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Transformation of the Social Space of an Ethnos in Historical Retrospect: Bulgarian Communities in Russia

Abstract: The social space is constantly changing, which creates difficulties in interpreting this category. There are no ethnic groups that have lived in one place for the entire period of their history. The colonists from the Balkans had a single status, but they were not a single entity at all. A. Skalkovsky (1848) and Nikolai Derzhavin (1914) wrote about Bulgarian settlements. The formation of independent Bulgaria was promoted by the activity of national enlightenment figures in Bulgaria (V.E. Aprilov, M. Drinov, T. Minkov) and the role of the Bulgarian diaspora in Russia. Military conflicts led to the fact that the Bulgarian settlements were on different sides of the borders. After the defeat in the Crimean War, Russia temporarily (until 1878) lost a small part of southern Bessarabia. This territory was ceded to the Principality of Moldavia, a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. The upheavals of the 20th century had a heavy impact on Bulgarians. Most of the Russian Bulgarians who lived in the province of Bessarabia were under the rule of the Romanian invaders for 22 years, until 1940. Historical and comparative methods of material analysis were used. In the course of the study, the position of the Bulgarians in the internal Russian conflicts was analyzed. The results of the research published in the article will be useful for specialists in the field of ethnology, ethnography and world history.

Keywords: Bulgarian diaspora, Ottoman Empire, Bessarabia province, Azov region, colonization, Nikolai Derzhavin, Aprilov, Marin Drinov, T.N. Minkov, S.N. Vankov.

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Трансформация социального пространства этноса в исторической ретроспективе: болгарские общины в России

Аннотация: Социальное пространство находится в постоянном изменении, что порождает трудности в интерпретации этой категории. Нет этносов, которые проживали бы на одном месте весь период своей истории. Колонисты с Балкан имели единый статус, но вообще не представляли собой единого целого. О болгарских поселениях писали А. Скалковский (1848), Николай Державин (1914). Становлению независимой Болгарии способствовали активность деятелей национального просвещения в Болгарии (В.Е. Априлов, М. Дринов, Т. Минков) и роль

болгарской диаспоры в России. Военные конфликты приводили к тому, что болгарские поселения оказывались по разные стороны границ. После поражения в Крымской войне Россия на время (до 1878 года) утратила небольшую часть южной Бессарабии. Эта территория отошла к Молдавскому княжеству, вассальному государству Османской империи. Потрясения XX века тяжело отразились на болгарях. Большинство российских болгар, живших в Бессарабской губернии, оказались на 22 года, вплоть до 1940 года, под властью румынских оккупантов. Были использованы исторический и сравнительные методы анализа материалов. В ходе исследования была проанализирована позиция болгар во внутрироссийских конфликтах. Результаты исследования, опубликованные в статье, будут полезны специалистам в области этнологии, этнографии и мировой истории.

Ключевые слова: болгарская диаспора, Османская империя, Бессарабская губерния, Приазовье, колонизация, Николай Державин, Априлов, Марин Дринов, Т.Н. Минков, С.Н. Ванков.

Introduction

The categories 'social space' and 'social time' characterize both sustainability and change. Time and space as philosophical categories describe both the state of the elements and the processes that arise between them. Indeed, society is in constant change. There is not a single society and nation without changes. Culture and economy are changing.

Russia has traditionally been a country that welcomes refugees from among the co-religionists and half-blood Slavs. Bulgarians make up a diaspora in Russia, a very significant number, quite educated, but almost invisible in political life. The reason is simple: Russian Bulgarians were distinguished by their absolute loyalty to Russia, never making any specific demands in the interests of the Diaspora. There were no revolutionaries, no dissidents, no ethnic mafia among the Russian Bulgarians.

The Bulgarian diaspora in Russia also played a huge role in the cultural, economic, and political development of Bulgaria, not only during the period of the Turkish yoke but also during the formation of the independent Bulgarian state. At the same time, scientists were somehow little interested in the fate of the Bulgarians, who became subjects of Russia, gradually becoming one of the ethnic groups of Russia.

Bulgarians in Russia is the general designation of the descendants of Bulgarian immigrants to the Russian Empire in the late 18th and 19th centuries. The first Bulgarians moved to Russia in the 10th century. After the Baptism of Russia, Byzantine monks, teachers, doctors, and icon painters arrived in Russia, among whom there were many southern Slavs, including Bulgarians. Probably, the Bulgarian was Metropolitan Cyprian of Moscow (1389-1406), one of the most prominent Russian church leaders.

The study aimed to analyze the transformation of the social space of Bulgarian communities in Russia in historical retrospect. Based on the goal, the following tasks were:

- give a historical description of the process of the Bulgarian re-sitting;
- analyze the peculiarities of the resettlement of Bulgarians to certain territories;
- analyze the features of the settlement of Russian Bulgarians;
- problems of the division of the Bulgarian colonies and settlements at the current geopolitical stage.

In the formation of the analytical material, the scientific works of such famous ethnologists in the space of Bulgarian issue as P.N. Batyushkov, L.M. Berg, N.S. Derzhavin, A. Klaus, B.M. Lyapunov, O.V. Medvedeva, and A. Skalkovsky were used.

Results

Historical Description of the Process of the Bulgarian Re-Sitting

However, the real large-scale immigration of Bulgarians to the Russian Empire began during the Russo-Turkish wars in the reign of Catherine the Great. Together with the Bulgarians, numerous Christians from the Balkans of various nationalities were resettled, who in Russia were equally called 'Trans-Danube migrants'. So, the accounting of Bulgarians is very difficult, given that the vast majority of 'Zadunaians' were Orthodox, and their living conditions in the Balkans were very similar. Finally, even among the immigrants who came from the Bulgarian lands, a considerable percentage were Turkic-speaking Gagauz.

In 1773, the entire Bulgarian village of Flatar, located near Silistra, numbering 400 families, moved to Russia. The influx from across the Danube increased, and in October 1801, an imperial decree extended certain benefits to 'Trans-Danube migrants'. By this time, the number of Zadunaians numbered in the tens of thousands. The ruler of Novorossiia, Duke A. Richelieu, called the Bulgarian settlers 'incomparable' for their ability to work on the land in the local climate (Richelieu called the German colonists 'obnoxious' for their constant complaints) (*Klaus, 1869*).

After the Russian-Turkish War of 1806–1812, the flow of migrants from across the Danube became especially large. Since Bessarabia, annexed to Russia as a result of this war, was a very desolate region, especially Budzhak, the southern steppe part of the province, the Russian authorities sent the mainstream of 'Zadunay' to Bessarabia. Among the Zadunaians, Bulgarians predominated (among whom at that time there was no special people—the Gagauz), Greeks, and the Cossacks who had once gone to Turkey.

It should note that not only the Bulgarians but also the Moldovans themselves were too large extent immigrants in Bessarabia, although it was historically part of the Moldavian principality. In general, the southern part of the Bessarabian province for immigrants from across the Danube became about what the Saratov province was for the German colonists by the place of the largest concentration of colonists, who make up a very considerable part of the population.

In the early 19th century, the Bulgarian settlements in the province of Kherson and Crimea—Small and Large Blagoyevo, Ternovka, Russia Balta Chokrak, Crichlow, parks and Kubanka—were created.

The colonists from the Balkans had a single status, but they were not a single entity. Even in a mixed colony, there was home to Greeks, Bulgarians, Gagauz, Moldovan, at the same time, in contrast to the German colonists, the colonists were talking mostly in Russian. The reason is that the Greeks spoke various mutually intelligible dialects, the Gagauz spoke their language, the Bulgarians did not yet have a literary language (in Bulgarian schools, teaching was conducted in Church Slavonic).

The account of the Trans-Danube migrants was kept very approximately. Only those, who served in the Russian army, were taken into account, and ordinary immigrants, especially those, who did not receive the rights of colonists, were not taken into account at all. A full accounting of entry and exit in Russia began only in 1828, but in Novorossiia, there was almost no accounting. Wars with the Turks, pestilence epidemics also had an impact on the number of colonists.

In 1818, there were 27,000 registered Bulgarian immigrants (along with the Gagauz people). After the successful Russian-Turkish war of 1828–1829, another 25 thousand Bulgarians and Gagauzians moved to Bessarabia (*Medvedeva, 2009*). By 1844, Bulgarians made up 3.3% of the population of Novorossiia (*Derzhavin, 1914*).

The centre of the Bulgarian colonies was the city of Bolgrad. The settlers also founded the city of Taracilia. There were also 60 Bulgarian villages in the province (but some of them were Gagauz, since the Gagauz people, as natives of Bulgaria, were not separated in official censuses from the Bulgarians themselves). Finally, quite a few Bulgarians settled in the cities of Izmail, Kilia, Reni, Akkerman (Belgorod-Dniester). They formed a significant part of the population there (*Derzhavin, 1914*).

Thus, during the 19th century, Bulgarians actively moved to new areas for themselves. This movement can be described as a historical remigration, if we take into account the settlement of the Slavic peoples in the first centuries of the new era. However, the second settlement was of an accentuated nature and concerned only certain regions of the south of the Russian Empire.

The Peculiarities of the Resettlement of Bulgarians to Certain Territories

The well-known Russian figure A. Skalkovsky in 1848 published a statistical work on the Bulgarian settlements in Bessarabia, in which he stated many features of life and everyday life of Bulgarians. Bulgarians lived in large families, 3–4 generations under one roof, the age of 80 years was common in their colonies. They possessed the art of finding water, which also helped to survive in the arid Bujak steppes. They sowed mainly wheat and corn. They were engaged in gardening with a special love. From Bulgaria, the settlers brought and began to grow cabbage, cucumbers, beans and other vegetables. They were engaged in gardening, wine-making, sericulture, and tobacco cultivation. The Bulgarians built the first sugar factory in the province. On the arid lands of Budjak, the Bulgarians began to use a specific plough, known as the 'Bessarabian'. By 1847, schools had been established in almost all the Bulgarian colonies. Quite quickly, the Bulgarian colonists achieved prosperity. It was the well-to-do Bulgarians in Russia who became the organizers of education in their homeland.

It is significant that during the Russian-Turkish war of 1828–29, the rich Odessa merchant Vasily Yevstafyevich Aprilov (1789–1847) armed and equipped a volunteer Bulgarian regiment that fought with the Turks at his own expense. In Odessa, he was a trustee of the Greek school. In 1835, in Gabrovo, at his expense, the first secular Bulgarian school was opened. Children of all classes were accepted to study there, and education was free. In the future, in other cities of Bulgaria, educational institutions were also opened on the Gabrov school model with the help of Aprilov. The textbooks for these schools, under the monk Neofit Rilski authorship, mostly printed and distributed in Bulgaria at the expense of the Aprilov. Aprilov also played a major

role to introduce the Russian public to the history and culture of the Bulgarians. He wrote several translations of ancient Slavic letters and writings on the need to develop education among his people.

With the Crimean War of 1853–1856, a new migration of Bulgarians is associated. As in the previous Russian-Turkish wars, they participated in it on the side of Russia. However, the unsuccessful course of hostilities and the retreat of the Russian army from Bulgaria led to the relocation of all residents of 29 villages from the vicinity of the city of Silistria in the amount of 6,600 people (about 900 families).

Thus, despite the new immigration of Bulgarians to Russia, in Bessarabia itself, the number has decreased.

After the defeat in the Crimean War, Russia temporarily (until 1878) lost a small part of southern Bessarabia. This territory was ceded to the Principality of Moldavia, a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire. Almost half of the Bulgarian colonies were located in this territory. In 1868, there were 46 Bulgarian colonies in the Bessarabian province. 57 thousand people lived there. However, the high natural growth rapidly increased both the absolute and the relative number of Bessarabian Bulgarians.

The Moldavian rulers immediately deprived the Bulgarian colonists of all privileges, imposed taxes and began to forcibly take the Bulgarians into their army. In response to the actions of the Bulgarians, the authorities of the principality introduced their troops into the colonies, establishing a real military occupation regime. The consequence was the mass departure of Bulgarians to Russia, which took on a particularly massive character in 1861–63 (Batyushkov, 1892). It was during these years that the Russian government began the agricultural colonization of the Azov steppes, in the Berdyansk and Melitopol counties of the Tauride province. Previously, the Nogais roamed these steppes, but in the early 1860s, the Nogais, along with some of the Crimean Tatars, left for Turkey. The authorities of the province considered that the Bulgarians, who had a good reputation as farmers and gardeners, would be able to turn the steppes into a granary. That is why the Azov Sea region was proposed to make a region of Bulgarian colonization. The government allocated 214 thousand dessiatines of land to former Russian citizens of Bulgarian origin who left the Moldavian principality. However, the Moldovan government-imposed all sorts of obstacles on the Bulgarian emigrants. Therefore, the first settlers were forced to cross the border illegally, and only in October 1861, they were issued passports. In the Northern Azov region, Bulgarians from Bessarabia founded 34 colonies. In meantime, in addition to the 'old' Russian Bulgarians from southern Bessarabia, Bulgarians from Bulgaria also arrived on the coast of the Sea of Azov. By the end of 1863, there were already 5,500 Bulgarian families in Berdyansk and Melitopol counties. Each family received a loan for the acquisition of 125 rubles, the supply of bread for each family member until the first harvest, and most importantly—50 acres of land.

The Slavic scholar Nikolai Derzhavin, in his work *Bulgarian Colonies in Russia*, published in 1914, singled out the Azov colonies as the most preserved national traditions and customs. He attributed this to the location of the Bulgarian settlements in proximity to each other and isolation. At the same time, the proximity of the Bulgarian colonies to German and Ukrainian settlements influenced the style of clothing and housing construction.

The centre of the Bulgarian settlements in Bessarabia is the city of Bolgrad Ismail County, located at the lake Yalpuh. In 1827, there were 2,279 inhabitants, of whom 2,270 were Bulgarians (Skalkovsky, 1848). The 1897 census counted 12,300 villages in Belgrade, of which 8,478 were Bulgarians, 1,199 Jews, 612 Moldovans, 117 Gagauzians, 40 Greeks, 63 Germans, 94 Poles, and about 1,700 Russians (Great Russians and Little Russians). According to the data of 1907, there were 111,624 Bulgarians in the rural population of the Bessarabian province (*Berg, 1923*).

Among the Bulgarians, who moved to Russia after the Crimean War, Marin Drinov (1838-1906) was particularly famous. At the age of 20, he emigrated to Russia, studied at the Kyiv Theological Seminary and Moscow University at the Faculty of History and Philology. His interest in Slavic history and philology led him to the then centre of the relevant sciences – in Prague. In 1865-71, the young scientist travelled to Europe, carefully studying the archives. In 1869, Drinov published the works *The History of the Bulgarian Church* and *On the Origin of the Bulgarian People*, which were highly appreciated by the academic world. On the pages of the Bulgarian newspapers that appeared at this time, Drinov also placed articles on historical topics, which in the conditions of the Turkish yoke sounded very revolutionary, encouraging Bulgarians not only to remember their great past but also to fight for the future. In 1869, in the Romanian city of Braila, Drinov, together with several Bulgarian scientists, created the *Bulgarian Book Friendship*, or, for short, the BLA (Bulgarian Literary Association), which later grew out of the framework of a literary organization and turned into the Academy of Sciences of Bulgaria. Drinov became the first chairman of the society and the editor of its body *Periodic Edition of the BCD*. However, Drinov did not stop his scientific activity in his new Homeland – in Russia. In 1873, at Moscow University, he defended his master's thesis *The Settlement of the Balkan Peninsula by the Slavs*. Three years later, Drinov defended his doctoral dissertation *The Southern Slavs and Byzantium in the 10th Century*. There he introduced into scientific circulation a lot of historical information that he received while researching ancient chronicles. His scientific achievements received a well—deserved assessment—since 1876, Drinov has been a professor of Slavic studies at the Kharkiv University. After the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, Drinov came to his homeland and became (as part of the provisional Russian administration of the country) Minister of Public Education and Spiritual Affairs, and vice-governor of Sofia. He was one of the founding fathers of the Bulgarian state, co-author of the first Bulgarian constitution, and it was at his suggestion that Sofia became the capital of the recreated Bulgarian state. In addition to playing a huge role in the creation of the state, Drinov was engaged in the development of the Bulgarian alphabet, since by 1878 there were several variants of the Bulgarian grammar. Drinov introduced the 32-letter civil alphabet used in Bulgaria before 1945 (with the small letters yat and yus, as well as the mute ‘ъ’ and ‘ь’ at the end of words). Minister Drinov created the National Library, built several hundred new schools, founded some secondary educational institutions, and prepared to establish a university (which was opened only in 1888, when Drinov was no longer a minister). However, the young principality of Bulgaria immediately after birth became a place of internal conflicts and a place of confrontation between the great powers, which resulted in several coups that brought pro-German forces to power. In April 1881, Prince Alexander Battenberg of Bulgaria carried out a coup by revoking the constitution, offering Drinov the chairman position of the State Council (something like prime minister). However, Drinov refused to get involved

in intra-Balkan squabbles. In such circumstances, in 1881, Drinov returned to Russia, Kharkiv, which became his native city, and continued working there until the end of his life. In 1898, Drinov became a Corresponding Member of the St Petersburg Academy of Sciences (*Lyapunov, 1905*).

Another enlightenment figure was Fyodor Minkov (Todor Nikolov Minkov)—(1830–1906), born in Ruschuk (now-Ruse) in the family of a well-to-do Bulgarian merchant. Thanks to the help of a rich uncle, he managed to get an education at the classical gymnasium in Vienna and the Dresden Polytechnic Institute. In Europe, Minkov met Russian students and learned Russian. During the Crimean War, without finishing his education in Dresden, he volunteered for the Russian army. He participated in several battles, and the defence of Sevastopol was wounded. After the war, he completed his education in Dresden, receiving a degree in engineering. In 1861, he finally moved to Russia. In 1862, with the active participation of Minkov, a South Slavic boarding school for immigrants from the South Slavic lands was founded in the city of Mykolaiv. In 1867, Minkov took charge of his private boarding school, which he managed for 25 years. The boarding house was a notoriously unprofitable enterprise, but Minkov was not interested in profit, it served the Slavic idea. In total, up to 800 people, mostly Bulgarians graduated from the Minkov Boarding School. Many students of the South Slavic boarding school later became prominent figures of the Bulgarian national liberation movement, became famous Bulgarian politicians, military men, writers and musicians. Along with teaching, Minkov was actively engaged in political journalism, defending the idea of Slavic unity. During the Eastern crisis of 1875–76, Minkov organized fundraising and the volunteers transfer to Bulgaria. In independent Bulgaria, Minkov could have held important positions but he could not leave the boarding school. In 1886, Minkov received the grade of full state councillor (civil grade of the 4th class).

Thus, in 1897, there were 170 thousand Bulgarians in the Novorossiysk provinces, of which 103 thousand Bulgarians lived in Bessarabia, which was 5.3% of the province population. There were 5,840 Bulgarians in Crimea. The Crimean Peninsula experienced next ethnic annexation. This created a more complex ethnic conglomerate on the peninsula. Fyodor Minkov and Marin Drinov made a special contribution to the assimilation of ethnic Bulgarians in the new territories. On their example, it is necessary to note the liberal policy of the Russian Empire in relation to the Bulgarian diaspora, in contrast to the policy of the Ottoman Empire.

The Features of the Settlement of Russian Bulgarians

The Russian Bulgarians played a certain role in the events of the First World War and the Revolution. Thus, the Bulgarian General Radko Dimitriev (1859–1918), who held command positions in the army of Bulgaria, after Bulgaria entered the war on Germany's side, immediately went to Russia, where he commanded a Russian corps. But during the Civil War, he was shot by the Bolsheviks.

The fate of the Russian officer of Bulgarian origin Semyon Nikolaevich Vankov (25.01.1858–21.06.1937) was happier. He was born in the Bulgarian city of Svishtov in the family of teacher Nikola Vankov, a committed Russophile. His father gave him his primary education. In 1867, Simeon's parents sent him to continue his education in Russia. He studied at the South

Slavic Boarding School in Mykolaiv, then entered the Konstantinovsky Artillery School in St Petersburg. In the meantime, as a free listener, the young Bulgarian attended classes at the Mining Institute, gaining solid knowledge in the field of minerals, which later largely determined his scientific activity. During the Russian-Turkish War of 1877–78. Vankov fought in the ranks of the Russian army for the liberation of his native country. In independent Bulgaria, Vankov served in the national army. He distinguished himself in the short Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885. Russophile Vankov was dissatisfied with the pro-German activities of Prince Alexander Battenberg and participated in a military coup. As a result of this, the prince was overthrown. However, a new coup soon followed, bringing the anti-Russian forces back to power. Vankov was arrested but managed to escape from prison and make his way to Russia. Since 1887, half a century Simeon (now Semyon) Vankov served in Russia. He held several high military positions in the Russian artillery. In the meantime, he was not only a combatant officer but also, thanks to his organizational skills, became a major organizer of military production. During the First World War, Vankov was the organizer of the production of field artillery in Russia having converted several civilian enterprises to the production of shells. In total, there were more than 500 enterprises under Vankov's rule. As a result of Vankov's activity in 1916, the 'shell famine', which had so severely affected the results of the campaign a year earlier, was eliminated. After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks attracted many 'bourgeois specialists', and Semyon Nikolaevich was among them. He was entrusted to head the artillery-armour and mine-electrical part of the metal department of the VSNH, the scientific and Technical Council of VSNH Glavmetall, the Scientific and Technical Council of VSNH coloured metals. In the meantime, he was a member of the board of many councils and committees of the Supreme Economic Council. He was elected Professor of Metal Technology of the Moscow Institute of National Economy, head of the Department of General Metal Technology of the Moscow Engineering and Pedagogical Institute. In those positions, he played a major role in the restoration and development of coloured metallurgy plants in Russia, in the design of the Dnipro Aluminum Plant, too. He was the organizer of the first Soviet congresses of scientific and technical workers in the space of metallurgy. He wrote numerous scientific papers on metallurgy. Vankov is rightly considered a pioneer of non-ferrous metallurgy in Russia, in particular, the light-alloy industry, which found its embodiment in aircraft construction, space technology and instrument making, one of the first propagandists of the widespread introduction of refrigeration technology and much more. Semyon Nikolayevich Vankov died on June 21, 1937, from heart disease in the eightieth year of life. He was buried at the Vvedenskoye Cemetery in Moscow (*Semyon Nikolaevich Vankov, 2012*).

The upheavals of the 20th century had a heavy impact on Bulgarians. Most of the Russian Bulgarians, who lived in the province of Bessarabia, was under the rule of the Romanian invaders for 22 years, until 1940. During the Romanian occupation, the Bessarabian Bulgarians were subjected to harassment, as relations between Romania and Bulgaria were very tense, and the Bessarabian Bulgarians were also considered pro-Russian. In 1930, according to the Romanian census, there were 163.7 thousand Bulgarians in Bessarabia, which was 5.7% of the population of Bessarabia. In 1940, there were about 180,000 Bulgarians.

Thus, as a result of Bulgarian immigrants' activity in Russian Army before, together with most of the Bessarabians, the Bulgarians enthusiastically welcomed the Red Army in 1940. The war, the 1946 famine, and the mass deportations of 'bourgeois elements' (there were many among the well-to-do Bulgarians) in the late 1940s seriously undermined the ethnocultural community of the Bessarabian Bulgarians. In the Moldavian Soviet Republic, the share of Bulgarians gradually decreased relative to the total population accounting for 2% of the republic's inhabitants (88 thousand people).

Problems of the Division of the Bulgarian Colonies and Settlements at the Current Geopolitical Stage

Although it was ignored until 1991, the most important problem was that the Bulgarians were divided by administrative borders. The majority of Bulgarians were residents of the Odessa region of Ukraine, about a third-residents of Moldova. The collapse of the USSR has led to the fact that now Bulgarians have become residents of two post-Soviet states. At the same time, the village of Parkany was in the unrecognized Pridnestrovian Republic. Almost half of the Moldavian Bulgarians were residents of the Gagauz Autonomy.

The total number of Bulgarians is decreasing. So, in 1989, 88.5 thousand Bulgarians lived in Moldova and 233 thousand in Ukraine. Depopulation, assimilation and emigration reduce the number of ethnic groups. At the beginning of the 21st century, about 140 thousand Bessarabian Bulgarians lived in Ukraine, 65 thousand in Moldova, 28 thousand of which were Gagauzia. Bulgarians dominated in the capital city of Bolhrad. According to statistics, the Bolgradsky district of the Odessa region was inhabited by Bulgarians in 61%, Gagauz in 19%, Russians in 8%, Ukrainians in 7%, Albanians in 2%, and Moldovans in 1.5%. Thus, the Bessarabian Bulgarians retain a certain 'hearth', thanks to which they have a significant chance to survive as a unique ethnic group.

Bulgarians of Moldova with Bulgarian mother tongue made up 81% of the population, 13.9% of Bulgarians indicated Russian as their native language (*Moldova...*, 2004).

The Bulgarians of Azov experienced all the vicissitudes of Soviet and post-Soviet history. Many Bulgarians, especially those who moved to the fast-growing cities of the Donbass, quickly became Russified. In 2001, in the Zaporizhzhia region, which includes most Bulgarian villages on the coast of the Sea of Azov, there were 27 thousand Bulgarians. Another 5 thousand Bulgarians lived in the Donetsk region. In total, there were 204 thousand Bulgarians in Ukraine. In the Russian Federation, there are 32 thousand Bulgarians, but most of them came from Bulgaria to study or work.

Thus, it should note that the Bulgarians of Crimea actively participated in the movement for the reunification of the peninsula with Russia. The Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in 1994-95 was Sergey Tsekov. Significantly, Tsekov himself was the leader of the Russian Movement of Ukraine party. Similarly, the Bulgarians of the Donbass, without creating any separate Bulgarian parties and organizations, generally take pro-Russian positions.

Conclusion

Thus, the social space describes the elements of society, which are different social groups: small and large, cultural and national, as well as the structures that arise between them. Social and describes the dynamics of the relationships that occur between them. In each locus and region, both in the past and in modern times, different historical variants of the social space (pre-industrial, post-industrial) coexist. The transformation of social space is asynchronous, varies in pace and scale, and generates a multiple and complex structure of the region.

The Bulgarian diaspora in Russia played an outstanding role in the development of Bulgaria but also gave Russia many outstanding figures in response. In the meantime, the Bulgarians, being very modest people, are not inclined to advertise their services to Russia, and even more so to complain about modern difficulties. It is therefore fair to recall the Bulgarian contribution to the history of Russia.

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