

# The Korean Diaspora in Uzbekistan: Marks of a History

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In the modern Republic of Uzbekistan the representatives more than hundred nations reside alongside of a title nation – Uzbeks. They have moved here for the diversified reasons and in the various periods of a history. Some of them have arrived in this region in a deep antiquity, some rather recently. Koreans are among migrants of 20th century.

The history of formation of Korean Diaspora living in sovereign Republic of Uzbekistan is specific and complete of tragically pages. Till second half of 1930's the number of the Korean population on territory of modern Uzbekistan was insignificant. A census of the population in 1897 fixed only three Korean men in the Fergana area of the Turkestan. By the information of a census of the population in 1926 about three tens of Koreans lived in Uzbekistan, they had moved there on various, basically, personal motives. However a census of the population in 1939 shows a great advance in number of the Korean population in Uzbekistan (more than 72 thousand inhabitants or 1,2% to total population in the Republic).

But what the reason of this demographic phenomenon? It is impossible to explain this situation by the improvement of living conditions or voluntary migration of Korean population or burst of birth rate. The reason was a violent deportation of the Korean population that has become a humanitarian accident for the people.

In conditions of the administrative–command regime that has been usual in USSR, mass deportation of the whole peoples were spent during realization of repressive actions, qualified by us as humanitarian accident for a society. Apotheosis of this practice has been reached in 1930–1940's, when Poles, Germans, Turks and other peoples were humiliated and violently displaced without the right of returning to places of residing. The Koreans of Soviet Far East were one of firsts who had been undergone of violent deportation.

On August 21, 1937 according to the special decree the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and Central Committee of the All–Union Communist Party (Bolshevik) took a decision to move the Korean population from Far East territory, ostensibly for suppression " of the Japanese espionage ". The objects for a deportation were Koreans, which were living in boundary areas of Far East. It was directed to settle them in the South–Kazakhstan area, in areas of the Aral Sea, Balkhash and in Uzbekistan. The action was required to begin immediately and to finish by January 1, 1938. Its realization was assigned on NKVD (National Commissariat of Internal Affairs)<sup>1</sup>.

Urgent deportation has begun from the area of Poset. As a result during 4 months the majority of the Korean population was thrown from Poset, Molotov, Grodekov, Khankai, Suyfun, Mikhailov and other frontier areas of Far East territory. Departure people were forced to leave their property. They were promised that accommodations, foods, jobs would be given on new place. But it was far from truth. The trains, in which they were transported, were not adapted for these purposes. On a road many peoples relapsed and died. The members of a number of families have been separated and were settled in various places. Besides the deportation was accompanied by arrests.

By September 19, 1937 26 trains were already sent (9 in Kazakhstan and 17 in Uzbekistan) <sup>2</sup>.

Deportees which arrived to November 15, 1937 were placed in next regions: in Middle-Chirchik area?11,948 inhabitants, in Low-Chirchik area?8,669 inhabitants, in Kungrad area of Karakalpakia ? 10,620 inhabitants, in Pstdargom area ?6,975 inhabitants, in Mirzachul area ? 5,036 inhabitants, in Gurlen area of the Khorezm district ? 5,799 inhabitants, in Samarkand ? 1,845 inhabitants, in Fergana ? 1,011 inhabitants, in Namangan?1,289 inhabitants, in Andijan?1,952 inhabitants etc<sup>3</sup>. Places, where trains

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1. White Book about the Deportation of Russian Korean Population in 1930–1940's. ? M. 1992, p.65 (In Russian).
  2. Kim P. Koreans of the Republic of Uzbekistan. ? Tashkent. 1993, p. 25 (In Russian).
  3. Kim B. The truth ? half-century later. Tashkent. 1999, p. 245–246 (In Russian).

were unloaded, had been badly adapted for living of arrived people. They were settled in barracks, schools etc. Often it was necessary to dig primitive dugouts for habitation.

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In the beginning of January, 1938 there were already 16,507 Korean workmen in Uzbekistan (in agricultural collective farms – 6,280 farmhands, in piscatorial collective farms ? 2,273 fishermen; the workers of the industrial enterprises – 822; unskilled laborers – 4,360; the employees of various kinds organizations ? 2,003; handicraftsmen ? 769) <sup>4</sup>. In this period more than 74.5 thousand of Koreans were violently deported in Uzbekistan. Forty-eight agricultural collective farms were organized by a part of the peoples, which arrived in 1937–1938. Others Koreans have been settled in 211 existence low-power collective farms. They got a role of one of the main supplier of rice in the structure of a national economy of Uzbekistan

Up to the entry of the USSR in the Second World War Korean Diaspora in Uzbekistan has been replenished with a part of Korean deportees from Kazakhstan. They migrated to the south of Kazakhstan and in Uzbekistan. The reasons of this were natural conditions and reunification of families.

The resettlement became the first part in a tragically succession of events. Although the local population of Uzbekistan has met Koreans benevolently and supported as far as possible, but the problems on a new residence were enormous. Change of natural climatic conditions, the difficulties of economic adaptability on new places, new national-ethnic and language environment, deprivation of the civil rights, difficulties with unification of separated families led to the deterioration of quality of living conditions and direct extinction of a part of deportees.

A severity of the Second World War and post-war recovery period did not bypass the Uzbekistan Koreans. But the life was gradually adjusted. Besides the removal of before existing restrictions from the Korean persons promoted improvement of living quality and by the end 1950's Korean population in Uzbekistan has reached 138 thousand.

These years basic populace of Koreans still lived at countryside. However the tendency of increasing the number of city dwellers has already began. A census of 1970 has confirmed it: 85.4 thousand inhabitants (from 147.5 thousand of the whole Korean population) lived in Uzbekistan cities. This process proceeded in the further. As has shown the census of population in 1989, 146 thousand persons of the Korean nationality from 183 thousand already lived at cities including the capital of Uzbekistan. From 1959 to 1989 the numbers of Koreans in Tashkent has grown in 8 times whereas the city population was increased in 2 times<sup>5</sup>.

The birth rate of Koreans (according to the data of investigation that has been carried out by demographers of National University of Uzbekistan in 1991) could be include into a group of birth rate, coming nearer to a low level for Uzbekistan. The inspection was spent in cities Kattakurgan, Novoi, Gulistan, in Bukhara area and Karakalpakistan. 271 peoples of the Korean nationality were interviewed, 175 from them lived at urban settlements. Demographic structure of interviewees was 155 men and 116 women. At the investigation time all men had on the average 2,1 children, and village men – 2,5 children. For the women this parameter is equaled 2,6 and 2,4 children accordingly<sup>6</sup>.

One of the negative consequences of deportation became a loss by Koreans in significant degree their national traditions, customs and even native language. By the data of census of population in 1989, 98% of the Korean population in Uzbekistan was not skillfully to read and to write in Korean language. In the USSR the idea of merging of all peoples into uniform Soviet people was propagandized therefore a development of national cultures was not welcomed. However a deterioration of interethnic relations in USSR in 1980's has forced the ruling elite to pay attention to this problem. As a result it has been given an opportunity to create public societies for realization of national-cultural requirement of the population living in an alien ethnic environment, in a separation from the historical native country.

In Uzbekistan Koreans was one of the firsts who began to embody in reality this opportunity. In November 1988 the initiative group has appealed to Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan with the request to promote in

creation of the Korean cultural center. In the beginning of December in the same year the assembly took place in Tashkent where more than 100 delegates were

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4. Kim B. The truth ? half-century later. Tashkent. 1999, p. 89 (In Russian).
  5. Gentshke V.L., Ten A.Yu. Koreans in Uzbekistan: 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Historical Demographic Moments). In: Proceedings of International Conference "Uzbekistan-Korea: Scientific and Cultural Cooperation (May 25-28, 2000, Tashkent, Uzbekistan), p. 386-389
  6. Ata-Myrzaev O., Gentshke V.L., Murtazaeva P. Multi-national Uzbekistan: Historical Demographic Aspects. ? Tashkent. 1998, p. 80-81 (In Russian).

present. The meeting has elected the organizing committee on organization of the Korean cultural center

of Uzbekistan, first in all territory of the USSR. The doctor of philosophical sciences, Professor S. M. Khan was elected as its chairman. The laborious daily job of the enthusiasts began. The first mass action of the Center was an organization of celebration of Lunar New Year holiday in 1989 in Tashkent. On a holiday more than 400 persons have participated.

Soon the communications with Koreans, living on the Korean peninsula, have began to develop, the Soviet Koreans were deprived these contacts almost a half-century. For example, by the invitation of organizing committee the Pyongyang art ensemble of songs and dance has arrived in Uzbekistan and whole month the spectators of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and other cities of Uzbekistan got pleasure from their sparkling arts<sup>7</sup>.

On January 12, 1991 the constituent conference of the Association of the Korean cultural centers of Uzbekistan (AKCCU) was held. At a conference its statutes was authorized, and its first chairman S.A.Khan (Associate Professor, candidate of historical sciences) was elected. One of main tasks of the Association became the revival of native culture.

Today AKCCU unites more 40 regional, provincial and urban Korean cultural centers. For past years a great work was done, though as all of us understand the revival of national culture is not a simple problem. Nowadays a revival of national traditions, customs of the Korean people is going on. The Korean language today is actively studied, the exhibitions, concerts, festivals, sports competitions are spent. The history of deportation of the Korean population earlier being closed is comprehensively investigated, articles and monographs are published, and the scientific conferences are organized. For example, for last ten years 3 monographs by P.G.Kim, 5 ? by V.D.Kim, a publication of A.A.Kan, revealing in detail a history of the deportation of Korean people and their life in Uzbekistan, were issued. Some of these investigations was published both in Russian and Korean languages<sup>8</sup>.

Certainly, no everything is smoothly in the Korean movement. Many theoretical problems require a decision, in the first place, concerning a definition the ethnic identity of the Uzbekistan Koreans. Today on a beginning of a new millenium, the Uzbekistan Koreans have very important tasks and unity and cohesion need for their resolving.

Speaking about processes of national revival of Korean Diaspora in Uzbekistan, it is necessary to note the big help that is given by a historical native Land. For example, in May 1992 by the help of The Republic of Korea the Education Center of Republic Korea was opened in Tashkent. Nowadays over one thousand peoples study in the Center.

After the disintegration of USSR the strong migration processes have begun in territory of Uzbekistan. They also touched the Korean population but a lesser degree than others ethnic groups. The departure of Koreans basically in Russia and in the lesser degree to other countries is observed.

In conclusion we would like to emphasize an idea that the history Korean Diaspora in Uzbekistan, that has begun from so tragically events, today proceeds in new historical conditions and the Koreans of Uzbekistan create themselves own future.

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7. Khan S.M. The Korean Cultural Centers ? How They Arose. In: Ten Years Later (10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Association of the Korean Cultural Centers of Uzbekistan). ? Tashkent ? Seoul. 2001, p. 5–9
8. Kim P.G., Kim V.D. The Association of the Korean Cultural Centers of Uzbekistan ? Ten Years. In: Ten Years Later (10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Association of the Korean Cultural Centers of Uzbekistan). ? Tashkent ? Seoul. 2001, p. 20.