

# The evolution of the Crimean Tatar national identity through deportation and repatriation

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## Introduction

In the recent events of today's politics in the post-Soviet region, we have witnessed re-emerging ethno-national conflicts that have direct connections to the Soviet legacy of displaced nations. For this study the Crimean Tatar case is used as an example of a formerly exiled nation. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Crimean Tatars repatriated to the geopolitically attractive region of the Crimean peninsula, the territory that they have claimed to be their ancestral homeland. Russia has recently incorporated the Crimean Autonomous Republic once again and it only seems that history is repeating itself.<sup>1</sup> New problems re-occur between the Crimean Tatars, the local Russian population and the Russian political hegemony. However, it appears so that the Crimean Tatars will never give up their national territory.

The Crimean Tatar nation is exclusive in its own nature because of its dramatic history. There were two major events in recent history that had changed the Crimean Tatar national identity; these were deportation from their territory in Crimea (1944) and repatriation to Crimea, slightly before and after the Soviet disintegration (1989-1994). The formation of the Soviet Union in the 1920s allowed nations to have political and cultural spheres of influences. In this period the Crimean Tatars strengthened their national consciousness in their territorial autonomy in Crimea. Yet the Second World War was a major turning point for the Crimean Tatars because they were accused of collaborating with the Germans. For several reasons, the Crimean Tatars (along with a few other nations) were deported to Central Asia. The deportation of Crimean Tatars became a threat to their rights to self-determination. Not only did their misplacement cause a threat to their national identity, but more deprivations were imposed on the Crimean Tatars that threatened their right to return to Crimea. Loss in territory and name could have permitted the group in destruction of their ethnos. From their perception, the Soviet state attempted to destroy their nation, but instead achieved opposite results. During their exile, the Crimean Tatars became more aware of their national identity and strengthened the determination to return to their homeland in the Crimean peninsula. It will become more apparent in this thesis that the Crimean Tatars became more self-conscious during a 'nation-destruction' process. Almost instinctively, the nation begins to mobilize and combat the system that is 'destroying' it, in order to preserve

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<sup>1</sup> Russia annexed Crimea in 1783 for the first time.

its right to self-determination. Within these different historical episodes, the Crimean Tatars claim to have learned to become radical, solidary, political and very well organized.<sup>2</sup> After surviving the Soviet pressure not to return to Crimea, the Soviet disintegration gave them the opportunity to repatriate to Crimea. Since then they continue their nation-building process and believe that their future remains in the Crimean peninsula.

The purpose of this thesis, through the case study of the Crimean Tatars, is to exemplify the strengthening of national identity by ethnic groups that have been formerly displaced by the Soviet Union. To what extent has Crimean Tatar national identity been strengthened as a result of deportation by the Soviet Union and repatriation after that? Deportation and repatriation is used to answer the question about the shaping of national identity of the Crimean Tatars. A constructivist approach is taken to explain how the national identity has evolved. Looking at the process of how the Crimean Tatar national identity has developed, helps us understand the current problems that occur between the Crimean Tatars and Russians in Crimea. The findings in this research will clarify why the Crimean Tatars have returned to Crimea and how this experience has formed their national identity.

This thesis begins with the literature review, theoretical framework and research methodology. The second chapter provides an ethnographical description of the Crimean Tatar population in a pre-modern era. It also explores the formation of the Crimean Tatar nation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> until the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The third chapter is about Soviet nation-building and nation-destruction processes of the Crimean Tatar nation. In this chapter the deportation of the Crimean Tatars is introduced. It elaborates on the social, political and cultural effects it had on the Crimean Tatars and what it meant for their national identity. Afterwards, the thesis continues into analyzing the Tatars' reaction against the Soviet authorities in the form of a national movement. The Crimean Tatar national movement and the Soviet disintegration had direct influence on the repatriation of the Crimean Tatars. The last chapters explore the aftermath of the Soviet disintegration, the repatriation process, and adaption of the Crimean Tatars in Crimea. The thesis is finalized with the results, discussion and conclusion.

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<sup>2</sup> Gubogol, M. N. & Chervonnaya, S. M. *Krymskotatarskoye Natsionalnoye Dvizheniye* [The Crimean Tatar National Movement] (TsIMTO, Moscow. 1992), p. 4.

## Chapter I: Research

### Literature review

One of the most discussed topics in literature, among historians like Aleksandr Nekrich and Edward Lazzerini, concerning the Crimean Tatars and their history is the problem of insufficiency of sources and gaps in social, political and economic developments of nationalities in the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup>

Among many other, the most notable experts on the Crimean Tatar history during the formation of the Soviet Union are Dr. Edige Kirimal, Alan Fisher, Hakim Kirimal and Edward Allworth.<sup>4</sup> A Crimean Tatar intelligentsia, Dr. Edige Kirimal wrote about the Crimean Tatars in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to the International Committee for Crimea, Kirimal was one of the first researchers to explore ethnic minorities in the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Edige Kirimal has been mentioned in most historical books on the Crimean Tatars because he was directly involved with the Crimean Tatar national movement in the 1920s and played a role on helping Crimean Tatar refugees during the Second World War.<sup>6</sup> Another notable researcher on the Crimean Tatar history is Alan Fisher. Fisher was one of the first Western scholars to have made an extensive work on the five-hundred years of Crimean Tatar history. He has used Russian, Turkish, Polish and Tatar documents and *samizdat*<sup>7</sup> to support his research. Fisher explored Crimea, trying to

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<sup>3</sup> Nekrich, M. Aleksandr. *The Punished Peoples*. Translated by George Saunders. (New York: Norton & Company, 1978); Alexeyeva, Ludmilla. *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*. (Middletown: Wesleyan University, 1985); Lazzerini, Edward. J. (1998). [Review of the book National Movement and National Identity among the Crimean Tatars (1905-1916). (International Journal of Middle East Studies, 30(1), 161-163. Published by: Cambridge University Press Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/164229>

<sup>4</sup> Kirimal, Edige. *Der nationale Kampf der Krimturken*. (Verlag Lechte, Emsdetten, 1952); Fisher, Alan. *The Crimean Tatars*. (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1978); Allworth, Edward. *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*. Ed. E. A. Allworth. 2nd ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Edige Kirimal was born in Crimea (1911) and he was involved in the Crimean Tatar nationalist activities (most probably during the Soviet occupation in Crimea) but he soon fled the peninsula at the turn of 1920s. He first fled to Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey and by 1939 he left to Berlin. There he attempted to secure rights for the Crimean Tatar refugees to settle in German camps. After the Second World War he pursued his studies in Munich where he wrote his monograph *Der nationale Kampf der Krimturken* (1951) and joined the Institute for Study of the USSR. Source: Bowman, Inci. (n.d.). 'Edige Mustafa Kirimal (1911-1980)'. Retrieved on 20 July, 2014 from the International Committee for Crimea Website: <http://www.iccrimea.org/historical/edigekirimal.html>

<sup>6</sup> Idem.

<sup>7</sup> Samizdat literally means "self-published". It was a dissident activity when censored information or documentation was passed from hand to hand during the Soviet Union.

retrieve the true history of the Crimean Tatars.<sup>8</sup> However, academic specialist in Central Eurasian Studies, Edward Lazzerini considers that particularly Western historians did not have access to the region and (proper) documentation Cold War.<sup>9</sup> He claims that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, scholars have had better opportunities to have access to do fieldwork and research archival documentation in centers such as Memorial and Central State Archives of Crimea (TsGAKr) (located in Simferopol).<sup>10</sup> Hakim Kirimal was one of the first scholars in post-Soviet Union who made an extensive research on the Crimean Tatars beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in his book, *National Movements and National Identity among the Crimean Tatars (1905-1916)*.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Edward Allworth also followed these steps in collecting documents and interviews from the Crimean Tatars and on the formation of their national identity.<sup>12</sup> These researchers contribute in exploring the formation of the Crimean Tatar national identity, before the deportation of Crimean Tatars (1944).

However, since the focus of this thesis is to analyze the national identity of the Crimean Tatars from the deportation by the Soviets until their repatriation to Crimea, the main focus of this research based on recent works. For example, Soviet dissidents and historians Aleksandr Nekrich and Ludmilla Alexeyeva focused more on the situation of displaced nations at the time of the Soviet Union in the 1970s. They argue that before *glasnost*<sup>13</sup>, the Soviet academics did not discuss the nationality experiences under the Soviet regime. Archival materials were not open to the public and literature was censored by the Soviet state.<sup>14</sup>

Only after *glasnost* was implemented, researchers had full access to archives and gained information about exiled nations. Furthermore, the Soviet disintegration gave access to travelling

<sup>8</sup> Alan, Fisher W. *The Tatars of Crimea, Return to the Homeland*. (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> Lazzerini, Edward. J. (1998). [Review of the book National Movement and National Identity among the Crimean Tatars (1905-1916)]. (*International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 30(1), 161-163. Published by: Cambridge University Press Article Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/164229>

<sup>10</sup> Idem.

<sup>11</sup> Kirimli, Hakan. *National Movements and National Identity among the Crimean Tatars (1905-1916)*. (Leiden: Brill. 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Allworth, Edward. (1998), pp. 1-27.

<sup>13</sup> Introduced by Mikhail Gorbachev, Glasnost was a policy that introduced transparency of governmental activities to the society in the Soviet Union.

<sup>14</sup> Nekrich, M. Aleksandr. *The Punished Peoples*. Translated by George Saunders. (New York: Norton & Company, 1978); Alexeyeva, Ludmilla. *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*. (Middletown: Wesleyan University, 1985).

and archival documentation, which brought more possibilities for the Crimean Tatars to discover their past.<sup>15</sup> The new material became an eye-opener for understanding the numerous misconceptions of Soviet history. So far, researchers attempted to revive the history of the Crimean.<sup>16</sup>

Yet recent studies focus more on the repatriation process of the Crimean Tatars and their adaptation in Crimea. For instance, Gubolgo & Chernovannaya have researched the Crimean Tatar national movement in the second half of the Soviet Union, due to the availability of new data that helped determine the position of displaced nationalities in the new ethno-political arena.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, multiple reports have been made by various NGOs and organizations, such as the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), Minority Rights Group and the Organization for Security and Cooperation Organization (OSCE). An example of research that is closely related to this study is from Greta Uehling, Yulia Biletska and Zaloznaya & Gerber analyze how ‘memory’ can be used to consolidate a national movement and to preserve a national identity under an oppressive regime.<sup>18</sup>

Different methods have been used when studying the repatriation and adaption processes. The research on these recent events is based on data collection from fieldworks. For example, Russian researchers from the Russian Institute of Oriental studies, Kul’pin and Vyatkin, have conducted an extensive field work in Crimea in 1992-1996, investigating the Crimean Tatars’

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<sup>15</sup> *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*. Ed. E. A. Allworth. 2nd ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Idem; Lazzarini, J. Edward. Ismail Bey Gaspirinskii (Gaspirali): ‘The Discourse of Modernism and the Russians’. In *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*. Ed. E. A. Allworth. 2nd ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998); Williams, Brian G. (1997). ‘A community reimagined. The role of “homeland” in the forging of national identity: the case study of the Crimean Tatars’. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 17:2; Kirimal, Edige. *Der nationale Kampf der Krimturken*. (Verlag Lechte, Emsdetten, 1952); Kirimli, Hakan. *National Movements and National Identity among the Crimean Tatars (1905-1916)*. (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Fisher, Alan. *The Crimean Tatars*. (Stanford: Hoover Institution, 1978).

<sup>17</sup> Gubogol, M. N. & Chervonnaya, S. M. (1992).

<sup>18</sup> Uehling, Greta. ‘Social Memory as Collective Action: The Crimean Tatar National Movement’. In *Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture, Power and the Transnational Public Sphere*. edited by John A. Guidry, Michael D. Kennedy and Mayer N. Zald. (University of Michigan Press, USA, 2000); Biletska, Yulia. (n.d.). ‘Politics of Memory in the process of shaping ethnic identity of Crimean Tatars, Russians and Ukrainians in Crimea’; Zaloznaya Marina & Gerber P. Theodore (June 2012). ‘Migration as a Social Movement: Voluntary Group Migration and the Crimean Tatar Repatriation’. *Population and Development Review* 38:2, 259–284.

problem to repatriate.<sup>19</sup> The research was conducted with cross-disciplinary studies of humanities and natural science called ‘Social Natural History’ (SNH).<sup>20</sup> Greta Uehling, Ismail Aydinguñ and Ays,eguñ Aydinguñ have also done extensive fieldworks by conducting interviews with Crimean Tatars.<sup>21</sup> Here, the researchers focused on understanding the Crimean Tatar cultural identity and their relationships with other ethnicities.<sup>22</sup> The accessibility of sources and new methods of research allow researchers to find the missing gaps in the history of the Crimean Tatar national identity.

However, the literature so far has failed to look extensively into the effect that the processes of deportation and repatriation themselves have on national identity. However, with the available sources and fieldworks made on subjects related to this study, it is therefore possible to measure whether deportation and repatriation have strengthened Crimean Tatar national identity.

## Theoretical framework

This chapter aims at conceptualizing terms that describe how the Crimean Tatars (as a collective of individuals) are identified throughout historical events. The Crimean Tatars are identified either as an ethnic group or a nation, depending on the circumstances (e.g. deportation and repatriation) that affected their national identity. This framework uses the constructivist approach to analyze how the Crimean Tatars national identity has evolved through the deportation and repatriation processes.

The terms conceptualized here are ethnic group and nation. Professor E. Kul’pin from Institute of Oriental Studies describes *ethnic group* (based on SNH methodology) as a community, comprised of individuals that have common values and a *weltanschauung* that has formed since their ancestors.<sup>23</sup> He explains that this community has evolved through stability and time and that

<sup>19</sup> *Krymskie Tatary: problem repatriatsii.* [Crimean Tatars: Problems of Repatriation] Ed. A. Vjakin and E. Kulpin. (Moskva: Institut vostokovedenija RAN [Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies RAN], 1997), p. 5

<sup>20</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>21</sup> Aydinguñ, Ismail & Aydinguñ, Ays,eguñ (2007). ‘Crimean Tatars Return Home: Identity and Cultural Revival’. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 113-128; Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2001). ‘The Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan: speaking with the dead and living homeland.’ *Central Asian Survey*, 20:3, pp. 391-404; Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2001). ‘The Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan: speaking with the dead and living homeland.’ *Central Asian Survey*, 20:3, pp. 391-404.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>23</sup> E. S. Kul’pin. (1997), p. 38.

it is conscious about its territory. An individual of an ethnic group knows its association with the group. Instinctively, the ethnic community wants to achieve safety, harmony and integrity, and fulfill individual self-consciousness in a system that has already created values.<sup>24</sup> An ethnic group is also a closed system, in which individuals can identify their own characteristics, which will be different from other ethnic groups (e.g. language, culture).<sup>25</sup>

Unlike the term *ethnic group*, Robert Kaiser, a geographer, defines *nation* as a group that adds a deeper value to the ancestry, territory and common future goals.<sup>26</sup> Also, Ismail and Ays,egu'l Aydingu'n suggest that once an ethnic group achieves a strong national consciousness, then it can be considered a nation, even if it is missing its territory or state.<sup>27</sup> However there are differences in opinions among scholars about the importance of territory when differentiating nation from ethnic group. For instance, Suny and Martin argue that in discourse about *nation* it is about territorial control and sovereignty. The Crimean Tatars have identified themselves (and institutionalized themselves through Soviet nationality policy) as a nation and with Crimea as their territory, since the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Even so, before the Russian revolution (1917), the 'less developed' ethnic heterogeneous clans and tribes would not identify themselves with a nation, but rather with the territory they considered to be their homeland.<sup>28</sup> Yet it was the intelligentsia that began composing its nation.<sup>29</sup> Right after the Russian revolution, the Bolsheviks had formulated national self-consciousness of non-Russian ethnic groups to gain their support in building a socialist state. The Soviet policies of indigenization actually forced social mobilization and enhanced nationalization of ethnic groups among non-Russians.<sup>30</sup> According to Kaiser, indigenization (*korenizatsiia*)<sup>31</sup> increased

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<sup>24</sup> Idem.

<sup>25</sup> E. S. Kul'pin. (1997), p. 39.

<sup>26</sup> Kaiser, Robert J. *Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR*. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> Ismail Aydingu'n and Ays,egu'l Aydingu'n. (2007), p. 116.

<sup>28</sup> Idem, p. 135.

<sup>29</sup> This is often the opinion from school of thought of constructivists (e.g. Ernest Geller and Benedict Anderson) that nations are not real or objective but constructed by elites. Walicki, Andrzej. (1998). 'Ernest Gellner and the "Constructivist" Theory of Nation'. *Cultures and Nations of Central and Eastern Europe*. Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute. Vol. 22, pp. 611-619.

<sup>30</sup> Idem.

the “sense of exclusiveness in the homeland” of the ethnic groups by gaining national territorial autonomy.<sup>32</sup> Kaiser explains that ‘territory’ became an essential asset to the nationalization process.<sup>33</sup> In pursuit of this development, the Crimean Tatars’ self-consciousness about national-territory remained acute until this day. However, not only did the Soviets promote the significance of their territory, but they also institutionalized the social and cultural forms of the ethnic nationalities and put them in a social category according to ethnic nationality.<sup>34</sup>

Another way of defining nation is with a constructivist approach. Benedict Anderson’s definition of nation is “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign”.<sup>35</sup> He argues that a population imagines its members and the scope of community and that it is constructed. The reason, Anderson claims, is that members will never know everyone in their community. Yet they imagine their connection. A nation seeks sovereignty to pursue freedom from other nations.<sup>36</sup> Sovereign nations always give “political expression about the immemorial past, limitless future and even eternity”.<sup>37</sup>

However, sociologist Roger Brubaker considers that the latter definitions of nation are more of a developmental occurrence.<sup>38</sup> He believes that a nation cannot be described as an entity, but as a “contingent event”.<sup>39</sup> Brubaker argues that, first of all, nationalism flourishes at the height of political events, political changes or external influences. Therefore it is not initially instigated by nations (on their own) (e.g. changes in Soviet policies).<sup>40</sup> In other words, external forces instigate nationalism and nationalism is then induced by the nation. Secondly, when the feeling of nationalism occurs, the nation begins to express its will for independence and autonomy.

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<sup>31</sup> Indigenization or *korenizatsiia* was a Soviet nationalities policy that was introduced in the early Soviet Union for non-Russians to represent the interests of their peoples in the Communist Party and in the People’s Commissariat of Nationalities. Hosking, Geoffrey. *Russia and the Russians*. (London: Penguin Group, 2012), p. 428.

<sup>32</sup> Idem, p. 125.

<sup>33</sup> Idem.

<sup>34</sup> Brubaker, Roger. ‘Rethinking Nationhood: Nation as Institutionalized Form, Practical Category, Contingent Event.’ (*Contention*, 4.1, 1994), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (2nd ed. London: Verso, 1991). p. 6-7.

<sup>36</sup> Idem, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> Anderson, Benedict. (1991), p. 11.

<sup>38</sup> Brubaker, Roger, (1994), p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Idem.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, pp. 8-10.

Brubaker also considers that “nationhood” is “institutionalized” in a cultural and political form (as ethnic nationalities were in the Soviet Union) and that “nationness” is an unforeseen event.<sup>41</sup> In Brubaker’s point of view, it is the external factors that instigate the formation of a nation and not internal (elites).<sup>42</sup> He takes the constructivist idea of nation but adds a different perspective to it, instead of analyzing “what is nation?” he questions “how is nation institutionalized within and among states?”<sup>43</sup>

The Crimean Tatars’ case complies with the assertion that nations are constructed by intellectuals and external forces (Soviet policy). However, since their identity was constantly fluctuating throughout different historical episodes, Brubaker’s theory on nation as a “contingent event” applies to the Crimean Tatar case that this nation is not just a constructed, developing entity but an ‘occurrence’ within the investigated time frame (1944-1994). The independent variables, deportation and repatriation take place in between this time frame. These variables are occurrences that have an effect on the dependent variable, the Crimean Tatar national identity.<sup>44</sup> These occurrences are researched because a nation that has lost its status quo and maintained the feeling of nationhood must have certain factors that keep a nation together. Brubaker’s constructivist approach is used to explain how this nation changed in the given time frame. The practical part of this research measures whether deportation and repatriation strengthened the Crimean Tatar national identity.

## Research methodology

In this thesis, an inductive theory is used as a method in an exploratory research, in order to find out patterns and causal paths between the studied variables. To answer the research question, the relationships between the variables are further explored. The ‘deportation’ and ‘repatriation’ are independent variables and the dependent variable is ‘national identity’ (see Table 1 on the next page). The outcomes are gathered from qualitative data sources (policies, memoirs, letters, reports and samizdat documents). The exploratory factors are based on a timeline that begins

<sup>41</sup> Idem.

<sup>42</sup> Idem, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Idem, p. 6.

<sup>44</sup> What is meant here by national identity is that ‘identities’ are socially and politically constructed. In other words, ‘identity’ fits in a social category, membership, characteristics and national consciousness. Source: Fearon, James, D. and Laitin David, D. (2000). ‘Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity’. *(International Organization*, Vol. 54, issue 04, pp 845-877.), p. 847.

with the deportation of the Crimean Tatars from 1944 until 1994 (repatriation process). This study also provides a historical overview of the Crimean Tatars' development of ethnic and national identity from the time before the deportation. However, some periods of history have a larger emphasis than others, to maintain a closer relevance to the issue. Similarly, the exploration goes beyond the repatriation process, into the situation today. Another contribution of this thesis is to make use of new materials to decipher how the national identity has been shaped by deportation and repatriation. Also, the constructivist approach is used to see if it still applies to the national identity today.

## Operationalization

IV Deportation and repatriation > exploring > DV Crimean Tatar national identity

**Dependent variable (DV):** national identity

**Independent variable (IV):** 1) deportation and 2) repatriation

Table 1

Concepts	Indicators	Data source
-Crimean Tatar national identity	-Territory -Ancestry -Cultural traits -Values -National consciousness -Social and political position (before deportation) -Future goals	-Memoirs -Reports
-Deportation	-Ethnic composition -Resettlement -Territorial deprivation -Population transfer -Soviet authorities' position	-Samizdat -Soviet policies -Memoirs -Reports
-Repatriation	-Migration -Resettlement	-Reports -Interviews

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Place of origin</li> <li>-Repatriation laws</li> <li>-National movement</li> <li>-Competence of repatriation</li> <li>-Tension of interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Letters</li> <li>-Documents</li> </ul>
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To analyze these variables, it is necessary to explore them by using data sources. The Crimean Tatar national identity is analyzed mainly from human rights reports, memoirs, letters, Soviet policies, reports and secondary sources on Crimean Tatar history.

### **Hypotheses:**

**H1:** Deportation of the Crimean Tatars strengthened their national identity.

**H2:** Repatriation strengthened Crimean Tatar national identity.

**Research question:** To what extent deportation and repatriation strengthened Crimean Tatar national identity?

### **Causal paths:**

The deportation had caused the Crimean Tatar national identity to dissolve and the community to disperse across the Soviet Union. The nation became disintegrated and caused a national movement from Crimean Tatar supporters of the movement and activists. While being stateless and without national territory, the national movement maintained national consciousness among the Crimean Tatars. During the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the national movement activists induced the Crimean Tatars to repatriate to Crimea. The outcomes of this research measures to what extent the deportation and repatriation have influenced the national identity of the Crimean Tatars, and it will provide a better understanding of how the Crimean Tatars represent their national identity today.

### **Possible validity threats**

In this qualitative research, there are several threats to validity. The validity threats come from data sources that are possibly biased. Primary data such as memoirs, letters and interviews

describe the events from one perspective; the Crimean Tatars' and those who supported them. Secondary sources that have been written during the Soviet Union are (to a certain extent) outdated, because researchers back then did not have much access to documents and archives and Western researchers that did not have access to the region. In addition, it is still difficult for researchers to analyze this timeline because the Soviet authorities did not consider the Crimean Tatars as a distinctive, ethnic group. This is why a large amount of data is missing. For instance, the population measurement of the Crimean Tatars does not exist as a separate ethnic group in the second half of the Soviet Union, since they were calculated as part of the local population.

## Chapter II: The traditional identity of the Crimean Tatars

This chapter traces the establishment of the Crimean Tatars as an ethnic group and the relations with Tsarist Russia before the Soviet Union. It also provides context for Crimean Tatar national identity formation. Additionally, it becomes clear how external forces (political hegemony) have influenced the modernization (social and political aspects) of the Crimean Tatar population before the civil war.

### Ethnic heterogeneity in Crimea

The ethnic composition in Crimea began developing between the 6th and 17th century. The Crimean Tatars claim to be one of the first settlers. The ethnic composition in Crimea derived from the geographic form of the Crimean peninsula. Most importantly, the Crimean ecosystem (the coast, steppe and the mountains) has contributed to attracting different peoples from different sides of the regions. The coastal area was an attraction for many European travelers and fishermen that had crossed the Black Sea and settled in the south of Crimea (Greeks, Goths, Adyghe, Armenians, Genoese, Italians, Alans and Venetians).<sup>45</sup> The northern steppe (two-thirds of the Crimean territory) was a get-away for tribes and nomads. The nomads that migrated from the east to the steppe were Khazars, Mongols, Kipchaks, Huns, Schythians, Pechenegs and Sarmatians.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the mountains were a place to hide if the steppe was too dangerous for the nomads. Yet how the Crimean Tatars have evolved into ethnic groups is still debatable. The problem lies in the fact that, according to European and Asian documentation, the ethnic composition of the Crimean Tatars has been discovered only since the formation of a state in Crimea in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, it is still undisclosed who were the primary indigenous population of Crimea, although historians agree that the presence of Tatars existed long before the establishment of the Crimean Khanate.<sup>48</sup>

Consequently, these three main geographical regions created ‘territorial economic zones’.<sup>49</sup> The ethnic tribes were divided along these zones. Greta Lynn Uehling, a post-doctoral Fellow in Ethnopolitical Conflict Studies, adds that even today, the Crimean Tatars can identify from

<sup>45</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002).

<sup>46</sup> Idem.

<sup>47</sup> Idem.

<sup>48</sup> Kirimli, Hakan (1996); Fisher, Alan (1978); Uehling, Greta Lynn (2002).

<sup>49</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002).

which parts of the region they descended in accordance with these zones.<sup>50</sup> The ethnic groups that lived in the mountainous region were called *Tats*; they were growing tobacco or herding sheep. Those living at the coast were called *Yaliboyus*. They produced wine and handled fishery. The descendants from the nomads in the steppe were called *Nogais*. They were preoccupied with agriculture in the northern part of Crimea near the coastal area.<sup>51</sup> From this we can deduct that the Crimean physical geography had divided the different groups, but also connected the diverse peoples from European and Asian lands to one place, the Crimean peninsula. At this point, they had no single ethno-national identity, but their identity was deeply intertwined with the land they lived on. Moreover, this ethnic compilation did not perceive the whole Crimean peninsula as a 'fatherland' country; instead their *patrie* was either a village or a clan.<sup>52</sup> In other words, their connection with the land was the center of their communal life. However, this identification of the Crimean Tatars was not always portrayed this way. Williams claims that the Soviet historiography has portrayed the earliest historical background of the Crimean Tatars as descendants from Mongolian tribes. Even though as mentioned above, the ethnic group is composed of all kinds of sub-ethnic groups.<sup>53</sup>

Indeed, the Crimean Tatars have some Mongolian descendants. Yet the Mongolians were the last sub-ethnic group that migrated to Crimea. The Mongolians came to Crimea in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century from the Golden Horde and integrated with the local population. In the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Golden Horde disintegrated and established a Crimean Khanate, under a Girey dynasty, that settled to rule the Crimean peninsula, with its center in Bakhchisaray.<sup>54</sup> The Turkic, Sunni Muslim population in Crimea was spread into clans under the ruling of the Crimean Khanate. However, each clan had representatives and Islamic leaders (imams and mullahs) that controlled different regions.<sup>55</sup> According to Uehling, the Crimean Khanate system was quite unique, because its ruling was not autocratic. The system was based on a combination of

<sup>50</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002).

<sup>51</sup> Williams, Brian Glyn. (1998). 'The Crimean Tatar exile in Central Asia: A case study in group destruction and survival.' p. 287.

<sup>52</sup> Idem.

<sup>53</sup> Idem.

<sup>54</sup> Sheehy, Ann & Nahaylo, Bohdan. The Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans and Meshkhetians. Report No. 6. Third Edition. (Report: Minority Rights Group, 1982), p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Williams, Brian Glyn. (1997), p. 226.

Ottoman law, Islamic law and Tatar law.<sup>56</sup> Religion and territory were unifying factors of the population living in the Crimean peninsula.<sup>57</sup>

The Crimean Tatars began with the first steps of the nation-building process when the Russian Empire annexed the Crimean peninsula in 1783.<sup>58</sup> That is to say, there was no other unifying identity among the ethnic groups before the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Another signifying identity was territory; the population in Crimea identified themselves with a specific location. Another factor that brings significance to their territory is the Crimean geographical location and the Islamic ruling in the peninsula. Crimea was very important to the Muslim world, as it came to be known as a *dar al-Islam* ‘the Adobe of Islam’, which means that it is a geographical territory where Muslims are free to practice their religion.<sup>59</sup> Geopolitically, it was also a valuable place for the Ottoman Empire, because Crimea was the most north-western land where Islam was worshipped and therefore a borderland to the Islamic world.<sup>60</sup> Later in this chapter, it will become clearer that this territorial significance added value to the Crimean Tatar national identity.

### Russian annexation of the Crimean peninsula (*Dar al-harb*)<sup>61</sup>

In 1783, the Russian Empire dissolved the Crimean Khanate rule and annexed the Crimean peninsula. Thus began a stagnation period of a hundred years for the Muslim Turkic population. This lasted until the Crimean Tatars finally began evolving into an ethnic polity. At the time of the colonial period, the Russian population conflicted with the daily lives of the Crimean Tatars. Problems arose, because the Russian settlers were Christian orthodox and they did not understand the Muslim ways of life. To emphasize, the Russian settlers were interfering with the Tatars’ “Islamic mode of existence”.<sup>62</sup> Ultimately, the Russian settlers and the Crimean Tatars became more aware that they were completely different from each other, especially because of dissimilarities in physical characteristics and social activities (e.g. religion and traditions).<sup>63</sup> As a matter of fact, Catherine’s policy towards Islam was relatively liberal and it allowed Tatar

<sup>56</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002). ‘The Crimean Tatars’.

<sup>57</sup> Williams, Brian Glyn. (1997), p. 226.

<sup>58</sup> Idem, p. 226.

<sup>59</sup> Jain, Parul. "Dar al-Islam." Encyclopedia Britannica. (n.d). Encyclopedia Britannica. Web. 2 June 2014. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1545037/Dar-al-Islam>.

<sup>60</sup> Williams, Brian Glyn. (1997), p. 226.

<sup>61</sup> “Dar al-harb” – a place where Islam is not worshipped. Source: Williams, Bryan Glyn. (1997), p. 226.

<sup>62</sup> Williams, Brian. (1997), p. 227.

<sup>63</sup> Idem, p. 227.

nobility to even have some privileges, which were no different from the Russian aristocracy.<sup>64</sup> Although this might be true, there were witness accounts from foreign and Russian travelers who had seen bad behavior towards the Crimean Tatars. To demonstrate this, Evgenii Markov, a Russian liberal critic and novelist, during his expedition to Crimea, wrote his observation on the Russian relation towards the Tatars in his book “Essays on Crimea” (1884) (see original in endnotes):

*Enchanted by Crimea, I wanted to know, how my countryman behaves toward a Tatar; but he immediately discouraged me ... “Very bad!” He said. “Living in the midst of a stranger... It annoys him that we take the first place; he needs to be slaughtered on our accounts; because he’s nasty, he cannot be replaced by a Russian”. During the war in Sevastopol, a coachman said about the treason of the Tatars, as if they were an object, without a slightest doubt; in this case, he shared the sad confusion of public opinion of the whole of Russia. However, this view on Tatars is necessary for complete understanding of Russian peasant relations to non-Christian.*<sup>65</sup>

This is the most compelling evidence, based on Markov’s observations, of the negative behavior from Russian settlers towards the Tatars in Crimea. Similar relations existed in Western colonies, whereas Christian empires ruled and attempted to regulate the Muslim lands. For example, when British took over Malaysia, or when Austria took over Bosnia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>66</sup> With this in mind, the colonial period in Crimea had caused the Tatars to migrate to the Ottoman Empire in large quantities, notably to seek refuge and obtain the freedom of religion in the Islamic lands. The Crimean Tatars had kept good relations with the Ottoman Empire. For this reason, the Ottomans were willing to offer refuge. Already in 1792, approximately 60,000 Tatars migrated to the Ottoman Empire<sup>67</sup>. The highest migration rate, however, took place after the Crimean War in 1853-56.<sup>68</sup> According to Uehling’s findings, over 200,000 more Crimean Tatars fled Crimea.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002)

<sup>65</sup> Translated by Julia Ilyina.

Quote taken from Evgenii Lvovich Markov. *Ocherki Kryma*. 1872.

“Очарованный Крымом, я хотел узнать, так ли, как я, относится к нему (татар) мой земляк; но он меня сразу обескуражил... -- Скверно! -- говорил он. -- Посреди чужого человека живешь... Ему досадно, что мы у его первое место заступаем, ему при нас околевать приходится; потому что он пакость, его сменить с русским нельзя. Об измене татар во время севастопольской войны ямщик говорил, как о вещи, не подверженной ни малейшему сомнению; в этом случае он разделял печальное заблуждение общественного мнения целой России. Впрочем, такой взгляд на татарина необходим для полноты отношений русского мужика к нехристу”.

<sup>66</sup> Williams, Brian. (1997), p. 228.

<sup>67</sup> Idem, p. 228.

<sup>68</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002).

<sup>69</sup> Idem.

But in addition, there were many fatalities among these migrations because of the harsh conditions that came with fleeing over the Black Sea to Turkey.

Problems occurred mostly because the Russian settlers did not trust the Crimean Tatars due to their close connections with the Turks, especially during the Russian-Turkish War (1806-1812) and the Crimean War. To prevent communication between the Turks and the Tatars during the wars, the Tatars were forced to migrate from the coast to the northern parts of Crimea.<sup>70</sup> Williams argues that the Russian military was even proposing to expel the whole Crimean Tatar community to Siberia.<sup>71</sup> Conversely, Sheeny and Nahylo state that the plan was to send the Crimean Tatars to the Semipalatinsk province (Kazakhstan).<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, this was the first proposal to exile the entire Crimean Tatar population by a political hegemon for geopolitical reasons. As a result of large migrations and fatalities, the Crimean Tatar population became just one-third of the population. Before the conquest of the Russian Empire in 1783 the Crimean population was between 3.5 and 7 million<sup>73</sup> (Russians and Ukrainians made 45% of the total population in Crimea).<sup>74</sup> It is also important to realize that the strong believers were most likely to migrate to the holy lands of Islam in Turkey. Due to the annexation, Crimea became *dar al-harb*, a place where Islam is not worshipped.<sup>75</sup>

For those who were left behind in the Crimean peninsula, the living situation was severe. In his book, Hakan Kirimli explains that the established local (Tsarist) administration had almost completely excluded the indigenous population: “the newly organized Tavrida *oblast* included lands which had little or no ethnic, religious, and economic ties with Crimea or the Tatars. This would ensure the loss of Crimean identity, as the latter would become gradually diluted within a large and much more complex administrative body.”<sup>76</sup> As a result, the annexation of Crimea was a large threat to the cohesion of the Tatars in the region. The large migrations, multiple wars and

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<sup>70</sup> Williams, Brian. (1997), p. 229.

<sup>71</sup> Idem.

<sup>72</sup> Sheehy, Ann & Nahylo, Bohdan. ‘The Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans and Meshkhetians’. Report No.

6. Third Edition. *Report: Minority Rights Group*. 1982, p. 7.

<sup>73</sup> Williams, Brian Glyn. (2001), p. 68.

<sup>74</sup> Idem, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, Brian Glyn. (1997), p. 228.

<sup>76</sup> Kirimli, Hakan, (1996), p. 3.

political hegemony of Tsarist Russia prevented any sort of unification of the Crimean Tatar society.

## National awakening

After a hundred years of oppression from Tsarist rule, the Crimean Tatars gradually began forming a national identity. At the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a “national awakening” took over the Muslim population in Crimea, the Russian Empire and beyond<sup>77</sup>. In her article, Uehling argues that the Russian Empire had then created more liberal conditions for the Crimean Tatars that gave space for the intelligentsia to grow.<sup>78</sup> Hence in 1905, the Crimean Tatar national groups were forming to demand social, political and cultural rights.<sup>79</sup> In addition, the Crimean Tatars understood the definition of ‘fatherland’ (*vatan*).<sup>80</sup> They began to see themselves as a polity with a territory which they claimed to be theirs, because their ancestors had lived on this land.<sup>81</sup> At this point, national consciousness was emerging among the Crimean Tatars through reforms and revolutionary ideas.<sup>82</sup>

### *Ismail Bey Gaspirali*

One of the key contributors of national awakening among the Islamic ethnicities was Ismail Bey Gaspirali. A notable Crimean Tatar intellectual, Gaspirali re-evaluated the Islamic society under the Russian Empire and embraced modernism among his people. In other words, Gaspirali had found a way to change the fate of the so-called “backward Muslim population” by having led a modernist movement for the Islamic society.<sup>83</sup> Ismail Bey Gaspirali (1851-1914), was a reformer who activated the nation-building process of the Tatars. Gaspirali introduced reforms to the Turkic nation after realizing how backwards the Muslim life came to be under the hegemony of Tsarist Russia.<sup>84</sup> He worked as a journalist in Paris, travelled to Egypt, the Ottoman Empire and Muslim India. During his travels he studied these places and made comparisons between the

<sup>77</sup> Idem, p. 32.

<sup>78</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002).

<sup>79</sup> Kirimli, Hakan. (1996), p. 3.

<sup>80</sup> In Turkic it is *vatan*: Kirimli, Hakan, (1996), p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> Williams, Brian G., 1998, p. 232.

<sup>82</sup> Idem, p. x.

<sup>83</sup> Lazzerini, J. Edward. *Ismail Bey Gasprinskii (Gaspirali): The Discourse of Modernism and the Russians in The Tatars of Crimea, Return to the Homeland*. Ed. E. A. Allworth.2nd ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 49.

<sup>84</sup> Alan, Fisher W. (1978), p. 50.

Islamic and Western societies. Henceforth, he discovered that European education and modernism should apply to the Muslim community in the Russian Empire.<sup>85</sup> In other words, he promoted a different kind of education to the Muslim society with a European influence. It is important to note, that Gaspirali's vision to modernize the Islamic world inspired the Crimean Tatar intellectuals and reformers.

### *Political community*

By 1917, the Crimean Tatars organized into a political community in Crimea, with a congress - *Kurultay* and a political party - *Milli Firkə*. For the first time, the Crimean Tatars established a national autonomy and a secular state in December 1917. A constitution was drawn based on nationalism, liberalism and on Western-based democracy.<sup>86</sup> If his creation of a unified nation did not happen, the Crimean Tatar community would be completely disintegrated because of such large migrations during the Russian annexation. At this point, the Crimean Tatar community understood the concept of nation and identified their characteristics as being part of a nation (religion, land, language, rituals, etc.) and gained national consciousness.<sup>87</sup> Yet the Crimean Tatar 'official state' only lasted for a short time, until the Bolsheviks overthrew Sevastopol in December 1918. The civil war had caused a power struggle among the Crimean Tatars and the Bolsheviks. Then, shortly after, the German forces overtook Crimea in April 1919, which lasted until November 1919 when the Red Army took over Crimea.<sup>88</sup> The Crimean Tatars were split between the Red and the White armies. While Kurultay's left wing fought on the Bolshevik side, the right wing escaped to Turkey. In October 1920, the Bolsheviks finally defeated their enemies. This brought a brief halt to the nation-building process of the Crimean Tatars.<sup>89</sup>

In 1920, the Crimean peninsula came under Soviet power. In due time, Moscow sent Chekha<sup>90</sup> and the notorious Hungarian Communist leader, Bela Khun to Crimea. Ultimately, Bela Khun led the region into a bloody rule, fighting against nationalists, bourgeois and those who

<sup>85</sup> Allworth, Edward A., (1998), p. 50.

<sup>86</sup> Williams, Brian G., (2001), p. 338.

<sup>87</sup> Kaiser, Robert (1994), p. 6.

<sup>88</sup> Idem, p. 344.

<sup>89</sup> Idem, p. 345.

<sup>90</sup> Chekha was the secret police, a government apparatus that consolidated Soviet power, its predecessors are NKVD and KGB.

previously fought with the opponent of the Red Army, which was the White Army.<sup>91</sup> As a result, the population decreased to a large extent, as overall 120 000 people were killed. By 1923, the Crimean Tatars formed 25% (150,000) of the Crimean population. The total of Ukrainians and Russians formed 50% of the population (the rest of the population belonged to smaller ethnic groups).<sup>92</sup> Under those circumstances, the Crimean Tatar culture also suffered critically because two-thirds of the Crimean Tatar intelligentsia was killed. In total, the Bolsheviks executed approximately 60,000 Crimean Tatars<sup>93</sup>. Furthermore, there was a famine that killed many more. Contemporary sources estimate, that from 110,000 people in Crimea who died from famine, about 60% of those were Tatars<sup>94</sup>. In addition, the cause of the famine was because there was famine in other parts of the Soviet Union. The Soviets sent foods and supplies from Crimea to those regions. In the meantime, an additional 50,000 of the Tatars migrated to Romania and Turkey.<sup>95</sup>

The Milli Firka party was then outlawed and became known as the “counter-revolutionary” party. Additionally, the local Bolshevik governmental body refused to work with Tatar nationalist leaders and resistance continued among the Crimean Tatars.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the turnout of this dispute was resolved by a Crimean Tatar communist, Veli Ibrahimov who was soon to be chosen as the representative of the Crimean Tatars. Ibrahimov suggested to the Kremlin that Crimean national autonomy should be established<sup>97</sup>. Even though the Bolsheviks did not favor this decision, in 1921 (October 18<sup>th</sup>), the Council of People’s Commissars proclaimed the establishment of the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Crimean ASSR).<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Kirimal, Edige, (1952), p. 286.

<sup>92</sup> Idem, p. 350.

<sup>93</sup> Williams, Brian G., (2001), p. 350.

<sup>94</sup> Fisher, Alan, 1978, p. 137.

<sup>95</sup> Williams, Brian, G., (2001), p. 150.

<sup>96</sup> Williams, Brian, G., (2001), p. 350.

<sup>97</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002).

<sup>98</sup> Kirimal, Edige. (1952), p. 287.

## Chapter III: Soviet nation-building and -destruction paradigms

The aim of this chapter is to trace the changes in Soviet nationality policy, from nation-building to nation-destruction. It will also look into the impact these policies had on the Crimean Tatar national identity that was already constructed prior to the Russian revolution. The changing powers of the political hegemonies (Tsarist to Soviet power) did not completely prevent the Tatars from nation-building. Despite of the fact that there were massive repressions against the clergy and the Tatar intellectuals caused by the Bolsheviks (during the invasion of the Crimean peninsula), the Tatars managed to upgrade their national status during the indigenization policy (*korenizatsiia*) in the 1920s. The Bolsheviks had recognized this small nation's identity and helped restore their vitality.

### Sovietization of the Crimean Peninsula

In the newly established Crimean ASSR, the Bolsheviks began developing a Soviet institutional base in Crimea. The nation-building decade of the 1920s was seen as the *Golden Age* by the Crimean Tatars. The reason it is called the Golden Age is because this period allowed the Crimean Tatars to expand their culture and have some political influence over the Crimean peninsula through the Soviet indigenization policy, *korenizatsiia*. Because the political community was secular before, it was easier for the Tatars to become accustomed to the Soviet policies. The Soviets also strengthened the Tatars' language, non-religious traditions, history, etc...<sup>99</sup> Additionally, the Tatar reformers from the Tsarist era believed that the Crimean Tatars needed modernization. In this state of mind, the reformers agreed to apply Soviet policies that would modernize the lives of Tatars.<sup>100</sup>

At the Tenth Party Congress in 1921, a New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced in the Soviet Union to rise again from the total breakdown from the civil war, to reintroduce a measure of stability in the economy.<sup>101</sup> At the same congress the Soviet authorities began developing a new nationality policy, to create national or regional territorial autonomy and eliminate the backwardness of ethnic groups. The Bolsheviks had a big challenge in this process. How to attract nationalities to join the Soviet regime? Also, how to avoid the impression that the Soviet

<sup>99</sup> Williams, Brian, G., (1998), p. 234.

<sup>100</sup> Idem.

<sup>101</sup> Smith, Jeremy, p. 55.

regime was yet another Russian-oriented oppressive government? They needed to persuade the non-Russians that they would represent their interests. Therefore, the Soviet leaders actually promoted nation-building of the nationals within the next two decades.<sup>102</sup> The Crimean Tatars were in fact recognized as the *korennoi narod*, the indigenous population of Crimea.

The proclamation of 1917 “Muslims of Russia and the Orient”, states that the Soviets would restructure Tsarist repressive measures. This concerned Muslims’ national, cultural and religious life.<sup>103</sup> Earlier, the White Guards attempted to suppress national leaders from gaining national autonomy. But the Bolsheviks used this opportunity to counter-weigh them. They promised them autonomy in national, cultural, religious and political areas. This was a method used to attract the non-Russians<sup>104</sup>. This gave them the opportunity to unify and create a national consciousness. For instance, the rising literacy rate allowed the Tatars to read about their national history and gain pride about their nation. The orientalists also helped the Tatars to revive their history. And most importantly, the Soviet state gave the Crimean Tatars the sense of territorial attachment by gaining regional autonomy.<sup>105</sup>

The main advantage for national groups would be to obtain a status of Autonomous Republic within the Soviet state. Smaller nations would obtain the status of a regional autonomy. In Allworth’s studies and documents on the Crimean Tatars, he argues that Crimea could have obtained a Union status. Regarding the qualifications for union republic, it is a border land and the population reached the required amount (one million).<sup>106</sup> The Crimean Tatars were hoping to represent Crimea and have it as Union Republic. But, according to Allworth, they were not the majority population.<sup>107</sup> Therefore the Crimean Tatars would not represent the Union anyway, if it was established. Nevertheless, they were claiming Crimea to be their national homeland-republic, a Crimean Tatar ASSR.<sup>108</sup> The Crimean Tatars went on claiming, “Those who say that the Crimean ASSR was territorial and not national forget that autonomy did not occur without

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<sup>102</sup> Although, the 1930s were moving towards a Russification policy, source: Williams, Brian. (2001), p. 334.

<sup>103</sup> Fisher, Alan, 1978, p.130.

<sup>104</sup> Idem.

<sup>105</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002).

<sup>106</sup> Allworth, Edward. (1998), p. 11.

<sup>107</sup> Idem.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p. 336.

nationality".<sup>109</sup> This is where the misconception derived from, as Hosking explains. Stalin awarded every nation a territory in the "form" of an autonomous republic.<sup>110</sup>

## Destruction of the Crimean Tatar nation

The *Golden Age* had ended with the execution of the leader Veli Ibrahimov in 1928. After Lenin's death, Stalin began implementing new policies which became known as the *Great Purges* (1933-1939) to clear the national communist movements and nationalist bourgeois among non-Russians<sup>111</sup>. Most of the Crimean Tatar intelligentsia perished from the purges and barely any cultural leaders survived.

The new policies have disfigured the social and political status of the Crimean Tatars. The Tatar language was changed from Latin into Cyrillic (1936) and as a consequence, the Crimean Tatars could no longer understand their literature.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, newspapers and journals were cut down in large quantities. As a result, Tatar literature became "politically unacceptable" or simply "non-Soviet".<sup>113</sup> Consequently, the literacy rate dropped among the Crimean Tatars and their cultural heritage was slowly disappearing.<sup>114</sup>

Fisher notes that, overall, the mass Tatar population, especially the peasants, did not benefit from the Soviet rule, and instead experienced more losses.<sup>115</sup> Between 1917 and 1933 about half of the Tatar population in Crimea perished or migrated from the peninsula. In addition, the years between 1928 and 1939 were the most destructive, when about 40,000 cultural and political Crimean Tatar leaders were executed.<sup>116</sup> Another 13,000 were deported because of *dekulakization*, a repressive campaign that was led against peasants that were considered class enemies<sup>117</sup>. Also, the collectivization process destroyed the Tatars' overall economy.<sup>118</sup> Insofar,

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<sup>109</sup> Williams, Brian. (2001), p. 335.

<sup>110</sup> Hosking, Geoffrey. (2012), p. 428.

<sup>111</sup> Fisher, Alan. (1978), p. 145.

<sup>112</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn. (2002).

<sup>113</sup> Fisher, Alan. (1978), p. 147.

<sup>114</sup> Uehling, Greta Lynn, (2002)

<sup>115</sup> Fisher, Alan. (1978), p. 149.

<sup>116</sup> Williams, Brian. (1998), p. 235.

<sup>117</sup> Hrynevych, Vladyslav. "Nationalities of the USSR in the Crucible of World War II." Crimea: Whose Homeland? On the Occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Deportation of Crimean Tatars'. Harvard University, Cambridge, U.S. (19 May 2014). Soundcloud file. Retrieved on June 09, 2014, from the Ukrainian Research

Fisher argues that no other nationality had ever experienced such losses in the Soviet Union. During this time, about half of the population was lost due to the deportations and executions.<sup>119</sup>

### Nazi German invasion on the Soviet Union

The Second World War was a controversial time for the non-Russian population in the Soviet Union. Under the ‘Operation Barbarossa’ the German Wehrmacht entered the Western borders of the Soviet Union occupying most of Ukraine<sup>120</sup>. At this point, the German occupants seemed like liberators to many nationals. The Soviet nationals were forced to pick sides between the Soviets and the German invaders. But in most cases they could not voluntarily choose sides. The German invasion in Crimea arguably changed the fate of the Crimean Tatars.

What made nationals consider changing sides with their enemy was because of Stalin’s purges and Russification policies. These had made the non-Russians feel threatened by the Soviet regime. Therefore, many decided to fight against the Soviets when the German forces invaded the Soviet territory.<sup>121</sup> By October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1941 on their mission to invade the Soviet Union, the German armed forces took over most of the Crimean peninsula and remained there for almost three years until the Soviets recaptured the peninsula in April 1944.<sup>122</sup> The reactions from the Crimean Tatars to this occupation were very diverse. Some kept their loyalty with the Red Army and joined the Soviet partisans to oppose the Nazi troops; Williams gives a rough estimate of about 20,000 to 75,000.<sup>123</sup> According to the German record, about 9,225 joined the German battalions voluntarily or they were forced to join (it is twice as few as what other sources estimate).<sup>124</sup> In fact, nationals that composed the majority of the population (Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Russians) also fought with the German battalions. Yet they were not deported like the Turkic speaking ethnicities. Hrynevych estimates that approximately 3.5 million people

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Institute, Harvard University Website: <http://www.huri.harvard.edu/events/conferences-symposia/185-crimea-whose-homeland.html>.

<sup>118</sup> Williams, Brian. (1998), p. 235.

<sup>119</sup> Fisher, Alan. (1978), p. 149.

<sup>120</sup> Hosking, Geoffrey, (2013) pp. 492-494.

<sup>121</sup> Idem.

<sup>122</sup> Pohl, Otto. (2010), p. 1.

<sup>123</sup> Williams, Brian, p. 236.

<sup>124</sup> Pohl, Otto, p. 1

(in the Soviet Union) were deported from their regions during the war, but only 1.3 collaborated with the Germans.<sup>125</sup>

Indeed, several thousand of the Crimean Tatar nationals participated in the battalions that were led by the Germans. They joined the German battalions to protect their Tatar villages or they were captive and were forced to join. A written statement exemplifies how Germans were perceived by some Crimean Tatars. In a report from the Forced Migration Projects and the Open Society Institute, Shavki Anafiev states that the Germans were not a threat to them:

*“Now I can say honestly – whereas before (the Soviet period) I couldn’t – that when the Germans came, we didn’t see them do anything horrible to my village. A few months after, they took away our collective farm’s boss and party organizer, and we never heard from them again. But other than that, the Germans did nothing to us... The Germans broke up the collective farms and redistributed the land. At harvest time, the Germans helped us gather the corps. Then one day the German commandant sent some trucks and we thought: That’s it – they are going to take everything and we are going to go hungry during the winter. But they only loaded nine trucks and went away”.*<sup>126</sup>

On the other hand, Williams contends that the Crimean Tatars did not voluntarily join the Nazis but they were forced to. The Crimean Tatars were considered as *untermenschen* (sub-humans) by the Nazis, because they saw them as Mongols. The Germans created a battalion of 20,000 Crimean Tatars to use as a defense mechanism, a pro-Nazi legion. In fact, once the Nazis captured Soviet soldiers, then they were forced to join the legion or they would be instantly executed.<sup>127</sup> Even the other Crimean ethnic group, the Karaim Jews had their separate legion that

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<sup>125</sup> Hrynevych, Vladyslav. (2014), 31:43

<sup>126</sup> Burke, Justin. *Crimean Tatars: Repatriation and Conflict Prevention*. (New York: Open Society Institute, 1996), p. 15.

<sup>127</sup> Williams, Brian G. ‘Doomsday – 18 May 1944: The Deportation of Crimean Tatars and Its Aftermath’ Crimea: Whose Homeland? On the Occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Deportation of Crimean Tatars. Harvard University, Cambridge, U.S. 19 May 2014. Soundcloud file. Retrieved on June 09, 2014, from the Ukrainian Research Institute, Harvard University Website: <http://www.huri.harvard.edu/events/conferences-symposia/185-crimea-whose-homeland.html> Williams, Brian, G. (2014), 41:36.

fought with the Wehrmacht.<sup>128</sup> Thus, Williams makes a remark that there were more Crimean Tatars fighting with the Soviet partisans, than the Ukrainians in Crimea.

It is difficult to estimate, to what extent the Crimean Tatars were political at the time, so far there is not a lot of evidence available on this issue. However, the Tatars were ultimately stuck between two superpowers. There were several reasons why the Tatars would have and did collaborate with the Germans. Nevertheless, it will become apparent in the next section that the reason behind the deportation of the Crimean Tatars was not only based on the arguments that they collaborated with the German Wehrmacht, but it was also a geopolitical reason.

## Deportation (*Sürgün*)

This section will test the validity of the hypothesis that deportation strengthened Crimean Tatar national identity (H1). The Crimean Tatars were deported from their Crimean homeland on 19 May 1944, shortly after the Soviets took over Crimea. The whole Crimean Tatar population was transported to special settlements in Central Asian republics where they were kept for twelve years. Among the 20 ethnic groups that were deported were Chechens, Karachai, Ingush, Kalymsk, Balkars, Volga Germans and Meshketian Turks.<sup>129</sup> The decisions to deport these nations were kept in secret and the reasons behind these deportations are still in debate. The main cause was that Stalin and his compatriots proclaimed the Crimean Tatars as traitors of the Soviet Union for taking sides with the Germans. It seems that the communist leaders finally fulfilled the Tsarist long-lasting aspiration to have “Crimea without Crimean Tatars” which began with Catherine II.<sup>130</sup> In other words, as mentioned in earlier chapters, the idea of having Crimea without the multiethnic population was already planted during the annexation of the Crimean peninsula by the Tsarist Empire.

According to an “Open Letter from the Russian Friends and the Crimean Tatars” a samizdat that was written in 1968 stated the Crimean Tatars had fifteen minutes and others even less to pack

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<sup>128</sup> Idem, 42:30

<sup>129</sup> Williams, Brian. (1997), p. 235.

<sup>130</sup> Mustafaev, Sh. ‘Evolutsiia samosoznaniya – vzglad iznutri’ [Evolution of self-establishment – an outlook from within]. Krymskie Tatary: problem repatriatsii. [Crimean Tatars: Problems of Repatriation] Ed. A. Vjakin and E. Kulpin. (Moscow: Institut vostokovedeniia RAN, 1997). Crimean Tatars: Problems of Repatriation. 1997, p. 24.

their belonging and prepare for their leave.<sup>131</sup> As they were taken to the railway station, the men were separated and sent by cattle cars to Western Siberia<sup>132</sup>. The rest were transported by sealed trains to Central Asia.<sup>133</sup> In the “Open Letter” the author describes the journey:

*“It was a journey of lingering death in cattle trucks, crammed with people, like mobile gas chambers. The journey lasted three to four weeks and took them across the scorching summer steppes of Kazakhstan. They took the Red partisans of the Crimea, fighters of the Bolshevik underground, and Soviet and Party activists...”*<sup>134</sup>

In this letter the author describes that even the people that were loyal to the regime were all deported to the special settlements, among them were even war heroes. The Soviet dissident Ludmilla Alexeyeva claims that the women, children and elderly were transported to reservations in Kirgizia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the Urals.<sup>135</sup> But the Crimean Tatar men who were still fighting at the front would be deported. Once the war was over and they were sent to Siberia where they would be separated from their families for about twelve years.<sup>136</sup> The transportation itself caused many casualties from the lack of proper conditions, which caused 46.2%, 195,471 Crimean Tatars to perish within that same year.<sup>137</sup>

But what were the main reasons for their exile in 1944? To accuse someone for treason is a powerful accusation with which to ‘justify’ a deportation. Pohl argues that Stalin had planned to deport the Crimean Tatars and nations from the North Caucasus already before the war.<sup>138</sup> This means that the reason to deport the nation for “treason” was just an excuse. For one, this reason is not justified because other nationals, among them Russians and Ukrainians, also collaborated with the Germans and nothing happened to these nations. Was the deportation justified or was it purely to dispense of rebellious ethnic groups? Hrynevych argues that these deportations were

<sup>131</sup> Sheehy, Ann and Nahaylo, Bogdan. (1982), p. 8.

<sup>132</sup> Burke, Justin. Crimean Tatars: Repatriation and Conflict Prevention. (New York: Open Society Institute, 1996), p. 22.

<sup>133</sup> Williams, Brian. (1998). ‘The Crimean Tatar exile in Central Asia: A case study in group destruction and survival.’ P. 294.

<sup>134</sup> Sheehy, Ann and Nahaylo, Bogdan. (1982), p. 8.

<sup>135</sup> Alexeyeva, Ludmilla. (1985), p. 137.

<sup>136</sup> Sheehy, Ann and Nahaylo, Bogdan. (1982), p. 8.

<sup>137</sup> Idem, p. 138.

<sup>138</sup> Pohl, Otto. (2010), p. 3.

used for foreign policy. In addition, Hrynevych explains that “ethnic cleansing and deportation were used as tools long before the war, but during the war, they were an important instrument to [Stalin’s] policy”.<sup>139</sup> As instruments the Tatars were used for security, but at the end of the war it was perhaps too risky to keep them in those borderland regions, to avoid any contact with Turkey.<sup>140</sup> Like the Crimean Tatars, the other deported nations (except for the Volga Germans), such as the Meskhetians, were located at the borders. According to a Soviet dissident, Aleksandr Nekrich explains that the Volga Germans were already deported to the steppes of Kazakhstan in 1941 to prevent them from having contact with the Nazi Germans.<sup>141</sup> However, Williams revealed that Stalin was actually planning to go to war with Turkey in 1944 and take over two provinces that were once part of Russia but had been lost Turkey during the Russia-Turkish war.<sup>142</sup> In addition, at the time, the Meshketian Turks that lived on the borderland with Georgia and they had nothing to do with the Nazis. Nevertheless, they were also considered traitors just like the Crimean Tatars.<sup>143</sup> Cenghis Dagci, a Crimean Tatar novelist that had been exiled in England expressed his impression on the deportations in an interview (no date was mentioned):

*“The tragedy did not start only after the war (deportation), it had its beginnings in the Thirties. Thousands of Crimean Tatars were deported between 1930 and 1936. These people were not opposed to the regime, they were only interested in cultivating their land, their vineyards, and orchards. They were simple, innocent people living in an agricultural community... The charge that the Crimean Tatars betrayed their Russian comrades during the war was nothing but a pretext, a deliberate slander. Among all the people of the Soviet Union, including the Russians, the Crimean Tatars collaborated least”.*<sup>144</sup>

All the deported nations were part of a strategy to prevent them from making contacts with the enemies. Subsequently, the deported nations were scattered throughout the vast lands of the Soviet Union and the institutionalized nations were partially destroyed. However, in the next

<sup>139</sup> Hrynevych, Vladislav. (2014), 32:47.

<sup>140</sup> Idem.

<sup>141</sup> Nekrich, Aleksandr, (1978), p. 26.

<sup>142</sup> Williams, Brian. (2014), 45:40

<sup>143</sup> Idem, 45:52

<sup>144</sup> Fisher, Alan. (1978), p. 162.

sub-chapter reveals that the Crimean Tatars attempted to maintain their national consciousness despite of their traumatic experience.

## Twelve years in special settlements

The deportation of the Crimean Tatars had marked the largest tragedy in their nation's history and it remains a part of their national identity to this day. The repressions in the 1930s and the deportation had forced the small nation to restructure their *weltanschauung*. Kul'pin argues that the outcome of the repressions and the deportation was a great loss in intelligentsia and those carrying the traditional culture<sup>145</sup>. In addition, Alexeyeva claims that their cultural presence such as items and belongings were distributed among the locals, reused or destroyed. Almost all the literature in their language was destroyed, mosques, cemeteries (e.g. tomb stones were used for construction).<sup>146</sup> In addition, the names of public places in Tatar were changed to Russian. In other words, any sign of the Tatars' former presence was eliminated.<sup>147</sup> In an "Open Letter of the Russian Friends of the Crimean Tatars" from the Human Rights Group report states that the property from the Crimea Tatars was given to Ukrainian settlers:

*"Everything was done to destroy all traces of the national life of the Tatars and the very memory of their existence. Houses were demolished, and orchards and vineyards were allowed to become wild and overgrown. The cemeteries of the Tatars were ploughed up, and the remains of their ancestors torn from the earth... Everything written and printed in Crimean Tatar was burnt – from ancient manuscripts to the classics of Marxism-Leninism inclusive."*<sup>148</sup>

Consequently, this destruction of Crimean Tatar cultural heritage was also a destruction of their history. Without a cultural heritage, an ethnic group, especially a nation, cannot identify its roots and its origins. Additionally, the Crimean Tatars' history was re-written in Soviet books.<sup>149</sup> Sheehy and Nahaylo's report argues that the second edition of the "Large Soviet Encyclopedia"

<sup>145</sup> Kul'pin, A. 1998. *Krymskie Tatary: problem repatriatsii*. Ed. A. Vjakin and E. Kulpin. Moscow: Institut vostokovedenija RAN, (1997), p. 40.

<sup>146</sup> Yakupova, Venera. (2002), p. 18

<sup>147</sup> Alexeyeva, Ludmilla, (1985), p. 138.

<sup>148</sup> Sheehy, Ann and Nahaylo, Bogdan. (1982), p. 9.

<sup>149</sup> Alexeyeva, Ludmilla. (1985), p. 138.

published in 1953 describe the Crimean Tatars as being constantly occupied with war and stealing goods.<sup>150</sup> Unlike the second edition, the first edition of the Encyclopedia described the Crimean Tatar “cultural achievements” and how the Crimean Khanate suffered under the Tsarist rule.<sup>151</sup> In this way, if a nation’s history and territory is changed, this means that the community loses its national identity. A nation cannot properly function once it fails to have a territory and knowledge about its history.

The Crimean Tatars were kept in these settlements for twelve years until Khrushchev liberated them in 1956. At the settlements, the Crimean Tatar nation was, to a certain extent, non-existent. The Crimean Tatars were strictly not allowed to leave the designated areas.<sup>152</sup> Those who attempted to return to Crimea got a prison sentence for 20 years. Families were torn apart and spread along other settlements and the deported were not allowed to visit even the funerals of their family members in other settlements.<sup>153</sup>

What did this deportation mean for the Crimean Tatar nation? Their main national identification, territory, was taken away from them and consequently there was no territorial basis for their recognition. Sooner rather than later, the Soviet authorities ceased to recognize the deportees as a Crimean Tatar nation. A Crimean Tatar, SH. U. Mustafaev explains in an entry ‘Evolution of Self-Consciousness, View from Within’ that everything was prepared so that the Crimean Tatars would cease to exist as a nation.<sup>154</sup> Mustafaev adds that even though this nation had lost all the main components that make it a nation, it managed to survive. For this reason, the Crimean Tatar ethnic polity began its battle to return to its homeland.<sup>155</sup> The Tatars began mobilizing by sharing their collective memory from the traumatic experiences. An example of how the new generation experienced the deportation, N. Bijazova, remembers (Newspaper ‘Komsomolec Tatarii, 24 December 1989):

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<sup>150</sup> Sheehy, Ann and Nahaylo, Bogdan. (1982), p. 9

<sup>151</sup> Idem.

<sup>152</sup> Burke, Justin. (1996), p. 22.

<sup>153</sup> Williams, Brian. (1997), p. 237.

<sup>154</sup> Mustafaev, Sh. U., (1997), p. 24

<sup>155</sup> Mustafaev, Sh. U., (1997). p. 24.

*“At our home in Bakhchisaray, there stood a lot of Soviet soldiers. Mother was cooking for them all days. Father was a communist, he managed the tannery factory. When the soldier came, mother was pregnant for eight months. Father began to shake... I packed all the things that came in front of my eyes. On the streets there were shouting, crying, and a mass of people. No one could understand anything. They were loaded on each other in wagons and for four days they did not open them. People were dying, travelling for 20 days, and those who arrived to Uzbekistan died from hunger. In the Kolhoz (collective farm) where we lived, until 1946, from 72 Crimean Tatar families only 16 were left. We were living exactly under the trees. No one was going to feed the special settlers in Central Asia. The children were playing among the dead, since the morning dawn, many remained lying under the trees. I was told of a 10 year old girl whose mother died. She cleaned her and buried her herself.<sup>156</sup>*

This shows that the Soviet authorities did not provide with the proper circumstances in making sure that the deported people would be properly settled in the designated areas. According to the document from the Soviet State Defense Committee (GOKO) which was signed by Stalin, was not fulfilled in reality. Signed by Stalin on May 11, 1944 (before the deportation) these are a few excerpts taken from the document:

- The special settlers are allowed to take as much as 500kg of things per family.
- Narkomzdrav USSR in the hours of the agreement from NKVD USSR, shall have one doctor and two nurses per train with special settlers with an appropriate amount of medical supplies and take care that there would be a sanitary and medical service during the journey.
- Narkomtor shall take care that every train with the special settlers would have a hot meal and boiling water every day.<sup>157</sup>

According to reports and victims the resettlement did not happen the way it was transcribed in the document. It also mentions that there would be food delivered for two months to the special

<sup>156</sup> Translated by Julia Ilyina. Yakupova, Venera. (2002). ‘Krymskie Tatary, ili privet ot Stalina!’ [Crimean Tatars, or hello from Stalin!]. Kazan: Idel-Press. Electronic version. Retrieved on 05 May, 2014 from Kazanskie vedomosti Website: [http://www.kazved.ru/books/Krimsky\\_Tatary.pdf](http://www.kazved.ru/books/Krimsky_Tatary.pdf), p. 16.

<sup>157</sup> Translated by Julia Ilyina. Yakupova, Venera. (2002), p. 140.

settlers, but most were dying from hunger and also diseases (caused by severe changes in climate).<sup>158</sup>

As soon as the Crimean Tatars “settled” in their new environment in harsh conditions, they began questioning why this nation was deported and when they would return to their homeland<sup>159</sup>. In this way, the Crimean Tatars began to build solidarity among themselves. The deportation of the Crimean Tatars could have disintegrated them, but instead it unified them even more. How did the Crimean Tatars maintain their nation consciousness? At first, the elderly had to pass on all their knowledge about their memories and traditions to the children. Second, according to Mustafaev, the Tatars were always prepared to return to their homeland. It even came to the point that marriages did not take place because they were waiting to wed in Crimea.<sup>160</sup> Mustafaev describes his perception on the situation that the “homeland was a travelling star in this dark hell of special settlement”.<sup>161</sup> To emphasize, the Crimean territory had a whole different meaning for the Crimean Tatars. It became part of their life-long goal to return to their homeland and it was their only hope to maintain their national identity. Their *weltanschauung* changed while living hundreds of kilometers away from their territory and living amongst people who saw the Crimean Tatars as traitors of the Soviet Union. But it also strengthened their social solidarity by working together to achieve their mutual goal. Kul’pin argues that because they could not count on the government they had to survive on their own, but the only way to survive (as a nation) was to protest against the government.<sup>162</sup> One form of their strategies (not against the government) was to become highly educated. This was one of the modernization processes. An ethnic group becomes educated and therefore more self-conscious about its existence and its belonging to a group. It appears that the Crimean Tatars realized soon enough that education was the key to get them out of this situation. The Tatars were determined to educate themselves to such an extent, that allegedly before the Soviet disintegration, the KGB statistics showed that Crimean Tatars were the most educated nation in the Soviet Union.<sup>163</sup> Instinctively, the Tatars chose to become educated especially in Russian language in public

<sup>158</sup> Burke, Justin. *Crimean Tatars: Repatriation and Conflict Prevention*, p. 22.

<sup>159</sup> Mustafaev, Sh. U. (1997). p. 24.

<sup>160</sup> Mustafaev, Sh. U. (1997), p. 26.

<sup>161</sup> Idem p. 26.

<sup>162</sup> Kul’pin, A. (1998), p. 40.

<sup>163</sup> Mustafaev, Sh. U. (1997), p. 26.

schools (instead of local language where the Tatars lived e.g. Kazakh, Uzbek and Kyrgyz.).<sup>164</sup> Even though the Crimean Tatars were not focusing on nation-building at the time, and there was a risk that their language would perish, they believed that after their returning to Crimea, they would continue their national traditions. Regarding the hypothesis, so far it is true that deportation in fact weakened Crimean Tatar national identity.

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<sup>164</sup> Idem, p. 27.

## Chapter IV: Crimean Tatar All-National Movement

This chapter will elaborate on the national movement that occurred in the post-Stalin period until the disintegration of the Soviet Union. This period is significant to the Crimean Tatars because, for the first time, they were able to express their demands and become revolutionary through their national movement. From then on, their community could be considered an ethnic polity, a displaced ethnic group with political intentions to return to their homeland. The national movement sheds doubt on whether the first hypothesis is really false. This chapter will test whether or not deportation gradually became a factor that strengthened instead of weakened Crimean Tatar national identity.

### Khrushchev's Secret Speech

In April 1956, after twelve years of living in immobile condition, the entire Crimean Tatar population was freed from the restrictions. They could now live anywhere in the Soviet Union. The only exception was that they were not allowed to return to Crimea.<sup>165</sup> To emphasize, this was a turning point for the Crimean Tatars because they could reunite with their family and friends but it also instigated a counter-reaction against the Soviet authorities.

At Khrushchev's Secret Speech at the 20<sup>th</sup> Communist Party Congress in 1956, Khrushchev declared that all the deported nations were liberated. According to Khrushchev's decree, the only ethnic groups that were not allowed to return to their homeland were the Meshketian Turks, the Volga Germans and the Crimean Tatars.<sup>166</sup> In addition, according to Justin Burke's report, the decree states that these nations were not allowed to return because they were still considered "guilty of collective treason". Conversely, Khrushchev condemned the "concept of collective guilt" (national treason) for the other ethnic groups that were liberated at the same congress.<sup>167</sup> However, the Soviet authorities allowed the Crimean Tatars to publish their own newspaper "the Banner of Lenin" (Lenin Bayragy) in their own language (the newspaper would be censored anyway by non-Crimean Tatars). Yet this did not satisfy them, because they aspired to return to their homeland.<sup>168</sup> Additionally, the decree also validated that their property will be confiscated

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<sup>165</sup> Burke, Justin. (1996), p. 23.

<sup>166</sup> Idem.

<sup>167</sup> Idem.

<sup>168</sup> Idem, p. 23

(although as mentioned in chapter three, most of it was already confiscated or distributed to Ukrainian settlers after the deportation).<sup>169</sup> It also meant that if the Crimean Tatars wanted to receive a passport, they had to sign an agreement that states they reject their property in Crimea, and without this signature they would not obtain a passport.<sup>170</sup>

Slightly before the congress, the Crimean peninsula was handed over to Ukraine on 19 February 1954. The Council of Ministers of Ukraine and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) made an agreement to transfer Crimea from RSFSR to Ukraine.<sup>171</sup> What this meant for the Crimean Tatars was that there were no potential discourses on returning the deported Tatars to Crimea. Instead, they were expected to assimilate with the local population where they lived. While being scattered all over the Soviet Union, they had no institution to support their national identity (or example there was no education provided in Crimean Tatar language). As a result, there was a danger that the ethnic group would be completely disintegrated. At the settlements, the older generation had to rapidly give all their knowledge about their traditions, norms and values, and most importantly the history about their land and ancestors to the young generation. This was the only way to carry on the national identity, since territory, literature and cultural heritage was out of their reach or destroyed. The youth understood that if they would not resist the injustices made upon them and their predecessors, then they would lose their national identity.

### Crimean Tatar All-National Movement

The limited freedom of the Crimean Tatars gave them the opportunity to establish political goals and tasks on retrieving their right to return to their homeland. The fact that they could freely move around, obtain education (although not in their language) gave them enough time and space to mobilize. Already at the turn of the 1950s, they began forming a platform for creating a national movement.<sup>172</sup> The movement began with a campaign to send petitions to Moscow. The new generation began combating for their ancestral land that they hardly remembered (or they

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<sup>169</sup> Gubogol, M. N. & Chervonnaya, S. M. (1992), p. 99.

<sup>170</sup> Idem, p. 99.

<sup>171</sup> See original “Ukaz o peredache Krymskoi Oblasti iz Sostava RSFSR v Sostav UkrSSR” in Yakupova, Venera. (2002), p. 144

<sup>172</sup> Williams, Brian, (1998), p. 239.

were already born in exile) but it was their communal memory and nostalgia of the deportation that forced them to protest.

Justin Burke states in his report that 1961 was the first year when 120,000 Tatars signed their first petition and sent it to Kremlin.<sup>173</sup> The following year, the first official group called “the League of Crimean Tatar Youth” was established.<sup>174</sup> At that time, the young Mustafa Dzhemilev<sup>175</sup> was part of the group. Mustafa Dzhemilev is an infamous figure among the Crimean Tatars and Central Asians. He has been persecuted a few times for being an activist for the national movement during the Soviet Union and he has remained the representative of the Crimean Tatars until today.<sup>176</sup> Almost instantly, the KGB disintegrated the league. The Tatars quickly became aware of the authorities’ power against collective movements and dissents. Consequently, the Tatars thought of specific strategies to protest against the authorities.

### Movement’s active period (1964-1969)

Uniquely, the Crimean Tatar movement became a grass root movement.<sup>177</sup> In 1964, the Crimean Tatars organized a “rotating lobby” in Moscow.<sup>178</sup> Peter Reddaway, a Professor in Russian and Eurasian studies, claims that there was no name or any structure associated with the lobby, and therefore it was more difficult for the authorities to capture the responsible ones. Those who appeared as leaders were sent to closed trials followed by a jail sentence. However, the purpose of this system of rotating delegates was that the KGB could not label a single person as a leader of the organization (until 1969).<sup>179</sup> The delegates’ tasks were to inform and deliver letters to the Soviet authorities about the situation of the Crimean Tatars. Additionally they kept circulating a

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<sup>173</sup> Burke, Justin. Crimean Tatars: Repatriation and Conflict Prevention, p.24

<sup>174</sup> Reddaway, Peter. *The Crimean Tatar Drive for Repatriation: Some Comparisons with Other Movements of Dissident in the USSR*. In ed. E. A. Allworth. *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*. 2nd ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998). p. 227.

<sup>175</sup> A notorious Crimean Tatar activist of the movement and he continues to represent his people, Williams calls him a “Mandela” among the Crimean Tatars and Central Asians. He is also called “Son of Crimea” - Kirimoglu. Williams. (1998), p. 237.

<sup>176</sup> Mustafa Dzhemilev is not allowed to return to his homeland again to Crimea by Russian law, since the Russian annexation of Crimea in March 2014 ‘Russia bars second Tatar leader from entering Crimea. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Retrieved on July 7, 2014 from: <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-crimea-chubarov-ban-entrance-dzhemilev-tatars/25447708.html>.

<sup>177</sup> Burke, Justin. (1996), p. 24.

<sup>178</sup> Idem.

<sup>179</sup> Grigorenko, Petr. (1982). *Memoirs*. New York: Norton, p. 348

samizdat<sup>180</sup> called “Informatsiia”. The samizdat informed Crimean Tatars about the amount of letters delivered to the authorities and which particular authorities were dealing with a certain matter (related to the Crimean Tatar exile).<sup>181</sup> The Soviets actually became aware that this movement might create a contagion within Uzbekistan and affect 8 million Uzbeks.<sup>182</sup> What they feared the most was the rise of nationalism among the republics. Therefore, the Soviets tried their best to halt the Tatar movement. At this point the Soviet authorities sentenced several activists.<sup>183</sup>

In the end, the structured lobbying actually paid off. General Pjotr Grigorenko was a Ukrainian national and a Soviet dissident who saw the injustices of the Crimean Tatars. He claims in his memoir that by 1967, eleven years of sending petitions, altogether about 200,000 Crimean Tatar adults signed 3,000,000 times on a couple of thousand petitions.<sup>184</sup> This means that every Crimean Tatar participated in this national movement. The amount of petitions signifies that almost every adult signed at least fifteen petitions.<sup>185</sup> The rotating representatives succeeded to meet with the senior party members altogether three times. Their main demand was for the Crimean Tatars to return to their homeland<sup>186</sup>. The demonstrations and petitions actually paid off and a decree was published in 1967 on the abolition of mass treason from WWII<sup>187</sup>. This decree meant that the Crimean Tatars achieved their political rehabilitation.

The main disappointment was that the decree of 1967 did not mention Crimean Tatars per se, the Soviet authorities referred to them in their documents as “citizens of Tatar nationality, who were formerly living in Crimea”.<sup>188</sup> Added to that were, the Tatars who previously lived in Crimea and were now “rooted” in Uzbekistan and other areas of the Soviet Union.<sup>189</sup> But the Crimean Tatars were not willing to accept that their “new homeland” would be in Uzbekistan or elsewhere but

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<sup>180</sup> Samizdat is a self-publishing journal or newspaper, commonly used by dissidents during the Soviet Union.

<sup>181</sup> Gubogol, M. N. & Chervonnaya, S. M. (1992), p. 100.

<sup>182</sup> Williams, Brian G., 1998, p. 239.

<sup>183</sup> Burke, Justin. (1996), p.24

<sup>184</sup> Grigorenko, Petr. (1982). Memoirs. New York: Norton. Print , p. 347

<sup>185</sup> Idem.

<sup>186</sup> Idem, p. 348.

<sup>187</sup> See original “Postonavlenie Presidiuma Verhovogo Soveta SSSR, O grazhdanah Tatarskoi nationalnosti, prozhivshykh v Krymu (5 September, 1967) in Yakupova, Venera. P. 146.

<sup>188</sup> Idem, p. 144.

<sup>189</sup> Idem, p. 144

Crimea. Later it was clarified that the Soviet authorities did not give the Crimean Tatars the permission to return to Crimea. The decree also emphasizes that the Council of Ministers should provide assistance for Tatar nationalities in domestic and cultural spheres to satisfy their national interests.<sup>190</sup> One document from a collection of samizdat documents retrieved from Budapest Archival Library, states that the revival of culture-building was in fact a fiction.<sup>191</sup> It only made it seem like Crimean Tatar language was taught in schools. In the document the author argues that the Crimean Tatar language and culture were degrading and it would be difficult to gain it all back because the new generation is being born in another territory.<sup>192</sup> It is also interesting to see, how the Council of Ministers would be willing to support the Tatars' cultural building if their national identity was not accepted in the first place?

In an interview, the journalist Venera Yakupova asked Ayshe Seitmuratova to tell her story about why she became an activist for the Crimean Tatar national movement for the newspaper "Komsomolec Tatarii" (September 9, 1990).<sup>193</sup> Ayshe begins with saying that life has made her into an activist. But her main reasons were that she was constantly rejected. Since her childhood, she tried to attend the national gymnastics and ballet schools but she was denied access. In higher education she took four entry exams and still denied access to a history department in an Institute in Uzbekistan. The director of the Institute claimed that no matter how many times she would pass her exams they would not let her in.<sup>194</sup> Ayshe emphasizes that because of her ethnic background, she was not allowed to participate in public institutions. Similarly, according to Burke's report, Mustafa Dzhemilev also could not have access to higher education and have a secure job at a factory.<sup>195</sup> It appears that the Crimean Tatars were sometimes allowed to develop themselves in society, but it was not made obvious to the rest of the public that they were often not welcome in certain institutions.

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<sup>190</sup> See original "Postonavlenie Presidiuma Verhovogo Soveta SSSR, O grazhdanah Tatarskoi nationalnosti, prozhivshykh v Krymu (5 September, 1967) in in Yakupova, Venera. (2002). Krymskie Tatary, ili privet ot Stalina! P. 146.

<sup>191</sup> Fakt i sootvestvujushie vyvody in Sobranie Dokumentove Samizdata (SDS) (Collection of Samizdat Documents). HU OSA 300-85-11. N. 21-3 (1977).

<sup>192</sup> Idem.

<sup>193</sup> Yakupova, Venera. (2002), p. 35.

<sup>194</sup> Idem.

<sup>195</sup> Burke, Justin. (1996), p.26.

An additional decree was published in 1967, stating that “the Tatar nationals, who formerly lived in Crimea, are allowed to live on all of the territory in the Soviet Union in accordance with legislation on employment and passport.”<sup>196</sup> Another interesting account, according to Reddaway, about 100,000 Crimean Tatars actually went to Crimea that same year because they misunderstood the wording in the decree from 1967 and thought they had the right to return. All those people were forcefully returned to Central Asia.<sup>197</sup> In the following decade the Soviet authorities chose 1400 Crimean Tatar families to legally settle in Crimea. But for the rest it was not possible to obtain official registration in Crimea that would allow them to live there.<sup>198</sup> Consequently, the Crimean Tatars did not find these decrees satisfactory. Therefore, in 1967 the Crimean Tatar delegates organized a meeting between the Soviet officials Andropov, Sholohov and Rudenko and the Crimean Tatars representatives to express their disappointment. However, the meeting did not meet the Crimean Tatars’ demands.<sup>199</sup> In 1968, 1969 and 1970 the movement weakened significantly because of the infamous Tashkent Trials. About fifty closed trials and arrests were made of 200 of those involved with the national movement.<sup>200</sup> Most of the movement’s leaders were sentenced; among them were Mustafa Dzhemilev and Ayshe Seytmuratova.<sup>201</sup>

As a consequence from the decree and the trials, the Crimean Tatar national movement created a public demonstration in Moscow in 1968. This event caught the attention of Soviet dissidents and human rights defenders, as well as the Crimean Tatar diaspora and countries abroad.<sup>202</sup> Afterwards, the Tatars’ story was published in the most famous samizdat for human rights defenders. This was the first time that the Crimean Tatar problem reached more people, other than the Soviet authorities. The notes on the Tashkent Trials even reached London, England, and soon enough they were published at Alexander Herzen Foundation in Amsterdam, on account of Karel van het Reve.<sup>203</sup> Mubeyyin Altan, an American Tatar activist (currently a director of the

<sup>196</sup> Translated by Julia Ilyina. Idem, p. 146.

<sup>197</sup> Reddaway Peter, 1998, in ed. Allworth p. 227.

<sup>198</sup> Idem.

<sup>199</sup> Grigorenko, 1982, p. 349.

<sup>200</sup> Guboglo, M. N. in Guboglo, M. N & Chervonnaya, S. M. (1992), p. 117.

<sup>201</sup> Idem, p. 117.

<sup>202</sup> Reddaway Peter, 1998, in ed. Allworth p. 227.

<sup>203</sup> Karel van het Reve (he was a Slavist at Leiden University) collected several samizdat publications out of the Soviet Union and thereafter founded the Alexander Herzen Foundation.

Crimean Tatar Research and Information Center), argues that this breakthrough of samizdat and documents to the West has alerted the small Crimean Tatar diaspora (circa 7,000 people) in America to support the national movement. And they did so by establishing a National Center of Crimean Tatars.<sup>204</sup> On the other side, according to Altan, Turkey (approximately four million Crimean Tatar descents reside in Turkey) did not give any support for diplomatic reasons until 1991.<sup>205</sup> According to an infamous samizdat, Chronicle of Current Events, the United Nations did not take any serious action to support the Tatars. The organizations that supported dissents the most were Amnesty International, Islamic Council of Europe, Minority Rights Group and the Tunisian government.<sup>206</sup>

However, exactly this became a Crimean Tatar problem for the authorities because they realized that what they have been doing so far, does not work. First the authorities allowed a few Tatar families to move back to Crimea, but they were chosen for their non-activist behavior (as part of propaganda).<sup>207</sup> Then a few cultural elements were sponsored such as a newspaper and a folk ensemble. In 1974 the authorities tried to make an administrative region for the Tatar in Uzbekistan and to give them autonomy in Uzbekistan, which would be called Mubarek Republic.<sup>208</sup> Yet, this plan did not work because the Crimean Tatars did not show any interest. The KGB became more hostile towards the Tatars. Lastly, the KGB attempted to create a countermovement against the Tatars so their national movement would disperse. However this was unsuccessful because the national movement continued its course and did not disintegrate.<sup>209</sup>

### **Analyzing tactics of the national movement**

It is essential to understand how the Crimean Tatars perceived themselves and portrayed this through their national movement. In 1969, several things happened that influenced the tactics of the national movement. First of all, what were their main aspirations and how were they going to pursue them? The foremost goal of the Crimean Tatar national movement was to be able to

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<sup>204</sup> Altan, Mubeyyin. (2001). 'The Crimean Tatar National Movement and the American Diaspora'.

<sup>205</sup> Idem.

<sup>206</sup> Reddaway, Peter, (1998), in ed. Allworth, p. 233.

<sup>207</sup> Idem, p. 232.

<sup>208</sup> Williams, Brian. (1998), p. 241.

<sup>209</sup> Reddaway, Peter, (1998), p. 233.

legally return to their homeland in Crimea and restore their government (Crimean ASSR).<sup>210</sup> According to the authorities, this was not possible because they disapproved them as a nation ('Tatars who previously lived in Crimea'). This provoked the Tatars and it became a 'Crimean Tatar problem'.<sup>211</sup> The Crimean Tatars laid down some tactics on how they wanted to act as a national movement. In his article, Reddaway summarizes these tactics mostly from *Chronicles of Current Events* samizdat documents.

First of all, the Crimean Tatars were very committed to the Soviet regime and they wanted to retrieve Crimean ASSR.<sup>212</sup> Secondly, they concluded not to follow their ancestors and immigrate to Turkey (although other national movements, e.g. Meshketian Turks, demanded emigration in 1969). They understood that otherwise, soon enough, the Crimean Tatar nation would disperse and eventually cease to exist. At this point religion was no longer the most prevalent factor of the nation. They also made sure not to emphasize their national movement on Islamic faith.<sup>213</sup> Their Islamic practice was in fact already fading because there were no religious institutions supporting it. According to Dzhemilev, their territory in Crimea remained a holy place for them, one way or another (despite of the fact that their Islamic traditions might not be allowed there either). Dzhemilev says, "Not a single thing can measure the holiness of the Homeland".<sup>214</sup> If this was not a good enough reason for the new generation, most importantly it could not refuse to fulfill the aspiration of the older generation that had suffered immensely from the deportation.

Another method was to get attention from abroad. If the Soviet authorities do not respond to their demands, then reaching out to the United Nations could raise awareness and put pressure on the Soviet government. Subsequently, the national movement decided to have cooperation with the newly established human rights movement and other nationals who were also condemned.

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<sup>210</sup> "Appeal of the Crimean Tatar nation to the General Secretary M. S. Gorbachev" (April 1987) in Yakupova, Venera. (2002). *Krymskie Tatary, ili privet ot Stalina!* [Crimean Tatars, or hello from Stalin!], p. 151. For full examination of their program on the national resurgence see *Fakt i sootvestvujushie vyvody* in *Sobranie Dokumentov Samizdata (SDS)* (Collection of Samizdat Documents). HU OSA 300-85-11. N. 21-8, 433 (1989).

<sup>211</sup> Williams, Brian. (1998), p. 241.

<sup>212</sup> Reddaway, Peter. (1998), p. 230.

<sup>213</sup> Idem.

<sup>214</sup> Mustafa Dzhemilev in *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*. Ed. E. A. Allworth. 2nd ed. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 22

However, their cooperation had to stay out of the secret service.<sup>215</sup> Another important tactic was to avoid the usage of violence and use Soviet legislation and constitution to defend their cases.<sup>216</sup> The movement had to remain on a grass root level with no obvious leaders of the movement so there would not be anyone to prosecute. According to a letter from the Crimean Tatars to Gorbachev, they claim that dozens of letters were sent by the Tatars to all Soviet central editorials of newspapers and journals about the Crimean Tatar national problem. However, in none of the editorials were the letters published.<sup>217</sup> Consequently, from all the rejections towards a legitimate return to their homeland, in this way the authorities actually strengthened and unified the nation.

### The first migrations to Crimea

Since the most important delegates were arrested at the turn of 1960s the following decade was a deadlock for the Crimean Tatar national movement. When Gorbachev introduced his policies *glasnost* and *perestroika*<sup>218</sup>, the Tatars could finally reach their dream to return to Crimea.

Shortly before the Soviet collapse, prominent Soviet dissidents, human rights activists and even writers, like Evtushenko and Okudzhava, tried to help the Crimean Tatars by writing letters to the Soviet leaders. One such letter was sent from a theoretical physicist, A. D. Sakharov (1921-1989) to the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Leonid Brezhnev. Sakharov wrote about a Crimean Tatar martyr, Musa Mamut who committed self-immolation in 1978 because he was not permitted to register in Crimea, and was sent away to prison camp once he attempted to settle in Crimea.<sup>219</sup> In his letter (written in 1979), Sakharov explains that Mamut aimed at obtaining the permission to live in the Crimean peninsula for many years. Mamut was rejected to register in Crimea and thus he violated the passport regulations (he was allowed to live elsewhere in the Soviet Union, but not in Crimea according to the passport regulations). He and his family stayed in Crimea which had cost him two years in prison. Afterwards he was again threatened to be sent to prison or deported to Central Asia. When a policeman was attempting to break into his house

<sup>215</sup> Reddaway, (1998), p. 231.

<sup>216</sup> Idem, p. 231.

<sup>217</sup> “Appeal of the Crimean Tatar nation to the General Secretary M. S. Gorbachev” (April 1987) in Yakupova, Venera. (2002), p. 151.

<sup>218</sup> Perestroika was the “restructuring” of the Soviet political and social institutions.

<sup>219</sup> Yakupova, Venera. (2002), p. 148.

to take Mamut into custody, he committed self-immolation.<sup>220</sup> This letter describes a Crimean Tatar who was trying to return to Crimea and stay there. Mamut was among many other Crimean Tatars who attempted to settle in Crimea. This continued to exist and became even worse at the turn of the 1980s when thousands began returning to Crimea. Williams argues that those who have never been to Crimea were moving there because they still did not consider their home in Central Asia.<sup>221</sup>

Sakharov therefore argues from a humanitarian point of view that the way the authorities handled the Crimean Tatars was an act of injustice. He wrote in his letter that "...the Crimean Tatars are being systematically rejected to residency and registration of purchased houses, and committing unlawful deportations, raids, convictions, destruction of homes, leaving the elderly and the children under the open-air..."<sup>222</sup> Yet their aspiration to repatriate was not purely coming from nationalistic emotions, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, it was also based on the nostalgia from Lenin's creation of the Crimean ASSR. From this nostalgia, the Tatars wanted to create a Crimean Autonomous Republic and establish an administrative unit coordinated by Crimean Tatars because they considered themselves the indigenous population.<sup>223</sup>

In response to Mikhail Gorbachev's new policies, perestroika and glasnost, the Crimean Tatars felt they had a chance to retain more attention to their problem. Especially at this time there was more access to reach the West. In July 1987, the Crimean Tatars made appearance on the Red Square, exposing banners "Motherland or Death" and claims for repatriation to Crimea in front of Western tourists and media.<sup>224</sup> Subsequently, after this demonstration of 300 Crimean Tatar activists, the General Secretary of the Communist Party, Andrei Gromyko promised to create a commission that would deal with their demands. In 1989, the commission agreed for the Crimean Tatars to return to Crimea. And finally, the representatives established an organization called "Organization of the Crimean Tatar National Movement" (OCNM) with its leader Mustafa Dzhemilev that took charge in the repatriation process of the Crimean Tatars.<sup>225</sup> Yet as soon as

<sup>220</sup> Idem, p. 148

<sup>221</sup> William, Brian. (1998), p. 242.

<sup>222</sup> Translated by Julia Ilyina, source: Yakupova, Venera (2002), p. 148.

<sup>223</sup> Williams, Brian, 1998, p. 242.

<sup>224</sup> Idem, p. 243.

<sup>225</sup> Idem.

the Soviet Union disintegrated in 1991, there was no aid left for their repatriation because Crimea became part of independent Ukraine and policies changed. Additionally, Ukraine was hit with hyperinflation. In addition to that, the Crimean Tatars were returning to a land that had changed completely since they were exiled, and they were entering a new political and social environment that was not expecting their return. Yet again, the Crimean Tatars' national consciousness had been developing throughout the post-Stalin years and it strengthened their will to return to their homeland. And thus their national consciousness became so vivid that circa 250,000 Crimean Tatars left everything behind to fulfill their 'obligation' to return to their rooted homeland.<sup>226</sup> Going back to the first hypothesis, it becomes clear that the answer is nuanced. While initially deportation did indeed weaken national identity, later it was the reason for the national movement to return to the homeland which resulted in strong national identity. So the first hypothesis is only partially false, meaning it is also partially true.

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<sup>226</sup> Idem.

## Chapter VI: Repatriation to Crimea (*Vatan*)

This chapter will test the second hypothesis, whether repatriation strengthened the national identity of the Crimean Tatars (H2). This chapter evaluates the repatriation process of the Crimean Tatars. What made the Crimean Tatars abandon everything they had in their new homelands (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) and migrate to Crimea? What was their perception of their territory after they returned to Crimea? Why did the rest of the Crimean Tatars remain in post-Soviet countries?

In 1989, large migrations to Crimea began from all the deported nations. After the Soviet disintegration, the flow of Tatars migrating to Crimea was even more immense. Burke estimates that by 1989, approximately 38,000 Crimean Tatars already lived in Crimea. By 1993 about 260,000 returned *en masse* but more than 100,000 remained in Siberia and Central Asia.<sup>227</sup> A recent report from the OSCE indicates that 266,000 Crimean Tatar returnees are living in Crimea (13.6%).<sup>228</sup> Yet for those who are still willing to repatriate to Crimea, are prevented because of economic circumstances.<sup>229</sup>

### Reasons for migration

The new generation had not set foot on Crimean land since they were born, but they learned about their ancestral traumatic past and about the mythical homeland in Crimea from their predecessors. Yet what made the new generation return to Crimea? The main reason behind the repatriation process for their nation was for the communal, historical memory and most importantly, returning justice to the deported peoples in 1944.<sup>230</sup> Symbolically, it was also important for shaping the Crimean Tatar national identity. Ismail and Ays,egu“ Aydingu“n claim

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<sup>227</sup> Eren, Nermin. ‘Crimean Tatar Communities Abroad’, in *The Tatars of Crimea: Return to the Homeland*. Ed. E. A. Allworth. 2nd ed. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998, p. 323.

<sup>228</sup> ‘The Integration of Formerly Deported People in Crimea, Ukraine.’ (2013). Research rept. The Hague: OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). Retrieved from: [www.osce.org/hcnm/78053](http://www.osce.org/hcnm/78053). Among the Crimean Tatar returnees were other indigenous groups that were deported returned to Crimea in early 1990s. These were the Qaraims (Tatar-speaking Jews), Qrymchaqs, Greeks, Armenians, Germans and Bulgarians (according to OSCE census, there are circa 5,000 of these ethnicities living in Crimea). Source: ‘The Integration of Formerly Deported People in Crimea, Ukraine.’ (2013), p. 3

<sup>229</sup> Kelaart Lucy and Vasyuta Genya, 2004.

<sup>230</sup> Biletska, Yulia. (n.d.). “Politics of Memory“ In the process of shaping ethnic identity of Crimean Tatars, Russians and Ukrainians in Crimea. Retrieved on June 22, 2014. P. 48.

that their birth place in Central Asia or Siberia was not their homeland, as they saw themselves as guests there.<sup>231</sup>

However, Kulpin contends that 300 Crimean Tatar interviewees convinced him that the growing nationalism in their homeland in Central Asia had forced them to migrate.<sup>232</sup> The growing ethnocentrism and nationalism in former Soviet Asian Republics instigated migrations of Russian-speakers and the Crimean Tatars that were never considered the rooted population of their newly established republics.<sup>233</sup> In 1988, there were ethnic conflicts in Uzbekistan and in 1989 there were conflicts in Kyrgyzstan, where pogroms were targeted against Meshketian Turks and Crimean Tatars.<sup>234</sup> Such incidents were a sign for many other Crimean Tatars to move. Subsequently, the partial reasons for migration were the repulsions from Central Asia and attraction to Crimea as a historical homeland.

Another important aspect to the repatriation process was that the leaders of the national movement had been preparing them for this migration several decades. Their leadership was successful because they convinced their people that a better solution for their revival as a nation would be to repatriate to their fatherland. It is important to note, that the repatriation process would not have been possible without the disintegration of the Soviet Union, as it became clear in the earlier chapters, the Soviet authorities could not permit the Crimean Tatars to migrate to Crimea. Yet what this repatriation also meant for the leaders of the national movement was a political opportunity for them.<sup>235</sup>

## Establishment of Mejlis

Since their repatriation, for reviving their national identity, the Crimean Tatar leaders have established their own governmental bodies, the Crimean Tatar legislature, Mejlis (also called the executive committee) which serves as a representation of the Crimean Tatar people in Crimea. Their main function is the “elimination of the consequences of the genocide committed by the Soviet state against Crimean Tatars, restoration of the national and political rights of the Crimean

<sup>231</sup> Ismail Aydingu̇n and Ays,egu̇l Aydingu̇n. (2007), p. 122

<sup>232</sup> Kulpin, E. S., (1997), p. 124.

<sup>233</sup> Idem.

<sup>234</sup> Idem, p. 125.

<sup>235</sup> Zaloznaya Marina & Gerber P. Theodore (June 2012), p. 275.

Tatar people, and implementation of its right to free national self-determination in its national territory.<sup>236</sup> The Ukrainian government approved its legality in 1999 with a presidential decree.<sup>237</sup> Their goals are to restore the status of Crimean Tatar language, establish religious institutions and install Crimean Tatar schools, etc.<sup>238</sup> On March 20, 2014 the Ukrainian Rada formally recognized the Crimean Tatars as the “indigenous peoples of Ukraine”.<sup>239</sup> However, the Russian population and the local Crimean government are calling to ban the Mejlis as a governmental body since the Russian annexation of Crimea (2014).<sup>240</sup> Even so, according to RIA Novosti (Russian news) Putin does not recognize the Crimean Tatars as the indigenous population.<sup>241</sup> Subsequently, since their return, the Crimean Tatars have not accomplished to become the titular nation of Crimea in their claimed homeland. What is more, the local population does not recognize them as a nation, but instead as an ethnic group. However, the Crimean Tatar leaders are still working towards political self-determination in the Crimean peninsula.

## Cultural identity

Apart from ethnic conflicts, what are the outcomes in cultural identity from interacting with the local population in Central Asia? Based on their fieldwork, researchers, Ismail and Ays,egu“Aydingu“n from Turkey suggest, that the Crimean Tatar cultural identity became hybrid from inter-ethnic relations.<sup>242</sup> The leaders of the Crimean Tatar movement saw this inter-ethnic relation as a threat to the preservation of their cultural identity.<sup>243</sup> Throughout the years in exile their cultural identity has been fading away while adopting cultural identities of other nations, mostly towards the Soviet Russian culture and language.<sup>244</sup> In addition, Kulpin claims that the Crimean Tatar began to feel more European amongst their Asian neighbors, and he emphasizes

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<sup>236</sup> ‘Crimean Tatars: Increasing Tensions Between Mejlis And De Facto Authorities’. (May 6, 2014). Unrepresented Nations

and People Organizations. Retrieved on 22 June 2014 from: <http://www.unpo.org/article/17111>.

<sup>237</sup> Idem.

<sup>238</sup> Allworth, Edward. (1998), p. 259.

<sup>239</sup> ‘Crimean Tatars: Increasing Tensions Between Mejlis And De Facto Authorities.’ (2014).

<sup>240</sup> Idem.

<sup>241</sup> ‘Russia Mulls Recognizing Crimean Tatars as Indigenous People – Putin.’ RIA Novosti 16 May 2014: RIA Novosti. Web. 22 June 2014. <http://en.ria.ru/russia/20140516/189871756/Russia-Mulls-Recognizing-Crimean-Tatars-as-Indigenous-People-.html>

<sup>242</sup> Ismail Aydingu“n and Ays,egu“l Aydingu“n. (2007), p. 119.

<sup>243</sup> Zaloznaya Marina & Gerber P. Theodore (June 2012), p. 275.

<sup>244</sup> Kulpin, E. S. 1997, p. 125.

that the Crimean Tatars became an ideal example of a Eurasian nation based on these transformations<sup>245</sup> Thus the Turkish scholars claim that the Crimean Tatar intelligentsia in Crimea attempt to revive their cultural identity to make their nation more unified. In the process of reviving cultural identity the Crimean Tatars have established 15 schools in their native language. However, Senior Policy Fellow, Andrew Wilson claims in his report that only 3% of the Crimean Tatar children are taught in their native language and only in the first years.<sup>246</sup> According to UNESCO heritage, the Crimean Tatar language is now formally an “endangered language”.<sup>247</sup> Wilson recommends that there should be about 80 Crimean Tatar schools. According to Ismail Aydinguñ and Ays,egu'l Aydinguñ, the Crimean Tatars created newspapers in their native language and they even made a Crimean Tatar TV channel but based on Wilson’s observations, the media is not well developed.<sup>248</sup> In addition, the Crimean Tatar cultural heritage is neglected, and because there are constant ethnic conflicts in Crimea, their mosques and cemeteries are often being attacked.<sup>249</sup>

## Socioeconomic and political problems

Most of the Tatars left their belongings and professions behind and moved to Crimea where the living standard was actually worse than where they came from in Central Asia. The largest problem was that Ukraine had no policies or programs for the migrations of Former Deported Peoples (FDP). At the time of large migrations after the Soviet collapse (1991-2001) the Crimean Tatars and other FDPs could not obtain the Ukrainian nationality. This issue caused further problems to have access to education, political representation, employment, health care and housing.<sup>250</sup> Yet in 2001, a nationality policy was launched which made it possible for the FDPs to obtain a Ukrainian nationality. In addition, three programs were introduced focusing on the “adaption, integration and resettlement” of the FDPs.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Idem, p. 126.

<sup>246</sup> Wilson, A. ‘The Crimean Tatars: A Quarter of a Century after Their Return.’ (Martinus Nijhoff, 2013). Security and Human Rights. p. 428.

<sup>247</sup> Idem.

<sup>248</sup> Ismail Aydinguñ and Ays,egu'l Aydinguñ. (2007), p. 274; Wilson, A. (2013), p. 429.

<sup>249</sup> Wilson, A. (2013), p. 429.

<sup>250</sup> Zaloznaya Marina & Gerber P. Theodore (June 2012), p. 274.

<sup>251</sup> Idem.

Concerning their professional status, persons with higher education and respectable employment would most likely work on farms and low-income interdisciplinary jobs because there were no jobs available for them on the peninsula.<sup>252</sup> This was in the cases when they did find employment, but over half of the adult population could not find employment according to 1999 and 2004 census.<sup>253</sup> According to Kulpin's investigation, about 85% of the returnees' in 1994-1996 claimed that their financial situation had worsened. Therefore it seems more likely that their migration to Crimea was not to gain economic prosperity. Nevertheless, they persistently kept on returning to Crimea. The large population of repatriates returning to Crimea had also no housing space for them. The desperate situation made them squat land where they built houses themselves, which caused a lot of disputes with the authorities. This situation continues today, according to OSCE there are circa 8,000-15,000 people squatting 2,000 hectares of land.<sup>254</sup> Official Ukrainian sources state that in 1999, about half of the Crimean Tatar population did not have permanent housing.<sup>255</sup>

Regarding the second hypothesis, whether the repatriation strengthened the Crimean Tatar national identity, it appears to be true but the actual process of nation-building has proven to be quite slow and there are still some obstacles (political hegemonies) that prevent the Crimean Tatars to have the full freedom in constructing their nation.

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<sup>252</sup> Yakupova, Venera, (2002), p. 22.

<sup>253</sup> Zaloznaya Marina & Gerber P. Theodore (June 2012), p. 274.

<sup>254</sup> The Integration of Formerly Deported People in Crimea, Ukraine. (2013). Research rept. The Hague: OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM). p. 12.

<sup>255</sup> Idem.

## Results and discussion

Before the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, the status of the Crimean Tatar national identity was a constructed community that was gradually developing its national identity (by the Crimean Tatar elites and the Soviet nationality policy).

Yet the first analyzed independent variable, deportation, had caused a discontinuity to the developmental construction of nation. This had created an identity crisis. The Crimean Tatar national identity was undermined by the Soviet authorities after the deportation. Therefore, the external forces (Soviet authorities) had influenced the awareness of national consciousness even more than ever before. This can be identified as the “contingent event” of nationhood, where an external force has sparked the feeling of nationalism in a community, because its right to self-determination has been confiscated. This occurrence had transcended into a national movement and stimulated the community to plan and confront ‘external forces’ in order to achieve their rights to self-determination. This national movement, in turn, strengthened their feeling of national identity even during their exile in the Soviet Union. This means that the first hypothesis is partially true.

Secondly, the disintegration of the Soviet Union gave way to the repatriation process. The second independent variable, repatriation, shaped the Crimean Tatar national identity to revive their cultural, social and political rights. Yet they are still constructing their national identity, but this time, by the consolidated Crimean Tatar elite. Thus, this elite work with primordial ideas that they belong to the Crimean territory and that they are truly the indigenous population of Crimea. In addition, the new ‘external force’ (Russia) is now testing the Crimean Tatars and their established governmental body. They are questioning whether the Crimean Tatars are the true indigenous population of Crimea. The repatriation has proven that the feeling of national identity is strong because a large number of the Crimean Tatars moved from Central Asia to Crimea. The adaption in Crimea had caused many difficulties, but it did not stop them from nation-building. Now they are living in their ‘destined’ territory and they can strengthen their national identity. In this case, the second hypothesis is true.

## Conclusion

This thesis focused on the evolution of national identity of the Crimean Tatars during the Soviet Union. After putting the Crimean Tatar nation building process and national identity formation in context by tracing the historical background of their struggle, this research focused on two specific processes, both triggered in one way or another by the Soviet Union. The deportation and subsequent repatriation (after the fall of the Soviet Union) of the Crimean Tatars were analyzed in the context of their role in strengthening national identity. To this end, the thesis sought to answer the question, to what extent deportation and repatriation strengthened Crimean Tatar national identity? The two independent variables were proved partially true and true, respectively. The results point to the fact that it is tumultuous events like these, the deportation of a whole nation from its original homeland to other distant and dispersed locations, that can be a strong enough reason, the so-called ‘contingent event’ described above, that shapes an entire nation and the next 50 years or more of its existence.

This analysis adds to academic research into ethnic groups, nation building processes, factors influencing national identity formation, displaced nations within the Soviet Union, and the effect of Soviet policies on national groups within its territory. Furthermore, it provides perspectives through which to assess current events and to better understand developments in Crimea by focusing the attention on the fate of ethnic groups like the Crimean Tatars within larger territorial units. After returning to Crimea, the Crimean Tatars embarked on a process to restore their government but that may become more difficult after Crimea was annexed by Russia for the second time. Now the Crimean Tatars are working on recollecting their ancestral cultural identity, which has been almost completely destroyed after their deportation. However, another question is, will the Crimean Tatars be able to remain in their traditional homeland and continue restoring their cultural heritage in the current situation?

Therefore, following the results from this thesis and current events, future research should explore the current and future Russian influence on the Crimean Tatars, since Russia ‘re-annexed’ the Crimean peninsula. Various Russian news sources predict that the Crimean Tatar governing body will be dissolved, or that their status of being the indigenous population in Crimea will be re-examined. Moreover, already two representatives of the Crimean Tatars have

been recently banned for entering the Crimean peninsula for another five years.<sup>256</sup> What will the fate of the Crimean Tatar nation and their political stance in Crimea be is difficult to predict but it is definitely a fruitful arena for further research into the Crimean Tatar nation and in particular its national identity formation processes.

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<sup>256</sup> ‘Russia bars second Tatar leader from entering Crimea’. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Retrieved on 2014, July 7, from RFERL Website: <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-crimea-chubarov-ban-entrance-dzhemilev-tatars/25447708.html>

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