

## THE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION FOR THE CRIMEAN TATARS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

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Before the First World War, the Crimean Tatars were among the most educated groups of population in the Russian Empire. Unfortunately, we have a little information about the functioning of educational institutions for the Crimean Tatars in 1914–1917. However, a comparative analysis of the data of the prewar period and the period of the Civil war of 1917–1920 allows us to reconstruct the situation in 1914–1918.

In the period before the First World War, all issues of Islam in Crimea, including religious education, had been under the jurisdiction of the Tavrian Mahometan Spiritual Directorate (TMSD). In the early twentieth century, the system of Islamic education in Crimea comprised three levels: *maktab* (the primary Muslim school), *maktab-e rushtive* (defined as “high-primary school” in Russian documents) and *madrassa* (the higher Muslim school). *Maktabs* were usually mosque-based and funded by either the local Muslim communities or religious endowments (*waqf*). Children of both sexes studied at *maktabs*. Clergy and teachers graduated from a *madrassa*. By the end of the nineteenth century, Crimea had up to 40 *madrassas*. Sufi monasteries (*tekiye* or *tekke*) of the Mevlevi, Naqshbandi, Dcrvani and Sa'adi orders also had religious schools.<sup>1</sup>

The non-traditional Muslim new-method (*jadid*) schools, introduced by the Crimean Tatar intellectual Isma'il-Bey Gasprinskii (1851–1914), combined religious and secular subjects. *Jadid* schools were gaining increased popularity in the early twentieth century. These new-method schools accepted children at the age of 7 for a four-year course (eight months a year). In 1909, the TMSD approved the “Programme and general rules for Crimean Spiritual Tatar *maktabs*”. A revision of the TMSD conducted in 1912 by the

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<sup>1</sup> Смирнов Н., Классовая база ислама в Крыму // Воинствующий атеизм, 1931, № 8–9, с. 32.

Ministry of Interior showed that, much to the chagrin of the Russian authorities, the new-method schools spread widely in the Crimea.<sup>2</sup>

It appears that the persistent efforts of Gasprinskii had finally borne fruit. The ideas of Islamic modernism (*Jadidism*) with a Pan-Turkist orientation, putting particular emphasis on the introduction of modern methods of education, found support among a wide cross-section of the Crimean Muslim clergy and intellectuals. Apparently, by 1920 this trend was dominant in the Crimean Tatar community.

Gasprinskii's major innovation was to introduce an intermediary level of education, the *maktab-e rushtiye*, which would begin after the primary *maktab* level and prepare the student to enter either the religious *madrassa* or the state-run secular secondary schools. The *rushtiye* curriculum comprised both secular and religious subjects: basics of religion; Arabic, Persian, Tatar and Russian languages; mathematics; geometry; accounting; general history; ethics; drawing; calligraphy; and hygiene.<sup>3</sup>

The *rushtiye* schools operated without being officially registered by the Russian authorities. In the late nineteenth century the Russian authorities opened secular primary schools for the Crimean Tatars. Here most of the subjects were taught in Russian, while Arabic was taught as part of the religious classes. In 1914, Crimea had a total of 698 primary schools. This number included 68 *zemstvo* schools for Tatars. Most Tatar children, however, went to *maktabs* (apparently largely new-method ones), which totalled 360. The total number of Tatars studying in primary schools, including the 68 *zemstvo* schools, was 11,000.<sup>4</sup>

The "Programme and general rules" for the Crimean *madrassa*, adopted by TMSD in the early twentieth century, provided

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<sup>2</sup> Воробьева Е. И., Власть и мусульманское духовенство в Российской империи (вторая половина XIX в. - 1917 г.) // Исторический ежегодник, 1997. Омск, 1997. - С. 40-55.

<sup>3</sup> Ганкевич В. Ю. Очерки по истории крымскотатарского народного образования (Реформирование этноконфессиональных учебных заведений мусульман Таврической губернии XIX - начала XX вв.). Симферополь, 1998; Ганкевич В. Ю. Джадидистская реформа образования крымских татар... (на украинском языке). Автореферат диссертации ... доктора исторических наук. Киев, 2000; Ганкевич В. Ю. Крымскотатарские медресе (курс лекций). Симферополь, 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Асанов А., Борьба за всеобщее образование в Крыму // Просвещение национальностей, 1951, № 4-5, с. 21.

the foundation for the reform of the higher level religious education in the spirit of Islamic modernism. The administration and teachers of *madrasas* were appointed by TMSD. Among the first ones to undergo reform was the old Zindzhirli (Zinjirli) *madrasa* in Bakhchisarai. In 1910, the Crimea had 33 reformed *madrasas*.<sup>5</sup>

In 1914–1916, during the first years of the First World War, a situation was not changed. Russian Empire began to take part in the First World War on August 1 (July 19), 1914. The fighting in the Crimea began on October 29 (16), 1914. However from 1914 to 1917, the Crimea was under the direct control of the Russian authorities and really the military clashes did not take place on the peninsula.

Significant changes began to occur in 1917, when the February Revolution began. After the February events of 1917, the Crimean Tatars organized *Milli Firqa* (National Party) and tried to take power into their hands. After the October revolutionary events on December 16, 1917, the Bolshevik Military Revolutionary Committee was established in Sevastopol city. Finally, on March 19, 1918, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Tavrida was proclaimed in the Crimea. The coming of the Bolsheviks to power in Russia led to the Brest Peace, following which Bolshevik power in Russia and Ukraine capitulated to Germany. According to the Brest Peace, whole Ukraine with Crimea must to come under the control of Germany. At the same time in Kiev the Direktoria, headed by the Hetman Skoropadsky, was created. It was controlled by the German authorities. However, after these events, on April 22, 1918, the troops of the Ukrainian People's Republic under the command of General Bolbochan occupied Evpatoria city and Simferopol city. But the German troops came after them to Crimea. On April 27, 1918, the Ukrainian troops of the UPR left Crimea. Before May 1, 1918, the German army occupied whole Crimean peninsula. From May 1 to November 15, 1918, Crimea was de facto under German occupation, de jure under the control of the Crimean regional government (from June 23) of Suleiman Sulkevich. On November 25, 1918, French troops entered in the port of Sevastopol city. This event coincided with the end of the

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<sup>5</sup> Ганкевич В. Ю. Джадидистская реформа образования крымских татар... (на украинском языке). Автореферат диссертации ... доктора исторических наук. Киев, 2000, с. 24–25; Ганкевич В. Ю. Крымскотатарские медресе (курс лекций). Симферополь, 2001.

First World War on November 11, 1918. After that, the Crimea experienced a period of Civil war, as a result of which the Bolsheviks won on November, 1920.

The two revolutions of 1917, perceived by political forces of different orientation as the victory of a new social order over the old one, served as a catalyst for controversial processes, which reflected significant differences in the understanding of modernity within different ethnic cultures. Clearly, the most active and educated part of the Crimean Tatar population – i.e. intelligentsia and clergy – imagined the future of their ethnic community in the light of the ideas of Islamic modernism. On March 25, 1917, the Provisional Executive Muslim Committee was established in Crimea, which dismissed the former conservative leadership of TMSD. On November 26, 1917 the first *Qurultay* (Assembly) was held, which elected the new government (Direktoria) with Numan Chelebi Dzhikhan (Chelebiev) as its head. Numan Chclibi Dzhikhan also chaired the newly established *Milli Firqa* (National Party).<sup>6</sup>

When the Ukrainian troops of the UPR left Crimea on April 27, 1918, the Crimean Tatars firstly revolted and then formed an alliance with the new German authorities. During 1918, the leaders of the Direktoria and Milli Firka actively cooperated with the German occupation authorities. They hoped to receive from Germany the support in restoring of the Crimean Tatar state. White Guardians stay on the territory of Crimea in 1919 and 1920 led to reprisals against the *Direktoria* and the *Milli Firka*. The leaders of *Milli Firka* supported the Soviet power and actively cooperated with it in 1920.

In the spirit of Islamic modernism, *Milli Firqa* did not draw a clear distinction between religion and politics. Consequently, the reform of religious institutions and the system of the state administration system were viewed as part of one unified process of modernizing the Crimean Tatar society. In its Programme (paragraph 26, section 2), *Milli Firqa* stated that the party supports “the fusion of religion with the state apparatus, which stands to protect the former and provide it with a wide scope of opportunity for action and assistance in a number of issues: in training the

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<sup>6</sup> Смирнов, Классовая база ислама в Крыму // Воинствующий атеизм, 1931, № 8–9, с. 39–40.

religious cadre, religious education, judicial process, etc.”<sup>7</sup> The Muslim reformers granted education an important, possibly even central, role in the transformation of society and its institutions.

Paragraph 26 of the *Milli Firqa* Programme stated that the party would strive to insure that "in all national schools religion be actually taught". Paragraph 10, section 2 stated: "In order for the teachers and religious workers not to suffer from destitution in their life, the party will strive to ensure the principle of [providing] insurance and pensions". According to paragraph 6, "*waqf funds* will be disbursed for the village, and the successive construction of new buildings for schools and mosques in the village and for their renovation"<sup>8</sup>

*Milli Firqa* obviously did not envisage any form of autonomy for the religious institutions, viewing them rather as an instrument in implementing their policies: "[the party] will ensure that *waqfs* will fully be controlled by the directorate [i.e. the religious administration], and that the income obtained from them be disbursed on enlightenment and improving the life of the religious workers" (paragraph 10, section 2). The reformers' methods of control over the religious institutions also reflected the general spirit of enlightenment. Paragraph 24 of the Programme stated: "The party demands from the religious directorate to summon the religious workers periodically to attend short-term courses".<sup>9</sup>

After the Civil War, the surviving leaders of *Milfi Firqa* agreed to cooperate with the Soviet authorities. In its appeal to the Crimean Revolutionary Committee (Revkom) of 25 November 1920, *Milli Firqa* specifically stressed its accomplishments in the field of Crimean Tatar education:

"... [we] managed to establish one high primary school in each district [*uezd*] of Crimea; one Tatar female teachers' school in Simferopol; one Tatar secondary arts school, and one teachers' seminary in Bakhchisarai, [in addition, *Milli Firqa*] is reforming the Tatar Higher Spiritual Seminary 'Zinjirli *madrassa*' by intro-

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<sup>7</sup> Смирнов, Классовая база ислама в Крыму // Воинствующий атеизм, 1931, № 8-9, с. 39-40.

<sup>8</sup> Смирнов, Классовая база ислама в Крыму // Воинствующий атеизм, 1931, № 8-9, с. 41-42.

<sup>9</sup> Смирнов, Классовая база ислама в Крыму // Воинствующий атеизм, 1931, № 8-9, с. 41-42.

ducing humanitarian disciplines and natural sciences ..."<sup>10</sup>

As Islamic modernism came to dominate the local scene in the period of revolution and civil war, Islamic education in Crimea received a new impulse for reform and further development.

In late 1920, the *Milli Firqa* party tried to convince the Bolshevik government of the Crimea: "1) to legalise *Milli Firqa*', 2) to transfer the Tatar religious, educational and *waqf* affairs under the jurisdiction of *Milli Firqa*', 3) to permit the publication of the newspaper 'Millet', of literature and academic journals and books"<sup>11</sup> The petition was, however, declined.

Despite the rejection of further cooperation with *Milli Firqa* as an independent political entity, many activists of the party soon came to occupy various posts in the Soviet state apparatus, including the system of education. In 1923 the *Milli Firqa* activist Veil Ibrahimov even became chairman of the Central Executive Committee (TsIK) of the Crimean Autonomous Republic. In their subsequent activities in the area of education and religion, the former *Milli Firqa* members largely remained loyal to the ideas of Islamic modernism.

In 1921, the Crimean ASSR established a Ministry of Education (Narkompros), which included a special department for Crimean Tatar education. The religious affairs were transferred to the jurisdiction of an Interdepartmental Commission which comprised representatives of the departments of justice, finance, and religious affairs. The authorities confiscated the premises of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate and closed all *madrasas*, while the last Mufti emigrated along with the White Guard troops.

In the early months of Soviet rule on the peninsula, the Crimean Tatar community already invested much effort into revitalizing the primary religious education. Between 1 November 1920 and November 1921, over primary 500 schools were opened or reopened, allegedly without the knowledge of the Crimean Educational Department (Krymnarobraz).<sup>12</sup> In comparison, Muslim primary schools in Crimea in 1914 had totaled 360.<sup>13</sup> Certainly,

<sup>10</sup> Центральный государственный архив Автономной Республики Крым (ЦГААРК), ф. П-1, оп. 1, д. 30: 2.

<sup>11</sup> Смирнов, Классовая база ислама в Крыму // Воинствующий атеизм, 1931, № 8-9, с. 41-42.

<sup>12</sup> ЦГААРК, ф. П-1, оп. 1, д. 65: 82.

<sup>13</sup> Асанов А. Борьба за всеобщее просвещение национальностей, 1951, № 4-5, с. 21.

over 140 Muslim schools emerged after 1914. Consequently, the educational efforts of *Milli Firqa*, over a relatively short period, in 1917–1918, brought some significant rewards. Thus, despite the First World War and Civil war, the education system of Crimean Tatars not only survived, but also received a further impetus to development.

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