

SOVIET ETHNIC CLEANSING OF THE CRIMEAN TATARS

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Abstract: *On May 11, 1944, the Soviet government accused the Crimean Tatars of mass treason and ordered the forced resettlement of the entire population from the Crimean ASSR to Uzbekistan. From May 18-20, 1944 the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) loaded nearly every Crimean Tatar man, woman, and child onto train echelons bound for the Uzbek SSR. A number of these trains were later diverted to the Urals and other regions of the R.S.F.S.R., but out of a total population of less than 200,000 over 150,000 ended up resettled in Uzbekistan as special settlers. Those sent to Uzbekistan were initially settled mostly on kolkhozes and sovkhozes, but due to very poor material conditions on these farms a large number of them migrated to industrial concerns such as mines, construction sites, and factories within the republic to work. Despite this migration, tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan still perished from such causes as malaria, malnutrition, and dysentery. In the Urals tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars ended up in wet forests where the able bodied adults felled trees and the rest of the population suffered from hunger and contagious diseases. Finally, a small group of Crimean Tatar men were mobilized as forced labourers in the coal mines of the Moscow and Tula oblasts. The Soviet government only released the Crimean Tatars from special settlement restrictions on April 28, 1956. It lifted the collective charges of treason against the nationality on September 5, 1967. But, it only allowed the Crimean Tatars to return home in large numbers after November 14, 1989. Their long exile in Central Asia and other areas of the USSR left an indelible mark on the nationality. The Crimean Tatar response to the current Russian occupation of Crimea cannot be understood without reference to the history of their deportation and suffering under the special settlement regime.*

Keywords: *Crimean Tatars, deportation, NKVD, special settlers, Uzbekistan*

KIRIM TATARLARININ SOVYETLER BİRLİĞİ TARAFINDAN ETNİK TEMİZLİĞE MARUZ KALMASI

Öz: 11 Mayıs 1944'te Sovyet hükümeti, Kırım Tatarlarını kitlesel ihanetle suçlamış ve Kırım Tatar nüfusunun tamamının Kırım ÖSSC'sinden Özbekistan'a zorla yerleştirilmesini emretmiştir. 18-20 Mayıs 1944 tarihleri arasında, İçişleri Halk Komiserliği (NKVD) neredeyse her Tatar erkeği, kadını ve çocuğunu Özbek SSC istikametinde giden tren vagonlarına bindirmiştir. Bu trenlerden bazıları daha sonra Ural Dağları'na ve Rus SFSC'sinin başka bölgelerine saptırılmıştır, ancak 200.000'lik nüfustan 150.000'i özel statüye sahip yerleşimciler olarak Özbekistan'a yerleştirilmiştir. Özbekistan'a gönderilenler ilk olarak çoğunlukla kolhozlar ve sovhozlara yerleştirilmiş, ancak bu çiftliklerdeki kötü yaşam koşulları sebebiyle pek çoğu çalışmak için madenler, şantiyeler ve fabrikalar gibi Özbek SSC içerisindeki sanayi bölgelerine göç etmişlerdir. Bu göçlere rağmen Özbekistan'daki on binlerce Kırım Tatarı sıtma, gıda yetmezliği ve dizanteri gibi sebeplerden dolayı ölmüştür. Ural Dağları'nda on binlerce Kırım Tatarı kendilerini yağmur ormanlarında bulmuş, burada çalışabilecek güçte olan yetişkinler ağaç kesmiş ve nüfusunun geri kalanı ise açlık ve bulaşıcı hastalıktan dolayı ıstırap çekmiştir. Son olarak, Kırım Tatarı erkeklerinden oluşan küçük bir grup, Moskova ve Tula Oblastlarındaki kömür madenlerindeki zorunlu işçi olarak çalıştırılmıştır. Sovyet hükümeti, Kırım Tatarlarının tabii tutulduğu özel statülü yerleşim sınırlandırmalarını ancak 28 Nisan 1956'da kaldırmıştır. Bu halka yönelttiği kitlesel ihanet suçlamalarını ise 5 Eylül 1967'de kaldırmıştır. Ancak Sovyet hükümeti, Kırım Tatarlarının büyük sayılarda evlerine dönmelerine ancak 14 Kasım 1989'dan sonra izin vermiştir. Orta Asya ve SSCB'nin diğer bölgelerine uzun süreli olarak sürgün edilmeleri Kırım Tatarlarında kalıcı izler bırakmıştır. Kırım Tatarlarının, Kırım'ın şu anda Rusya tarafından işgal edilmesine verdikleri tepki, özel statülü yerleştirilme uygulaması sebebiyle sınır dışı edilmeleri ve ıstırap çekmeleriyle ilgili olan tarihi sürece atıf yapılmadan anlaşılması mümkün değildir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırım Tatarları, sınır dışı edilme, İçişleri Halk Komiserliği (NKVD), özel statülü yerleşimciler, Özbekistan

Historically the Crimean peninsula has been a multiethnic territory with a large indigenous population in the form of the Crimean Tatars. During World War II, the population of the peninsula shrank considerably as a result of Soviet deportations and Nazi genocide. The vast majority of these losses were from groups other than the Russians and Ukrainians. The single largest loss consisting of the nearly 200,000 Crimean Tatars forcibly deported from their ancestral homeland to special settlement restrictions in Uzbekistan and the Urals from 18-20 May 1944. The ethnic cleansing of the Crimean Tatars over 70 years ago still has continuing effects both on the Crimean Tatar people and the territory of Crimea today. The recent Russian occupation of Crimea and the subsequent persecution of Crimean Tatars that managed to return to their ancestral homeland from exile in Uzbekistan has highlighted some of the outstanding issues remaining as a result of the deportations. These issues include the continued presence of large numbers of Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan, their continued lack of full political, cultural, and economic rights in Crimea, and the lack of compensation for lost property, labour, civil rights during the special settlement era. This article will look at the deportation of the Crimean Tatars in May 1944 and their subsequent experiences as special settlers in Uzbekistan and the Urals until April 1956. It will focus on the origins of the present problems listed above in the deportations and imposition of special settlement restrictions upon the Crimean Tatars. Unlike the Chechens, Ingush, Karachais, Balkars, and Kalmyks the Soviet government never restored the Crimean ASSR and effectively continued to ban the vast majority of Crimean Tatars from living in their homeland until the late 1980s. Thus in many ways the problems of deportation and rehabilitation were greatly exacerbated for the Crimean Tatars in comparison to the above listed North Caucasian nationalities and Kalmyks.

The deportation of the Crimean Tatars from their ancestral homeland to Uzbekistan and the Urals entailed a traumatic disruption of their collective existence. Virtually the entire population was removed from their homeland for more than a generation. During this time they lost access not only to their traditional lands, but also much of their cultural heritage including mosques, grave yards, libraries, and other buildings. The initial years of exile also saw a massive increase in excess premature deaths due to malaria, typhus, malnutrition, and other health problems directly resulting for the deportation and poor material conditions in the areas of special settlement. The horrors endured during this time have become one of the most important collective memories shared by the

Crimean Tatar nationality.¹ This memory constituted an important role in the mobilization of Crimean Tatar political activism aimed first at returning to Crimea and later struggling for the full restoration of their rights as the indigenous people of the territory.

From October 1941 to April 1944 the Crimea was under German occupation. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet began issuing resolutions about punishing collaborators and traitors in Crimea already in 1943. At this time the Soviet government had not yet labelled the entire Crimean Tatar nationality as traitors and the resolutions referred to trying individuals under article 58 of the Soviet criminal code rather than administrative exile. They made no mention of any particular nationalities.² It is only after the Soviet military retook the peninsula that the higher echelons of the Soviet government made the claim that most of the traitors in the territory were Crimean Tatars and that the entire nationality should be punished. The first such written evidence is a letter from Beria, the head of the NKVD to Stalin on May 10, 1944. This letter accused all 20,000 Crimean Tatars in the Soviet military of deserting and going over to fight with the Germans against the USSR and recommended that the entire population of 140,000-160,000 people be deported as special settlers to Uzbekistan.³ The ethnic cleansing of the Crimean Tatars quickly proceeded once Beria decided on their fate.

The day after Beria sent his letter to Stalin accusing the Crimean Tatars in their entirety of treason and recommending their deportation, the GKO issued Resolution GOKO No. 5859ss. The first two paragraphs of this document repeat Beria's accusation of mass treason, although without any specific numbers this time. It also repeats Beria's proposed solution to this problem. The first operative clause of this decree read, "All Tatars are to be exiled from the territory of the Crimea and settled permanently as special settlers in regions of the Uzbek SSR. The exile is to be undertaken by the NKVD USSR. The NKVD USSR (com. Beria) is required to finish the exile of the Crimean Tatars by 1 June 1944."⁴ Preparation for the deportation and reception of the Crimean

- 1 For an extended discussion of the role of the memory of the deportation in Crimean Tatar national construction see Greta Lynn Uehling, *Beyond Memory: The Crimean Tatars' Deportation and Return* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).
- 2 N.F. Bugai, ed., *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii* (Moscow: Insan, 2002), doc. 51, pp. 81-82.
- 3 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 55, p. 85.
- 4 N. Pobol and P. Polian, eds., *Staliniskie deportatsii 1928-1953: Dokumenty* (Moscow: MFD, Materik, 2005), doc. 3.148, p. 497.

Tatars in Uzbekistan began almost immediately. In exactly one week from the deportation order the NKVD began the systematic round up and removal of the Crimean Tatars from their ancestral homeland.

Kobulov and Serov kept Beria informed of the conduct of the operation in Crimea during its three day duration. On May 18, 1944 they sent the first telegram on the deportation of the Crimean Tatars to Beria. They noted by 8:00 pm that day that the NKVD had loaded 90,000 people onto 25 train echelons. A full 17 of these echelons with 48,000 deportees had already left Crimea on their way to Uzbekistan without any noted acts of resistance.⁵ Beria passed this information on to Stalin.⁶ By noon the next day the number of Crimean Tatars loaded onto trains by the NKVD had reached 140,000 of which 119,424 on 44 echelons had already departed for their new destinations.⁷ Another telegram six hours later updated the number of Crimean Tatars loaded onto trains to 165,515. Those already on their way to Uzbekistan numbered 136,412 people on 50 train echelons.⁸ Beria passed these later numbers onto Stalin.⁹ The ethnic cleansing of Crimea of its indigenous Tatar population finished on 20 May 1944. The final day of the deportations of Crimean Tatars from their homeland increased the number of deportees up to 180,014.¹⁰ The following day in a mop up operation the NKVD deported an additional 5,500 Crimean Tatars to Gorky Oblast.¹¹ The operation involved 9,000 operative personnel of the NKVD-NKGB and 23,000 soldiers and officers of the NKVD armed detachments.¹² The NKVD cleansed the Crimean peninsula of virtually its entire indigenous population.

The train journey to Uzbekistan from Crimea was extremely arduous. The deportees lacked sufficient food, proper hygiene, and adequate medical attention. The result was that a number of Crimean Tatars died on the way to their new destinations. The Soviet government did not keep complete records on the losses during the deportation. But, there are references to deaths occurring on the deportation trains among the

5 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 58, p. 86.

6 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 59, pp. 86-87.

7 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 60, p. 87.

8 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 61, p. 87.

9 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 62, p. 87.

10 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 63, p. 88.

11 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 64, p. 88.

12 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 75, p. 93.

Crimean Tatars. From May 23 to June 4, 1944, a total of 59 echelons carrying 163,632 Crimean Tatars on 3,252 wagons passed through the station of Iletska. The authorities documented removing fourteen dead and four ill from among these deportees at this station during this time.¹³ One tabulation by Radio Liberty places the total number of Crimean Tatars to die during transit at 7,889 (5%) people.¹⁴ This contrasts sharply with the official Soviet figure of 191 deaths during transit.¹⁵ Other sources of information, however, such as oral testimonies from the survivors strongly suggest that the Radio Liberty figure is closer to the truth than the NKVD one.

After their deportation from Crimean and the start of their journey to Uzbekistan, Stalin diverted some 10,000 Crimean Tatar families to work as special settlers in forestry and the paper and cellulose industries in Molotov Oblast, Gorky Oblast, Sverdlovsk Oblast, and the Mari ASSR.¹⁶ In reality the number sent to the Urals was much larger. On July 1, 1944 the NKVD reported that 8,597 Crimean Tatars had been sent to the Mari ASSR, 10,002 to Molotov Oblast, 5,514 to Gorky Oblast, 3,591 to Sverdlovsk Oblast, 2,800 to Ivanovo Oblast, and 1,047 to Yaroslavl Oblast.¹⁷ By August 24, 1944, a total of 9,177 Crimean Tatar special settlers had arrived in the Mari ASSR. The vast majority of these deportees were women and children. The Crimean Tatars in Mari ASSR were divided among 1,481 adult men, 3,329 adult women, and 4,367 children.¹⁸ Conditions in the wet forests of the Urals were often even worse than those in Uzbekistan. The winters for instance were much colder. The experience of the Crimean Tatar special settlers in the Urals has been largely lacking in most English language literature on their deportation.

Living and working conditions for a number of Crimean Tatars initially sent to work in the lumber and paper industries in parts of Gorky Oblast were absolutely horrific. The NKVD recorded 6,387 Crimean Tatar

13 N. Pobol and P. Polian, eds., *Staliniskie deportatsii 1928-1953: Dokumenty* (Moscow: MFD, Materik, 2005), doc. 15, p. 139.

14 James Critchlow, *"Punished Peoples" of the Soviet Union: The Continuing Legacy of Stalin's Deportations*, (Washington DC: Human Rights Watch, September 1991), p. 8.

15 Ali Khamzin, "Krymskie Tatary v Uzbekistane" (Seriiia <<Rabochie dokumenty IFEAK>> No. 11, Dec. 2004), p. 12.

16 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 65, p. 88.

17 T.V. Tsarevskaiia-Diakana, ed., *Spetspereseleniye v SSSR* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2004), doc. 125, p. 423.

18 N.F. Bugai, ed., *Iosif Stalin – Lavrentiiu Berii. "Ikh nado deportirovat", Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii* (Moscow: Druzhba narodov, 1992), doc. 24, p. 146.

special settlers in Kostroma Oblast on October 10, 1944. Many of these were people originally deported to Gorky Oblast that found themselves in Kostroma Oblast as a result of the redrawing of the oblast borders in the fall of 1944. In particular Kologriv and Manturov raions were detached from Gorky Oblast and incorporated into Kostroma Oblast.¹⁹ A total of 1,893 Crimean Tatars lived in Kologriv raion and 776 in Manturov raion, both of which the NKVD characterized as having “extremely unsatisfactory conditions for supporting special settlers.” In Kologriv raion the building of winter barracks progressed very slowly due to a lack of glass for windows. Supplies of clothes, shoes, and food to the Crimean Tatar workers were extremely substandard. Many worked felling trees barefoot. Sometimes no bread would be supplied for two or three days at a time. When bread was provided it was only 150 grams a person a day and there was no medical service. The result was the outbreak of dysentery, scabies, and eczema in a number of the settlements in the raion.²⁰ The nearly 2,000 Crimean Tatars in Kologriv Raion lived and more often than should have been the case died in terrible physical conditions.

Other regions of the Urals also experienced epidemics among the Crimean Tatar special settlers. By July 11, 1944, the NKVD had registered 328 cases of typhus among Crimean Tatar special settlers.²¹ On October 19, 1944, the NKVD reported another outbreak of acute typhus among Crimean Tatar special settlers in Voroshilov Raion, Molotov Oblast. At this time they had confirmed 18 cases, but were worried about the epidemic spreading and so were requesting immediate assistance to contain the outbreak.²² Unsanitary and overcrowded housing conditions made typhus a recurrent health problem among the various special settler contingents in the USSR during the 1940s.

In total the Crimean Tatars were divided between 151,604 people sent to Uzbekistan as special settlers and 31,551 deported to various areas of the RSFSR. In total the number of deported Crimean Tatars counted on June 4, 1944 reached 183,155.²³ The Soviet authorities recorded 151,529 deportees arriving in Uzbekistan and 191 dying on the way. The NKVD dispersed the 27,558 Crimean Tatar men, 55,684 women, and 68,287 children across the bulk of Uzbekistan, a territory much larger than the

19 Bugai, *‘Ikh nado deportirovat’*, doc. 27, p. 148.

20 Bugai, *‘Ikh nado deportirovat’*, doc. 26, p. 147.

21 Tsarevskaia-Diakana, *Spetspereselentsy v SSSR*, doc. 126, p. 124.

22 Bugai, *‘Ikh nado deportirovat’*, doc. 28, p. 148.

23 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 74. p. 93.

Crimean peninsula. The largest number 56,362 ended up in Tashkent Oblast followed by Samarkand with 31,540, Andizhan with 19,630, Fergana also with 19,630, Namangan with 13,804, Kaskha-Dar'in with 10,171, and Bukhara with 3,983.²⁴ Uzbekistan became the centre of Crimean Tatar life and death following the May 18, 1944 deportations.

The Crimean Tatars were initially distributed in small groups across Uzbek inhabited kolkhozes and sovkhozes in Uzbekistan. Their status as special settlers prevented them from moving freely from place to place. They could not leave their assigned settlements without special NKVD permission.²⁵ They also lost the right for their children to receive education in their indigenous language. Instead, Crimean Tatar children were to receive their education in Russian.²⁶ SNK Resolution No. 13287rs of June 20, 1944 decreed that deported Crimean Tatars along with Chechens, Ingush, Karachais, and Balkars would receive their education in the Russian language in the areas in which they were confined as special settlers.²⁷ Both their legal and cultural rights were severely confined.

The summer of 1944 witnessed a huge number of Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan contracting and dying from malaria and gastro-intestinal diseases. At the end of July 1944, Chernyshev reported to Beria that 40% of Crimean Tatars in Namagan Oblast and almost 100% in Samarkand Oblast suffered from one of these two ailments.²⁸ The death rates were extraordinarily high due both to a lack of medical supplies and a lack of food. The government provided the special settlers with 8 kg of flour and 2 kg of cereal per a person once every two weeks in June 1944 and once a month after July 1944. They provided no milk, meat, or fat.²⁹ According to the Soviet government's own records 13,592 (9.1%) Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan perished from May 1944 to January 1, 1945.³⁰ At the Bayat No. 1 and No. 2 Sovkhozes in Tashkent Oblast more than 700 Crimean Tatars died of emaciation during 1944.³¹ The

24 Khamzin, "Krymskie Tatory v Uzbekistane", p. 12.

25 N. F. Bugai and A.N. Kotsonis, eds., "*Obiazat' NKVD SSSR... vyselit' grekov*" (*O deportatsii grekov v 1930-1950 gody*) (Moscow: Insan, 1999), doc. 27, p. 92 and doc. 28, pp. 93-95.

26 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 125, p. 139.

27 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 126, pp. 139-140.

28 N.F. Bugai, *L. Beria – I. Stalinu: 'Soglasno vashemu ukazaniiu..'* (Moscow: AIRO XX, 1995), p. 159.

29 Khamzin, "Krymskie Tatory v Uzbekistane", 13.

30 Ayder Ibragimov, ed., *Krimski studii: Informatsiinii biuletin*, no. 5-6, (September-November 2000): doc. 26, p. 68.

31 Khamzin, "Krymskie Tatory v Uzbekistane", 13.

following year the Soviet government recorded 13,186 (8.7%) Crimean Tatar deaths in Uzbekistan of which 6,096 were children under 16.³² The 26,966 recorded deaths of Crimean Tatars from May 1944 to January 1, 1946 represent 46 deaths a day among the group or 17.8% of the total population perishing in less than two and a half years.³³ This is an incredibly large percentage for any national group to lose in such a short period of time.

One of the chief problems faced by the Soviet authorities regarding the Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan was the timely integration of them into kolkhozes and providing them with individual garden plots. This tardiness greatly contributed to both the high mortality rate and the rapid urbanization of Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan. A report of May 26, 1945 noted that 131,690 (36,415 families) deportees lived across 59 districts of Tashkent, Samarkand, Fergana, Andizhan, Namagan, Kashkadar'i, and Bukhara oblasts of Uzbekistan. Most of them had been settled in agricultural pursuits rather than industrial enterprises. A full 54,243 had been settled on kolkhozes (14,712 families) and 26,994 on sovkhozes (7,633 families) versus only 50,447 in industrial towns (14,050 families). Membership in the kolkhozes among the deportees living in them was 82.3%. Despite being over a year since the deportations, only 7,094 of the families settled in kolkhozes numbering 20,018 people had received private garden plots to supplement the extremely meagre amount of food available from other sources.³⁴ These individual family garden plots were extremely important in providing food for kolkhoz workers, especially during World War II. The following month things improved somewhat for Crimean Tatar kolkhoz dwellers. Membership in the kolkhozes had increased to 93% for those living in them and possession of an individual family plot to 84%. In total 21,415 families had been provided with housing. However, 3,660 families still lived in conditions described by the NKVD as unsatisfactory. The Soviet government still found it necessary to provide 500 tons of flour, 15 tons of cereal, 50 tons of salt, and 25 tons of sugar as emergency food aid to Crimean Tatar special settlers in Uzbekistan in June 1945 in order to reduce the extremely high rates of excess mortality and morbidity among the group due to malnutrition.³⁵ Nonetheless this very minimal amount of food did not come anywhere near the amount necessary to reduce mortality to a normal rate. The lack of prompt provision of individual garden plots

32 Ayder Ibragimov, ed., *Krimski studii: Informatsiinii biuletin.*; doc. 26, p. 68.

33 Ayder Ibragimov, ed., *Krimski studii: Informatsiinii biuletin.*; doc. 26, p. 68 and Khamzin, "Krymskie Tatary v Uzbekistane", p. 14.

34 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 136, p. 146.

35 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 135, p. 146.

also forced a very large number of Crimean Tatars to migrate to industrial work sites where they were paid wages that could purchase food. By July 1, 1948, only 30% of able bodied adult deportees from Crimea, 30,704 people, still worked in agriculture.³⁶ The Crimean Tatars came to fill many of the industrial niches in Uzbekistan that the indigenous Uzbeks could not or would not fill.

In addition to agricultural pursuits the Soviet government assigned Crimean Tatars to a number of industrial work sites. Also as seen above economic necessity forced a number of Crimean Tatars to take these jobs. These included ozerkerite mine in Shor-Su , the uranium mine in Lyangar, construction of the Lower Bozsu and Farhad hydro electric stations, the metallurgy factory in Bekabad, and other factories in elsewhere in Uzbekistan.³⁷ Conditions on the Farhad dam were so horrific that already on September 30, 1944, the local Uzbek authorities passed a resolution on transferring the 1,159 Crimean Tatars working on it and their 1,313 family members to cotton kolkhozes in Tadzhikistan to prevent the all from dying.³⁸ This is the origin of the Crimean Tatar population living in Tadzhikistan.

A small number of Crimean Tatar men also ended up working in the labour army mining coal in the Moscow region. The original deportation sent some 5,000 Crimean Tatars to this region as mobilized workers along the same legal lines as German labour army conscripts.³⁹ That is organized into military style detachments under GULag discipline, surveillance, and rations.⁴⁰ Two years later on June 20, 1946, attrition had reduced this 5,000 to 3,866 of which 1,334 worked in Moscow Oblast and 2,532 worked in Tula Oblast.⁴¹ By June 18, 1947, deaths and releases had further reduced the number of Crimean Tatars working in the Moscow region as coal miners down to 2,017 men.⁴² These men were eventually released from the labour army and placed under special settlement restrictions like the rest of the Crimean Tatar population.⁴³ Like the case of the Crimean Tatars deported to the wet forests of the Urals, most English language literature on the deportations does not deal

36 Bugai, *'Ikh nado deportirovat'*, doc. 48, pp. 264-265.

37 Khamzin, "Krymskie Tatary v Uzbekistane", 13.

38 Bugai, *'Soglasno vashemu ukazaniiu..'*, pp. 159-160.

39 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 66, p. 89 and Bugai, *'Soglasno vashemu ukazaniiu..'*, pp. 157-158.

40 A.A. German and A.N. Kurochkin, *Nemtsy SSSR v trudovoi armii (1941-1945)* (Moscow: Gotika, 1998), pp. 7-8.

41 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 141, pp. 151-152.

42 Bugai, *Deportatsiia narodov kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, doc. 146, pp. 155-156.

43 Tsarevskaiia-Diakana, *Spetspereselentsy v SSSR*, doc. 138, p. 470 and doc. 141, pp. 472-473.

with the Crimean Tatars mobilized to work in the coal mines of the Moscow and Tula basins.

The Crimean Tatars remained confined to special settlement restrictions in Uzbekistan and elsewhere until the mid-1950s. The Soviet government freed the Crimean Tatars from the special settlement restrictions on April 28, 1956.⁴⁴ But, the same decree removing them from the special settlement regime also banned them from returning to Crimea or receiving compensation for property confiscated. The main benefit of the Soviet pardon was that they could now freely move about and choose their place of residence within Soviet Central Asia. The charges of treason were officially lifted by the Soviet government on September 5, 1967.⁴⁵ But, they still could not return home to Crimea. It was only after 1989 with the passing of a resolution by the Supreme Soviet on November 14, 1989 “On Recognizing the Illegal and Repressive Acts Against Peoples Subjected to Forcible Resettlement and Ensuring their Rights” that the Soviet government allowed large numbers of Crimean Tatars to return to their ancestral homeland.⁴⁶ It was only after this decree that a permanent return to Crimea could commence from Uzbekistan.

The deportation of Crimean Tatars from their ancestral homeland to Uzbekistan and the Urals where they lived under special settlement restrictions and suffered from extreme material deprivation undoubtedly constituted the most traumatic series of events in their modern history. It is impossible to understand the current position and struggle of the Crimean Tatars today in Russian occupied Crimea without keeping these events foremost in mind. Their attachment to their homeland is much stronger than that of most groups due to having experienced its loss for over a generation. This loss entailed not just an alienation from their native lands, but also a regime of severe discrimination, hunger, disease, and other suffering. The Crimean Tatars thus can be mobilized around issues involving their homeland to a much greater extent than other nationalities in Crimea. This makes them an important force to be reckoned with in Crimea despite being a numerical minority in the territory.

44 Bugai, *‘Ikh nado deportirovat’*, doc. 57, p. 273.

45 Mikhail Guboglo and Svetlana Chervonnaia, *Krymsko-Tatarskoe natsional’noe dvizhenie: Istoriia, problemy, perspektivy* (Moscow: RAN, 1992), vol. II, doc. 20, p. 51.

46 Svetlana Alieva, ed. *Tak eto bylo: Natsional’nye repressii v SSSR, 1919-1953 gody* (Moscow: Insan, 1993), vol. III, p. 257 and Andrew Wilson “Politics in and around Crimea: A Difficult Homecoming,” *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*, ed. Edward Allworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp.82-83.

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