea (resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine n.367 of 4 June 2015, revised on 16 September 2015) (resolution n.722) is another problem. This creates significant barriers for the work of foreign journalists, lawyers, and human rights advocates in Crimea. There is no opportunity to provide the documents from abroad via the Consular and Diplomatic institutions of Ukraine, and one cannot apply in English. A government resolution also contains a secret list with the categories of foreign citizens who could be granted a special entry permit for Crimea. This resolution regulates the procedure for entering and leaving the territory of Crimea by the citizens of Ukraine, which directly contradicts both the Law of Ukraine “On providing the rights and freedoms of the citizens and a law-based regime on the temporary occupied territory of Ukraine” and the international standards on freedom to move.

Any restrictions in freedom to move around the country for its citizens can be imposed only and exclusively by the law with a legitimate purpose and a need for such restrictions in a democratic society.

Blockade of cultural ties and kinship in diaspora societies of Crimea leads to the violation of the Declaration on the Rights of People belonging to national or ethnic, religious and language minorities, which was adopted without voting by a resolution 47/135 of the UN General Assembly on 18 December 1992.

It is known that the Crimeans cannot receive visas to travel to the Western countries, including the ones which are their historical Motherland (for the representatives of the peninsula’s national communities). This problem was also reflected in a number of appeals from the representatives of various peoples and nationalities of Crimea, including the Crimean Tatars, to the UN and other international organizations. These appeals condemn and call it unacceptable to apply political and other sanctions restricting cultural and humanitarian ties with the national organizations of Crimea, whose representatives see them as their historical Motherland.

A special attention should be paid to the violation of the right to peaceful development of the citizens of Crimea by Ukraine in connection with the so-called Kerch incident.

Even the twenty fifth report of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights in Ukraine for the period from 16 November 2018 to 15 February 2015 pays attention to the violations of the norms of the international humanitarian law arising from the so-called Kerch incident.

The Kerch incident occurred when three Ukrainian military ships trespassed the state border of Russia at the end of November 2018. 24 Ukrainian military servicemen were later detained and arrested by the border control officials.

It followed an illegal seizure of a Crimean fishing ship Nord by Ukraine in Azov Sea on March 25, 2018 when seven members of the crew had been detained for several months. Captain Gorbenko appeared before a criminal court, while the ship was confiscated. Meanwhile, under a number of Russian-Ukrainian agreements, the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait are “historically internal waters” of Russia and Ukraine.

No one from the Russian side doubts the right to free navigation in the Black Sea, as well as the principle of freedom of shipping traffic in the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait for the ships (including the military ones) of Russia and Ukraine.

Presently, it is Ukraine that argues against the acknowledgement of the Azov Sea and the Kerch Strait as the internal waters of two countries and wishes to terminate all agreements with Russia about it.

It is Ukraine that invited the NATO ships to the Azov Sea, while Russia takes the measures to prevent the escalation of the conflict and does not abuse its right to control.

It is evident that the freedom to navigate in the Kerch Strait cannot be absolute and is always connected with certain objective restrictions which are of surmountable nature (weather, complicated bottom relief, a need for piloting and observing the priority in passing of ships by creating the caravans).

Under the 2007 Treaty between Russia and Ukraine, any ship passing through the Kerch Strait has to inform about it beforehand three times – 48, 24, and 4 hours prior to the passing to the captain of the Kerch port, and piloting is a must for large ships.

By now, it has been established that on November 22, 2018 at 10:23 p.m., the Ukrainian side was informed about a temporary closure of the Strait, and the latter said that its three military ships were near the Meganom Cape and did not plan to pass the Strait at that time.

Ukraine asked passing the strait for its ships at 7 a.m. on 25 November 2018 with a delay, while 166 civil ships were waiting for its passing through the strait that day.

According to the data of the Russian side, a group of military ships of Ukraine ignored that ban and trespassed the Russian border at 07.01 a.m. on 25 November 2018.

Armed Ukrainian ships tried to secretly move with removed gun-overs, maneuvered dangerously, and created threats for normal ship navigation near the Kerch Strait, thus they violated the Articles 19 and 21 of the UN Convention on Marine Law. Subsequently, they were blocked and seized by the Russian border officers as trespassers of the marine border.

We think that these provocative actions of the Ukrainian military ships in the Azov and the Black Sea waters are seen to be an abuse of the international law, which leads to the violation of the human rights, including the right to development.

Under the UN Declaration on the Right to Development of 4 December 1986, the right of the residents in Crimea to development can be exercised under

efficient international cooperation and elimination of the barriers on the development path, including a refusal from any aggression and contribution into peace consolidation.

On the 40th and 42nd sessions of the UN Council on Human Rights in Geneva, a Crimean representative of the International Council of the Russian compatriots addressed Saad Alfarargi, a special UN reporter on the right to development, twice with the request to pay attention to the situation according to his mandate issued in 2017. However, this request is left unanswered up till now...

STATE IDENTIFICATION OF CRIMEA: HISTORY AND CONTEMPORARY REALITIES

Oleg A. Kotolupov,

Doctor of Economics, Professor, Academician of the Crimean Academy of Sciences

Pavel A. Khrienko,

Doctor of Sociology, Professor, Academician of the Crimean Academy of Sciences (Simferopol)

A historical feature of Crimea is that it has traditionally been inhabited by many peoples. Throughout the centuries, it had been home to the Tauri, Cimmerians, Scythians, Alans, Greeks, Romans, Jews, Goths, Huns, Bulgars, Hazar's, Crimean Karaites, Hungarians, Kievan Rus' peoples, Cumans, Genoese, Armenians, Krymchaks, Turks, Nogais, Tatars, Russians, and many more. Crimea did not become predominantly mono-ethnic until the December of 1475 when the Ottoman Turks conquered the last Orthodox kingdom Theodoro (or Gothia) populated by the descendants of the Goths, Alans, Circassians, Crimean Karaites, and Byzantine colonists. From this time, along with the mass extermination, the exodus of the Christian and other population from the Crimea, or their conversion to Islam, began.

Many momentous events are associated with Crimea. It was here, in Chersoneses, that in 988 Vladimir, the prince of Kievan Rus adopted Christianity as the state religion, which had a significant influence on the formation of the humanitarian image and mental characteristics of the peoples of the Russian world. The subsequent historical development of Crimea has always been connected in one way or another with Russia, but the modern statehood on the peninsula as defined in the New and Newest times.

The second half of the 18th century was characterized globally by processes related to the alteration of the state status of numerous countries and regions. Such processes have taken many forms, from savage and barbaric colonisation by Western countries to voluntary forms of unification. It was in 1773 that the independence of the United States of America was declared, the political configuration was changing in Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as in Europe itself. There was also an intensive process of state identification of the peoples who lived in southern Russia.

A particularly significant impact on the development of the Northern Pontic Littoral, including Crimea, was exercised by the Russian-Turkish wars.

The outcome of one of these wars that lasted from 1768 to 1774 and became the most important in terms of its consequences was the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji signed between Turkey and Russia. Crimea gained independence from Turkey

under this treaty, while Russia secured the lands between the Dnieper and the Southern Bug, as well as Kerch and a large part of the Kerch Peninsula. This was de facto the first step towards the unification of Crimea with Russia.

After gaining independence from Turkey, Crimea found itself in an environment where local ruling elites were not prepared to govern, and reforms by the last Crimean Khan Shahin-Giray, who attempted to modernise the region in Western-style, caused widespread discontent and even led to a bloody internecine war. The peninsula was essentially brought to utter devastation. Many Crimeans addressed Russia with a request to help solve the existing problems.

Under such circumstances, on 8 April 1783, Catherine II issued a Manifesto announcing the annexation of Crimea to Russia. It should be specifically noted that this was not a move of colonial subjugation, but rather an appropriate response to the situation in the region. Moreover, such a step was made in a fairly democratic way. It is common knowledge that, at the initiative of Grigori Potemkin, a large-scale poll was carried out in Crimea, during which the so-called “sworn forms” were distributed in the majority of localities. In the questionnaires, it was asked whether the citizens wished to swear allegiance to Russia. (The swear forms survived and are currently displayed in the Russian State Archive in Moscow). At such a “referendum”, the overwhelming majority of the peninsula’s inhabitants supported the inclusion of Crimea into Russia, while the Crimean elite appeared promptly on top of the Aq Qaya rock outside Karasubazar (present-day town of Bilohirsk) where they solemnly and with no pressure whatsoever swore allegiance to the Russian Empire.

Russian authorities promised to preserve and protect the local population’s traditional way of life. In particular, Catherine’s manifesto contained the following dispositions with regard to the new subjects: “...we make a holy and unwavering promise, for the sake of ourselves and the subjects of our throne, to provide for them on a par with our historic citizens, to guard and protect their personalities, property, churches, and their original religion whose free manifestation with all the legitimate rites shall be inviolable; and, finally, to bestow on each of them all the rights and benefits that are established in Russia...”. Such an attitude towards the local population was practised strictly. This was particularly emphasized by a prominent Crimean Tatar educator Ismail bey Gasprinsky who wrote: “Observation and travelling have convinced me that no other nation treats the conquered, utterly extraneous people with such humaneness and sincerity as our bigger brothers, the Russians”. (See I. Gasprinsky *Russia and the East*. Kazan: Tatar book publisher, 1993. P. 19).

On December 28, 1783 Turkey was constrained to recognize the fact that Crimea had been absorbed by Russia and signed the “Act of the annexation of Crimea, Taman, and Kuban by the Russian Empire”. The Statute on the independence of the Crimean Khanate that was back then in force under the Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji was now cancelled. Shortly after, on February 2 (13), 1784 the

Taurida Oblast was constituted within the borders of the Russian Empire while in 1803 the Taurida Governorate was established.

From the legal point of view, Crimea became definitively part of Russia with the enactment of the Treaty of Jassy between the Russian and the Ottoman Empires, better known as the “Treaty of the eternal peace and friendship, signed between the Russian Empire and the Sublime Porte”. (December 29, 1791 (January 9, 1792). According to this treaty, Russia obtained all the Northern Pontic Littoral, including Crimea. In the Caucasus, the former borders along the Kuban River were re-established, and Turkey gave up its claims for Georgia.

The Treaty of Jassy was of exceptional importance for the state identification of many Eastern European peoples. For instance, straight after the treaty had been signed, people started settling on the deserted land that had been previously called “The Wild Fields” and was subsequently denominated Novorosiya. The newly reclaimed territories attracted various experts and common citizens not only from the Russian Empire but also from Germany, Austria, France, the Czech Republic, and many other countries. Such well-known cities as Sevastopol, Simferopol, Kherson, Nikolaev, Odessa, Ekaterinoslav (present-day Dnipro), and many others were laid out in record time. Intensive development of the Kryvyi Rih and Donbas regions began. Evidence shows that in those circumstances Crimea was completely integrated into Russia’s economic, political, and humanitarian space.

With the annexation of Crimea to Russia, the region became de facto open to the world, which was formalised by the relevant legal documents. All the Crimean ports were exempted from paying customs duties. Besides, prominent scientists and cultural figures were invited to Crimea to ensure its efficient reclamation and development. William Gould was summoned from England for laying out parks and gardens. Joseph Banque, an outstanding horticulturist, arrived from France, being appointed Director of the Taurida Gardens. He was commissioned to cultivate in Crimea the world’s most refined varieties of grapes, silk, and oilseed crops. Count Jacob de Parma was summoned from Italy to build processing plants, etc. But the most powerful intellectual forces for the innovative development of Crimea came from the Russian Empire.

Four years after Crimea had become part of Russia, Catherine the Great, accompanied by a large group of foreign diplomats, visited the region to attest that it was rapidly developing in the most progressive way on the basis of the best national and foreign achievements. Subsequently, Crimea further intensified its development and, being once ruined, the largest economic, military-political and humanitarian centre of Russia.

It should be specifically noted that the state identification and development of Crimea was taking place in the presence of severe military and political confrontation, predominantly with the Western countries that attempted repeatedly to seize the peninsula through military means.

The first attempts to change Crimea's state status were undertaken in the middle of the 19th century. A number of European countries – England, France, Sardinia, and Turkey – performed a military intervention on the peninsula. Turkey intended to restore “vassalage” in Crimea while Western countries sought to weaken Russia's increasingly important role in the international arena.

The aggressors brought heinous devastation to the peninsula. Yet, they did not achieve their goals. The heroic defence of Sevastopol showed to the entire world that Crimea's historical identity could not be broken by force.

The outcome of the Crimean war was formalized in the Treaty of Paris. According to this document, Russia's rights in the Black Sea were reduced considerably, but the status of Russian Crimea remained unaltered in terms of the provisions of international law.

An important milestone in the history of Crimea was the 20th century. Over this period, the state and political status of the peninsula changed repeatedly. In 1918, the Tavrida Republic was established as part of the Russian SFSR. In 1919, the Provisional Workers' and Peasants' Government transformed Crimea into the Soviet Socialist Republic, while in 1921 the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK) and the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian SFSR adopted a decree on the establishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the USSR. In all these transformations, Crimea remained invariably part of Russia as an integral but autonomous part of Russia, characterised by its traditional multi-ethnicity and extensive rights in dealing with the internal problems of public life.

It should also be noted that the state identification of Crimea at the beginning of the twentieth century took place in the context of another Western European intervention. France, Germany, Great Britain, and some other countries sent their troops to Crimea, aiming at its occupation and separation from Russia. Intervention by Western countries in Crimea contributed to the aggravation of the entire complex of social relations in the region and led to a de facto economic and humanitarian catastrophe. However, Western countries failed again to change the state status of Crimea.

At that moment, as we have already said, the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was created within Russia.

The territory of the Republic was divided into 7 Crimean Tatar, two German, and three Jewish districts. Apart from them, there were dozens of national rural councils – Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, etc. Before the Second World War Crimea's population was represented by Russians (49.5%), Crimean Tatars (19.4%), Ukrainians (13.7%), Jews (5.8%), Germans (6.0%), and other peoples.¹⁷⁹ The region was peculiar for its multi-ethnicity.

Another attempt at the “Western-style” annexation of Crimea was made during the Second World War. Hitler's German plan was to separate Crimea from

¹⁷⁹ See: Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1921-1945). Simferopol: Taurida, 1990. P. 22-24.

Russia and rename it Gothenland. Nazi Germany believed that the peninsula belonged to the German nation. This was based on the historical fact that Goths lived in Crimea in the early Middle Ages.

The struggle for Crimea during the Second World War was particularly fierce. The entire world knows about the “second” heroic defence of Sevastopol and the Kerch resistance. That time again, the heroic defence of Crimea by the Soviet army and the majority of the local population did not let separate it from Russia.

As part of its post-war development, Crimea has changed its administrative, but not state, status several times. For instance, on June 30, 1945, the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was transformed into the Crimean Oblast as part of the RSFSR. As is well known, by the time the United Nations was established, Crimea had remained Russian.

It was not until February 19, 1954, on the 300th anniversary of Ukraine’s unification with Russia, that the Crimean Oblast (**excluding Sevastopol** which remained the central administration city) was passed to the administrative control of the Ukrainian SSR.

The crisis that erupted in the late 1980s made the issue of Crime’s state and political status a top priority again. On January 20, 1991, a pan-Crimean referendum was held at the initiative of Crimeans, in which 81.3% of the peninsula’s population took part. The question: “Are you in favour of restoring the Crimean ASSR as a subject of the USSR union and a party to the union treaty?” was answered positively by 93.26%. The referendum results showed that the local population had voted not only for the reestablishment of the Autonomy but also for its status **as an independent constituent entity of the USSR**. This would provide an opportunity to internally define the political destiny of the peninsula in the presence of the long-simmering global cataclysms.

On March 17, 1991, at another referendum, the question “Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a new federation of equal sovereign republics, which guarantees full respect of human rights and freedoms notwithstanding the nationality?” received a positive reaction of the overwhelming majority of Crimeans – 87.6%, while the voting turnover was 79.3%. Therefore, in the early 1990s Crimean peoples expressed clearly their opinion on the destiny both of their region and of the whole Fatherland.

In terms of the state self-identification of Crimea, the most important period was the one that witnessed the dissolution of the Soviet Union. It is common knowledge that the overwhelming majority of Crimeans advocated the preservation of their union state. The legal protection of the Crimeans from possible annexation by other countries was ensured by the Soviet Union Law “On the procedure of solving the issues related to the secession of a union republic from the USSR”. According to this law (art.3), in a union republic that contains autonomous republics, autonomous regions or autonomous districts the state

self-identification of such territories shall be performed by means of holding a referendum.

It was this right that Crimean citizens tried to exercise during the collapse of the USSR. In the early 1990s, over 240 thousand signatures were collected from the Crimean population on a corresponding petition that was subsequently made known to the international community as well. However, the ostensible “human rights” activists and advocates of a “rule-of-law state” did their best to deny to the Crimeans legitimate state self-identification, having therefore violated the fundamental principles of the domestic and international law.

Crimea was made part of the Ukrainian state in an utterly illegal way. An overwhelming majority of the peninsula’s population was strongly opposed to such a state of affairs. This is clearly proved by numerous facts. One such proof is the results of the referendum that was held on June 26, 1994, in the city of Sevastopol and showed that 90% of the local inhabitants expressed their support for the city to remain Russian.

Basically, **the Ukrainian annexation** of Crimea and Sevastopol and the fact that the Crimeans had been denied their right to hold a referendum in accordance with the Law “On the procedure of solving the issues related to the secession of a union republic from the USSR” provoked an extremely tense situation. A relative compromise was found on the basis of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea. This Constitution provided for the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea’s right to hold referendums and, additionally, extended Crimea’s rights in conducting internal and foreign policy as much as possible.

However, in 1995 the Ukrainian leadership abolished the 1992 Crimean Constitution unilaterally, which presented a blatant violation not only of the Republic of Crimea’s rights but also of the Ukrainian Constitution itself.

The beginning of 2014 was particularly grievous for Ukraine and Crimea. As is well known, the so-called “Euromaidan” in Kiev was disapproved of by almost all Crimea’s population. In particular, this is illustrated by the resolutions of the

Peoples of Crimea’s Forum took place on February 7, 2014, and in which 173 delegates from 34 national organizations and associations took part, along with over 100 guests from all the cities and regions of the Republic. The Forum’s resolution demanded the administration of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to protect the local population from the aggressively nationalist scenario in Kiev and not to allow the escalation of the inter-ethnic tensions and the civil war in Crimea.

Particular emphasis should be placed on the impact of the events that were rapidly unfolding back then in Ukraine. The whole world is aware of the blatant facts when nationalist-minded militants started to seize administrative buildings, brought law enforcement officials to their knees, set fire to offices of opposition parties and organizations, smashed monuments to the Soviet era and its leaders, killed citizens, created parallel illegal authorities, etc. The Crimeans were partic-

ularly outraged by the shooting of the Crimean riot police. Moreover, nationalist youth groups from Western Ukraine started arriving in Crimea with obvious terrorist intentions while the leaders of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis made public calls to commit acts of violence. The Verkhovna Rada deputies were engaged in incessant scuffles despite the absolute non-existence of meaningful anti-crisis solutions.

The crisis in Ukraine escalated to the point of acquiring international significance. To overcome it, other countries had to join in. Thus, on 21 February 2014, talks were held in Kiev between the official Ukrainian authorities and representatives of the opposition on overcoming the “Ukrainian crisis” peacefully, with the participation of the European Union countries: Germany, France, Poland and the Russian special representative. It was agreed that the resolution of the crisis would be left to the Ukrainian people themselves. The country’s leadership and the opposition undertook to refrain from using coercive measures. Both parties also committed themselves to take “considerable effort to normalize the life in cities and villages by means of liberating administrative and public buildings and unblocking streets, parks, and squares”. Besides, it was agreed to hold an early election that was to take place before December of the same year. France, Germany, and Poland officially witnessed and signed the Agreement, having therefore undertaken to be the guarantors of its fulfilment in terms of international law.

However, the very next day after the Agreement had been signed, armed nationalist militants with the acquiescence of the same “guarantor” countries seized the President’s Administration, the Verkhovna Rada buildings, the Cabinet of Ministers, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Under the pressure of the Euromaidan protestors, the Verkhovna Rada appointed an “Interim” President of Ukraine promptly, which was completely contrary to the Constitution of the country and to the Agreement signed by the authorities and the opposition and was essentially a blatant seizure of power. In this context, it is particularly interesting that the US and the European Union recognized the “new leadership” immediately. On the other hand, in December 2016, according to the decision of the Dorogomilovsky district court of Moscow made in relation to the claim filed by Vladimir Oleynik, a people’s deputy of the Verkhovna Rada’s previous convocations, the seizure of power in Kiev by the ultra-nationalists was recognized as a “coup”.

The duly elected President was forcibly removed. The ultra-nationalists who seized the power not only de facto terminated the country’s Constitution but also unleashed a civil war in the South-East of the country where millions of citizens did not approve of such a scenario and where the resistance was growing rapidly. The coup in Ukraine was cynically called “the Revolution of Dignity”.

The protests against such a “revolution” were particularly strong in the multinational Crimea. Thousands of people gathered at rallies chanting “Fascism is no way!”, “No to nationalism!”, “Sevastopol, Crimea, Russia!” and demanded to protect them from the growing arbitrariness of the Ukrainian nationalists. At

the same time, the Crimeans clearly remember the Ukrainian nationalists' chants which said that "Crimea will be Ukrainian or deserted". Under pressure from protesting public opinion, the Crimean authorities (especially after the shooting of the Crimean riot police by Nazis and the mass refusal of the security forces to serve Ukraine, whose authorities had failed to impose proper law and order) sided with the local population.

Under such conditions, the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea gave the Crimeans the legal and moral right to decide fateful issues of state self-determination independently by holding all-Crimean referenda. In particular, Article 18 of the Constitution provides that one of the main authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea is:

"the announcement and holding of republican (local) referendums", while the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea has the authority to "take decisions pertaining to the holding republican (local) referendums..."¹⁸⁰. These dispositions did not contradict international law and the principles of the protection of fundamental human rights.

In the current legal conflict created by the coup d'état in Ukraine, the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of 1992, which also gave the right to the Crimean parliament to hold a referendum without any approval, became an absolutely legitimate document (note also the fact that the Supreme Council of Crimea never repealed the 1992 Constitution). It was this right provided by both Constitutions that Crimeans exercised.

In February of 2014, the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea adopted a decision on holding a referendum at which the following questions were posed: 1) "Do you support reunifying Crimea with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation?" and 2) "Do you support the restoration of the 1992 Crimean constitution and the status of Crimea as a part of Ukraine?" The referendum had the following outcome: the total number of voters was 1,274,096 (83.10%). The number of votes in support of the question: "1) Do you support reunifying Crimea with Russia as a subject of the Russian Federation?" was 1,233,002 (96.77%). The number of votes in support of the question: "2) Do you support the restoration of the 1992 Crimean constitution and the status of Crimea as a part of Ukraine?" was 31,997 (2.51%). The number of ballot papers that were recognized as invalid was 9,097 (0.72%).

In Sevastopol, the voter turnout was 89.5% while the first question received a positive response from 95.6% of the local residents who took part in the voting. The protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Crimeans and public order was ensured by numerous volunteer community policing groups and, following the official request of the local authorities, by the Russian armed forces that were deployed in Crimea according to Russian-Ukrainian agreements, together with the Crimean police, and other law enforcement authorities. Hence,

180 Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Simferopol, 1998. P. 59, 66.

the Crimeans' right to express their position on the state identification (which had been previously suppressed by the Ukrainian authorities) was protected, together with the basic principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The Crimean referendum was characterized by an unusually high involvement of the local population and provided an utterly accurate representation of the citizens' position on the issue in question. Over one thousand observers from dozens of countries confirmed the legitimacy of the referendum, its good organization, and the active civic engagement of the local population.

It should be emphasized that not only the peninsula's population but essentially all the security agencies and administrations of cities and districts supported the Crimeans' movement aimed at reuniting with Russia. In particular, almost 100% of the police personnel immediately filed reports asking to transfer them to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs. The overwhelming majority of several thousand Ukrainian servicemen deployed in Crimea either supported the reunification with Russia or did not impede it. Ukrainian officers started one by one, to ask to continue their military service in the Russian army. In such circumstances that were dubbed the "Crimean spring" not a single fire shot was heard; the other way round, the reunification of Crimea with Russia was perceived as a long-awaited feast. An unprecedented unity with the Crimean peoples was manifested by almost everybody – local authorities, police, and many other organizations and power structures.

However, the referendum results and the subsequent reunification of Crimea with Russia provoked another aggressive reaction from the Western countries. A new war was declared against the Crimean population in the form of economic and political sanctions. Basically, it meant that the Western countries were fighting against democracy and those who followed its principles within Crimea.

Ukraine's reaction was not long in coming as it introduced food, energy, transport, and other forms of the peninsula's blockade. Water supply through the North Crimean Canal was cut off. The mass media unleashed a brazen campaign that aimed at discrediting the state identification of Crimea and was predominantly based on lies and misinformation.

The Western countries failed to annexe Crimea during either the 1853-1856 Crimean war, the 1918-1921 Western intervention, or Hitler occupation. It is quite obvious that the current sanction-based aggression of the Western states, just like the previous attempts to seize Crimea, is doomed to failure.

Judging from the analysis of Crimea's state identification process, the most important conclusion can be drawn: over the last centuries of the Modern and Contemporary history Crimea de-jure and de-facto remained Russian and heroically defended this status. The overwhelming majority of the region's population identified themselves as belonging to the Russian world.

Considering the above-mentioned facts, the public, and especially the foreign one, wonders more often than before: "Why the Crimeans and the whole of Russia have always defended Crimea with such a dedication?". The answer to such a

question cannot be simple and unambiguous. This issue comprises a complex of deep-rooted historical and civilizational aspects, the most crucial of them being, in our opinion, the following ones.

First of all, the historical development of Crimea over the last centuries has led to the formation of peculiar relations here that identify the peninsula as a part of Russia and are characterized by multi-ethnicity and religious diversity. Crimea is coeval with the American statehood that ensured the establishment of the present-day mentality of the American society. Over the same time span, the Russian state identification has formed in Crimea.

A particularly high level of development was achieved by Crimea during the Soviet period of its history. Back then, the idea to develop it as a “pan-Union health resort” appeared, and the region was free from social, national, and other forms of violence. Crimea has always been the region of peace and cooperation. Moreover, after the Yalta conference that was held in 1945 by the allied members of the anti-Hitler coalition, Yalta has essentially become the summer capital, and not only of the Soviet Union. Here numerous forums and meetings were held between the state leaders, politicians, and public figures to solve the most critical issues of international cooperation.

Several decades of Crimea’s administrative subordination to Ukraine within the Soviet state had provoked no protests. The protests began with the forcible “confinement” of Crimea, against the will of the Crimean people, into an independent Ukrainian state in 1991 and the start of aggressive Ukrainization of the peninsula. No one could agree with the widely spread chant of the Ukrainian nationalists that “Crimea would be Ukrainian and deserted”. It should be also noted that the majority of Crimeans encouraged the repatriation of the Crimean Tatars as an act of historical justice but did not approve of the position of their leaders who had officially proclaimed at the 2nd Kurultai that their objective was “...the re-establishment of the Crimean Tatar people’s statehood across the whole territory of its Fatherland – Crimea”. The economic basis of such statehood should have been “the land and natural resources of Crimea, including its health and recreational potential, which are the basis of the national wealth of the Crimean Tatar people”. In case of any opposition towards this process, the Kurultai authorised the Mejlis to seek that Crimean Tatars were acknowledged as a people that were fighting for their national liberation”.¹⁸¹

For all the metamorphosis of Crimea’s development in the post-Soviet period, it inevitably remained in the orbit of the Russian world, dominated by the desire to further develop Russian culture, language and education and to expand ties with Russia, which remained the homeland of the vast majority of the region’s population.

The second point. Political aspects of Crimea’s state identification. The afore-described facts are evidence that Crimea has always been the object of a

181 See: The Avdet, July 11, 1991.

severe political struggle in the international arena. At the same time, it is common knowledge that the Crimeans not only were involved in political relations but also actively defended their interests from various external intrusions.

In the contemporary realities, a stereotype has been imposed upon the general public, according to which Crimea was allegedly “annexed” by Russia that had always pursued this goal in its politics. Such a point of view contradicts the real state of affairs.

The political identification of Crimea during the post-Soviet period was rather peculiar. The reason is that it was not Russia who tried to absorb Crimea but, the other way round, it was Crimea that sought the reunification with its historical fatherland. In this context, one episode from the Contemporary History of Russia is very illustrative. As it is well known, by the Decree passed by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union in the October of 1948, Sevastopol was made a separate administrative and economic centre and was classified as a centrally administered city. Since then, this city has experienced no transferrals. This fact is widely known far beyond Sevastopol and Russia. During the collapse of the Soviet Union, Sevastopol inhabitants demanded in a categorical and absolutely democratic way to formalize the legitimate status of the city as belonging to Russia. On July 9, 1992, the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation legally confirmed such a status of the city. However, an investigation into the status of Sevastopol was initiated by the United Nations.

In these circumstances, it came as a big surprise when on July 19, 1993 the Russian Federation’s representative to the United Nations Yu. Vorontsov wrote a letter to the Head of the United Nations Security Council which says that:

“The resolution of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation adopted on 9 July 1993 on the status of Sevastopol. Sevastopol” diverges from the policy of the President and the Government of the Russian Federation to pursue Russia’s interests in the Black Sea Fleet, the stationing of the Russian Navy in Ukraine, in Crimea and in Sevastopol. Even the Security Council, having been surprised by such a position of the then President of Russia, did not make a definitive resolution on the status of Sevastopol and ruled that “the Council would continue examining the issue in question”¹⁸².

This is how Sevastopol, the city of Russia’s glory and the hero city, was given away, and its inhabitants were betrayed. At least, Crimeans perceived the situation in this way. And this was not the first betrayal committed by the then liberal democratic authorities of Russia. At the time, the first President of Ukraine L. Kravchuk said that if Russian leaders, particularly Boris Yeltsin, had demanded that Crimea remain part of Russia when the Soviet Union collapsed, he would not have opposed it. Even this experienced Ukrainian politician was probably aware of the historical peculiarity of Crimea.

182 Resolutions and decisions of the United Nations, July 20, 1993, Document S/26118. P. 156.

As strange as it may sound, the “giving away” of Sevastopol by the Russian liberal democratic authorities of that time was a turning point in the Crimeans’ struggle for reunification with Russia, their historical Fatherland.

The “third siege of Sevastopol” started. Pro-Russian organizations, such as “The Russian community of Sevastopol” and “The Russian Community of Crimea”, and the mass public movement “Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia” were established and start growing rapidly. A special Fund for the economic and humanitarian cooperation “Moscow-Crimea” was created, along with other organizations that engaged in an active struggle for the reunification of Crimea with Russia. In reality, the goal of this struggle was perceived, as we have already mentioned, as the absorption of Crimea by Russia. And this process terminated only in the spring of 2014, when Russia was finally able to meet halfway its compatriots who lived on the peninsula in the presence of a looming geopolitical catastrophe provoked by the coup and the domination of ultra-nationalist mood in Ukraine.

Such peculiar aspects of Crimea’s state identification are now preferred not to be remembered. However, this is a historical fact that should be taken into consideration. All the above-mentioned proofs provide the grounds for drawing a conclusion that the contemporary development of Crimea is utterly impossible without Russia, and that Crimea, in its turn, is an active participant in the process of forming its own state identification which it had rightfully vindicated.

The third point. Spiritual and moral aspects of the state identification of Crimea.

Crimea has an immense spiritual, moral, and even sacral significance both for Russian citizens and the Crimeans themselves. In this context, the public opinion of the Russians and the Crimeans was predominantly shaped by Innokenty, Archbishop of Kherson and Taurida, who said during the laying of St. Vladimir’s cathedral in the besieged Sevastopol that the Crimean land was “our ancient and ancestral heritage. Here the font of our Christianity is, and it is here that our holy history and popular traditions originated from. For Russia, to yield this country to anyone would mean to renounce its baptismal font and to betray its memory...”¹⁸³.

One and a half-century later, Russian President Vladimir Putin in his annual message to the Federal Assembly on February 4, 2014, made a special comment that Crimea had particular importance for Russia while Kherson “has a great civilizational and sacral significance, like the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is important for the followers of the Islamic and Jewish religions”.

Moreover, for Russia, the protection of Crimea has traditionally been the manifestation of honesty, courage, and glory. No other region in Russia can boast of having two hero cities – Sevastopol and Kerch – and a city of the military glory – Feodosia. This fact is deeply imprinted in the public conscience of many Russian generations and is necessarily recognized by international public opinion.

183 See: Archbishop Innokenty. The speech at the laying of the cathedral in Sevastopol on July 15, 1854. The Crimean archive. 1994. N. 1. P. 105.

For instance, the school programs in England include Alfred Tennyson's "The Charge of the Light Brigade". This verse plays an educational role similar to that of Mikhail Lermontov's "Borodino" in Russian schools. Alfred Tennyson admires the heroic act of the English aristocrats who died in the Battle of Balaclava in 1853 while carrying out their order and fighting against the Russians who were desperately protecting their land. Back then, no one doubted that the Russians were protecting their country, their Fatherland, in contrast with the contemporary Western politicians who argue that Russia "is annexing Crimea". From the point of view of simple logic, it is the same as saying that Russia has allegedly "annexed Crimea" from itself.

As is well known, the word "Crimea" is present all over the world in the names of the cities, streets, and squares. For example, only in the United States **seven** cities and localities bear the name of Sevastopol.

Another reason why Russia has always protected Crimea so selflessly is that the overwhelming majority of its population is represented by people who are Russian in terms of their nationality, culture, and language. The Russian statehood in Crimea is essentially over two hundred years old. Russian Crimea can be called coeval with most contemporary countries in North, South, and Central America, as well as in present-day Europe.

There are numerous other facts that prove the obviousness of the Russian status of Crimea and its unique role and significance in the contemporary history of Russia.

Just like it is impossible to deprive the Muslims of their holy sites – Mecca and Medina, the Israelites – of Jerusalem, the Americans – of New York, it is equally impossible to deprive Russia of Crimea. This is eloquently illustrated by the facts related to Crimea's state identification and its particular aspects over the last centuries of Modern and Contemporary History.

As history has shown, all the attempts, especially those of the Western countries, to get hold of Crimea are doomed to failure. The same fate awaits today's sanctions against Crimea that are part of the civilizational war that the West has unreasonably started against Russia.

ON THE QUESTION OF THE UNLAWFULNESS OF THE TRANSFER OF CRIMEA TO UKRAINE

Vladimir I. Kononenko,

PhD in Legal Sciences, Head of the Department of the Russian State University of Justice (Moscow)

Taking into consideration that currently the issue related to the unlawfulness of the transfer of a part of the Russian territory to Ukraine is still being animatedly discussed, I deem it necessary to turn to the legal analysis of the transfer of the Crimean Oblast to Ukraine and of the issue related to the city of Sevastopol.

As is well known, according to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated February 5, 1954 the Crimean oblast passed from the administrative control of the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR by its Decree of 19.02.1954 approved a joint submission by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Ukrainian SSR on such a transfer¹⁸⁴. It should be noted that in this case, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union exceeded its competence. It was defined in art.49 of the 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union and did not include such decisions since they belonged to the exclusive competence of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union, according to art.14, p. “d” of the 1936 Constitution.

Art.18 of the 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union contained the basic principles of the sovereignty of the states that were then part of the Soviet Union. One of the most essential elements of such sovereignty was the inviolability of their borders, so the territories of the USSR republics could not be changed without their consent.

The same rules were provided in the Constitutions of the USSR republics. In the 1937 Constitution of the Russian RSFSR, they were mentioned in art.16.

According to art.22 of the Constitution of the Russian SFSR, the highest organ of state power was the Supreme Council of the RSFSR, and it had the exclusive authority to decide on the territory modification, bearing in mind the peoples' will and the decision of the regional Councils of Workmen's Deputies. Hence, only the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR had the authority to decide on reshaping its territory, that is alienating the Crimean oblast from Russia, and not its subordinate body – the Presidium.

The authorities of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR were defined by art.33 of the 1937 Constitution of the RSFSR. Its competence did not include the authority to decide on transferring a part of its terri-

184 The Bulletin of the 1938-1975 Laws of the Soviet Union. /Moscow, “New of the Council of Workmen's Deputies of the Soviet Union”, 1975, P. 104-105.

tory in favour of another state. How, by the way, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR was not authorized to decide on the alteration of Ukraine's territory either but, nevertheless, it did pass the resolution according to which the Crimean oblast was to be included within the Ukrainian SSR. Such a resolution could have been passed by the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR only. Therefore, Ukraine's sovereign right to decide on the modification of its territory was violated as well. Besides, attention should be paid to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union which did not contain a reference to the Constitutional provision that it had been guided by. And this was not by chance, since, as we have mentioned earlier, it had no such authority. There was no reference to the population of Crimea either, as was the case in other decrees.

It should be noted that, according to the so-called Radbruch formula, even the legitimately adopted regulatory acts whose contents violate the concept of justice or go beyond what is considered to be just shall be declared null from the moment of their adoption as not meeting the criteria of law. It should be noted that when the FRG took over East Germany, the German courts often referred to the "Radbruch formula" for GDR regulations, declaring them null and void. Not only are the regulatory acts on the transferral of the Crimean Oblast to Ukraine illegitimate but they also neglect the notion of justice as such since the population of Crimea, like serfs, were transferred to another state without their consent and subsequently became subject to the Ukrainization, starting from their language.

According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, pioneer of hermeneutics, man lives in the environment formed by his language, and the boundaries of this language coincide with the boundaries of existence itself. Now, as then, Ukrainian authorities exploited the language to attempt to alter the conscience of the Russian population that lives in Ukraine.

As far as the Sevastopol issue is concerned, it should be noted that, according to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR dated October 29, 1948, Sevastopol was alienated from the Crimean Oblast and made an autonomous administrative and economic centre subordinate to such republican cities as Moscow and Leningrad.

Here a conclusion can be drawn that at the moment of the transferral of the Crimean Oblast which violated numerous provisions of the 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union and the corresponding provisions of the Constitutions of the RSFSR and Ukraine, Sevastopol was not transferred to Ukraine and could not be legally transferred on the basis of the same resolution that had alienated the Crimean Oblast. Such a decision required undergoing a separate (autonomous) legal procedure taking into consideration that the city had changed its legal status to become a republican city. There were no statutory acts that confirmed the transferral of Sevastopol, and there could not be any such activity due to the city's strategic role in protecting the Southern borders of the Soviet Union.

Therefore, from the legal point of view, Sevastopol has always remained within Russia.

Ukraine's claims for the city of Sevastopol are groundless. It should be noted that Ukraine absorbed Sevastopol unilaterally, which is reflected in the Constitution of Ukraine adopted on April 29, 1978. Art. 8 of the Constitution defines the administrative and territorial structure of the Ukrainian SSR. Art.76 of the Ukrainian Constitution provides that the determination of the regional division of the country lies in the competence of the Ukrainian SSR. According to art.77 of the said Constitution, the territory of Ukraine, along with other regions, includes a republican city of Sevastopol. However, in art. 71 of the Russian Constitution adopted on April 12, 1978, Sevastopol is not included in the list of the republican cities, which contradicts the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Russia passed on October 29, 1948, that alienated Sevastopol from the Crimean Oblast.

Such an approach can be explained by the fact that back then the Soviet Union was ruled by a Ukrainian, Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev. Hence, Ukraine annexed a part of the Russian territory.

Russia's disregard for the legal aspect of the process of deciding on Sevastopol's fate in the 1990s led to the unreasonable separation of the Black Sea fleet between Russia and Ukraine which was based on its own territory and to further equally unreasonable payments for the deployment of the Russian fleet in Sevastopol due to which Russia suffered the loss of billiards of roubles. We might as well, for instance, be paying to Norway for the current basing of our Northern fleet in our own waters.

If Ukraine recognizes the 1954 Decrees on the transferral in its favour of the Crimean Oblast, it must also recognize the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR on the separation of Sevastopol from the Crimean Oblast, passed on October 29, 1948. Moreover, according to the available information (which is yet to be verified), around 1994 Ukraine addressed the United Nations Security Council with the request to recognize Sevastopol as a Ukrainian city. The above-mentioned request of **Ukraine was denied** since the country had not provided the Security Council with the regulatory acts that would confirm that Sevastopol had ever been transferred from the RSFSR to Ukraine.

On May 21, 1992, the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation in its Regulation on the legal assessment of the resolutions passed by the RSFSR's highest authorities in relation to the status of Crimea in 1954 declared them null and void.

It should also be noted that in the context of the discussed events this Regulation is incorrect since it deals with RSFSR's highest authorities and their resolutions.

According to art.22 of the 1937 Constitution of the RSFSR, the highest state authority was at the time the Supreme Council of the RSFSR but it did not take

part in the transferral of the Crimean Oblast to Ukraine. Therefore, it is only the Presidium that is concerned, which means that the highest authorities of both countries took no decision on the modification of the state borders. In case a subordinate body interferes with the competence of the Highest Authority, its decisions cannot be interpreted as decisions of the Highest Authority itself. Otherwise, we would indirectly legalize the non-Constitutional decisions of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR.

In this regard, I reckon that today the Constitutional Court should declare both decisions (the Regulation of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR on the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from Russia to Ukraine, signed on February 5, 1954, and the Decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Russia and Ukraine on the executed transferral of the Crimean Oblast to Ukraine) null and void since they contradict the Constitution, especially because on September 17, 2018, the former Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko signed the Decree on the termination of the Russian-Ukrainian Friendship Treaty.

Providing a legal assessment of the Regulation of the Supreme Council of Ukraine signed on February 13, 1954, it should be noted that the Presidium requested to transfer Crimea and not the administrative and economic unit – the Crimean Oblast, – that is to transfer the geographical name only. Besides, the Presidium addressed the body that did not possess the authority to decide on such matters since in that case only the confirmation of the previously executed transferral could be concerned, and such a confirmation could be made by the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union only. In other words, such a statutory act of the Supreme Council of Ukraine has no legal force.

A legal analysis of the above-mentioned documents allows raising the issue of the compensation by Ukraine of the unreasonable material losses incurred by Russia in relation to the separation of the Black Sea fleet and the fee for its basing.

Besides, another question might be raised – the one that regards the legitimacy of the privatization of the industrial facilities located in Sevastopol (for instance, the enterprises engaged in repairing Navy ships, etc.) that was carried out by the State Property Fund of Ukraine, being the latter an entity that had no such authority.

SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE PEOPLES OR THE STATE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY?

Sergey V. Shitkov,¹⁸⁵

PhD in Legal Sciences, Moscow State Institute of International Relations
(Moscow)

The universally recognized principles of international law serve, first, for preventing conflicts. Each of them has a clear scope of application. A particular feature of these principles is that there is no hierarchy in their entirety. Each and every principle deserves to be respected and is self-sufficient. Each principle is recognized, formalized, and needs to be followed strictly.

However, such an interpretation is rather naive and straightforward. The problem arises when it is necessary to understand what is the most important aspect and how a particular historical and political process should be qualified from the international law's point of view. Here an ample scope for speculations and misinterpretations appears.

The issue that concerns the correlation between the territorial integrity principle and the self-determination principle is not new and will require to be settled each time some nation tries to implement the latter. The interconnectedness, complementarity, and interdependence of these two principles are beyond doubt if one examines carefully the contemporary examples that stem from the centrifugal tendencies which arise during the collapse of multi-ethnic state entities or in case particular countries seek to exploit the inter-state settlement mechanisms for achieving their own goals.

Many researchers note that a nation's attempt at self-determination necessarily meets the demand to strictly observe the inviolability of borders and the territorial integrity of the states, which is bound to cause the collision of these two principles.

A young scientist at the Higher School of Economics A.A. Aleksanyan rightly points out that "basically, depending on the political interests, the priority is given either to the territorial integrity principle or to the self-determination principle"¹⁸⁶. At the same time, he notes quite reasonable that "in order to justify, in terms of international law, the seizure and forced retention of the territories belonging to the small peoples, the self-determination principle either get denied completely or

185 S.V. Shitkov, Vice-Rector at the MGIMO University, is the author of the monograph "Annexation. An attempt at the historical and legal analysis". Tambov. Publishing house of Tambov State University named after G. R. Derzhavin. 2016. 104 pages. Some materials from his current monograph are quoted with his consent. As S.V. Shitkov rightly points out in his paper, "this essay was written in search of an answer to the question: what should be done in this regard in the future to learn how to avoid speculations and hear the people's will". P. 2.

186 A.A. Aleksanyan. Realization of the peoples' right to self-determination in the context of the principle the territorial integrity of the states. Scientific journal "News of the Perm University: legal sciences", electronic version. Issue 4(22). 2013. www.jurvsnik.psu.ru/index.php/ru-4222013/26-2010-12-01-13-31-58/4-22-2013/478

is set against the territorial integrity principle”¹⁸⁷. Such a primacy of the territorial integrity principle is also spoken about by many Western researchers.¹⁸⁸

To confirm his point of view, A.A. Aleksanyan refers to Azerbaijan’s position on the self-determination of Nagorny Karabakh that is based on the assertion that the peoples’ right to self-determination has no regulatory force and can have any significance only if it is completely subordinate to the territorial integrity principle. For example, according to Azerbaijan’s former member to the Constitutional Committee of the Soviet Union S. Mirzoev, “in case of a collision of the provisions that define the inviolability of borders and the territorial integrity and the peoples’ right to self-determination, international law gives priority to the protection of the territorial integrity”¹⁸⁹.

This problem is far from being new. True enough, the territorial integrity of the countries has been repeatedly discussed in various international treaties, declarations, and agreements, and not without reason: the leaders of the states that signed such documents were mostly preoccupied with protecting their territories from internal and external threats to its integrity. In this regard, the peoples’ right to self-determination became “the kind fairy” that everyone liked and respected but no one ever met.

However, sometimes a strong player used to take this principle out of his sleeve in order to weaken the opponent. Such a position did not enjoy much success in the states whose territory was at risk of division, which entailed the non-recognition or a severely conditional recognition of the local population’s right to self-determination, and the desire to prevent the expression of the people’s will and the modification of the state borders. As a result, a fresh discussion on what is more important sparked.

It is beyond doubt that the territorial integrity principle is the most crucial means of protecting a state’s sovereignty. There is no state that does not possess its territory which is the “setting” for the realization of the state’s sovereignty. The sovereignty of the nation that inhabits a particular territory implies that this nation owns the territory and has the exclusive right to dispose of it. The territory of the state is its most important characteristic. The inviolability of the territory is the clear-cut condition of the state’s existence. The Charter of the United Nations prohibits the use of force in the form of invasions, annexations, and occupations, and any other actions aimed at the division of the states’ territories unless such actions are performed in accordance with the international sanctions and/or with the UN consent, which clearly means that this principle is designed for the protection of the sovereign states’ territories from various claims, especially external¹⁹⁰.

187 A.A. Aleksanyan. The mentioned paper.

188 S.V. Chernichenko. The self-determination principle (contemporary interpretation). «The Moscow Journal of the Contemporary Law». N. 4. 1996.

189 S. Mirzoev. National minorities and the problem of the secession/the Nagorny Karabakh conflict settlement symposium organized by the Danish Institute for Human Rights. Copenhagen, 1991. (quotation from the paper by A. A. Aleksanyan).

190 V.N. Fedorov. The United Nations, other international organizations and their role in the 21st century. Moscow, 2005.

At the same time, the term “territorial integrity” is not sufficiently correct. In the UN Charter, this term in its literal interpretation is contained only in the English-language version of the document. A similar meaning can be found in the French and Spanish versions. As for the Russian version, it speaks about “territorial inviolability”. Some researchers explain this by the fact that the term “integrity” as itself is absent in the UN Charter¹⁹¹.

However, the predominant point of view is that there are different legal interpretations of such terms that are various elements of the same principle. At the same time, the territorial inviolability is “the protection of a state’s territory from any external threat; no one can claim the state’s territory for the purpose of taking hold of it or occupying it either partially or entirely and penetrating its land, sea, or air against the will of this state”, while the territorial integrity is “the condition of the unity and indivisibility of a state’s territory; no one can claim the state’s territory for the purpose of a partial or total violation of its unity or of the division, separation, exclusion, transferral or absorption of the state’s territory, in whole or in part, in favour of another state’s territory”¹⁹².

However, in our opinion, a more substantiated point of view is the one according to which such a discrepancy is a mere inaccuracy that, nevertheless, equalizes these terms due to the equivalence of various UN Charter versions¹⁹³.

(In the context of the subject raised in this paper, we are also interested in how the researchers try to emphasize the importance of one of these two principles taking into account the political situation, which is clearly shown by numerous papers dedicated to the Nagorny Karabakh crisis.)

The initiative to include this term in the UN Charter belongs to Australia who made such a proposal at the UN conference in San Francisco in 1945. The idea was supported by the UN Big Five - the future permanent members of the Security Council¹⁹⁴. It is quite natural that in the post-war period the world was in need of guarantees that the living space would no longer be claimed by some particular country.

A crucial aspect of such a principle was the unlimited number of its subjects since each and every state had the right to the protection of the integrity of its territory. Speaking about the means of protection, they can resort to the “arbitrators” represented by the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council, and other international organizations established in accordance with art. 52-54 of the UN Charter, as well as to coercive measures allowed by international law. At the same time, no one deprives them of their right to ensure such protection by their own means.

191 L.M. Karapetyan. State and national conflicts in the CIS regions and international legal framework for their settlement. “The Moscow Journal of the Contemporary Law”. N. 2 (38). 2000. April-June. P. 227.

192 International law. Edited by V.I.Kuznetsov, B.R. Tuzmukhamedov. Moscow, 2010. P. 178.

193 A.A. Aleksanyan. Realization of the peoples’ right to self-determination in the context of the territorial integrity principle. Scientific journal “News of the Perm University: legal sciences”, electronic version. Issue 4 (22). 2013. www.jurvsnik.psu.ru/index.php/ru-4222013/26-2010-12-01-13-31-58/4-22-2013/478

194 S.V. Chernichenko. Theory of international law. Volume 1. Moscow, 1999. P. 220.

The territorial integrity principle is reflected not only in the UN Charter but also in the fundamental documents of the regional organizations.

Art. 2 of the 1963 Charter of the Organization of African Unity proclaims that its main goals are the protection of the territorial integrity and the natural resources of the African states¹⁹⁵. Likewise, art. 5 of the Pact of the Arab League is dedicated to the protection of the territorial integrity of the member countries¹⁹⁶.

However, the full description of this concept is contained in the Declaration “On Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States” adopted under the UN Charter¹⁹⁷, which provides the definition of this term: “Every State has the duty to refrain from the threat or use of force to violate the existing international boundaries of another State or as a means of solving international disputes, including territorial disputes and problems concerning frontiers of States”¹⁹⁸. Besides, the Declaration emphasizes that “No territorial acquisition resulting from the threat or use of force shall be recognized as legal”¹⁹⁹.

Previously this principle was implemented in the bilateral treaties and agreements according to the so-called “Bandung formula” that was used in the 1955 Bandung declaration on promotion of world peace and cooperation²⁰⁰.

Subsequently, this principle, along with other principles, was formalized in the 1975 Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Part VIII of the Final act said that “the participating States will respect the equal rights of peoples and their right to self-determination, acting at all times in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and with the relevant norms of international law, including those relating to the territorial integrity of States” (quoted from p. 5, page 228).

As we see, the equal rights of peoples and their right to determine their future are closely interrelated by the international community with the territorial integrity of the states.

Therefore, this principle has a wide legal interpretation, which allows to analyse its exact meaning only in close relation to other principles of international law, including the principle of self-determination of peoples.

Self-determination is understood as the right of a people, population or ethnic group to determine of its own free will the forms of its socio-political life²⁰¹.

195 Organization of African Unity (history of creation and activities). Collection of documents. Moscow, 1970, and the Charter of the Organization of African Unity, 479 U.N.T.S.39, entered into force Sept. 13, 1963. <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/africa/OAU Charter 1993.html>

196 <http://docs.pravo.ru/document/view/18367155/16023147/>

197 Current international law. Selected documents. Compilers: A. V. Kukushkina, A. S. Yukhno. Moscow, 2014.

198 Current international law. Selected documents. Compilers: A. V. Kukushkina, A. S. Yukhno. Moscow, 2014. P. 57.

199 Ibid. P. 58.

200 International law. Volume 1. Textbook for Academic Baccalaureate. Edited by A. N. Vylegzhanin. Moscow, 2015. P. 70.

201 International law. Edited by V. I. Kuznetsov, B.R. Tuzmukhamedov. Moscow, 2010. P. 184.

This principle was first formalized in the Charter of the United Nations, which stated that one of the goals of the UN was the necessity to “develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of self-determination of peoples”²⁰². In other articles of the Charter this principle is mentioned in a fuller form, yet no clear definition is provided.

The principle was also specified in the International Bills of Human Rights.²⁰³

In the 1970 Declaration on principles of international law the self-determination principle was defined as follows: “All peoples have the right freely to determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every State has the duty to respect this right in accordance with the provisions of the Charter”²⁰⁴.

At the same time, the Declaration contains the definition of the modes in which peoples can exercise their right to self-determination, that is “the establishment of a sovereign and independent State, the free association or integration with an independent State or the emergence into any other political status freely determined by a people”²⁰⁵.

Hence, these legal acts formalize the peoples’ right to freely and independently determine and select the forms of their political identity (autonomy, federal constituent entity, creation of a state, free association with another state or unification with it, determination of any other political status), its political and legal status, and pursue its social, economic, and cultural development, and the right to resist a state that forcibly impedes the self-determination, including receiving support from other states and international organizations²⁰⁶.

A people’s right to self-determination cannot be absolute. The violation of a state’s integrity under the pretext of self-determination is unacceptable. Here, too, one could speak of separatism, which is in vectorial contradiction with the principle of the self-determination of peoples.

Particular attention should be paid to the difference between self-determination and separatism that some authors mention²⁰⁷.

In their opinion, self-determination of peoples has a politically progressive nature that ensures the best conditions for the peoples’ successful development, while separatism has a negative and destructive meaning since its goal is to break a single state up. The pursue of self-determination is supported by the majority of the population while separatism is not a large-scale phenomenon and serves to the objectives of a small group of people. Unlike self-determination, which does not

202 Quotation from the UN Charter by: V. Fyodorov. *The United Nations, other international organizations and their role in the 21st century*. Moscow, 2005. P. 2 Art. 1.

203 *International Bills of human rights: a collection of documents*. Compiler V. A. Kartashkin, E. A. Lukasheva, 2nd edition, Moscow, 2002.

204 *International Bills of human rights: a collection of documents*. Compilers: A.V. Kukushkina, A.S. Yukhno. Moscow, 2014. P. 59-60.

205 *Ibid.* P. 60.

206 *International law*. Edited by V.I.Kuznetsov, B.R. Tuzmukhamedov. Moscow, 2010. P. 185.

207 S.N. Baburin. *Territorial regimes and territorial disputes (State and legal issues)*. Moscow, 2001. P. 9-10.

destroy the organic historical unity, separatism breaks up political and cultural ties within a single national territory. When self-determination is concerned, the separation is not an end in itself but merely a means of the fullest possible expression of the interests of a population that pursues a positive and progressive development. Meanwhile, for separatism, separation is the ultimate goal. In the process of the self-determination, leaders seek to meet the interests not only of the majorities they represent but of all the peoples and population groups, which are ignored by separatist leaders. Besides, self-determination takes place within an entirely legitimate framework.

The methodologies employed by a self-determining nation and by separatists were also defined by P.P. Kremnev who termed them as “dissolution” and “disintegration”. According to Kremnev, a dissolution is “the termination of a state’s existence in conformity with the constitutional and international law, when the process of the state’s breakdown to several parts... takes place in strict compliance with the constitutional and legal provisions established by this state and after an explicit expression of will of the local population has been obtained. Otherwise, an “unlawful disintegration of the state takes place in violation of the established norms” (using the legal terminology)... .”²⁰⁸

With a slight correction for the excessive idealization of the “disintegration mechanism”, according to P.P. Kremnev, one can generally agree with this assessment.

So, the population of any state has the unconditional right to determine its attitude towards the existing social and political organization of the state, demand its modification, as well as alteration of their status in this state with the right to cease to be its members. This can be carried out with the use of peaceful means of protecting the own rights, namely the free expression of will, which enables the peoples to separate from their territory without external influence, like Singapore separated from Malaysia in 1980 or Montenegro from Serbia in 2006, or, the other way round, to remain within their state, like Quebec preferred twice to remain within Canada in 1989 and in 1995 or Scotland that chose not to leave Great Britain in 2014. The lack of a state’ respect towards a part of its population that seeks to exercise their right to self-determination often leads to military conflicts in the course of which the self-determining people win their independence that is either recognized by the international community, like in the case of Eritrea which separated from Ethiopia, or not recognized, as is the case with Abkhazia, Transnistria, South Ossetia, and East Ukrainian republics.

The appearance of the self-determination principle demands that territorial changes took place predominantly on its basis²⁰⁹. In that sense, the self-determination principle becomes the key principle of the boundary definition²¹⁰.

208 Kremnev P. P. P. The disintegration of the USSR and the state’s succession. Moscow, 2012. P. 10.

209 B.M. Klimenko. Territorial disputes peaceful settlement. Moscow, 1982. P. 6.

210 Yu. G. Territory in international law. Moscow, 1958. P. 101.

Moreover, even Soviet international law experts noted that “the correspondence between a state’s actual territorial ownership and the nation’s right to self-determination provides it with a legal status and with the right to own and dispose of such territory”²¹¹.

The problem of reconciling these two principles is not a new one. It was back in May of 1992, in the final document of Helsinki-II meeting called “The Challenges of Change”, that this problem was given the top priority. It is obvious that the solution to this problem lies in the necessity to reconcile these two principles and “ensuring by the international organizations (UN, OSCE, and others) of a meaningful and timely solution of the issues related to the breach of human rights, and of the exercise of the right to self-determination by the peoples in sovereign states”²¹².

It appears that the prohibitive and limitation nature of the territorial integrity principle and the positive and democratic nature of the self-determination principle are beyond doubt. The advocates of forcible alienation of the sovereign states’ territories speak about self-determination while overlooking the condition of the territorial integrity protection. Those who claim that a state’s territorial integrity should be preserved “at all costs” deny the peoples who populate these territories their right to self-determination, calling any such movement separatist.

Yet, the people’s right to self-determination is their most important grounds for disposing of its territory, and contra posing this right to territorial integrity is not anything other than political and legal speculation.

The territorial integrity should be based on a people’s voluntary unification with the state in question and on the state’s respect towards the people’s right to cease to be its member. Nothing can justify the lack of respect for a positive right that manifests democracy and liberty.

The peoples’ exercise of their rights cannot be called an assault on territorial integrity since the peoples’ will and mutual consideration of their interests and the interests of the state should remain a priority.

The polarity of the discussed principles allows suggesting that only the development of the mechanisms of their reconciliation can help create a balanced algorithm for the settlement of international conflicts.

One cannot but agree that “the development of international law and foreign relations in the second half of the 20th century and in the current century is characterized by a considerable expansion of the legal regulation of various fields of inter-state relations. And this leads to the alteration of the meaning of many principles and norms of contemporary international law”²¹³. In this regard, the modern community has immense opportunities for trying to find an optimal balance

211 Ibid. P. 89.

212 B.M. Klimentko. Territorial disputes peaceful settlement. Moscow, 1982. P. 228.

213 Kartashkin V. A. The change of the normative content of the main principles of contemporary international law. “The Moscow Journal of the Contemporary Law”. N. 1 (97). 2015, January-March. P. 38.

between these two principles by means of developing them and introducing further regulation without political or historical falsifications and speculations.

However, by far this balance has not been found yet, and the uncertainty provides ample scope for political swindling. Sharp terms are being used. In particular, “annexation” has recently become the most frequently used word – both appropriately and not.

THE “CRIMEAN SPRING”: CHOOSING THE PATH TO THE HISTORICAL HOMELAND OF THE STATE

Pavel V. Tarusin,

PhD in Political Sciences, Associate Professor at Lomonosov Moscow State University (Moscow)

Big things are better seen from a distance. In the same way, the events of the “Crimean Spring”, gradually receding into history, are losing their emotional, proper political, opportunistic character of perception, which creates conditions for their detailed and unbiased study. Though from the political point of view the problem of Crimea’s identity is now completely and utterly settled for Russia, this by no means eliminates the demand, or even necessity, to scientifically study and discuss the processes, causes, and events related to “the peninsula’s returning home”. The lack of desire to raise and discuss burning and somewhat uncomfortable issues creates the perception with the opponents and the public that the declared political stances are weak and not backed by solid evidence.

The main points of view towards the above-mentioned events are:

The logical process of the peninsula’s returning to its “historical motherland”.

The well-planned annexation of a part of the Ukrainian territory by Russia.

One of the events within the process of the Ukrainian statehood breakdown, which is far from being over yet.

Omitting the details pertaining to these points of view, as well as to numerous conspiracy theories, we would like to note that the “Crimean Spring” events were neither pre-determined nor inevitable. Therefore, the key epistemological task is to investigate and reconstruct the reasons and factors that led to the random choice of the option to reunite Crimea with Russia and its implementation in the spring of 2014. The obtained data have an impact on the perceptions and estimations with regard to the stability and validity of the peninsula’s unification with the Russian state, and the prospects of its development in the political, social, economic, and cultural environment.

The methodological basis of the research. The stances of the parties that insist on Crimea’s return to Ukraine are based on the casuistry of the regulatory and legal approach towards the issue of secession of particular territories of various states, especially in the light of the

“Kosovo independence precedent”. Russia is criticized for the violation of the norms of international law, including the non-intervention in the internal affairs of another respecting its territorial integrity, and inappropriate procedures for the transition of regions from one state to another. Clearly, a certain hastiness of the organization and holding of the referendum, the actual lack of regard for the opposite point of view during its preparation, and the influence of an affective nature of the public conscience and mood must be admitted.

Nevertheless, current boundaries and the states’ territories are unable to exist for a long period of time without relying on the duly expressed population’s will. However, throughout the period of Ukrainian independence, the authorities in Kiev have stubbornly refused to allow the Crimeans to express their own position on the peninsula’s ownership. On the other hand, the forms of a new order that appear within the one to be changed go invariably beyond the framework of the previous norms and provisions. Hence, any discussion on the priority of the Ukrainian legislation and norms of international law as well as on the decrees and regulations of Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada, the deposed President V. Yanukovich and the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are meaningless, unless the will of the Crimeans themselves is taken into consideration as the main grounds for the determination of the region’s status and destiny. We should dispel the “illusion of the inviolability” of territorial divisions and inter-state boundaries²¹⁴ that is allegedly guaranteed by the norms and principles of international law. The examples of the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the reunification of Germany, and the separation of Kosovo show that in such matters there is nothing eternal and stable. The composition and the boundaries of the states are subject to occasional changes due to political, social, cultural, and ethnic factors of their existence, as well as the balance of forces and interests between such states. Therefore, it is politics that predetermines the selection of a legal format for resolving such conflicts.

From the Late Classic point of view, political processes are not linear and can feature absolutely different development scenarios.²¹⁵ The selection of a particular scenario (development path)²¹⁶ depends on spontaneously appearing causal mechanisms²¹⁷ which characterize the existing ad hoc composition and structure of factors and variables and the substance and vectors of the connections and inter-relations that get formed between them. In other words, the description of the actual thread of events, the condition and parameters of the initial circumstances, formal legal aspects of the actions and behaviour of the parties, and their initial goals and interests does not explain much. Together, they only limit the range of plausible scenarios, forms and consequences, each of which has a chance of happening.

Hence, we should define the actual combination and hierarchy of the causes and conditions that set the direction and form of the processes and influence the

214 Especially those that acquired statehood overnight and without regard for the will of the population living there. In particular, the internal administrative divisions between the Soviet Union regions.

215 O.V. Gaman-Golutvina. Overcoming methodological differences: disputes on the cognition of politics in the era of uncertainty. *Polis. Political research*. 2019. No. 5. P. 19-42.

216 “A random selection that gets subsequently backed by special interests and by the development peculiarities, traditions, existing policies, and differences in values and formal and informal rules leads to the fact that the country starts following a particular trajectory”. A.A. Auzan. *Social contract and the civil society*. World of Russia. 2005. No. 3. P. 7.

217 I.M. Lokshin. 20 years of discussing the renewal of methodology of social sciences. – *Method*. Issue 4. Moscow: Institute of scientific information on social sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2014. P. 390-412.

force and the outcome of particular factors, depending on their balance and with regard to particular situations. Often, at bifurcation points, the moment-to-moment impact of very small forces becomes decisive.

While assessing the dynamics, the scope, and the prospects of the events, it should be borne in mind that social and political processes, especially in the dissipative state of the system, are immensely inert and unfold according to their own logic. Having once been launched, they at all times risk going far beyond those limits and goals that were set by their initiators, to the point of getting out of their control completely. This is because the multi-levelled nature of the processes and their involvement in the more large-scale global flows and development trends make their management highly complicated.

On the other hand, the scope and intensity of the political processes are not evenly distributed in the social space and time; they are always compressed into groups of actions clotted over a specific timeframe in a specific place and divided by more or less lengthy lapses of time. Short-term phases of activity are replaced by sluggish periods of accumulation of social energy, which cyclically and unexpectedly erupts, discharging at unpredictable points on the political continuum.

Statesmen need to be able to wait for the right moment to realise their plans, to accumulate the necessary types (combinations) of resources, to prepare favourable conditions, and to recognise and exploit opportunities that arise by chance effectively.

Backstory of the events. Notwithstanding all the uncertainty and openness of the political processes in the post-Soviet territory, the return of Crimea to Russia has become the most logical scenario for the resolution of one of the collisions which appeared after the collapse of the Soviet Union that left the issue of the peninsula's identity suspended (deferred). The previous development of the political, economic, social, and cultural processes on the peninsula itself as well as in Ukraine and Russia and the deterioration of the inter-state relations drove the plotline for the future events and predestined the list of participants and their intrinsic interests. The circumstances of the transition period have shaped only the exact configuration of the causal mechanism and the plotline of the "Crimean Spring".

Ukraine – Crimea. The 1954 decision to transfer Crimea to Ukraine almost did not alter the substance of the peninsula's nearly two-century relations with the then Soviet Union republics, not to mention the perception and the identity of the local population, which treated the connection with Ukraine as merely administrative and artificially imposed. Within the single Soviet state – and later on within independent Ukraine – no alternative driver (impulse) or mechanism appeared that would alter the region's vector and the development path which had been set by Catherine the Great and G. Potemkin in the context of the Russian political, economic, and cultural environment.

B. Yeltsin and L. Kravchuk's reluctance, or inability, to raise the issue of Crimea's identity during the collapse of the Soviet Union and the hope that this

issue would “resolve itself on its own” spawned the permanent tensions on the peninsula. Ukrainian authorities did not possess the resources, will, or political wisdom that were required for the elimination of such tensions. Their clumsy confrontational policy only kept exacerbating the problem, causing the regional establishment and the Crimeans themselves to make regular attempts to change the region’s status. Therefore, when an acute crisis of the Ukrainian statehood came, this challenge became as blatant as ever, demanding to be resolved in a form that was highly painful for all the parties.

From 1991 to 2014 the autonomous Crimea was an anomaly, a foreign object in the unitary structure of the Ukrainian state. The principle of the federative organization was probably more able to cope with the task of incorporating the peninsula in the political, economic, and cultural space of the Ukrainian state and creating a solid basis for preserving Crimea within Ukraine (if the integration was among their goals at all).

However, the Ukrainian elite failed (though it did not have the necessary resources anyway) to venture the federalization of their relations with Crimea, in order not to create a precedent for other Ukrainian regions, thus jeopardizing the whole process of the emergence of a still weak and divided state which was being sewn up from various “territorial patches” that differed between themselves from the cultural and civilizational point of view. Yet, the facts show that political, economic, and cultural controversies of particular Ukrainian regions remain unsolved, even within a single unitary state.

The awareness of the fact that the timeframe for forming a new Ukrainian nation which did not exist at the moment of the Soviet Union’s collapse is very restricted resulted in the selection of the constructivist approach towards its formation. The primacy of the formal belonging to Ukraine was being emphasized, though the local population had been merely technically divided by the administrative boundaries that overnight became state borders. A peculiar feature of the implemented model was the deliberate creation and use of the image of the “enemy”, both internal and external, represented by the Russian language, culture, and the Russian state itself, together with its authorities. The “alienation” from Russia as a means of ethnic consolidation of the society within the framework of the “Ukrainian identity” and cultural and linguistic unification were inevitably driving the process of the development of the “separated” country to an unpredictable trajectory of the confrontation between its particular regions and various social strata, as well as between Ukraine and Russia themselves.

Such beliefs and methods of “nation-building” clearly contradicted the historical tradition, experience, and logic of the development of the Crimean society as well as the state of the inter-ethnic relations on the peninsula. The overwhelming majority of the local population, including the indigenous Crimean Tatars, did not see their future within the “independent” nationalist state, not to mention being part of its nation that was being formed at the moment; this majority did not corre-

spond to the standards and ideals of the “Ukrainian identity”.²¹⁸ However, it is impossible to determine retrospectively to which extent the Crimean population was extraneous to the concept of the political unity of the Ukrainian nation and whether they were really part of this nation when their point of no return had been reached.

Pro-Russian identity and the political views of the peninsula’s population entered into an unsurmountable contradiction with Ukraine’s national policy and its vector for statehood development. The Kievan authorities reckoned that the solution to the problem laid in restricting autonomy, making the region economically deprived, speculating with the confrontations between various ethnic groups, and, since the Ukrainian “cultural and national element” was next to absent in Crimea – performing the forced Ukrainization of the peninsula’s population, which has become the most irritating factor for them.

Instead of carefully, carefully and gradually integrating the Russian-speaking population of Crimea into the still-emerging Ukrainian society, showing tolerance and caution towards its values and interests, the Kiev authorities chose the path of suppressing any manifestations of regional “otherness” and independence. An artificial cultural and linguistic assimilation with the use of inappropriate tools and methods, together with the adherence to the nationalist ideology, sparked mass protests, keeping a fire of resentment burning with both the regional elite and the overwhelming majority of the population. Seeking to restore its power and to partially weaken the peninsula’s pro-Russian mood, the Ukrainian authorities resorted to the bald instigation of the confrontation between the Russian and the Crimean Tatar communities, making them clash one against the other.

Contrary to Kiev’s intentions, **the double threat** – from the “looming Ukrainization” and from the Crimean Tatar ethnic group that had historically been unfriendly to Russia – only made the Crimea’s population detest the idea of forming the Ukrainian nation and creating for them “common home” with the rest of Ukraine. At the same time, the Crimean Tatars, spoilt by the attention and impunity of the authorities in Kiev, only strengthened their claim to exclusive advantages and privileges by openly demanding the restoration of their own statehood, in total contradiction to the objectives and principles of the establishment and existence of the Ukrainian state, its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

It should be noted that during Crimea’s belonging to Ukraine its pro-Russian identity and the population’s mood remained almost unaltered, and no stimulus for the region’s irreversible absorption into the political, economic, and cultural environment of the Ukrainian state appeared. Ukraine possessed no sufficient economic and power resources for this, nor the necessary cultural potential. It simply had little to propose to the Crimeans, comparing to Russia.

218 It is enough to compare the outcome of the Crimean population’s voting at the 1991 referendums with average Ukraine’s results and to study the goals declared by the representatives of the peninsula’s both Russian and Crimean Tatar communities.

The inert nature of the historical memory, the rejection of the civilizational geopolitical choice made by Ukraine’s post-Soviet authorities, and the need to preserve and deepen mutually beneficial economic and cultural ties with Russia, together with the growing chaos in Ukraine and the presence of the Black Sea fleet, did not allow to isolate the peninsula from gravitating towards Russia. In the end, it was not “the Moscow’s hand” but the mistaken policy of the Kiev authorities (especially in foreign relations) together with its hastiness and poor implementation that strengthened powerful forces (impulses) for returning to the historic fatherland that had been until a certain point drowsing within the Crimean community.

Russia – Ukraine. The rapid collapse of the Soviet Union brought numerous obstacles to the inter-state relations between Russia and Ukraine, the most sensible of them being the issue of Crimea’s identity and its Black Sea fleet bases. Moscow’s approach towards the settlement of this issue was defined by the country’s real capabilities for protecting its interests and positions in this region and by the Kievan authorities’ readiness to reckon with them. Only a qualitative change in Russia’s political, economic, and military potential and in the balance of power in the region was able to produce a fundamental modification of the objectives and principles of the Kremlin’s policy.

At B. Yeltsin’s times, the economic crisis, the verticals of the state authority and army, and a military conflict in Chechnya made the actualization (raising) of the Crimean issue highly ill-timed and non-constructive. Putting it on the agenda of inter-state relations prematurely in no way contributed to its acceptable resolution from the point of view of Russian interests, depriving it of any chance of satisfying them in the future.

The actual leader of the Russian government Ye. Gaidar said: “I do not think that the “Crimean issue” will ever become serious. Crimea totally tied to Ukraine, and its unification with Russia – even merely hypothetical – would destroy Russian economy”.²¹⁹

Moreover, the immediate revision of the borders inherited from the Soviet Union was out of the question in those circumstances: the example of the break-up of Yugoslavia with its massive ethnic cleansing showed what such demands would lead to.

Therefore, accusations of Yeltsin’s aloof position on the fate of Crimea and its Russian-speaking population are extremely unfounded. Yeltsin and his entourage on the fate of Crimea and its Russian-speaking population. Russian authorities of the time never rejected Crimea but, being limited in their capabilities by the framework of the inter-state treaties and by the country’s weakness, pragmatically waited for a “window of opportunity” which had solid and reasonable prerequisites.

As S. Shakhray noted, art.5 of the Belovezha Accords initially involved the recognition of Ukraine’s boundaries only provided that its allied status towards

219 Ye.Gaidar, “The truth of Ukraine”, 1995.

Russia would be preserved.²²⁰ Hence, Russia initially manifested its readiness not to raise the peninsula issue but only under the condition that Ukraine remained out of any block, the Black Sea fleet continued to be based in Crimea, and the two countries maintained partner and good-neighbourly relations. Due to geopolitical and other reasons, Russia could not afford to lose its positions in Crimea and in the Northern Pontic Littoral, letting NATO forces in there.

As long as the Kremlin and the society preserved their hopes and expectations that the country's interests would be met by means of holding negotiations and making concessions in favour of Ukraine, Russia avoided entering into sharp confrontation by raising the issue of Crimea's identity. Yet, the existence of this problem was quite actively used as a means of informal pressure on the Kievan authorities aimed at calling them for dialogue, and of promoting and protecting Russia's stances during the inter-state negotiations.

In those circumstances, the "Crimean issue" was kept suspended and did not go beyond the general rhetoric and regulatory acts of the Federal Council, the regional authorities (predominantly in Moscow and in the Krasnodar Krai), as well as various social and political organizations, including those which emerged on the peninsula and were supported by particular Russian political forces and structures. If necessary, Russia's corresponding actions and declarations could easily be disavowed by the Kremlin.

However, the troubles with the establishment of the Ukrainian statehood and the creation of the Ukrainian civil nation, together with the permanent economic and financial crisis, made the Ukrainian authorities more and more committed to "stay afloat" by means of obtaining unjustified economic preferences from Russia, including, first of all, prices for energy and its transit to Europe. On the other hand, NATO as well as trying to "exchange" allied and partner relations with Russia for the assistance from the EU. The priority of maintaining close and mutually beneficial long-term relations with Russia gave way to the framework of current political and economic plans nurtured by a very narrow social elite. Kiev increasingly went beyond the limits of what was permissible in the national, in particular, in the language issue, which served as an indicator of the intentions and intentions of the "neighbour" for Moscow.

Ukrainian authorities' new line towards the revision of the national priorities, the shift of the existing geopolitical, military, and strategic balance at Russia's South Eastern boundaries in favour of the EU and NATO, the destruction of the general economic and cultural environment of the two countries, and the unwillingness to make reasonable and mutually beneficial compromises were considerably limiting the space for cooperation between the two countries, making the Kremlin lose its strategic patience.

In two decades, the Russian leadership and society have travelled the hard road from hopes and illusions to deep disappointment about the possibilities of not

220 S.Shakhray. Interview with the Business Online journal. May 21, 2014. <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/article/104747> (revised on November 15, 2019)

just mutually beneficial and allied, but simply normal cooperation with a neighbouring state. The confidence in the Kievan authorities has been lost completely, independently from what political forces were at its helm. The decisive devaluation of their promises and obligations and the reached agreements has occurred.

Since the Ukrainian side glamorously failed to act as Russia’s strategic partner and ally, the alteration of the format and quality of the cooperation with Ukraine and the cancellation of all the previously granted preferences became inevitable. The newly discovered inefficiency of using the tools of the soft strength: privileges on transit and the price of energy resources, the Russian language and factors of common history and culture, predetermined a fundamental change in the Russian strategy to neutralize potential threats to the main bases of the Black Sea Fleet by creating conditions that make it impossible for Ukraine to join NATO and the EU in the foreseeable future. First of all, by putting the issue of Crimea’s ownership on the agenda, without taking into account the positions and interests of Kiev, which turned out to be incompetent.

What used to be deemed absolutely unacceptable from the point of view of maintaining centuries-old brotherly ties (the peninsula’s return within Russia with the use of power resources) was now considered as “the least of evils”. In such circumstances, the former barriers for power actions that destroyed the historical “fabric” and the brotherly nature of the ties between the two nations got thoroughly broken while moral and other commitments to Ukraine were devaluated. Now the balance of costs and gains in case of absorbing Crimea looked acceptable for Russian authorities and population, even taking into consideration potential restrictions and sanctions. The Kremlin, and the Russian society as well, tended increasingly to think that the Crimean “egg” today was better than the elusive and highly unlikely “hen” (or the mid-term prospect of a friendly neighbourhood between Russia and Ukraine) tomorrow. On the other hand, the tendency for a radical deterioration of Russia’s relations with the Western countries that became evident back then, made it “insensitive” to the external pressure and drove the Russian elite and society to develop a sense of inevitability and of being doomed to a long-term confrontation with the former partners.

The emergence of a “window of opportunity” for the self-determination of Crimea. Short overview of the self-determination attempts history. The issue of Crimea’s self-determination hung thick in the air even before the Soviet Union collapsed. In February of 1991, following the results of the regional referendum, the Crimean Oblast was transformed into the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within Ukraine, and in September of that year, the Supreme Council of the Crimean ASSR passed the declaration on the state sovereignty of Crimea. On February 26, 1992, according to the resolution of the Supreme Council, the Crimean ASSR changed its name to the Republic of Crimea, while on May 6 of the same year the Crimean Constitution was adopted that established Crimea’s inclusion into Ukraine on the basis of an agreement.

From 1992 to 1995, the regional political authorities took several attempts to separate Crimea from Ukraine. Thus, on 5 May 1992, the Supreme Council of Crimea adopted a resolution on holding an all-Crimean referendum on independence and state independence of the Republic of Crimea, which was abolished by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. In January of 1994, Yu. Meshkov was elected President of the Republic of Crimea, while the coalition of political parties called “Russia” obtained the majority of the seats in the Supreme Council.

However, the new authorities of Crimea faced the absence of a financial, economic, and administrative basis for ensuring true autonomy, and with the lack of support from Russia. B. Yeltsin and his entourage viewed these events as a distressing obstacle that was able to revive suspicions about Russia’s “persistent imperial ambitions”. Moreover, the Western countries exercised active pressure on Russian authorities with regard to the issue of Crimea’s independence.²²¹

In March of 1995, Ukraine’s Verkhovna Rada unilaterally abolished the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea and the office of the President of the republic. A number of Crimean political parties were dissolved, including those that belonged to the “Russia” bloc. An attempt at self-determination failed due to poor management of pro-Russian forces and the denied support from Moscow. This negative experience was taken into consideration in 2014.

On October 21, 1998, the Crimean Parliament adopted a new Constitution that was aligned with the Ukrainian Constitution. Hence, Crimea was definitively assigned the status of a Ukrainian region, and for a while, the issue of the self-determination of this autonomous entity was relegated to second place. In fact, the political aspect of the pro-Russian organizations’ activities became less crucial, and the main role was given to the issues related to the Russian language, religion, culture, historical self-conscience, and maintaining ties with Russia. For a while, Ukrainian authorities got a *carte blanche* that they eventually failed to use.

Despite the persistence of objective facts, the window of opportunity for the peninsula’s self-determination appeared – for a short period of time – only in March of 2014. This was predominantly explained by Ukraine’s state of forces (resources) and the Russian authorities’ ability to ensure the organization and holding of a referendum for the Crimeans to express their will with regard to self-determination, and subsequent implementation of their choice.

The events of the “Crimean Spring” became possible due to the combination of exceptional forces and circumstances that can be described by a notion of the **ideal storm**. Here we deal with an unpredictable and spontaneous convergence, in a particular point of the historical process, of a critical mass of objective

221 “These promises stood a check in 1995. Yuri Meshkov, who was supported by Russia, took charge of the regional government and expressed the desire to open a representation of the independent Crimea in Washington. Clinton called Yeltsin and ... said that there would be no seizure of Crimea ... Yeltsin denied Meshkov his support, and his “government” collapsed. In 1995, Washington kept the promise it had given to Ukraine”. Robert Mcconnel. Keep America’s Word Again—and Protect Ukraine. Wall Street Journal. Jan. 9, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/keep-americas-word-again-and-protect-ukraine-1484007466> (revised on November 15, 2019)

and subjective conditions that urged the course of events to follow the scenario in question. The random and almost out-of-Russian-control nature of the “ignition” and unfolding of the process of collapse of the Ukrainian government and statehood clearly dismisses the mere possibility that there existed any preconceived and detailed plan of the Kremlin with regard to absorbing the peninsula.

Moreover, at the initial stage, the Russian leadership paradoxically impeded such a scenario, insisting on the legal format of settling the existing severe social and political crisis in Ukraine. Naturally, there were some hypothetic, non-binding, and vague ideas and projects, as well as state plans which, however, were detached from the existing situation and were not formalized by the country’s political administration in a single and coherent action program.

The Kremlin’s decisions were an inevitable (and deprived of any actual alternative) response to the unpredictable and spontaneous development of the situation, an attempt to prevent a civil-military confrontation on the Crimean Peninsula.

The coup in Kiev as the bifurcation point. The rapid progressing of events at the Kievan Maidan opened a phase of fundamental self-organization of the Ukrainian state, putting at risk its mere existence.²²² The coup created a power vacuum in the country and in the regions and provoked social and political division that involved the society in an open civil confrontation. The form in which President V. Yanukovich was removed, contrary to the European countries’ guarantees, drove the acceptable methods and norms of the political struggle beyond its legal framework, having essentially legitimized and justified the use of direct violence and physical elimination towards political opponents.

The Ukrainian statehood’s transition to the dissipative state together with total disregard for the legal methods and forms of the emerged conflict’s settlement and of the protection of own interests led to the fact that the regions that were alien to Ukraine from the historical, cultural, and mental point of view separated from it. The change of power at Maidan, and more so the program goals that were declared at it, catalysed the process of Crimea’s self-determination.

In those circumstances, the peninsula’s political establishment and its population allowed themselves to “ignore” (or, as it would be more correct to say, to give an appropriate interpretation to) the constitutional procedure and the algorithm of adopting and implementing such a decision, and to disregard the regulations and resolutions of the central authorities.

The leaders and main activists of pro-Russian movements who opposed the illegal change of power in Kiev and were promoting the idea of unifying Crimea with Russia were supported by the overwhelming majority of the population and mass media. Using, in a wide and obtrusive way, various forms and methods of pressure (including the non-conventional ones), they undertook a comprehensive change of leadership of the regional public authorities.

²²² However, it is yet premature to assess the qualitative nature and long-term prospects of the transformation of political and social structures in Ukraine that is still far from being over and has not yet defined its key parameters.

The active formation of armed militia divisions started, which coexisted with the official military forces deployed on the peninsula. Such actions met no opposition due to the total collapse of the previous public authority system in Crimea, which had lost public recognition and support completely. Moreover, for the staff of these government bodies, the majority of which were epy Crimeans, the illegitimate nature of the “new power” became a formal pretext for refusing to obey the new chiefs and eliminated previously assumed obligations, including moral ones (military oath) towards the Ukrainian state.

Such actions caused vehement opposition from both the new Ukrainian government and the radical nationalist groups who not only voiced threats towards the pro-Russian forces but moved on to actively prepare initiatives and resources for suppressing them, hoping to make the Kievan events happen in Simferopol and Sevastopol. A rather real threat for Crimea’s Russian-language population emerged, and it failed not because the radical nationalists refused to escalate the violence, including the military one. The unification with Russia was perceived, therefore, as the best alternative to “extinguishing” and settling the emerging conflict on the peninsula. The anomie of Ukraine’s central and regional public authorities and the legal presence of Russian military forces in Crimea and in Sevastopol contributed to the emergence of a favourable environment for a bloodless (unlike in Donbas) form of implementing this scenario.

Russia’s position and strategy. The coup and the formation of a nationalist government in Kiev essentially left no space for the Kremlin to select means and methods of protecting the national interests. In this climate of total uncertainty, the beacons (guiding stars) for Russian responses and decisions were the non-legal form of change of power, the aggressive rhetoric of the Maidan leadership, its declared course towards early and full Euro-Atlantic integration, and the generous and unconditional support of the Western partners with regard to the elimination of the allegedly “pro-Russian” President V. Yanukovich. In their entirety, these “indicators” foretold the upcoming sharp change in the relations between the two countries and the confrontation escalation, including the loss of the Black Sea fleet bases in Crimea and the involvement of the peninsula in NATO’s military activities.

The formula of the relations between Russia and Ukraine shifted rapidly towards a set of methods and strategies based on the “zero-sum game” principle. The peninsula’s return was now perceived as a decisive change in the balance of forces in favour of our country. Not taking advantage of this opportunity would be an irreparable mistake from the point of view of the realisation of state and national interests and the creation of long-term favourable conditions for their defence. Another such chance in the near future was considered to be next to impossible.

The possibility to preserve Crimea within Ukraine laid exclusively within the framework of negotiations between Kiev and Moscow, on which the launch

of mechanisms (first, power ones) for the secession of the peninsula depended. However, since at the moment Moscow did not recognize the Kiev authorities and emphasized the legitimacy of V. Yanukovich, a serious problem emerged related to maintaining direct (and not through intermediaries) contacts between the leaderships of the two countries for discovering the opponents’ goals, intentions, and reasoning. Political, diplomatic, and other channels of communication were blocked.²²³

Since the deadlock in the relations between the two countries became as evident as the new authorities’ reluctance to negotiate, Russia’s decision to take Crimea back was the most reasonable and justified in the presence of direct threats to break the previously achieved agreements, especially with regard to the Black Sea fleet. Its implementation allowed reducing considerably the degree of unpredictability with regard to the progress of events and development of the relations with Ukraine in the long run, depriving the latter of the last opportunity to conduct the double-natured policy of balancing between Russia and the Western countries. Even in case of a dramatic deterioration of the relations both with Kiev and with the Western countries, the situation remained predictable enough for the Russian authorities and society to abandon former illusions and unrealistic expectations.

The definitive decision on the reunification with Crimea was, according to some sources, taken by V. Putin on the night of 22/23 February 2014 after a discussion with several confidants from his closest entourage. The selection of this scenario was probably influenced by a markedly negative attitude of the Russian leader to the mere concept of “the Ukrainian nation’s state”²²⁴ and his confidence in the frangible brotherhood and historical closeness of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples.²²⁵

A consolidated viewpoint prevailed, although of course there were different approaches, with some political forces in Russia and on the peninsula²²⁶ conceivings of the self-determination of Crimea in the broader format of allocation of “Ukrainian Novorossia”; however, there was no capacity or resources for such an ambition. The discrepancies were not fundamental and concerned not the basic points but the technical ones, that is, how to put this scenario to practice.

The resilience towards the sanctions imposed by the Western countries, including personal limitations and restrictions, served as a litmus test for the

223 For instance, the negotiations with Ukraine’s new leader, A. Turchinov, according to the new table of ranks, were held by the Speaker of the State Duma S. Naryshkin – a figure that obviously was not involved in making key decisions of the Russian authorities.

224 For example, during a closed-door meeting at the NATO summit in Bucharest in April of 2008, V. Putin told G. Bush: “Ukraine is not a state at all. A part of its territories is situated in Eastern Europe while another part, and a considerable one, was donated by us! If Ukraine goes to NATO, it will go there without Crimea and the Eastern regions, and will simply collapse”. M.Zygar. All the Kremlin’s man: Brief history of modern Russia. Moscow: Intellectual literature, 2017. P. 188.

225 For example, his speech at a press conference on December 19, 2013. <https://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/19859> (reviewed on November 15, 2019).

226 And their attitude, in particular, was expressed by the notorious Igor Girkin (Strelkov).

exceptional unity of the Russian leadership with regard to the decision they had made. However, there could be no other scenario. The incredible pressure of the society and its mood and the unique opportunity to ensure –once and for all – the country’s geopolitical interests in the Black Sea excluded any other position, even for the key figures of the opposition.²²⁷

The costs of this decision – political, economic, financial, and reputational – were inevitable and predictable. Yet, the issue of state sovereignty and independence has never been viewed in our country through the prism of the economic categories, not to mention the necessity to pay to follow our own political course.

The sovereignty has always been the absolute value for the Russian society and state. However, the threat to impose sanctions was attenuated by the already existing confrontation in the relations with the Western partners symbolized by the mass refusal of the leaders of the Euro-Atlantic countries to visit the Olympic Games in Sochi, which looked like a personal insult towards the head of the state.

The careful judgment of the country’s potential for resisting external pressure and the faith in the support and stability of the Russian society enabled V. Putin to take colossal risks and costs, showing the political courage and the readiness to neglect personal consequences for the sake of the interests of the country he ruled. Nevertheless, the main issue was not whether the Russian leadership had enough political will but the selection of forms and methods of using the existing resources and the emerged opportunities that would ensure the organization and holding of a referendum on the region’s destiny, its results being almost foreclosed,²²⁸ and the implementation of the population’s will.

It was necessary to conduct Crimea’s transfer to Russia in a legitimate form in order to attenuate the emerging succession gap of the and eligibility and legitimacy of the momentous decision to be made, to minimize the chances of contesting the act of self-determination, preserving the manageability of the political and social processes on the peninsula and preventing a plunge into a legal mess and total chaos. This is why the main role in raising the issue of holding a referendum and establishing a formal framework for enabling the population to express their will was played by the Crimeans themselves, or, to be more precise, by the new leadership of the regional public authorities. At the same time, it was necessary to exclude possible provocations from Ukrainian security forces subordinated to Kiev and from the Crimean Tatars, since any confrontation, not to mention bloodshed, inevitably led to unpredictable consequences for the process of self-determination.

It was known that the balance of forces of the Ukrainian state and the regional leadership was against the Crimeans, even in the presence of an actual collapse of

227 “Crimea now is a part of Russia <...> It will remain such and never again in the foreseeable future will become a part of Ukraine”. From the interview to A. Navalny on the “Echo of Moscow” radio station on October 15, 2014. <https://echo.msk.ru/programs/focus/1417522-echo.html> (reviewed on November 15, 2019).

228 As a phone poll carried out on the peninsula showed. From an interview with V. Putin for O. Stone’s documentary “Revealing Ukraine”.

the public authorities in Kiev. Therefore, the self-determination could take place only if based on the overwhelming Russian resources. The presence of Russian military forces on the peninsula in conformity with the existing agreements and the opportunity to increase their strength by means of deploying additional contingent personnel allowed performing the isolation of the peninsula.

Thus, the threat of using violence by Ukrainian security forces and radical nationalist groups could be eliminated, and favourable conditions and opportunities for holding a referendum, fixing its results and implementing the population’s will appeared, since such a right had been denied them by the Ukrainian authorities for the previous twenty years. Yet, the limited military support as such did not have a decisive influence on the citizens’ mood and on the voting outcome. It merely allowed to organize and hold the referendum with the use of legal procedures and instruments and to identify and fix the Crimeans’ will. The results of the referendum were of paramount importance, and not the circumstances and forms of its holding.

The Ukrainian side: potential and actions. The strong position and actions of the Russian leadership, their confidence in the achievement of their goals, total approval they received from the overwhelming majority of the population and mass media, and the unity of the elite and the society were in sharp contrast with the Ukrainian reality.

Having overthrown the former authorities, Maidan leaders became completely conscious to what extent the whole state administration system was destroyed: there was neither duly elected President nor legitimate government, and the majority of the Verkhovna Rada’s members were their political opponents from the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine. The strength point of the Ukrainian statehood and the newly formed government was completely unknown, as was the degree of its support in the society and in particular regions where the political aversion towards the coup was rapidly mutating into the self-determination movement.

Therefore, in the existing circumstances, the main goal of the “winners” was not to preserve the country’s territorial integrity and to keep its regions but to fix the new balance of forces in the Ukrainian elite²²⁹ and to legalize the seized power and the control over its activists and resources until the tide of the Maidan euphoria subsided. One of the most important issues that were included in the political agenda in the first place was the holding of the voting which was impossible during martial law.

Taking into consideration the manifold superiority of the Russian forces, sharp actions towards Crimea and its inhabitants would inevitably cause colossal negative consequences that were unacceptable for the Ukrainian society and the

229 Among them, by means of dissolving political parties and their political opponents – the Party of Regions and the Communist Party of Ukraine – even if this would mean the total loss of manageability and disorganization of the regions under their control, including the Donetsk and Lugansk Oblasts.

key players. The initiators of such an adventure would have lost their political future. At the same time, the organization of the voting required alienating the protest electorate in Crimea and Donbas in order to ensure more favourable results of the voting. Thus, territorial integrity of Ukraine and its priorities were sacrificed in favour of the electoral interests and prospects of the winning part of the Ukrainian “political elite”.

The then most influential political figures (A. Yatsenyuk and Yu. Timoshenko) were strongly opposed to the actions in Crimea. They did not wish to transform the country of which they were at the helm into a field of open and hopeless military confrontation with Russia, and more so because the Western protectors insisted on a political, and not military, solution of the problem. Only A. Turchinov who had assumed the role of a “crisis manager” and had therefore lost all his political opportunities, was active and consistent in his efforts to preserve the peninsula within his country. He simply had nothing to lose.

The “price” of losing the peninsula was to be used for “buying” the time necessary for the stabilization and restoration of the Ukrainian state power vertical that had been destroyed by the “winning Maidan” leaders. Besides, the demands of the Crimean population clearly exceeded what the Kiev authorities could give or even promise them, since it was entirely dependent on the position of the nationalist forces that supported Maidan.

The intellectual legitimization of the power seizure – a transition to **the pro-Western civilizational paradigm of Ukraine’s development in the presence of maximum distancing from Russia**– required resigning the social contract on the basis of nationalist values and anti-Russian principles. In such a case, the sacral and redeeming sacrifice represented by Crimea that was irreversibly going to Russia became particularly handy for creating both an image of the enemy and the Stockholm syndrome as a means of bringing the civil nation together.

Thanks to the published transcript²³⁰ of a meeting of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine that was held on February 28, 2014, the opportunity to give a fairly accurate and objective assessment of the state and capabilities of the Ukrainian leadership and its vision of the prospects of preserving the peninsula within Ukraine. The participants of the meeting noted the absence of power resources and influence expansion tools that would allow controlling the region and neutralizing the “activists of the pro-Russian movements”, thus ensuring the imposition of martial law in Crimea. The operational personnel of all the Ukrainian security forces numbered only 5,000 people. In Crimea, the number of mission-ready troops consisted of 1,500-2,000 people against the 20,000-contingent of the Black Sea fleet, excluding the local militia divisions.

The desire to obtain support from NATO and the “Budapest guarantors” met a formally passive reaction of the Western partners towards the events that were taking place, who limited themselves to expressing nominal anxiety and voicing

230 “The Ukrainian Truth”. February 22, 2016. <http://www.pravda.com.ua/rus/articles/2016/02/22/7099911/> (revised on November 15, 2019).

warnings addressed to Russia. They simply were unable to act immediately and reluctant to take responsibility for someone else’s problems. In this case, the Budapest guarantees on which Ukraine was relying so much proved to be a mere fiction²³¹ which became a sad disappointment for the new ruling clique that now had to count on its own forces only.

The above-mentioned factors together with the country’s unwillingness to enter into a military confrontation and the fear of the military and other strengths of Russia paralyzed the political will of the Kievan elite and made it unable to fight for its strategic initiative. The possible way out was to play for time, hoping to change the balance of powers with the help of the Western countries, and not to recognize the legitimacy of the Crimean referendum, delegitimizing its results in the first place. This is why Ukraine kept lagging behind with its reactions, played a defensive game, and, most importantly, adopted a passive behaviour – diplomatic notes, appeals to the world community, and formal prosecution of the new regional public authorities, which only boosted their determination to achieve the goals they had set for themselves and led to the shift of public demands towards the reunification with Russia.²³²

Since the political decision on imposing martial law and fighting back had never been taken, the Ukrainian leadership kept waiting and refused to give orders to start using the troops, not to mention the organization of armed resistance to the Russian contingent in Crimea and to the local population. The destruction of the political channels of controlling the army made the power element of Ukrainian politics plunge into self-destroying inaction that rendered impossible not only the involvement of the Ukrainian troops in the confrontation but even their organized withdrawal from the peninsula “with flags flying”.

It seems that misinterpretation and underestimation of the causes and content of the Crimean mass sentiment were at the heart of the miscalculations of the new government in Kiev. The extremely limited intellectual potential of the Ukrainian political class was to be blamed, the majority of which had been forced to “step aside” after the coup and rather low quality of the expert and information basis of the mechanisms of taking decisions on all the levels.

What happened was viewed not through the prism of regional self-determination but as Russia’s intentional activities for annexing a part of the Ukrainian territory where the main base of the Black Sea fleet was located. Russia and its

231 “In 2014, the problem of the obligations assumed a different meaning... Instead of taking military measures, the US introduced sanctions <...> However, this help was far from being sufficient. Yet, in the new circumstances, the guarantors were not able to do more”. Robert McConnel. Keep America’s Word Again—and Protect Ukraine. Wall Street Journal. Jan. 9, 2017 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/keep-americas-word-again-and-protect-ukraine-1484007466> (revised on November 15, 2019).

232 N. Shufrych, according to his own words, reached an agreement with S. Aksyonov and V. Konstantinov on returning to the 1992 Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, about which he, once back, reported to A. Turchinov. However, the following morning the Prosecutor General’s office issued arrest warrants against both Crimean leaders. From N. Shufrych interview to the “Gordon” TV show on the “112 Ukraine” TV channel on December 26, 2017. <https://112.ua/interview/ya-osuzhdayu-Yanukovycha-za-predatelstvo-on-predal-ukrainu--po-muzhski-po-chelovecheski-426501.html> (revised on November 15, 2019).

military forces were perceived as the key enemy. This is why the Kievan authorities were fighting not for the local population and its opinion and mood and not for the Ukrainian identity but for the territory, and, according to them, the solution laid in “displacing” the pro-Russian citizens from Crimea. The “exodus” of the local population to Russia took place indeed but together with the territory they occupied.

Regional leaders. The format and the outcome of those events were largely determined by the personal qualities of the regional heads and leaders and by the state of the mechanisms and channels of their nomination. The operation of such mechanisms in the dissipative situation assumed a random and unpredictable nature. No matter how strong the desire of Crimeans to reunite with their “historic homeland” or how great the superiority of Russian capabilities over Ukrainian ones maybe, it was people, not depersonalized structures, who made concrete decisions, set objective factors in motion, organized and directed the actions of the masses.

In Ukrainian times, the Crimean establishment had an unequal and disadvantaged status comparing to other elite groups, including the Kievan and Donetsk ones, a status that did not correspond to its ambitions and aspirations. Its supervisors, in the form of plenipotentiary representatives, as well as the head of the Sevastopol city administration, were directly appointed by the president of Ukraine, with whom the candidates for the heads of regional government were agreed. The 2000s saw a considerable growth of influence of the Donetsk elite that had ties with the Party of Regions.²³³

Such a “second-best” and humiliating position was characterized also by rather limited involvement of the Crimean establishment in the network of the Ukrainian elite structures and its being compelled to expand its ties with the Russian side, including, in particular, the Black Sea fleet command, businesses, and, most importantly, cultural figures.

The non-acceptance of the outcome of the coup by the majority of the regional authorities was followed by a sharp and almost total disruption of the contacts with the Ukrainian elite. A split occurred between the population-elected representative bodies and the executive bodies whose heads supported the new Kievan government. As a result, the personnel of the regional and local executive authorities were changed by means of spontaneously nominating sometimes “off-the-street” candidates who possess real political resources, will, determination, and organizational skills. At the same time, the examination and drop-out of these candidates were performed “on the move”, that is, already in the process of performing practical activities for the reunification of Crimea with Russia.

In the presence of qualitative transformations of the political order its “destroyers” cannot count on the protection of the institutes and norms they are

233 A.A. Zotkin. State power and political elites in Ukraine in the context of the relations between the centre and the region // Power structures and dominance groups / Edited by A.V. Duka. Saint-Petersburg: Intersocis, 2012. P. 286-306.

overthrowing. They need to show exceptional courage and readiness to go to the end without worrying about their lives. The leaders’ nomination and activities require minimal personal safety guarantees provided by either internal or external subjects. The state of high uncertainty and the self-preservation motives led to the fact that many key figures, especially former political “heavyweights” at the regional level, proved to be unfit and, most importantly, unwilling to assume responsibility for the solution of a truly historical task. In that situation, many simply did not dare “trying” the leader role.

The nominated regional leaders – not only the heads themselves but also their closest entourage – proved to be unable to meet the key demands and requests of the Crimeans whose mood was in every possible way backed by their determination and political will.²³⁴ Therefore, the synergy of the objective preconditions and the personal factor allowed implementing no other scenario but that of a voluntary and unforced return of the peninsula to Russia.

Meanwhile, advocates of the “Ukrainian way” showed themselves as completely non-correspondent to the challenges that were posed by the emerging crisis. However, they were rather limited in demonstrating such capabilities, and not only due to lack of resources or support from Ukraine. The leaders of the Crimean Tatar community could not play any important role in thwarting the preparation and holding of the referendum since the Mejlis’ position was not pro-Ukrainian but rather simply anti-Russian while its goals were to use the momentum for restoring the quasi statehood of the Crimean Tatars. Clearly, within Russia, their chances for independence would have been zero while in the case of preserving Crimea within Ukraine such chances would increase considerably since it provided an opportunity to demand an “exit package” in the form of the autonomy for the rendered services.

This explains the double-natured and quite reserved position of the Crimean Tatar community and Mejlis who limited themselves to sabotaging the referendum, which had almost no impact on its results and on how it was perceived in Russia, Ukraine, and in the Western countries. Another negative factor was personal aspects related to the Mejlis leaders.

M. Dzhemilev, whose son faced condemnation after having committed an involuntary murder, was forced to leave the leadership position in the Crimean Tatar public structures. As a result, at the moment of the Crimean events he found himself a “warlord with no troops”, a mere “moral leader” deprived of any power position and authority, the absence of which could not be remedied by his reputation and the trust of the Crimean Tatar People. As for R. Chubarov whom he had selected as a nominal Mejlis leader, he was a figure with no influence whatsoever, completely unable either to organize and manage public activities or to achieve the necessary result.

234 Yet, the majority of the leaders of the “Sevastopol Spring”, having fulfilled their obligations, proved to be unfit for routine management and were subsequently moved to formal status positions.

The course of events. Let us emphasize once again that at the beginning of the “Crimean Spring”, its leaders and direct participants, as well as observers and experts, had a vague idea of what their decisions and actions would lead to. The events were unfolding in a spontaneous and unpredictable manner and sometimes radically transformed the opportunities and resources of the parties together with the scope and substance of their claims and demands since even a minor force is able to alter the state of the events and the vector of their course. Whether the losers had the opportunity to turn the tide of the events, what they had not done, and what they could do – all these are rhetorical questions, but history knows no “if”.

The forms, methods, and the sequence of the parties’ actions depended on a spontaneous course of events, as well as on the composition and mood of the participants, their will to fight against the opponents, the situational interpretation of the prospects of achieving the tactic goals, etc. It is utterly impossible to take into account all the spectrum of these factors, circumstances, and limitations both in general and in particular points in time.

Pro-Russian movements and forces and the majority of the Crimeans were fully aware of the uniqueness and transience of the emerged circumstances, as well as of the fact that to lose them would be equal to abandon the idea of reunification. Another such opportunity to return to the natural trajectory of the historical destiny which had been rejected in 1954 and in 1991 was unlikely in the foreseeable future. However, initially the issue of “unifying” Crimea to Russia did not exist; it was the natural course of events that brought it to the political agenda.

In the presence of the power vacuum that had suddenly appeared in Ukraine, the balance of forces on the peninsula was completely undefined, which did not allow the parties to set the limits of their opportunities and demands, and to define the goals and tasks of their actions as well as forms and methods of their accomplishment. This explains the restricted nature of the claims and actions of the Crimean opponents of the coup in Kiev and the supporters of self-determination within Russia.

Only the decision that was taken by the Kremlin and managed to decisively alter the balance of powers and interests on the peninsula served as an impulse for boosting the decisiveness of their actions and goals. The often-intransigent nature of the demands and their severity which kept increasing with the growth of the superiority of forces and the demoralization of opponents, exacerbated, in their turn, the uncertainty and the unpredictability of the forms and ways of moving towards the ultimate goal but by no means the prospects of its achieving.

The action planning was based on a “mix” of the incoming contradictory information which was characterized by an undefinable degree of credibility, which also increased the overall uncertainty. Though nominally the first violin was played by the regional leaders and structures, the final say in the elaboration and holding of the events belonged to Russia since it possessed the necessary resources and power, assumed the responsibility for the peninsula’s destiny,

and bore all the relative costs. Hence, the decisions and actions of the Crimean leaders and population were within the Russian framework. The coordination of activities in terms of their deadlines and tasks was performed through the previously deployed administration bodies for the command of the Black Sea fleet and the Special Operation Forces. This allowed to fully use the power resource of the Russian divisions deployed in Crimea.

The decisive implementation of the Russian military power (the seizure of the headquarters of the armed forces of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Sevastopol, the concentration of the key military divisions and blocking of the Ukrainian troops on the peninsula, and the deployment of the powerful divisions at the borders) allowed to get hold of the strategic initiative and made the Kievan authorities lag constantly behind and play by the imposed rules. The timely and efficient territorial isolation of the region by means of blocking the Isthmus of Perekop and establishing control over the local airports made it impossible for the Kievan government to send its troops and arms to Crimea, thus accelerating the decomposition of the Ukrainian security forces.

From the functional point of view, the use of the Russian troops required secrecy, suddenness, and unpredictability of their actions to Ukraine and its Western partners. The anonymity of involving the Russian power resource (the so-called “polite people”) allowed to foresee the opponents’ retaliation and deprived them of formal pretexts for escalating the conflict in the most crucial and decisive moment when the new leadership and the administration were being established on the peninsula and the referendum on its future status and identity was being prepared and held.

However, NATO and the EU countries who cumulatively were several times more superior than Russia did not manage to realize their potential and did not accumulate, in the right place and at the right time, forces and resources that would be sufficient for disrupting the deployment of the Russian military contingent that was taking place at the moment.²³⁵

Judging from the political considerations related to the informational preparation and holding of the voting, an open involvement of the Russian power resource in the inter-Crimean processes was highly undesirable. In the presence of an “unfinished breakup”, it was unreasonable to give rise to the informational attack against Russia and the new Crimean authorities, provoke the creation of a cohesive anti-Russian front, and the formation of a negative public opinion in the Western society. In the necessary cases, the actions of the Russian troops were camouflaged by the militia and local activists. Once the referendum was held and its results were fixed, Russian participation was recognized at the highest level.

The qualitative change of the situation after the deployment of the Russian contingent caused the radicalization of demands of the Crimean “political elite”

235 There were even no NATO ships in the Black Sea that could demonstrate their determination and support for Ukraine’s demands.

and the local population and the organization of universal voting on the issue of the reunification with Russia, its realization having transformed from a hypothetical idea into the most plausible scenario. The actions of the main participants had but a limited impact on the forms and deadlines of holding the referendum, not to mention its chances.

The return to the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea within Ukraine ceased to satisfy all the parties, so the new Crimean government made the questions to be raised at the referendum as close to the public demand as possible and provided for the smallest possible time gap between the voting and the fixation of its results. This decision, in particular, explains the hastiness with which the referendum was prepared and held, and some merely formal derogations from the procedures, which became the grounds for the Euro-Atlantic community not to recognize the legitimacy of the obtained results.

The active approach, the support of the population and the wise and decisive coordination of the activities undertaken by the regional structures and the Russian contingent allowed to fulfil the task for making the peninsula return to its historical fatherland, which had been set by the Crimeans and Russian political authorities.

It should be repeated that Russian power, economic, and diplomatic support by no means questions the referendum results since the population's choice was expressed as clearly as possible both at the referendum itself and during the preparatory events and was also confirmed by the course of the peninsula's development within the Russian Federation.

The presence of a Russian contingent removed the fear of the population and allowed them to express their opinions and defend their interests truly freely. It was not Russia but the previous Kievan authority and the coup initiators and participants who sparked, by their actions and decisions, the emotionally heated atmosphere of the public mood in Crimea and the population's total unwillingness to remain within the Ukrainian state.

The only, though not fatal, failure was the attempt to encourage the Crimean Tatar community to participate in the referendum and not to oppose itself to its organization and holding. No result was obtained in the course of the negotiations between V. Putin and Dzhemilev and the attempts of Tatarstan and Chechnya leaderships to influence the rhetoric and behaviour of the Mejlis which proved to be entirely unable to negotiate with and viewed the Crimean Tatars as a tool for satisfying their own power ambitions. The Mejlis authorities rejected the benefits and privileges that were being offered to the "indigenous people" during the establishment of new regional administration bodies, having thus hindered the activities aimed at formulating and implementing their intrinsic interests. However, the Chechen "holidaymakers" in Crimea, who had created the illusion of a "mass influx", soon calmed down the passions of the Crimean Tatar community, having prevented possible mass protests and confrontation actions.²³⁶

236 The author personally saw such groups of 10-15 people in Bakhchysarai and Sokolyne and noted that the local Crimean Tatars reacted on their arrival rather cautiously.

Consequences of Crimea’s reunification with Russia.

1. The Crimean society came back to the stable and natural form of its existence and development within the Russian Federation that is the basis of its economic growth, and to a comfortable cultural and linguistic environment. The peninsula obtained a qualitatively new political landscape and the system of administering and taking decisions which is now much more efficient than the previous one in terms of tackling the region’s pressing issues and needs.

2. The main “irritating factor” in the relations between Russia and Ukraine, which was artificially created by alienating the Russian Crimea in 1954, was definitively eliminated. With time, the intensity of “phantom pains” experienced by the Ukrainian authorities and society in relation to the region that is foreign to the unitary and nationalist idea of modern Ukraine will subside (though not without periodical tensions), which would allow making the relations of the two countries return to the normal track.

3. Crimea’s secession from the political and state-space of Ukraine considerably mitigated the split of the Ukrainian political class, lowered the degree of the social and cultural separation within the society, and soothed the civil confrontation in the country.

The years of the peninsula’s living within Russia and the results of the polls and the State Duma elections confirm the rightfulness and smoothness of the scenario that the Crimeans selected for their historical path. The conditions, forms, and goals of Crimea’s development changed completely, which creates the new approaches and principles of settling the confrontation related to the region’s unification with Russia.

Therefore, any attempt to cancel the choice made by the population (by means of sanction pressure, economic and diplomatic isolation, and non-recognition, not to mention power intervention) is doomed to failure and will not lead to the restoration of the pre-crisis status quo but can cause highly negative consequences for everyone.

SELF-DETERMINATION OF THE RUSSIAN SEVASTOPOL. PRECONDITIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE RUSSIAN SPRING FOR THE HERO CITY

Ivan A. Chikharev,
PhD in Political Sciences (Sevastopol)

Sevastopol has had a very peculiar role in the history of the “Crimean Spring” (or, as the Sevastopol inhabitants prefer saying, the “Russian Spring”). Obviously, the local population was united with the rest of the Crimeans in their desire to come back home. However, the roots, the historical importance, and the contemporary context of this aspiration were different. Speaking about the metaphor of coming back home, let me make a courageous statement. Sevastopol is such a home. And it is not only Crimea that came back to Russia: our country in its entirety came back to its native Sevastopol – the crucial source of Russian statehood, spirituality, and civilization.

In this article, I would like to study the preconditions of the self-determination of Sevastopol as a Russian city, its role in the peaceful reunification of the Crimean Peninsula with the Russian Federation, and the prospects of its positioning in the federative and international space. The objective of this article is to analyse the Sevastopol aspect of “coming back home”, though I by no means underestimate the role that the Republic of Crimea, Simferopol, Kerch, and each other Crimean city played in this process. Yet, my research and political experience are largely connected with Sevastopol, so I am analysing Sevastopol events while remembering that they are part of wider historical and geopolitical processes. Besides, a peculiar feature of my approach towards the “Russian Spring” is that I study it as a “federal centre”, in a comparative perspective, and in the international context.

Sevastopol, above all, was and remains a unique geographic environment (mestorazvitiye) – that is, a subregion with peculiar geographic, social, and cultural aspects²³⁷.

At the same time, its uniqueness is defined not by the provincial narrowness of the land between the big (Sevastopol) bay, the Crimean Mountains, and the Inkerman rocks. Moreover, the city is far from being cosmopolite, as the “Black Sea crossing” model suggests²³⁸. In my opinion, Sevastopol is a “continental strait” from the Mediterranean Basin to Eurasia.

A “valve” (sometimes direct, sometimes return) of the geopolitical flows between the sea and the land. In this paper, I am not going to narrate the whole

237 A.P. Kabachenko, V.V. Kovalenko, I.A. Chikharev, M.A. Matrosov The geographic environment of Crimea and Sevastopol from Ancient Times to the present day. // Paradigms of history and social development, 2018, N.12

238 V.V. Kovalenko, E.B. Altabaeva. At the Black Sea crossing. Crimea from Ancient Times to the end of the 8th century. Lviv, 2002

history of the Eurasian and Mediterranean Sea relations that allow drawing such a conclusion²³⁹.

In a nutshell, the main idea is that this valve can be controlled and regulated only by a state that possesses historical experience and is based on the interaction of the Eurasian and Mediterranean peoples, that is, the Russian Federation. Our country miraculously embraces the Mediterranean Christian tradition and the cultures of the Northern, Eastern, and Western peoples of Eurasia who gravitated towards Crimea as to the touching point with the central civilization. Any other identity of Crimea apart from Russian would break this historical connection and would make this process unilateral.

The metaphor of a “valve” suggests a high degree of internal and external pressure, explosion risk, and alarmism. A valve pushes the undesirable external pressure outwards but its excess can lead to an explosion, as was the case with the first and second sieges of Sevastopol during the Crimean War and the Second World War, respectively. During the third siege, the explosion was prevented, but the city had been literally pushing the undesirable unilateral external pressure outwards over the entire post-Soviet period (I will dwell on this later).

Yet, the roots of Sevastopol’s “Russian” identity extend far beyond the marks “1873” and even “988”. They must be linked with the introduction of Christianity in the Eastern Mediterranean region and in the Northern Pontic Littoral in the first centuries AD. Interestingly, the mere notion of the “Russian world” was first used in relation to the life of St. Clement. Hence, the early Christian Chersoneses can retrospectively be viewed as not only part of the Russian world but as its source²⁴⁰. But what is the relation between the exiled Roman Pope and the Russians who appeared in Chersoneses almost 1,000 years later? This exile and the subsequent East-West Schism form an important counterpoint between the Western and Eastern Catholic and Orthodox worlds.

They served as the basis for the step-by-step shaping of the Eastern Christian branch that the Tsardom of Russia adopted and started following around the 15th century, after the Fall of Constantinople and the romanization of Kiev. Since then, Sevastopol’s Russian history, despite its geopolitical discreteness, assumed cultural and historical coherence. The absorption of Crimea by the Russian Empire was merely a formal entrenchment of this intrinsic link.

However, the foundation of Sevastopol had a very peculiar meaning strategic outpost, the city of Russian seamen, Russia’s only non-freezing seaport situated in the harbours of the Heracles Peninsula which are ideal for such purposes. It is true but, to start with, Sevastopol, according to Prince Grigori Potemkin’s plan, was to become the third capital of Russia. In other words, it was meant to become

239 I.A. Chikharev. The experience of reconstructing Sevastopol’s political tradition. Part II. // *Paradigms of history and social development*, 2018, N.12

240 A.V. Nazarenko. The course for the renovation of the Church of the Tithes”, or the history of the veneration of Saint Clement of Rome in Kiev an Rus’. Moscow-Brussels 2013.

not simply a Russian city but the third centre of the empire after Moscow and Saint-Petersburg. Secondly, the city's name speaks for itself: "Sevastopol" means "holy", "sacred". This toponym confirms Sevastopol's peculiar status within the Russian world.

Further Russian history of Sevastopol is described and analysed in quite a detailed manner – up to 1920 when the Russian exodus occurred. During the Crimean War, the Siege of Sevastopol became a clear manifestation of the city's special status for Russia – both in national and spiritual, Christian sense. But how should we view the Russian exodus and the period of rejecting the continuity and the Russian imperial tradition, together with the "Russianness" itself?

In the "valve" model, this was the period of a profound dysfunction, when Russia witnessed the alteration of its internal environment, and when the Russian society lost the quality of the Russian world, having been affected by the destructive non-Christian external influence. The difference in the parameters of the two environments caused the destruction of the valve and, during the Russian exodus, not only to "throwing the baby out with the bath water" (this baby being the young Russian world) but to even more devastating consequences in the form of the new Fascist intervention.

The ill-adjusted valve of Sevastopol (its adjustment being closely related to the Christian order) seemed the main pressure point of the geopolitical "body" of the Soviet Union and became therefore target of a hard blow that could only be repelled with the axiology of restoring almost Christian justice of the retribution borne by the Great Patriotic War.

In his address to the US Congress, Roosevelt said: "I saw Sevastopol and Yalta and I know that there is not room enough on earth for both German militarism and Christian decency"²⁴¹. The same value of restoration became of paramount importance in defining Sevastopol's status during the post-war period. In 1948, the hero city became directly subordinate to the Russian SFSR for the organization of activities for rebuilding the city that had been almost entirely destroyed. Russia once again restored a unique connection with its source.

In fact, remembering Berdyaev's "The Origin of Russian Communism" (which would be convenient for filling the gap between 1920 and 1944), Stalin's "resurrection of empire", and establishing relations with the Russian Orthodox Church as grounds for the geopolitical victories, let us say that only the sacred nature of the holy war as the process of restoration in the sense of justice and in the sense of peaceful creation in a truly profound manner and not just ideologically or formally politically, gave Sevastopol its Russianness back.

The idea of a spiritually heroic act of Sevastopol's defenders has lived in the city over the entire Soviet period. Today it is equally perceptible. This idea did not always have an external Christian cover but it is profoundly Christian in terms of its spirit. And it became a new power and a new valve membrane that will never again let the Fascism in.

241 <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/march-1-1945-address-congress-yalta>

The military personnel is worth mentioning separately. So far, the history of Sevastopol's Russian self-determination looks like the confrontation of ideas and meanings. However, at all times, it has been a heroic and tragic truth of Russian soldiers and officers' deeds. For over two centuries this city has been military, and for military officials the issue of self-determination does not exist. Sevastopol is Russian both by definition and in terms of its honour, conscience, and pledge of allegiance.

In fact, the militaristic nature is present also in the historical blood of Sevastopol. Owing to the fierce Tauri, the Ancient Greeks initially called the entire Black Sea region inhospitable. As for Chersoneses, it was laid by the Dorians – the people who founded Sparta. The Romans created there a stronghold for exercising military control over the peninsula. Potestarity²⁴² is the key feature of the political and military culture of Sevastopol²⁴³, the feature that defines the character of the “valve city”.

It was military men – immediate heirs of the victorious soldiers of the Great Patriotic War, united with the first Siege heroes by a military brotherhood that surpasses the time gap between 1920 and 1944 – who played the key role in preserving the Russian self-determination of Sevastopol in the early 1990s.

Speaking about the preservation of the Black Sea fleet – the core of Sevastopol's Russian identity – the period between 1992 and 2013 seems another quite obvious gap that we would like to discuss in this article. The recent publication of the Federal Archive Agency contains almost no documents dated between the second half of the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, which evokes sinister thoughts of Ukrainian timelessness²⁴⁴.

Indeed, the times were not easy for Sevastopol. However, basing on my communication with numerous bearers of this yet fresh history, I can say that those were the times of a tough but correct operation of the Sevastopol valve which coped successfully with its pressure.

It is this period in its entirety, and not only the spring of 2014 but that should also be considered the third Siege of Sevastopol. Its heroes are defence officers who endured the hardships of military service and held NATO's sea attacks, Russian patriotic organizations who worked under the pressure of the Security Service of Ukraine, common Sevastopol citizens who repeatedly resisted the ferocious Ukrainization and Americanization of the Russian people. These are the tough historical preconditions of the “Russian spring”, its “soil” and its “winter crops” that lie beneath the snow of the 20th century's biggest geopolitical catastrophe. Fortunately, it did not stay long, like any snow in Sevastopol.

On January 20, 1991, along with the all-Crimean, a city referendum was held in Sevastopol, at which 97% of the city inhabitants supported the “status of Sevas-

242 Potestarity is a form of organizing public power in pre-class and early societies that had no political and state institutions and attributes.

243 I.A. Chikharev. Quoted from the article

244 krym.rusarchives.ru

topol – the main base of the Black Sea fleet, the centrally administered city”²⁴⁵. The referendum results were not taken into consideration by either the Ukrainian SSR authorities or the Soviet Union leadership. However, from that moment a Russian patriotic movement started growing in the city.

A considerable role was played by the Black Sea fleet: its Commander, Admiral I. Kasatonov, refused to pass the city to Ukraine. In April 1992, the Russian Movement of Sevastopol was formed, and in the autumn of the same year – the Sevastopol division of the Russian National Salvation Front which on January 7, 1993, held a rally under the slogan “Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia”. In early 1993, the Russian community of Sevastopol was created, and in the summer that year the Russian People’s Veche was convened, which was meant as an alternative to the City Council. Proving the idea of Russia’s counter-intention to return to the home harbour, let us make the following notion. The Regulation of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation as of July 9, 1993, formalized the Russian federal status of Sevastopol.

It should be noted that the Russian self-determination of Sevastopol not only was not taking place separately from the rest of Crimea but was the main driver of the Crimean people’s self-determination. It was in Sevastopol that the Republican movement of Crimea organized its main actions. For example, on January 12, a rally against the Ukrainian pledge of allegiance took place on the Nakhimov Square, and on February 6 another demonstration was held there against flying the Ukrainian flag on the City Council building. After the 1993 parliament crisis in Russia and the adoption of the new Constitution of the Russian Federation where the “Russian federal status” of Sevastopol was formalized, the first stage of the “third siege” was over.

Besides, in April of the same year, Presidents B. Yeltsin and L. Kuchma agreed on a step-by-step settlement of the Black Sea fleet issue. Hence, Russian leadership in the person of Yeltsin and his entourage essentially refused to fight for Russian Sevastopol. However, to entirely break the ties between Russia and Sevastopol was not possible not only due to the fleet status but also thanks to political efforts of particular Russian statesmen.

On June 26, 1994, a “general poll” was held in Sevastopol, according to which 90% of the city’s inhabitants supported the Russian legal status of the city. This little-known act was subsequently taken into consideration in the course of preparing the draft regulation of the State Duma of the Russian Federation “On the status of the hero city Sevastopol...”.

From 1994, the “Moscow” stage of the fight for the Russian self-determination of Sevastopol started. In that year, at the initiative of the Moscow Mayor

245 Here and throughout the article the fact-based quotations are given from: I.V. Ostrovskaya. History of emergence and development of pro-Russian movements in Crimea and Sevastopol from 1991 to March 2014. Krasnodar, 2018; I.V. Ostrovskaya. The all-Crimean referendum dated January 20, 1991: Sevastopol’s dimension. // Paradigms of history and social development, 2018, N.10.

Yu.M. Luzhkov, the foundation “Moscow-Sevastopol” was established, which had an important financial and humanitarian effect on the preservation of Sevastopol’s Russian roots and the support of Russian seamen and their families.

Moscow in the person of Luzhkov supported Sevastopol and its Fleet up until the “Russian Spring” events. In 2018, Moscow resumed its significant financial support towards Sevastopol that had already become Russian.

On September 15, 1995, the Russian Community of Sevastopol was founded. This organization participated at the most important events of the “third siege” and the “Russian Spring” and has been working ever since. However, its activities are based on the following humanitarian principle: “Provide Russian children in Russian Sevastopol with the Russian history and literature and the Russian language”.

On December 5, 1996, following the request of Yu. Luzhkov, the Federation Council adopted a regulation “On the establishment of the commission of the Russian Federation for the preparation of the issue of the legal status of the city of Sevastopol”, and as soon as on December 9 the State Duma Committee on Issues of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Contacts with Fellow Countrymen prepared a draft regulation on the Russian federal status of the hero city.

The initiatives of both chambers of the Russian Parliament were not supported by the re-elected B. Yeltsin who continued to stick to the Belovezha Accords. In 1997, the Kremlin resumed its course for the bilateral settlement of the status of the Black Sea fleet and signed Russian-Ukrainian Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Partnership which formalized the existing borders. For a certain period of time, this helped suspend the discussions but not the confrontation against the Ukrainization and did not affect the Russian communities’ readiness to fight for Sevastopol.

On January 1, 1997, the Russian Duma of Sevastopol was established, which united 20 public organizations. In March 1997, the first congress of Russian communities of Crimea and Sevastopol was held, at which such respected Russian politics participated as S. Baburin and D. Rogozin.

The latter, during his speech at the congress, said: “We now need complete unity while preserving the entire variety of political and public organizations that represent pro-Russian patriotic forces of Crimea. We need a unified slate that would assume authority in Crimea and Sevastopol. We should stop talking about the third siege of Sevastopol. It is time we move from defence to attack”.

In August 1997, Sevastopol organizations participated actively in the actions against NATO exercises in Yevpatoria. In 1997, the leader of the National Bolshevik Party of Russia wrote the “Scenario of a military uprising” with the description of the incitement of a Russian revolution in Sevastopol²⁴⁶.

Notwithstanding the author’s odiousness, one cannot fail to notice that this document contains one of the first, though fiction-like, descriptions of a “colour

246 E. Limonov. *Anatomy of a Hero*. Moscow, 2008.

revolution”, and the hopes that Sevastopol would become the source of the national resurrection of Russia (though based on an extreme revolutionary scenario). Eduard Limonov’s comment that the uprising’s hymn would be the famous song

“Arise, Great Country!” turned out to be prophetic: in 2014 it was sung at a people’s will demonstration on the Nakhimov Square. On August 24, 1999, on Ukraine’s Independence Day, a group of Nazbols, inspired by the revolutionary writer’s “manual”, seized the spire of the Sailors’ Club. The result was not the Russian uprising but the activists’ almost 18-month imprisonment which subsequently became the subject of Limonov’s story “Imprisoned by Dead Men”. Those events terminated the typical for the 1990s “demonstration” period in the history of the protection of Sevastopol’s Russian identity.

In 1999, a branch of the Moscow State Lomonosov University opened in Sevastopol, becoming one of the pillars of Russia’s “soft” influence in the city and in the region.

From early 2000s, attempts at institutionalizing the Russian movement and its incorporating into the official political structures started being undertaken.

In 2001, the party “Russian Bloc” was established, which subsequently managed to insert a number of Russian communities’ activists in the City Council. In July of the same year, the Presidents V. Putin and L. Kuchma undertook a joint visit to Sevastopol, which mitigated the tensions related to the city’s status that was proclaimed joint heritage of Russia and Ukraine until 2014.

Russia and Ukraine jointly reconstruct the St. Vladimir Cathedral in Chersoneses.

A relative lull did not last for long: after the “first Maidan”, the policy of Ukrainization and unitary tendencies strengthened, entering into confrontation with the enhancement of the Russian Federation’s international influence in 2005-2008.

In 2005 and 2006, the People’s Front and the National Front, respectively, were created under the name “Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia”. The summer of 2006 was marked by a new vehement opposition towards NATO exercises. And in the same year public and educational activities of “The 35th Battery” museum and memorial complex started, which were of great moral and psychological importance for the restoration of historical memory and justice by means of explicit demonstration of the heroic acts and the tragedy of the second Siege of Sevastopol. At the same time, starting from 2007, “Sevastopol Studies” is taught in local schools.

Notwithstanding the educational value of V.V. Kovalenko and E.B. Altaeva’s relative study book that was used until 2015, Sevastopol, strangely, was called in it “part of Ukraine that belongs to the European family of peoples while Ukraine existed from the Ice Age”²⁴⁷. In November 2007, the President of Ukraine V. Yushchenko signed the Decree “On a number of measures for developing the

247 V. Kovalenko, E. Altaeva. Quoted from the article

humanitarian field in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and in the city of Sevastopol” which implied several steps for the Ukrainization of the peninsula.

In return, the City Council of Sevastopol adopted a program for the promotion of the Russian language for 2007-2011, and the upcoming year 2008 became one of the most important in the history of the “third siege”. It embraced the protection of the monument to Catherine the Great, the fight against the sign dedicated the “Ukrainian fleet” to be placed on the Graphskaya Pier, and the strengthening of the Russian Cossack divisions.

A little-known fact is that in August of 2008 Sevastopol inhabitants welcomed gleefully MRK Mirazh – the guided missile corvette that destroyed two Georgian warships and made another five Georgian vessels retreat.

The period from 2009 to 2013 was marked by the simultaneous strengthening of positions of pro-Russian activists in Crimea and Sevastopol and of Russia’s humanitarian influence in the region.

In December 2009, Sevastopol inhabitants did not allow holding a marching of Ukrainian Nationalists, thus drawing the line under the 17-year round of opposing to Neo-Fascism (in 1992, the activists of the Nationalist People’s Movement of Ukraine who arrived in the “train of friendship” held an action of intimidation).

In Sevastopol, a branch of the “Russian World” foundation was opened (an organization that engages in protecting the Russian language) while major veteran and patriotic organizations resumed their activities. In 2013 and in February 2014, two important events in Sevastopol’s Orthodox life took place – the arrival of St. Vladimir’s relic to Chersoneses and “The Gift of the Magi” exhibition (with the organizational support of Sevastopol’s Russian Cossack community).

Sarcastic comments of some researchers who said that this was the moment when the “professional Russians” appeared, that is, the activists who received remuneration for their pro-Russian activities, only confirm that Russia’s influence became systematic, however cynical this may sound.

This overview of the contemporary history of the issue, which was deliberately checked without mentioning the names of the third siege participants, allows to understand that here we deal with the preconditions of nothing else but the “Russian (Crimean) Spring” as Sevastopol’s Russian self-determination.

The mere discussion of its progress is rather complicated by today’s continuing debates on the nature of events that unfolded in the autumn and winter of 2013-2014 and the way various Sevastopol, Russian, and foreign political forces contributed to them.

Therefore, here I am going to analyse the debates themselves, without claiming to give a precise estimation of the “Russian Spring”. To start with, there are three points of view on the “Russian (Crimean) Spring” in terms of its (geo) political prospect and not of the research position of their adherents: Sevastopol, Russian federal, and foreign.

The latter, with few exceptions, mimics the Ukrainian point of view resentment: “The “Russian Spring” is the result of a treacherous invasion and a hybrid war with the use of information manipulations and Special Operations Forces, a demonstration of the imperial aggression of Putin’s Russia, militarized Sevastopol being its stronghold and outpost”. Alternative points of view only mitigate the epithets used in this definition and occasionally note that Sevastopol has historically been Russian and Russian-speaking.

The federal point of view consists in describing the “Russian Spring” as a response to the Maidan and the reunification of Sevastopol and Crimea with Russia on the basis of the free will of Sevastopol inhabitants and the Crimeans under the protection of Russian security forces thanks at the political initiative of Russia’s President V.V. Putin.

Other opinions at the federal level are voiced by representatives of Liberal groups. They are essentially similar to the Western voices but put an accent on such aspects of the “Russian Spring” as the strengthening of the authoritarian regime and the positions of security agents and of a close group of oligarchs to the disadvantage of the economic interests of Russian citizens.

Sevastopol interpretations of the “Russian Spring” are considerably less well-studied. Strangely enough, the “transitological” point of view dominates, according to which all the credit is attributed to a group of people led by the “people’s mayor” A.M. Chaly, which intensified their activities in the spring of 2014 but is, in my opinion, only indirectly related to the “third siege”.

Besides, paradoxical as it may seem, such a point of view is in contrast with the first, federal, approach since it gives a very discreet (not to say derogatory) estimation of the role that Putin and the “little green men” played in the main events. The “Russian Spring” itself is viewed as a species of conservative revolution that should influence the transformation of entire Russia. But these are not the only paradoxes: such a point of view is shared by some Moscow political scientists and publicists as well²⁴⁸.

This stance, however, is opposed by an opinion of a vast range of groups that participated actively at the events “in the field” – at roadblocks, in forests, on the Nakhimov Square. These are both the representatives of the Russian organizations that we have already mentioned and new structures that appeared in 2014, including the “Sevastopol Roadblock”. They, on the other way round, favoured more the “Russian federal” point of view, except the fact that they desired to participate more actively in the economic and political processes after the reunification.

Finally, there is an opinion that the Russian Spring is the merit of Sevastopol inhabitants, the result of their large-scale manifestations and the participation in the referendum. Despite all these variations, the majority of Sevastopol inhabitants is convinced that it was the people’s will demonstration on February 23 in Sevastopol that heralded the beginning of the “Russian (or Crimean) Spring”.

248 <https://politconservatism.ru/special/russkaya-vesna-v-bolshoj-ruskoj-istorii>

In the context of this article, let me suggest that the Sevastopol versions are quite compatible between themselves, despite certain militant sectarianism, and with the first federal point of view: once again, it was not only Crimea's return to its home but Russia's reciprocal aspiration for returning to its historical cradle.

Now, let me change the style of my article for the third time (an attentive reader would have already noticed my transition from the epic form of narration to the historical one). From now on, we are going to plunge into political science analysis.

In terms of political comparative science, the "Crimean Spring" is, first and foremost, a political transition, that is, a change of political regime. It was only afterwards that the territorial identity of Crimea and Sevastopol changed. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned, the preconditions of the "Crimean Spring" can be studied from the transitological point of view.

In its light, the methodology of "the funnel of causality" can serve as the basis for analysing progressively the various transition factors. Although Transitology is not characterised by the metahistorical scale and idealistic bias demonstrated in the first part of the article, one can speak of Sevastopol's place-development and special place in the Russian world as essential factors of transition-return, especially as they are also confirmed in the period of modern history. International transition factors shall be studied separately.

It is known that over the last decades the political transitions (the so-called democratization) have occurred under the influence of the US, the EU, and certain Western countries. And this influence was sometimes crucial.

The Russian Spring became the first transition in at least 30 last years that took place under the influence of a non-Western state. The particular features of this transition were, first of all, its peaceful nature and, secondly, Russia's assuming responsibility for the further development of Crimea and Sevastopol. Possible counter-arguments that, for instance, "the Russian-style authoritarian regime" was introduced in Sevastopol, are not valid, and not only because Western estimations of the democracy in Russia have a well-known bias.

Sevastopol witnessed the establishment of a rather polyarchal political regime with a high degree of competition and the involvement of the civil society. Freedom House's recent estimation²⁴⁹ is incorrect and somewhat ignorant since it equalizes regional political regimes in Sevastopol and Crimea. In the context of the transit, the referendum can be analysed as a normal "treaty", that is, the formalization of a new design of the political system. Subsequently, this treaty was consolidated by holding elections at all the levels, each of them being loyal towards the new order. The 2017's direct election of the mayor of Sevastopol was the first in the city's history.

In other words, a comparative international estimation of the "Crimean Spring" makes us speak about it as a peculiar transition that changed the rules

249 <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2019/crimea>

of the game in the post-bipolar system of world management. Moreover, from the political realism's point of view, such an event demonstrates the shift of the balance of powers as the first real challenge to the centre of the unipolar world, which makes our "Spring" the paramount milestone in the world order evolution.

In the transitological dimension, another important aspect is the technological one. Describing the discussions, we have slightly touched upon the tools of drawing the "Spring" closer. Let us assess to what extent the notion of "colour revolution" and "hybrid war" and the underlying methods can be applied to the events we are analysing. Indeed, if we define a "colour revolution" as a "political transit that occurs under external management or influence and is based on large-scale forms of political participation and new media", then the "Crimean Spring" answers to this definition.

At the same time, it should be taken into consideration that the "Crimean Spring" in itself is a reaction to Maidan as a colour revolution and, generally speaking, is a sort of *fin de siècle* for a series of colour revolutions – from Belgrade in 1999 (or even Paris in 1968) to Kiev in 2013. A "colour counter-revolution" is a slightly pretentious but truthful definition of the "Crimean Spring".

Now, if we proceed to define a hybrid war as a combination of military and non-military tools of influence as well as conventional and non-conventional forms of using force, only partial applicability of this notion to Russia's actions must be acknowledged. Indeed, there were no military actions while the power influence did not go beyond the conventional limits (**the maximum contingents allowed by the Partition Treaty on the Status and Conditions of the Black Sea Fleet were not exceeded, and there were no casualties**). Nevertheless, Russia efficiently used various tools for managing the situation: information, economic, psychological, organizational, mass media, etc. Yet, these tools did not go beyond the "soft power" and "smart power" that are promoted by the West.

Therefore, the "Crimean Spring" can be viewed as a demonstration of Russia's modern and internationally competitive high-tech influence on the political processes.

Besides, like in the case of colour revolutions, there is another important issue – the starting point of the war, its origin, or *casus belli*. Even within the framework of our narration, it can be seen that "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" had to cope with various aspects of a hybrid war, including NATO exercises, acts of violence and moral terror committed by Ukrainian Nationalists, "trains of friendship", attacks on buses, etc. Hence, even if the "Crimean Spring" was a hybrid war, it was a war of liberation.

Apart from the already mentioned international consequences of the "Crimean Spring", we should point out a dynamic development of the economic sphere (first of all, in terms of the infrastructure and the growth of the population's real income), and of the legal system and law enforcement (several fields of legal relations were fixed which had been in the mayhem in Ukraine's times). A cultural

and intellectual renaissance started when in 2014 the Sevastopol state university was established. The Black Sea fleet was reborn, having obtained dozens of new warships and types of weapons.

However, the existing problems in the Russian self-determination of Sevastopol should also be mentioned. They become more evident against the social problems that have not been solved yet but have a totally different nature which is explained by the uncertainty of Sevastopol's future image.

The above-described interpretations of the "Crimean Spring" show the discrepancies in its visualization. From the Western point of view, the

"Russian Sevastopol" project has no future. For the Russian Federation, it is only one of the 85 regions, though a very important one. But for Sevastopol inhabitants, it is the third capital, a city with a unique lifestyle, dignity, and degree of independence.

It is evident that the future of Sevastopol is connected with partially overcoming the international isolation – first in the Black Sea region and the Eastern Mediterranean region and then in Eurasia. The participation in providing the Western part of the Silk Road and the implementation of projects for the transportation of energy and the promotion of advanced technologies in the Middle East and in North Africa will allow obtaining room for the further stage of development.

At the same time, Sevastopol will preserve its role as an outpost of a geostrategic confrontation with NATO. Its mission as a leader in military technologies is compatible with the position of a flagship technological centre. Besides, Sevastopol, like in the former years, should remain one of the most beautiful and comfortable Mediterranean cities.

Taking into consideration the international legal aspects of Sevastopol's status, the discussion and procedures related to its recognition can be initiated at a new stage. There can also be undertaken an attempt to give Sevastopol a special status in the Orthodox and – more generally – in the entire Christian world, similar to that of Jerusalem, Vatican, Constantinople, and Athos.

But anyway, the key to success in our joint effort to "fight" for Sevastopol should be comprehensive research and educational activities for studying the "Russian Crimean Spring", its preconditions, and consequences.

THE CRIMEANS' ELECTORAL CONSISTENCY IS PROOF OF THE STEADFASTNESS OF THEIR POLITICAL CHOICE

Andrey R. Nikiforov,

PhD in Historical Sciences, Associate Professor at the Taurida Academy of V. I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University (Simferopol)

It is known that during the all-Crimean referendum on March 16, 2014, the absolute majority of the Crimeans gave a positive answer to the question: “Do you support the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation?”. Out of 1,274,094 voters (83.1% of the Crimeans who are entitled to vote), this option was supported by **1,233,002** voters (96.77%)²⁵⁰.

At first sight, the results obtained at the 2014 referendum seem surprising, which raises doubts with various external observers, especially those who “observed” the “Crimean Spring” events from “around the corner”, from “behind the bushes” and other convenient places, though rather distant from the main arena. They cannot imagine the elation that seized the peninsula’s inhabitants back then and are not able to experience those emotions that flooded the Crimeans. This is where cold scepticism and groundless reproaches for foul play stem from; they are merely caused by the inability to acknowledge a possibility of people’s sincere behaviour.

Yet, apart from the emotional explanation of the phenomenon of the 2014 referendum, there is also a rather rational one. For example, it is conspicuous that on March 16, 2014, the Crimeans almost repeated the result of the first Crimean referendum which took place on January 20, 1991.

Indeed, in the presence of a real threat of the USSR’s collapse, the Crimeans supported the “reestablishment of the Crimean ASSR as a constituent entity of the USSR and member of the Union treaty”. 1,441,019 inhabitants of Crimea (81.37%) took part in this first all-nation voting in the history of the USSR, and the new status of the peninsula was supported by 1,343,255 voters (93.26%)²⁵¹.

This comparison becomes even more evident if studying the motivation of both referendums. In 1991, the Crimeans used to promote the following formula: “Crimea will remain within USSR even if there will be nothing else left of it except Russia”. This formula proves that back then the Crimeans voted for a unified state, that is, for remaining in the same state as the rest of Russia. Making an allowance for a peculiar nature of that historical moment, it is essentially the same process that the one which took place in 2014. Hence, the choice of Crimea’s geopolitical status and state identity by its inhabitants remained unaltered for almost a quarter of a century.

250 History of Crimea in 2 volumes. Moscow, “Kuchkovo Pole” publishing house, 2017. Vol. 2. P. 751.

251 Ibid, P. 694.

Yet, the two referendums are only the starting and the ending points of a lengthy electoral process during which the adherence to this choice was manifested on many occasions. We have drawn such a conclusion basing on the analysis of the electoral behaviour of the inhabitants of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (ARC) from 1994 to 2010. This analysis allows dividing the Crimean voters into two distinct groups which we have conditionally defined as “pro-Russian” and “National Democratic”²⁵².

Let us study the evolution of the “pro-Russian” electoral group which is of interest to us in this article.

The maximum volume of the “pro-Russian” electorate in Crimea can be defined on the basis of the Crimean results of the two second rounds of the 2014 Presidential election in Ukraine. The degree of social activity reached on the eve and during the “Orange revolution” by both opposing electoral groups and their sharp polarization allow presuming that it was then that the “pro-Russian” electorate of the autonomous republic was mobilized to the highest degree.

Let us remind the readers that both times the level of V.F. Yanukovych's support was above 81% (81.99% in the second round and 81.26% at the second ballot)²⁵³. In this case, it is absolutely irrelevant whether Yanukovych was actually a pro-Russian politician. What matters is that back then, in 2014, he was perceived as a symbol of Ukraine's pro-Russian political line by both those who supported him and those who voted against him. They cast their votes for “ideal Yanukovych” who in fact had never existed but for whom there was electoral demand in South-East Ukraine, including Crimea.

During less tense periods of time, the “pro-Russian” electorate was not so strong. For instance, the “pro-Russian” voters of the autonomous republic voted in a more “relaxed” manner even in 1994 when Yuri Meshkov was running for President of Crimea (72.92% of votes in the second round)²⁵⁴. The same people gave 78.24% of their votes to Yanukovych in the second round of the 2010 Presidential election²⁵⁵ – a remarkable but obviously less impressive result than the one reached by Yanukovych in 2004.

Now let us analyse the distribution of votes of the “pro-Russian” electoral group between the parties and electoral associations at the elections to the Ukrainian and Crimean Parliaments from 1998 to 2012. It was during this period that the elections were held according to the proportional representation principle, which allows studying their results in terms of the parties' preferences.

From the whole range of such political organizations, we have created a sample of robust parties that define themselves as “pro-Russian” and had at least once (basing on the results of the voting in Crimea) overcome the 3% threshold which is the minimum acceptable result for the candidates at such elections.

252 Text in Ukrainian Text in Ukrainian P. 121-132.

253 Text in Ukrainian Access mode: <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2004/wp0011>.

254 History of Crimea in 2 volumes. Moscow, “Kuchkovo Pole” publishing house, 2017. Vol. 2. P. 709.

255 Text in Ukrainian Access mode: <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vp2010/WP0011>.

Table 1.
**“Pro-Russian” electorate of the ARC according to the results of the
 parliamentary election from 1998 to 2012 (%)**

Party/ Electoral bloc	1998 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine)	2002 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine)	2006 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine)	2006 (Supreme Council of the ARC)	2007 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine)	2010 (Supreme Council of the ARC)	2012 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine)
Party of Regions/ «For Yanukovych»	-	-	58.01	32.55	60.98	48.93	52.34
«Union»/ «FOR UNION»	10.68	-	1.60	7.63	-	5.28	-
Communist Party of Ukraine	39.34	33.91	4.54	6.55	7.62	7.42	19.41
Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine/ N. Vitrenko’s bloc	1.47	3.87	6.18	4.97	4.10	1.73	-
Social Democratic Party of Ukraine (united)/ «Not SO!»	2.05	12.47	1.48	3.09	-	0, 11	-
«Russian bloc» / Russian Unity	-	4.76	-	-	-	4.01	1.20
TOTAL:	53.54	55.01	71.81	54.79	72.70	66.98	72.95

As we see, in 1998 the “pro-Russian” group got very close to the 50% mark. In 2004, during the Presidential election, this parameter reached its all-time high, while in the following years it stagnated around the 70% mark. Interestingly, the electoral numbers of the “pro-Russian” group overcame the 70% mark during the all-nation elections which are characterized by a higher degree of the group’s mobilization towards “appropriate” political parties. In the course of the republican elections, the behaviour of the Crimean voters shows a more large-scale electoral “creativity”. This is probably because during the Crimean parliament election the electoral parameters of the “pro-Russian” group are consistently below the 70% mark.

In October of 2010, during Crimea's last Supreme Council election within Ukraine, this creative activity led to such non-conventional results as an all-time low of voters at the Parliamentary elections (47.94%) and an unprecedentedly high number of votes cast for the "none-of-the-above" option (7.89%)²⁵⁶ which was second only to the result of the winning party.

In 2010, these numbers considerably ruined the planned-in-advance triumph of the Party of Regions, which, nevertheless, gained a monopoly for political power in Crimea. However, the members of the party faced strong and badly organized resistance from most Crimeans who decisively refused to cast their votes for the party in power which had systematically ignored their campaign promises and implied commitment to follow the pro-Russian line.

This situation almost mirrored itself two years later, at the Verkhovna Rada elections. During them, the Crimean voters set another "record" – comparing to other Ukrainian regions, the voter turnout in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was the lowest (49.45%)²⁵⁷. Besides, the number of votes cast by the Crimeans for the Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform (7.17%) was as close as possible to the number of protest votes in 2010 (7.89%). Obviously, Vitali Klitschko's electorate in Crimea was represented not only by 2010 protest voters but, nevertheless, it was a rather surprising coincidence.

In 2010, there was another party that was trying to present itself as an alternative choice of the "pro-Russian" voters in Crimea – "Russian Unity". However, in the end, its result (4.01%) remained nearly at the level reached in Crimea at the 2002 Verkhovna Rada election by the "Russian bloc" party (4.76%). This is another curious coincidence.

The "pro-Russian" voters were reluctant to cast their votes for ethnically veneered political parties; the term "Russian" in a party's name was far from ensuring its success with the voters. It can be presumed that the "pro-Russian" spirit of the Crimean voters consisted not in their aspiration for ethnic marginalization but in cultural, historical, and geopolitical priorities. This is proved by the election success of Yu. A. Meshkov in 1994 and V.F. Yanukovych in 2004 and 2010.

Yet, the discreet results of the alternative pro-Russian political forces (truly pro-Russian, without quotes) are explained by their clearly outsider (and often even marginal) status. The electoral support shown by the Crimean voters was focused on supporting the leaders of the "pro-Russian" side, even though their "pro-Russian" nature was raising a growing distrust in them.

Interestingly, according to research performed by Ukrainian Razumkov Centre for Economic and Political Studies in 2009, the so-called "Slavic commu-

256 2010 election. Information. Multi-member constituency [electronic resource]. - Electoral campaign in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. – Access mode: <http://izbircom.crimea-portal.gov.ua/rus/index.php?v=5&tek=89&par=87>.

257 Text in Ukrainian [electronic resource]. - Text in Ukrainian. – Access mode: <http://www.cvk.gov.ua/pls/vnd2012/wp001>.

nity” identified by its experts numbered 58.7%²⁵⁸, which corresponds exactly to the percentage of the ethnic Russians who live in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (58.5%) as stated in the course of the 2001 All-Ukrainian population census²⁵⁹ and to the minimum threshold of the “pro-Russian” electoral group. This is the lowest mark that it used to hit during crises and periods of disappointment but which it had never gone below.

The maximum mobilization of the “pro-Russian” electoral group has a correspondence in the data of the 2001 All-Ukrainian population census as well. Its numbers are correlated with the share of the Crimeans (inhabitants of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea) who named the Russian language their native one in the course of the census (77.00%)²⁶⁰. Such a correlation indirectly confirms the cultural, historical, and civilizational choice to which the Crimeans remained faithful over the entire 23 years’ period of their republic’s existence within independent Ukraine.

The All-Crimean referendum held on March 16, 2014, provoked the super-mobilization of the pro-Russian voters. Almost all their ever-present opponents remained at home. The voter turnout proved to be equal to the maximum number of the “pro-Russian” electorate (which almost coincided with the support shown to Yanukovych in 2004).

The extent to which the Crimean voters supported the idea of reunifying with Russia presents a unique result. For the first time ever, this issue was raised explicitly, with no complicated formulas and no half-words. This is where such a high degree of certainty stems from.

The result of the 2014 referendum is unique in many ways but at the same time was well-expected, since it is based on the consistency of the geopolitical choice to which several generations of Crimeans remained faithful.

258 Text in Ukrainian Text in Ukrainian - 2009. - №5(109). P.4.

259 2001 all-Ukrainian population census. [electronic resource]. – Access mode: <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/rus/results/general/nationality/crimea/>.

260 Ibid.

CRIMEAN REFERENDUMS (20.01.1991–16.03.2014): A LONG JOURNEY HOME

Aleksandr S. Kiselev,

Master of Geography, Simferopol branch of the “Civil society development fund”

Natalia V. Kiseleva,

PhD in Political Sciences, Associate Professor at Vernadsky Crimean Federal University (Simferopol)

On January 20, 1991, it was in Crimea that the first referendum in the history of the USSR was held. The decision to hold a referendum was taken under the pressure of mass demonstrations that the peninsula’s inhabitants organized in the autumn of 1990. On November 13, 1990, the Crimean regional council of deputies arranged the referendum to be held on January 20, 1991.²⁶¹

1,441,019 people took part in this voting, which corresponds to 81.4% of the locals entitled to vote. The question: “Do you support the reestablishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a constituent entity of the Soviet Union and a member of the Union treaty?” received a positive answer from 1,313,855 people (93.3% of the voters)²⁶². Following the results of the referendum, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR had to adopt a resolution on the re-establishment of the Crimean ASSR²⁶³.

However, the restoration of the autonomous republic was not the only declaration made by the peninsula’s inhabitants at the referendum. The Crimeans also voted for Crimea to become a member of a new Union treaty, which was never implemented, but this was how the peninsula’s inhabitants tried to protect both their state and their existence within it.

They confirmed their choice at the all-Union referendum on the preservation of the USSR, which was held on March 17, 1991. The following question was raised at the universal suffrage: “Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a new federation of equal sovereign republics, which guarantees full respect of human rights and freedoms notwithstanding the nationality?”

80% of the country’s voters took part in the referendum. 76.4% of them gave the answer “Yes”. In Crimea (Sevastopol excluded), the positive answer was given by 1,085,570 voters (87.6%). In the Russian SFSR, there were only seven

261 Resolution “On holding a referendum” signed at the 4th extraordinary session of the Regional council of the people’s deputies of Crimea // Krymskaya Pravda. – 1990. – November 14

262 On the results of the Referendum on the state and legal status of Crimea, held on January 20, 1991 // Krymskaya Pravda. – 1991. – January 22.

263 Law of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic “On the reestablishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic” n. 712-XII dated 12.02.1991 // Holos Ukrayiny. – February 15, 1991.

such regions out of over 80 constituent entities. In Sevastopol, slightly more than 80% of the voters favoured the preservation of the Soviet Union²⁶⁴.

Hence, the Crimeans for the second time supported the idea of remaining in the same state.

On December 1, 1991, at the referendum on Ukraine's independence, the peninsula's inhabitants demonstrated a negative attitude towards the dissolution of the state again. In Crimea, the number of people who supported the issue that was put to the vote was the lowest. In various regions of Ukraine, the scope of negative voting ranged from several tenths of a per cent (in Ternopol Oblast) to several per cent (13% in Luhansk Oblast). At the same time, in Sevastopol the number of people who opposed the independence was 5 times higher than Ukraine's average, having reached 39.4%, while the Republic of Crimea's average was 5.5 times higher, having amounted to 42.2%. In particular, in Simferopol, the independence met the opposition of 66% of the citizens entitled to vote²⁶⁵.

Hence, in Crimea, the degree of the electoral support of the issue raised at the referendum was the lowest. Taking into consideration the overall degree of support of Ukrainian independence that ranged from 83% to 98% in various parts of the Ukrainian SSR, in Sevastopol the independence was favoured by 57% while the relative average number in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was 54% (including a discreet 33% in Simferopol) (fig. 1)²⁶⁶.

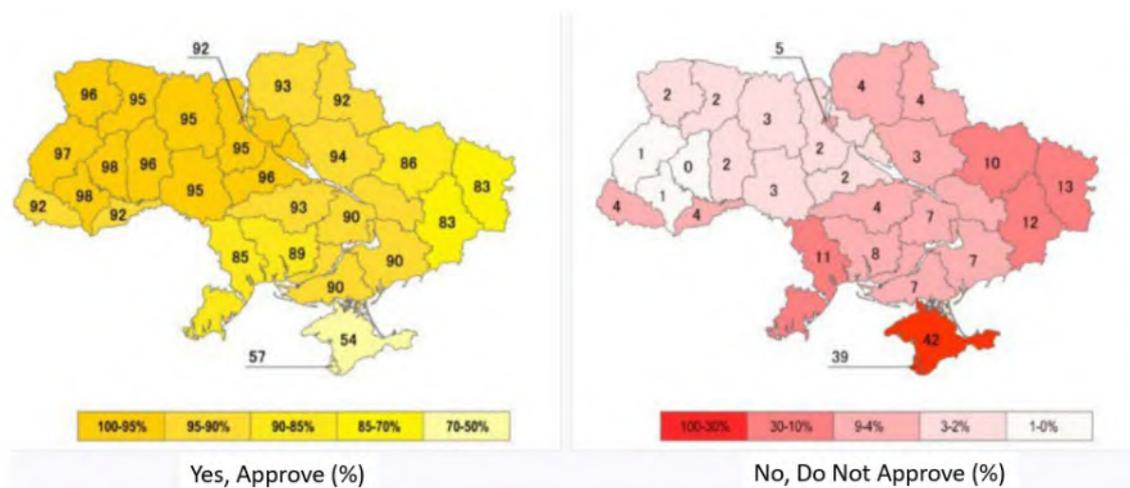


Fig. 1. The Ukrainian SSR's citizens' voting at the All-Ukrainian referendum on December 1, 1991.

After the signing of the Belovezha Accords and the collapse of the Soviet Union, another referendum was initiated in Crimea. According to the existing legislation, hundreds of thousands of signatures were collected in support of the

264 All-Ukrainian referendum result statement, December 1, 1991 [Electronic resource] / Access mode: https://archives.gov.ua/Sections/15r-V_Ref/index.php?11.

265 Referendums in Crimea, Ukraine, and the Soviet Union [Electronic resource] / Access mode: <http://kro-krim.narod.ru/LITERAT/UKRAIN/referen.htm>.

266 All-Ukrainian referendum result statement, December 1, 1991 [Electronic resource] / Access mode: https://archives.gov.ua/Sections/15r-V_Ref/index.php?11.

Crimean referendum with the following wording of the question to be raised: “Given the illegitimacy of 1954 acts on the transferral of Crimea from the Russian RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR, considering the Crimean inhabitants’ will that was expressed at the all-Crimean referendum on January 20, 1991, and in connection with the results of Crimea’s voting on the all-Ukrainian referendum issue on December 1, 1991, do you support the independent Republic of Crimea within the Union with other states?”

On May 5, 1992, the “Act on the proclamation of the state autonomy of the Republic of Crimea” was adopted at a Crimean Parliament session, which was to enter in force from the moment of its ratification at the all-Crimean referendum scheduled for August 2 of that year²⁶⁷.

However, on May 13, the Supreme Council of Ukraine declared the Crimean Parliament’s resolutions on proclaiming autonomy and holding a referendum to be in contradiction with the Constitution of Ukraine and suspended them. Under Kiev pressure, the members of the Crimean Parliament capitulated, having abolished the autonomy act on May 21 and declared, on July 9, a moratorium on their own resolution on holding a referendum since its results were quite straightforward, and the authorities knew that the Crimeans would prove their adherence to preserving their state for the fourth time as well.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Crimeans who, contrary to their will, found themselves within the newly independent Ukraine, for 10 years used to vote for the communist party at all the Ukrainian Parliament elections (until 2002), grasping at the communists as at a straw that would give them back their Fatherland.

After the 2004 nationalist coup, the Crimeans started voting at the Ukrainian deputies’ elections for the Party of Regions as the only, though very weak, alternative to the Ukrainian neo-Nazism.

It should be noted that, preferring first the communists and then the regionals, the Crimeans, nevertheless, voted not for the Communist Party of Ukraine or for the Party of Regions but rather against the Ukrainian nationalism since, unlike the overwhelming majority of Ukrainian citizens, they saw to what real consequences the victory of the neo-Nazism in the country would lead. The same threat and the same tendency were noted also by Crimean political scientists, contrary to their Ukrainian colleagues. For example, the analysis of the dynamics of the “Svoboda” popularity growth allowed even long before the 2012 Verkhovna Rada election, to predict that the radical nationalists would easily overcome the minimum threshold, even if it was increased from 3% to 5%. Hence, the comments made by the Ukrainian politicians and most political scientists, who claimed that the main discovery of that election was “Svoboda’s electoral rating, caused nothing but surprise. There was nothing unexpected about that at all.

267 Referendums in Crimea, Ukraine, and the Soviet Union [Electronic resource] / Access mode: <http://kro-krim.narod.ru/LITERAT/UKRAIN/referen.htm>

The other way round, the result was quite predictable and logic²⁶⁸ and could be foreseen back at the 2007 election when Oleg Tyagnybok's party, having failed to take seats in Parliament, demonstrated, nevertheless, the most impressive increase of the geography of its electoral support (the number of its voters grew in each region with no exception) and the most promising dynamics. In 14 administrative and territorial units out of 27, "Svoboda" increased the number of its supporters by more than 100%²⁶⁹.

Simultaneously with their electoral attempts to oppose Ukrainian Nazism, the Crimeans showed their alienation from Kiev which was viewing its new state as an anti-Russian project. The Crimeans' alienation was expressed in continuous decrease of the electoral activity. At the last Verkhovna Rada election, the voter turnout in Crimea was below 50%.

After the plebiscite on January 20, 1991, the Crimeans' large-scale electoral activity repeated only at the referendum on March 16, 2014, whose results showed both high turnout and massive support of the reunification with Russia. According to public opinion research, even a week before the referendum over 80% of people were disposed to vote for the reunification²⁷⁰, and the positive dynamics of the public's mood kept growing daily, as sociologists at the Crimean bureau of sociology, analytics, and marketing discovered in the course of a mass poll.

The question "Do you support the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation?" received a positive answer from 96.8% of voters in the Republic of Crimea and 95.6% of voters in Sevastopol.

The referendums held on January 20, 1991, and March 16, 2014, are momentous for Crimea. This is why during these plebiscites the peninsula's population showed huge electoral activity and massively supported the issues raised.

In January 1991, the voter turnout in Crimea varied from 73.3% (Krasnoper-ekopsk) to 90.3% (the Nyzhnegorsk region). In the majority of administrative and territorial units of the then Crimean Oblast, the electoral activity was over 80%. The average voter turnout in Crimea (excluding Sevastopol) was equal to 82.1% while in Sevastopol it was 77.7% (fig. 2)²⁷¹.

In March of 2014, the average turnout both in Crimea and in Sevastopol was higher – 83.1% and 89.5%, respectively. Meanwhile, the voting activity in the administrative and territorial units of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea varied

268 The regulation of the Supreme Council of Crimea "On the act on the proclamation of the state autonomy of the Republic of Crimea" [Electronic resource] / Access mode :<http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/krym/show/rb0072002-92>.

269 Kiseleva N. "Svoboda" party: program neo-Nazism and threats to the Crimean autonomy [Electronic resource] / Access mode :<http://www.novoross.info/biblioteka/15581-natalya-kiseleva-partiya-svoboda-programnyy-neonacizm-i-ugrozy-dlya-respubliki-krym.html>.

270 Poll: up to 83% of the Crimeans will vote for the reunification with Russia [Electronic resource] / Access mode : <http://itar-tass.com/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/1040763>.

271 Final statement with the results of the voting at the referendum on the legal status of Crimea, January 20, 1991 [Electronic resource] / Access mode: <http://krym.rusarchives.ru/dokumenty/itogovye-svedeniya-po-rezultatam-golosovaniya-na-referendume-o-pravovom-statuse-kryma>.

from 57.6% (the Kirovsky region) to 94.6% (Kerch). At the same time, in all the cities (except Saki) the voter turnout at the referendum on March 16, 2014, was higher with respect to the referendum on January 20, 1991, while in the majority of rural areas (except the Lenin region and the Chornomorsky region), it, the other way round, dropped. Nevertheless, in the majority of the administrative and territorial units of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the voter turnout was over 80%, similar to 1991 (fig. 3)²⁷².

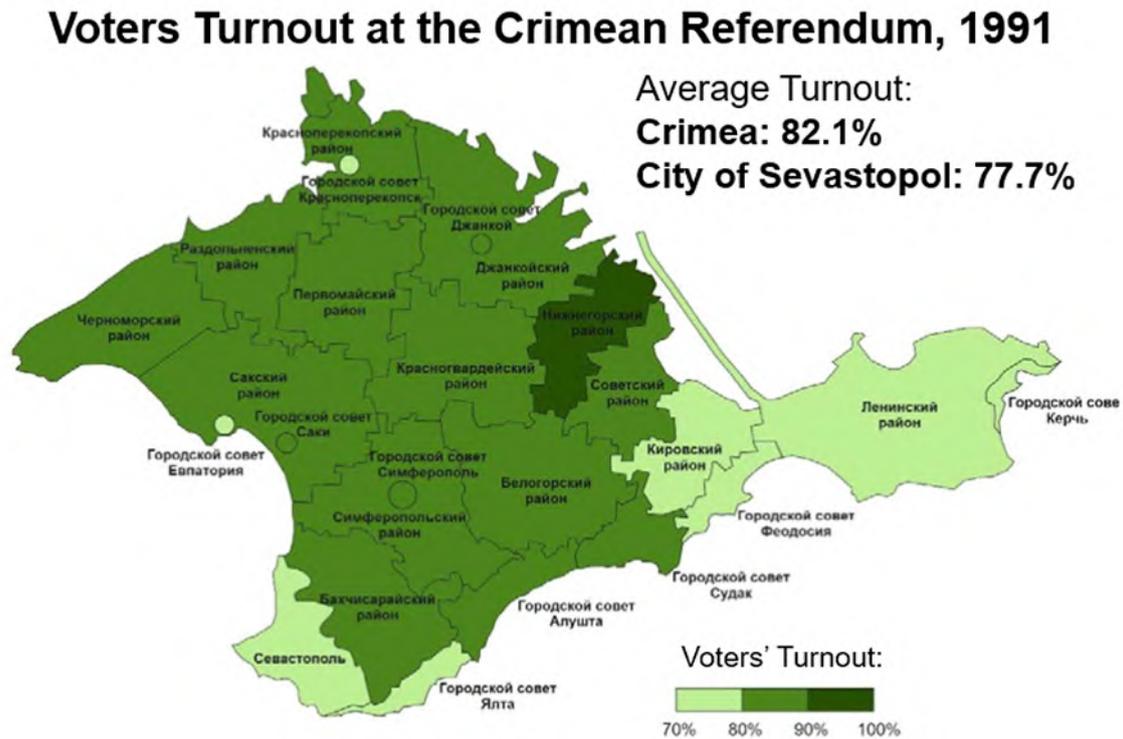


Fig. 2. Voter turnout at the referendum on January 20, 1991.

[compiled by the authors]

In January of 1991, the autonomous status of Crimea within the Soviet Union was favoured by, on average, 93.3% of the peninsula's inhabitants, including 91.3% in the Crimean Oblast without Sevastopol and 90.6% in Sevastopol. In the overwhelming majority of the administrative and territorial unit of the Oblast, the support of the Crimean autonomy was over 90%, with the exception of Kerch, Krasnoperekopsk, and the Krasnoperekopsk region where the autonomous status was favoured by less than 90% of the population (though over 80%).

The share of the peninsula's inhabitants who did not support the reestablishment of the autonomous status was 5.6% in the Crimean Oblast in general, 7.9%

²⁷² Results of the all-Crimean referendum on March 16, 2014 (as stated by the Commission of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on holding the all-Crimean referendum in accordance with the Interim regulation on the republican (local) referendum in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, ratified by the Order of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on March 6, 2014 n.1702-6/14 "On holding the all-Crimean referendum", based on the protocols of the territorial commissions for holding the all-Crimean referendum on the voting results) [Electronic resource] / Access mode: http://crimea.gov.ru/content/uploads/files/info_dep/rezultati.pdf.

in Sevastopol, and 5.2% in the rest of Crimea. In the majority of the administrative and territorial units, the percentage of such voters did not exceed 5.0%, and only in two cities, the share of those who opposed the autonomy was above 10% (11.1% in Kerch and 14.9% in Krasnoperekopsk)²⁷³.

Voters Turnout at the Crimean Referendum, 2014

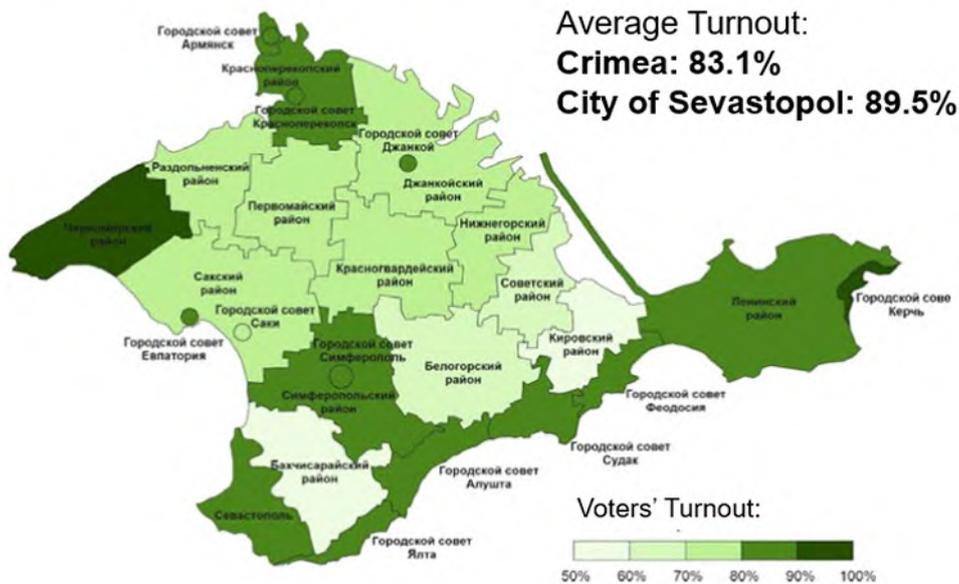


Fig. 3. Voter turnout at the referendum on March 16, 2014.
 [compiled by the authors]

Voters Turnout at the Crimean Referendum, 1991 – Vote for Autonomous State

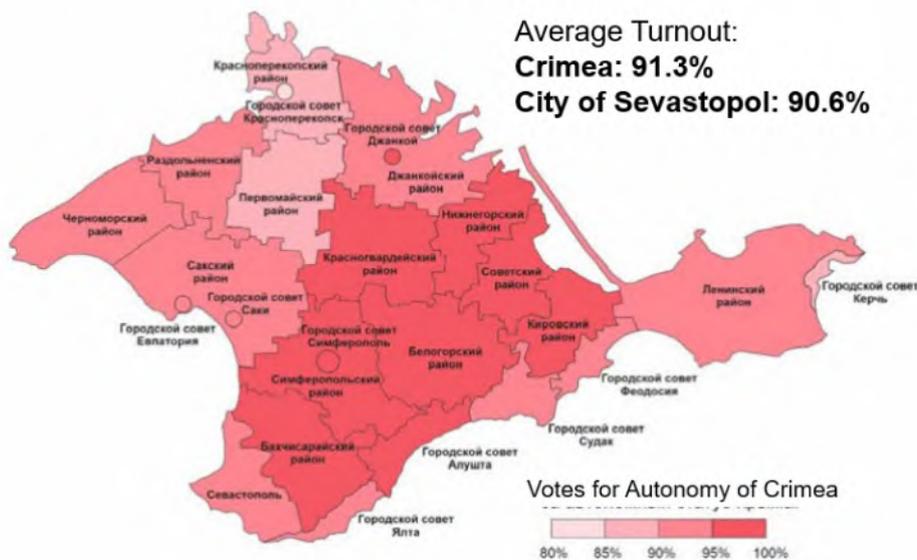


Fig. 4. Geography of voting for the autonomous status of Crimea at the referendum on January 20, 1991 [compiled by the authors]

273 Final statement with the results of the voting at the referendum on the legal status of Crimea,- January 20, 1991 [Electronic resource] / Access mode: <http://krym.rusarchives.ru/dokumenty/itogovye-svedeniya-po-rezultatam-golosovaniya-na-referendume-o-pravovom-statuse-kryma>.

Voters Turnout at the Crimean Referendum, 1991 – Vote Against Autonomous State

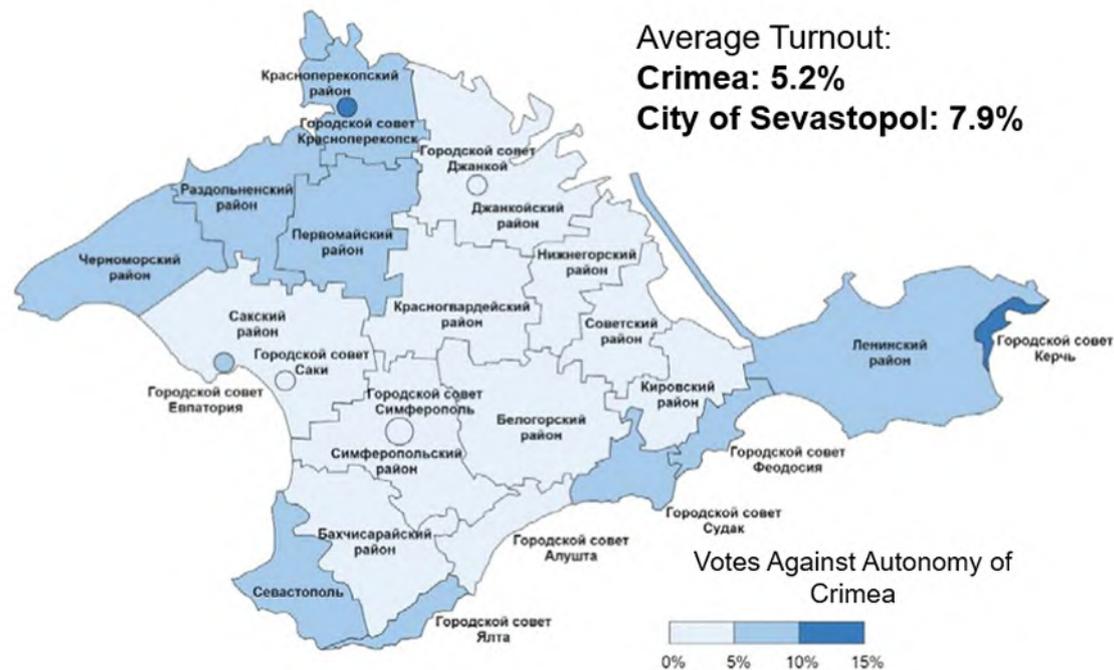


Fig. 5. Geography of voting against the autonomous status of Crimea at the referendum on January 20, 1991 [compiled by the authors]

The result of the referendum on March 16, 2014, was rather predictable. The Crimeans could not fail to take a chance to return to their historical Fartherland. And they took it.

In Sevastopol, 95.6% of people voted for inclusion into the Russian Federation, while in Crimea in general this parameter was 96.8%. Almost in all the administrative and territorial units of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the share of those who voted for returning to Russia exceeded 95%. Only in two regions, lower figures were registered: in the Rozdolne region (94.8%) and in the Chornomorsky region (86.2%).

The proportion of supporters of the peninsula's Ukrainian status was 2.5% in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and 3.4% in Sevastopol. Meanwhile, in the overwhelming majority of the administrative and territorial units of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the share of such responses did not exceed the average percentage (2.5%), and only in the Chornomorsky region a relatively large proportion of the supporters of the Ukrainian status was registered (12.9%)²⁷⁴.

The two Crimean referendums (1991 and 2014) can definitely be called momentous. It should be noted that in the bulletins of the referendum on Jan-

274 Results of the all-Crimean referendum on March 16, 2014 (as stated by the Commission of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on holding the all-Crimean referendum in accordance with the Interim regulation on the republican (local) referendum in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, ratified by the Order of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on March 6, 2014 n.1702-6/14 "On holding the all-Crimean referendum", based on the protocols of the territorial commissions for holding the all-Crimean referendum on the voting results) [Electronic resource] / Access mode: http://crimea.gov.ru/content/uploads/files/info_dep/rezultati.pdf.

uary 20, 1991, there was no mentioning of preserving Crimea within Ukraine. The only issue raised was that of the region’s participation in the Union treaty as an autonomous legal entity. However, contrary to the will of the overwhelming majority of the Crimean Oblast’s inhabitants, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the peninsula remained within Ukraine for the long 23 years. Nevertheless, it was that referendum that enabled the Crimeans to hold another plebiscite on March 16, 2014, and subsequently return to Russia.

Voters Turnout at the Crimean Referendum, 2014 – Vote Affiliation with Russian Federation

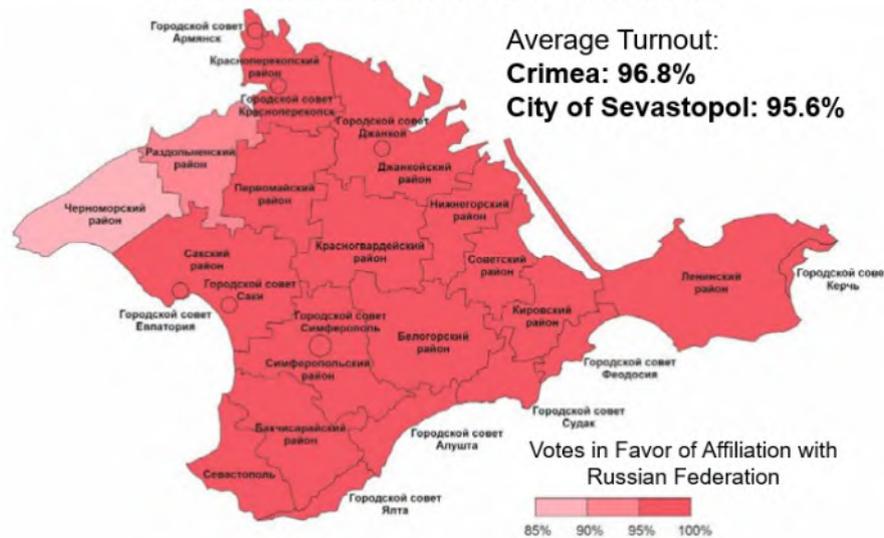


Fig. 6. Geography of voting for inclusion into the Russian Federation [compiled by the authors]

Voters Turnout at the Crimean Referendum, 2014 – Vote for Ukrainian Status



Fig. 7. Geography of voting for the Ukrainian status [compiled by the authors]

Such a scenario in the context of geopolitical history was, of course, predictable. As the authors of a monograph called “Reflections on Crimea and geopolitics” wrote 20 years before the 2014 events, “to implement its interests in Europe, the resurrected Russia will sooner or later have to demand the return of Crimea”, after which “its strong foreign policy will be re-established immediately, and a retrograde movement from betrayal to victory will start”²⁷⁵.

275 Kiselev S., Kiseleva N. Reflections on Crimea and geopolitics. Simferopol: the Crimean archive, 1994. P. 33, 34.

HISTORICAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ASPECTS OF CRIMEA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION

Vladimir M. Pavlov,
Historian²⁷⁶ (Simferopol)

On March 11, 2014, the Supreme Council of Crimea adopted the “Declaration on the independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol”, and on March 18 of the same year, the “Agreement between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea on including the Republic of Crimea into the Russian Federation and establishing new federal entities within the Russian Federation”.

The secession, or the withdrawal of some region from its state (in this case it was the Autonomous Republic of Crimea's withdrawal from Ukraine) was received favourably and raises no doubts with the Russian politicians. However, Crimea's secession from Ukraine provoked a sharp and painfully negative reaction of the leading politicians in the West. For example, 10 days before the Crimean referendum the former US President Barack Obama said that the referendum would “violate the Ukrainian Constitution and international law”, while the Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel called the inclusion of Crimea into Russia an annexation.

The actions of Crimea and Russia were viewed as a gross violation of the norms of international law by almost all leading politicians of the Western world who decided to express their opinion on the matter. One wonders whether there were historical and legal grounds for holding a referendum on the status of Crimea and subsequently adopting the Declaration on the independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and their inclusion into the Russian Federation.

Historical justification of the Crimea's people right to self-determination.

From 1783, the Crimean Peninsula was within the Russian Empire, while Simferopol was the administrative centre of the Taurida Governorate. During the 1917-1922 Civil War, Crimea became the last stronghold of the White movement on the European territory of Russia. In the Soviet Period, the Crimean ASSR (until 1945) and the Crimean Oblast (after 1945) were a part of the Russian SFSR. In 1954, by a decision of Soviet leadership and without considering the Crimeans' opinion, the Crimean Oblast was illegitimately transferred to the Ukrainian SSR.

276 Pavlov V. M., Head of the Information and intra-ethnic relations office in the Republican committee for the issues of the nationalities and deported citizens in the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (1995-2005), author of a number of publications: “Crimean repatriates: deportation, return, and resettlement”. Gabrielyan O.A., Efimov S.A., Zarubin V.G., Kisliy A.E., Malgin A.V., Nikiforov A.R., Pavlov V.M., Petrov V.P. Simferopol. «Amena» publishing house, 1998. 340 pages, and others.

Within the Ukrainian SSR, the Crimean Oblast remained the only region with the absolute majority of the ethnically Russian population. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Crimea became part of independent Ukraine within which it possessed limited autonomy. In March 2014, Crimea returned to Russia, which exacerbated the conflict between Russia and Ukraine.

Hence, the story of the Crimean conflict takes its origin from the illegitimate transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR which took place in 1954, just 10 months after Joseph Stalin's death and Nikita Khrushchev's coming to power, on the 300-year anniversary of the unification of Ukraine with Russia. According to the political practise of those times, the most challenging state problems used to be discussed first at the sessions of the Political Bureau (Presidium) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and only afterwards – by the highest state authorities. For instance, at the Presidium session that took place on January 25, 1954, in the course of discussing the issue “On the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR”, the following resolution was adopted:

1. Approve of the attached draft Order of the USSR Supreme Council Presidium with the amendments agreed on at the session about the transfer of the Crimean Region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

Acknowledge the necessity of holding a special session of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union, at which discuss the joint report of the Praesidium of the Supreme Councils of the Russian SFSR and the Ukrainian SSR on the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR”²⁷⁷.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned **joint report** was never submitted to the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union. To be precise, those reports were indeed submitted, but not jointly: on February 5, 1954 – by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR, and on February 13 of that year – by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR.

The main problem in this context lies in the answer to the question: who had the right to authorize the modification of the Russian territory on behalf of Russia itself? According to art.16 of the Constitution of the Russian SFSR, “the territory of the Russian SFSR is not subject to modifications without the consent of the Russian SFSR”. Art. 33 of the Constitution of the Russian SFSR did not provide for the right of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR to modify the republic's boundaries, while art.23 said that “all the rights attributed to the Russian SFSR” are exercised by **the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR**²⁷⁸.

277 Excerpt from the minutes n.49 of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union “On the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR”. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/texstes/vozvrat.htm>.

278 1937 Constitution of the Russian SFSR [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <https://www.rusempire.ru/>

Art.18 of the Constitution of the Soviet Union also stated that “the territory of the Union republics cannot be modified without their consent”. Meanwhile, according to art.14 of the Constitution of the Soviet Union, “the approval of modifications of the boundaries between the Union republics” lied within the competence of the Soviet Union “represented by its highest authorities and state administration bodies”. Hence, neither the Presidium nor the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR could exercise the rights related to the modification of the territory of the Russian SFSR²⁷⁹.

On February 19, 1954, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union adopted the Decree which said: “Taking into consideration the common nature of the economics, territorial proximity, and close economic and cultural ties between the Crimean Oblast and the Ukrainian SSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union decides as follows:

Approve of the joint report of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR and the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR on the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic”²⁸⁰.

As we have already noted, there was no **joint report**.

Art.14 and art.31 of the Constitution of the Soviet Union said:

Art.14: “The competence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics represented by its highest authorities and state administration bodies includes:

d) control over the compliance with the Constitution of the Soviet Union and the ensuring of the conformity of the Constitutions of the Union republics to the Constitution of the Soviet Union;

e) approval of the modification of boundaries between the Union republics” and Art.31: “The Supreme Council of the Soviet Union exercises all the rights attributed to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics according to art.14 of the Constitution, since such rights do not lie, in virtue of the Constitution, within the competence of the bodies of the Soviet Union that are subordinate to the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union: the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union, the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union, and the Ministries of the Soviet Union”²⁸¹.

Hence, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union was equally not entitled to adopt such orders, since the “approval of the modification of boundaries between the Union republics” was **only within the competence of**

sssr/konstitutsiya-rsfsr/1199-konstitutsiya-rsfsr-1937-g.html.

279 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/cnst1936.htm>.

280 Script of the session of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union held on February 19, 1954 [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.consultant.ru/cons/cgi/online.cgi?req=doc&base=ESU&n=6726#0680144654204232>.

281 1936 Constitution of the Soviet Union [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/cnst1936.htm>.

the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union. Besides, the illegitimate nature of the Order of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union adopted on February 19, 1954, was aggravated also by the **absence of a quorum**, since at that session only 13 out of 27 members of the Presidium were present and voted for this act, which means that in the absence of quorum this act **cannot be valid**.

Hence, by the Order dated February 19, 1954, the region that had been deeply tied with Russia over several centuries became illegitimately separated from it by a single stroke of a pen, with the opinion of the citizens of the Russian SFSR and the Ukrainian SSR (including, in particular, the Crimean Oblast) having been ignored. And though in the 1950s such a historic act in the scope of the entire Soviet Union was perceived as a mere formality, the overwhelming **majority of the Crimeans considered it to be unfair and illegal**.

The gross violation of the provisions of the Constitution of the Soviet Union in the course of transferring the Crimean Oblast from Russia to Ukraine was confirmed by the Decree of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation dated May 21, 1992 “On the legal assessment of the resolutions made by the highest authorities of the Russian SFSR in 1954 in relation to changing the status of Crimea”. It said the following: To declare “The Regulation of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated February 4, 1954 “On the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR” null and void from the moment of its adoption as having been adopted in violation of the Constitution (Main Law) of the Russian SFSR and the law-making procedure”²⁸². The following day, the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation published the Address to the Supreme Council of Ukraine, in which it called for the President and the Supreme Council of Ukraine to “abstain from taking any action aimed at suppressing the free expression of the will of Crimea’s population which has, according to the provisions of international law, the full right to determine their future on their own accord”²⁸³.

The clearest manifestation of the Crimeans’ aspiration for the state sovereignty with a view to withdraw from Ukraine and make a union with Russia lies in the history of holding referendums on the status of Crimea from 1991 to 2014. The very idea of the political self-determination of Crimea and its unity with Russia has deep historical roots, since it existed even before Ukraine obtained its independence. For example, on January 20, 1991, the Soviet Union’s first referendum was held on the peninsula, in which 81% of Crimea’s inhabitants took part, over 93% of them supporting the re-establishment of the Crimean ASSR as a constituent entity of the Soviet Union and member of the Union treaty²⁸⁴.

282 Decree of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation dated May 21, 1992 “On the legal assessment of the resolutions made by the highest authorities of the Russian SFSR in 1954 in relation to changing the status of Crimea”. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode // <https://base.garant.ru/6314854/>.

283 Address of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation dated May 22, 1992. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://docs.cntd.ru/document/901829933>.

284 The results of the all-Crimean referendum held on January 20, 1991, were not implemented, and the will expressed at it by Crimea’s people was trampled by Ukraine.[Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www>.

Back then, the Crimeans used to say that they would remain within the Soviet Union even if it would be the Union with Russia only. It was the desire to be part of their historical Fatherland that became the main idea about the voting for the people, as V.A. Konstantinov²⁸⁵.

The historical importance of this referendum consisted in the fact that it was the first attempt to determine the future of Crimea based on the direct expression of the will of the citizens themselves – its inhabitants. Following the referendum's results, on February 12, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR adopted the Decree “On the reestablishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic”.

However, the will of the Crimean population who voted for the reestablishment of the Crimean ASSR **as a constituent entity of the Soviet Union and member of the Union treaty** was not implemented due to evident confrontation of Ukraine's state authorities.

In this regard, the Chairman of the State Duma S.Ye. Naryshkin, in his speech on June 11, 2014, on the eve of the Russia's Day, emphasized that “when the democratic procedures became possible, Crimea's inhabitants made a clear declaration on their intention to re-establish the unity with Russia. Back in January of 1991, a referendum took place in the Crimean Oblast, which essentially contested the transferral of Crimea to Ukraine. 93% of voters supported the raised issue, while the voter turnout was 81%. In fact, Crimea was annexed. It was an annexation, though peaceful”²⁸⁶.

The second referendum, this time all-Union, took place in conformity to the resolution of the 4th Conference of the People's Deputies of the Soviet Union on March 17, 1991. It raised the issue of preserving the Soviet Union as a new Federation of equal sovereign republics. 80% of the country's voters took part in the referendum. 76.4% of them gave the answer “Yes”. Including in Ukraine: 83.5 % voters, 70.2 % voted for preservation of the Union.

In Crimea (excluding Sevastopol), 1,239,092 people (79.3%) took part in the referendum, with 1,085,570 of them (87.6%) giving the answer “Yes”. In Sevastopol, likewise, the overwhelming majority of people voted for the preservation of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the citizens of Ukraine, Crimea, and Sevastopol expressed their desire to preserve the country in which they lived. Yet, this will was ignored by the authorities of Ukraine and other Union republics²⁸⁷.

On August 24, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR adopted, together with the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, the resolution to hold, on December 1, 1991, a referendum for confirming the said act. At the

sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/1991.htm.

285 V.A. Konstantinov To walk their own path / V.A. Konstantinov. – Simferopol: 2017 – 255 pages.

286 Arinin A. N. History of the referendums in Crimea: a long journey towards the reunification with Russia. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // http://www.rcoit.ru/lib/history/russian_federation/18119/.

287 Referendum on preserving the Soviet Union, March 17, 1991. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <https://ria.ru/20160317/1390101948.html>.

all-Ukrainian referendum scheduled for December 1, 1991, a single issue was raised: “Do you support the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine?” Of 84.18% of Ukraine’s voters who took part in the referendum, 90.32% said “Yes”.

In Crimea, from 67.7% of citizens who participated in the voting, 54.2% voted for the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine. Two-thirds of the Crimean voters (973,653 people) either voted “against” or ignored the referendum. It should be noted that in 1991, those who took part in the referendum from Crimea were various categories of the Soviet citizens who were on the peninsula on that day, including thousands of tourists and people on business trips, as well as army conscripts and the Black Sea fleet seamen who were temporarily doing their Navy service in Crimea, though not being its inhabitants. Basically, the Crimean referendum held on January 20, 1991, meant that the participation of the Crimeans in the referendum on the independence of Ukraine would have no sense since Crimea had already voted for its independence from the Ukrainian SSR, having expressed its will to return to **the status of the autonomy within the Soviet Union**.

On September /date omitted/, 1991, the Supreme Council of the Crimean ASSR adopted the Declaration on the state sovereignty of Crimea, in which the republic was proclaimed a member of the Union treaty²⁸⁸. This offered new opportunities for the republic to improve its status but in the face of the Soviet Union’s collapse, these opportunities remained unfulfilled.

On May /date omitted/, 1991, when Crimea was already within independent Ukraine, the peninsula’s Supreme Council adopted the Act on proclaiming the state autonomy of the Republic of Crimea. This Act contained the appeal towards the President and the Supreme Council of Ukraine to sign a bilateral agreement between the Republic of Crimea and Ukraine.²⁸⁹

Besides, on the same day the decree on holding, on August 2, 1992, the all-Crimean referendum on the independence of the Republic of Crimea was adopted. The following question was to be raised at the referendum: “Given the illegitimacy of 1954 acts on the transferral of Crimea from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR, considering the Crimean inhabitants’ will that was expressed at the all-Crimean referendum on January 20, 1991, and in connection with the results of Crimea’s voting on the all-Ukrainian referendum issue on December 1, 1991, do you support the independent Republic of Crimea within the Union with other states?”²⁹⁰

However, on May 13, 1992, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the regulation “On the political situation related to the decisions made by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea on May 5, 1992”, which instructed

288 Declaration on the state sovereignty of Crimea. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/dekl.htm>.

289 Regulation of the Supreme Council of Crimea “On the Act on proclaiming the state autonomy of the Republic of Crimea”. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/1992ref.htm>.

290 Regulation of the Supreme Council of Crimea on holding an all-Crimean referendum. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/1992ref.htm>.

the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea to cancel its regulations on the Act on proclaiming the state autonomy and holding an all-Crimean referendum as violating the Constitution of Ukraine²⁹¹.

On May 6, 1992, the Supreme Council of Crimea adopted **the Constitution of the republic**, which enshrined Crimea's status as a rule-of-law democratic state.

According to art.9 of the Constitution, the Republic of Crimea was part of Ukraine through their relations were based on relative treaty and agreements. Art.10 provided that the Republic of Crimea could autonomously enter into relations with other states and entities and cooperate with them on mutually beneficial terms in such areas as economics, culture, healthcare, education, science etc. on the basis of agreements and treaties²⁹².

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, on January 30, 1994, the President of the Republic of Crimea was elected, the government led by a famous Russian economist Yevgeny Saburov was formed, and a number of fundamental legislative acts were adopted. However, the Ukrainian authorities undertake measures to restrict the legitimate rights of the Republic of Crimea. In virtue of Ukraine's Order dated March 17, 1995 "On the Autonomous Republic of Crimea", the Constitution of Crimea adopted on May 6, 1992, was abolished, together with a vast list of Crimean regulatory acts: "On the election of the President of the Republic of Crimea", "On the President of the Republic of Crimea", "On the re-establishment of the constitutional fundamentals of the statehood of the Republic of Crimea", "On the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Crimea", "On the election of deputies and heads of the village, district (in villages), city, and district (in cities) Councils"²⁹³.

On March 31, 1995, the President of Ukraine signed a Decree "On several aspects of the relations between the central government executive authorities and government executive authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea", in which he made the Crimean Government directly subordinate to Ukraine's Chamber of Ministers, modified the procedure of appointing the prime minister and members of the Crimean Government, and made heads and executive committees of the village, district (in villages), city, and district (in cities) Councils go out of control of the Supreme Council of Crimea²⁹⁴.

Hence, it was back in **the first half of the 1990s that Ukraine violated Crimea's sovereignty**, while the political will of its peoples remained non

291 Verkhovna Rada's Regulation "On the political situation related to the decisions made by the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea on May 5, 1992". [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/1992okup.htm>.

292 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea, adopted on May 6, 1992 года. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/1992konst.htm>

293 Ukraine's Law dated March 17, 1995 n. 95/95-BP "On the Autonomous Republic of Crimea". [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // https://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31590108.

294 President of Ukraine's Decree "On several aspects of the relations between the central government executive authorities and government executive authorities of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea" n. 278/95. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/1992ukria.htm>.

fulfilled. De facto, from 1995 to 2014, Crimea was a territory **that had been illegitimately occupied by Ukraine**.

S.P. Tsekov, Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea, showed genuine civic courage when he gave his speech in the State Duma of the Russian Federation on April 14, 1995, in which he used the following expressions to describe the policy of Ukrainian authorities towards Crimea:

“The resolutions made by of the Supreme Council of Ukraine on March 17 and the decree signed by the President of Ukraine on March 31, unprecedented in terms of both the procedure and the substance, have reduced Crimea not even to a region but, much worse, to a colony. Essentially, the rule of the President of Ukraine was established in Crimea.

Judge for yourself. The Constitution of the republic was abolished, together with two laws of Ukraine: “On the status of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea” and “On the delimitation of competence between the state authorities of Ukraine and the Republic of Crimea”. Both laws defined the powers of the republic and stated that the scope of such powers cannot be altered unless mutual consent is given. The Supreme Council of Crimea has no more right to adopt its Constitution, as well as amendments, modifications, and integrations to it; any of the above is now to be approved by the Supreme Council of Ukraine.

The laws “On the President of the Republic of Crimea” and “On the election of the President of the Republic of Crimea” have been abolished as not corresponding to the law and the Constitution of Ukraine.

The republic has been deprived of its ownership of the land and natural resources. Its territorial division has been performed – Sevastopol has been separated from Crimea. The state status of the Russian and the Crimean-Tatar languages has been cancelled, with the only remaining state language being now Ukrainian. Elections to local power authorities in accordance with the Crimean law have been cancelled; they have been postponed for 2 months and are going to be held on the basis of the Ukrainian law, which has created difficult circumstances for Crimean political parties and public organizations.

The citizenship of the Republic of Crimea has been abolished, though it used to be recognized previously. The Crimean government has been made subordinate to the central executive authorities of Ukraine. Those government members to whom the Supreme Council of Crimea expressed its entirely justified mistrust have been reinstated. The very name of our republic – the Republic of Crimea – causes sharp repudiation in Kiev.

Having abolished the self-governance of the republic, Ukraine’s leadership has shut for the members of the Russian community **and for the Parliament of Ukraine access to the television and radio**. The situation in which the Chairman of the Supreme Council has no opportunity to freely speak on the Crimean television and radio (the latter being directly subordinate to Kiev) is the demonstration of the violation of fundamental human rights.

The broadcasting of the Supreme Council of Crimea's sessions has been prohibited with a view to preventing the Crimean community to learn about the current political events.

A new rule is emerging according to which state officials are being dismissed on the basis of their nationality. On the eve of March 17, 1995, the cleansing of the Crimean police was essentially performed. The overwhelming majority of the released Russian were unreliable people.

The analysis of the changes that have taken place in the power authorities in Crimea over the past 6 months shows the following: 97 officials of various levels have been dismissed for various reasons, including 79 Russians and 18 representatives of other nationalities, while among the newly appointed officials there are 14 Russians and 83 people of other nationalities"²⁹⁵.

Why did not Russia protect back then its interests with regard to Crimea and Sevastopol? Answering this question, the President of the Russian Federation V. V. Putin, during his address to the State Duma deputies, members of the Federation Council, leaders of Russian regions, and representatives of the civic society on March 18, 2014, said the following: "Our country was then in such a difficult situation that simply could not protect its interests. But the people could not accept the blatant historical injustice. All these years, both our citizens and numerous public figures have repeatedly raised this issue, saying that Crimea is a traditionally Russian region while Sevastopol is a Russian city"²⁹⁶.

The strong will to reunify with Russia, expressed at the referendum on January 20, 1991, the inhabitants of Crimea and Sevastopol decisively proved at the referendum on March 16, 2014, at which the general voter turnout was above 90%, and over 95% of voters in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol supported the reunification with Russia²⁹⁷.

Therefore, the historical aspiration of Crimea's people to self-determination with the ultimate goal of making the peninsula return to Russia was **repeatedly** manifested during the democratic expression of will in the form of **Numerous** referendums that were held. The same is proven by the results of the presidential and parliamentary elections at which the Crimeans voted, as a rule, for the candidates who supported the interests of Crimea and South-East Ukraine.

2. Crimea's people's right for self-determination in the context of Ukraine's national law and the provisions of international law.

The Constitution of Ukraine leaves no chance for self-determination for all its regions and all the peoples who live in this state.

295 Speech of the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea S. Tsekov at a session of the State Duma of the Russian Federation on April 14, 1995 // "Crimean News". – 1995. – April 17.

296 Address of the President of the Russian Federation on March 13, 2014. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

297 Referendum of the status of Crimea and Sevastopol (2014). [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // https://studopedia.ru/8_187384_referendum-o-statuse-krima-i-sevastopolya--g.html.

According to Art.73 of Ukraine's Constitution, the issues related to Ukraine's territory can be settled only on an all-Ukrainian referendum. Art. 133 of the country's main law determines the list of territorial entities that make part of Ukraine.

Art.157 says that the "Constitution of Ukraine cannot be amended if such amendments provide for the abolishment or restriction of the rights and freedoms of a person or a citizen or if they aim at eliminating the independence or violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine"²⁹⁸.

The same was relevant also for the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea adopted on October 21, 1998:

Art.1 provides that "the Autonomous Republic of Crimea is an inalienable integral part of Ukraine and settles the issues that lie in its competence within the limits defined by the Constitution of Ukraine".

According to Art.2:

"1. The Constitution of Ukraine, the laws of Ukraine, and the Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are the legal basis of the status and powers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, and the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

In case the provisions of the regulatory acts of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea or the acts adopted by the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea contradict the Constitution of Ukraine or the laws of Ukraine, the provisions of the Constitution of Ukraine or the laws of Ukraine prevail"²⁹⁹.

Since the referendum held on March 16, 2014, was dedicated to the issue of Crimea's secession from Ukraine, one cannot fail to declare this referendum contradictory to the current Constitutions of Ukraine and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. However, if we assess the reunification of Crimea with Russia from the point of view of international law, we will discover rather solid grounds for considering the secession of Crimea and Sevastopol from Ukraine and their unification with Russia quite legitimate.

As is well known, in February of 2014, Ukrainian authorities lost their legitimacy. The coup occurred, President Viktor Yanukovich was removed without adhering to any impeachment procedure, the legitimate government was dismissed, and the state became totally uncontrollable. The armed coup in Ukraine was performed by illegal military formations which assumed they had the right to use violence against Ukraine's legitimate authorities (the forces of the so-called "Maidan self-defence" organized in a military fashion (division to hundreds, dozens, etc)).

298 Constitution of Ukraine. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <https://meget.kiev.ua/zakon/konstitutsia-ukraini/>.

299 Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/1998konst.htm>.

The guerrillas of the radical nationalist movement “The Right Sector” who participated in the “Maidan self-defence” were preparing for sending to Crimea the so-called “train of friendship” to forcibly suppress the separatist mood³⁰⁰.

The leaders of the radical parties who came to power, though having a minority in the Parliament, claimed that the allegedly legitimate Verkhovna Rada appointed a new government since it was necessary to somehow control the state, but in reality, they illegitimately assumed the power to form executive governmental bodies, which makes the authorities illegitimate in their entirety.

The first legislative initiatives of the new authorities in Kiev consisted in restricting the rights of the Russian-speaking inhabitants of South-East Ukraine. As early as on February 23, 2014, immediately after Oleksandr Turchynov’s had been appointed “acting President” of Ukraine, **the law was abolished which provided the granting to the Russian language the status of the regional language in a number of the country’s regions**. Several days later, Kiev Circuit Court decided to **prohibit the broadcasting of four Russian TV channels**.

These events sparked mass protests in Crimea, as well as in Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkov, Odessa, and other cities where large-scale demonstrations took place, whose participants opposed the policy of the new state authorities. One of the demands advanced by the protestants was to hold a referendum on the federalization of Ukraine and the status of the Russian language.

On March 30, 2014, the demonstrators in Kharkov demanded to proclaim the South-East Autonomy composed of eight Ukrainian regions. “We suggest uniting the forces of the South-East regions, forming the coordination council, and speaking with one voice in the fight against the putschists”, – was written in their address.

“We reckon that our place in this state should be the historically formed South-East autonomy”, – said the authors of the document.

On April 7, 2014, the Republican people’s council was formed in Donetsk, which proclaimed the sovereignty of the Donetsk People’s Republic and decided to hold, on May 11, a referendum dedicated to such issues as the creation of a federative state and the status of the region and the Russian language.

On the same day, the acting President Oleksandr Turchinov announced the creation of an anti-crisis centre and the start of the “anti-terrorism initiatives”. On April 15, he said that the operation in East Ukraine entered into the “power stage”. Armed conflicts between the troops of local militia and Ukrainian army divisions and the National Guard started, which later mutated into a fully-fledged civil war. In such a situation, when the state institutions were destroyed and non-functional, the people and the legitimately elected Supreme Council of Crimea could be guided only by their will and the generally recognized norms of international law.

The UN Charter and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

300 “The Right Sector” to send a “train of friendship” to Crimea. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <https://gordonua.com/news/maidan/pravyi-sektor-napravit-v-krym-poezd-druzhyby-11469.html>.

Cultural Rights provide that all peoples have the right to self-determination. In virtue of this right, people freely determine their political status and equally freely ensure their economic, social, and cultural development. All the member states, including Ukraine, are required to promote, in accordance with the provisions of the UN Charter, the implementation of the right to self-determination and respect this right³⁰¹.

Here we should remember those norms of international law which, according to Art.9 of the Constitution of Ukraine, are part of the its legislative system. For example, Art.5 of the Constitution of Ukraine provides that the people are the source of power, and no one can usurp it³⁰².

Hence, **the holding of the Crimean referendum was essentially based on the people's direct implementation of the provisions of international law that are recognized by Ukraine.** The right to self-determination implies that the self-determining part does not ask permission from its whole.

The decision on Crimea's secession from Ukraine was made on the basis of the will expressed by the Crimean inhabitants at the referendum and their implementation of the right to self-determination enshrined in the UN Charter and other international regulatory acts.

On March 11, 2014, the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City Council of Sevastopol approved the Declaration on the independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. The preamble of the Declaration states that the deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City Council of Sevastopol were guided by "the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of a series of other international regulatory acts that provide for the people's right to self-determination" and took into consideration "the fact that on July 22, 2010, the International Court of Justice confirmed with regard to Kosovo that a unilateral proclamation of independence by a part of a state does not violate the norms of international law"³⁰³.

3. Crimea's implementation of the right to self-determination and the stances of the world community.

The reunification of Crimea with Russia was an event that provoked not only an acute conflict but also a profound shift in the international relations. What are the stances of the world community on this issue?

Unfortunately, the reunification of Crimea with Russia is not recognized by the majority of the countries. On March 27, 2014, the UN General assembly

301 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // https://www.un.org/ru/documents/decl_conv/conventions/pactecon.shtml.

302 Constitution of Ukraine. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <https://meget.kiev.ua/zakon/konstitutsia-ukraini/>.

303 Declaration on the independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.sevkrimrus.narod.ru/ZAKON/2014nezavisimost.htm>.

adopted a resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. 100 out of 193 UN member countries supported the document, while 11 voted against it, and the remaining 58 abstained from voting. The resolution emphasizes that “the referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on March 16, 2014, has no validity and cannot form the basis for any alteration of the status of Crimea or of the city of Sevastopol”. Although the General Assembly’s resolution has an advisory nature and is not mandatory, the Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon said that the UN would adhere to the provisions of this document.

On December 19, 2016, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on human rights in Crimea, whose preamble calls Crimea “a temporarily occupied territory” and “reaffirms the non-recognition of its annexation”. 70 countries voted for the document, 26 voted against, 77 abstained from voting, and 10 countries did not vote.

On December 9, 2019, the UN General Assembly approved the resolution on Crimea in which it called for Russia to withdraw its troops from the peninsula and “stop occupying the territory of Ukraine”. 63 countries supported the resolution and 19 voted against it, including Russia, Belarus, China, Armenia, Burundi, Cambodia, Cuba, North Korea, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, Philippines, Serbia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe. 66 member states abstained from voting³⁰⁴.

Hence, we see that the number of countries which consider the held referendum legitimate is relatively small. Yet, each year they are joined by several more countries, which indicates the world community’s understanding of the situation which has appeared with regard to Crimea.

BRICS takes the neutral position. Brazil, China, India, and South Africa abstained from voting on Crimea at the UN General Assembly session.

On March 18, 2014, the Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that the inclusion of Crimea into the Russian Federation was illegal and that NATO allies would not recognize it.

On March 18, 2014, President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso made a joint statement in which they said that “the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence of Ukraine should be respected” and that the European Union did not recognize either the referendum in Crimea or its result – the absorption of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation.

As of August 2019, Crimea is recognized as part of Russia by the following countries: Afghanistan, Venezuela, Cuba, Nicaragua, Syria, Sudan, and North Korea.

One of the few European leaders who pointed at the West’s double standards with regard to the Crimean referendum is the President of the Czech Republic Miloš

304 The UN adopted the anti-Russian resolution on Crimea (DOCUMENT). [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <https://rusvesna.su/news/1575920233>.

Zeman who compared it to the separation of Kosovo from Serbia. According to Zeman, the situation around Kosovo became an obvious violation of the Security Council resolution, which guaranteed the territorial integrity of Serbia. Nevertheless, in 2008, the Kosovo Parliament unilaterally proclaimed the independence of the republic, without holding a referendum, while in 2010 the International Court of Justice recognized the legitimacy of such a decision. “But something happened that is called “measuring with double meter” or “double standards policy”: when the referendum in the case of the Crimea is illegal annexation, and when Kosovo becomes independent in spite of the above-mentioned UN Security Council resolution”, – Miloš Zeman said on TV Barrandov³⁰⁵.

At the same time, the majority of the Western countries recognized the status of Kosovo despite the fact that, according to the Constitution of Serbia, this territory still remains “the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija”. Yet, they noted that Kosovo was a unique case that should not become an example for other peoples, including the Catalans and the Basques in Spain and France.

The then US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice substantiated the “uniqueness” of the Kosovo case by a number of factors, including the general context of Yugoslavia’s collapse, ethnic cleansing, and the fact that the province had been ruled by the UN administration for a prolonged period of time. At the same time, according to Rice, **other cases that contradict the interests of the Western countries cannot be unique**. Meanwhile, such facts as Crimea’s century-long existence within the Russian Empire, its illegal transferral to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954, the peninsula’s autonomous status, the atrocious coup in Kiev, and, finally, the referendum at which over 95% of the local population voted for the reunification with Russia cannot apparently be considered “unique”.

Strictly speaking, the situation in Crimea is identical to that in Kosovo. In both regions, the people fought for national self-determination. They wanted to obtain independence and be able to determine their future in the way which they deemed necessary. From the legal point of view, there are no fundamental differences in the pursuit of independence shown by the Crimeans, the Abkhazians, and the Kosovar Albanians. However, in the course of settling such matters, the collective West is guided by their geopolitical interests and implements that double standard policy to which referred Miloš Zeman.

From the geopolitical point of view, the West needed Kosovo’s independence as well, since after that Serbia was reduced to a second-rate regional state, notwithstanding the fact that over many decades it used to be an important political force in the Balkans and in Europe. And today no one takes into account its opinion and does not intend to do so in future.

When it came to Crimea, the issue of the Russian-Ukrainian relations arose and, more generally, on Russia’s place in the world. The Crimean issue is not only

305 Attitude towards Crimea and Kosovo – double standards, – President of the Czech Republic. [Electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <https://rusvesna.su/news/1507273294>.

a legal problem but a geopolitical one as well. The return of Crimea considerably improved Russia's positions in the Pontic Littoral, in the Caucasus, and even in the Middle East. Having preserved its navy bases in Crimea, Russia's Black Sea fleet remains an influential military force in the Black and Mediterranean Seas. In a more ample context, the reunification of Crimea with Russia became an important step towards the reintegration of the post-Soviet world.

It is clear that the West is reluctant to see Russia as a powerful centre of influence and is doing its utmost to weaken it. Being loyal to its strategy aimed at containing Russia, the West does not want and will not recognize the peninsula as a part of the Russian Federation, so in the next several decades this issue will remain one of the most controversial problems in our relations with the West.

AT THE ORIGINS OF THE CRIMEAN SPRING. PECULIARITIES OF DEVELOPMENT OF THE RUSSIAN MOVEMENT IN CRIMEA

Igor V. Evtyushkin

Senior lecturer at the Medical Academy of the Crimean Federal University named after V. I. Vernadsky, Delegate of Simferopol City Council (Simferopol)

The “Crimean Spring” phenomenon draws the attention of both Russian and foreign researchers. The list of scientific and journalistic works, recollections and memoirs dedicated to the reunification of Crimea with Russia in 2014 is constantly expanding. At the same time, there is a polarity of assessments and opinions related to the essence and drivers of the “Crimean Spring”. As Sokolov notes, one of the problems of the modern historiography of the “Crimean Spring” is the attempt to “falsify some episodes of the contemporary history of the peninsula, to downgrade or reduce the role of the people’s expressed will, being the main driving force of the desire to return to Russia”³⁰⁶.

Political circumstances largely explain the prepossession of a number of Ukrainian and foreign³⁰⁷ studies devoted to the events of the “Crimean Spring”. At the same time, some domestic experts have also expressed the opinion that Crimean politicians are unsteady when it comes to holding a referendum on the status of Crimea. And not just from liberals.

Specifically, the statements of I. Strelkov (Girkin) became quite resonant. In the discussion session with journalist N. Starikov on the Neiomir-TV channel, Girkin, who positioned himself as an included observer and one of the leaders of the Crimean militia in 2014, challenged Starikov’s thesis that the legitimate state authorities made their own decisions on the referendum on the status of Crimea. Starikov’s thesis is that the legitimate state authorities independently made decisions on holding a referendum on the status of Crimea³⁰⁸.

However, Girkin’s words are not confirmed and are disproved by recollections of Crimean parliamentarians and members of volunteer corps, propagandists of publication *Crimea*. Realities use them to form political myths about the all-Crimean referendum, according to the results of which the Crimea reunification of Crimea with Russia³⁰⁹. «Residents of the peninsula did not wish to rebel against the authorities in Kiev, so it was necessary to bring the «revolted Crimeans» from

306 Sokolov, D. *Historiography of the Crimean Spring: interpretations, problems and perspectives*/D.Sokolov// *Journal of Russian and Eastern European Historical Studies*. – 2018. – No.1(12), p. 164.

307 Finnish scientists refuted the arguments of Russia in favour of the Crimea annexation on points [Electron. resource]. - Access mode: // <https://inosmi.ru/politic/20160504/236406205.html>.

308 Strelkov told that Crimean delegates were forced to hold the referendum (electronic resource). – Available at: // <https://republic.ru/posts/1/1208362>.

309 Girkin’s Crimean “insights” (electronic source). - Available at: // <https://ru.krymr.com/a/krymskie-otkrovenia-diversanta-girkina/30117553.html>.

neighbouring Russia», – the author of the website «Crimea. Realities» summarised by extension of I. Girkin’s thesis³¹⁰.

This conclusion is an example of how the memories of «participant observers» are often quoted out of context and are used to discredit the all-Crimean referendum of March 16, 2014.

The outlined theoretical problem keeps current the theme of Russian movement development in Crimea during the “Crimean Spring”. In general, there is a need to study prerequisites for Russian movement formation and development in Crimea during two decades after the Ukrainian SSR seceded from the USSR together with Crimea.

The process of reunification of Crimea with Russia was not a one-time event caused by the coup d’état of 2013-2014 in Ukraine. Reunification of Crimea with Russia was the result of Russian, pro-Russian movement development in Crimea (hereinafter referred to as the Russian movement). The term “Russian movement” is usually understood as a regional movement of Russian compatriots of Crimea³¹¹, irredentist in nature. In respect to Crimea definitions “Russian movement” and “pro-Russian movement” are very difficult to distinguish on the theoretical side, due to cosmopolitan principles of recruitment of Russian public organizations and political parties.

In this article, we aim the analysis of invariant trends of the Russian movement development in Crimea, focusing on the activities of the largest and most authoritative actors of this movement. This refers to the Crimean Republican Movement (CRM), the Russian Community in Crimea, and the “Russian Unity” all-Crimean movement.

The activities of political parties affiliated with these organisations – the Republican Party of Crimea (CRM Party), the Crimean regional branch of the Russian Bloc party, and the all-Ukrainian Russian Unity party – should also be reviewed. These social and party structures (together with a number of other, smaller institutes) made up the organizational core of the Russian and pro-Russian movement in Crimea. People of Crimea at large were a social base of the movement.

We can consider the formation of the Russian movement in Crimea as a form of self-organization of Russians and culturally Russian Crimeans in the context of the withdrawal of the Ukrainian SSR from the USSR together with Crimea.

The transfer of the Crimean region from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954 was traditionally perceived by the Crimeans as a historical injustice. This perception further intensified in the post-Soviet realities, when Ukraine became an independent state, and the Russian

310 Ibid.

311 Yu. Kokin, V. Regional movement of Russian countrymen of Crimea as a factor of geopolitical transformations amid the collapse of the Ukrainian governance / Yu. V. Kokin // *Politeks* – 2014. – vol. 10. – No. 2, p. 231 – 241. [electronic source]. – Available at: // <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3ujnw8OL-4remQ1bXdxRFItQzg/view?pref=2&pli=1>

Federation turned out to be a foreign state for the Crimeans. In December 1991, the Belovezha Accords were signed which liquidated the Soviet Union, and there-with state and political relations between Crimea and the Russian Federation.

Crimea has become one of the most pronounced ethnics, cultural, and linguistic Russian enclaves outside of Russia. According to the 1989 all-Union census survey, ethnic Russians accounted for 65.6% of the peninsula's population. At the same time, the phenomenon of the macro-ethnic identity of the Russians has developed in Crimea. It is shared not only by Russians by origin but also by representatives of other peoples living in Crimea³¹².

In fact, Russians fall in a state of a national minority though they made up the majority of the population of the peninsula. The ruling elite of Ukraine placed a bet on the compulsory approval of the Ukrainian language alone and nationalist, Russophobic ideology in all spheres of state life.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union – a process that, in fact, meant the disintegration of a large, historical state of Russia – the ideology of nationalism began to flourish in the nation-states that emerged on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Moreover, the establishment of the ideology of Ukrainian, Kazakh, Moldavian and other types of nationalism was often combined with the promotion of Russophobic ideas, extrusion of the Russian language from various spheres of public life, and suppression of Russian national identity. There is a slogan that was popular among Ukrainian nationalists in the 1990s: “Suitcase, railway station, Russia!”

The law “On Languages in the Ukrainian SSR” adopted in October 1989, which assigned only the Ukrainian language as the state language on the territory of Ukraine, was the first serious crackdown of the Ukrainization policy on the rights of the culturally Russian citizens of Crimea.

The development of the Russian movement in Crimea was also stimulated by a massive inflow of the Crimean Tatar population into the territory of the peninsula. Russians and representatives of other nationalities who live on the territory of the peninsula got acquainted with the ideology of Crimean Tatar nationalism. An ethnocratic organization called Mejlis has become more active in Crimea³¹³ whose leaders artificially opposed the Crimean Tatars to other peoples of Crimea³¹⁴. The Mejlis ideology, in any respect, is restricted to the principle of national exclusiveness of the Crimean Tatars on the territory of Crimea. First of all, we mean only the “Crimean Tatar right to self-determination.”

The primary root meanings of the Russian idea for the Russians living in Crimea and other Russian-ethnic and Russian-cultural “enclaves” who lost their political relations with the Russian Federation after the break-up of the USSR

312 A.V. Baranov Russian Political Movements of Crimea and Sevastopol: resources of influence, positioning, agenda of activity. / A.V. Baranov // Caspian region: policy, economics, culture. – 2014. No. 2(39), p.78

313 An extremist organization that is illicit in the Russian Federation.

314 A.V. Baranov The complex conflict in Crimea: intraregional factors and strategies of policy actors. / A.V. Baranov // POLITEX. - 2013. - Vol. 9. no. 3, P. 124.

began to be determined not only by the values of self-awareness but also by the vital tasks of self-defence and self-preservation.

The noted negative tendencies made it necessary to form the Russian movement in Crimea. A lot of Russian, pro-Russian institutes appeared on the territory of Crimea at the beginning of the 1990s. By the mid-1990s, their number in Crimea exceeded two dozen, subject to some estimates³¹⁵. Therefore, ideological principles and targets declared by these institutes developed dispersedly, in isolation from each other. Nevertheless, even the simplest comparative analysis of these principles and paradigm reveals two basic postulates which underlay structuring of the Russian idea in Crimea:

- re-establishment of political, economic, and cultural relations between Crimea and the Russian Federation, destroyed during the break-up of the USSR;
- defence of Russian social and cultural space in Crimea³¹⁶.

Speaking about the first of the above postulates, we should note that the concepts “Russian idea” and “Russia’s idea” in Crimea were essentially indiscernible in the 1990s. Chairman of Russian Community S.P. Tsekov noted in an interview that at the stage of formation of the community in 1993, it was planned to call it “Russia’s Community of Crimea”, considering that this way it would be possible to join broader segments of the population, representatives of different nationalities who lived in Crimea³¹⁷.

Finally, the ethnic name prevailed - “Russian community of Crimea”, but definitely there is a close relationship between the concepts of “Russian idea” and “Russia’s idea” in Crimea. Notably, Russian activists of Sevastopol followed the example of the formation of the Russian community of Sevastopol.

Another relation should also be noted: the relation between Russian (Russia’s) and republican ideas in Crimea. In conditions of the break-up of the USSR and the return of the Crimean Tatars to the peninsula, an all-Crimean referendum on the reconstruction of the Crimean ASSR was held in Crimea. As a result of this referendum dated January 20, 1991, an autonomous republic was reconstituted in Crimea. In 1992, the Crimean ASSR was renamed the Republic of Crimea.

The republican status of the peninsula (later, the city of Sevastopol was separated from the Crimean autonomy by the Ukrainian authorities into a separate administrative and territorial unit) became an important “fulcrum” for the pro-Russian political forces of Crimea.

The republican idea in Crimea has undergone a certain evolution in its development and different vectors can be distinguished - irredentist, re unionist and regionalist.

315 You can be Russian if you want. An interview with the chairman of Russian Community in Crimea S.P. Tsekov (electronic resource) - Available at: // <http://rusk.ru/st.php?idar=111285>.

316 Evtyushkin, I. Stages of the establishment of Crimea’s Russian community [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

317 You can be Russian if you want. An interview with the chairman of Russian Community in Crimea S.P. Tsekov (electronic resource) - Available at: // <http://rusk.ru/st.php?idar=111285>.

Subject to one definition irredentism (Italian *irredenta* – “not liberated”) is a variety of national policy of any state, political party or movement, which is aimed at the unification of people, nations or ethnos spread out all over the world. Historically, it emerged as a movement for the annexation of the borderlands of Austria-Hungary with the Italian population to Italy.

The Irredentist vector in the development of the Republican idea in Crimea was represented primarily by the Crimean Republican Movement, a political movement established in September 1991, from which the Republican Party of Crimea (RPC Party) later grew. The following people were leaders of the RMC /RPC: Valery Averkin, Yuri Meshkov, Sergey Tsekov, Viktor Mezhak and other activists.

The RMC’s program guidelines were limited to two main goals - the foundation of a republic in Crimea with all rights of an independent sovereign state and holding a referendum on the statehood and legal status of Crimea.

A number of other public organizations that emerged in Crimea at that time, namely, the “January 20 Movement” (Valery Sagatovsky), “Democratic Taurida” (Boris Kizilov), “Russian Society of Crimea”, etc. put forward similar ideas.

The Crimeans at this time rediscovered Vasily Aksyonov’s fantastic novel *The Island of Crimea*, which outlines the prospects for Crimea’s development as an independent state.

Some authors note reunions principles (with a focus on reintegration of the USSR)³¹⁸ of the republican movement in Crimea.

The vector of irredentism in development of the republican and, in equal measure, Russian idea in Crimea was on the upgrade through to the mid 1990s. In one of his interviews, Yuri Meshkov argued the need for foreignization of Crimea due to the fact that the Republic of Crimea could thus become a full-fledged subject of the CIS and conclude interstate union treaties with all republics of the Commonwealth³¹⁹. This entailed the conclusion of a union treaty with the Russian Federation.

At the same time, it should be noted that there is a vector of regionalism in the development of the Republican idea in Crimea, which was personified by the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea Nikolay Bagrov and a part of the deputy corps, rallied around the Party of Economic Revival of Crimea (PERC). This vector was based on the recognition of the realities of the Republic of Crimea being a part of Ukraine and the request for granting of the widest possible powers to the Crimean autonomy. It should be noted that representatives of the RMC/RPC opposed Bagrov’s policy of conciliation in relations with Kiev.

318 Malgin A. V. Transnistria, Crimea, Carpathian Ruthenia: Three Cases of Post-Soviet Regionalism // Crimean Context.- 1996.- No.5, P. 79

319 “Crimea becomes a sovereign, independent state...” An interview with Yu. A. Meshkov // *The Crimean Truth*). – 1992. – May 20

Ideas of irredentism in Crimea reached the peak of their development and practical implementation in 1992, when the Supreme Council of Crimea supported the initiative of the RMC to hold an all-Crimean referendum on the statehood and legal status of the Republic of Crimea (later moratorium was passed on this referendum under pressure from Kiev), and in 1994 when pro-Russian political forces took power in the Republic of Crimea.

Representatives of the “Republican party of Crimea (RPC parties) jointly with the efforts of “Republican party of Crimea” (RPC) founded an electoral bloc “Russia” at the end of 1993.

In January 1994, the candidate from the “Russia” bloc, Yuri Meshkov, was elected President of the Republic of Crimea. In spring 1994 “Russia” block won a parliamentary election in the Republic of Crimea. Following the results of the election, Sergey Tsekov became the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea.

However, when they came to power in Crimea, the representatives of the “Russia” bloc faced serious difficulties. Specifically, due to opposition from Kiev, the holding of a referendum on the status of Crimea failed. The representatives of the RMC collected 246 thousand signatures of Crimeans for holding this referendum in the early 1990s.

On the other hand, contradictions arose between the newly elected President and the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea. Ukrainian authorities sought to intensify the conflict between “branches of power” in Crimea. The conflict reached its peak when Yuri Meshkov dissolved the Crimean parliament in the autumn of 1994. This situation was used by Kiev as a reason for the limitation of authorities of the Republic of Crimea.

A serious blow to the development of the Russian movement and the Russian (Russia’s) idea in Crimea was the abolition of the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of 1992, the institution of the presidency in Crimea, more than 40 laws and regulations of the Republic of Crimea, and Crimean political parties by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in 1995³²⁰.

In April 1995, being the Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea, Sergey Tsekov spoke at a meeting of the State Duma of the Russian Federation with a report on violation of rights of the Crimeans and on limitation of authorities of the Republic of Crimea by Kiev. During his speech, he stated that “Russia cannot consider the situation with Crimea only a domestic affair of Ukraine – from the historical, the ethnic composition of Crimea viewpoint and from the point of view of international law”³²¹.

Unlike the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation, Russian President Boris Yeltsin did not raise an issue of the Russian status of Crimea. Russia’s polit-

320 Encyclopaedia of the peoples of Crimea. – Simferopol: Publishing office LLC “Publishing office “Share”, 2016. – 256 p., p. 158.

321 Rodin, I. Tsekov spoke in the State Duma. In his opinion, Crimea is not only the domestic affair of Ukraine. – *The Independent newspaper*, 1995. – April 15 [electronic resource]. – Available at: // https://sites.ualberta.ca/~khineiko/NG_95_97/1145635.htm

ical space for solving of the “Crimean issue” was limited. At the time, work was underway on the division of the Black Sea Fleet and the so-called “Grand Treaty”. On the one hand, this agreement made it possible to preserve the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the city of Sevastopol, and on the other hand, Russia was forced to recognize that Crimea belonged to Ukraine.

Ukrainian leadership headed by President Leonid Kuchma continued its offensive against the pro-Russian movement in Crimea. After multiple attempts, Kiev managed to form a new parliamentary majority in the Crimean parliament. In July 1995, speaker Sergey Tsekov, who headed the parliamentary faction of the “Russia” block in the Supreme Council of Crimea, was dismissed. Yuri Meshkov left for Russia under the pressure of the Ukrainian security services.

A new stage in the development of the Russian movement in Crimea began. It was associated with the activation of the work of the Russian community of Crimea.

Russian community of Crimea dates back to the “Republican Movement of Crimea” (RMC) and the “Republican Party of Crimea (RPC)”³²².

In 1993 leadership of the Republican Party of Crimea (RPC) came to a conclusion that it was necessary to establish a public organization focused in its activities on protection of the rights and interests of the Russians of Crimea and all Crimeans who consider the Russian language and Russian culture to be native. The decision to establish this organization was made on October 23, 1993, at a meeting of the Expanded Coordination Council of the RPC. The organisation was called the “Russian Community of Crimea”. The Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Crimea officially registered the Community in March 1994.

Vladimir Terekhov, a Crimean writer, poet, chairman of the Union of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian writers of Crimea, people’s deputy of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR / Ukraine in 1990-1994 initiated foundation of the Russian community of Crimea and became its chairman in 1993-2003.

V.Terekhov superintended the work of the Russian Community of Crimea together with S. Tsekov. As a deputy of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR from Crimea, S.P. Tsekov voted against the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine³²³. In 1992, he became one of the leaders of the “Republican Party of Crimea (RPC party)”³²⁴. From 1993 to 2003, Tsekov was Deputy and then First Deputy Chairman of the Russian Community of Crimea, and in 2003 he headed the Community.

A number of stages can be distinguished in the development of the Russian community of Crimea. The first of them is associated with the participation of

322 An interview with Sergey Tsekov within the project “Contemporary people’s history of Crimea”. [electronic resource]. –Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2016/09/20/4984.htm>.

323 At the origins of the Republic of Crimea – an interview with Sergey Tsekov to the *Crimean News* in September 1992) [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2015/01/27/3961.htm>.

324 Encyclopaedia of the peoples of the Crimea. – Simferopol: Publishing office LLC “Publishing office “Share””, 2016. – 256 p., p. 157.

representatives of the Community in 1993-1995 in the activities of the “Republican Party of Crimea (RPC)”.

In 1995, the Russian community of Crimea reached a new level of development. In 1995-1998, representatives of the Russian community of Crimea de facto worked in the Supreme Council of Crimea as a faction of the “Republican Party of Crimea (RPC)”, despite Ukraine’s ban on the activities of Crimean parties on the territory of the peninsula.

Representatives of Russian organizations were weakened by the political crisis of the mid-1990s, defeated at elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea in 1998. Nevertheless, the Russian community of Crimea not only withstood these conditions but also managed to become the leading Russian, a pro-Russian organization in Crimea.

At the same time, a network of regional organizations of the community did not cover the city of Sevastopol, where the Russian community of Sevastopol (chaired by Raisa Telyatnikova)³²⁵ and other local organizations functioned.

Years of work in opposition have strengthened the Russian community of Crimea. The community has reached a whole new level of social, political and organizational work. It was a period of rethinking how the Russian, pro-Russian movement functioned in Crimea.

Social and political activity of Russian community of Crimea was aimed at formation of a Russian, pro-Russian movement, acting on the basis of the Russian idea, which has the organizational capacity, human resources and mass character, which can protect in practice rights and interests of Russian and culturally Russian Crimeans. The romantic appeal of the first half of the 90s was replaced by pragmatism.

During the period under review, the following people closely participated in work of the Community: Sergey Tsekov, Vladimir Terekhov, Anatoly Zhilin, Alexander Shevtsov, Oleg Rodivilov, Natalia Lantukh, Larisa Chulkova, Alexey Melnikov, Vyacheslav Korolev, Andrey Kozenko, Vladimir Pinchuk, Valery Ilyichev, Stanislav Matveev, Oleg Kucherenko, Valery Kropotov, Lev Abramenko, Boris Bakulin, Svetlana Tokareva, Vladimir Blinov, Natalya Krasnovskaya, Maria Poddubnaya, Valery Ivanov, Alexander Allerov, Viktor Kharabuga and many other activists.

Regional organizations of the Community stirred up their work. Organizations actively worked in Eupatoria (Oleg Kucherenko, Semyon Klyuev), Feodosia (Gennady Pilyaev, Valery Krasnolozhkin, Gennady Ryzhenkin), Yalta (Vera Semenova), Krasnoperekopsk (Lev Kruzhko, Natalya Shapovalova), Bakhchisaray (Valery Borisov), Sudan), Alushta (Alexey Melnikov), Saki region (Stanislav Matveev), Dzhankoy (Galina Kobernik), Dzhankoy region (Lyud-

325 I.V. Ostrovskaya History of foundation and development of the Russian and pro-Russian movements in Crimea and Sevastopol in 1991 - March 2014.): ...candidate of historical sciences: 07.00.02 / Inna Valerievna Ostrovskaya – Krasnodar, 2018. – 215 p. p. 142-146.

mila Korshunova), Krasnogvardeisky (Nina Tsykunova, Alexander Bilinevich, Alexander Kuzyakov), Kirovsky (Vladimir Troshin), Chernomorsky (Vitaly Rudakov), Leninsky (Vladimir Bublikov, Yuri Polkoshnikov), Simferopol (Vladimir Pinchuk, Alexander Zabelin) regions of the Republic of Crimea. Simferopol city organization of the Russian community of Crimea (Valery Kropotov, Lev Abramenko, Vladimir Blinov, Valery Ilyichev) and its regional organizations (Vladlen Korolev, Elena Malova, Valentina Popova, Valentina Kolesnikova, etc.) were in the vanguard.

In 1998-2002, when there was only one representative in the Supreme Council of Crimea (Oleg Rodivilov), the Russian community of Crimea managed to launch an active social and political activity³²⁶.

Sergey Tsekov used his experience of parliamentary work in the work of the governing bodies of the Russian community of Crimea, i.e., Presidium and Duma of the Community. Praesidium and Duma meetings have become regular and systematic. This circumstance consolidated the leadership of the Russian community of Crimea, improved the manageability and efficiency of the organization.

In 1997, the “Russian Youth Centre of Crimea” (RYCC), a youth organization of the Russian community of Crimea, was founded. RYCC was established on May 31, 1997, in accordance with the decisions of the 1st Congress of Russian Youth of Crimea and Duma of Russian Community of Crimea. The RYCC obtained the legal status by notification and acted without legal identity throughout Crimea in accordance with the Charter of the Russian Community of Crimea and the Regulations on the RYCC.

Andrey Kozenko, Viktor Afanasiev, Stanislav Krasnovsky, Alexey Kipa, Kirill Belov, Vladimir Bobkov, Yulia Vasyutina, Alexander Bozhko, Alexander Popovkin, Vladislav Mashkov, Alexey Zhilin and others took an active part in the youth organization of the Russian Community of Crimea. Andrey Kozenko has been the head of the RYCC for many years.

Later on, other structural subdivisions were founded within the Community – “Russian Cultural and Educational Centre” (headed by Natalya Lantukh and Larisa Chulkova), “Council of War and Labour Veterans (headed by Alexander Allerov)³²⁷.

The Community managed to establish partnerships with the authorities of the Russian Federation and the Moscow Government.

Since the foundation of the Consulate General of Russia in Simferopol in the late 1990s, the Russian community of Crimea has maintained partnership, friendly relations with all Consuls General of Russia in Simferopol: Alexey Sviridov, Alexander Nikolaev, Igor Astakhov, Vladimir Andreev, Vyacheslav Svetlichny³²⁸.

326 Evtyushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: <http://www.ruscimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

327 Ibid.

328 Ibid.

Foundation for the Development of Economic and Humanitarian Relations “Moscow-Crimea” has become one of the instruments of country people support in Crimea by the Moscow Government. The Fund was established in November 1996 for interaction with the state, public and economic organizations of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Oleg Kotolupov became President of the Moscow-Crimea Foundation and Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov became Chairman of the Foundation’s Board of Trustees.

In 1998, at the initiative of the Moscow-Crimea Foundation, an agreement was signed between the representative and executive authorities of Moscow and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on cooperation in trade, economic, scientific, technical, humanitarian, and cultural fields.

A new quality level of interaction between the Fund “Moscow-Crimea” and the Crimean population was the establishment of the “Russian Cultural Centre” in the city of Simferopol in spring 2001 at the initiative of the Fund’s management, which opened branches in 10 cities of the Crimea. Department of International Relations of the city of Moscow, which was headed by Georgy Muradov, was one of the founders of the RCC.

The leadership of the “Moscow-Crimea” Fund included representatives of the Russian community of Crimea. In particular, from July 2001 to July 2003, Oleg Rodivilov was the director of the representative office of the “Moscow-Crimea” Fund. At the same period, the “Russian Cultural Centre” was headed by Galina Grzhibovskaya³²⁹.

The Russian community of Crimea jointly with “Moscow-Crimea” Fund held cultural events, celebrated holidays and memorable dates associated with the history of Russia. With the assistance of the “Moscow-Crimea” Fund, Russian countrymen in Crimea were supported. In particular, there was support for veterans, disabled people, and other socially vulnerable groups of the population, support for young people and creative clarity. The Fund founded a scholarship for students and graduate students of Crimean universities who studied problems of Russian people history and culture in Crimea and ran the research-to-practice conference. Many events of the Russian community of Crimea were held in the Russian Cultural Centre.

The “Russian World” newspaper and the “Russian World” supplement to the “Crimean Truth” newspaper were published with the support of the “Moscow-Crimea” Foundation. Newspaper “Russian World” was published later as a distinct newspaper (Vladimir Terekhov, Anatoly Zhilin, Natalya Kiseleva, Oleg Slyusarenko, Igor Evtyushkin were editors of the newspaper over the years) It is noteworthy that the newspaper “Krymskaya Pravda” played a special role in information support of the Russian, pro-Russian movement in Crimea. The

329 Moscow in the contemporary history of Crimea (1991-2014). – Simferopol: “ARIAL” Publishing and Printing House, 2016. – 164 p., p. 56-59.

editor-in-chief of the “Crimean Truth” Mikhail Bakharev was a member of the Presidium of the Russian community of Crimea for many years³³⁰.

Russian community of Crimea also developed partnerships with the “Institute of CIS Countries (Institute of an expatriate community and Integration)”, an autonomous non-profit organization created in 1996 by Russian politician and public figure Konstantin Zatulin³³¹.

Workstreams associated with protection of the Russian language and culture, support of Russian-language education in Crimea, and preservation of the historical memory of Russia in Crimea were strengthened in social and political activities of the Russian community of Crimea.

In 1997, at the initiative of a member of the Russian community of Crimea, Maria Poddubnaya, a Resolution of the Supreme Council of Crimea was adopted on the mandatory conduct of surveys on the preference of language of study in schools in Crimea. This regulatory legal act of the Crimean parliament made it possible to preserve Russian-language education in Crimea.

For comparison, that time in other regions of Ukraine, schools were transferred from Russian to Ukrainian in an administrative manner, without the consent of pupils and their parents.

In April 2001, at the initiative of the deputy of Simferopol City Council, a member of the Russian community of Crimea Vladlen Korolev, Simferopol City Council addressed Verkhovna Rada and President of Ukraine L. Kuchma with proposals to expedite the re-ratification of the European Charter of Regional Languages or minority languages and resolve the issue of giving the Russian language the status of an official one. Simferopol City Council decided also to address the People’s Deputies of Ukraine from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea with a request to speak in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with an initiative to hold an all-Ukrainian referendum on granting the Russian language the status of a second state language in Ukraine³³².

Russian community of Crimea began to celebrate holidays and memorable dates that it established and that were connected with the history of Russia. They are aimed at preserving historical memory of Russia in Crimea, strengthening the position of Orthodox Russian culture in Crimea and Ukraine. For instance, Crimeans began to celebrate the following dates:

The day of reunification of Crimea and Russia (April 19) is the anniversary of the signing by Empress Catherine the Great of the Manifesto “On the acceptance of the Crimean Peninsula, the Taman Island and the entire Kuban side under the Russian state” in 1783. It is celebrated by the Community since 1996.

330 Evtyushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

331 Ibid.

332 Ibid.

Day of Remembrance of Russian soldiers who died during the Heroic Defence of Sevastopol and in the Crimean War in 1853-1856 (September 9) is the day of completion of the heroic First Defence of Sevastopol, which lasted 349 days, in 1855.

In 1995, at the initiative of the Russian community of Crimea, the first events were held in memory of the Crimean War of 1853-1856. On November 21, 1996, at the initiative of representatives of the Russian community of Crimea (Natalya Krasnovskaya and others), the Supreme Council of Crimea adopted a resolution “On the Day of Remembrance for soldiers who died during defence of Sevastopol and in the Crimean War, and on measures to preserve, restore, maintain and protect burials, monuments and memorial sites associated with events of the Crimean War of 1853-1856”. In accordance with this resolution, September 9 became an official memorable date in Crimea.

Day of the Russian Language Defence (June 6) – A.S. Pushkin’s birthday.

This date is celebrated by the Russian Community of Crimea since 1998.

Day of the Reunification of Russia (18 January) – the day of the Pereyaslav Rada, which reunited Ukraine with Russia. The tradition to celebrate anniversaries of the Pereyaslav Rada in Crimea was established by the Russian community of Crimea in the late 1990s. In January 2011, this date became an official holiday date in Crimea at the initiative of representatives of the Russian community of Crimea in the Crimean parliament.

Since 2002, at the initiative of the Russian community of Crimea, the all-Russian holiday date – the Day of Russia (June 12) – has been celebrated in Crimea.

N.Ya. Danilivskiy’s birthday (December 10) – this day representatives of the Russian community of Crimea commemorate famous Russian philosopher, author of the book “Russia and Europe”, one of the founders of civilizational approach to history interpretation. The events traditionally take place near Foros, on the historical territory of the Mshatka estate, where N.Ya. Danilevskiy is buried.

Representatives of the community have constantly stressed that Crimea is the cradle of Orthodoxy in Russia, that St. Equal-to-the-Apostles Prince Vladimir – the Baptizer of Russia – was baptized in Crimea, that St. Apostle Andrew, St. Equal-to-the-Apostles Cyril and Methodius and other Orthodox saints preached in Crimea.

Every year, on 28 July, the Russian community of Crimea celebrates the state commemorative date - the Day of the Baptism of Russia (Memorial Day of St. Grand Duke Vladimir, the Baptist of Russia)³³³.

The Russian community of Crimea organized scientific conferences dedicated to protection of the Russian language, Russian culture and historical memory of Russia in Crimea, as well as to the development of Russian-Ukrainian relations. For instance, the Community initiated the annual holding of research-to-practice conference “Crimea in the scope of the Russian world.”

333 Ibid.

In 2002, a new political upsurge of the Russian community of Crimea began. Following the scheduled parliamentary elections in Ukraine, three representatives were elected to the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea – Sergey Tsekov, Oleg Rodivilov, and Galina Grzhibovskaya.

The community developed cooperation with ideologically close public organizations of Crimea, Ukraine, Russia.

In November 2003, at a joint meeting of Presidium of Duma of the Russian Community of Crimea and the Council of the Crimean Republican Public Organization “Russian Movement of Crimea”, it was decided to join members of the Russian Movement of Crimea (Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea Alexander Chernomorov, Chairman of the Executive Committee – Oleg Slyusarenko) – the second pro-Russian organization that actively worked in Crimea in early 2000s – to the Russian community of Crimea³³⁴. The merger also affected regional organizations of the Russian community of Crimea and the Russian movement of Crimea.

So, leaders of regional organizations of the Russian movement of Crimea led some regional organizations of the Russian community of Crimea: in Bakhchisaray – Sergey Knyrik, in Yalta – Roman Grechanik, in Feodosia – Gennady Pilyaev, in Kerch – Pyotr Kotelnikov, in the Belohirsk region – Sergey Makhonin, in Armyansk – Tatiana Simonova.

At the same time, leadership of the Russian community of Crimea developed partnerships with Russian and pro-Russian organizations that worked all over Ukraine - the Russian Community of Ukraine (chaired by Konstantin Shurov), the Russian Movement of Ukraine (chaired by Aleksandr Svistunov) and others. Till 2010 Sergey Tsekov was the Deputy Chairman of the Russian Community of Ukraine and a member of the Presidium of the Russian Movement of Ukraine.

In 2002, as a result of the merger of two parties – “For Unified Rus” and “Russian-Ukrainian Union”, a “Russian Bloc” political party was established in Ukraine. It was headed by Alexandr Svistunov.

Sergey Tsekov was one of the founders of “Russian Bloc” and deputy chairman of this party in 2003-2005. For a long time, the “Russian Bloc” party was a political “wing” of the Russian community of Crimea³³⁵.

In January 2004, Sergey Tsekov, as chairman of the Russian community of Crimea, joined the managing board of the “International Council of Russian Compatriots” (ICRC), an international public organization aimed at the consolidation of Russian compatriots who lived in various countries all over the world. The Foundation of ICRC was initiated by the Moscow Government³³⁶.

334 An interview with Sergey Tsekov within the project “Contemporary people’s history of Crimea”. [electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2016/09/20/4984.htm>.

335 Ibid.

336 International Council of Russian Compatriots. (International Council of Russian Compatriots). [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.msrs.ru/about-us>.

In 2004, a new stage began in the development of the Russian community of Crimea, which can be limited to the period 2004-2009. Events of the so-called “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine were the starting point of a new stage in the work of the Community³³⁷.

Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea interpreted mass actions on Kiev Maidan as a serious challenge for Russian and culturally Russian citizens of Ukraine. In 2004-2005, the Community acted as one of the basic social and political forces in Crimea, which offered political opposition to the “Orange Revolution”.

Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea held thousands of rallies in Simferopol against political lawlessness in Kiev, in favour of Viktor Yanukovich as a candidate who won the presidential election. The community declared the third round of the presidential elections in Ukraine illegitimate, during which “Maidan” and its Western curators brought Viktor Yushchenko to power in Ukraine³³⁸.

This activity was started during actual termination of work of the Crimean organization of the “Party of Regions”, and full flight of leaders from the Crimean republican branch of the Party of Regions. The central leadership of the Party of Regions and Viktor Yanukovich, as the party leader, noticed the activity of the Russian community of Crimea during “anti-orange” protests in Crimea. As a result, the community and the Party of Regions have formed a partnership.

The election campaign of the “Party of Regions” for elections to the Ukrainian parliament and local councils began with the participation of Viktor Yanukovich in celebration of the Day of Russia on June 12, 2005, in Simferopol. This event was organized by the Russian Community of Crimea.

V. Yanukovich was awarded the title “Honorary Member of the Russian Community of Crimea”. It should be noted that the titles of Honorary Members of the Russian Community of Crimea were also awarded to Yuri Luzhkov, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Konstantin Zatulin, scientist Alexander Dugin, Hero of the Soviet Union Gennady Kuchkin, and other famous people.

In 2006, the Russian community of Crimea took part in formation of the “For Yanukovich!” electoral bloc in local elections in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea³³⁹.

It should be noted that the Community has maintained a partnership with the party Russian Bloc. Chairman of the Community S. Tsekov, who initiated the

337 Evtuyshkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>

338 The Russian community of Crimea and the CRO of the “Russian Bloc” party consider illegitimate the results of the second round of presidential elections. [electronic resource]. - Available at: // http://old.ruscrimea.ru/rok/miting_29_12_04.php.

339 An interview with Sergey Tsekov within the project “Contemporary people’s history of Crimea”. [electronic resource]. - Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2016/09/20/4984.htm>.

establishment of the “For Yanukovych!” bloc, achieved participation of “Russian Bloc” and “Party of regions” in its establishment. Considering the political necessity that arose, some members of Presidium of the Russian Community of Crimea joined the “Party of Regions”. But the majority of the Community members retained their membership in the Russian Bloc party.

Due to the establishment of a bloc of two parties, the Community managed to obtain influential representation in the Crimean parliament and in local councils of the Republic. The Supreme Council of Crimea comprises 14 representatives from the Russian community of Crimea. S.P. Tsekov became the first deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Alexander Chernomorov was elected a deputy of the Ukrainian parliament³⁴⁰.

During the period of Viktor Yushchenko presidency, Kiev intensified its offensive against the cultural rights of Russians and Russian-cultural citizens of Ukraine. Therefore, the human rights activities of the Russian community of Crimea were the leading direction of its work³⁴¹.

In 2005, representatives of the Community opposed the transfer of the language of study in gymnasium school No. 43 in the village of Komsomolskoye near Simferopol into the Ukrainian language. As a result, due to opposition and protests, “orange” Prime Minister of Crimea Anatoly Matvienko and authorities of gymnasium school No. 43 under his control allowed finding classes with Russian language of study in this school³⁴².

Due to influential representation in the Crimean parliament, representatives of the Russian community of Crimea began to seek the adoption of regulatory legal acts by the Supreme Council of Crimea aimed at protecting the Russian language in Crimea.

In 2006, among other things, a new version of the resolution on the use of the Russian language in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, adopted by the Supreme Council of Crimea in April 1998, was approved. It is very important that a number of supplements were introduced, draft laws on amending the current legislation of Ukraine were prepared, including amendments to the Rules of Civil Procedure, to the Code of Administrative Judicial Procedure, to the advertising law and many other laws. These bill drafts, if adopted, could expand the scope of use of the Russian language in Crimea and Ukraine. These proposals were sent to Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine³⁴³.

Sergey Tsekov, Anatoly Zhilin, Oleg Rodivilov, Larisa Chulkova, Alexander Shevtsov, Andrey Kozenko, Oleg Slyusarenko, who represented the Russian

340 Evtushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

341 Ibid.

342 School No. 43 near Simferopol is not a “training ground” for Ukrainization [electronic resource]. - Available at: <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2009/08/31/583.htm>.

343 The Russian language must acquire the status of the state language in Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: <https://kvshurov.livejournal.com/59270.html>.

community of Crimea in the Supreme Council of the Republic worked most actively in protecting the Russian language and Russian culture in Crimea.

In 2008, Sergey Tsekov, as First Deputy Chairman of the Crimean Parliament, called collegium of Ministry of Education and Science of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea not to comply with the order of the “orange” Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine Ivan Vakarchuk to transfer education at universities into the Ukrainian language. Representatives of the Community initiated adoption of a decision by the Supreme Council of Crimea, which challenged orders of the Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine.

Deputies from the Russian community of Crimea worked with teachers and staff of Crimean universities and schools. Particular attention was paid to protecting the Crimean State Medical University from Ukrainization, because of the attempts to transfer study and training process of future doctors in Crimea into the Ukrainian language.

Deputy Chairman of the Russian Community of Crimea Anatoly Zhilin, who headed the Standing Commission of the Supreme Council of Crimea on Science and Education, showed great activity in defending Russian-language education in Crimea.

In June 2008, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine held parliamentary hearings on the drafting of a new version of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, which was supposed to amend Clause 5 in order to introduce education in universities in the Ukrainian language. There was only one person of civil servants speaking at proceedings – Anatoly Zhilin, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Science and Education of the Parliament of Crimea – who publicly opposed these changes.

He warned participants of parliament proceedings about the negative consequences of **violent Ukrainization**. “How did Kosovo crisis begin? Prohibition of education in the native language launched it. Your actions, gentlemen parliamentarians, can explode the social and political situation in Crimea,” – Anatoly Zhilin said. Taking into account standpoints of Crimea and the South-East of Ukraine, this amendment was never introduced into the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”³⁴⁴.

The attempt of the Minister of Education of Ukraine Ivan Vakarchuk to introduce since 2008 a decree according to which all enrolees had to pass the final testing (EIT – external independent testing) **only in the Ukrainian language**, also failed. Crimean deputies sent a letter about the need to conduct testing in Crimea’s schools in three languages: Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar. This initiative was put into practice. For this, tremendous credit goes to the Russian community of Crimea.

In May 2008, a decree was issued by the Minister of Education of Ukraine, which approved the sectoral program for improving the study of the Ukrainian

344 Evtushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

language in general educational institutions with the educative process in the languages of national minorities for 2008-2011. According to this decree, hours for studying the Ukrainian language and literature should be increased at the expense of principal subjects in the approved program; it was proposed to introduce bilingual teaching of mathematics and one of the other subjects on pupils' choice.

Due to the activity of the Standing Commission on Science and Education of the Supreme Council of Crimea, where the majority was represented by members of the Russian community of Crimea, this decree was not implemented in Crimea³⁴⁵.

Since 2007, on the initiative of the Russian community of Crimea, "The Great Russian Word" International Festival of Russian Culture has been held annually from 6 to 12 of June in Crimea³⁴⁶. The goals and objectives of the Festival were initially aimed at developing Russian culture, strengthening the position of the Russian language in Crimea and Ukraine, and strengthening of Ukrainian-Russian friendship. The festival was annually congratulated by Presidents of the Russian Federation V. Putin and D. Medvedev, heads of the supreme authorities of the Russian Federation.

"The Great Russian Word" festival has become a good platform for development of cooperation between regions of Ukraine in the field of protection of the Russian language and culture. Leaders of regional councils of various regions of Ukraine traditionally took part in the opening of "The Great Russian Word" festival. Representatives of the south-eastern regions of Ukraine showed the greatest activity. After events of the "Orange Revolution", Russian and Russian-cultural identity of population and of regional power brokers of the respective regions intensified, and political and social and cultural phenomenon of the "South-East" emerged.

"The Great Russian Word" International Festival was held in various cities and regions of Crimea. It included a whole range of activities aimed at protecting the Russian language – scientific conferences and seminars for scientists – specialists in Russian philology, teachers and tutors of the Russian language from various regions of Ukraine, CIS countries, concert programs, Russian song contests, creative contests for young people, meetings with famous figures of Russian culture. Within the framework of the Festival, International Research-to-Practice Conference "The Russian Language in the Multicultural World", International Church and Academical Cyril and Methodius Readings, the Ukrainian-Russian Public Forum "Interaction" and others were held.

One should note the youth patriotic contests of the Russian community of Crimea: "My Motherland – the Russian Language", "My Family in the History of Motherland" and "The World of a Russian Fairy Tale", which were held within

345 Ibid.

346 "THE GREAT RUSSIAN WORD" International Festival: Press file. – Simferopol, 2018 [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://orlovka.org.ru/files/845/mezhdunarodnyj-festival-v.pdf>.

the framework of “The Great Russian Word” festival. Members of the Presidium of the Community – Natalya Lantukh and Larisa Chulkova – participated actively in their organization. For many years Ms Lantukh and Ms Chulkova coordinated the implementation of Russian educational programs in Crimea related to providing Russian compatriots with an opportunity to study at Russian higher educational establishments. Dozens of young Crimeans received quotas for study in Russia on a budgetary basis every year³⁴⁷.

In 2007, significant funds (more than a million hryvnia in total) from the budget of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea were directed to support the Russian language in Crimea for the first time. On the deputies’ initiative – members of the Russian community of Crimea – the Supreme Council of Crimea approved a plan of annual events for free development and use of the Russian language till 2010.

Supported by deputies from the Russian community of Crimea, it was possible to broadcast the “Russian World” program on the State TV and Radio Company “Crimea”. More funds were directed to support a number of printed publications on the Russian language (for instance, the Crimean literary magazine “Brega Tavrida”)³⁴⁸.

In 2008, on the initiative of deputies Oleg Rodivilov and Larisa Chulkova, the Crimean parliament adopted a resolution to perpetuate the memory of the talented Russian philosopher N.Ya. Danilevsky.

Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea were also active in the local councils of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. In particular, in Simferopol City Council, deputies from the Russian community of Crimea (Vladimir Blinov, Valery Ilyichev, Natalya Lantukh, Viktor Afanasyev, etc.) succeeded in return of pre-revolutionary names to the three central streets of Simferopol – Alexander Nevsky Str. (Soviet name – Rosa Luxemburg Str.), Dolgorukovskaya Str. (K. Libknekht Str.), and Petropavlovskaya Str. (Oktyabrskaya Str.)³⁴⁹. It should also be noted the decision of Simferopol City Council on inadmissibility to prohibit broadcasting of Russian channels on cable TV of the city, initiated by deputies from the Russian community of Crimea.

In the period of Viktor Yushchenko’s presidency, Kiev’s attempts to make Ukraine join the NATO military bloc intensified. These actions made by Kiev contributed to the development of the anti-NATO movement in Crimea.

In 2006, members of the Russian community of Crimea took part in a mass protest in the city of Feodosia against the arrival of NATO troops in Crimea. After an unsuccessful attempt to settle in Alushta, which caused a spontaneous protest of the city’s residents, NATO members went to Feodosia. NATO warship “Advan-

347 Evtyushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

348 The Russian language must acquire the status of the state language in Crimea. [Electronic resource]. - Mode // <https://kvshurov.livejournal.com/59270.html>.

349 When we restore historical names, we honour the memory of our great ancestors. [electronic resource]. - Available at: // <http://old.ruscrimea.ru/cms/index.php?go=Pages&in=view&id=91>

tage” entered the port of Feodosia and delivered engineering and construction equipment and weapons there. Local residents blocked all exits from the port and demanded an explanation from the authorities: why the US military landed on the Ukrainian territory and what kind of cargo they brought. The official version was the following: the Americans came for military training exercises. Nobody in Feodosia believed it. The picket at the gates of Feodosia trade port against attempts to create a NATO military base in Crimea lasted 26 days. The City Council declared Feodosia “a territory without NATO.” Finally, the Crimeans won. US marines left Feodosia³⁵⁰.

Since 2007, members of the Russian community of Crimea have regularly held protest actions in Crimea, on Lake Donuzlav, near a small town called Novoozerno, against the annual “Sea Breeze” naval exercises near Novoozerno. US Department of Defence was one of the organizers of the exercises. Among other things, the exercises proposed the landing of seaboard troops in the area of Donuzlav with the participation of military units of NATO member states. The first picket of protest against the “Sea Breeze” exercises was held by the Russian community of Crimea in 1997.

In July 2008, during the naval phase of the “Sea Breeze” exercise, on Lake Donuzlav, participants of anti-NATO protest action (trying to prevent a training landing of amphibious assault forces on the Crimean coast) clashed with police officers³⁵¹. Finally, since 2009, the Ukrainian authorities have refused to conduct Sea Breeze exercises on the Donuzlav Lake and changed their location for the Odessa region.

From then on, representatives of the Russian community of Crimea began to hold annually a youth patriotic anti-NATO tented camp “Donuzlav” near the small town of Novoozerno³⁵².

One should emphasize the decision of Simferopol City Council on Simferopol as a city without NATO, which was made on the initiative of the deputies of Simferopol City Council Viktor Afanasyev and Valery Ilyichev.

Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea held a number of protest actions against provocative events of Ukrainian nationalists in Simferopol and other cities and regions of Crimea (marches in honour of leaders of Ukrainian nationalists Bandera and Shukhevych, against Crimean autonomy, etc.).

Almost all such events of ultranationalist organizations (“Svoboda” party and others) were blocked by the Russian community of Crimea and representatives of other pro-Russian, anti-fascist political forces (“Russian Bloc” party, “Union” party, Communist Party).

350 9 years ago a large-scale anti-NATO protest started in Feodosia. [Electronic resource]. - Access mode:// <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2015/05/27/4173.htm>.

351 Ukrainian soldiers clashed with anti-NATO protesters in Crimea, on the shore of Lake Donuzlav. [Electronic resource]. - Access mode: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2008/07/24/66.htm>.

352 Why have we set up a camp on the Donuzlav shores?! [electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2010/07/18/1331.htm>

In 2009, on the initiative of deputy Andrey Kozenko, the Supreme Soviet of Crimea adopted a resolution “On prevention of propaganda of fascism and racial intolerance, rehabilitation and heroification of fascist collaborators in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea”³⁵³.

The representatives of the Russian community of Crimea and the Russian youth centre of Crimea protested against violations of the law by the ethnocratic structure “Mejlis”, among other things, against illegal land seizure in Crimea.

Activists of the Russian Youth Centre of Crimea have repeatedly picketed the court of the Central District of Simferopol, where a trial on organizers and participants of an armed assault against a group of Slavic youth in the “Cotton Club” bar in Simferopol took place. Also, annual pickets were held near the Representative office of the President of Ukraine in Crimea³⁵⁴.

In the second half of the 2000s, the authority and influence of the Russian community of Crimea increased, both in Crimea and at the international level. In 2006, leadership of the Russian Federation, headed by President Vladimir Putin, began to pursue a policy aimed at consolidating Russian compatriots who lived abroad. Putin announced this policy in October 2006 at the Second World Congress of Compatriots, which was held in St. Petersburg. The World Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots Residing Abroad (WCC) was a consolidating structure that united Russian compatriots all over the world.

In 2007, Sergey Tsekov, as the Chairman of the Russian community of Crimea, joined the World Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots³⁵⁵.

In 2007, representatives of the Russian Community of Crimea took part in planning a meeting of the World Coordinating Council of Russian Compatriots in Crimea, in Yalta. Compatriots from CIS countries, Europe, North and South America, Asia, Africa and Australia gathered in Livadia Palace. Department on Compatriots Issues of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation sent an official letter of acknowledgement to the Russian community of Crimea for the high level of this event. Intention of the Russian Federation to protect Russian compatriots living abroad was demonstrated by the events associated with Georgia’s armed attack on South Ossetia in August 2008. Russia responded resolutely to the aggressive actions of the Georgian military, forcing Georgia to peace.

In 2008, deputies of the Supreme Council of Crimea from the Russian community of Crimea initiated the adoption of the appeal of the Supreme Council of Crimea to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with a call to recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia³⁵⁶.

353 Propaganda of Fascism and collaborationism is banned in Crimea. [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2009/04/22/396.htm>

354 “Cotton must not be repeated!”. [electronic resource]. – Access mode: // <http://old.ruscrimea.ru/cms/index.php?go=Pages&in=view&id=82>

355 Evtuyshkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

356 The Supreme Council of Crimea voiced support for the peoples of Abkhazia and South Ossetia in their right

Russia's decisive actions associated with the defence of compatriots in South Ossetia and Abkhazia have raised a serious concern of the United States.

In this context, the United States began to show an increased interest in the Crimean issue in Russian-Ukrainian relations. In 2009, the US Embassy in Ukraine advanced the initiative to open an American representative office in Simferopol. In response, the Crimean parliament, at the initiative of Sergey Tsekov, called on the Ukrainian leadership not to open an American representative office in the capital of Crimea³⁵⁷.

During his meeting with William Taylor, a US Ambassador to Ukraine, Sergey Tsekov said that the current degree of mistrust, primarily in the sphere of Russian-American relations, does not allow Crimeans, most of whom consider Russia their ancestral homeland which interests they will not betray, to agree with opening of the so-called "American presence post" in the Crimea³⁵⁸.

At the end of the first decade of the 2000s, irredentist demands in Crimea were announced again by movement "People's Front Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia» coordinated by Valery Pod'yachiy (the movement was not officially registered under Ukrainian legislation). Pod'yachiy stated the necessity to "implement the results of the all-Crimean referendum of January 20, 1991" and "adopt a Declaration on the reunification of Crimea and Russia". Therefore, the Security Service of Ukraine concocted a criminal proceeding against Pod'yachiy.

In 2009, the Russian community of Crimea held a series of protests in relation to initiation of a criminal case by the Security Service of Ukraine against activists of People's Front "Sevastopol-Crimea-Russia" on the counts of separatism. Pickets in support of pro-Russian activists Valery Pod'yachiy and Semyon Klyuev were held in front of the building of the Court of Appeal of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, where the trials of V. Pod'yachiy and S. Klyuev were held³⁵⁹. Deputies from the Russian community of Crimea attended court sessions: Sergey Tsekov, Anatoly Zhilin, Alexander Shevtsov, Oleg Slyusarenko, Andrey Kozenko, Valery Ilyichev and others. According to the estimates of Valery Ilyichev, chairman of Simferopol city organization of the Russian community of Crimea, 10 pickets were held during the year. Activists of the Community: Evgeniy Sharov, Andrey Trufanov and others actively participated in their organization.

In 2009 a new stage in the activities of the Russian community of Crimea began. This stage can be limited to the period of 2009–2014. It is associated with partnership of the Russian community of Crimea with the party Russian Unity

to self-determination! [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2008/09/17/150.htm>.

357 Crimean parliament to ban the establishment of the US footprint post in Simferopol [electronic resource] Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2009/02/03/306.htm>.

358 At a meeting with the US Ambassador to Ukraine, the Chairman of the Russian Community of Crimea spoke about the inadmissibility of opening a "post of American presence" in Crimea". – Access mode: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2009/01/23/291.htm>.

359 The Russian Community of Crimea is picketing the Court of Appeal once again. The trial of Valery Pod'yachiy continues. [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2009/08/28/579.htm>.

and similarly named political movement. The establishment of the Russian Unity movement and party brought the Russian and pro-Russian movements in Crimea to a whole new level of development.

In 2008, a Crimean entrepreneur, one of the leaders of the public organization Civic Active of Crimea Sergey Aksyonov, joined the Russian community of Crimea. In 2009 Sergey Aksyonov and Sergey Tsekov initiated foundation of the All-Crimean movement “Russian Unity”. Idea of uniting Russian organizations of Crimea within the framework of the movement Russian Unity was supported by the All-Crimean gathering of citizens in the city of Simferopol³⁶⁰.

S. Aksyonov and S. Tsekov were elected co-chairmen of the All-Crimean Movement of Russian Unity. The Duma of the Russian Community of Crimea elected S. Aksyonov as the first deputy chairman of the Community.

In 2009, given the fact that the policy of the Party of Regions more and more did not correspond to the election promises, representatives of the Russian community of Crimea – members of the Party of Regions – disaffiliated from the party. Sergey Tsekov deserted his post of the First Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea, Anatoly Zhilin and Oleg Rodivilov deserted their posts of chairmen of the standing committees of the Crimean parliament on science, education and culture.

In 2010, Russian organizations that participated in foundation of the All-Crimean movement Russian Unity came to the conclusion that it was necessary to form an all-Ukrainian party Russian Unity. This party was created and officially registered by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine in September 2010 (two weeks before start of local elections campaign). Sergey Aksyonov became the leader of the party Russian Unity³⁶¹.

During foundation of Russian Unity, new activists joined the Russian community of Crimea and its regional organizations: Alexander Spiridonov, Mikhail Sheremet, Konstantin Mikhailov, Mikhail Makeev, Evgeny Kostylev, Anton Sirotkin, Oleg Shishkov, Dmitry Achkasov, Dmitry Polonsky, Roman Shantaev, Irina Alekseeva and others.

Work with youth has intensified. In 2010, on the basis of the “Russian Youth Centre of Crimea”, Youth non-governmental Association the YOUNG movement³⁶² was founded (leaders: Andrey Kozenko and Vladimir Bobkov).

As a result of local elections in Crimea in 2010, the “Russian Unity” party cleared the three percent barrier in the elections to the Supreme Council of Crimea. Three representatives of the “Russian Unity” party – Sergey Aksyonov, Sergey

360 The all-Crimean gathering of citizens in Simferopol supported the idea of uniting Russian organisations in Crimea as part of the Russian Unity movement. [Electronic resource]. - Mode of access: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2009/12/19/820.htm>.

361 Evtuyushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

362 The Young for Russian Unity movement was created in Crimea. [Electronic resource]. - Access mode: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2010/01/25/895.htm>.

Tsekov and Sergey Shuvaynikov – became deputies of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Moreover, representatives of the “Russian Unity” entered local councils of cities and districts, where they managed to register the city and regional organizations of this party³⁶³.

Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea in the Crimean parliament continued to initiate decisions aimed at the protection of the historical memory of Russia in Crimea. In 2009-2010, Oleg Rodivilov pitched the idea to make a memorial of the Nazi concentration camp during the Great Patriotic War, which was located on the territory of state-owned farm Krasniy near Simferopol. A member of the Russian community of Crimea Igor Evtushkin developed the first draft decree on the memorialization of the concentration camp on the territory of the state-owned farm Krasny. On the proposal of Evtushkin, the project was brought before the Supreme Council of Crimea by Oleg Rodivilov and Viktor Popov. However, due to the complexity of the task, the project was returned for revision.

Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea and the “Russian Unity” party managed to achieve adoption of the decree on the memorialization of the concentration camp of the state-owned farm Krasny in the Crimean parliament of the 6th convocation (2010-2014). Sergey Tsekov developed a new draft and brought it through the Crimean parliament (in 2010 he became chairman of the Crimean Parliament’s Standing Committee on Culture). At the same time, a decree was adopted on the memorialization of the Greek village “Laki”, which was burned down by the Nazis during the Great Patriotic War. Later a pivotal role in the building of the memorial on the place of the concentration camp of the state farm Krasny was played by a speaker of the Crimean parliament Vladimir Konstantinov³⁶⁴.

The “Russian Unity” party, with the support of the Russian community of Crimea, took an active position in the protection of the historical memory of Russia in Crimea, as well as throughout Ukraine.

In 2011 within the framework of the patriotic action “On the Roads of Victory”, activists of the “Russian Unity” party and the Russian community of Crimea went to Lvov to congratulate the Lvov veterans on Victory Day. During that period, provocations of Ukrainian nationalist organizations against celebration of Victory Day and use of Soviet symbols became more frequent in Lvov.

Despite intense opposition of Ukrainian nationalists, the action of the “Russian Unity” party took place. A large-scale Victory Banner with wishes for veterans of Western Ukraine from various regions of the country was spread on the Hill of Glory in Lvov. Representative of the Lvov Regional Organization of Veterans of

363 Evtushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

364 An interview with Sergey Tsekov within the project “Contemporary people’s history of Crimea”. [electronic resource]. – Access mode // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2016/09/20/4984.htm>.

Ukraine received certificates for recreation in Crimea for the Lvov veterans. This action had a great resonance not only in Ukraine, but also far beyond its borders and once again showed radical attitude of Ukrainian nationalists organizations³⁶⁵.

Over the subsequent years, the “Russian Unity” party and the Russian community of Crimea continued to hold the patriotic action “On the Roads of Victory”. Within the framework of this action, motor rallies were carried out in hero cities and cities of military glory of Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. Oleg Slyusarenko, Dmitry Polonsky, Anatoly Tsurkin, Mikhail Sheremet, Andrey Kozenko, and other activists of the “Russian Unity” party and of the Russian Community of Crimea took an active part in the motor rallies.

In 2011, at the initiative of Sergey Tsekov the Supreme Council of Crimea made a decision to hold ceremonial official events in the Republic dedicated to the anniversary of Pereyaslav Rada (Day of the reunification of Ukraine and Russia) on January 18³⁶⁶. Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea traditionally call this date the Day of Reunification of Rus’. The Crimean parliament entrusted the Ministry of Education and Science with the autonomy to develop a plan of thematic events dedicated to the history of Pereyaslav Rada for schools and universities.

In 2011, representatives of the Russian community of Crimea initiated the adoption of a decree of the Crimean parliament “On measures aimed at enhancement of participation of Crimeans in strengthening of the autonomy, fostering of respect for the symbols of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea”³⁶⁷.

The Russian community of Crimea joined efforts with the “Russian Unity” party and continued to participate in the process of Russian compatriots’ consolidation, in the establishment of a system of coordination councils of Russian compatriots (KSORS). In 2011, Sergey Tsekov was elected Chairman of the Crimean Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots Organisations³⁶⁸. At the meeting of the 4th World Congress of Russian Compatriots in St. Petersburg in 2012 Sergey Tsekov proposed to make Crimea a symbolic subject of the Russian Federation³⁶⁹.

In 2012, after meeting of Sergey Tsekov and Sergey Aksyonov with the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities Knut Vollebek, Sergey Tsekov made a statement that the European official refuses to recognize the facts of viola-

365 Victory Day in Lvov. [Electronic resource]. - Mode of access: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2011/05/10/1806.htm>.

366 The Consul General of Russia said that the decision of the Crimean parliament to celebrate the anniversary of the Pereyaslav Rada was wise. [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2011/01/18/1635.htm>.

367 The Crimean parliament supported the decree on intensification of participation of Crimeans in strengthening of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2011/12/21/2199.htm>.

368 The Crimean regional conference of organizations of Russian compatriots took place. [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2011/08/29/1985.htm>.

369 Sergey Tsekov spoke at the plenary session of the IV World Congress of Russian Compatriots (TEXT). [electronic resource]. – Available at // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2012/10/30/2710.htm>.

tion of rights of the Russians, Russian-speaking citizens in Ukraine, despite their obviousness, and speaks against raising of the Russian language status in Ukraine. According to S. Tsekov, “these and previous similar statements and actions of Knut Vollebek can be regarded as Russophobic”³⁷⁰.

Anti-Russian, Russophobic forces in Ukraine with abroad support showed themselves with special emphasis during the so-called “Euromaidan”. The events of the Crimean Spring were the Crimeans’ reaction to the “Euromaidan” coup d’état in Ukraine. This was the beginning of a whole new stage not only in the history of the Russian community of Crimea but also in the history of Crimea and Russia as a whole.

During the so-called “Euromaidan” (December 2013-February 2014) the Russian community of Crimea, led by Sergey Tsekov, and the “Russian Unity” party, led by Sergey Aksyonov, served as a consistent political actor with the necessary organizational capacity to prevent spreading of nationalist ideology in Crimea and to rebuff the Crimean followers of “Euromaidan” who carried out provocative acts in Simferopol and a number of other cities and regions of Crimea, supported by local divisions of nationalist organizations, football fans and activists of the Crimean Tatar organisation “Mejlis”³⁷¹.

In 2013, Sergey Tsekov was a fierce opponent of “Euromaidan” in Kiev. On December 1, he made a statement in support of police actions to restore order on Independence Maidan.³⁷²

Due to exacerbation of confrontation in Kiev and launch of the campaign of administrative buildings’ seizure in a number of regions of Ukraine, the Russian community of Crimea and the “Russian Unity” party, together with representatives of the Cossacks and organizations of Afghan veterans, took initiative in the foundation of people’s guards, people’s resistance to counter attempts of extremists and neo-Nazis to enter Crimea.

In December 2013-February 2014, Sergey Tsekov took part in trips of the Crimean parliament speaker Vladimir Konstantinov to Moscow. “Euromaidan” journalists immediately called these negotiations “secret” and said that the issues discussed in Moscow by the Crimean delegation went well beyond the discussion of “the prospects for inter-parliamentary and inter-regional cooperation of the Crimean autonomy and regions of the Russian Federation”³⁷³.

In February 2014, Sergey Tsekov launched an initiative on adoption by the Supreme Council of Crimea of an appeal to the Russian Federation with a request

370 Chairman of the Russian Community of Crimea Sergey Tsekov considers that activities of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities Knut Vollebek can be regarded as Russo phobic. [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2012/07/27/2575.htm>.

371 The Crimeans thwarted a PR campaign of “Euro maidan followers” in the Crimean capital. [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2014/01/26/3387.htm>.

372 Sergey Tsekov: police actions on Independence maidan are justified [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2013/12/01/3281.htm>.

373 Evtushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

for assistance and defence of autonomy. He announced this idea on February 4 at a meeting of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. The politician stressed in his speech that in the current situation “only the Russian Federation can act as our guarantor and our protector”, that Crimea is not only multinational but also Russian autonomy. He called on the Presidium and the Supreme Council of Crimea to prepare an appropriate appeal to the Russian Federation “for support, assistance and defence”³⁷⁴.

On February 22, an anti-constitutional coup d'état took place in Kiev. The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, captured by the Euromaidan militants, announced self-removal of President Viktor Yanukovich from power, proceeding from the fact that the President, in the view of the Verkhovna Rada, unconstitutionally gave up his powers (Yanukovich himself defined the actions of the Verkhovna Rada as a coup d'état).

Sergey Tsekov participated in a congress of deputies of all levels in Kharkov on February 22. Other representatives of Crimea also participated in the congress.

The next day, February 23, during an action in front of the building of the Supreme Council of Crimea in Simferopol, dedicated to the Defender's Day, the “Russian Unity” party and the Russian community of Crimea announced the mobilization of Crimeans who are not indifferent to the fate of Crimea. It was the place where people's volunteer corps were formed to protect peace and stillness in Crimea. About two thousand men immediately enrolled in the people's guards³⁷⁵.

From among women who came to the event, a medical aid crew was formed (it included members of the Presidium of the Russian Community of Crimea Natalya Lantukh and Larisa Chulkova). Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea and the “Russian Unity” party took an active part in formation of the people's guards: Mikhail Sheremet, Dmitry Polonsky, Andrey Kozenko, Anton Sirotkin, Mikhail Makeev, heads of regional organizations of the Community and of the “Russian Unity”.

On February 24, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Crimea A. Mogilev made a statement in which he expressed an opinion that the Crimean government is ready to obey the leaders appointed by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. The leadership of the Crimean Parliament, headed by V. Konstantinov, were on the opposite side of the issue. There was an initiative to resign A. Mogilev. This issue could be raised at the session of the Supreme Council, scheduled for February 26, 2016³⁷⁶.

On February 26, the representatives of the “Russian Unity” party and the Russian Community of Crimea, together with representatives of Cossack organi-

374 Sergey Tsekov: Only Russia can defend the Crimean autonomy [electronic resource]. – Available at: <http://www.ruscimea.ru/2014/02/04/3402.htm>.

375 Crimea has mobilized! People's guard squadrons are formed. [electronic resource]. – Available at: <http://www.ruscimea.ru/2014/02/23/3432.htm>.

376 Evtushkin, I. Stages of formation of the Russian community of Crimea. [electronic resource]. - Available at: <http://www.ruscimea.ru/etapy-stanovleniya-russkoj-obshhiny-kryma>.

zations and units of the People's Volunteer Corps, took part in a rally of pro-Russian organizations in front of the building of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Russian, pro-Russian activists rebuffed attempts of a large crowd of thousands of radical representatives of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis supported by militants of the ultra-nationalist organization Right Sector, that sought to seize the building of the Crimean parliament in order to hinder its activities. As the result of clashes, citizens of Simferopol Igor Postny and Valentina Koreneva were killed.

On the night of February 26th to 27th, Russian flags were raised over the buildings of the Supreme Council and the Council of Ministers of Crimea. These events laid the foundation for gaining independence and reunification of Crimea and Russia³⁷⁷.

On February 27, a special session of the Crimean parliament was held in the building of the Supreme Council of Crimea. Sergey Aksyonov and Sergey Tsekov took active part in its arrangement. Crimean deputies have appointed a republican referendum on expansion of powers of the autonomy. Later, it was decided to reword and hold a referendum on the status of Crimea. Presidium of the Crimean Parliament assessed the situation in Ukraine as "an unconstitutional seizure of power by radical nationalists supported by armed criminal gangs." In this situation, the Supreme Council of Crimea accepted "full responsibility for the fate of Crimea."

It was decided to resign the Crimean government headed by Anatoly Mogilev. Sergey Aksyonov was appointed chairman of the Crimean government. Sergey Tsekov became Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council of Crimea³⁷⁸.

Strange statements of I. Girkin that the deputies were supposedly "gathered by home guard" for the session is a subjective opinion. This opinion is not supported by any serious source. Most of the deputies of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea supported the position of the Crimean parliament speaker Vladimir Konstantinov on countering the coup d'état in Ukraine even before the events of February 27.

In March 2014, leaders and followers of Russian organizations of Crimea and Sevastopol took part in arrangement of referendum on the status of Crimea³⁷⁹, during which the Crimeans expressed their political will on joining the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to Russia.

The all-Crimean referendum on the status of Crimea was held on March 16. Two issues were brought up for the referendum: the reunification of Crimea with Russia as a constituent entity of the federation, or restoration of the Constitution of

377 Ibid.

378 Vice-speaker of the Supreme Council of Crimea: "Ukraine will envy us soon." Sergey Tsekov speaks about legitimacy of authorities on the peninsula and "polite armed people".) [electronic resource]. – Available at: // <https://www.mk.ru/politics/article/2014/03/06/995004-vitsespiker-verhovnogo-soveta-kryima-ukraina-skoro-stanet-nam-zavidovat.html>

379 Sergey Tsekov: The referendum in Crimea is designed to restore historical justice. [Electronic resource]. - Access mode: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2014/03/09/3478.htm>.

the Republic of Crimea of 1992 while Crimea remains part of Ukraine. According to official data after 100% of protocols were processed, 96.77% of those who voted on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea chose the first item of the bulletin – “For reunification of Crimea with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation”, and 95.6% of those who voted in Sevastopol.

On March 17, the results of the referendum were approved by the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City Council of Sevastopol. From that time till March 18 the Republic of Crimea was an independent state.

On March 18, a historic event took place in St. George’s Hall of the Kremlin, during which two new constituent entities were integrated to Russia: the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol. Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a message to both chambers of the Federal Assembly with reference to the appeal of the Crimean parliament with a request to join the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to the Russian Federation. The Crimean delegation that took part in this meeting also included representatives of the Russian community of Crimea³⁸⁰.

After the declaration of independence of Crimea and entry of the Republic of Crimea into the Russian Federation, the State Council of the Republic of Crimea decided to vest Sergey Tsekov with authorities of a member of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation on March 26, 2014.

By decree of President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin, Sergey Aksyonov was appointed Acting Head of the Republic of Crimea on April 14, 2014.

On October 9, 2014, the State Council of the Republic of Crimea in a unanimous vote elected Sergey Aksyonov as the Head of the Republic of Crimea and made a decision to combine the positions of the Head of the Republic of Crimea and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea.

Generally, research confirmed the thesis that the Russian, pro-Russian movement in Crimea was the driving force of reunification of Crimea and Russia.

Russian public organizations and political parties were the organizational “core” of this movement. Broad strata of the Crimean population were a social base of the Russian movement (and not only ethnic Russians). This fact was confirmed particularly by popularity of pro-Russian ideas in Crimea during election campaigns. They were articulated not only by Russian, pro-Russian parties and public organizations but also by pro-Ukrainian mega-parties, such as the “Party of Regions”. The largest Russian organizations and political parties in Crimea had representations in government agencies.

Social assistance of the Crimeans, support of Russia, active participation in the political life of Crimea – all these factors allowed Russian, pro-Russian orga-

380 Representatives of the Russian community of Crimea took part in a historical event. [Electronic resource]. - Access mode: // <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2014/03/18/3501.htm>

nizations of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol to actively oppose Russo phobic political forces in Crimea and Ukraine, the policy of forced Ukrainization of the Crimeans, to continue education in Russian in schools and universities of the Crimea, to keep historical memory of Russia in Crimea, to oppose pulling of Ukraine into NATO military bloc.

The idea of putting the historical record straight and reuniting Crimea with Russia had different forms of articulation and implementation, but it was unifying for the Russian movement in Crimea.

THE CRIMEAN AUTONOMY RECONSTRUCTION IN 1991

Vyacheslav G. Zarubin³⁸¹

Historian (the city of Simferopol)

In 60-80s, the Crimean Peninsula was a favourite holiday destination for both ordinary people and the Soviet party elite. At the same time, it is an important economic and military-strategic region. Officers, government officials as well as other people strive to finish their service life here, as a result, there is a significant percentage of retirees in the share of the population (today³⁸² they make more than 20%; every fourth Crimean is a retiree).

The resettlement policy continues as well, now residents of various regions of Ukraine are sent here.

Since the second half of the 50s of the twentieth century the Crimean Tatar national movement started. Its main demand was their return to Crimea. Despite the fact that the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR of September 5, 1967 “On Citizens of Tatar Nationality Residing in Crimea” withdrew charges of betrayal of Motherland from the entire Crimean Tatar population, it stated that the Crimean Tatars settled down for good on the new place of residence, enjoy all rights of Soviet citizens, that’s why their return to Crimea is considered inexpedient.³⁸³

However, as a publicity step an organizational recruitment was announced among the Crimean Tatars for resettlement to the peninsula, but, as it is indicated in the secret information of the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine I.K. Lutak addressed to the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine V.V. Scherbitsky, only 2493 people (419 families) arrived here on a scheduled basis from 1968 to the end of March 1974. Those Crimean tartars who tried to return without authorization ran against numerous obstacles, although 206 families (1196 people) managed to independently move to the Crimean region.³⁸⁴

According to the 1989 census in Crimea, the majority of the population were Russians – 1,629,542 people (67%) and 625,919 people were Ukrainians (25.8%).

381 Vyacheslav G. Zarubin is one of the initiators of the reconstruction of the Crimean autonomy in 1991 and of the foundation of the State Committee for Protection and Use of Monuments of History and Culture of Crimea (now, Department for Protection of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Crimea). In 1990-1994 he was a Deputy of the Crimean Regional Council. Refer to citation: Zarubin, V. G. Reconstruction of the Crimean autonomy. Problems of development of the Republic of Crimea in 1991-1993. Documents of the Research-to-Practice Conference “The Autonomous Republic of Crimea in the 21st century: experience, problems, development”. Simferopol: AntikVA, 2006. p. 116-141, ISBN 966-2930-07-8.

382 As of 2006.

383 Refer to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR “On citizens of Tatar nationality who lived in Crimea”. Bulletin of the Supreme Council of the USSR. 1967. No. 38. p. 531-532.

384 Crimean Tatars in 1944-1994. Articles. Documents. Information of witnesses. O.G. Bazhan, Yu.Z. Danilyuk. K., 1995. p. 199.

It should be noted that during the census 2,794 Armenians, 2,166 Bulgarians, 2,684 Greeks, 2,357 Germans were recorded, and a significant part of them had nothing to do with those forcibly expelled from Crimea and their descendants.

Since the end of the 80s, awakening of political activity begins on the peninsula. Different organizations are founded that do not associate themselves with the Communist Party, often opposing themselves to it. Growth of national identity is noted, national-cultural societies are actively established: Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Greeks, Jews, Karaites, Krymchaks, then Bulgarians, Germans, the Crimean Society of Russian Culture, Ukrainian organizations.³⁸⁵

At the same time, a spontaneous process of Crimean Tatars return is in progress (in 1979 there were 5,422 Crimean Tatars on the peninsula, in 1988 – 17,500, in 1989 – 38,365, in 1990 – 83,116), who claimed for restoration of the Crimean ASSR of the 1921-1945 pattern, which they considered as a national-territorial Crimean Tatar autonomous state formation. This was especially typical for the National Movement of Crimean Tatars ((NDKT) NMCT), led by Yu.B. Osmanov (1941-1993), who asserted the revival of norms of “Leninist national policy.” However, organization of the Crimean Tatar National Movement ((OKND) OCTNM), headed by dissident M. Dzhemilev, which was created in 1989, took an anti-Soviet position and more distinctly shaped a course towards creation of ethnic state system, began to earn great reputation,³⁸⁶ which could not but cause fears of the majority of Crimeans.

The growth of centrifugal tendencies at the level of union and autonomous republics, driven by the real need to raise their economic independence, the obvious inability of the Centre to take responsibility for deep political, economic, and social transformations forced the regions to look for the ways out of the current situation.

In this situation, the society begins to discuss issues related to legitimacy of the forced expulsion of various ethnic groups from Crimea in 1941 and 1944, abolition of the Crimean ASSR, transfer of the Crimean region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR. There is a growing interest in the history of state systems during the Civil War and pre-war period. In the minds of the population, sentiments associated with the raising of the Crimea status, picked up by various democratic social and political associations, began to grow.

The publication of the novel “Island of Crimea” by V.P. Aksyonov at the end of the 80s played an important role in these processes.

Even then, there were calls for the proclamation of an independent republic on the peninsula, with its direct subordination to Moscow.

385 Crimean Repatriates: Deportation, Return and Settlement. Gabrielyan, O.A., Efimov, S.A., Zarubin, V.N. et al. Simferopol, 1998. p. 117.

386 Guboglo, M.N., Chervonnaya, S.M. Crimean Tatar national movement. M., 1992. Volume 1. Documents). Materials. Chronicle.

Radicals from the “Democratic Union” advance an idea of independence of Crimea, its secession from the USSR by way of a referendum. It is interesting to note that for the first time ever the idea of a referendum in order to determine the fate of the peninsula was advanced by the Bolsheviks on November 24 (December 7), 1917, at the II conference (congress) of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (b) of Taurida province in Simferopol, who stated that population of Crimea consists of various nationalities and Crimean Tatars do not make up the majority on the peninsula, and they decide whether it is possible to hold a referendum on the autonomy of Crimea.³⁸⁷ However, they did not recall this decision in future ...

Professor of Simferopol State University, Doctor of Philosophy V.N. Sagatovsky, made interesting proposals. In his judgment it should be taken into account that the peninsula, throughout its history, has been and remains a multinational region with unique natural conditions, it is a place of rest for citizens from various places throughout the USSR, which makes it necessary to give Crimea the status of a “union international-territorial autonomy” ... At the same time, the supreme authority of this entity – the Council of People’s Deputies of Taurida – “should include two chambers: territorial and national. In the latter, all nations of Crimea should be represented as equals”. Thus, it would be possible to solve two problems simultaneously: “self-development of Crimea and its use in interests of the Union as a whole to the fullest extent of its capabilities on the basis of economic independence and unity of all peoples residing there”.³⁸⁸

Later these provisions were consistently reflected in policy documents of the entity “Democratic Taurida” (see, for example, *The Crimean Truth*, 1990, February 16).

Under the circumstances, the Crimean regional committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, which has been constantly waiting for instructions from above, was not ready to solve the problem. In this regard, the statement in the extreme view book “Ukrainian Crimea” written by Professor V. Sergiychuk, director of the Centre for Ukrainian Studies of the Kiev National University named after T.G. Shevchenko, that “an idea of the foundation of autonomy was generated inside the belly of the Crimean Regional Committee of the party and was approved as early as in 1988 at the regional conference... “sounds foolish.”³⁸⁹

In fact, this position was put forward by the regional party conference as the main platform in the elections to the Supreme Council of the USSR.

Speaking at September (1989) plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the first secretary of the Crimean regional committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine of that time A.N. Girenko made a

387 Resolution of the II Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (b) of Taurida province on September 24, 1917 The struggle for Soviet power in Crimea. Documents and materials. Simferopol. 1957. Volume 1. P. 118-119

388 Sagatovsky V.N. To develop a theory of interethnic relations. Information and methodological bulletin, “Reporter”. Simferopol, 1989 Rev. 2. Part 1. P. 18-23

389 Sergiychuk, V. Ukrainian Crimea K., 2001.

proposal to adopt a special Law on Crimea, “which would take into account such factors as the unique historical and ethnic past of the region, its significance as an all-Union health resort, multinational composition of population and the Crimean Tatars problem”³⁹⁰, but it did not go any further.

The leadership of the region had no idea that a similar opinion was expressed back in 1921 when the issue of the status of Crimea was also discussed. Then, by decree of the Collegium of the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities and the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), M.Kh. Sultan-Goalie was sent to Crimea (and stayed there from February 13 to March 29, 1921), who reported to the People’s Commissar for Ethnic Affairs I.V. Stalin (copy – in the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party (b)): “Even before my trip to Crimea, I thought that it was erroneous to announce Crimea RED HEALTH RESORT (so in original – V.Z.) prior to its political self-determination. Primarily, it was necessary to plan the autonomy of Crimea so that later it would declare itself a health resort on its own initiative. After my visit to Crimea, I made certain of this”.

He proposed to implement “the declaration of Crimea as an autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic with a Constitution corresponding to the Constitution of Dagestan and of Gorskaya Republic”³⁹¹, that is, in fact, territorial autonomy, taking into account peculiarities of the multi-ethnic region.

When the regional committee received instructions from Moscow, it finally determined its policy. As remembered by N.V. Bagrov who replaced A.N. Girenko as the first secretary of the regional committee: “For the first time, the need to find ways to solve this problem was officially announced at the January (1990) plenum of the regional party committee on inter-ethnic relations. That time it was defined only as a problem statement”.³⁹²

The future formation was thought to be a territorial, multinational autonomous state, that could give an opportunity to Crimea to gain greater economic independence and solve local problems more efficiently, including problems of an inter-ethnic nature, under circumstances of the transition to regional self-financing,

Some candidates for the regional council (S.A. Efimov, N.V. Kosukhin, Y.D. Rozgoniuk, who later gained the confidence of their voters) proposed to solve the problem of raising Crimea status at the All-Crimean referendum. It was decided to establish an organising committee for development and implementation of proposals on the status of Crimea, which included deputies of the regional council, including the author of these lines, people’s deputies of the USSR and the Ukrainian SSR from Crimea, representatives of national and cultural societies, of Crimean Tatar organizations, and lawyers.

390 N.V. Bagrov. The most important tasks of ideological employees. Information and methodological bulletin, “Reporter”. Simferopol, 1989 Part 1. P. 1-8

391 Report from a member of the board of the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities, Sultan-Galiev on situation in Crimea. Crimean archives. Simferopol, 1996, #2 P. 84-94

392 N.V. Bagrov. Crimea. The time of hopes and worries (no place), (no year) p. 97.

During July-August 1990, members of the groups explored several options for raising the status of the region (from an autonomous region to a union republic), the majority agreed with the option of an autonomous republic.

According to recollections of N.V. Bagrov who retained his party post, back then, some issues “could be solved only with solicit the support of party bodies as well as of governmental authorities. Reconstruction of the republic was undoubtedly one of such issues. As the first secretary of the regional committee and chairman of the regional council, I had the opportunity to meet with top officials of the party and state. I had conversations with M. Gorbachev and N. Ryzhkov. In August 1990, a Crimean delegation travelled to the Supreme Council of the USSR, where we had a long conversation with the Chairman of the Supreme Council of the USSR A. Lukyanov. Continuous negotiations were held with the leadership of Ukraine – V. Ivashko, L. Kravchuk, S. Gurchenko, with deputies of the Supreme Council of Ukraine”.³⁹³

The centre looked with favour on the foundation of the Crimean statehood. Soon Moscow began to place a certain stake on the autonomy movements in union republics, hoping to find allies in them as a counterbalance to the course of the sovereignty of republican authorities.

It should be noted that the formation of the Crimean autonomy proceeded exclusively in a legitimate way. Idem N.V. Bagrov emphasized: “We have strictly defined a number of conditions for ourselves that must be observed at any cost: strict adherence to the law, consideration of the opinion of all the Crimeans, the balance of interests, unification, not separation of people.”³⁹⁴

The 3rd session of the regional council (September 1990) could not make a decision on the way of raising the status of the peninsula for a long time. Deputy S.A. Efimov, who spoke on this issue, proposed to hold an all-Crimean referendum. The majority of the deputies agreed. A statement was also adopted on abolition of illegal acts of 1945-1946 that liquidated the Crimean ASSR, which was sent to the Supreme Council of the USSR and the RSFSR.

The Crimean communists also made their final decision on the problem of the status of the region. It was emphasized in the 42nd Crimean Regional Party Resolution “On National Policy,” adopted a month and a half later: “The conference believes that in the current circumstances, the most acceptable option is to recreate the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a subject of the Soviet Union. The final decision on the status of Crimea can be made only on the basis of the will expressed by all Crimean citizens by way of a referendum”.³⁹⁵

The issue of the peninsula status was also considered at a meeting of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR. All speakers (12 people)

393 N.V. Bagrov. *Crimea. The time of hopes and worries* (no place), (no year) p. 98.

394 N.V. Bagrov. *Crimea. The time of hopes and worries* (no place), (no year) p. 98.

395 *Crimean Repatriates: Deportation, Return and Settlement*. Gabrielyan, O.A., Efimov, S.A., Zarubin, V.N. et al. Simferopol, 1998. p. 121.

agreed that Crimea has the right to autonomy (or special status). But there was another event in Kiev, as well. One can agree with N.V. Bagrov, who noted in his memoirs: “Ukrainian movement towards sovereignty, which became more and more active, switch of the most part of the leadership of the republic and the deputies of the Supreme Council of Ukraine to these positions and growth of nationalist sentiments accompanying this process raised groundless concerns of the overwhelming majority of the Russian-speaking population of Crimea. The Law of the Ukrainian SSR “On Languages” became an accelerant. The Crimeans grew anxious as new political acts were adopted and events took place, which witnessed of redistribution of political forces and direction of the ideas of Ukrainian national statehood”.³⁹⁶

On November 12, 1990, the 4th extraordinary session of the Crimean Regional Council began its work. L.I. Grach, who made the main report, announced that re-establishment of the republic should proceed through a referendum. Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR L.M. Kravchuk who was present at the session, tried to convince the deputies that reconstruction of the republic could be achieved by the decision of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR, without any referendum. But the deputies insisted on their own decision and adopted the “Declaration on the State and Legal Status of Crimea” (109 voted “for”, 3 “against”, 6 abstained). It said: “The Crimean Regional Council of People’s Deputies considers the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR of June 30, 1945 and the Law of the RSFSR of June 25, 1946, which abolished the Crimean ASSR, unconstitutional and declares the right of the peoples of Crimea to re-establish statehood in the form of Crimean ASSR as a subject of the USSR and a participant in the Union Treaty. Exercise of this right must be carried out solely on the basis of the will expressed by people through a referendum”.³⁹⁷

Kravchuk only specified the wording of the referendum. At that time, many people were astounded by his words which characterized this political figure and that period: “Could it be that you like St. Andrew’s flag more than the yellow and blue one? I disgust both of them. This flag does not suit me today”.³⁹⁸

The same session approved the Temporary Regulation and the procedure for its implementation on the territory of the Crimean region, developed by the state and legal department of the regional council under the leadership of P.B. Evgrafova, determined its date – January 20, 1991, and made a commission for organizing the referendum, which included representatives of repatriated ethnic groups A.S. Danelyan, Yu.B. Osmanov, H.I. Shonus. It was decided to appeal to the Supreme Councils of the RSFSR, Ukrainian SSR, Uzbek SSR, Tajik SSR, Kirghiz SSR, Kazakh SSR to assist in holding this referendum among those people, who

396 N.V. Bagrov. *Crimea. A time of hope and anxiety.* (b.m.), (b.d.) S. 93.

397 *Crimean Repatriates: Deportation, Return and Settlement.* Gabrielyan, O.A., Efimov, S.A., Zarubin, V.N. et al. Simferopol, 1998. p. 121-122.

398 N.V. Bagrov. *Crimea. A time of hope and anxiety.* (b.m.), (b.d.) S. 147.

were forcibly expelled from Crimea, and their descendants who lived on the territory of the relevant republics.³⁹⁹

The all-Crimean referendum was supported by “Memorial”, “Ecology and Peace”, “Democratic Taurida”, and other social and political associations. One cannot deny the role of the Crimean regional organization of the Communist Party of Ukraine in the arrangement of the referendum. The Crimean Tatars’ leaders appealed for a boycott of the referendum.

The first referendum in the USSR was held at the scheduled time. Out of 1,441,019 (81.37% of those included in the voter list) who took part in the referendum, 1,343,855 people (93.26% of those who took part) answered positively to the question “Do you support the reestablishment of the Crimean ASSR as a subject of the Union and a member in the Union Treaty?”.

On January 24, 1991, the 5th session of the Crimean Regional Council approved the results of the referendum and turned to the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR with a proposal to consider and amend the Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR, to submit a proposal to the Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR on the introduction of appropriate amendments and additions in Constitution of the USSR and definition of the foundation of its governmental bodies before the adoption of Constitution of the autonomy.⁴⁰⁰ On February 12, 1991, at the session of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR the Law “On the restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic” was adopted (out of 450 people’s deputies, 355 people participated in roll call vote, and 253 cast an affirmative vote), which temporarily recognized the Crimean Regional Council “prior to the adoption of Constitution of the Crimean ASSR and foundation of constitutional bodies of state power on its basis ” by the supreme body of state power on the territory of the autonomy with the status of the Supreme Council of the KASSR⁴⁰¹, as well as a resolution on the introduction of this law into effect, in which as an exception the condition was set: within a month, to elect by additional secret voting to the Supreme Council of the KASSR the corresponding number of deputies “from organizations of national and cultural societies and other public associations of the deported peoples of Crimea at regional meetings of these organizations” and the corresponding number of deputies at a session of the Sevastopol City Council from among its deputies.⁴⁰²

On March 7, 1991, the Supreme Council of the USSR annulled the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR dated June 30, 1945 “On transformation of the Crimean ASSR into Crimean region as part of the RSFSR” and a number of discriminatory acts against Crimean Tatars, and on June 6, 1991,

399 Crimean Repatriates: Deportation, Return and Settlement. Gabrielyan, O.A., Efimov, S.A., Zarubin, V.N. et al. Simferopol, 1998. p. 122.

400 Crimean Repatriates: Deportation, Return and Settlement. Gabrielyan, O.A., Efimov, S.A., Zarubin, V.N. et al. Simferopol, 1998. P. 122-123.

401 Vedomosti Verkhovnyaya Rada of the Ukrainian SSR. 1991. № 9. Clause 84.

402 Vedomosti Verkhovna Rada of the Ukrainian SSR. 1991. № 9. Clause 85.

the 3rd session of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR adopted a supplement to Clause 75 of Chapter VIII of Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR with the following content: “The Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic is an integral part of the Ukrainian SSR and independently resolves issues within its competence.”

Thus, it can be stated that the Crimean autonomy was restored by legal way.

SEVASTOPOL–CRIMEA–RUSSIA: HOW DID IT GET STARTED?

Inna V. Ostrovskaya

PhD in Historical Sciences, Researcher of Sevastopol Military History Museum and Reserve (Sevastopol)

The reunification of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia updates research on a complex of issues of their regional history, in which one of the central places is occupied by study of issues related to Russian social movements. The Russian movements of Crimea and Sevastopol refers to the totality of public associations and organizations of the regional community (both with legal status and without it), which included ethnic Russians, as well as those citizens of Ukraine who considered themselves Russian culture bearers and the Russian language speakers.

These movements came down in their documents and in their practical activities in favour of preserving Russian social and cultural space in Crimea, for strengthening relations with the Russian Federation. Identification of its participants is based on identification with the Russian-cultural space and Orthodox faith.

From 1991 to March 2014, they were a powerful participant in social and political processes on the peninsula. Russian movement in multi-ethnic Crimea and Sevastopol had a significant social base for continuous work in manifesting interests of the densely living Russian community. The members of this movement were public associations and organizations established at the initiative of not only ethnic Russians but also representatives of the Russian-cultural community as a whole in order to protect their interests. Unlike other regions of Ukraine, consolidation, and – later – politicization of the Russian ethnocultural community in Crimea and Sevastopol were started before Ukraine gained its independence, which contributed to the relatively rapid formation of its social institutions after 1991.

The Foundation of the first Russian public associations on the peninsula was a manifestation of “perestroika” in 1985-1991. Under the circumstances of democratization of the social system, different ethno-cultural associations appeared that put forward demands to preserve the status of the Russian language as a state language, to maintain historical memory and Russian culture.

In the early 1990s, the struggle for the status of the Crimean autonomy, expansion of its rights and powers, as well as the return of repatriates and the problem of rights, arrangement of the Crimean Tatar people were the factors that influenced the accelerated pace of foundation of the Russian movement in Crimea.

The political factor of the foundation of the Russian movement was reinforced by the deterioration of the social and economic situation in the region.

Dismantlement of the old, Soviet economic system and initiation of a new, liberal system, based on the free market and private property, led to the impoverishment of a significant part of the population and mass discontent. All these factors contributed to the leap in political activity in the mid-1990s and had a significant impact on the increase in the rate of self-organization of the Russian community in Crimea. The mentioned factors and the problem of the lack of proper regulation of Sevastopol status during the partition of the Black Sea Fleet became the primary reason for the initiation of the pro-Russian movement in Sevastopol.

Philosopher M.S. Kolesov singles out the “Russian factor” as a specific factor for Sevastopol regional community. According to him, its components include mentality characterized by strong sense of statehood, involvement and responsibility for the fate of the state. The scientist emphasizes the great influence of achievements and successes of the Soviet past on the formation of priorities in self-awareness and the identification of the population in Sevastopol. The second component, according to the researcher, was economic development of the city as an integral part of the all-Union military-industrial complex. The third is culture and education which were historically formed on the basis of the Russian language. The next, fourth, component is the demographic one, which is expressed in dense, numerically predominant settlement of Russians. Another component, geopolitical, was determined by the role of Sevastopol as an important naval base in the Black Sea-Mediterranean region.⁴⁰³

Since the early 1990s, the situation in the city was worsened by the deterioration of the economic situation in Ukraine, which was reflected in its population, primarily retirees and socially disadvantaged sections of citizens. In addition, Ukrainian nationalist organizations showed their increased interest in the city. They intended to hold their events in the city of Sevastopol with the aim of “recoding” public opinion towards Ukrainization.

In the city of Sevastopol itself, where the regime of a closed naval base maintained until 1995, the socio-political situation was stable. The social stand of the population, the majority of which was Russian, as well as its public opinion, was characterized by a unified position, which was expressed in recognition of the city as a primordially Russian, with historical, military naval traditions, where representatives of different nationalities lived together in peace. These sentiments were demonstrated by one of the most massive citywide meetings of the “perestroika” period, which took place at the end of September 1989.

Then delegations of labour collectives, participants of the meeting of thousands at the city stadium expressed their opinion on a number of draft laws of the Ukrainian SSR: “On amendments and supplements to Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR”, “On elections of people’s deputies of the Ukrainian SSR”, “On elections of local Councils of People’s Deputies of the Ukrainian SSR”, “On languages in the Ukrainian SSR “ The adopted resolutions noted the need to take into account

403 Kolesov M.S. Russia and the Crimea at the Turn of Two Epochs. Sevastopol, 2006. P. 96.

the opinions of the large Russian community in the city when adopting state laws. Subject to Sevastopol residents, the motto “only together and on an equal footing” must prevail when government decisions are made.

That was also when for the first time, a call was made to secede from the Ukrainian SSR and join the RSFSR, in case of imposition of the Ukrainian language in Sevastopol and Crimea. This categorical statement of the question was caused by legislative recognition of the Ukrainian language as the only one state language on the territory of the entire country, while in the USSR, officially, the Russian language had the status of not only the state language but also the language of interethnic communication. It should be noted that the Russian language has lost this status with the liquidation of the USSR.

Visit of the “train of friendship” with members of ultra-nationalist Ukrainian group UNA-UNSO to the city on March 1, 1992 shocked residents of Sevastopol. According to V. Melnik, the chairman of the executive council of UNA-UNSO⁴⁰⁴ and one of the promoters of this action: “we showed to all people that a group of patriots can achieve any set goals without any permission from above ...”⁴⁰⁵. After marching with songs and banners along the streets of Sevastopol, members of the organization held a short meeting and prayer service near the church, where, in their opinion, in 1918 the Bolsheviks shot Ukrainian nationalist. Then they entered carriages and went home.

In response to such an action, the Russian movement in Sevastopol became more active. It expressed the position of the regional community in all important areas of its life, including the key issue of state affiliation of Sevastopol and of the Black Sea Fleet. Sevastopol residents who witnessed this event condemned the actions of Ukrainian nationalists. The citizens were outraged by the nationalist position expressed at the meeting concerning the non-Ukrainian population. As a result of reaction to this demarche of nationalist forces, a public organization the Russian Movement of Sevastopol was registered in the executive committee of Sevastopol City Council in April 1992.

The pro-Russian vector was more pronounced in the work of public associations of the city of Sevastopol, when compared with the Crimean republican organizations. Political identity associated with the Russian Federation was overwhelming among its participants.

Admiral I.V. Kasatonov, the then commander-in-chief of the Black Sea Fleet, described the activities of these associations and noted: “The beginning of January 1991 is a period of activation of pro-Russian public organizations created on the peninsula in 1990-1991. They did not cover up their goals: restoration of historical justice and “powering on” of the legal right to join Crimea and Sevastopol to Russia. At the same time, under circumstances of the advent of legal chaos and an

404 UNA-UNSO is prohibited in the Russian Federation as an extremist organization.

405 Mi - z UNSO, ch. 3, ch. 1 “Without cloak and dagger”. [Electronic resource] / Mode of access: <http://www.una-unso.org>.

obvious direction to breaking ties between Kiev and Moscow, the issue of the state and legal independence of Crimea came up on the agenda”⁴⁰⁶.

In autumn 1992 some Sevastopol organizations united under activities of Sevastopol branch of the Russian National Salvation Front (NSF). The initiative to create a branch of the Front in the city was put forward by the Russian People’s Assembly chaired by A.G. Kruglov⁴⁰⁷, a deputy of the city council of the 20th and later 22nd convocations, in the first deputy cadence as a member of the standing commission on mass media, publicity, citizen appeals. It should be noted that the organization was not officially registered by Ukrainian justice authorities.

When Front’s organizing committee published its call in the newspaper “The Day” to organize its regional committees at local levels, activists of such public organizations as Russian People’s Assembly, Society for Protection of Human Rights, Voters’ Club, Ecology and Life founded the branch in the city of Sevastopol. Later, public associations Unity and the Russian Movement of Sevastopol⁴⁰⁸ joined its work.

On January 7, 1993, an unauthorized meeting of citizens took place in the city, initiated by members of Sevastopol branch of the National Salvation Front (NSF). About 3.5 thousand people took part in it. The slogan “Sevastopol - Crimea - Russia”⁴⁰⁹ was resounded during the meeting for the first time. From that moment on, a period of mass demonstrations began, including unauthorized ones of a pro-Russian nature.

The political basis for the activities of the group of organizations headed by A.G. Kruglov (Sevastopol branch of the NSF, Russian People’s Veche, Russian People’s Assembly) was legal opinion of the Supreme Council and the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation on assessment of transfer of the Crimean region from the RSFSR to the affiliation of the Ukrainian SSR in 1954. The main forms of work of the organizations of this group were meetings, picketing, gatherings, and processions.

Attitude of the Ukrainian state authorities to the actions of pro-Russian organizations in Sevastopol and Crimea was most vividly reflected in the Address of the President of Ukraine L. Kravchuk to population of the region, published in

406 I.V. Kasatonov, Notes of the Commander of the Black Sea Fleet. Moscow, 2001. P. 129

407 Alexander Georgievich Kruglov was born in 1924 in a family of teachers. He was a participant of the Great Patriotic War, as a gun aimer and commander of an anti-tank gun. Member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union After the war, he graduated from the journalism department of Leningrad State University. He worked in newspapers in Leningrad, Uzbekistan, Sakhalin, Crimea. He is an author of a number of books. In 1956, he was expelled from the CPSU for views that did not correspond to the party’s course, in 1988, membership in the CPSU was restored. Since October 1989 he was a member of the Crimean branch of the Union of Writers of the USSR. Aleksandr G. Kruglov – candidate for People’s Deputies of the Ukrainian SSR. //Sevastopol glory. 1990. 2 February. № 22.

408 On the nation salvation front - preparation for offensive. Interview with A.G. An interview with A.G. Kruglov, chairman of Sevastopol department of the Russian Nation salvation Front // Homeland flag. Sevastopol.– 1992. – November 11. – No. 223.

409 Chronology of socio-political events in Sevastopol in the period from December 1992 to June 1993. State Archives of the Russian Federation. F. P–10026. Op. 4. D. 3515. L. 1-3ob.

April 1992 in Crimean and Sevastopol newspapers. It said: "We can talk more about the restoration of national justice, real equality of people of all nationalities who live here, in Crimea. It is about the protection of the Ukrainian minority because democracy is genuine only when it protects the minority ... I am fully on board with the position of the President of Russia, expressed in December last year, that the issue of Crimea is a problem of Ukraine".⁴¹⁰

The most numerous gatherings of citizens, at the initiative of this organization, were observed throughout 1993, and especially on the eve of adoption of a decision on the status of Sevastopol in the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation.

July 9, 1993. The Supreme Council of the Russian Federation adopted a resolution "On the status of the city of Sevastopol", that confirmed that the city of Sevastopol belonged to the Russian Federation within the administrative-territorial boundaries of the city district as of December 1991.⁴¹¹

During 1992, several public organizations appeared in Sevastopol, as well as branches of the Crimean republican political parties, which advocated the revision of the status of Sevastopol and the entire Republic of Crimea, and their transfer to the Russian Federation. City branch of the Republican Movement of Crimea (the Republican Party of Crimea was formed on the basis of the RMC), branch of the All-Crimean Movement of Voters for the Republic of Crimea, as well as city organization of the Russian Party of Crimea were among those who asserted themselves at most.

The Foundation and operation of Sevastopol branches of the Crimean republican parties, public associations outside the republic, were conditioned by the intention to consolidate, and, if possible, to strengthen their positions in the social and political sphere of the city. Indeed, according to the Constitution of the Republic of Crimea of May 6, 1992, the city of Sevastopol was considered an integral part of Crimea, but at the same time it had a special status. In addition, the problem of the Black Sea Fleet equally affected the interests of the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, including its political, social and military aspects.

Thus, on April 20, 1994, Sevastopol city branch of the Republican Movement of Crimea (later the Republican Party of Crimea) was registered by the Department of Justice in order to integrate into the political space of the city. By January 1, 1996, the number of this party reached 1,500 people. Sevastopol branch of the All-Crimean Movement of Voters for the Republic of Crimea (VDIRK) was also active. These two Sevastopol organizations of republican associations were united by a common position on the status of Sevastopol. It involved pursuance of the

410 Appeal of the President of Ukraine L. Kravchuk to the people's deputies of all levels, political forces and the population of the Republic of Crimea. //Sevastopol's Glory. 1993. № 70. 24 April.

411 On the status of the city of Sevastopol. Resolution of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation No. 5359-1 dated July 9, 1993. Crimea. Sevastopol. Russia. History. Geopolitics. The future. Head of the writing team L.I. Shershnev M., 2007. p. 137.

status of the city as a city of the Russian Federation, the main base of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation. At the same time, the associations advocated integration of the city economy into the Crimean economy, taking into account its special status⁴¹².

The decline in public activity in the city was caused by Russian-Ukrainian agreements on the Black Sea Fleet signed in May 1997, and then by the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Russia and Ukraine signed in June 1997. They temporarily (until the Orange Revolution) weakened the dynamics of the pro-Russian movement in Sevastopol. It should be noted that leadership of the Russian Federation did not provide systematic assistance to Russian organizations in the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol at that time.

Russian Community of Sevastopol (RCS), which worked steadily until the beginning of 2014 was among the authoritative pro-Russian organizations not only in Sevastopol but in the whole of Crimea. Afghanistan war veteran, a Sevastopol resident, Sergey Chirich, was its first chairman.

In 1993 when the first chairman of the RCS died, the organization was headed by Raisa Telyatnikova. By the beginning of 1994 the RCS accounted for 1,000 members, residents of Sevastopol. With the aim of creating a more massive organization, both individual and collective membership was envisaged. The community was registered in the city bodies of justice as a public organization with a national and cultural profile. The primary tasks of this organization were the following: assistance and help in obtaining Russian citizenship by residents of Crimea, popularization of achievements of Russian culture, art, science, education, and expansion of educational tourism. Further, social assistance was provided for veterans of the Great Patriotic War, as well as the establishment of business and economic ties with the Russian Federation.

This was the only Russian organization in Crimea, which in November 1995 was intended to be forcibly disbanded through judicial procedures on the suit of prosecutor of the city of Sevastopol “for a clearly defined anti-Ukrainian orientation, calls for change of territorial integrity of the state and incitement of national, racial hostility”⁴¹³.

The Russian Community of Sevastopol was supported by the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, the Council of Compatriots at the State Duma of the Russian Federation, and the International Congress of Russian Communities. An attempt to cease activities of the community was the basis for the statement of the State Duma of the Russian Federation addressed to Ukrainian authorities. It was noted: “Under such circumstances when for the sake of preserving good-neighbourly relations with Ukraine the Russian Federation makes concessions on many issues of bilateral relations in resolving the problem of the Black Sea Fleet, the

412 Appeal of the Sevastopol branches of the RPC/RDK and the All-Crimean Movement of Voters for the Republic of Crimea to the Sevastopol City Council // Slava Sevastopol. - 1993. - 17 September. - № 183.

413 Gorbachev S.P. “The Case of ROS”. //Flag of the Motherland. Sevastopol. 1995. – October 28. No. 201.

State Duma can consider the oppression of the oldest Russian community in the new emigre community only as a challenge to the Russian people, as an open attack on the organization of Russian compatriots in Ukraine”,⁴¹⁴.

The trial was widely covered by local media, and the Russian press did not stand aside either. Finally, a court decision was made in favour of the RCS, and the prosecutor’s claim was rejected.

The precedent related to the attempt to prosecute the Russian community in the city of Sevastopol consolidated the pro-Russian forces in the city and Crimea. On March 28, 1997, the 1st Congress of Crimea’s Russian Communities was held in Sevastopol, in which 142 delegates from 19 organizations took part. The main directions and principles of joint activities of Russia’s and Russian communities of Crimea and Sevastopol were determined at the congress. At the same time, decisions were made to create a coordinating body – the Council of Communities and to nominate a representative of the Crimean and Sevastopol organizations in government structures and public associations of Russia.

R. Telyatnikova, chairman of the RCS, was elected the Representative officer by a general vote. The choice of the Crimean and Sevastopol activists was associated with support of activities of the RCS by the Black Sea Fleet command; Sevastopol organization had its own print media – newspaper the Russian Community of Sevastopol – and its own representation in the deputy corps.

Such statutory instrument as the resolution of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation on the Russian status of Sevastopol adopted on July 9, 1993, played an important role⁴¹⁵.

Specificity of the activities of the Russian community of Sevastopol was that the community served as an instrument of support for military personnel of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation, their families, and citizens of the Russian Federation who lived in the city.

Since summer, 1997, the Russian community of Sevastopol, together with the Russian community of Crimea, the Crimean branches of the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU), the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine (PSPU), has been active in countering the exercises of NATO forces in Ukraine and Crimea. This direction of political activity of the community and of the pro-Russian forces of Sevastopol crystallized as far back as June 1997, when the Sevastopol Bastion public bloc was founded.

In his memoirs, admiral I.V. Kasatonov (commander of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Navy in 1991-1992) noted that since the beginning of the 1990-s “some aspects of Ukraine’s foreign policy began to appear: pursuance of rapprochement with the West, not with Russia, its leaning towards NATO and

414 Statement of the State Duma of the Russian Federation in connection with the attempt to forcibly disband the Russian community of Sevastopol and close its newspaper. //Russian community of Sevastopol. 1995. № 13. October.

415 I Congress of Russian and Russian communities of the Crimea was held. //Russian community of Sevastopol. 1997. №6 April.

absence of any tendencies towards military alliance with Moscow. There were all the signs of active military intelligence in the Black Sea Fleet, wiretapping of all negotiations and interception of telegrams”⁴¹⁶.

It was planned to land a joint Ukrainian-American assault force during the “Sea-Breeze-97” exercise on the Crimean coast near Donuzlav. On August 25, in Eupatoria, pro-Russian forces from all over the peninsula held an action to oppose the exercises. It was supported by deputies of Russian State Duma from Anti-NATO non-factional association. Further on actions of the “Anti-NATO” association contributed to unification and coordination of the activities of Russian organizations and pro-Russian movements in Crimea and Sevastopol. After all, as noted by the deputy of the Verkhovna Rada from Crimea L.I. Grach, supporters of the Euro-Atlantic course of Ukraine, referred the struggle against cultural identity of the peninsula and political independence of the autonomy as the most important area of their activity.⁴¹⁷

Within the framework of Sevastopol Bastion bloc, the RCS cooperated with public associations of veterans of the Great Patriotic War and Armed Forces.

Sevastopol Committee of War and Military Forces Veterans was an authoritative public association of Sevastopol veterans. Until October 1995, this public structure worked as Sevastopol Section of the Soviet Committee of War Veterans (founded in April 1965 on the basis of the decision of the Presidium of the Soviet Committee of War Veterans). By the early 1990-s and later, the organization retained its previous structure, which included 62 primary and 29 local organizations. As of 2008, the organization united 3600 people who had the status of veterans of the Great Patriotic War, 8350 - veterans of the Armed Forces, 1286 war veterans of local conflicts, 600 invalids of the Great Patriotic War⁴¹⁸.

By the beginning of the 1990-s, the veteran movement, in general, was not only well-structured, but also institutionally consolidated, coordinated because of the active work of its members on creation of the All-Union Book of Memory, which began in the second half of the 1980-s.⁴¹⁹ The work on implementation of the all-Union project has provided significant experience of interaction not only with museums, veteran organizations of war buddies but also with political administration of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation, house and street committees, youth search elements⁴²⁰.

The pro-Russian line of activities of veteran organizations, included in this bloc, was expressed through popularization and propaganda of military traditions of Russia’s, Russian, Soviet fleets in the Black Sea. Russia was considered as a state which history, cultural traditions, and religious beacons are closely

416 I.V. Kasatonov, Notes of the Commander of the Black Sea Fleet. Moscow, 2001. p. 121.

417 Grach, L.I. It’s not yet evening. Kiev, 2007. p. 143.

418 Sevastopol: encyclopaedic reference Compiling editor M.P. Aposhanskaya. 2d ed., amended and corrected Sevastopol; Simferopol, 2008. p. 759.

419 GAGS. F. P-570. Op. 1. D. 5. L. 5.

420 GAGS. F. P-570. Op. 1. D. 9. L. 4.

connected with the city of Sevastopol and are supported by its residents. As direct participants in war events of the past and modern history of their motherland, they made awareness-building on military-patriotic education among young people in the navy and in the city.

The Sevastopol Club of City and Fleet History Lovers, created as far back as 1982, also worked actively in this direction, uniting older people, veterans of labour and of the Armed Forces. Its main task was to promote the history of Sevastopol and the fleet, as well as to educate based on the best historical traditions.

It is necessary to note the work of the Military Research Group of the Black Sea Fleet, which has been operating in the city since 1957 and brought together retired officers, admirals and generals and those in reserve of the Black Sea Fleet, who had combat experience, who actively participated in the Great Patriotic War and other local conflicts. His work provided publication of historical, journalistic, chronicle, documentary books about war and history of the Black Sea Fleet foundation from Catherine times. The average circulation of publications was 1000 copies. They were sent to school libraries, clubs, military units of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation⁴²¹.

When we reconstruct the history of the beginning of self-organization of citizens on the peninsula in the first half of the 1990s. we cannot but recall the Cossack organizations.

The revival of Cossack traditions on the peninsula began in 1993. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Crimea Yu. A. Meshkov dated May 16, 1994 “On the Cossacks of the Crimea” contributed to this process⁴²². This regulatory act gave the Cossacks as an ethno-cultural community the right to revive their traditional social and economic way of life, to create public organizations with the historical names of communities, unions, etc., which could operate in the status of public associations.

Ukrainian authorities considered the Cossack associations in Crimea the pro-Russian formations which could ensure “forceful provision of relevant political decisions”⁴²³. The oldest Cossack organization on the peninsula is the Crimean Cossack Union (CCU), founded in January 1993.

In 1996 CCU was included in the “Union of Cossack Forces of Russia and Abroad”. The Cossacks of this organization had the consultative capacity and participated in all forms of both the Ukrainian Cossacks and the forums of the Cossacks of Russia. In 2001 V.S. Cherkashin took up the position of the Supreme Ataman of the Crimean Cossack Union.

421 Gorbachev S.P. The Military Scientific Society of the Black Sea Fleet is 55 years old. [Electronic resource] / Mode of access: <http://blackseafleet-21.com/>.

422 On the Cossacks of the Crimea: Decree of the President of the Republic of Crimea №63/94 of May 16, 1994 // Bulletin of the Government of the Republic of Crimea. Simferopol, 1994. No. 3 (14). p. 8

423 Litvinenko O. The Russian Federation’s Crimean Project: An attempt to reconstruct policy on the basis of ad hoc solutions // National Security and Defense. Kiev, 2009. No. 5. P. 73

Revival of the Cossacks in Sevastopol began with the Sevastopol Cossack community, established in 1994. Among the main tasks of the activities of Sevastopol Cossack formations were the following: revival of the historical and cultural traditions of the Cossacks, patriotic education of youth. One of the specific areas of activity of the Sevastopol Cossacks was assistance in preservation of cultural and historical heritage.

Both Crimea and the Sevastopol Cossacks associations performed joint activities to prevent land grabbing on the peninsula, opposed actions of radical Islamist groups in Crimea, and also opposed exercises of NATO countries in the Black Sea⁴²⁴. Later, in 2007, a Cossack organization “Black Sea Cossack Sotnia” was founded. Ataman of this organization A.A. Mareta took an active part in the events at the Earl’s Landing in 2008, when on July 5, at the Earl’s Landing, the military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine made an attempt to install a memorial plate in honour of the 90-th anniversary of raising the flag of the Ukrainian People’s Republic on the ships of the Black Sea Fleet. The installed plate was torn down and drowned in the sea by activists of pro-Russian public organizations and parties in the city of Sevastopol. Prosecution of defenders of the Earl’s Landing clustered together the pro-Russian movement in Crimea. Activists of pro-Russian organizations of Sevastopol and Crimea jointly supported defenders of the Earl’s Landing, A. Mareta, D. Solovyov, and A. Karavaev⁴²⁵.

We should take note of the political activity of the Sevastopol organization of the Russian Bloc party, which over the years was led by G.A. Basov and V.L. Tyunin.

In 2010 G.A. Basov, took on leadership of the Russian bloc party on a nationwide scale, replacing A.G. Svistunov, and V.L. Tyunin was at the head of the public association “For United Russia”.

The first Sevastopol public associations of Orthodox citizens, which, as a rule, coalesced around Orthodox parishes also had the status of public associations.

On August 10, 1993, the Centre for Orthodox Education, the first public association of Orthodox Christians, was opened in Sevastopol. Operation of the association was popular, especially with young people. It was proved by the events of November 1993, when for the first time in the modern history of the religious life of Sevastopol, an Orthodox church in the centre of the city was set on fire during an evening divine worship.

The Ukrainian legislation did not provide for any definition of a mechanism of religious organizations’ responsibility for the consequences of their activities, including damage to mental health of people. In this situation, educational activities of special Orthodox centres were of great importance for public welfare.

424 From the “Recent People’s History of Crimea”. Anatoly Mareta. [electronic resource] / Available at: http://blackseafleet-21.com/news/2-03-2016_iz-novejshej-narodnoj-istorii-kryma.

425 Oleg Rodivilov: “Solovyov, Mareta and Karavaev defended the Grafskaya Wharf, which he sang in “Leo Tolstoy’s “Sevastopol Stories” [Electronic resource] Mode of access: <http://www.ruscrimea.ru/2008/07/15/58.htm>.

Since January 1998, with participation of the Centre, a lecture hall “Comparative Theology and Sectology” has been arranged for everyone. Also, the work of its department – the Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Occultism and Alternative Medicine – was arranged.

Among the first Orthodox public associations in Crimea was the Crimean Fund Art in Jesus’ name, registered on May 24, 1993. The Fund carried out missionary and educational work by means of cultural events and actions. In the course of significant organizational work, the fund acquired its own Orthodox library, on which basis lectures on religious topics were held in cooperation with eparchy.

Thus, the fact of the existence of numerous associations with different organizational and legal forms in Crimea and in the city of Sevastopol as far back as in the first half of the 1990-s was caused by the fact that they reflected and defended the interests of the Russian people of Crimea in the broadest sense of this category.

Russian public associations founded in the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol differed in organizational and legal forms, level of functioning, directions and subjects of operation. The great problem of the Russian movement in Crimea and Sevastopol was, according to the majority of experts, their disunity, and failure to found a single movement with a leading centre. But time has proved the correctness of the postulate: “the more diverse the system, the more stable it is,” which means it is viable.

Events of the Russian Spring showed a high level of civic initiative among Sevastopol and Crimean residents, and the public associations established by them became active participants in the events of early 2014, which led to the desired reunification with Russia.

AN ANALYTICAL SUMMARY OF THE REFERENDUMS HELD IN CRIMEA (1991–2014)

Pavel A. Khrienko,

Doctor of Sociology, Professor, Academician of the Crimean Academy of Sciences (Simferopol)

On January 20, 1991, it was in Crimea that the first referendum in the history of the USSR was held. It was attended by 81.3% of voters. Then 1,343,855 people (93.26%) answered positively to the question: “Are you for re-establishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a subject of the USSR and a participant in the Union Treaty?” The referendum was deemed competent. On the basis of its results, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR was forced to make a decision on the restoration of the Crimean ASSR.

On March 17, 1991, in accordance with the decision of the 4th Congress of People’s Deputies of the USSR, an All-Union referendum was held following the Crimean one. The following question was put to a general vote: “Do you consider it necessary to preserve the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a renewed federation of equal sovereign republics, in which the rights and freedoms of a person of any nationality are fully guaranteed?” 80% of the country’s voters took part in the referendum. And 76.4% of them answered “yes”. In Ukraine: 83.5% voters, 70.2% voted for preservation of the Union. In Crimea (excluding Sevastopol) 1,085,570 people (87.6%) out of 1,239,092 (79.3%) voters gave their voices “for”.

Eight months later, on December 1, 1991, a referendum was held in Ukraine again with the question: “Do you support the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine?” In Crimea, 62% of the citizens included in the lists took part in the referendum. And 54% voted for the Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, taking into account the number of vacations and resort visitors who took part in the voting, as well as numerous military personnel. Two-thirds of Crimean voters (973,653 people) either voted “against” or did not take part in the referendum. Results of the Ukrainian referendum on December 1, 1991 became the basis for foundation of an independent Ukrainian state with the Crimean Autonomy as part of it.

In connection with the legal dispute continuing around the result of the referendum on December 1, 1991, it should be noted that it was held when the state of the USSR actually and legally existed, and its legal field was preserved. Thus, only decisions and actions within the framework of existing laws can be considered legitimate. And, therefore, the secession of any union republic from the USSR should have been carried out in accordance with the Law of April 3, 1990 “On the procedure for resolving issues related to secession of a union republic from the USSR.”

It is stated in clause 3 of the said Law: “In a union republic that includes autonomous republics, autonomous regions and autonomous areas, a referendum is held **separately for each autonomy**”.

It is also defined: “In a union republic, on the territory of which there are places of dense residence of ethnic groups that make up the majority of the population of a given locality, the results of the voting in these localities are taken into account on an individual basis when determining the results of a referendum”. It is also said in Clause 6 of the Law that a decision on secession of a union republic from the USSR is considered adopted if at least two-thirds of the citizens of the USSR permanently residing on its territory voted for it. Part 7 of Clause 17 of the Law provided that in the event of secession of the republic from the USSR, the status of territories that did not belong to the seceding republic at the time of its entry into the USSR must be agreed upon.

All these legal norms of the Union Law, as well as many others, were grossly ignored by Ukrainian authorities.

After the Belovezha Accords and break-up of the USSR, another referendum was initiated in Crimea. According to legislation as in force at that time, hundreds of thousands (more than 240 thousand) signatures were collected for holding a new Crimean referendum on the following:

“Taking into account the illegality of the acts of 1954 on the transfer of Crimea from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR, considering the will of the people of Crimea, expressed in the all-Crimean referendum on January 20, 1991, and in view of results of Crimean voting on the issue of the all-Crimean referendum on December 1, 1991. Are you for the independent republic of Crimea in an alliance with other states? “

However, “indefinite moratorium” was illegally imposed on this referendum, and initiators of the referendum were subjected to political repressions. As a result, the legal nihilism of Ukrainian political figures led to a long-lasting confrontation between Crimea and Ukraine, many legal collisions.

On June 26, 1994, a referendum (general poll) was held on the status of Sevastopol. And 90% of Sevastopol residents gave their voices for the Russian status of the city. Building upon this, the Sevastopol City Council of People’s Deputies adopted a resolution on August 24, 1994: “1. To recognize the Russian legal status of the city of Sevastopol. 2. To confirm the principled position of the City Council on Sevastopol as the main base of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation, expressed in all prior decisions of the City Council of the XXI and XX convocations”.

In the appeal of Sevastopol City Council of People’s Deputies to leadership of Russia and Ukraine, it was said that “of the day, the city of Sevastopol is still part of the Russian Federation, since when the Crimean Region was transferred from Russia to Ukraine in 1954, the Resolution on the status of Sevastopol of 1948 was not cancelled, and the subsequent extension of jurisdiction of Ukraine to the city of Sevastopol was adopted unilaterally ..”. In this regard,

attention should be paid to the fact that the UN Security Council, which intentionally considered the Sevastopol problem, actually agreed with the fact that there were no decisions to transfer the city of Sevastopol to Ukraine. The legal basis for being the part of Ukraine for Sevastopol was the provision of the Treaty between Russia and Ukraine, signed in Kiev on November 12, 1990, where the contracting parties undertook a commitment to “respect the territorial integrity of each other within the framework of the currently existing borders”. The UN Security Council especially welcomed the position of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, who at that time actually refused to defend Sevastopol and spoke out totally against the decision of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation “On the status of the city of Sevastopol as the main base of the Black Sea Fleet”. (Collection of UN Decisions and Resolutions, July 20, 1993. Document S/26118).

The *de facto* **annexation of Sevastopol by Ukraine** and the denial of the Crimeans’ right to hold a referendum in accordance with Law “On the procedure for solving issues related to secession of a union republic from the USSR” generate an extremely adversarial atmosphere in Crimea. A relative compromise was found on the basis of the 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Crimea. This Constitution provided for the right of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea to hold referendums, and also extended at most the rights of Crimea in conducting domestic and foreign policy. Permission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine to hold referendums in Crimea was not specified.

However, in 1995, President of Ukraine L. Kuchma unilaterally abolished the 1992 Constitution of Crimea. This was a gross violation of the rights of the Republic of Crimea, as well as of the Constitution of Ukraine, which provided for legitimacy of the 1992 Constitution of Crimea. In 1998, under Kiev’s pressure, a new Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was adopted. But even in this imposed Ukrainian Constitution, there was a right of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to hold referendums in Clause 18.

Thus, consideration of results of referendums held in Crimea since 1991 permits to draw the following conclusions.

The first point. Over the past twenty-three years, numerous referendums have been held in Crimea to determine the statehood of the region. The referendums were organized and conducted in accordance with current international norms and based on democratic principles.

The second point. At the referendums, the population of Crimea has clearly defined its state and political priorities aimed at reintegration with Russia, as ancestral homeland of the overwhelming majority of Crimeans.

The third point. There is good reason to believe the “war” unleashed by the ruling elites in Ukraine and the reactionary forces of the West against the Crimean referendum, held in March 2014, for non-recognition of its results can be regarded as a protest against fundamental principles of democracy and the right of people for self-determination, provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

ANALYTICAL REPORT “ON LEGITIMACY OF THE ALL-CRIMEAN REFERENDUM”⁴²⁶

Enough time has passed since the historical reunification of Crimea and Russia, but still, a group of Western states, contrary to the principles of international law, keep on to promote in international organizations, including the UN, the theses on “occupation” and “annexation” of Crimea by the Russian Federation, ignoring legal declaration of the will of the people of Crimea, expressed by them on the all-Crimean referendum on March 16, 2014.

1. On February 23, 2014, a coup d'état took place in Kiev, as a result of which power was usurped by opponents of the legally elected President of Ukraine V.F. Yanukovich, **who had to leave Kiev because of the threat to his life.**

On February 23, 2014, there was an illegal attempt to dump the president, the procedure under Clause 108 of the Constitution of Ukraine was grossly violated. At the same time, the promised V. F. the guarantees promised to V.F. Yanukovich specified in the Agreement on the Settlement of the Political Crisis in Ukraine on February 21, 2014, signed through the mediation of representatives of the European Union (on behalf of leadership of Germany, France and Poland), **were not provided.**

A group of individuals led by A. Turchinov and A. Yatsenyuk seized and appropriated state powers by force through violence. Norms of the Ukrainian Constitution were defied; the Constitution was actually no longer in force, since necessary legal conditions for its application were lost.

At the same time, in Crimea, in contrast to Kiev, legally elected bodies of state power continued to operate, and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea continued to exercise its sovereignty on its territory in accordance with its Constitution. It should be borne in mind that the Autonomous Republic of Crimea retained its special status, which was beyond the scope of the unitarity of the Ukrainian state due to different ethnic composition compared to Ukraine (65% ethnic Russians and 13% Crimean Tatars), and its affiliation in Ukraine after proclamation of the sovereignty of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea by the Act of September 11, 1991 was a compromise based on the observance of its special rights of autonomous formation within unitary Ukraine. The coup d'état in Kiev and the threat of ethnic cleansing and civil war looming over Crimea destroyed this compromise.

According to section 10 of the Constitution of Ukraine of 1996, it was the autonomous legal status that was legally related to the rights of peoples that covered the territory of Crimea. Subject to **Clause 138.2** of this section of the Constitution of Ukraine, in particular, **the jurisdiction of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea includes “arrangement and holding of local referendums”,** and

426 On June 21, 2017 in Moscow, there was a presentation of this Analytical Report. “On legitimacy of Crimean referendum” in ITAR TASS

the possible subject of such referendums is not limited to this special “Crimean” section of the Constitution.

Actions of Crimean authorities under the circumstances prevailing in Ukraine were of a legal nature. Based on the convincing results of the referendum (96.77% of those who voted supported reunification of Crimea and Russia, with a turnout of 83.1%), on March 17, 2014, an independent sovereign Republic of Crimea was proclaimed.

As for the city of Sevastopol, it should be noted that on October 29, 1948, by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR, it was separated from the Crimean region and subordinated directly to the republican authorities.

Therefore, the de facto affiliation of the Russian city of Sevastopol (Clause 133 of the Constitution of Ukraine) to Ukraine is not based on any regulatory acts of Russia on its transfer to Ukraine and is nothing more than a **unilateral decision of Ukraine** to include the Russian city of Sevastopol in its composition, which must be considered from a legal point of view, as nothing but **the seizure of foreign territory by Ukraine**.

The referendum held on March 16, 2014 in the city of Sevastopol confirmed this circumstance once again (95.6 % of voters gave their voices for reunification with Russia with a turnout of 89.5 %) and the city of Sevastopol returned its former special status.

In light of this situation, residents of Crimea, in full compliance with provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of December 10, 1948, taking into account that the new (essentially criminal) Kiev “government” treated human rights with disdain and contempt, made the correct decision to hold a referendum on independence and reunification with Russia, **which made it possible to avoid the use of armed violence against the republic and its inhabitants**.

In this respect actions of the legal authorities and citizens of Crimea were fully **consistent** with legal norms, in particular, with provision of part 2 of Clause 27 of the Constitution of Ukraine on the right of “everyone to protect his/her own life and the lives of other people from unlawful encroachments”.

The Crimean referendum, which took place under the supervision of over 150 international observers on March 16, 2014, and was caused by the coup d'état, amid seizure of power in Kiev by nationalists and extremists, was an exercise of the right of peoples to self-determination. Until March 16, 2014, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea existed as autonomy within Ukraine, and also had its own Constitution of the ARC, adopted on October 21, 1998. Clause 48 of this Constitution of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea entitled “Guarantees and ensuring the status and powers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea” provides that these guarantees are ensured by democratic institutions of society, which include also referendum on any important issue for the population of the republic.

In addition, one should take into account that even in the preamble to the Constitution of Ukraine recognition and establishment of the right of Ukrainian

peoples to self-determination is stated. The Constitution also guarantees, according to clause 69, the expression of the will of the people through a referendum. Moreover, the purpose of a referendum is defined as manifestation of one of the forms of direct democracy.

In the current situation, when a real threat to the life and security of the Crimean population loomed, the people of Crimea independently decided their fate through a peaceful referendum, without applying for a forced last resort - an uprising against tyranny and oppression, which saved thousands of human lives.

2. Actions of Crimean residents are also consistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly resolution on December 16, 1966, which inhibits torture, cruel treatment, assaulting dignity (Clause 7), national discrimination, hostility (Clause 20) (“Moskalyaku na giliaku – Russians to gallows!”, “Crimea is Ukrainian or deserted!” – the most popular slogans of Ukrainian nationalists); the cancellation (suspension) of the **Law on the State Language Policy of Ukraine** meant in fact a ban on the use of Russian language, while the Russian-speaking and Russian-cultural population of Crimean Peninsula make over 85%.

Clause 26 of the said Covenant proclaims the equality of all people before the law, prohibition of any kind of discrimination and protection against discrimination on the grounds of language, nationality, and political convictions.

The people of Crimea understood that it can get this protection only through self-determination and reunification with its historical homeland, where they had been for more than 200 years (since April 8, 1783, after Empress Catherine II signed the Manifesto “On acceptance of the Crimean Peninsula, Taman Island and the entire Kuban side under Russian state”).

3. Events in Ukraine that followed proved the correctness of the Crimeans’ choice (bloodshed events in Odessa, civil war in Donbas).

These actions on holding the referendum were legal and justified, since:

a) an anti-constitutional coup d’état was carried out in Ukraine **supported by foreign states** (V. Nuland confirmed the fact of long-term financing of preparation and holding of actions aimed at subversion of the state structure of Ukraine);

b) in fact, the coup d’état was confirmed by the decision of Dorogomilovsky District Court of Moscow dated December 27, 2016, which came into legal force, following the petition of V. Oleynik on establishment of the legal fact of a coup d’état in Ukraine in February 2014, and in accordance with the Convention of the CIS countries of January 22, 1993 “On legal assistance and legal relations in civil, family and criminal cases” (Minsk) decisions that come into legal force in fact are automatically acknowledged in all 12 countries which signed the Convention, including Ukraine (Clause 51);

c) there was no legitimate power in Ukraine, despite the fact that part 3 of Clause 5 of the Constitution of Ukraine provides that no one can usurp power. Armed formations not provided for by the laws of Ukraine, in the form of the

"Right Sector", UNA-UNSO, the "Svoboda" party and others were the shock force of the usurpers, which was created and functioned, contrary to the requirements of part 6 of Clause 7 of the Constitution of Ukraine. Nazi executioners and traitors of the Second World War period were declared national heroes by the new government, state ideology was based on Nazism, and terror became the main tool of state policy.

Later, illegal armed groups were used for brutal repression against Ukrainian citizens who opposed the coup, up to the arbitrary deprivation of life, prohibited by Part 1 of Clause 27 of the Constitution of Ukraine. It is evidenced by multiple facts of the massacre, cruel treatment and abasement of human dignity, deprivation of life by nationalists near the town of Cherkassy, acts against Crimean residents who defended the Constitution on Maidan, attacks on buses, arson attack and murder of citizens returning from Kiev to Crimea, visits of so-called "Trains of friendship" from Kiev to Crimea, provocations on the basis of interethnic conflicts, etc., which indicates a gross violation of the requirements of Part 1 of Clause 28 of the Constitution of Ukraine.

d) there were physical persecutions and an attempt on the life of the legally elected President V.F. Yanukovich, murder of policemen from Crimea A.V. Fedyukin, D.A. Vlasenko, V.I. Goncharov, who protected the public during "Euromaidan";

e) under the conditions of the coup, the Crimeans exercised the population's right to protection caused by **the threat to life and safety of the Crimean population, and warmongering**. In Crimea, self-defence forces were created with participation of Cossacks, home guard, together with a part of local militia, under the command of the head of the Crimean government S.V. Aksyonov, appointed by the legitimate president V.F. Yanukovich. The number of home guard made approximately 10,000.

f) contrary to the requirements of Part 4 Clause 17 of the Constitution of Ukraine on the prohibition of the use of armed forces of the country in order to restrict rights and freedoms of citizens, the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine was preparing a landing of an assault force of Ukraine with the aim to disrupt the referendum, which became known in Crimea and Moscow.

The Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff of Ukraine (AFU) V. Muzhenko said that in March 2014 Kiev leadership discussed the possibility of assault landing in Crimea to oppose the referendum on reunification of the peninsula with Russia. He said this in an interview with *The Ukrainian Truth*. "On March 1, 2014, together with the Deputy Head of the Main Operations Directorate, General Viktor Nazarov, we proposed response to the situation in Crimea. It was supposed to carry out an amphibious operation: to land on the peninsula and to seize airfields, to augment our groups there". He added that it was proposed to intercept the narrow isthmus between Crimea itself and the Kerch Peninsula, as well as to cut off traffic on the Simferopol-Sevastopol and Simferopol-Yalta

highways. According to him, planes were sent to airfields to load the troops in the evening of March 1, 2014. However, due to security arrangements taken by Russia and Crimea, this decision was cancelled.

4. The appeal of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea to the President of Russia with a request for assistance in ensuring peace and tranquillity on the territory of Crimea. On February 28, 2014, by agreement with the legally elected President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich, new government headed by S.V. Aksyonov was formed by the Supreme Council of the ARC and began to function. Konstantinov and Aksyonov appealed to the Crimean security officials and the President of Russia with a request to protect Crimean people and temporarily reassigned the security structures to themselves.

5. Subject to the United States and the EU countries, the referendum is allegedly illegitimate and anti-constitutional due to the presence of Russian armed forces in Crimea during this period of time.

However, it should be noted that at the moment Russia acted in full compliance with international law, since its military presence in Crimea (the Black Sea Fleet based in Sevastopol for over 200 years) was due to the international treaty with Ukraine and international law. The Russian armed forces could move across the territory of Crimea, as it is provided for by the international treaty between Russia and Ukraine, which was ratified by the Verkhovna Rada.

The deployment of Russian troops in Crimea and in the city of Sevastopol is due to an international agreement of May 28, 1997. Military personnel of Russia's Armed Forces did not take part in the voting and could not influence its result. Since there was a real threat of seizure of administrative buildings by SBU and "Right Sector" in order to disrupt the referendum, self-defence fighters and people's guard from amongst residents of Crimea, who also did not influence the vote count, kept order at polling stations.

6. On March 3, 2014, at the UN Security Council meeting as an objection to unsubstantiated accusations Russia's Permanent Representative to the UN V. I. Churkin presented the text of the appeal of the Ukraine's President V.F. Yanukovich to the President of Russia V.V. Putin with a request for military assistance: "As the legally elected President of Ukraine, I declare. Maidan events, illegal seizure of power in Kiev led to the situation when Ukraine found itself on the verge of a civil war. There are chaos and anarchy in the country; life, security and rights of people, especially in the South-East and in Crimea, are under threat. Under the influence of Western countries, overt terror and violence are exercised, people are persecuted on political and linguistic grounds. In this regard, I appeal to the President of Russia V.V. Putin with a request to use the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to restore the rule of law, peace, law and order, stability and to defend population of Ukraine. V.F. Yanukovich, March 1, 2014".

In the legal sense, Yanukovich continued to preserve his legitimacy as the President of the state until his re-election or discretionary resignation.

March 18, 2014. The President of Russia emphasized the following in his appeal. "Russia did not send troops to Crimea, it only augmented its grouping, at that it did not exceed the maximum assigned strength provided for by the international treaty." These measures were taken in order to protect "lives of citizens of the Russian Federation, our compatriots and personnel of the military contingent of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation deployed in accordance with the international treaty on the territory of Ukraine" in the environment of lawlessness and threats of nationalist extremists.

Moreover, the President of Russia confirmed his constitutional right in the national parliament of the state to use Russian troops abroad but did not exercise it. (Resolution of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation No. 48-CФ dated March 1, 2014)

Thus, the unsubstantiated accusations of the use of Russian military forces before, during and after the referendum in Crimea have not been legally confirmed and are still only attempts to invent "arguments" against the legitimacy of the referendum.

The pivotal question in the crisis environment in Ukraine, provoked by unconstitutional, criminal Bandera coup in Kiev as a result of the armed seizure of power by extremists, is related to the question of the legitimacy of this "power" itself. Those persons who came to power in Ukraine by military coup committed a criminal offense, and their actions could not be legally effective for the Russian Federation.

7. In this regard, the Conclusion of the Venice Commission on the Crimean referendum of March 21, 2014, No. 762/2014 CDL-AD (2014) 002 is unconvincing. It is stated in this conclusion that "there are numerous provisions of the Ukrainian Constitution that very clearly indicate that separation of a part of the country's territory cannot be the subject of a local referendum ". But **constitutional provisions** concerning the functioning of the authorities of Ukraine, which were in force before the coup in Kiev, **were destroyed, and the emergency circumstances in Crimea (a real threat to the life of the Crimeans, as their supreme value; unleashing of a civil war) did not allow to hold a referendum without measures to ensure its holding, which are within the competence of the legal authorities of Crimea.**

Summarizing the above, it is necessary to state that there was **secession** in Crimea (that is, a voluntary departure from the state without control by legal authorities), the proclamation of state independence by the legitimate representative body acting through the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, confirmed in the referendum that approved secession from Ukraine. It was followed by the entry of the **independent Crimean state into the Russian Federation and reunification with Russia in accordance with the will of the people of Crimea**, which fundamentally excludes annexation, i.e., **the forceful joining of a part of a country by another country.**

Therefore, in such cases, it is necessary to legally distinguish “secession” from “annexation”, as, for example, between voluntarily “accept” and “withdraw” by force.

Thus, the assertion of some politicians that the Crimean referendum was held allegedly in violation of international law looks absurd, and the UN General Assembly Resolution No. A / RES / 68/262 of March 27, 2014, on the “territorial integrity” of Ukraine, which was adopted under pressure of western countries in a hurry and without fact-based legal analysis, seems to be unfounded.

Declaration of Independence does not violate norms of international law and cannot do this, **which was confirmed** by the International Court of Justice, **which** in its decision of July 22, 2010, confirmed that “unilateral declaration of independence by a part of the state does not violate any norms of international law... General international law does not contain any applicable prohibition on the declaration of independence”.

9. The legitimacy of the referendum of the residents of Crimea of March 16, 2014, is further augmented by the fact that resolution of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation of May 21, 1992, No. 2809-1 acknowledged the Resolution of the Presidium of the RSFSR Supreme Council of February 5, 1954 “On transfer of the Crimean region from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR” **null and void from the moment of its adoption as it was adopted in violation of the Constitution (Basic Law) of the RSFSR and the legislative procedure.**

The Supreme Council of the Russian Federation made a decision to return the illegally lost territory and, at the same time, did not establish a Russian protectorate over Crimea, but left this decision for the future, with the participation of residents of Crimea and on the basis of their will. The resulting legal void, lack of legal clarity regarding the status of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol were overcome 22 years later on the basis of democratic expression of the will of its people on self-determination of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and subsequent reunification with their historical homeland - Russia.

Thus, **the referendum in Crimea, including in the city of Sevastopol**, held on March 16, 2014, through which the peoples inhabiting the Crimean Peninsula independently determined their fate on a democratic basis, **was held legitimately** and must be acknowledged as such by foreign states. ...

Working Group on International Legal Issues Under
the Head of the Republic of Crimea

A.A. Vlasov Doctor of Law, Professor

G.B. Mirzoev, Doctor of Law, Professor

P.A. Khrienko, Doctor of Social Sciences, Professor

A.V. Molokhov, PhD in Historical Sciences

V.I. Kononenko, PhD in Legal Sciences

A.I. Travnikov, PhD in Legal Sciences

M.L. Ioffe, Vice-President of the International Association of Russian-speaking lawyers.

APPENDIX: LAWS AND REGULATIONS

THE PEACE TREATY OF KUCUK KAYNARCA BETWEEN RUSSIA AND TURKEY

July 10, 1774

Clause 3. **On Independence of Crimea**, clauses 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. On incorporation of Azov, Kerch, Yenikale, Kinburn and other lands to Russia.

Article 3. All Tatar peoples: Crimean, Budjak, Kuban, Edisans, Jemboiluk and Edichkul, without exception from both empires, have been acknowledged free and completely independent of any outside power, but under the autocratic rule of their own khan of Chinggis generation, chosen and erected by all Tatar a society, who may govern them according to their ancient laws and customs, without giving any account to any extraneous power; and for this, neither the Russian court nor the Ottoman Porta have any right to interfere both in the election and erection of the aforementioned khan, and in their domestic, political, civil and internal affairs under any guise, but to acknowledge and honour this Tatar nation in a political and civil state following the example of other states, which are under their own rule, and which are independent from everyone except for the one God; in religious ceremonies, as coreligionists with Muslims, in the reasoning of his Sultan Majesty, as the supreme caliph of the Mohammedan law, they have to conform to the rules prescribed by their law, without the slightest prejudice, but political and civil liberties asserted for them.

Except for the fortresses of Kerch and Yenikol with their districts and marinas, which the Russian Empire holds for itself, the Russian Empire leaves to this Tatar nation all the cities, fortresses, villages, lands and marinas in Crimea and Kuban, gained by its arms, the land between rivers Berdo and Horse Waters (Konskie vodi) and the Dnieper, as well as all the land up to the Polish border, lying between the Bug and Dniester rivers, excluding Ochakov fortress with its old district, which still belongs to the Ottoman Porte, and is promised by the decree of a peaceful treatise and by the exchange of all of this to withdraw troops from their possessions, and the Ottoman Porte mutually undertakes, evenly renouncing any right, whatever it might be, to fortresses, cities, dwellings and everything else in Crimea, in Kuban and on the island of Taman, to have no military posts and military people of their own there, ceding these areas in the same way as the Russian court cedes to Tatars the lands in their complete autocratic and independent possession and rule.

Also, with all the possible honours and celebrations, the Ottoman Porte undertakes and promises not to introduce and not to hold their military men, whatever their rank, in the mentioned cities, fortresses, lands and dwellings of its garrisons, not to introduce and not hold their military men into these cities, not to have siemens or other military people, whatever their rank, below in the area of these, and leave all Tatars in the same full liberty and independence, in which the Russian Empire leaves them.

Article 18. Kinburn Castle, lying at the mouth of the Dnieper River, with a considerable district along the left bank of the Dnieper and with a corner that is made up with plains lying between the Bug and Dnieper rivers, remains in complete, eternal and absolute possession of the Russian Empire.

Article 19. The fortresses of Yenikale and Kerch, lying in the Crimean Peninsula, with their marinas and everything in them, the same with counties, from the Black Sea and following the ancient Kerch border to the Bugak plot of land, and from Bugaks in a straight line upwards even to the Azov seas remain in the complete, eternal and absolute possession of the Russian Empire.

Article 20. The city of Azov, with its district and with the boundaries shown in the instruments committed in 1700, that is, in the 1113-d, between governor Tolstoy and the Agug governor Gassan Pasha, remains in possession of the Russian Empire in perpetuity.

Article 21. Both Kabarda regions, that is, Big and Small, in the vicinity of the Tatars, have a great connection with the Crimean khans; for this reason, they can be delivered into possession of the imperial Russian court by the will of Crimean Khan, with his council and with the Tatar senior representatives.

Article 22. Both empires agreed to completely annul and consign to eternal oblivion all previously existing treaties and conventions between them, including Belgrade, with subsequent conventions, and never base any claim on them, except the convention signed in 1700 between Governor Tolstoy and Agug Governor Hassan Pasha regarding the borders of the Azov district and the establishment of the Kuban border, which will remain indispensable, as it was before.

These the above-written points in twenty-eight articles for eternal peace between the most highness empire of All-Russia and the Ottoman Porte, signed by hand and approved by seals of the plenipotentiaries of both high sides at the village of Kyuchyuk-Kainardzhi with the Russian lieutenant general Knyaz Repnin, and with the Ottoman Effendi Nisanzhi Resmi Akhmet and Reis Effendi Ibrahim Munib, I with the full authority given to me by Her Imperial Majesty

accept, acknowledge and confirm in faithfulness with my handwritten signature and attachment of the coat of arms of my seal. In the camp near the village of Kuchuk-Kainarji.

July 5, 1774.

General Field Marshal Count
Rumyantsov

And our imperial majesty ratifies and confirm this treatise, of the eternal peace written above, promising by our imperial word for ourselves and for our heirs this treatise into eternal friendship with his Sultan majesty on our part in everything, as it says, inviolably keep and execute, and for the sake of assurance of that we have commanded to approve our ratification with our state seal.

Given in St. Petersburg on August the first of the year one thousand seven hundred and seventy-four, of our third reign for ten years.

**MANIFESTO
OF THE GREAT EMPRESS CATHERINE II
ON AFFILIATION OF THE CRIMEAN PENINSULA, TAMAN
ISLAND WITH THE ENTIRE KUBAN DISTRICT TO RUSSIA,
1783, APRIL 8⁴²⁷**

By the Grace of God,
We, Catherine the Second,
Empress and Sole Ruler of All Russia,
et cetera, et cetera, et cetera

In the war with the Ottoman Porte, when the forces and victories of Our weapons gave Us the full right to leave Crimea in Our favour, which was in Our hands, We sacrificed by this and other extensive conquests for the renewal of good amity and friendship with the Ottoman Porte, transforming the peoples of Tatars to a free and independent region, in order to sweep away forever the cases and methods of strife and coldness, which often took place between Russia and the Porte in the former state of Tatars.

However, we did not reach silence and security within that part of the Empire of Our, which were to be the fruits of this decree. Tatars, following the suggestions of others, immediately began to act contrary to their own good, given to them by Us.

Their autocratic Khan, chosen by them in such a change of the circumstances, was ousted from the place and homeland by an alien and was preparing to return them under the yoke of their former domination. Some of them blindly clung to him, the other was not able to resist. Under such circumstances, We were forced to preserve the integrity of the building erected by Us, one of Our best gains from the war, to accept right-minded Tatars into Our patronage, giving them the freedom to choose another lawful Khan in Sahib-Girey's place and establish his reign: for this it was necessary to set our military forces in motion, to detach from them in the most severe time a noble corps in the Crimea, to keep it there for a long time, and, finally, to act against the rebels by force of arms; from which a new war almost flared up with the Ottoman Porte, like that in everyone's fresh memory.

Thanks be to God! Then this thunderstorm passed by recognition from the Porte of the lawful and autocratic Khan in the person of Shagin-Girey. The product of this turning point did not cost Our Empire cheap; but We, at least, hoped that it would be rewarded by a future and secure neighbourhood. Time and even a short time, however, in fact, contradicted this assumption.

A new rebellion that arose last year, of which the true beginnings are not hidden from Us, forced Us again to full armament and to a new detachment of Our troops in the Crimea and on the Kuban side, which remain there to this day:

427 Complete collection of laws of the Russian Empire, V. XXI, No. 15.708.

because without them there could be no peace, silence and constitution among the Tatars, and an active test for many years in every possible way already proves that just as their previous subordination to the Porte was a reason for cold relations and conflicts between the counties, the same is now when their transformation in a free region and their inability to reap the fruits of their freedom triggers Our concern, leads to losses and troubles Our army.

The world knows that having such fair reasons from Our side to send more than once Our troops into the Tatar region, as long as the interests of Our State could be coordinated with the hope of the best, we did not appropriate our superiors there, we took revenge or punished the Tatars who acted hostilely against Our army below, who conquered by the well-meaning in the suppression of harmful disturbances.

But now, when, on the one hand, it is acceptable to respect the great costs spent to this day on the Tatars and for the Tatars, amounting, according to the correct calculation, for twelve million roubles, not including the loss of people, which is higher than any monetary value; on the other hand, when we know it happened that the Ottoman Porte begins to apply the supreme power in the Tatar lands, namely: on the island of Taman, where her official, who arrived with an army, publicly ordered to chop off the head of a person sent from Shagin-Girey Khan with a question about the reason for his arrival, and declared the local inhabitants to be Turkish subjects; then this act destroys our former mutual obligations about freedom and independence of the Tatar peoples; confirms Us more clearly that Our assumption at the conclusion of the peace, having made the Tatars independent, does not suffice to remove all the reasons for strife, which can happen because of the Tatars, and supplies Us with all those rights which Our victories in the last war were acquired and fully existed before the conclusion of the peace; and for that, according to the duty of the care offered to Us for the welfare and greatness of the fatherland, trying to establish its benefit and safety, as well as considering it as a means forever alienating the unpleasant reasons that disturb the eternal peace between the All-Russian and Ottoman Empires, which We sincerely wish to preserve forever, no less and in exchange and satisfaction of Our losses, We decided to take under our power the Crimean peninsula, Taman Island and the entire Kuban side.

Announcing to the inhabitants of those places such a change in their existence by the power of Our Imperial Manifest, we promise sacredly and unwaveringly for ourselves and the Successors of Our Throne to keep them on an equal footing with our natural subjects, to protect and defend their persons, property, temples and natural faith, which is free and all legal rights will remain inviolable; and finally, allow each of the states all those rights and advantages that such in Russia enjoy; on the contrary, we demand and expect from the gratitude of our new subjects that they, in their happy transformation from rebellion and disorder into peace, silence and lawful order, will vain by faithfulness, diligence and good

manners to become like our ancient subjects and deserve, on an equal basis with them, Our Monarch's mercy and generosity.

Given in Our patronal city of St. Peter, April 8th in the year of Our Lord, 1783, and in the twenty-first summer of Our reign.

DECREE
OF EMPRESS CATHERINE II OF FEBRUARY 2, 1784
“ON FOUNDATION OF THE TAURIAN REGION”

The reasons that induced us to join the Crimean Peninsula, Taman and the Kuban side to our Empire are known from our Manifesto published on the 8th day of April 1783.

With the help of God, our intention was put into action, our borders in that land were put in safety, they took away all the reason for the ever-present misunderstandings and strife with the neighbouring Ottoman Empire, and finally, our minister with the representative empowered by His Sultan Majesty decreed on the 28th day of December 1783, through a triumphant act, peace and friendship between the two Empires, on the exact basis of the treatise of 1774 and the explanatory convention of 1779 and the trade agreement of 1783 that followed, excluding all those articles in the first two, which, according to the present conversion of the Tatar peoples to our citizenship, cannot be valid.

According to such a happy ending of external affairs, we acknowledge it as the duty of our reign to pay our attention to the fact, that these lands subject to our sceptre are arranged in a way of government in general for everything, our state prescribed, and so that their inhabitants, with the free use of each of his natural faith, and with quiet possession of the property lawfully belonging to him, took advantage of all the benefits that our other subjects, under our laws, peacefully and safely enjoy. As a result of this, We establish a region under the name of Taurida consisting of the Crimean peninsula with the land lying between Perekop and the borders of the Yekaterinoslav governorship, and the Taman islands, as long as the multiplication of the population and various necessary institutions will make it convenient to arrange the province, we will entrust it to the management of our general, governor-general of Yekaterinslav and Tavria Prince Potemkin, whose feat and our own and all these lands have fulfilled the assumption, leaving him to divide that region into districts, appoint cities, prepare for opening during the current year, and inform us and our Senate about all the details, related to that; as for the Kuban side, it is convenient to join it to the Caucasian province, about which we will not hesitate to inform the Senate.

JASSY PEACE TREATY BETWEEN RUSSIA AND TURKEY

December 29, 1791 – January 9, 1792

Clause 2. Treatise of Peace of July 10, 1774, and Aegirs of the year 1188 of the 14th day of the Moon by Jemaiel Evvel; the explanatory convention of March 10, 1779, and Aegira of the year 1193 of the 20th day of Jemaziel-Akhyr; the treatise of trade of June 10, 1783, and Aegirs of the year 1197 of the 21 Rejeba, and an act explaining the affiliation of Crimea and Taman to the Russian Empire, and that the border is the Kuban River, of December 28, 1783, and Aegis of the year 1198 of the 15 Safar, by the power of this peace treaties are confirmed in all their clauses, except for those that are cancelled by this treatise or by the same ones after the other, and both High Contracting Parties undertake to maintain them sacredly and inviolably and to fulfil them with good faith and accuracy.

Clause 6. According to the second clause of this peace treaty, including other treatises, the act of December 28, 1783, which was adopted before incorporation of Crimea, Taman to the All-Russian Empire, and before defining the border in that direction between the two contracting parties on the Kuban River, the Ottoman Porte, in the statement that for future times it wants to put out everything that can disturb peace, silence and good agreement between the two powers, promises and undertakes to solemnly use all the power and methods to curb and restrain the peoples living on the left bank of the Kuban River at its borders, so that they do not make raids on the borders of the All-Russian Empire, do no offense, predation and ruin to the Russian-Imperial subjects and their villages, dwellings and lands, neither secretly nor openly, and under no guise they do not capture people in captivity; about which the strictest prohibitions on the part of the Ottoman Porte were given to the proper persons under pain of cruel and inevitable punishment, and in those places, after the exchange of ratifications for this peace treaty, they must be promulgated by all means: if, even for such a decree in this treatise and a prohibition imposed on such a mentioned peoples, one of them dares to raid the borders of the All-Russian Empire, and there to add harm, loss or ruin, or cattle, or whatever is stolen or taken away, or Russian people will be captured in captivity, in this case, upon filing a complaint, an early and urgent satisfaction has to be delivered, by the return of the robbed and stolen, especially the indispensable and no reservation of the unconfirmed search and release of Russian or captured people, rewarding the damages inflicted, and the approximate punishment of those guilty at the border in the presence of the appointed commissar from the Russian border authorities; If more than any hope, such satisfaction in six months from bringing a complaint would not have been delivered, the Ottoman Porte undertakes to pay all losses from the treasury itself in a month upon filing a complaint from the Minister of the Russian-Imperial, considering that the above penalties for violation of the tranquillity of neighbouring borders will certainly and accurately be fulfilled without delay.

**DECREE
to the Ruling Senate**

Appointing Sevastopol as the main military port, we command to close down the port Customs located there, which has to finish its operations within six months from this day. After that time, it goes without saying that merchant ships will not be allowed to enter there, unless, from an assault or for the sake of other sudden cases, such a ship enters the port for repair or for salvation, and not for bargaining, and, as soon as the danger has passed or the repair is finished, it should leave.

February 23, 1804.
Emperor Alexander I

III PROCLAMATION OF THE UKRAINIAN CENTRAL RADA

Ukrainian people and all the peoples of Ukraine!

The Russian Republic is going through a difficult time. In the north, in the capitals, there is an internecine struggle, there is no central government, and lack of governance, anarchy and devastation is growing throughout the state. Our region is also in danger. Without central, unitary and strong power people's Ukraine will also be plunged into an abyss of fatal civil strife and complete decline.

People of Ukraine! You set us together with the fraternal peoples of Ukraine to observe the rights gained by the struggle, and to create order, to preserve and create a better future in our land, and we, the Ukrainian Central Rada, doing your will in the name of establishing order in our land, in the name of saving all of Russia, we declare from now that Ukraine will be the "Ukrainian People's Republic", without separating from the Russian Republic, preserving its unity, we will firmly stand on our land in order to render assistance to all of Russia with our forces so that the entire Russian Republic becomes a Federation of equal and free peoples, and until the convocation of the Ukrainian Constituent Assembly, all the power to create order on our land, to issue laws and rule belongs to us, the Ukrainian Central Rada, and our Government to the General Secretariat of Ukraine. In consciousness of his strength and power of the border of Ukraine. On our native land, we will guard laws and revolution not only at home, but throughout Russia, and therefore declare: the Ukrainian People's Republic owns the lands inhabited by the majority of Ukrainians: Kiev region, Podolia, Volynia, Chernigov region, Kharkov region, Poltava region, Yekaterinoslav region, Kherson region, **Tavria without Crimea.**

Secretary General of Military Affairs of the UPR
Semyon Petlyura,
November 8, 1917

May 30, 1918

Send a copy as of May 30 with No. 169

To representative of Austro-Hungarian Government on May 30, 1918, for Count Forgach, No. 22711

To Mr Representative of the Caesar German State, Actual Privy Counsellor Freiger Dr Mum von Schwarzenstein

Your Excellence!

We have the honour to inform you that the Government of the Ukrainian State considers it extremely necessary to incorporate the Crimean Peninsula in the Ukrainian State.

Crimea is closely economically, politically and ethnographically connected with the life of Ukraine and its population. The Ukrainian State, for its part, will never be able to develop normally without its connection with Crimea. However, when the Ukrainian People's Republic was proclaimed the III Proclamation, it stated that only northern Tavria belongs to the Ukrainian State, without Crimea. But first of all, the Proclamation generally noted only the main parts of the Ukrainian territory, meaning that those lands in which the Ukrainian people do not have an absolute majority will join later. Therefore, neither Kholmsk region, nor the parts of Kursk, Voronezh Governorates, regions of the Don Cossack Host, nor Bessarabia were indicated in the Third Proclamation. Meanwhile, it was understood then that these lands would necessarily be transferred to Ukraine. The same with Crimea. This method of border demarcation at first only in general terms, is also explained by the fact that then the Ukrainian Republic was considered only as a federal part of Russia. The same with Crimea, if it joined voluntarily to Ukraine, it had to be a federal subject of Russia, and thus the authors of III Proclamation understood that the Ukrainian State did not lose ties with Crimea, this strategic and economic outpost of Ukraine.

Now, when Ukraine has finally on its way of complete political independence, the connection with Crimea, as a federal subject of the failed All-Russian Federation, can be completely cut off. And so now, when the Ukrainian troops, with the help of friendly German troops, seized Crimea into their own hands, there is a question on annexation of Crimea to the Ukrainian State.

Moreover, as we adhere to the principle of self-determination, without violating will of the population, and, finally, understand various differences in the life of Crimea, the Ukrainian government believes that the annexation of Crimea can take place on an autonomous basis, in accordance with which the project should be developed, with the knowledge of sentiments of the vast majority of Crimean population, bearing in mind interests of that population and its ancient

ties with the Ukrainian government, there is no doubt that the will of the population can be expressed only for reunification with Ukraine.

Thus, statements of pan (“pan” – Polish or Ukrainian gentleman) Commander of the Corps of German troops stationed in Crimea that Crimea and even all of Tauria do not belong to the Ukrainian State are particularly unpleasant.

Given the seriousness of the issue, the Government of Ukraine would like to give explanations in order to prevent the said claims and the corresponding actions, which are the obvious result of misunderstandings on the part of the troops which are friendly to the Ukrainian State.

Your excellence, please accept assurances of full respect and allegiance.

Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

(signed by Doroshenko).

Director of the Department

(signed by Loskiy).

True copy:

Head of the Political Department⁴²⁸

428 <http://yadocent.livejournal.com/285844.html>

DECREE
OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COUNCILS
OF WORKERS, SOLDIERS AND PEASANT DEPUTIES OF THE
SOVIET REPUBLIC OF TAURIDA

In accordance with resolution of the First Constituent Congress of Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Peasants as well as Countryfolks, Muslim Deputies, all land and military-revolutionary Committees of Taurida, held on March 10, 1918, the Central Executive Committee, declares the territory of the Crimean Peninsula, consisting of Simferopol, Feodosia, Yalta, Yevpatoria and Perekop districts, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Taurida.

The head of the Soviet Republic of Taurida is the Taurida Council of People's Commissars, subordinated to the Central Executive Committee of Councils of Workers', Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies of the Republic of Taurida.

Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars	A. Slutskiy
Secretary of the Central Executive Committee	I. Firdevs

March 22, 1918.

THE ALL-RUSSIAN CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**DECREE
of October 18, 1921****ABOUT AUTONOMOUS CRIMEAN SOCIALIST SOVIET
REPUBLIC**

The All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars decree:

1. To set up the Autonomous Crimean Socialistic Soviet Republic as a part of the RSFSR within the borders of the Crimean Peninsula with the existing districts: Dzhankoi, Yevpatoria, Kerch, Sevastopol, Simferopol, Feodosia, and Yalta.

Note: To establish a Commission composed of representatives of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the RSFSR, the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic, the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic and the People's Commissariat for Nationalities Affairs, the decision of which is approved by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, in order to resolve issues on the northern borders of Crimea.

2. Administration of state power of the Autonomous Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic is formed according to the Constitution of the RSFSR from local Councils, the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic.

3. In order to manage the affairs of the Autonomous Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic, the following People's Commissariats are established:

- 1) of Internal Affairs,
- 2) of Justice,
- 3) of Education,
- 4) of Healthcare,
- 5) of Public Welfare,
- 6) of Agriculture,
- 7) of Food,
- 8) of Finance,
- 9) of Labour,
- 10) of Council of National Economy,
- 11) of Workers'-Peasants' Inspectorate,
- 12) of Public Relations and of Department of Public Utilities and Statistics.

4. a) To manage Military Affairs of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic, a Crimean Military Commissariat is established under the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic, subordinate to the nearest Military District.

Note: Management of Naval Affairs remains under jurisdiction of the Central Bodies of the RSFSR.

b) To combat against counterrevolution, a Crimean Extraordinary Commission is established under the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic, subordinate directly to the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission, and its Collegiate body is formed by the Crimean Council of People's Commissars and approved by the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission.

c) Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade remain entirely under jurisdiction of the People's Commissariats of the RSFSR, which establish the appropriate representative offices under the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic.

d) Control of Lines of Communication within the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic remains entirely under the jurisdiction of the People's Commissariat for Lines of Communication of the RSFSR, and for control of lines of communication an Authorized People's Commissariat for Lines of Communication is established under the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic, acting under the guidance of the Southern District of Lines of Communication in accordance with the interests of the Autonomous Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic within the general plan and procedure for using Lines of Communication of the RSFSR. e) The Central Administration of Crimean Resorts remains under direct supervision of the People's Commissariat of Health of the RSFSR, and the Collegiate body of the Central Administration of Resorts is established by agreement of the People's Commissariat of Health of the RSFSR and the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic.

Note: Chief of Sea Services, Chairman of the Collegiate body of the Central Administration of Resorts, representatives of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, the People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade, Commissioner of the People's Commissariat for Lines of Communication of the RSFSR, Head of Communal Services and Chairman of the Statistical Department are included in the Crimean Council of People's Commissars with a consultative vote.

5. All institutions and individual representatives of the united People's Commissariats of the RSFSR located on the territory of Crimea, not provided for by this regulation on the Autonomous Crimean Soviet Socialist Republic, act according to directives of corresponding People's Commissariats of the RSFSR in contact with the Crimean Council of People's Commissars.

6. In order to maintain unity of financial and economic policies throughout the territory of the RSFSR, all decrees and orders of the People's Commissariats of the RSFSR: for Food, for Finance, of Council of National Economy, of Labour, for Lines of Communication, of People's Communication, Workers 'and Peasants' Inspection and of Central Statistical Office, are mandatory for the corresponding People's Commissariats of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic.

Note: People's Commissars of the aforementioned Commissariats and Departments are appointed by the Crimean Council of People's Commissars and are approved by the corresponding People's Commissariats of the RSFSR. The same procedure applies to the Chairman of the Crimean Extraordinary Commission.

7. People's Commissariats of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic (of Internal Affairs, of Justice, of Education, of Health, of Public Welfare, of Agriculture and Communal Services) are autonomous in their actions and are directly responsible to the Crimean Central Executive Committee, the Crimean Council of People's Commissars and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee.

8. To coordinate and unite activities of the economic bodies of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic under the Council of People's Commissars of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic, the Crimean Economic Conference is founded, acting in accordance with the resolution of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of June 30, 1921.

9. All financial and technical resources are provided to the Autonomous Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic from general funds of the RSFSR.

Note: When local products are distributed, demands and needs of the Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic are met on a first-priority basis.

10. Until convocation of the All-Crimean Constituent Congress of Councils and elections of the Crimean Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars, the Crimean territory is governed by the Crimean Revolutionary Committee.

Chairman of the All-Russian Central
Executive Committee

M. Kalinin

Chairman of the Council of People's Commisars

V. Ulianov (Lenin)

Secretary of the All-Russian Central
Executive Committee

A. Enukidze

Moscow, Kremlin, October 18, 1921.

RESOLUTION

OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND THE COUNCIL OF PEOPLE'S COMMISSIONERS OF AUTONOMOUS CRIMEAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

The All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissioners decrees:

1. To set up the Autonomous Crimean Socialist Soviet Republic as a part of the RSFSR within the borders of the Crimean Peninsula with the existing districts: Dzhankoi, Yevpatoria, Kerch, Sevastopol, Simferopol, Feodosia, and Yalta.

October 3, 1921

DECREE

PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE USSR

**On the transformation of the Crimean ASSR into
the Crimean Oblast of the RSFSR.**

Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics decrees:

To approve the submission of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic on transformation of the Crimean ASSR into the Crimean Oblast within the RSFSR.

Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the USSR
Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the USSR
Moscow, Kremlin, June 30, 1945.

M.Kalinin

A. Gorkin

DECREE

OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR

of October, 25, 1948,
No. 403 Moscow, Kremlin

On the Measures for the Acceleration of Restoration of Sevastopol

The USSR Council of Ministers notes that the city of Sevastopol and the main naval base of the Black Sea Fleet are restored extremely slowly. At the current pace, restoration of the city and of the naval base can be finished not earlier than in 10-15 years, which is completely unacceptable.

The Council of Ministers of the USSR considers it an urgent government task to accelerate the restoration of Sevastopol as a first-class naval fortress and

DECREEES:

1. To complete the restoration of Sevastopol and the main naval base of the Black Sea Fleet within the next 3-4 years.

2. To finance 1,523 million roubles of capital investments, for restoration of Sevastopol for the period 1949-1952, including:

a) 414 million roubles for the restoration of the city (housing stock, cultural institutions, healthcare facilities and public utilities);

b) 700 million roubles for the restoration of the naval base, including 200 million roubles for the construction of residential buildings, barracks, service and cultural institutions;

c) 409 million roubles for the restoration of industrial enterprises and transport. To propose to the State Planning Committee of the USSR to allocate targeted investment for the restoration of Sevastopol, starting in 1949.

8. To entrust the execution of construction and installation works to:

a) Administration for restoration of the city of Sevastopol under the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR;

57. To include the city of Sevastopol into the category of republican cities.

To establish the Administration for restoration of Sevastopol under the Council of Ministers of the USSR in order to ensure fulfilment of tasks for the soonest restoration of the city of Sevastopol.

58. To appoint Mr I.V. Komzin Head of the Department for the restoration of Sevastopol under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, relieving him of his duties of Deputy Minister for Construction of Military and Naval Enterprises.

59. The Council of Ministers of the USSR considers the restoration of the city of Sevastopol and the naval base to be the most important national task and obliges the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR Mr Rodionov,

Minister of Armed Forces of the USSR Mr Bulganin, Minister of Construction of Military and Naval Enterprises Mr Digay and heads of corresponding ministries and agencies to establish personal control over the fulfilment of tasks for restoration of Sevastopol, provided for by this Decree, on time.

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR

J. Stalin

Executive Officer of the Council of Ministers of the USSR

Ya. Chadaev

DECREE

PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE USSR

On separation of the city of Sevastopol into an independent administrative and economic centre

To separate the city of Sevastopol into an independent administrative and economic centre with its own special budget and refer it to the category of cities of republican subordination.

Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the RSFSR

I. Vlasov

Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the RSFSR

P. Vakhmurov

Moscow, October 29, 1948.

DECREE

OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE RSFSR

October 29, 1948, No. 1082
Moscow

The city of Sevastopol issue

Due to the separation of the city of Sevastopol into an independent administrative and economic centre and its inclusion into the category of republican cities, the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR decrees:

1. To oblige the Ministry of Finance of the RSFSR and the Crimean Regional Executive Committee to separate the budget of the city of Sevastopol from the budget of the Crimean region for 1948 and not later than November 20, 1948, to submit it for approval by the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR.

2. To oblige the State Planning Committee of the RSFSR, together with ministries and agencies of the RSFSR, and the Crimean Regional Executive Committee to separate a plan for economic and cultural construction and a plan for supplies of materials and machinery of the city of Sevastopol within the framework of plans for economic and cultural construction and plans for supplies of materials and machinery of the Crimean region for 1948, and to submit it for approval to the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR by November 20, 1948.

3. To oblige the State Planning Committee of the RSFSR, the Ministry of Finance of the RSFSR, ministries and agencies of the RSFSR to allocate the city of Sevastopol as a separate line in a state plan and in a budget in future.

Chairman of the Council of Ministers
of the RSFSR
Executive Officer of the Council
of Ministers of the RSFSR

M. Rodionov

I. Padezhnoy

DECREE

OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE RSFSR

On the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR

Taking into account territorial inclination of the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR, affinity of economy and close economic and cultural ties between the Oblast region and the Ukrainian SSR, the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR decrees the following:

To consider it expedient to transfer the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

To ask the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR to consider the case of transferring the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR and to enter the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR with the appropriate submission.

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR A. Puzanov
Executive Officer of the Council of Ministers of the RSFSR I.Gruzdev
Moscow, February 5, 1954, No. 156

DECREE
OF THE PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL
OF THE USSR

**On the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from
the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR**

Taking into account affinity of economy, territorial proximity, and close economic and cultural ties between the Crimean Oblast and the Ukrainian SSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR decrees:

To transfer the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

This decree shall be submitted for approval by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR.

Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the USSR

M. Tarasov

Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the USSR

I. Zimin

February 5, 1954

DECREE

OF THE PRESIDIDIUM OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE USSR

On the Submission of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR Concerning Transfer of the Crimean Oblast to the Ukrainian SSR

Having discussed the submission of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR concerning the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR, introduced for consideration by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR, for its part, believes that the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR is quite viable given the affinity of their economy, territorial proximity and close economic and cultural ties and it is evidence of boundless confidence of the great Russian people to the Ukrainian people.

The Ukrainian people will meet the decision to transfer Crimea to the Ukrainian SSR with heartfelt gratitude and favour, as a new manifestation of concern of the Central Committee of the CPSU and Soviet Government for further strengthening of indissoluble bonds of friendship and fraternal ties between the Russian and Ukrainian peoples. The Government of Ukraine will pay due attention to the further development of the Crimean national economy, improving the material and cultural well-being of working people of the Crimean Oblast.

According to the submission of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR decrees:

To ask the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR to transfer the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

Chairman of
the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Ukrainian SSR D. Korotchenko
Secretary of
the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Ukrainian SSR V. Nizhnik
Kiev, February 13, 1954.

DECREE

PRESIDIUM OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE USSR

**On the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the RSFSR
to the Ukrainian SSR**

Taking into account affinity of economy, territorial proximity and close economic and cultural ties between the Crimean Oblast and the Ukrainian SSR, the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the RSFSR decrees:

To approve of the joint submission of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR and the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR on the transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the RSFSR

K. Voroshilov

Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the USSR

N. Pegov

Moscow, Kremlin, February 19, 1954.

LAW

**ON THE TRANSFER OF THE CRIMEAN OBLAST FROM
THE RSFSR TO THE UKRAINIAN SSR**

The Supreme Council of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics decrees:

1. To approve the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR of February 19, 1954, on transfer of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

2. To introduce appropriate amendments to Clause 22 and 23 of the Constitution of the USSR.

Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the RSFSR
Secretary of the Presidium of the Supreme
Council of the USSR
Moscow, Kremlin, April 25, 1954.

K. Voroshilov

N. Pegov

STATEMENT

of the third session of the Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies to the Supreme Council of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Supreme Council of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic "On the need to revoke the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR dated June 30, 1945 "On the transformation of the Crimean ASSR into the Crimean Oblast within the RSFSR" and the Law of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of June 25, 1946 "On the abolition of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR and on the transformation of the Crimean ASSR into the Crimean Oblast".

Simferopol, September 8, 1990.

The Crimean ASSR was transformed into the Crimean Oblast by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR of June 30, 1945. On June 25, 1946, the Supreme Council of the RSFSR adopted the "Law on the abolition of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR and on the transformation of the Crimean ASSR into the Crimean Oblast". These acts, which criminally indicted the entire nations for treason and institutionalized their deportation, sowed bitter seeds of mistrust between people of different nationalities, entailed a violation of their constitutional rights.

Expulsion of Germans from Crimea in 1941, Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Armenians and Bulgarians in 1944 was used as a matter for liquidation of the autonomous republic, destroyed its harmonious ethnic identity that had developed over centuries.

With the aim of restoring of historical justice and statehood of Crimea, the Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies declares the need to revoke the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR dated June 30, 1945 "On transformation of the Crimean ASSR into the Crimean region within the RSFSR" and the Law of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic of June 25, 1946 "On abolition of the Checheno-Ingush ASSR and on transformation of the Crimean ASSR into the Crimean Oblast", as unconstitutional.

* * *

The Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies considers that determination of the state status of Crimea should be based on the will of the people of Crimea.

ECLARATION

ON THE STATEHOOD AND LEGAL STATUS OF CRIMEA

The current socio-political and socio-economic situation in the region urgently requires introducing changes to the statehood of Crimea. The Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies considers the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR of June 30, 1945, and the Law of the RSFSR of June 25, 1946, which abolished the Crimean ASSR, unconstitutional and declares the right of peoples of Crimea to re-establish statehood in the form of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as a subject of the USSR and a participant in the Union Treaty.

Exercise of this right should be carried out solely on the basis of will expression of people through a referendum. The Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies believes that the Supreme Councils of the USSR and of the Ukrainian SSR will treat this Declaration with respect and understanding.

Adopted by the fourth extraordinary session of the Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies.

Simferopol, November 12, 1990.



КРЫМСКИЙ ОБЛАСТНОЙ СОВЕТ НАРОДНЫХ ДЕПУТАТОВ

четвертая сессия 21 созыва

РЕШЕНИЕ

12.11.1990г.

г. Симферополь

О проведении референдума.

Областной Совет народных депутатов РЕШИЛ:

1. Временное положение о референдуме и порядке его проведения на территории Крымской области Украинской ССР утвердить /приложение № 1/.
2. Провести референдум 20 января 1991 года.
3. Образовать комиссию по организации референдума в количестве 29 человек /приложение № 2/.
4. Обратиться к Верховным Советам РСФСР, Украинской, Узбекской, Таджикской, Киргизской и Казахской Советских Социалистических республик оказать необходимое содействие в проведении референдума среди крымских татар, других депортированных из Крымской области народов, в настоящее время проживающих на их территориях.
5. Облсполкому рассмотреть вопрос о выделении необходимых средств для проведения референдума и выполнения экспертной оценки прогнозируемого социально-экономического развития Крыма.
6. Считать целесообразным найти формы участия народных депутатов СССР и УССР, избранных от Крымской области, депутатов областного Совета в работе над новым Союзным договором.
7. Рекомендовать облтелерадиокомитету, редакциям областных, городских и районных газет широко освещать работу по подготовке и проведению референдума.
8. Настоящее решение опубликовать в областных газетах "Крымская правда" и "Советский Крым".

Председатель Совета

Н.В. Багров Н.В. Багров

М. Васильев

А. Луц

От областной (центральной) комиссии
по референдуму в Крымской области
**О РЕЗУЛЬТАТАХ РЕФЕРЕНДУМА
О ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОМ И ПРАВОВОМ СТАТУСЕ КРЫМА**

21 января 1991 года состоялось заседание областной (центральной) комиссии по референдуму в Крымской области, рассмотревшей результаты референдума о государственном и правовом статусе Крыма, состоявшегося 20 января 1991 года.

На основании представленных протоколов городских и районных комиссий по референдуму областная (центральная) комиссия сообщает, что:

— общее число граждан, внесенных в списки для участия в референдуме, составляет 1.770.841 человек;

— число граждан, которые получили бюллетени, — 1.443.260 человек;

— число граждан, которые приняли участие в голосовании, — 1.441.019 человек, что составляет 81,37 процента от внесенных в списки для участия в референдуме;

— число голосов, поданных за воссоздание Крымской Автономной Советской Социалистической Республики как субъекта Союза ССР и участник Союзного договора, составляет 1.343.855, или 93,26 процента от принявших участие в референдуме;

— число голосов, поданных против одобрения вынесенного на референдум вопроса, составляет 81.254, или 5,64 процента от принявших участие в голосовании;

— число бюллетеней, признанных действительными, составляет 15.910.

Комиссия утвердила результаты референдума, состоявшегося во всех городах и районах области.

**ОБЛАСТНАЯ (ЦЕНТРАЛЬНАЯ)
КОМИССИЯ ПО РЕФЕРЕНДУМУ
В КРЫМСКОЙ ОБЛАСТИ**

LAW

OF UKRAINIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

On the restoration of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

Clause 1 To restore the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within the territory of the Crimean Oblast as part of the Ukrainian SSR.

Clause 2. To acknowledge temporarily the Crimean Regional Council of People's Deputies the highest body of state power on the territory of the Crimean ASSR until adoption of the Constitution of the Crimean ASSR and establishment of constitutional bodies of state power on its basis and to grant it the status of the Supreme Council of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR L. Kravchuk,
Kiev, February 12, 1991, No. 712-XII

ACT

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF UKRAINE

Based on the fatal danger that hanged over Ukraine because of the coup d'état in the USSR on August 19, 1991,

- carrying on the thousand-year tradition of state-building in Ukraine,
- proceeding from the right to self-determination provided for by the UN Charter and other international legal documents,
- implementing the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic solemnly

DECLARES INDEPENDENCE OF UKRAINE

and foundation of an independent Ukrainian state – UKRAINE.

The territory of Ukraine is indivisible and inviolable.

From now on, exclusively the Constitution and laws of Ukraine are in force on the territory of Ukraine.

This Act comes into force from the date of its approval.

Head of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR L. Kravchuk,
Kiev, August 24, 1991.

RESOLUTION

OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE UKRAINIAN SSR

On the declaration of independence of Ukraine

The Supreme Council of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic **decrees:**

To declare Ukraine an independent democratic state on August 24, 1991.

Since the date of declaration of independence only the Constitution of Ukraine, its laws, government regulations and other legal acts are valid on the territory of Ukraine.

To hold a republican referendum to confirm the act of declaration of independence on December 1, 1991.

Head of the Supreme Council of the Ukrainian SSR L. Kravchuk,
Kiev, August 24, 1991, No. 1427-XII

DECLARATION

ON THE STATE SOVEREIGNTY OF CRIMEA⁴²⁹

The Supreme Council of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic,
– expressing the will of people of the republic,
– being aware of historical responsibility for the future of Crimea,
– respecting sovereign rights of all peoples,
– considering Crimea, a part of the Union Treaty,
– respecting the state sovereignty of Ukraine,
– proceeding from the priority of universal human values, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, other universally recognized international legal acts,
– seeking to set up a legal democratic state within Ukraine,

declares:

The state sovereignty of Crimea as supremacy, independence, unity and indivisibility of the state power of the republic on its territory.

1. Citizens of the republic of all nationalities are the people of Crimea, who are the bearers of sovereignty and the source of state power. The sovereignty of the people is realized on the basis of the Constitution, both directly and through elected representative bodies.

State power in the republic is exercised according to the principle of its division into the legislative, executive, and judicial power.

Only the Supreme Council of the Republic can act on behalf of the people of Crimea.

The most important state issues related to development of the republic, its relations with other republics, are brought up for a nationwide discussion or referendum.

2. The territory of the republic cannot be changed without its consent. The Supreme Council of the Republic decides all issues related to the administrative and territorial structure. The existing special status of the city of Sevastopol is preserved, set forth by the relevant legislative acts and cannot be changed without consent of its citizens.

3. The Republic guarantees equal rights and freedoms to all citizens who lived on its territory, regardless of their nationality, social origin, political convictions, or religious beliefs.

The Republic confirms rights of the deported peoples, and will give every assistance in their return, revival of their national identity and culture.

429 Bulletin of the Supreme Council of Crimea, 1991-1992, No. 2, clause 80. (the Declaration was revoked on the basis of the Resolution of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, No. 250/94-BP dated November 17, 1994).

4. The people of Crimea have the exclusive right of ownership to land, its mineral resources, airspace, water, and other natural resources located within the territory and continental shelf of Crimea.

The economic, scientific and technical potential generated on the territory of the republic is its property, the material basis of sovereignty and is used in the interests of its citizens.

Enterprises, institutions, organizations and facilities of other states, international organizations may be located on the territory of Crimea and use its natural resources only in accordance with the Constitution and laws of the republic. The Republic guarantees equality and protection of all forms of property.

5. The republic determines on a stand-alone basis its economic status, pursues financial, credit and investment policies, sets its state budget, establishes the procedure for formation and use of foreign exchange and other funds.

6. The republic independently establishes the procedure for nature protection on the territory of Crimea and the use of natural resources, and monitors the environmental situation.

The republic has the right to prohibit construction, terminate operation of any enterprise, institution and organization, as well as other facilities that pose a threat to environmental safety.

7. The republic is independent in addressing issues of science, education, cultural and religious development, guarantees to all nationalities that live on its territory, the right for their free national and cultural development.

This Declaration is valid from the date of its adoption and is the basis for development of the Constitution of the Republic, participation in preparation and conclusion of the Union Treaty, treaties with other republics and states.

Adopted by the Supreme Council of the Crimean ASSR
on September 4, 1991.

RESOLUTION

OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

On resuming the work for studying the legal validity of the decisions made by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union on February 19, 1954, and the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union on April 26, 1954, with regard to withdrawing the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR.

The Supreme Council of the Russian Federation resolves:

1. That the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation's Committee on the international affairs and foreign economic relations and Legislation Committee with the involvement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation should continue studying the issue related to the Constitutional validity of the 1954 decisions on transferring the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

2. To establish a commission composed of the deputies of the Russian Federation for studying the circumstances related to the legal validity of the decisions made by the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union on February 19, 1954, and the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union on April 26, 1954, with regard to withdrawing the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR.

President of the Supreme Council
Of the Russian Federation
Moscow, House of Government of Russia,
February 6, 1992, n. 2292-1

R. Khasbulatov

RESOLUTION

OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

On the legal assessment of the 1954 decisions made by the highest state authorities of the Russian SFSR with regard to changing the status of Crimea

The Supreme Council of the Russian Federation resolves:

1. To declare the resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated February 5, 1954 “On the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR” null and void from the moment of its adoption as having been adopted in violation of the Constitution (Main Law) of the Russian SFSR and the law-making procedure.

2. In view of the acknowledgment of this fact by the subsequent legislation of the Russian SFSR and the signing of a bilateral agreement between Ukraine and Russia dated November 19, 1990, in which both parties abdicated their territorial claims, and taking into account the enshrinement of this principle in the treaties and agreements between the CIS states, to consider it necessary to settle the issue related to Crimea by means of holding inter-state negotiations between Russia and Ukraine with the participation of Crimea and on the basis of the expression of will by its population.

President of the Supreme Council
Of the Russian Federation
Moscow, House of Government of Russia,
May 21, 1992, n. 2809-1

R. Khasbulatov

STATEMENT

OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN SFSR TO THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF UKRAINE

Esteemed friends! Colleagues!

Recently, we have followed with great anxiety the progress of the political processes which hinder the establishment of closer ties between our peoples and states on the basis of genuine equality of rights and respect towards the principles provided by our bilateral agreement dated November 19, 1990, and by the treaties and agreements of the Commonwealth of Independent States. In Russian society, doubts are arising with regard to the sincerity of the intentions of several CIS founders who, having proclaimed, on the one hand, the noble purposes of establishing the genuine Commonwealth of Independent States on the basis of the equality of rights and harmonious settlement of the issues which are vital for all the CIS peoples, and, on the other hand, having obtained true political autonomy, are now seeking to destroy this Commonwealth, prioritizing their individual interests over the interests and principles which were proclaimed in the Creation Agreement.

Painful wounds have been inflicted to our relations by unilateral attempts to artificially disintegrate the Army, by the fight for the Navy, and by hostile statements made on various international forums.

All the above-mentioned factors cause damage to the world community which at times experiences difficulties with comprehending the actions of the leadership of particular CIS states who, in the presence of the deterioration of their economies and peoples, are not entirely aware of the genuine realities and the obvious priority of the tasks related to the restoration and development of the broken economic and industrial ties and who violate the rights of the Russian people and other nations and peoples who are historically tied with Russia and who live on their territories.

Today, a general opinion is growing and gaining strength in Russia, according to which efficient measures to protect the state interests of the Russian Federation should be taken, and demands are being made to perform a legal assessment of the decisions related to the transferral of Crimea from Russia to Ukraine.

Putting this issue on the agenda of today's session of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation, we by no means pursue the goal of advancing any territorial claims to Ukraine and to fraternal Ukrainian people. Our task is different: to

communicate a real and extremely unfavourable state of affairs in the Commonwealth itself. We seek to draw the attention of the societies in each of the CIS countries to the real policy of their governments, whose activities often do not take into account the aspiration of all the peoples to live in peace and harmony with other peoples of the former Soviet Union. The peoples are interested in the comprehensive strengthening of the Commonwealth and development of the international processes.

Remaining faithful to the principle of the inviolability of boundaries within the CIS, including those between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, Russia intends to strictly adhere to the fundamental principles of the Charters of the UN and the OSCE, together with the provisions of the Belovezha Accords and the Alma-Ata protocol.

The Supreme Council of the Russian Federation assumes that the dialogue for settling this issue should be held in a civilized manner and should aim at achieving mutual understanding and not exacerbating the relations within the CIS and undermining its principles.

Currently, everyone who values the ideals of democracy and just should demonstrate wisdom, responsibility, and self-control with regard to Crimea and ensure strict observance of the rights of Crimea's entire population, including the Crimean-Tatar people.

The Supreme Council of the Russian Federation appeals to the President of Ukraine and the Supreme Council of Ukraine to abstain from taking any action aimed at suppressing the free expression of the will of Crimea's population which has, according to the provisions of international law, the full right to determine their future on their own accord.

The Supreme Council of Russia on behalf of Russian peoples reaffirms its friendship towards the peoples of fraternal Ukraine and expresses its hope that our voice will be heard, and that all the issues within the framework of the Russian-Ukrainian relations will be settled peacefully by holding political negotiations with a view to achieving fair agreements which correspond to the interests of both parties and promote peace and harmony.

The Supreme Council hopes that a similar approach will be adopted by Ukraine and its highest state authorities.

The Supreme Council of Russia

May 22, 1992.

**THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
LEGAL DEPARTMENT**

December 2, 1992. Moscow, House of Government of Russia

To the Secretariat of the Seventh Conference of the People's Deputies of the Russian Federation, to the attention of the People's Deputy of the Russian Federation Pudovkin Ye. K.

Following your request on the status of the city of Sevastopol, in conformity to the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated October 29, 1948, we hereby inform you that in virtue of the aforementioned Decree the city of Sevastopol was made an autonomous administrative and economic unit with a separate budget and included into the category of republican cities. The 1954 Decree on the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR was not recognized as no longer valid and has not been abolished yet. No amendments were introduced to the said Decree.

Head of the Department R.M. Pivilyov

RESOLUTION

OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

On the status of the city of Sevastopol

The Supreme Council of the Russian Federation, having examined, on the instruction of the Seventh Conference of the People's Deputies of the Russian Federation, the issue related to the status of the city of Sevastopol, hereby resolves:

1. To confirm the Russian federal status of the city of Sevastopol within the administrative and territorial boundaries of the city district as of December of 1991.

2. That the Council of Ministers – Government of the Russian Federation should within the shortest possible time elaborate a state program for implementing the status of the city of Sevastopol by issuing instructions to the relative ministries and offices; to conduct negotiations with the Government of Ukraine on the city of Sevastopol as the main base of the Black Sea fleet. To include the following People's Deputies as representatives of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation in Russian delegation for holding negotiations: Voronin Yu.M., Ambartsumov Ye.A., Pudovkin Ye. K., Saenko G.V., Selivanov A.G., Chebotarevskiy R.Z., Yugin V.A.

3. The Central Bank of Russia to provide for the financing of the relative budget items of the city of Sevastopol through its local subsidiaries.

4. The Constitutional Legislation Committee of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation to elaborate a draft law of the Russian Federation on the enshrinement of the federal status of the city of Sevastopol in the Constitution of the Russian Federation.

5. In order to prevent political tensions, ask the Government of Ukraine to withdraw the divisions of the special forces which were relocated to the vicinity of Sevastopol.

President of the Supreme Council
Of the Russian Federation
Moscow, House of Government of Russia,
July 9, 1993, n. 5359-1

R. Khasbulatov

**SEVASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL OF THE PEOPLE’S DEPUTIES,
21ST CONVOCATION, 2ND SESSION**

RESOLUTION

N.41, August 23, 1994, Sevastopol

On the status of the city of Sevastopol

Having heard and discussed the information presented by the Deputy of the City Council in the 7th constituency Romanenko V.I. “On the status of the city of Sevastopol”, taking into account the results of the public opinion poll dedicated to the issue and conducted in Sevastopol on June 26, 1994, with regard to the issue, and, considering the current inter-state contacts between Ukraine and the Russian Federation aimed at signing a comprehensive agreement, Sevastopol City Council of the People’s Deputies

RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

To acknowledge the Russian legal status of the city of Sevastopol; To reaffirm the principal position of the City Council on viewing Sevastopol as the main base of the Black Sea fleet of the Russian Federation, which was expressed in all previously made resolutions of the Council of the 21st and 22nd convocations;

3. To accept the statement of the City Council on the status of the city of Sevastopol addressed to the Presidents of the two states: Yeltsin B.N. and Kuchma L.D. and to heads of the highest state authorities Shumeyko V.F., Rybkin I.P, and Moroz A.A. (attached);

4. To send a delegation of the City Council to participate in the negotiations;

5. To entrust the control over the implementation of the present resolution to Vice President of the City Council Glushko N.M.

President of Sevastopol City Council
of the people’s Deputies

Chief Secretary of the City Council

Head of the drafting committee of the session

Chief Secretary of the session

V. Semenov

K. Pavlenko

V. Romanenko

I. Kulikov

To the President of the Russian Federation YELTSIN B.N.
To the President of Ukraine KUCHMA L. D.
To the Chairman of the Federation
Council of the Russian Federation SHUMEYKO V. F.
To the Chairman of the State Duma
of the Russian Federation RYBKIN I. P.
To the President of the Supreme Council of Ukraine MOROZ A. A.

STATEMENT

OF SEVASTOPOL CITY COUNCIL OF THE PEOPLE'S DEPUTIES

Sevastopol City Council of the People's Deputies addresses you with the request to take a reasonable official decision with regard to the Russian Federal status of the city of Sevastopol and to solve definitively the problems of the Black Sea fleet.

The grounds for examining the afore-mentioned issues are:

1. The will of the inhabitants of Sevastopol and the Black Sea fleet navy officials, 89% of whom gave a positive answer to the Russian status of the city.
2. Absence of concrete decisions on the status of the city and the fleet.
3. The continued financial and economic blockade of the city.
4. Principal impossibility of the joint deployment of the Russian Black Sea fleet and Ukraine's Navy.
5. The bringing of the divisions of the National Guard of Ukraine into the city without approval of the City Council of the People's Deputies.

The legal grounds of the Russian federal status of the city of Sevastopol have been thoroughly studied by numerous commissions, including the international ones, and are based on the Regulation of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated October 29, 1948, on the separation of Sevastopol from the Crimean Oblast and its transformation into an autonomous administrative and economic unit with the status of a republican city.

De jure, Sevastopol still remains part of the Russian Federation since by the moment the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from Russia to Ukraine took place in 1954, the 1948 regulation on the status of Sevastopol had not been abolished, and the subsequent extension of Ukraine's jurisdiction to Sevastopol was performed unilaterally, without a corresponding resolution being adopted by the constitutional authorities of the Russian SFSR.

After the Soviet Union collapsed in December of 1991 and the sovereign state of the Russian Federation and Ukraine emerged, the Russian legal status of the city of Sevastopol remained unchanged and was subsequently reaffirmed by

adopting a Resolution of the Supreme Council of the Russian Federation dated July 9, 1993 “On the status of the city of Sevastopol”.

The lack of legal regulation of the relations between Russia and Ukraine with regard to the status of Sevastopol creates grounds for territorial claims of third countries.

Dear politicians!

Taking into consideration the particular importance of the city of Sevastopol for Russia and increasing negative consequences, we hereby ask you to implement the will of the city’s inhabitants and the Black Sea sailors to restore historical justice by immediately finalizing the negotiations on the Russian federal status of the city of Sevastopol and solving definitively the problems of the Black Sea fleet. We reckon that the participation of the delegation of Sevastopol City Council in the negotiations is indispensable.

We are confident that your political wisdom and sense of responsibility will allow solving the issues related to the city of Sevastopol and the Black Sea fleet.

President of Sevastopol

City Council of the People’s Deputies

Chief Secretary of the City Council

Head of the drafting committee of the session

Chief Secretary of the session

August 23, 1994

V. Semenov

K. Pavlenko

V. Romanenk

I. Kulikov

**To the President of the Russian Federation Yeltsin B.N.
and to the Chairman of the Federation Council Shumeyko V.F.
To the Chairman of the State Duma
of the Russian Federation Rybkin I.P.
To the Prime Minister
of the Russian Federation Chernomyrdin V.S.**

STATEMENT

of the deputies of the Supreme Council of Sevastopol City Council and the political parties and public movements of the city of Sevastopol

In virtue of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated October 29, 1948, Sevastopol was made an autonomous administrative and economic unit with a separate budget and included into the category of republican cities. From that moment onwards, there were two administrative units with a special economic status: the Crimean Oblast and the city of Sevastopol. Along with the legally confirmed republican status, the city (the main base of the Black Sea fleet) still preserved its Union subordination. All the military affairs (this function being the crucial one for Sevastopol as a Navy base) lied within the competence of the Soviet Union. However, the inclusion of Sevastopol into the category of republican cities was not enshrined in the 1948 Constitution of the Russian SFSR since this Constitution contained no list of republican cities. Besides, the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated 29.10.1948 was subsequently neither amended nor abolished, which means that it remains valid to this day.

A logical consequence of the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated 29.10.1948 is the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Russian SFSR n.1082 dated 29.10.1948 "Issues related to the city of Sevastopol".

Resolution of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated 05.02.1954 "On the transferral of the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR" and the corresponding Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union dated 19.02.1954 contain no reference to Sevastopol, which further proves that Sevastopol preserved a special status of a city that was not part of the Crimean Oblast.

However, Sevastopol was mentioned in art.77 of the Constitution of Ukraine, which said that Kiev and Sevastopol were the republican cities of the Ukrainian SSR.

This provision of the Constitution of the Ukrainian SSR was invalid from the moment of its adoption, since it had been adopted by the Ukrainian SSR unilaterally without the corresponding resolution of the constitutional authorities of the Russian SFSR.

Given the Decree of the Russian SFSR dated October 29, 1948, the state sovereignty over Sevastopol, according to the provisions of international law, has never been transferred to anybody. Hence, Ukraine is illegitimately trying to extend its sovereignty over a part of the Russian territory.

International law demands that any extension of a state's sovereignty to some territory should take place in the form of an international treaty to be stipulated in writing and governed by international law.

The administrative control over Sevastopol which is exercised by Ukraine, and Russia's sovereignty over the city which has never been transferred to anybody, are entirely different issues.

Ukraine's claims towards Sevastopol are illegitimate from the point of view of international law since non-constitutional regulatory acts cannot serve as the basis for Ukraine's legitimate international rights after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

This is why on July 9, 1993, The Supreme Council of the Russian Federation confirmed the Russian federal status of the city of Sevastopol. This decision was preceded by lengthy and meticulous work for studying the status of Sevastopol from the point of view of international law.

The conclusion of the international experts was so immaculate that not a single vote "against" was cast while two voters abstained.

Russia is the legal successor of the Soviet Union with regard to the right to use the port of Sevastopol's navy base, this right being based on legal custom, or the long-term and inviolable use which is acknowledged by all the countries. However, this does not mean that to address Ukraine with this issue would imply making any territorial claims to it since Russia's rights are clearly defined by the corresponding international agreements. Here we deal with the rights to the territory which used to lie within Russia's administrative and territorial boundaries during the Soviet period. When it comes to Sevastopol, the legal custom principle does not apply to Ukraine since there are no corresponding agreements that would conform to the provisions of international law and would extend Ukraine's sovereignty to Sevastopol.

The poll carried out in Sevastopol on June 26, 1994, confirmed the stance of Sevastopol inhabitants, 89% of whom supported the city's status as the main base of Russia's Black Sea fleet.

On August 23, 1994, at an extraordinary session of Sevastopol City Council the resolution "On the status of the city of Sevastopol" was adopted, the first paragraph of which says the following: "To acknowledge the Russian legal status of the city of Sevastopol".

By having taken this decision, Sevastopol emphasizes that the opinion and will of the city inhabitants should necessarily be taken into account. Meanwhile, the forces of the National Guard of Ukraine continue entering the city.

Simultaneously, Ukraine is carrying out an open financial and economic blockade of Sevastopol. Despite the fact that, in early 1994, it was agreed to allo-

cate 1.5 trillion Ukrainian Karbovanets to finance the stabilization program, by 01.11.1994 no funds were received.

The joint deployment of the Black Sea fleet and Ukraine's Navy raises great concerns.

We address you with the request to confirm the Russian federal status of Sevastopol and to prevent the transferral of the state sovereignty over Sevastopol to Ukraine within the framework of the upcoming signing of the Agreement between Russia and Ukraine.

We ask you to take into consideration the legal status and particular strategic importance of Sevastopol for Russia. We hope that your political wisdom and sense of responsibility will allow restoring justice with regard to a legendary city, a city of Russian glory, a city that is worth worshipping – the city of Sevastopol. The fate of Sevastopol and Crimea is an open bleeding wound for every Russian citizen and a political challenge for the state's authorities.

On the instruction of the deputies of the Supreme Council of Crimea and Sevastopol City Council, leaders of the political parties and public movements of the city of Sevastopol – V.I. Kolodkin, G.S. Rubtsov.

November 10, 1994

STATEMENT

of the State Duma of the Russian Federation

On the attitude towards the decisions made by the Supreme Council of Ukraine with regard to Crimea

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, reaffirming its willingness to establish friendship and strategic partnership with Ukraine manifested in the address of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation to the deputies of the Supreme Council of Ukraine and the Supreme Council of Crimea in May 1994 and in the statement of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation “In relation to the regulation of the Supreme Council of Ukraine dated November 17, 1994 “On the implementation of the Decree of the Supreme Council of Ukraine “On the political and legal situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea” dated November 23, 1994, taking into consideration the statement of the President of the Republic of Crimea and the statement of the Supreme Council of Crimea in relation to the decisions made by the Supreme Council of Ukraine with regard to Crimea on March 17, 1995, and basing on the principles of equal rights, the peoples’ right to determine their future, the sovereign equality, and the territorial integrity which are enshrined in the Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe dated August 1, 1975, hereby expresses its profound concern about the prospects of the Russian-Ukrainian relations with regard to the decisions which were made by the Supreme Council of Ukraine and which discredit the will of the population of the Republic of Crimea, interrupt the negotiating process between Crimea and Ukraine, and can considerably destabilize the situation in the region.

The State Duma, referring to the example of the Russian Federation itself, notes the lack of alternatives to the political dialogue as the universal means which allows avoiding tragic consequences of the escalation of the internal conflict. The attention that our colleagues from the Supreme Council of Ukraine pay to the complex issues of the emerging Russian statehood enables us to call on them to show discretion and patience and to respect the right and freedoms of the Crimean citizens.

The extraordinary and hasty decisions of the Supreme Council of Ukraine, which were made, in our opinion, without considering the entire complex of possible political and legal consequences and their impact on the Russian-Ukrainian relation on the whole, cannot but affect the State Duma’s discussion of the problematic aspects of the Russian-Ukrainian negotiations, including such issues as the restructuring of Ukraine’s debt, the division of the Black Sea Fleet, and the status of its main base – the city of Sevastopol. The State Duma once again recommends the Government of the Russian Federation to take into consideration, in the course

of discussing the existing situation at the negotiations with Ukraine, the legitimate interests of Crimea's inhabitants and the results of the Crimean referendum, and to hear the representatives of the Republic of Crimea.

The State Duma calls upon the elected state authorities of Ukraine and Crimea to show as much good will as possible in the process of searching for compromises on the basis of respect towards constitutional rights and freedoms. We hope that the personnel of the Black Sea fleet will contribute to maintaining stability in the region and avoiding provocations and threats to the lives and security of Crimea's inhabitants.

RESOLUTION

of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation in relation to the decisions made by the Supreme Council of Ukraine with regard to Crimea

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation resolves:

1. To recommend, once again, to the Government of the Russian Federation to submit to the State Duma the entire set of agreements signed with Ukraine in February and March of 1995.
2. To invite Head of the Russian delegation at the negotiations with Ukraine O.M. Soskovets to participate in the State Duma session scheduled for March 24, 1995, for hearing information on the progress of the negotiations and answering to the questions of the State Duma deputies.
3. To instruct the State Duma Committee on Issues of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Contacts with Fellow Countrymen and the State Duma Committee on the legislation and the judicial and legal reform, jointly with the State Duma Committee on the budget, taxes, banks, and finances, to elaborate and introduce to the State Duma a draft of the Federal Law “On the procedure of the restructuring of debts owed by foreign states to the Russian Federation”.
4. To recommend to the State Duma representatives in the Inter-Parliament commission on the Russian-Ukrainian cooperation and the State Duma Commission on the Black Sea fleet to take into consideration, in the course of conducting negotiations and consultations, that as of December 1991, Sevastopol in the administrative and territorial boundaries of the respective city district was acknowledged the main base of the Black Sea fleet.
5. To recommend to the President of the Russian Federation to hold consultations with the Government of the Russian Federation and the Federation Council of the Russian Federation on the issues related to the relations with Ukraine.

Chairman of the State Duma
of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation I.P. RYBKIN.
Moscow, March 22, 1995, № 604-1 GD.

OPEN LETTER

To the President of the Russian Federation B.N. Yeltsin,
to the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation V. S. Chernomyrdin,
to the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation,
to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation

The necessity of this address is caused by our profound concern with regard to the processes related to Sevastopol – the main navy base of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation.

Having been founded in 1783 as a base of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, Sevastopol for over two hundred years has been the guarantor of security of our Fatherland's Southern borders and the stronghold of stability in the Black Sea region.

The city defenders protected it twice from the enemies, having amazed the entire world with their courage and having rendered Sevastopol the legendary city of Russian glory and the home of Russian seamen.

The mere mention of Sevastopol evokes in the Russian citizens the sense of pride mingled with grief: pride for the great achievements and victories and grief for one and a half million Russian lives lost in the battles for Crimea and Sevastopol throughout its history.

Hundreds of our compatriots, having sworn allegiance to Russia, gave their strength and their hearts to serve their Fatherland: officers and sailors of the Black Sea fleet and their families dedicated their lives to the only goal – to ensure the peaceful life of the Russian citizens.

There are no, and have never been, any legal grounds that would refute the Russian status of Sevastopol. In accordance with the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Russian SFSR dated October 29, 1948, Sevastopol was included into the category of republican cities. In the course of transferring the Crimean Oblast from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR in 1954, this decree was not abolished and still remains valid.

The mere idea of transferring Sevastopol to any other state is unnatural and anti-popular. This would weaken the defence capacity of the Russian southern borders, reduce Russia's authority in the world arena, and inflict irreparable damage to the conscience of the Russians.

The Black Sea fleet is alive and united, it possesses cutting-edge equipment and can fulfil general military tasks for protecting the boundaries of our country. This is proven by navy exercises which have been successfully completed this year by the fleet command.

The entire country supports the Black Sea fleet. All the major Russian territories and regions, together with the government of Moscow, united for supporting the Black Sea fleet officials.

We ask you to confirm, at all levels and within the shortest possible time, the Russian status of the city of Sevastopol as the main navy base of the Russian Black Sea fleet by introducing the corresponding paragraph to the upcoming comprehensive agreement on friendship and cooperation between Ukraine and Russia.

Yu.M. Luzhkov, Head of the Board of trustees of the “Moscow-Sevastopol” charity fund, O.M. Tolkachev, Vice-President of the “Moscow-Sevastopol” charity fund, G.V. Antyufeev, member of the Executive Board of the “Moscow-Sevastopol” charity fund, V.N. Chernavin, Chairman of the Submarine Sailors Union of the Russian Navy, Hero of the Soviet Union, V.F. Mironov, Chairman of the Russian Fleet Officer Association, Yu.S. Rusin, Chairman of the United Council of the Submarine Veterans of Russia, P.D. Barabolya, Chairman of the “Peace to the oceans” International Committee, M.P. Nenashev, Chairman of the “300th anniversary of the Russian fleet” public council, V.K. Kubaryov, Chairman of the Leningrad association of war veterans and fellow soldiers’ military service, Hero of the Soviet Union, I.F. Klochkov, Chairman of the public association of war and labor veterans, ex-servicemen, and law enforcement veterans of Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad Region, Hero of the Soviet Union, I.S. Kondakov, Chairman of the Saint Petersburg Union of reserve and retired officers, L.Ye. Kopnov, Chairman of the united council of the Navy veterans and law enforcement authorities of Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad Region, A.F. Shorokhov, Chairman of the Saint Petersburg Association of the soldiers-internationalists, V.P. Govorov Chairman of Russian War Veterans Committee, I.A. Slukhay, Chairman of the Moscow War Veterans Committee, V.A. Belaryov, Chairman of the Moscow city council of war and labor veterans, ex-servicemen, and law enforcement veterans, Ye.M. Konokhov, Chairman of the Moscow city council of ex-servicemen, A.P. Lagunov, president of the Afghan War veteran association, M.P. Boghuk, President of the charity fund for the rehabilitation and social support of the law enforcement authorities, V.V. Pimenov, Chairman of the association of military operations and local conflicts veterans, F.A. Klintsevich, Chairman of the Russian Afghan War veterans union, A.N. Razumov, President of the Moscow fund for rehabilitation and social support of soldiers-internationalists, A.N. Pushkin, Chairman of the public veteran association of the participants of military operations on the territory of other states, V.G. Mikhailov, Chairman of the Moscow house of veterans, V.V. Zmirlov, Chairman of the Central administrative district council of veterans, A.E. Arbusov, Chairman of the Northern administrative district council of veterans, A.I. Belyakov, Chairman of the North-Eastern administrative district council of veterans, S.I. Molokoedov, Chairman of the Western administrative district council of veterans, A.Ya. Baloban, Chairman of the North-Western administrative district council of veterans, M.N. Rudnitskiy, Chairman of the Eastern administrative district council of veterans, I.N. Avachev, Chairman of

the South-Eastern administrative district council of veterans, N.D. Bezdenezhny, Chairman of the Southern administrative district council of veterans, B.M. Balychev, Chairman of the South-Western administrative district council of veterans, A.M. Bratov, Chairman of the Zelenograd council of veterans.

October 21, 1996.

DECLARATION

on the independence of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol

We, deputies of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol City Council, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and of a series of other international regulatory acts that provide for the people's right to self-determination, and taking into consideration the fact that on July 22, 2010, the International Court of Justice confirmed with regard to Kosovo that a unilateral proclamation of independence by a part of a state does not violate the norms of international law, hereby adopt a joint resolution:

1. In the event that, following the upcoming referendum of Crimean peoples on March 16, 2014, the decision on the inclusion of Crimea (namely the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol) in Russia is made, after the referendum, Crimea will be declared an independent and sovereign state with a republican form of government.

2. The Republic of Crimea will be a democratic and multi-national state which undertakes to maintain peace and inter-ethnic and inter-faith harmony on its territory.

3. Provided that the corresponding results are obtained in the course of the referendum, the Republic of Crimea, as an independent and sovereign state, will address the Russian Federation with the proposal to include the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation as a new constituent entity of the Russian Federation on the basis of the corresponding interstate agreement.

4. The Declaration was approved by the Resolution of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea at an extraordinary plenary session on March 11, 2014, and by the Resolution of Sevastopol City Council at an extraordinary plenary session on March 11, 2014.

President of the Supreme Council
of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea
Chairman of Sevastopol City Council
March 11, 2014.

V. Konstantinov
Yu. Doynikov

**THE VERKHOVNA RADA OF THE AUTONOMOUS
REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA****RESOLUTION****ON THE INDEPENDENCE OF CRIMEA**

The Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, in accordance with the will directly expressed by the peoples of Crimea at the referendum on March 16, 2014, which showed that the peoples of Crimea supported the inclusion in Russia and, consequently, the withdrawal from Ukraine and creation of an independent state, guided by the Declaration on the independence of Crimea adopted at an extraordinary plenary session of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea on March 11, 2014, and at an extraordinary plenary session on March 11, 2014,

DECREES:

1. To declare Crimea an independent sovereign state – the Republic of Crimea, in which the city of Sevastopol has a special status.

The Republic of Crimea intends to establish its relations with other states on the basis of equality, peace, good-neighbourliness, and other generally recognized principles of political, economic, and cultural cooperation between the countries.

The Republic of Crimea addresses the United Nations and all the world's states with an appeal to recognize the independent state established by the peoples of Crimea.

2. From the day of adoption of this Resolution, on the territory of the Republic of Crimea the laws of Ukraine will no longer apply, and the decisions of the Supreme Council of Ukraine and other state authorities of Ukraine adopted after February 21, 2014, will no longer be implemented.

The laws of Ukraine, apart from what is provided by the first subparagraph of this paragraph, will apply on the territory of the Republic of Crimea until the corresponding regulatory acts of the Republic of Crimea are adopted.

3. The activities of the state authorities of Ukraine on the territory of Crimea are terminated, while their powers, property, and funds are transferred to the state authorities of the Republic of Crimea designated by the Government of the Republic of Crimea.

4. For the purpose of protecting the rights and freedoms of the citizens and economic operators, the courts of Ukraine on the territory of the Republic of Crimea will continue operating, while their decisions with regard to the imple-

mentation of the laws of Ukraine on the territory of Crimea shall not contradict this Resolution.

The highest judicial authorities on the territory of Crimea are the corresponding courts of appeal which are located on the territory of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, the city with a special status.

5. All the institutions, enterprises, and other organizations established by Ukraine or with its participation on the territory of Crimea become the institutions, enterprises, and other organizations established by the Republic of Crimea.

6. The state property of Ukraine which, by the day of adopting this Resolution, was located on the territory of the Republic of Crimea, is from now on the state property of the Republic of Crimea.

7. The property of labour unions and other public organizations of Ukraine which, by the day of adopting this Resolution, was located on the territory of the Republic of Crimea, is from now on the property of the divisions of the corresponding organizations located in the Republic of Crimea, and in the event that there are no such divisions – the state property of the Republic of Crimea.

8. The Republic of Crimea represented by the Verkhovna Rada of the Republic of Crimea addresses the Russian Federation with the proposal to include the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation as a new constituent entity of the Russian Federation with the status of a republic.

9. This Resolution becomes valid from the day of its adoption.

President of the Supreme Council
of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea

V. Konstantinov

Simferopol,
March 17, 2014
№ 1745-6/14

**СЕВАСТОПОЛЬСКИЙ ГОРОДСКОЙ СОВЕТ**

VI созыва

РЕШЕНИЕ

внеочередная сессия

17 марта 2014 года

№7156

г. Севастополь

О статусе города-героя Севастополя

Исходя из прямого волеизъявления народов Крыма на референдуме 16 марта 2014 года, которое показало, что народы Крыма высказались за вхождение в состав России и, следовательно, за выход из состава Украины, руководствуясь Декларацией о независимости Республики Крым, принятой на внеочередном пленарном заседании Верховного Совета Автономной Республики Крым 11 марта 2014 года и внеочередном пленарном заседании Севастопольского городского Совета 11 марта 2014 года, Севастопольский городской Совет

РЕШИЛ:

1. Поддержать принятие Верховной Радой Автономной Республики Крым решения о провозглашении Крыма независимым суверенным государством – Республики Крым, в которой город-герой Севастополь имеет особый статус, и обратиться к Организации Объединенных Наций, ко всем государствам мира с призывом признать независимое государство, созданное народами Крыма.

2. Со дня вступления в силу настоящего решения на территории города Севастополя не применяется законодательство Украины, не исполняются решения Верховной Рады Украины и иных государственных органов Украины, принятые после 21 февраля 2014 года.

Законодательство Украины, кроме указанного в абзаце первом настоящего пункта, применяется на территории города Севастополя до принятия соответствующих нормативных актов города Севастополя.

3. Деятельность государственных органов Украины на территории города Севастополя прекращается, их полномочия, имущество и денежные средства переходят к органам, определенным Севастопольским городским Советом.

4. В целях защиты прав и свобод граждан и субъектов экономической деятельности суды Украины на территории города Севастополя продолжают функционировать, при этом их решения, касающиеся применения законодательства Украины на территории города Севастополя, не должны противоречить настоящему решению.

Высшими судебными органами на территории Крыма являются соответствующие апелляционные суды, находящиеся на территориях Республики Крым и города Севастополя.

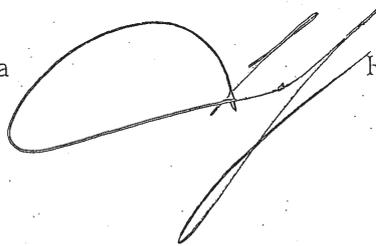
5. Все учреждения, предприятия и иные организации, учрежденные Украиной или с ее участием на территории города Севастополя, становятся учреждениями, предприятиями и иными организациями, учрежденными городом Севастополем.

6. Государственная собственность Украины, находящаяся на день принятия настоящего решения на территории города Севастополя, является собственностью города Севастополя.

7. Город-герой Севастополь в лице Севастопольского городского Совета обращается к Российской Федерации с предложением о принятии города-героя Севастополя в состав Российской Федерации в качестве субъекта Российской Федерации со статусом города федерального значения.

8. Настоящее решение вступает в силу со дня его принятия.

Председатель
городского Совета



Ю.В. Дойников

AGREEMENT

BETWEEN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND THE REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA ON THE INCLUSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF CRIMEA INTO THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION AND ESTABLISHING NEW CONSTITUENT ENTITIES WITHIN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

(Moscow, March 18, 2014)

The Russian Federation and the Republic of Crimea,
basing on the historical affinity of their peoples and taking into consideration
the existing ties between them,

acknowledging and reaffirming the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, according to which all peoples have the inalienable right to freely determine, without external interference, their political status and to pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every State has the duty to respect this right,

being determined to ensure the respect and observance of human dignity, rights, and freedoms, including the right to life, freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and beliefs, to all the people who live on their territories, without any distinction whatsoever, in accordance with the generally recognized principles and norms of international law, and being aware of the close inter-relation between other fundamental principles of international law enshrined, in particular, in the Charter of the United Nations and in the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the principle of respect and observance of human rights and freedoms,

expressing the common will of their peoples, inextricably tied to each other by the affinity of the historical fate, to live jointly within a democratic federative law-based state,

seeking to ensure the well-being and prosperity of their peoples on the basis of the free and voluntary opinion given by the peoples of

Crimea at the all-Crimean referendum held in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol on March 16, 2014, in the course of which the peoples of Crimea decided to reunify with Russia as a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, taking into consideration the proposal of the Republic of Crimea and the city with a special status Sevastopol to include the Republic

of Crimea, together with the city with a special status Sevastopol, in the Russian Federation, have signed this Agreement, having agreed as follows.

Article 1

The Republic of Crimea is considered to be included into the Russian Federation from the date of signing this Agreement.

The inclusion of the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation is to be performed in accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation, this Agreement, the Federal constitutional law “On the procedure of including and establishing a new constituent entity in the Russian Federation”, and the Federal constitutional law on the inclusion of the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation.

Article 2

From the day of including the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation, the new constituent entities are to be established – the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol.

Article 3

The Russian Federation guarantees to all the peoples who live on the territory of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol the right to preserve their native languages and the creation of an environment for studying and developing them.

The state languages of the Republic of Crimea are Russian, Ukrainian, and Crimean Tatar languages.

Article 4

The territorial boundaries of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol are defined by the boundaries of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol on the day of the inclusion of the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation and the establishment of new constituent entities within the Russian Federation.

The land boundary of the Republic of Crimea which is contiguous with the territory of Ukraine is the state border of the Russian Federation.

The demarcation of the sea areas of the Black and Azov Seas is to be performed on the basis of the international treaties of the Russian Federation and the norms and principles of international law.

Article 5

From the day of including the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation and establishing new constituent entities within the Russian Federation, the citizens of Ukraine and people without citizenship, who are permanently resi-

dent on that day on the territory of the Republic of Crimea or the federal city of Sevastopol, are considered to be citizens of the Russian Federation, except for the people who within one month from that day declare their intention to preserve the citizenship of another state that they and (or) their under-age children hold or to remain people without citizenship.

Article 6

From the day of including the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation and establishing new constituent entities within the Russian Federation and until January 1, 2015, the transition period will take place, during which the issues will be settled related to the integration of the new constituent entities of the Russian Federation into the economic, financial, credit, and legal systems of the Russian Federation and into the system of the state authorities of the Russian Federation, as well as the issues of fulfilling military service on the territory of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol.

Article 7

The citizens of the Russian Federation conscripted to military service in the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol are to fulfil their military service in the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol until 2016 inclusive.

Article 8

The elections to the state authorities of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol will take place on the second Sunday of September 2015. Until the election of the state authorities of the Republic of Crimea and the state authorities of the federal city of Sevastopol, their powers will be exercised, respectively, by the State Council of the Republic of Crimea (the Parliament of the Republic of Crimea and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Crimea) and the Legislative Assembly of the city of Sevastopol.

Article 9

The legislative and other regulatory acts of the Russian Federation apply on the territory of the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol from the day of the inclusion of the Republic of Crimea in the Russian Federation and the establishment of new constituent entities of the Russian Federation, unless otherwise provided by the law of the Russian Federation.

The regulatory acts of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, of the Republic of Crimea and the city with a special status Sevastopol apply on the territory of, respectively, the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol until the end of the transition period or until the adoption of the corresponding regulatory act of the Russian Federation and (or) the Republic of

Crimea, the corresponding regulatory act of the Russian Federation and (or) the federal city of Sevastopol.

The regulatory acts of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, of the Republic of Crimea and the city with a special status Sevastopol which contradict to the Constitution of the Russian Federation, shall not apply.

Article 10

This Agreement applies temporarily from the date of its signing and becomes valid from the day of its ratification.

The Agreement is signed in Moscow on March 18, 2014, in three copies, each copy in the Russian language.

On behalf of
the Russian Federation V. PUTIN

On behalf of
the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol V. KONSTANTINOV
A. S. CHALIY,
AKSYONOV

Scientific Publication

Published for non-commercial purposes by decision
of the Working group for international legal issues
of the Permanent Representative of the Republic
of Crimea under the President of the Russian Federation

Unification of Crimea with Russia: Historical and Legal Grounds. Multi-author monograph

Responsible Editor

Doctor of Law, Professor A. Vlasov