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HISTORICAL MEMORY AND NATIONAL SELF-AWARENESS

As is known, every new generation turns to the past to comprehend not only its connections with what came before, but also its present interests. This has always been so. But at any historical stage there comes a time when historical figures or events evoke a special interest. The last few decades have led many, if not the majority of the peoples to exhibit increased attention to the past. This has clearly coincided with the growth of their national self-awareness. Therefore it is expedient, both scientifically and practically, to consider the question of the relationship between a people's historical and national self-awareness. The author will also try to define the place of historical memory in the system of historical self-awareness and to outline its practical manifestations among the Soviet peoples on the basis of data of ethnosociological research.

The conception about the historical past is a component of national self-awareness, if it is understood broadly – not only as the national identification of people, but also as the „we-image“ as a whole, i. e., a conception about its features, its past and present and its national interests connected with it. At the same time, the conceptions and knowledge of the members of a concrete entity about their past, including their knowledge of legends, traditions and established historical facts, in the author's opinion, is not tantamount to historical self-awareness. Such knowledge and conceptions can rather be described as historical memory. It is an indispensable part of culture, of continuity, which stabilizes an ethnos. Historical memory is a specific cultural potential of a people. It can be used, and sometimes it is really used in the interests of the people and sometimes in the interests of certain social groups. It is known that during the Second World War politicians, writers and the propaganda media turned to the memory of the outstanding Russian army leaders Alexander Nevsky, Alexander Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov in an effort to mobilize the potential of all society to the acceleration of socio-economic development. Soviet writers and public opinion turn to the memory about the positive labour traditions of peoples.

Regrettably, historical memory can be used not only for progressive purposes. Sometimes it is invoked to deepen „historical roots“. This leads to an upsurge of national sentiments, and it is highly important what actions are thus stimulated. National sentiments leaning on historical memory may arouse „admiration“ for the

past and self-opposition to other peoples, i.e., may have negative consequences. But they may also stir up patriotic sentiments, infuse people with a sense of dignity and prompt them to take intensive labour, social and cultural actions. To use a figure of speech, historical memory resembles ingots of precious metal which can be used both as the armours of conquerors and as the flagstaves of banners which unite peoples, or as adornments which diversify people's day-to-day life.

It is actualized historical memory, which brings about popular unity, that, in the author's opinion, is the historical self-awareness of a people. In other words, it is not only people's knowledge about events and phenomena of the past, but also their attitude to these events and phenomena, as well as the behaviour which stems from such knowledge and attitude. Thus, just as in national self-awareness as a whole, three elements are to be found in the historical self-awareness as its part (or its element) – cognitive, emotional-evaluative, and regulative.

The historical memory and historical self-awareness of members of a certain entity do not coincide with national self-awareness on all points. Knowledge about the past of all mankind, including about its early, pre-ethnic stages of development or, for instance, about the international aspect of the class struggle clearly goes beyond the bounds of national self-awareness. This knowledge helps to realise the place and role of one's people in the historical process, but does not form part of the knowledge about one's people, of the „we-image“.

What then actualizes historical memory? What makes it, conventionally speaking, an active element of national self-awareness? Above all, national interests, which, as is known, are usually an expression of social interests. It is not an accident that it is primarily the intelligentsia which represents and disseminates historical knowledge and gives it an ideological and political form, thus helping historical figures or events of the past to become a banner and a symbol consolidating the nation. At the same time, historical the nation. At the same time, historical and national self-awareness becomes mass self-awareness only when it is disseminated among all social strata of the people. Researchers in many countries assume that national and historical self-awareness gains a truly mass scope when education is placed within the reach of everybody and when national ideas are widely propagandized by the mass media among all sections of the population. Of course, this does not mean that in the past the population did not practise national self-identification and had no conception about the past. As is known, there were no ethnic entities without names and self-awareness, and patriotism in the name of the people has been displayed by individuals at all times. In the modern sense, mass national self-awareness is exhibited when all or the majority of the members of a concrete human entity have a historically authentic knowledge about their people, have adopted the attitude to its values ideologically institutionalized by the state or leading groups and are prepared to act in the name of common aims and interests, i.e., when the realization of the interests of one's nation, or people is there.

The data obtained in the course of a representative ethnosociological research under the project „Optimization of the Socio-Cultural Conditions of the Development and Drawing Together of Nations in the USSR“, carried out by the Department of Ethnosociological Research of the Institute of Ethnography of the USSR Academy of Sciences in the years 1971–1976 and 1979–1981¹ among the Russians in the RSFSR

1. The research was headed by Yu. V. Arutyunyan. Concerning the programme see Yu. V.

and other republics, the Uzbeks, Georgians, Moldavians and Estonians show the wide dissemination of historical self-awareness as part of national self-awareness. The community of historical destiny is among the basic signs of the individuals' self-identification with their peoples. For instance, the Russians in the RSFSR placed this factor after language close in significance to general traditions, customs and professional culture. And it was of greater importance to them than, for instance, place of residence or external similarity. Among some nationalities in the course of identifications the significance of the community of the historical past increases as they lose other ethnodifferentiating features.

One of the indicators of historical self-awareness is interest in the literature about the past of one's people. Judging by the results of the interviews, attention to this literature is great among all peoples. The question sheet emphasized literary subjects to which the respondents were to express their attitude. In terms of the interest aroused by it literature about the past of one's people took first place among the Georgians, second among the Uzbeks, third among the Estonians and fourth among the Russians. But among the Russians first place was taken by literature about the military events of the Second World War — also part of history.

The popularity of the literature about the past of one's people to a certain extent helps form a judgement about the people's historical memory. Information about historical and cultural events registered in myths, legends, traditions, ballads, songs, folk stories and then in professional historical and literary works has been handed down from one generation to the next. The volume of historical memory in each individual or social group depends on education, breadth of general cultural knowledge and in some people even simply on the retentive power of their memory. But the actualization of cultural events and phenomena depends on certain circumstance, above all, on social situations, which activate and sometimes sharpen national self-awareness. For instance, historical memory is usually more active among non-numerous peoples. During the ethnosociological expeditions to Georgia the Moscow researchers were struck by how well the Georgians know events of their history and take pride in their people's cultural figures and their works. And everyone — not only the intelligentsia, but also factory and office workers, elderly people and the younger generation — is well informed about all this. Later, these impressions found reflection in the generalized results of the interviews: practically no one among the Georgians found it difficult to answer a question about outstanding national leaders, and this knowledge, as a rule, showed a wide scope.

The interview programme, conventionally speaking, had no „fan“ as regards historical questions. In fact, there only a question about outstanding figures to which the respondents felt particular attraction and a question about their literary interests, But answers to them frequently assumed the form of lively stories. People shared their deep innermost impressions. The generalized results of the interviews showed that among the foremost figures (artists, scientists, writers, etc.) the Uzbeks and Moldavians mentioned historical leaders five times as often as scientists (the Georgians — even six times) and twice as often as cultural figures. The Russians named historical leaders

three times as frequently as scientists. But it should be borne in mind that the name of V. I. Lenin, which, more often than not, was given by people of different nationalities, was categorized as a classic of Marxism-Leninism. If it were included among the historical leaders, the share of the named historical leaders compared to scientists, writers and other categories would rise still higher. Such deep and broad historical memory cannot have been developed exclusively by basic education and the mass media. It has been formed, as shown by the stories, by the family, relatives and friends.

As a rule, cultural and historical events are realized not just as part people's past. These events create a subjective feeling of connection, of the continuity of traditions, And, on the whole, the realized attitude to historical events and values and the feelings connected with such an attitude are a manifestation of national self-awareness.

History knows many cases in which around the names of historical or cultural figures was created an aura of national heroes, and they became symbols of national movements.

Among the outstanding leaders the Russians, Uzbeks and Moldavians named writers, poets, artists and composers twice as often as scientists. Cultural figures of their nationalities were named by 80 per cent of the interviewed Georgians and Russians and by over a half of the Moldavians and Uzbeks. It can be asserted that cultural figures form a stable part of the peoples' historical memory.

Particular popularity has been gained by outstanding men in literature and art among the peoples whose professional culture has been in intensive formation in the last few decades. They have become a symbol of national pride. Highly indicative examples are furnished by the colossal popularity of the Kirghiz writer Chingiz Aitmatov, who has become one of the favourite prose-writers among all Soviet peoples, of the Avar poet Rasul Gamzatov and of the Moldavian dramatist Ion Drutse. The popularity of national writers is shown by the colossal circulations of their works and of the screen and stage versions of these works. It is a form of recognition of their creative achievements. Characteristically, on the year of the 50th birth anniversary of Aitmatov, according to the results of a study of relevant registry office materials made by S. I. Karakeyeva, many newly born boys in Kirgnizia were given his name. That was a clear manifestation of their national sentiments.

In the 1970s and the 1980s there was a symptomatic interest in the history and culture of one's people, which assumed the form of visit to historical and ethnographic museums. According to the data of an international survey conducted by the European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences (Vienna Centre) under UNESCO, in which the author took part, in Estonia the Museum of History and Archeaology was visited once a year and more frequently by 54 per cent of the interviewed Estonians, the Museum of Folk Art and Ethnography by 43 per cent and historical monuments by 72 per cent. The interest in historical monuments and museums is particularly great among the more educated population groups. The same survey has established that in over a half of the families the parents usually encourage their children to read historical books and to watch historical films. Most probably, it is a manifestation not only of a desire to convey to their children general cultural knowledge, but also to instil in them a national self-awareness.

The stable maintenance among the people of the interest in their history is also shown by the fact that during the interviews with the Moldavians 70 per cent of the

respondents said they wanted to have the number of radio and television programmes devoted to the history of their people increased.

Historical memory includes not only events of long-gone days, but also those of more recent times and to a certain extent even current events. This is why we speak of current history. The interest in the present-day life of one's people is inherent in all peoples, but it stood out with particular clarity among the national groups which live among other ethnoses. According to data generalized by V. K. Malkova of the Institute of Ethnography, in 1975 every 100 Azerbaijanians who lived in Georgia subscribed to 270 copies of newspapers published in Azerbaijan, every 100 Armenians to 112.4 copies of newspapers published in Armenia and every 100 Byelorussians to 164.2 copies of newspapers published in Byelorussia. Every 100 Uzbeks who lived in Tajikistan subscribed to 84.4 copies of newspapers published in Uzbekistan. Such an interest in the life of one's nation apparently points to the realization by people of their connection with their nation, to the feeling that they have a share in its achievements.

Apparently, the „cultural arsenal“ included in historical memory, just as events of the historical past and of the „historical present“, forms just as important a part of the „we-image“ as the conception about some typical features of the people – what is referred to as the national self-stereotype. It is, as it were, the potential reserve of national self-awareness. It may start working, actuating and directing human actions, or it may remain in abeyance – depending on the situation. In the modern conditions, when the basis of national self-awareness or, in more concrete terms, traditional culture, especially among the European peoples, has been narrowing, the role of historical memory has been increasing. Furthermore, national self-awareness not infrequently stirs memories of the past, which are far from always adequate to the original variants.

The major potential of national self-awareness enables the state, for purpose of social progress, to choose from it what it finds particularly effective in a concrete situation. For instance, in the conditions of the current restructuring Soviet public opinion strove to intensify the Russians' orientation to labour by recalling the labour traditions of the old industrial centres. Patriotic sentiments mounted following an appeal to preserve cultural relics. At the same time, efforts were made to fuse ideologically institutionalized national self-awareness with Soviet patriotism, common to all peoples of the USSR.²

Attempts to hyperbolize the self-awareness of Russians for isolationist purposes by the leaders of the informal organization Pamyat (Memory) have incurred public denunciation³. In contrast, the appeal of Russian writers, for instance, Valentin Rasputin, to „revive“ the lofty moral principles of the Russians, to bring about an upsurge of national sentiments in the name of the improvement of our life has found support among various strata of society. Georgia's public figures have tried to make the realized national cohesion of the Georgians help to combat negative phenomena such as corruption and moral deformations. The Soviet Central Asian peoples prize the

2. *Kommunist* (The Communist). 1987, No 13, p. 9.

3. See the newspapers *Komsomolskaya pravda*, May 22, June 27, 1987; *Sovetskaya kultura*, June 18, 1987; *Vechernyaya Moskva*. September 7, 1987; the magazine *Ogonyok* May 21. 1987, etc.

respect of others. Efforts were made to use this distinction as a mechanism of increasing people's sense of responsibility and to raise the labour productivity.

The national self-awareness, formed and grown, constitutes, as it were, part of the spiritual arsenal of the modern peoples. It may remain in abeyance, potential. But, given certain social conditions, it may assume active forms. The positive or negative meaning of such activity depends above all on the aims of human actions. When national interests are concentrated on self-centred aims actualized national self-awareness may set peoples apart, lead to manifestations of localism and seclusion, and complicate the relations between nations. Active national self-awareness, the realization of historical responsibility to one's people and pride for it against the background of people's direct social concern for the success of their activity strengthens their labour and social enthusiasm and may further the progress of the nation and society as a whole.

The use of the spiritual potential of every nation accumulated by its national self-awareness and the actuation of this potential for the benefit of progress is a complex but exceedingly important task facing society.