

The Crimean Tatar's World Congress and Eurovision

Written by Marta Dyczok

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MARTA DYCHOK, MAY 18 2016

This is an adapted excerpt from *Ukraine's Euromaidan: Broadcasting through Information Wars with Hromadske Radio* by Marta Dyczok

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Every year Crimean Tatars commemorate their deportation by Stalin in 1944. More than 70 years later, the young Crimean Tatar singer Jamala wrote a song about the deportations, called 1944. It won this year's Eurovision Song Contest, and it honours her great-grandmother who was one of the deportees. The song starts with these lyrics:

"When strangers are coming
They come to your house
They kill you all
And say
We're not guilty
Not guilty."

One year ago another statement was heard: "We will never give up" said Refat Chubarov. The Crimean Tatar leader was addressing his people. They'd come from all over the world to participate in the Second Crimean Tatar Congress held in Ankara, Turkey, on the 1st and 2nd of August 2015. "No one can determine the destiny of Crimea without the Crimean Tatar people," he continued. "We have lived there for a 1,000 years." Delegates rose to their feet and began chanting, "nation, homeland, Crimea."

It was really interesting to watch 430 delegates from 14 countries representing 184 Crimean Tatar organizations meet and debate priorities, policies, procedures, in their own language.

Seventy-seven-year-old former dissident Ayshe Seyturmatova came from Simferopol. Khalil Khalilov recently completed a commerce degree at the Rotman School and flew in from Toronto. A round faced man in fatigues with Genghis Khan as his 'nom de guerre' arrived from the war zone in the Donbas.

Along with the others, over two days they restructured the international organization – the Congress – so that the Crimean Tatar people can speak with one voice and make it more effectively heard internationally. Mejlis leader Refat Chubarov has been banned from Crimea for five years, but they elected him to head the Congress.

The event was funded by Turkey and criticized by Russia. Crimean Tatar leaders from Crimea were prevented from participating by those currently controlling the peninsula. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin attended as well as Turkish politicians and a variety of diplomats.

Crimea's parliament dismissed the event as a fringe effort. But, Turkey's president Recep Erdogan met with the Crimean Tatar Congress leadership as soon as he returned from China.

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And 'Genghis Khan' invited me to his native Yevpatoria for plov as soon as what he calls the second Russian occupation is over, and he can return.

About the author:

Marta Dyczok is Associate Professor at the Departments of History and Political Science, Western University, Fellow at the University of Toronto's Centre for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies (CERES), Munk School of Global Affairs, Adjunct Professor at the National University of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy. She was a Shklar Research Fellow at the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute (2011) and a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars in Washington DC (2005-2006). Her latest book is *Ukraine's Euromaidan*. Previous books include: *Media, Democracy and Freedom. The Post Communist Experience* (co-edited with Oxana Gaman-Golutvina, 2009), *The Grand Alliance and Ukrainian Refugees* (2000), and *Ukraine: Change Without Movement, Movement Without Change* (2000). Her doctorate is from Oxford University and she researches media, memory, migration, and history.