



THE STRUGGLE AND THE RESPONSE IN STALIN'S DEPORTATION POLICY: THE CASE OF CRIMEAN TATARS

Stalin Dönemi Sürgün Politikası Sonrası Bir Mücadele ve Tepki Örneği: Kırım Tatarları

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Özet

1937–1949 yılları arasında SSCB çatısı altındaki sekiz topluluktan (Volga Almanları, Karaçaylılar, Kalmuklar, Çeçen-İnguşlar, Balkarlar, Ahıska Türkleri ve Kırım Tatarları) yaklaşık iki buçuk milyon kişi Stalin döneminde çıkarılan bir kararla vatanlarından çıkarılarak Orta Asya'ya sürgüne gönderildiler. Kararın gerekçesi bu halkların II. Dünya Savaşı boyunca düşmana yardımcı olmak suretiyle vatana ihanet etmeleriydi. Ne var ki bu suçlama herhangi bir araştırma, mahkeme ya da hükümle desteklenmedi. Kararın adilliği hakkındaki tartışmalar bir yana bırakılacak olsa bile Stalin döneminde gerçekleşen bu sürgünler Stalin'in "milletler politikasının" en saldırgan ve Sovyet tarihinin de en trajik kısımlarından biri olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Aradan geçen yarım yüzyılı aşkın zamana rağmen sürgünün etkileri sürülen halklarda hâlâ hissedilmektedir. Bu anlamda Kırım Tatarları da 1944 yılının Mayıs ayında kimliklerinin bir parçası olan Kırım yarımadasından sürülerek Orta Asya'ya gönderildiler. Bu sürgün, Kırım Tatarlarınca daha çok Stalin ve Stalin sonrası Sovyet rejiminin ulusal miraslarını, kimliklerini ve anavatanlarına olan bağlılıklarını bastırma ve siyasi, ekonomik, askeri önemi nedeniyle vazgeçemedikleri Kırım'ı Slavlaştırma yolunda attıkları bir adım olarak algılanmaktadır. Bu anlamda barındırdığı zorluklara rağmen yaşanan bu sürgün ve ardından başlayan vatana dönüş mücadelesi etnik bir grup olarak tanımlanan Kırım Tatarları'nın ulus bilincini kazanmaları sürecinde çok önemli bir basamak olmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kırım Tatarları, Stalin'in Sürgün Politikası, Kırım Yarımadası, Ulus Bilinci

Abstract

Approximately two and a half million people belonging to eight different nations, who have lived under the roof of USSR, (the Volga German, Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechen-Ingushs, Balkars, Meskhetian Turks and Crimean Tatars) have been displaced from their homelands and deported to Central Asia by a decree of Stalin within the years of 1937-1949. The reason of decree was betrayal to USSR during the World War 2, although the decree was not supported by any investigation, trial or judgment. Even leaving the debates about the fairness of the decision, Stalin's era deportations were evaluated as one of the most aggressive part of Stalin's "nationality policy" and one of the most tragic landmarks of Soviet history. The affects of the deportation have been still felt among the deported nations even after more than half a century of the deportation. In that sense, Crimean Tatars have been deported from Crimean peninsula, where gave to their nationality its identity, to Central Asia in May, 1944. That of deportation was perceived by Crimean Tatars as a step of Stalin and post-Stalinist Soviet regime in order to suppress the Crimean Tatars' national heritage, identity and memory of their homelands and to provide the Slavization of Crimean peninsula, where carries political, economic and militaric importances. In that regard, the deportation with all its difficulties and the afterward struggle of "return to homeland" became a very important step within the Crimean Tatars' process of gaining their national consciousness.

Key Words: Crimean Tatars, Stalin's Deportation Policy, Crimean Peninsula, National Consciousness

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Introduction

The case of using official mass deportation policy toward almost two and a half million people belonging to Soviet Union's national groups within the period of 1937-1949 has indeed constituted one of the important landmarks of Soviet history. Those of ethnic and religious deportations also have had influence on the destiny of eight Soviet or so-called "punished" societies (including the Volga German, Karachai, Kalmyks, Chechen-Ingushs, Balkars, Meskhetian Turks and Crimean Tatars) each of whom have still suffered from the deportation *en masse*, even those who have returned to their homeland by Khrushchev's permission nearly a half century ago. In that context, the Crimean Tatars have appeared as one of the largest groups among the deported nations (after the Volga Germans and the Chechens) by a population of 238.500 and also one of the three whose return from exile was not permitted by the Soviet authorities.

Moving from this point, it is the purpose of this paper to interpret the preconditions, causes, implementation and the political-social consequences of the mass deportation of Stalinist regime within the case of Crimean Tatars. By doing so, moving from the deportation phenomenon, I aim to understand the relationship of ethnic minorities and the Stalinist regime within the context of his nationality policy and to reach a deeper evaluation of political-historical consequences of the deportation policy under Stalinist regime.

I-DEPORTATION IN TERMS OF "NATIONALITY QUESTION" IN USSR

A-) Nationality Policy under Stalinist Regime

"If the politics not be engaged in people, people will be engaged in politics."

Antonie de Saint-Exupery

The nationality question in the Soviet Union had covered a very crucial place in Soviet domestic affairs. On the other hand, between 1917 and 1964, the domestic policy of USSR toward nationalities did not go through a uniform course. In accordance with the shifting circumstances and altering leaders, the nature and dimension of the nationality policies has considerably rotated. However, despite that of differentiations, there had indeed a commonality shared by all the Soviet leaders.¹ That was the belief that the only solution for the nationality problem lied in eliminating national differences. In that context, what have changed were only the methods. "Lenin relied on education to reach his goal; Stalin on violence Khrushchev, on breaking with Stalinist methods and seeking political and economical rationality"². On contrary to Lenin, who accepted a more egalitarian solution to national problems with a somehow underestimated attitude and hoped that official egalitarianism would convince the non-Russians to be voluntarily adopted³, Stalin had already noticed the difficulty lying under the nationality problem. However; he possessed a one-sided understanding toward the issue: "force and the further stages: violence". That of coercion became a characteristic instrument of Stalinist regime to the problem. In any cases, Stalin has never been fascinated by Lenin's confidence in teaching of internationalism and equality of nations.⁴ Since despite of his Georgian origins, Stalin identified himself much more with Russia. By doing so, he obviously underestimated whatever non-Russian, but the nationalist feelings and frustrations most. As a leader, he used to impose Russian superiority upon other nations of the USSR. Even from the

¹ Amy Knight, "The Political Police and The National Question in the Soviet Union", **The Post-Soviet Nations**, Alexander J. Motyl (ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 170

² Helene Carrere d'Encausse, **The Great Challenge**, New York: Holmes & Meier Publisher, 1992

³ Helene Carrere d'Encausse, **The Nationality Question in the Soviet Union and Russia**, Norway: Scandiavian University Press, 1995, p. 35

⁴ Peter Neville, **Russia: The USSR, The CIS, and the Independent States**, London: The Windrush Press, 2003, p. 192.

mid-1920s onward with Stalin, the rights and prerogatives of non-Russian nationalities have gradually eroded.

As for him, the Russian domination was perceived by the conquered people once an "absolute evil," then a "relative evil," then a "lesser evil," however; in the end it became an "absolute good" and indeed their salvation.⁵ Moving away from the "absolute goodness" of the conquest, those who have been struggling against the Russian domination had no longer any reason to go on fighting. Relevantly, all national heroes who had resisted to colonialism had to be condemned. Hence, all non-Russians were urged to be separated from their own past and to identify their history with only Russian materials.

By the early 1930s, Stalin finally was able to carry out his own thoughts on the nationalist problem. His approach was multi-faceted. Updating the previous experiences of egalitarian concept of society, he paved the way for cultural compromise and federalism.⁶ Furthermore, while carrying that of respect toward the federal structures, Stalin also directed the USSR into an upheaval aiming at transforming society. In the process of transforming society according to his criteria, at the beginning Stalin gave a start for purges of all national elites who not surprisingly were opposed to him. "In 1934, 70 per cent of the members of the Central Committee were to be dead. Between 1934 and 1938, one and a half million party members were purged"⁷. Thus, a whole generation of able young communists were sacrificed to satisfy Stalin since they all committed the "crime" of returning to the springs of national fidelity. That of purges was the one of the signs of Stalin's further domestic policies, including the deportations, all of which were strictly directed to destroy the national existence and conscious. In his era, also the last prints of the cultural and political pluralism have been vanished and the autonomous areas have systematically destroyed.⁸ In this way, the official egalitarianism has disappeared, yielding a "community of nations" which would be administrated by "an elder brother" meanly the Russian people in charge of and guide for all.⁹

Just after Stalin's purges, on the eve of World War II, the consequences of those purges became obvious: Stalin had paved the way for a new elite that would be able to be encouraged for a new concept of relations between nations of the USSR, a kind of concept that was keenly unegalitarian, borrowed from the imperial view of past.¹⁰ From this aspect, once has been an empire, the USSR indeed included several elements among which three of them were crucial. First, there was a certain element of centralization in domination of weaker and subjugated part. As a second element, there was dominating ethnicities which occupy a privileged position in the subjugated parts socially, culturally and politically. A third feature is that there was exploitation of the imperial periphery by the centre in various forms.¹¹ In this context; the violence exposed to ethnicities can be basically evaluated in those of forms. Since, from Stalin's coercive point of view, the issue of nationality policies is rather viewed in terms of "a coercive state maintaining its dominance over unwilling national groups"¹².

Keeping mind those of comments, with the beginning of the World War II, coupled with the Stalin's suspicion against ethnic minorities for disloyalty of the Soviet regime, the policy of Stalinist regime finally has made its tragic decision: *"the mass deportation of eight nation... "*

⁵ Carrere d'Encausse, **The Nationality Question in the Soviet Union and Russia**, p. 30

⁶ Ronald J. Hill, "Ideology and the Making of a Nationalities Policy", **The Post-Soviet Nations**, Alexander J. Motyl (ed.), New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, p. 58

⁷ Neville, *ibid.*, p. 200

⁸ Alaeddin Yalçinkaya, **Yetmiş Yıllık Kriz: Sovyetler Birliği'nde Moskova-Türkler İlişkileri**, İstanbul: Beta Yayınevi, 2004, p. 174

⁹ Carrere d'Encausse, **The Nationality Question in the Soviet Union and Russia**, p. 31

¹⁰ Robert Conquest, **The Great Terror: Stalin's Purge of the Thirties**, London: MacMillan, 1968

¹¹ Alexei Vasilyev, "Russia and Central Asia", **Rising Tension in Eastern Europe and The Former Soviet Union**, David Carlton, Paul Ingram, Giancarlo Tenaglia (eds.), New York: Dartmouth, 1996, p. 65

¹² Knight, *ibid.*, p. 170

B- The Deportation Policy of Stalin

"Russia is the leading nation of the USSR. In this war, she had won the right to be recognized as the guide for the whole Union. In contrast to the other people who had shown their weaknesses in the war, the Russian people had demonstrated Russia's strength. "

Josef Stalin, May 24, 1945

1-) Preconditions and the causes of the deportation

The war conditions and especially the German invasion had gave rise to nationalist reactions that of which make Stalin and his successors convinced that the borderland were so much sensitive and vulnerable and this sensitivity indeed might lead to the destruction of the entire system especially during such an extraordinary situation as war.¹³ Depending upon that of "safety of socialist Fatherland" claim, Stalin's autonomist tendencies moved in a tragic way for eight nations who used to accommodate in the regions surrounding from Baltic shores to Black Sea, from Far East to Korean border. Having labeled as "bad nations" and accused of treason, Poles in the West, Crimean Tatars in the south, Germans in Volga area, Karachais, Chechen-Ingushs, Balkars and Meskhetians in Caucasus, Kalmyks near Caspian Sea and Koreans in Far East have steadily uprooted from their native soils and deported to Central Asia between 1937 and 1949.¹⁴ Both of deported nations were accused of "collective crime" and "betray to Fatherland" accompanying claims of collaborating with Germans and working as spies on behalf of Japans during the war.

In addition, it is also noteworthy that there observed discrimination in the selectivity of punished nations. Despite of the variety of deported nations in terms of ethnic and linguistic terms (Indo-European, Iranian, native Caucasian, Turk, Mongolian), the Slavic or Russian Orthodox nuances were indeed absent.¹⁵ Meanly, this was maybe extreme but a way of Stalin to declare that there were bad nations, but also good ones, and the best of them was the Russian nation.

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of deportation of nations from their ancient homeland by ignoring any trial or investigation process in the execution was clearly a kind of manifestation of lawlessness implemented by Stalin and his successors.¹⁶ Even there existed much of comments about Soviet justice under Stalin one of which "illustrated the Soviet principle by a joke about a rabbit which escaped from the Soviet Union into Poland, explaining that it did so because all camels in the USSR were to be shot. When it has been said that "But you are not a camel", the rabbit answered as "No, but how can I prove it?"¹⁷ So, the question was whether the German invasion was the basic cause of deportations or it was an instrument to justify that of punishment of related nations. In anyhow, even it was the case, how could it be possible to attribute that of inimical activities to an entire nation including women, old people and even children? Hence, the obvious target of the policy has appeared in a very pragmatic sense: "recolonization or settlement of near-abroad regions by reliable population"¹⁸, in other words to establish reliable, trustworthy barriers against possible invasions and for further expansionism. In this context, the characteristic of Stalin meant so much. As Solzhenitsyn stated in describing Stalin "in all his long-suspicion-ridden life he had trusted no one". Coupled with his paranodial fear through the security of

¹³ Carrere d'Encausse, **The Nationality Question in the Soviet Union and Russia**, p. 28

¹⁴ Seyit Tuğrul, **SSCB'de Sürgün Edilen Halklar**, İstanbul: Chivi Yazıları Yayınevi, 2003, p. 17

¹⁵ Isabelle Kreindler, "The Soviet Deported Nationalities: A Summary and an Update", **Soviet Studies**, V. 38, July 1986, p. 388

¹⁶ Ağa-Ali Kemaloğlu, **The Phenomenon of Ethnic Deportations in Soviet Nationality Policy: Meskhetian Turks Case**, Master Thesis, Bilkent University: Ankara, February 1996, p. 3, for further information please also see Otto J. Pohl, **The Stalinist Penal System: A Statistical History of Soviet Repression and Terror 1930-1953**, Mac Farland: North Carolina, 1997 and Otto J. Pohl, **Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949**, Greenwood Press: Westport, 1999

¹⁷ Neville, *ibid.*, p. 200

¹⁸ Kemaloğlu, *ibid.*, p. 4

Soviet state, Stalin indeed did not wish to see national minorities who settled in frontier area of borders in the case of their any real or possible collaboration with the enemies.

Hence, it can be stated that like all the great colonial empires, the Russian-Soviet empire where coercion and force became a standard, recognized part of repertory at the disposal of Soviet nationality policy,¹⁹ has left its print on the ethnic detritus spread across the vast lands of it once dominated. In that context, that of deportations en mass can be evaluated as the tragic examples of a totalitarian regime's endurance in order to achieve total ethnic cleansing of its nations in a speedy and encompassing nature with the allocation all of its resources.²⁰

In the final point, under the deportation policy of Stalin, 1.600.000 people of eight nations had deported to Central Asia, by a big proportion to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Begun with the deportation of Volga German in September, 1941 due to a so-called preemptive measure; the wave of deportation had lasted by the Meskhetian Turks on November, 1944 this time by a punitive measure. According to final estimates, of the 1.600.000 deportees almost one in three approximately 530.000 deportee had been lost during the deportation process.²¹

II- THE CRIMEAN TATARS CASE

A- The Deportation of Crimean Tatars

"It was early in the morning-still dark- when they came and knocked on the door. They told us some kind of resolution had been adopted and that we must leave. They gave us a half hour to gather some possessions and food... Everyone began to cry as we gathered our things. Later they loaded us into a truck and drive us away to a muddy field where we have waited for hours in the rain surrounded by soldiers and machine guns. Eventually we were taken to a spot where two long freight trains were waiting. Only early in the morning did the train begin to move. During the journey the train stopped only in stations where the soldiers in each time have asked "any bodies there", "any bodies there? ". Those of bodies which were just thrown away into hollows, predominantly were belonged to children and olds, two of whom were my father and brother..."²²

These words belonged to at that time sixteen years old boy: one of 238.500 Crimean Tatars, who came to know the frightened term of "deportation" by a well-planned operation started on May 18 and completed on May, 20 1944. An entire nation has sent to a "journey of lingering death, death moved down the old, the young and the weak"²³ depending upon the claim of "mass collaboration with the enemy" which did not stand upon strong evidences. Firstly, throughout the summer 1941, the Red Army mobilized millions of Soviet citizens from all nationalities to resist against German invasion. In that recruitment process, between 250.000-300.000 Crimean Tatars were mobilized and sent to fight in partisan brigaded and also on the front.²⁴ Secondly according to Soviet historian Alexander Nekritch, beside the participants of Red Army, thousands of Tatars had been sent to labor camps by Germans as "Ostarbeiter" during the years of 1942-43. Even as Edige Kırımal stated between the years of 1943-44, Nazis had burned out 128 Crimean villages due to the fact that they helped to partisan brigaded.

¹⁹ Edward Allworth, "Mass Exile, Ethocide, Group Derogation: Anomaly or Norm in Soviet Nationality Policies?", **Tatars of the Crimea and Their Struggle for Survival**, Edward Allworth (ed.), London: Duke University Press, p. 170

²⁰ Brian Glyn Williams, "The Crimean Tatar exile in Central Asia: a Case Study in Group Destruction and Survival", **Central Asian Survey**, 17/2, 1998, p. 285

²¹ Tuğul, *ibid.*, pp. 175-179

²² The Open Society Institute, **Crimean Tatars: Repatriation and Conflict Prevention**, 1996, pp. 12-13

²³ Kreindler, *ibid.*, p. 391

²⁴ Williams, *ibid.*, p. 286

On the other hand, following the Nazi capture of Crimea, up to 8.000 Crimean Tatars were formed into anti-partisan defense brigades whom operated in Nazi controlled areas in the peninsula.²⁵ However, such collaborative acts were by no means equalized to all Crimean Tatars, especially considering that Slavs and the significant number of Ukrainians assisted Germans and even enlisted in pro-German military units. Anyhow those of guilty portion of population have already left the Crimea long before the Red Army's arrival to this territory.²⁶ From this point of view, a kind of punitive treatment from Stalin was expected, but never in that degree of brutality. The deportation of Crimean Tatars was indeed noteworthy for its vast scale and ruthlessness. Beside, keeping mind all the statistics above, the so-called claim of collective betray of Crimean Tatars do not sound satisfying enough. Even Khrushchev in his secret speech to the "Twentieth Party Congress held in 1956 suggested that Stalin's claims about the collaboration of certain nationalities with Germans were wrong.²⁷ So, for a deeper understanding, a historical perspective to the issue is also required.

1-) Historical Background of Crimean Tatar's Deportation

According to the leading commentators, beside Tatar's behaviors during the war, there was variety of factors which were responsible for the tragedy in 1944. In fact, what they mentioned was the Russia's hostility exhibited toward Tatars long before the emergence of the war which caused from the centuries-lasting uneasy relations of two nations.

"The Crimean Tatars are Hanafi, Sunni Muslim Turkic minority whose ethnogenesis as a distinct group was completed on the northern shores of the Black Sea during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries"²⁸. Since then, Crimea became a region of attention and Moscow's first real attempts toward Crimean Tatars had started with the invasions of 1687-1689. But it was only with Tsarina Catherina II in whose reign the Crimea first incorporated into (1774), later was annexed by the Russian Empire (1783). Actually, at that times there existed both political and economical motives behind Russia's interest in maintaining control within Crimea with more emphasis to economic reasons, on concentrating the aspects of foreign trade with Europe and the rich agricultural lands. As for the political aspect; this was partly physiological and partly real. Since the thirteenth century, Moscow indeed had suffered from both military incursions by and political subjection to the Tatars. Especially since the Crimean khanate's existence in 16th century, the khan's armies often terrorized neighboring principalities, including the Russian principality of Muscovy.²⁹ Even Slavs were captured in a battle of Crimea's thriving slave trade. That of practice of enslavement created the stereotype within the Slavic population that Tatars were barbarians and also created the anti-Tatar fear and animosities. Hence, since then the Tatars have represented a hostile force on Moscow's frontiers.³⁰ Moving from that point, it can be stated that prior to the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 1783; they had a history of hostility. "Even a 19th century foreign observer of Russia has characterized the conquest of Crimea as an act of revenge against the last empire of the Tatars, who had enslaved Russia for so long."³¹ By the Russian annexation, the russification process has begun. Meanwhile, from the start, "possession of the Crimea occupied an important place in the Russian psyche, a feeling that keeps retain to this day".³² Evaluating from a strategic aspect, Crimea such a geo-strategically important area was seen vital in gaining access to the Mediterranean Sea, an stable aim of countless Russian and subsequently Soviet leaders.

²⁵ For further information please see, Patrik Von Zur Mühlen, **Gamalı Haç ile Kızılyıldız Arasında: İkinci Dünya Savaşı'nda Sovyet Doğu Halklarının Milliyetçiliği**, E. B. Özbilen(trans.), Ankara:Mavi, 1984

²⁶ Tuğul, *ibid.*, p. 173

²⁷ Kemaloğlu, *ibid.*, p. 34

²⁸ Williams, *ibid.*, p. 287

²⁹ The Open Society Institute, *ibid.*, p. 17

³⁰ Alan Fischer, **The Crimean Tatars**, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978, p. 66

³¹ Kreindler, *ibid.*,p. 388

³² Fisher, *ibid.*, p. 81

The prejudice and hostility toward Crimean Tatars have shown itself times before the events of World War II. As an instance, just after the Crimean War of 1854-1856, Tatars, traditionally, accused of betraying Russian Army by aiding the Anglo-French and Turkish alliance. Nonetheless, that of Crimean War experience strictly deepened the impression of Tatars were unreliable subjects. In that sense, during the war, in 1855 Crimean Tatars in big groups migrated to Ottoman Empire mainly to Anatolia, which could be also considered as the first example of Crimean Tatars' deportation. Gradually after, during the last half of the 19th century to 1930s the Tatar intelligentsia had been devastated by assimilation, purges and emigration.

In addition, looking through a historical perspective, it can be observed that throughout all those years Russian authorities have pursued consciously a policy of decreasing Tatar population in Crimea. The statistics also say so. Tatars comprised about 83 percent of the peninsula's population in 1783, and 20 percent in 1937, 1.5 percent in 1989 and eventually 9.6 percent in 1993 while the ratio of Russians and Ukrainians have been rising up.³³ As it can be concluded, the history of Russian-Crimean Tatars relations have loaded with those of forced migrations, collectivization, purges, war, Nazi occupation and finally deportation.

By a projection from 18th century to the deportation years, it seemed that actually there had not much of differences in Russia's final interest on Crimea. The strategic influence of Crimea peninsula in general and Black Sea Fleet in particular still refers so much for Russian side³⁴ in terms of its shore with Black Sea, the Sevastopol marine and its Mediterranean climate. In that sense, in explanation of deportation, the dates of deportation and the dates of Soviet demand upon Turkey for joint control of the Straits were coinciding. After the deportation and first major settlement of Slavs was completed, in March 1945, Molotov informed the Turkish ambassador that the USSR was renouncing the Turco-Soviet Treaty of Neutrality signed in 1925.³⁵ Moving from here, it seems to be sure that, Soviet demands for Turkish Straits had a relevancy in the issue due to the possibility that Stalin wanted to be sure that no "fifth column of Turkic nationalities" would stand in the way as a pressure on the Soviet-Turkish borders.

In conclusion, in addition to the above-mentioned causes, the legacy of continuing prejudice against Crimean Tatars on the part of Russian element in the Soviet Union has served to the Soviet authorities at least as a pretext. Pursing the czarist approach of "Crimea without Crimean Tatars"³⁶, Stalin and his successors, in this manner, have motivated by the foreign policy considerations in deporting the Crimean Tatars from the Black Sea area.³⁷

B- The Crimean Tatar Resettlement in Central Asia

"... deportation from Crimea was more than a deportation from one continent to another, it was a trip back in time."

By May 20, 1944 the act of deportation had ended, however; the rest of the story has just begun for the ones who were going to their unknown future as a deportee. According to the estimations of Nikolai Burgai, a specialist on deportations, of 191.088 Crimean Tatars, who could survive during the journey, 151.604 Crimean Tatars were sent to Uzbek SSR, 8.597 to the Udmurt and Mari Autonomous Oblasts and the rest distributed throughout Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. Among them,

³³ **The Open Society Institute**, *ibid.*, pp. 16-22

³⁴ Gerard Snel, "At the Border of European Security: The Case of Ukraine", **Rising Tension in Eastern Europe and The Former Soviet Union**, David Carlton, Paul Ingram, Giancarlo Tenaglia (eds.), New York: Dartmouth, 1996, p. 113

³⁵ Baskın Oran, **Türk Dış Politikası: Kurtuluş Savaşından Bugüne Olgular, Belgeler, Yorumlar**, İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, C. II, 2002

³⁶ Brian Glyn Williams, **The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora experiences and the Forging of a Nation**, Leiden: Brill, 2001, p. 375

³⁷ Fisher, *ibid.*, pp. 150-155

Tashkent became sharply pointed as the main dispersion centre for Crimean Tatars where they received a hostile welcome depending upon the anti-Tatar propaganda of Soviet agencies. About their arrival, a Crimean Tatar reported as³⁸:

"I personally recall how we were met by the local inhabitants, who had been poisoned by Stalin's propaganda. One of the rocks hit me. I was still only a boy. "

The mutual relations with the Uzbeks could be established only after making a point of stressing their shared Islamic beliefs and traditions. Islam and the Crimean Tatar language which is a hybrid of Oghuz and Kipchak (Uzbeks are Kipchak), surely provided a common ground of an open dialogue between these two peoples.

Upon arrival in Central Asia, the Crimean Tatars from their deportation in 1944, until after Stalin's death in the mid-1950s, were forced to live under a punitive, special settlement regime (*spetsposeleniel*)³⁹. That of settlement included highly difficult life conditions like informal camps which were run by NKVD and in which Tatars have worked 12 hours workdays in the fields and factories. Having faced with drastic changes of climate (desert oasis conditions) and other lifestyle conditions such as inadequate housing (barracks, dug outs or simple mud brick dwellings), insufficient supply of clean water and food, most of Tatars coped with the diseases and lost their lives in the harsh early years of settlement.

Therefore; the Crimean Tatars had to get used to considerable socioeconomic changes in order to adapt to and survive in its unfamiliar and at the same rate difficult conditions. Tatars who settled in Southern Uzbekistan were forced in to be employed in agriculture while the ones settled in Tashkent vicinity in the factories. On the other hand, it is also said that "Crimean Tatars, to a considerably degree, satisfied the need for the development of industry in the republics of Central Asia."⁴⁰

The Crimean Tatars suffered in that of life conditions for 12 years until the death of Stalin, after 1953 it was time for being rehabilitated and struggling to go back "home".

1-) Crimean Tatar's Struggle to Return to Crimea

Although it was not the first movement emerged in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union, the Crimean resistance is marked as the one which has been the longest in sense of permanency: for twenty-nine years.⁴¹ With the death of Josef Stalin in 1953, his successors Khrushchev's launched de-Stalinization campaigns and as a result Soviet Union has experienced a political amendment through its "punished nations". Trying to rectify some of Stalin's injustice policies, Khrushchev gradually put an end to the special settlement regime and allowed Crimean Tatars "survivors" to reengage in Soviet society in 1956. However; there was an exceptional for Tatars who constituted one of the three nations (the other two were the Volga Germans and Meskhetian Turks) whose demand for returning was ignored and condemned to remain in Central Asia.⁴²

From that moment on, the Tatar's long-lasting struggle for "right to return" and national rehabilitation has begun in terms of a highly motivated campaign with the leadership of Mustafa

³⁸ Williams, **The Crimean Tatar exile in Central Asia: a Case Study in Group Destruction and Survival**, pp. 290-295

³⁹ Kemaloglu, *ibid.*, p. 33

⁴⁰ Williams, **The Crimean Tatar exile in Central Asia: a Case Study in Group Destruction and Survival**, p. 298

⁴¹ Peter Redaway, "The Crimean Tatar Drive for Repatriation: Some Comparisons with Other Movements of Dissent in the USSR", **Tatars of the Crimea and Their Struggle for Survival**, Edward Allworth (ed.), London: Duke University Press, 1988, p. 194

⁴² Williams, "**The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora experiences and the Forging of a Nation**", p. 403.

Jemilev⁴³. Jemilev and some senior Tatar leaders have so decided that their nationality would not regain its ethnic rights without taking political action. As the first action that the Tatar leaders took, was sending petitions, some of which with over 6000 signatures, asking for the right to return in the "light of Leninist nationality policies"⁴⁴. As a second step "anti-Soviet propaganda and stirring up racial discord" was produced at the end of which Tatar leaders were sentenced to prison. After 1964, Tatars continued their campaign in a more professional way; via lobbies. As a result, a decree was published on 9 September 1967 which accepted the claims of collaboration were uneven but denied to return to Crimea.⁴⁵ Despite of the decree, after a decade after 1967, 577 Crimean Tatar family obtained residency permits in Crimea.

It was just after the dismantling of USSR when 260.000 Tatars had managed to return, thus in 1993 the population of Tatars in Crimea has risen up to 9.6 percent which is a relatively hopeful ratio comparing with the 1.5 percent of 1989's census.

C- The Consequences of the Deportation on Crimean Tatars

Stalin's deportation policy toward Crimean Tatars as the other seven nations has indeed had two faces: what it was hoped to be succeeded via deportations was not only the physical removal of Tatars from Crimea, but it was also locked up destroying Tatar's cultural involvement on the Crimea. Hence, in response to each of two "face" belong to the Crimean Tatars cases; I would like to mention two basic consequences of the deportation: its political and social outcomes.

1-) Political Consequences of the Deportations on Crimean Tatars

In terms of political means, deportation actually achieved the score that aimed by the Soviet regime. The Crimean Tatars, who still struggle for their return to "homeland", enjoy none of the Soviet forms of group recognition that they had experienced earlier. In any case, just after the deportation, the Crimean peninsula was resettled primarily with ethnic Russians and Ukrainians; even in 1954 Crimea's transformation from the Russian Federation to the Ukrainian SSR had been authorized by Khrushchev.⁴⁶

As a consequence of its lacking unit status, at the moment, Crimean Tatars do not possess either a written constitution or a proceeding body, so they cannot be identified with any branch of political organization that might develop on a base of territorial unit. Beside, the nationality also lacks other customary Soviet forms of formal sovereignty such as a flag, a seal, a capital city or a national anthem.⁴⁷ Since the liquidation of former Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, the Crimean Tatars have still lacked of a political-administrative territory and naturally a political body. Short to say, that all constituted the political outcomes of the deportation: due to the absence of a territory and a political recognition, Crimean Tatars seem not to be existed in political terms.

2-) Socio-cultural Consequences of the Deportation

What has happened in Crimea after the deportation with the motive of eradicating signs of Tatar's presence obviously highlighted the other aspect of Soviet policy which seemed as equally brutal. Coupled with the all of the post-war Soviet administrations' enforcements toward the permanent exile status of the Crimean Tatars, those of eradications clearly identified the general long-term policy of the Soviet regime: "to prevent any prospective re-Tatarisation of the Crimea".⁴⁸ In that sense, the best solution in order to

⁴³ Mustafa Jemilev is also known as Mustafa Cemiloğlu.

⁴⁴ Allworth, *ibid.*, pp. 179-180

⁴⁵ The Open Society Institute, *ibid.*, pp. 178-179

⁴⁶ The Open Society Institute, *ibid.*, p. 200

⁴⁷ Allworth, *ibid.*, p. 173

⁴⁸ Hakan Kırımlı, "Soviet Educational and Cultural Policies Toward the Crimean Tatars in Exile", *Central Asian Survey*, 8/1, 1989, p. 85.

prevent the return to the Crimea and the re-establishment of the Crimean ASSR would be the complete "assimilation of the Crimean Tatars among the people of the places of exile and a subsequent dissolution of a distinct Crimean Tatar national identity.⁴⁹ In doing so, Crimean Tatars, facing assimilation and amalgamation, would disappear as a nation and a non-existent nation would have no claim over Crimea. Therefore, serious of action pursuing the goal of full or partial destruction of Tatars was carried out. For instance, in Crimean Tatars' homeland, most trace of their culture such as village mosques, Muslim cemeteries, historical monument of ancient culture were eradicated. Even Crimean Tatars were not included as a nation in Soviet censuses and for all intents and purposes, the Crimean Tatars had been erased from the USSR's ethnic map.⁵⁰ Additionally, they have pursued marginally radical methods in destroying Crimean Tatar's language and literature. As a tragic instance, in Akmesid, Baku, Tbilisi, Kazan and other cities of the USSR, all books which published in Crimean Tatar were burned or removed. Tatar's educational opportunities were also limited with the offer of opening course for children who had no schooling. Tatars also had no books or newspapers in their native language. Only by the partial rehabilitation of Khrushchev in whose rule the publication of a newspaper -Lenin Bayragi- a journal -Yildiz- and a few books -totally 16 in 1959-68-in Crimean Tatar language were permitted.⁵¹

Hence, considering all these conditions, it might strongly expect that the preservation of Crimean Tatar national identity and culture was nearly impossible. However; the development of recent decades and the events of 1980s suggest that Crimean Tatars did not lose their unique national identity in Central Asia, rather have maintained much of the characteristics of a distinct national group to this day in spite of the policies of Soviet administration. Furthermore, the deportation has somehow broken down the regional linguistic differences that had for centuries divided the Tatars.⁵² That of preserving national identity can be basically attributed to two factors:

First of them is the tremendous role of family in keeping sense of Crimean Tatar's alive. The young Tatars who grew up in Central Asia and have relatively foggy memories about their previous life and who attended to Uzbek, Kazak and Russian schools were taught by the parents and grandparents in sense of detailed and traditional nuances like the Tatar cuisine, songs from Crimea etc. In doing so, they indeed succeeded in creating a sense of identification within themselves and a sense of separateness from the surrounding people. Also, keeping the memory of deportation alive, the older generations provided to pass on that of communal grievances from generation to generation.⁵³

*"Around the family table, every day we talked about coming back to the Crimea. We were raised on the idea of motherland and there is no doubt that the family played the primary role in preserving an imaginary territorial link to Crimea."*⁵⁴

As a second motive, which contributed to the maintenance of Crimean Tatar identity was indeed regime's discrimination against the Crimean Tatars.⁵⁵ That of strict discrimination caused to the emergence of a defense instinct among Tatars which subsequently led the born of Crimean Tatar national movement. As Robert C. Bone explained in his article, the nations who believe that they are sharing the same destiny, living same common grievances and keeping the same memory of the injustices, gather easily under the term of "us" and tend to struggle to the common enemy which makes them unified.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 69

⁵⁰ Williams, **The Crimean Tatar exile in Central Asia: a Case Study in Group Destruction and Survival**, p. 301

⁵¹ Kırmımlı, ibid., pp. 71-72

⁵² Williams, **The Crimean Tatars: The Diaspora experiences and the Forging of a Nation**, p. 454

⁵³ Williams, ibid., p. 300

⁵⁴ Williams, **The Crimean Tatar exile in Central Asia: a Case Study in Group Destruction and Survival**, p. 302

⁵⁵ Ayşegül Aydıngün, İsmail Aydıngün, **Kırım Tatarlarının Vatanına Dönüşü: Kimlik ve Kültürel Canlanma**, Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2004, p. 59

⁵⁶ Yalçınkaya, ibid., p. 175

Tatars, in this manner, concentrated their efforts on reviving Crimean Tatars' national consciousness via the press, literature and education in their place of exile. Coupling with the goal of returning to the homeland, the Crimean Tatar national movements obviously received mass participation from Tatars in exile and indeed contributed to formation of the unified Crimean Tatar nation of today. In other words, on contrary to what Stalin had stated, Crimean Tatars have still sustained to survive as a distinct nation even if they do not have a homeland.

Conclusion

It has been said that empires are often built and raised on the suffering of non-ruling groups. That, the World War II deportees of eight nations constituted one of that "sufferings". From eight nations approximately two and a half million people were deported to various parts of Central Asia carrying the label of 'bad nations' on them, because they were accused of collaboration with the enemy, however; interestingly without any trial, any investigation and any judgment. Moving further from the justice the claims, it is a fact that those of deportations became the most tragic landmarks in Soviet history. In any case, the subtitles of the deportation have still been affective on the deported nations.

In this context, since May of 1944, when Crimean Tatars have come to know the horror of deportation, they have still suffered from their mass deportation from Crimean peninsula, where gave their nationality its identity and where became the reason of their deportation, as well. More than 200.000 Crimean Tatars, half of whom perished during the process of transit and in the early years of exile, have faced the ongoing efforts of both Stalin and post-Stalin's Soviet regime to suppress their national heritage, nationhood, the memory of their homelands. Impressively, however; this exiled micro-nation preserved its national identity, its struggle and dream to return "Green Island". The case of Crimean Tatars, in that sense, forms a successful example of the unification of national identity and political mobilization of even small and fragmented ethnic groups irregardless of the hardy circumstances or brutal sanctions they face.

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