

PERSON'S COMMITMENT TO COUNTRY AND EMIGRATION

INTENTIONS:

IMAGE DETERMINATION

Svetlana V. Frolova

Candidate of Philosophical Sciences,
Associate Professor of Consultative Psychology Chair,
Psychology Department,
Saratov State University
frolovasv71@mail.ru

Abstract

The article offers a theoretical model of factors of person's commitment to country and uses it to explain sense-making role of a sphere of individual mental images in building life strategy through emigration. The empirical research challenges assumptions that the positive and meaningful images of one's country leaving a deep cognitive and emotional trace in psyche carry out function of integration of a person with his/her social and ethnocultural environment, and negative images of one's country and positive images of foreign countries differentiate, separate a person from his real sociocultural environment and promote emigration intentions.

To evaluate risks of segregation from one's country, the author developed an image and association method and mathematical tools, allowing finding out level of ethnocultural integration of the sphere of mental images.

Results of the empirical study conducted by Russian and Kazakhstan researchers revealed that ethnocultural integration of the mental image sphere of people devoted to the country was equally high. Potential emigrants of both countries are characterized by equally low ethnocultural integration of the sphere of mental images.

Approach offered by the author can be used for evaluation of risks of migratory behavior and further development of social and psychological programs of migratory tendencies management.

Key words: person's devotion to the country, the emigration intentions, images of meaningful experience, ethnocultural integration of the sphere of mental images.

The migratory behavior is becoming a macro-social phenomenon in the modern world. There are several reasons: mixture of cultures, various public

crises, new type of global social identity, various technical means promoting acceleration of movement in global scale, and translation of information about opportunities of those places where a person hasn't yet been to and where he / she can satisfy his / her growing requirements.

Migration problem was a subject of a number of scientific psychological studies conducted by researchers from different countries throughout several decades [1]. The research we conducted from 2005 to 2012 reveals the interest of the Russian young generation in building their life and career strategies through emigration [2, 3].

Forecasting of migratory behavior and social mobility of individuals is closely connected with studying person's commitment to the social community of his / her country. What do person's attraction and commitment to the social community of his / her country and migration tendencies rely on? To solve this problem, first one should find theoretical and methodological background to model of person's commitment to his / her country.

The modern research of commitment stems from the article by H.S. Becker [4]. He suggested that attachment to a new life pattern emerged gradually and unconsciously through a succession of side bets, or tributes paid by an individual to a group in the process of his / her interaction with it. The wide meaning of the concept of «commitment» includes attachment of an individual to a pattern of some actions, another individual, or a group.

Nowadays attempts to differentiate commitment to a job, profession, career, company, and group are being made [5]. However, commitment to a social, citizens' community or to a country has not been studied thoroughly yet, though it is a vital issue nowadays.

The social community is defined as "a group of people united by historically formed stable social relations, and possessing a number of common features (traits), giving it a unique identity"[6]. One of the types of social communities is the community representatives of a certain country.

We think that the commitment to country is one of the possible connections between human and social community, which has its own history, culture, spiritual and material resources to ensure the conditions for the existence of its individuals. We differentiate psychological involvement of an individual into the social community and his / her formal involvement. Psychological commitment to a country is cognitive and emotional dynamic formation, expressed in an individual's subjective representations of value of the social community he or she belongs to, its attractiveness, its prospects for satisfying his or her basic needs.

One of the most significant criteria of commitment to country is attitude to emigration. Relying on target approach in defining social behavior [7], emigration in psychology can be defined as an act of social behavior aimed at changing the social situation of a person involved in a large collective process, and emigration intention can be defined as the first step in the process of emigration which marks a decision to move to another country, or as an act of volition which constructs the future implementation of social behavior in other social and cultural reality. Key aspect of the psychological definition of emigration is a change of civil status and nationality of a person leaving his / her country and moving to another country. Psychological value of emigration can not only emphasize the special kind of human social behavior that results in change of social environment, but also note some more of its psychological aspects such as manifestation of civil personal identity and transformation of its social, cultural, and ethnic identity.

We claim that the most profound explanatory and forecasting model of commitment to a social community can be built on the basis of the system approach methodology [8] and synthesis methodology of individualism and sociologism in social psychology [9].

The System Model of Factors of Individual Commitment to a Social Community

Personality dispositions, social community characteristics, mental and social-psychological space personality and current sociocultural situation can be distinguished as the major components of the system model of individual commitment to a social community factors (*Figure 1*).

1) **Personal characteristics** of an individual that can directly or indirectly determine commitment to a group or social community: basic needs and motives, characterological features, values and attitudes, life orientations, dispositions and purposes, a wholesome “ego” image, coping strategies, et cetera.

Our research has shown that the young people who want to emigrate have a more individualistic value sphere and use the coping strategies of confrontation and escapism more often [2].

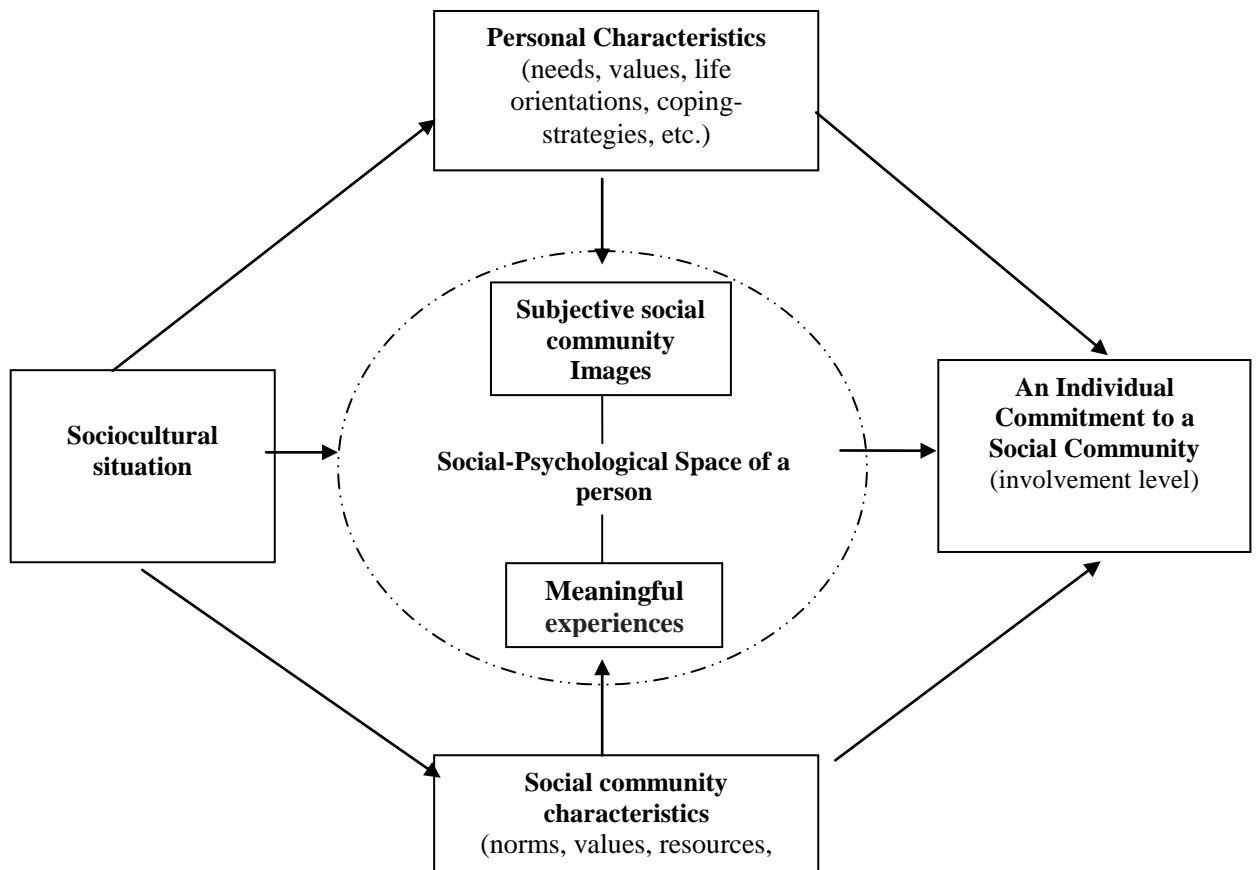


Figure 1. The system model of individual commitment to social community factors

2) **Social Community Characteristics** include norms and values of a social community, its material and non-material resources, et cetera. Group or social community values can be similar to those of an individual or completely different from them. A group can possess some resources that can satisfy unfulfilled individual needs.

Attractiveness factors of a social community can be divided into the following: physical (that is anthropological-biological) similarity of an individual to group representatives; similarity of an individual value system to group cultural values; social, economic, professional, personal success of social community representatives; attractiveness of economic, social, cultural, climatic and geographical, nature resources and conditions of a group activity; attractiveness of a habitat.

Attraction to a country of desired emigration can be connected with individual representations of opportunities to satisfy his or her basic needs; representations of social, professional, and personal success of the members of the new social community; expectations to be accepted as a group member; hopes for escaping from former obligations and difficulties. Our research revealed that young people with emigration intentions often believed that a foreign country could provide them with better social and living conditions, higher salary and were sure that people living abroad had a higher level of behavior culture and had some special cultural traditions [2, 3].

It is obvious that it is not characteristics of social community that define a person's commitment to it. They determine person's commitment in the way of refracting through the system of subjective perceptions, values and human relations, organizing a special element of the worldview – social and psychological space of personality.

3) **The social and psychological space of personality** is a person's specific mental space where social objects (including social communities) refract through the perspective of individual values, relationships, and meanings

and are framed by a subject into the system of positively, neutrally, or negatively meaningful objects or phenomena connected and related to with each other in a specific way (a special element of the person's worldview) [10]. Meaningful objects or phenomena of the social and psychological space may or may not exist in the real world. Social and psychological space of personality is a system forming element in the model of the factors of commitment to social community. The fundamental subsystems of the social and psychological space of personality include the image sphere and world of meaningful experiences of personality.

The sphere of person's mental images is a system of person's "internal images" or secondary images (experienced in the absence of direct impact of incentives as their prototypes) [11], including generalized images of reality itself, the environment, social groups and communities, in relation to which he or she comes. The sources for emergence of secondary images are images of perception, the results of the rationalization process, imagination, synthesis and comprehension of information perceived from the outside.

This psychic structure includes memory images, notions, social conceptions (of the world), ideas, creative images. The image sphere also includes a special class of images - images of mythological content, experiences which are related to spiritual, moral and religious meanings. They are based on something common to people of the same culture, something universal – archetypical, on the one hand, and are a part of the phenomenology of internal – an individual, inner world of a person, on the other hand. The image sphere is closely related to person's motivation, emotional and volitional spheres and connects past experiences with the present and the future, determines development of an individual and his or her life objectives.

The sphere of images can be inhomogeneous in its contents and structure. The most crucial role for development and motivation of human behavior is played by image sphere core represented by images of important experience.

The world of meaningful experiences are exposed as various forms of emotions taking part in creating and transforming certain subjective meanings of elements perceived from the environment [12]. **Meaningful experience** is a class of the experiences which change something in the value-semantic sphere of an individual, and (or) determine its further development as a whole. Meaningful experience results in transformation of subjective values or meanings of the elements of the environment and the environment in general. Meaningful experienced images is connected with dominant motives and needs, leaves the cognitive and emotional trace that results in new life meanings and generalized secondary images, and has great influence upon life self-realization. Part of significant experience has not fully conscious nature. For example, early childhood experiences can leave lasting cognitive and emotional trace on the child's life, by determining some person's inclinations and aspirations.

The dominance of positively meaningful experienced images of culture, nature, social characteristics of living in a social community and minimum amount of negatively meaningful experienced images of this community plays a significant role in emergence of an individual commitment to the country.

4) **Sociocultural situation** can be a determinant of individual and group characteristics, their interaction, and person's mental social and psychological space. Human psychology is greatly determined by an epoch. Modern macro-social processes include global informatization; faster technical development resulting in faster social changes; forgetting traditional values; dominance of individualistic tendencies and development of purposes of selfish consumerism; greater mobility that is expressed through various forms of migration in the modern world.

Patrick G. Buchanan defines migration as the main problem of the modern epoch and suggests that it is connected with the existential civilization crisis that results in moral decay and contempt for the traditional values [13]. Alvin Toffler claims that connection of an individual with a place where he or she lives has

never been that fragile and short [14]. Migrants' psychology is brought up by the process of adaptation to global social changes.

The level of ethnocultural integration of sphere of images

Sociocultural changes affect an individual's inner world, his or her feelings and result in a set of secondary images in his / her psyche. These images are grouped together to form a wholesome multidimensional, multilevel dynamic subsystem of psyche, i.e. the imaginative sphere that performs regulatory, programming functions, function of reflection of the outer and inner worlds of an individual [11].

Nowadays people are living in the multicultural and ethnocultural mosaic environment, in the wide availability of on-screen images. Though being to a great extent a reflection of the real world, the imaginative sphere of an individual can be considered mosaic from ethnic, social, and cultural points of view. Positively meaningful experienced images of perception and representation of the social community will perform the function of integration of an individual into the community and development of commitment to it. Both positively meaningful images of other social communities experienced by an individual and negatively meaningful experienced images of perception of the social community he or she belongs to perform the function of disintegration (dissociation) of the individual and community.

The sphere of individual images necessarily includes both images of the community he or she belongs to and images of communities in foreign countries; both images that integrate an individual with his or her actual sociocultural environment and those that disintegrate (dissociate) him or her from the latter. Keeping that in mind, we cannot speak of ethnocultural integrated or differentiated imaginative sphere – we can only speak of an extent of its integration into or differentiation from a social community, and, therefore, of a level of individual commitment to social community.

The level of ethnocultural integration into a certain community can be measured by finding out a ratio of positively meaningful experienced images of a social community and socially differentiating (dissociating) ones.

To evaluate ethnocultural integration of sphere of individual images, we have introduced a special index – a coefficient of ethnocultural integration of the image sphere (I_{ec}). The coefficient can be calculated by finding out the ratio of a fixed number of positively meaningful experienced components of an individual image that are cultural coordinated (i_{c+}) to those that are ethnocultural differentiating (i_d).

$$I_{ec} = \frac{i_{c+}}{i_d}, \text{ where in } i_d = i_n + i_{c-}.$$

Ethnocultural differentiating components of individual image sphere include positively meaningful experienced images that are not culturally coordinated (i_n) and negatively meaningful experienced images that are culturally coordinated (i_{c-}).

We assumed that the level of ethno-cultural integration of sphere of images plays an important role in the formation of person's psychological commitment to his / her country. High ethnocultural integration of sphere of images can promote person's consolidation with his / her social community and enhance the potential of social and psychological adaptation by creating the conditions for building life strategies within the country.

Research of ethnocultural integration of the image spheres of Russian and Kazakhstani people who are committed to the country, and who are potential emigrants

To test the suggested hypotheses, we have carried out research. We have applied the method of structured psychological interview that makes it possible to reveal of individual commitment to one's country and emigrations intentions

of the youth. We have also worked out an image and association test that helps to reveal the presence of positively and negatively meaningful experienced images of social communities of one's country and those of foreign countries in sphere of images. The testees were offered to conjure up images of various aspects of living in their home country and abroad and evaluate their attraction and power (strength of) with the help of subjective grades scale from «-10» to «+10» points. Those qualitative characteristics give opportunity to calculate a coefficient of ethnocultural integration of an individual with image sphere.

Pre-tests we carried out have established correlation coefficient characterizing reliability of the method equal 0.87 which is quite high.

The study involved 370 participants: the Russians (250) and Kazakhstani (120) aged from 18 to 25. Comparison of the average values of functioning of image spheres revealed significant differences between the potential emigrants and young people who want to build their lives in their country ($p \leq 0.0$). We also discovered that the coefficients of the Russians and Kazakhstani's ethnocultural integration of image sphere in the groups with different attitude to emigration were almost equal (see Table 1 and Figure 2).

The highest coefficient of person's ethnocultural integration of image sphere (I_e) is the coefficient of young adults, who want to build their future in their country (for the Russian participants $I_{ec} = 1.75$; for the Kazakhstani participants $I_{ec} = 1.77$), while the lowest coefficient is the coefficient of people who want to live and work abroad permanently (the Russian participants $I_{ec} = 0.53$; for the Kazakhstani participants $I_{ec} = 0.50$). The intermediate coefficient of person's ethnocultural integration of image sphere is the coefficient of people who only want to leave their country for some time (the Russian participants $I_{ec} = 0.75$, for the Kazakhstani participants $I_{ec} = 0.76$).

Table 1.

Coefficients of the Russians and Kazakhstani's ethnocultural integration of image sphere with different attitude to emigration

Participants	Test groups		
	1. People who want to live and work abroad permanently	2. People who want to live and work in their native country permanently	3. People who are ready to emigrate to another country to live there for some time
Russia	0.5**	1.75**	0.75**
Kazakhstan	0.53**	1.77**	0.76**

Note: sign ** means that indicators significantly vary in the lines, statistical significance $p \leq 0.01$.

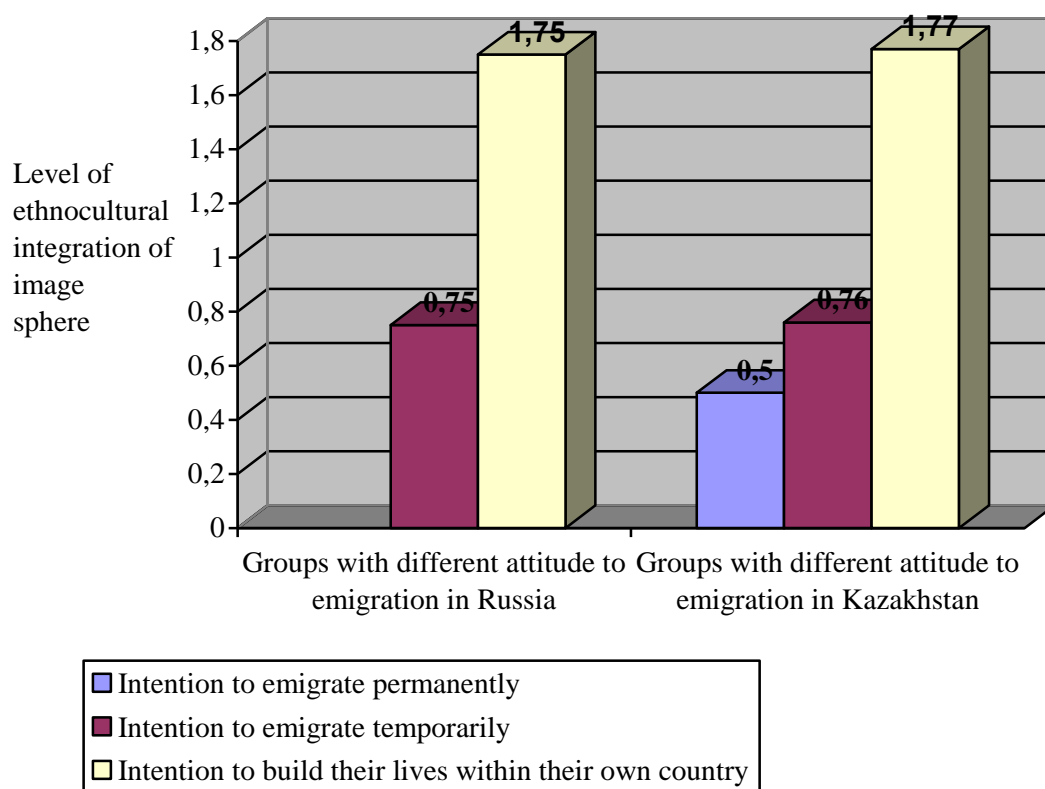


Figure 2. Level of ethnocultural integration of image spheres of people with different attitude to emigration in Russia and Kazakhstan

Conclusion

Thus, our hypotheses concerning the connection between ethnocultural integration of the image sphere and personal commitment to own country have been proved. The fact that people of different countries and cultures who are committed to their social communities have equally high ethnocultural integration of image spheres speaks well for applying our image and association test to different culture-bearers, and proves our assumptions about image determination in the process of building civil personal identity and loyalty to their countries and cultures.

The data we received is indirectly confirmed by our previous research. It showed that emigratory intention is connected with a lack of meaningful experience of fantastic and mythological images of native culture [2]. The young people committed to the country remember fairy tales heard and read in their childhood more often. Figurative and emotional language of national fairy tales has influence on both children's conscious and unconscious and ingrains it through comprehension of values and meanings of national culture in a native social community. We also found out that low sociocultural integration of potential emigrants' image spheres appears more often than image spheres of others appearing in response to stimuli of Hermann Rorschach's projective test of the spontaneous associative culturally differentiated images of the foreign countries ($p \leq 0.0$).

The images which are perceived and experienced significantly by the person since early childhood, has great importance for his or her psychological commitment to his / her country, along with factors such as sociocultural, economic situation, personal characteristics, qualities, and resources of the social community. To secure psychological wellbeing of living in native country, it is important to know its various aspects which give positive significant experience, and emotional and cognitive understanding of the world

of material and spiritual, natural and cultural values of one's social community in the present, in the past, and even in the future.

In conclusion the author expresses his gratitude to the participants of the English seminar of the department of psychology at Saratov State University (Russia, Saratov), members of the laboratory of social psychology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russia) and the International Department of the University of Wyoming (USA, Laramie, Casper city) for the possibility of testing and discuss the results of this study.

References

[1]. Bondyreva S.K. Migratsiia (sushchnost i iavlenie) (Migration (essence and the phenomenon) / S.K. Bondyreva, D.V.Kolesov. – M.: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo psikhologo-sotsialnogo instituta; Voronezh: Izdatelstvo NPO «MODEK», 2004. – 296 p.

[2]. Frolova S.V. Smysloobrazuiushchie factory emigratsionnyh namerenii studentov (Sense-forming factors of emigratory intentions of students) // Psikhologicheskii zhurnal (Psychological journal). 2006. V.27. № 3. P.58-67.

[3]. Frolova S.V. Predstavleniia sovremennoi molodezhi ob emigratsii kak uspeshnoi zhiznennoi i karernoi strategii (Representations of modern youth about emigration as successful vital and career strategy // Izvestiia Saratovskogo universiteta. Novaia seriia. 2012. T. 12. Ser. Filisofiiia. Psikhologiiia. Pedagogika. Vyp. 4. S. 97-100. (The news of the Saratov university. The new series. 2012. V. 12. The series Philosophy. Psychology. Pedagogics. Release. 4. P. 97-100).

[4]. Becker H.S. Notes on the concept of commitment // American Journ. of Sociology. 1960. V. 66. N.1. P.32-40.

[5]. Becker T. E., Randall D. M., Riegel, C. D. The multidimensional view of commitment and the theory of reasoned action: A comparative evaluation. //Journ. of Management. 1995. V. 21. № 4. P. 617-638.

[6]. Filosofskiy entsiklopedicheskii slovar (The philosophical encyclopaedic dictionary). M.: Sovetskaya entsiklopediya, 1989. P. 437.

[7]. Robert M.-A., Tilman F. Psycho, connaître l'individu et le groupe aujourd'hui. Collection: Humanisme d'aujourd'hui. Published by Bruxelles, Editions Vie Ouvrière, 1980.

[8]. Lomov B.F. Sistemnost v psikhologii: Isbrannye psikhologicheskie trudy (Systemness in psychology: the Elected psychological works) / Pod red. V.A. Barabanshchikova, D.N. Zavalishinoy, V.A. Ponomarenko. – M.: Izdatelstvo Moskovskogo psikhologo-sotsialnogo instituta; Voronezh: Izdatelstvo NPO «MODEK», 2003. – 424 p.

[9]. Shihirev P.N. Sovremennaya sotsialnaya psihologiya (Modern social psychology). – M.: "Tsentr psikhologii i psihoterapii", Izdatelstvo "KSP ", 1998. – 345 s.

[10]. Zhuravlev A.L., Kupreichenko A.B. Sotsialno-psikhologicheskoe prostranstvo litnosti (Social-psychological space of person). – M.: Izdatelstvo «Institut psikhologii RAN», 2012. – 496 p.

[11]. Gostev A.A. Psikhologiya vtorichnogo obraza (Psychology of secondary image). – M.: Izdatelstvo «Institut psikhologii RAN», 2007. – 512 p.

[12]. Bassin F.V. “Znachashchie” perezhivaniia i problema sobstvenno-psikhologicheskoi zakonomernosti ("Meaning" experiences and a problem of own - psychological lawness) // Voprosy psikhologii. 1972. № 3. P. 105-124.

[13]. Buchanan P. J. State of emergency. The third world invasion and conquest of America Edge of destruction. New York: Thomas Dunne Books / St. Martin's Press, 2006. – 320 p.

[14]. Toffler A. Future shock. N.Y.: Random House, 1970. 362 p.