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## **The 1944 Soviet Deportation of Crimean Tatars to Uzbekistan and the Urals as Special Settlers**

### **Abstract**

Shortly following the recapture of the Crimean peninsula from German occupation in 1944, the Stalin regime decided to forcibly remove the Crimean Tatar population to Uzbekistan. This decision was officially made on 11 V 1944 and carried out on 18-20 V 1944. The NKVD rounded up close to 200,000 Crimean Tatars during those three days and sent them by train eastward towards Central Asia. Uzbekistan remained the destination for the vast majority of the deportees. More than 150,000 Crimean Tatar deportees arrived in Uzbekistan in the summer of 1944. The Soviet government resettled over a third of these men, women, and children in Tashkent Oblast outside of the capital city of the republic. In Uzbekistan the NKVD initially settled most of these deportees on kolkhozes and sovkhozes to work as agricultural workers. Malaria, malnutrition, and other maladies claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Crimean Tatar lives during their first couple of years in Uzbekistan. These deadly material conditions convinced many Crimean Tatars to subsequently go find jobs in mines, factories, and constructions sites where they could get better access to medicine and food. The Soviet authorities sent around another 30,000 Crimean Tatars to the Urals and other regions of the R.S.F.S.R. In the Urals the NKVD employed the deported Crimean Tatars in forestry work felling trees. The Soviet government placed the Crimean Tatars both in Uzbekistan and the Urals under special settlement restrictions confining them to their new places of residence and work until 28 IV 1956. Even after this date, however, they were not allowed to return home. This article is on their material and legal conditions from 18 V 1944 until 28 IV 1956, a period of 12 years that had a traumatic and long lasting effect upon the national development of the Crimean Tatars. The source base for this article consists mostly of archival documents from the State Archives of the Russian Federation (GARF). Some of these I had access to directly while others are reproduced in published document collections.

**Key words:** Crimean Tatars, Soviet deportations, Special Settlers, Crimean Peninsula, Uzbekistan

## Introduction

The Crimean Tatars were the third largest deported nationality after Germans and Chechens in the USSR forcibly removed from their homeland and sent eastward by the NKVD as special settlers. They were accused of being a treasonous nation to the USSR and uprooted and resettled in Uzbekistan, the Urals, and other regions distant from their homeland despite the fact that the majority of the population were women, children, and old men. The number of Crimean Tatars to assist the German occupation in any way was a small minority. The eviction of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea was almost total and virtually the entire population found itself subjected to the harsh edicts of the special settlement regime and a severe lack of almost all necessities. Housing, food, and medicine were all in short supply and this deprivation directly led to a large minority of the population dying prematurely in Uzbekistan and elsewhere.

The aim of this article is provide a solid narrative of the Crimean Tatar people's tragic fate between the years 1944 when the Stalin regime deported most of them to Uzbekistan and the Urals until their release from the special settlement restrictions in 1956. It does this primarily thorough an examination of the relevant documents in the GARF (State Archives of the Russian Federation) collections in Moscow regarding the NKVD's removal of the Crimean Tatars from the Crimean ASSR, their transportation eastward, and their life as special settlers. Supplementing these documents are other records from the same files that I did not examine personally reproduced in document collections published in Moscow and some secondary sources by Russian scholars. The article thus relies almost exclusively upon material generated by the Stalin regime itself for its own archives. This is in line with most historical research on the Crimean Tatars during this period for as Yaacov Ro'i has pointed out the available written documentation „is almost entirely regime material, whether of the party, regional leaders, or secret police, for the peoples concerned left, to all intents and purposes, no written source material whatever<sup>1</sup>”. This has resulted in much of the recent historical research and literature presenting a similar top down approach of describing the actions of the Soviet state and particularly the NKVD against the Crimean Tatars. This orientation can clearly be seen in the works of scholars like N.F. Bugai and Pavel Polian, both of whom rely almost entirely on sources originally from GARF, and have very

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<sup>1</sup> Y. Ro'i, *The Transformation of Historiography on the 'Punished Peoples'*, „History and Memory” 2009, vol. 21, no. 2, p. 152.

few references to material generated by the Crimean Tatar deportees themselves. The few exceptions to this approach have mostly been by non-historians. In the case of the Crimean Tatars the work of anthropologist Greta Uehling who conducted research on the memory of the 1944 deportations and subsequent time as special settlers using oral interviews is most notable. But, given the limited written contemporary primary sources are almost all from the GARF archives as Ro'i has noted, most recent historical research including this article rely very heavily upon material from the Stalin regime itself despite its biases and problems. The basic events detailed in the archives match with the memories and oral histories of the events handed down for two generations now among the Crimean Tatars. The archives, however, unlike these oral sources reveal a huge amount of statistical data that was previously unavailable to researchers.

### **The Soviets Retake the Crimean Peninsula**

As the Soviet military reoccupied Crimea in May 1944 the NKVD and NKGB began to purge the peninsula of what they considered to be anti-Soviet elements. By 18 V 1944 this would include almost the entire Crimean Tatar population, the indigenous people of the region. By 7 V 1944, the NKVD and NKGB had arrested 5,381 people and confiscated 5,395 rifles, 387 machine guns, 250 sub-machine guns, and 31 mortars as well as a large number of grenades and rifle ammunition. A report from 10 V 1944 from head of the NKVD Beria, to head of the GKO (State Defense Committee) Stalin accused the Crimean Tatars of mass treason claiming that over 20,000 had defected from the Red Army in 1941 and gone over with their arms to fight with the Germans. The report goes on to claim these deserters were organized by the Tatar National Committees established by the Germans to help rule the territory into military, punitive, and police detachments. These detachments fought against the Red Army and Soviet partisans. Beria further accused the Tatar National Committees of assisting the Germans in forcibly sending 50,000 Soviet citizens to Germany and confiscating their property for use by the German army. On the basis of these alleged acts of treason by Crimean Tatars against the USSR, Beria asked that the GKO authorize the forced removal of all Crimean Tatars from the Crimean peninsula. The report then suggests that the Crimean Tatars be resettled as special settlers in the Uzbek SSR to work on kolkhozes and sovkhozes as well as in industry and construction. An arid republic with hot summers, the climate and physical conditions in Uzbekistan differed radically from Crimea. In particular the presence of malaria greatly increased the morbidity and premature mortality of the deported Crimean Tatars arriving in Uzbekistan. The deportation of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Uzbekistan was to be coordinated with Secretary of the Central

Committee of the Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Uzbekistan, Yusupov. This massive relocation would involve from 140,000-160,000 Crimean Tatars. This is an under-count, the actual number of Crimean Tatars deported in May 1944 was considerably higher. The operation was initially planned to start on 20-21 V 1944 and finish on June first 1944. It only awaited final approval by Stalin, the chairman of the GKO<sup>2</sup>. The basic outline for the ethnic cleansing of all Crimean Tatars from their ancestral homeland to Uzbekistan had already been established by Beria under the spurious justification of unproved treason by some 10% of their population.

### The Deportation Order

The next day on 11 V 1944, the GKO issued a resolution simply titled On Crimean Tatars numbered 5859ss signed by the chairman of the committee, Joseph Stalin. This five page document has two paragraphs of preamble repeating the accusations of Beria's report the previous day followed by nine operative clauses on carrying out the deportation of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Uzbekistan as special settlers. The exact same charges as made by Beria are repeated by Stalin, but without any of the numerical quantification of the first document. The first operative clause states:

All Tatars are to be evicted from the territory of Crimea and settled as permanent inhabitants with the status of special settlers in districts of the Uzbek SSR. The eviction is to be undertaken by the NKVD USSR. The NKVD USSR (Comrade Beria) is required to finish the eviction of the Crimean Tatars by 1 VI 1944<sup>3</sup>.

The second operative clause of the deportation order established the order and conditions of the resettlement. Each deported family was allowed to bring 500 kilograms with them into exile. The personal and collective property they were forced to abandon was to be taken over by the people's commissariats of procurement, agriculture, and sovkhozes. The deportees were to receive vouchers for livestock, grain, vegetables, and other agricultural produce to be redeemed by the appropriate peoples' commissariat in their new places of settlement before 1 VII 1944. Responsibility for the actual transport of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Uzbekistan in train wagons fell to head of the NKPS (Peoples' Commissariat of Transportation) Lazar Kaganovich. Each train echelon was to have a medical car with one doctor and two nurses. Also hot food and boiled water were to be provided every day to the Crimean Tatars during their transit. Operative clause

<sup>2</sup> GARF, F. 9401, o. 2, d. 65, ll. 41-43.

<sup>3</sup> GARF, F. 9401, o. 2, d. 65, l. 45.

number three deals with the arrival and distribution of the deportees in Uzbekistan. The settlement of the arriving deportees in Uzbekistan was assigned to the head of the Communist Party in Uzbekistan, Yusupov, head of the Uzbek SSR Council of People's Commissars, Abdurakhmanov, and head of the Uzbek SSR NKVD, Kobulov. They had until 1 VII 1944 to settle the Crimean Tatar special settlers on sovkhozes, kolkhozes, auxiliary agricultural enterprises and factory settlements for use in agricultural and industrial labor. The decree again gives the number of Crimean Tatars to be settled as special settlers in Uzbekistan as 140,000 to 160,000. This is roughly accurate since the additional Crimean Tatars deported from their homeland by the NKVD were settled in locations other than Uzbekistan. Settlement on individual kolkhozes, sovkhozes, and other settlements was to be done by truck or car from the train stations. In their new residences the deportees were to receive kitchen plots and assistance in constructing houses. Operative clause number four details the form of this assistance was to take. This assistance was to take the form of loans of up to 5,000 rubles per a family to be paid in installments of up to seven years. They were also to be immediately placed under the authority of special commandants of the NKVD. Operative clause number five deals with the immediate problem of feeding the arriving Crimean Tatar deportees in Uzbekistan. The Crimean Tatar special settlers were to receive free flour, groats, and vegetables for the months June through August 1944<sup>4</sup>. The amount of this food assistance was quite meagre. It was a mere 8 kg of flour, 8 kg of vegetables, and 2 kg of cereal per a person per month<sup>5</sup>. Operative clauses six through nine deal with the provision of resources for the NKVD to carry out the mass resettlement of Crimean Tatars from Crimea to various settlements in Uzbekistan<sup>6</sup>. This resolution formed the legislative basis for the deportation of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Uzbekistan and confining them to settlements in that republic as special settlers under severe legal restrictions.

On 21 V 1944 in accordance with a suggestion by Beria the GKO ordered the diversion of 10,000 Crimean Tatar families on route to Uzbekistan to the Urals for work for the People's Commissariat of Forestry mainly to work felling trees. In particular the NKVD assigned them to work as special settlers under special commandants in Sverdlovsk, Molotov, and Gorky Oblasts and the Mari ASSR<sup>7</sup>. These wet forests with their cold and damp winters differed as much from the more temperate climate of Crimea as did Uzbekistan. Here tuberculosis rather than malaria was a major contributor to morbidity and premature death. But, there was also a typhus outbreak among the Crimean Tatars in Molotov Oblast

<sup>4</sup> GARF, F. 9401, o. 2, d. 65, ll. 44-48.

<sup>5</sup> GARF, F. 9401, o. 2, d. 65, l. 50.

<sup>6</sup> GARF, F. 9401, o. 2, d. 65, ll. 44-48.

<sup>7</sup> *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma: Dokumenty, fakty, kommentarii*, ed. N.F. Bugai, Moskva 2002, doc. 43, p. 74.

in fall 1944<sup>8</sup>. As well in Sverdlovsk Oblast<sup>9</sup>. This was followed by an outbreak of typhus among deportees from Crimea in Gorky Oblast during December 1944<sup>10</sup>. These outbreaks were the result of overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions.

## The Deportation from Crimea to Uzbekistan

The NKVD began the mass round up and deportation of the Crimean Tatars from Crimea to Uzbekistan and the Urals on 18 V 1944. Two of Beria's closest associates in the security organs, Ivan Serov who was Deputy Commissar of the NKVD and Bogdan Kobulov Deputy Commissar of the NKGB. They kept Beria informed of the progress of the three day operation to deport all the Crimean Tatars from Crimea by telegram. They sent the first one on the evening of the first day. This telegram from Serov and Kobulov to Beria on the progress of the deportation noted that by 8 pm that night that the NKVD had rounded up 90,000 Crimean Tatars and taken them to train stations. Over half of these men, women, and children 48,400 had already been loaded on 17 echelons and sent eastward<sup>11</sup>. By noon the next day the NKVD had vastly increased these numbers. At that time they had loaded 119,424 Crimean Tatars onto train echelons and sent them on their way to Uzbekistan<sup>12</sup>. Six hours later the number of Crimean Tatars in transit to their places of settlement as special settlers had increased to 136,412 in 44 train echelons<sup>13</sup>. The next day, 20 V 1944, the NKVD completed the operation to deport the Crimean Tatars to Uzbekistan. They had loaded a recorded total of 180,014 Crimean Tatars into train wagons and sent the echelons eastward<sup>14</sup>. A summary of the operation by Serov and Kobulov to Beria on 20 V 1944 noted that in addition to the 180,014 Crimean Tatars deported as special settlers that the Soviet army had also conscripted 6,000 Crimean Tatars for labor in Gur'ev, Rybinsk, and Kuibyshev. Another 5,000 had been sent to work in the Moscow coal trust. This brought the total number of Crimean Tatars evicted from Crimea in May 1944 up to 191,044. In addition to these people the NKVD arrested 5,989 people during the operation, 1,137 for being „anti-Soviet elements”<sup>15</sup>. In a mere three days the NKVD had forcibly removed nearly 200,000 Crimean Tatars from their

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem, doc. 85, p. 97.

<sup>9</sup> Ibidem, doc. 131, pp. 143-144.

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, doc. 132, p. 144.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, doc. 58, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, doc. 60, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup> Ibidem, doc. 61, p. 87.

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, doc. 63, p. 88.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, doc. 66, p. 89.

ancestral homeland and sent them to Uzbekistan and the Urals to live and work as special settlers.

The journey by train from Crimea to Uzbekistan was quite difficult. Even the official rations assigned to the deportees by the Soviet government were quite meagre. They amounted to only 500 grams of bread, 70 grams of meat or fish, 60 grams of cereal, and 10 grams of fat per person per day<sup>16</sup>. This lack of food especially protein and fat would continue years into their exile in Uzbekistan before finally being rectified.

### Initial Distribution of Crimean Tatar Deportees

On 25 VI 1944 Colonel of state security Mal'tsev wrote a report for Deputy Chief of the NKVD, Chernyshov on the arrival, distribution, and conditions of Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan. The resettlement of the Crimean Tatars to Uzbekistan was completed on 11 VI 1944. The total number of Crimean Tatars to arrive in Uzbekistan by this date was 35,275 families with total of 151,604 individual members. These were divided among 26,749 adult men, 53,537 adult women, and 71,318 children. As can be seen from these figures almost half of the deported Crimean Tatars to arrive in Uzbekistan were children and less than 18% were adult men. The largest number of the Crimean Tatar deportees were settled in Tashkent Oblast, 56,641 Crimean Tatars followed by Samarkand Oblast with 31,604<sup>17</sup>. They were settled in regions of these oblasts outside the cities and urban centers.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Crimean Tatar Special Settlers, 11 VI 1944

Oblast in Uzbekistan	Number of Deportees
Tashkent	56,641
Samarkand	31,604
Andizhan	19,773
Ferghana	16,096
Namangan	13,431
Kashkadarya	10,012
Bukhara	4,047
<b>Total</b>	<b>151,604</b>

Source: GARF F. 9479, o. 1, d. 180, l. 5

<sup>16</sup> GARF, F. 9401, o. 2, d. 65, l. 49.

<sup>17</sup> GARF, F. 9479, o. 1, d. 180, l. 5.

## Division of Labor among Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan

Most Crimean Tatars deported to Uzbekistan were initially employed in agriculture, mostly on kolkhozes. In June 1944 a full 87,116 Crimean Tatar special settlers in Uzbekistan lived and worked on kolkhozes versus 30,315 on sovkhoses, and 34,173 at industrial enterprises and construction sites<sup>18</sup>. According to one NKVD report housing on kolkhozes for the special settlers in Uzbekistan was satisfactory. While housing on sovkhoses was crowded. But, housing at industrial and construction sites was in extremely short supply and the Crimean Tatars were often housed in buildings unsuitable for human habitation. On kolkhozes Crimean Tatar families were housed in sections of small houses and were supposed to be given kitchen plots to grow vegetables and fruits. On sovkhoses each family had only a single room for living space. Housing for the Crimean Tatars resettled in Uzbekistan was worst for those working in industry and construction. Many industrial enterprises and construction sites did not have any free housing available for the newly arrived Crimean Tatar deportees. So they were housed in barracks, dugouts, club houses, school buildings and similar structures. At the construction site for the Nizhne Bozsu hydroelectric station in Tashkent Oblast a full 850 Crimean Tatar families lived in half destroyed dugouts under extremely compact conditions. Up to 15 families lived in each dugout. At the Yangi-Yul brick factory also in Tashkent Oblast a 100 Crimean Tatar families with 450 people were housed in the rooms of the summer club<sup>19</sup>. Although the housing conditions at industrial factories and construction sites was far worse than on kolkhozes, they were often preferred by Crimean Tatars who moved to them in large numbers during their first year in exile due to offering stable wages capable of buying food. In contrast the lack of kitchen plots to grow food for many Crimean Tatars on kolkhozes meant that they had a worse diet.

A report from Beria to Stalin on 4 VII 1944 gives a breakdown of the deportees from Crimea during 1944. The total number of people subjected to forced resettlement by the NKVD from Crimea to other regions of the USSR was 225,009. The vast majority of these, 183,155 were Crimean Tatars. Uzbekistan was the destination for 151,604 of the Crimean Tatar special settlers. The NKVD sent the remaining 31,551 Crimean Tatar deportees to various areas of the RSFSR in accordance with a GKO resolution issued on 21 V 1944<sup>20</sup>. One of these areas was the Mari ASSR which received 9,177 Crimean Tatar special settlers<sup>21</sup>. Another was Gorky Oblast which on 1 IX 1944 had a total of 5,095 Crimean Tatars<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> GARF, F. 9479, o. 1, d. 180, l. 5.

<sup>19</sup> GARF, F. 9479, o. 1, d. 180, l. 6.

<sup>20</sup> GARF, F. P-9401, o. 2, d. 65, l. 275.

<sup>21</sup> *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma...*, doc. 79, p. 94.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 83, p. 96.



A significant number of Crimean Tatar special settlers in both Uzbekistan and the RSFSR had already been assigned to work on kolkhozes, sovkhozes, in lumber preparation, for various industrial enterprises, and on construction sites by early July 1944. In addition to the Crimean Tatars, the NKVD had also evicted 15,040 ethnic Greeks, 12,422 Bulgarians, 9,621 Armenians, 1,119 Germans, and 3,652 foreign citizens from Crimea in 1944. The 38,202 Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, and Germans with Soviet citizenship were sent to the Bashkir ASSR, the Mari ASSR, Kemerovo Oblast, Molotov Oblast, Sverdlovsk Oblast, and Kirov Oblast in the RSFSR as well as Gur'ev Oblast in Kazakhstan. The 3,652 foreigners were resettled in Ferghana Oblast Uzbekistan<sup>23</sup>. After the Germans and North Caucasians the Crimeans were the third largest contingent of national deportees assigned special settler status.

Ironically, despite the initial much better housing conditions on kolkhozes and sovkhozes for Crimean Tatar special settlers in Uzbekistan than at industrial and construction sites, during the first two years after their resettlement, the percentage of Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan working outside of agriculture more than doubled from 1944 to 1945 as they migrated away from kolkhozes and sovkhozes to work for wages in industry and construction<sup>24</sup>. This migration was due to a large number of kolkhoz workers and their families having no access to kitchen plots to grow food. On 20 V 1945, a year after the initial deportation from Crimea, there were 36,415 families of Crimean Tatar special settlers with 131,690 people in Uzbekistan spread across Tashkent, Samarkand, Ferghana, Andizhan, Namangan, Kashkadariya, and Bukhara oblasts. The number living on kolkhozes was 14,712 families with 54,253 people (41.2%). The number living on sovkhozes was considerably lower at 7,633 families with 26,994 (20%) members. But, the number living at industrial and construction sites almost equaled those living kolkhozes by this date. This category had 14,050 families consisting of 50,447(38.3%) people. A main motivating factor for the move from kolkhozes to industrial and construction sites was a lack of kitchen plots to grow food. Only 7,904 (56.25%) or a little over half of the families living on kolkhozes with 20,108 people had access to kitchen plots by the end of May 1945<sup>25</sup>. Stable wages working in factories and building sites provided greater food security than working on a kolkhoz without access to a kitchen garden.

Initially in summer 1944 among the Crimean Tatar special settlers arriving in Uzbekistan out of 72,104 adults capable of working they were divided between 42,035 kolkhoz workers (58.3%), 15,697 sovkhoz workers (21.7%), and 14,872 workers (20%) in factories and construction. This number does not include those

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<sup>23</sup> GARF, F. P-9401, o. 2, d. 65, l. 275.

<sup>24</sup> GARF, F. 9479, o. 1, d. 246, l. 46.

<sup>25</sup> *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma...*, doc. 134, pp. 145-146.

not deemed capable of labor so is considerably lower than the figures for the total population in Uzbekistan discussed above. The biggest difference is that it did not include the large number of Crimean Tatar children deported into Uzbekistan that were dependents rather than workers. This rapidly changed to more workers in factories and construction and less in agriculture during the next year. A year later the division of labor among Crimean Tatar special settlers in Uzbekistan was 21,662 kolkhoz workers (37%), 13,041 sovkhoz workers (22%), and 24,364 workers in factories and construction (41%)<sup>26</sup>. Thus kolkhoz workers went from a majority of Crimean Tatar workers in Uzbekistan to less than the plurality employed working in industry and building.

This movement away from agricultural work on kolkhozes towards industrial work and construction created a special economic niche in Uzbekistan for the Crimean Tatars. The vast majority of ethnic Uzbeks preferred to work in their traditional agricultural pursuits rather than take jobs in factories or on construction sites. Likewise the Soviet government found it difficult to entice Russians and others from outside of Uzbekistan to move to the republic to take these jobs. The Crimean Tatars found themselves taking these jobs by dint of economic necessity and often for reasons of basic survival.

### **Material Conditions and Excess Mortality among the Crimean Tatars**

Material conditions for the Crimean Tatar special settlers remained difficult into the summer of 1945. A little over a tenth of them, 3,660 families still lacked adequate housing according to the NKVD<sup>27</sup>. In June and July 1945 the Soviet government had to provide a significant amount of food aid to Uzbekistan to help feed the Crimean Tatar special settlers. But, in some cases this was not sufficient. On the Narpay sovkhoz the conditions of Crimean Tatars were so bad that the Soviet government ordered 329 families (2,639 people) relocated on 18 X 1945 to work on sovkhozes in Tajikistan lest they perish from lack of necessities<sup>28</sup>. This transfer is the origin of the Crimean Tatar population that lived in Tajikistan after World War II.

As a result of these poor material conditions the Crimean Tatar special settlers in Uzbekistan suffered hugely increased rates of excess premature mortality as a result of malnutrition and disease in Uzbekistan. From 1 VII 1944 to 1 VII 1945, the NKVD recorded 22,355 deaths or 14.81% among the Crimean Tatar

<sup>26</sup> GARF, F. 9479, o. 1, d. 246, l. 46.

<sup>27</sup> *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma...*, doc. 134, pp. 145-146.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 135, p. 146.

special settlers that had arrived in Uzbekistan in May and June 1944<sup>29</sup>. This elevated mortality rate left 1,483 Crimean Tatar children in Uzbekistan orphans by 10 VI 1945<sup>30</sup>. This high death rate would continue among the Crimean Tatar special settlers in Uzbekistan for the next couple of years.

Material conditions for the Crimean Tatars sent to the Urals were also dismal in 1944. A report by Colonel Mal'kov, the chief of the Special Settlement Section of GULag NKVD on 10 X 1944 described the conditions in Kostroma Oblast endured by Crimean Tatars and other special settlers. There were 6,387 Crimean Tatar special settlers in the territory at the time. In Kologrivsk Raion the construction of winter barracks moved slowly and a lack of glass prevented windows from being repaired. Furthermore clothes and shoes were not issued to the special settlers and they worked barefoot in the forests. The supply of food was irregular and of poor quality. Often special settlers went 2-3 days without bread. From 16 to 20 VIII 1944, no bread at all was issued to the special settlers at Fofanovsk. The bread supplied to the families of those special settlers working in forestry in Kologrivsk Raion amounted to only 150 grams a person per day. In addition to food supplies being unsatisfactory so was medical care and there were outbreaks of dysentery and various skin diseases due to poor diet and hygiene<sup>31</sup>. The Crimean Tatars and other special settlers were just above prisoners in the Soviet government's hierarchy for receiving clothing, shoes, food, and medicine. As a result they received precious few of these necessary resources.

A third group of Crimean Tatars were the 5,000 men mobilized to work in the Moscow and Tula coal basins. On 20 VI 1946 there were still 1,334 Crimean Tatars mining coal in the Moscow region and 2,532 in Tula for a total of 3,866. These workers were permanently attached to their respective enterprises on 18 VII 1945. Unlike most special settlers in industry they were not at this time allowed to bring their families from Uzbekistan to join them and as a result their wives and children suffered from extreme poverty since they were not capable of working<sup>32</sup>. As of 8 III 1947 despite attempts for over a year the Crimean Tatars mining coal in the Moscow and Tula oblasts were still not allowed to reunite with their families<sup>33</sup>. They only received this right on 17 VIII 1947<sup>34</sup>. The use of Crimean Tatars in extractive industries like coal mining in Moscow and Tula as well as forestry in the Urals diversified the group's geographical dispersion as well its occupational profile.

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<sup>29</sup> GARF, F. 9479, o. 1, d. 246, l. 45.

<sup>30</sup> *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma...*, doc. 136, p. 146.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 130, pp. 142-143.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 141, pp. 151-152.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 145, p. 155.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, doc. 147, p. 156.

The deplorable material conditions and unfamiliar climates of Uzbekistan and the Urals took a heavy toll on the deported Crimean Tatar special settlers. The lack of proper housing, food, clothing, and medicine greatly facilitated the spread of infectious diseases and reduced their immunity to these illnesses. The result of course was widespread epidemics of malaria, typhus, dysentery, and other maladies that had a much higher than normal lethal nature. Assessing the exact demographic losses suffered by the Crimean Tatars as a result of this material deprivation is impossible. But, even the incomplete and probably understated numbers found in the Soviet archives are horrible enough.

### **The Special Settlement Regime**

The Stalin regime placed the Crimean Tatars and other deported peoples under the same legal restrictions it had earlier imposed on kulaks sent into internal exile in 1930-1931. These restrictions were streamlined into a single codified resolution by the SNK (Council of People's Commissariats) on 8 I 1945. These restrictions prevented the Crimean Tatar and other special settlers from leaving their assigned place of residence without special NKVD permission and required them to inform the NKVD of all births, deaths, and escapes among members of their families. I have translated the relevant document into English and reproduced it below.

Council of People's Commissariats Union of SSRs Resolution No. 35

From 8 I 1945 Moscow, Kremlin

On the legal situation of special settlers

Council of Peoples Commissariats Union of SSRs RESOLVES:

1. Special settlers enjoy all rights of citizens of the USSR, with the exception of restrictions, provided for in the present Resolution.
2. All able bodied special settlers are obliged to be engaged in socially useful labor. Towards this goal local Soviets of workers deputies in coordination with organs of the NKVD are to organize labor arrangements of the special settlers in agriculture, industrial enterprises, construction, and economic cooperative organizations and institutions.

The violation of labor discipline by special settlers is subject to punishment according to existing laws.

3. Special settlers do not have the right without the authorization of the NKVD special commandant to be absent from the boundaries of the region of settlement served by their special commandant. Voluntary absence from the boundaries of the region of settlement, served by the special commandant, will be viewed as flight and treated as a criminal matter.

4. Special settlers – heads of families or people substituting for them are required within a three day period to report to the special commandant of the NKVD all events that change the composition of the family (birth of a child, death of a family member, flight, etc.).

5. Special settlers are obliged to strictly observe the established regime and social order of the places of settlement and obey all orders of the special commandant of the NKVD.

The violation of the regime and social order in the places of settlement by special settlers is subject to administrative sanction in the form of a fine up to 100 rubles or arrest up to five days.

Deputy Chairman

Council of Peoples Commissariats Union of SSRs V. Molotov

Administrative Affairs Council of People's Commissars Union of SSRs Ya. Chadaev<sup>35</sup>.

The NKVD commandant network in Uzbekistan monitoring and controlling the Crimean Tatars had less than 200 officers to watch over and discipline a population of nearly 200,000 or about one per thousand. The NKVD only had 76 special commandants and 103 assistant special commandants in the republic<sup>36</sup>. It was therefore extremely understaffed.

The lack of enforcement personnel in the NKVD commandant system led to a number of escapes and attempts to return home by special settlers. This was true of all the national contingents including Chechens, Germans, and Kalmyks as well as Crimean Tatars. From 1944-1948 the UNKVD/UMVD in Crimea searched for 2,734 deportees that had fled from the confines of the special settlement areas they had been assigned in the east. The authorities only captured 118 of these fugitives. But, they also detained 582 fugitives that were not on their lists for a total of 700 people<sup>37</sup>. Most of these fugitives were not Crimean Tatars, but rather other peoples deported from Crimea such as Greeks, Armenians, and Bulgarians. Crimean Tatars only made up 196 of these fugitives<sup>38</sup>. Only 111 of these

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, doc. 133, pp. 144-145.

<sup>36</sup> GARF, F. 9479, o. 1, d. 180, l. 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma...*, doc. 98, p. 104.

<sup>38</sup> Ibidem, doc. 99, p. 108.

700 fugitives were arrested, tried, and sentenced under the existing criminal law. The largest number, 409 were arrested and forcibly returned to the special settlement area from which they had fled. Finally, 180 were forcibly returned without being arrested<sup>39</sup>. Despite the lack of commandants in Uzbekistan, the long distance to Crimea and the harsh surroundings of the areas of special settlement kept the number of people escaping and returning home to a minimum.

Nevertheless, these escapes were a major motivating factor for the Soviet government imposing new draconian restrictions on the special settlers belonging to deported nationalities in 1948. An Ukaz by the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet on 26 XI 1948 made the exile of these people permanent including subsequent generations and made attempted escapes punishable by 20 years of hard labor. Free citizens caught attempting to help national deportees return to their ancestral homelands in the USSR were subject to incarceration for up to five years. I have translated the document into English and reproduced it below.

UKAZ  
PRESIDIUM of the SUPREME SOVIET of the USSR

On the criminal responsibilities for flight from places of obligatory and decreed settlement of people exiled to distant regions of the Soviet Union in the period of the Fatherland War. With the goal of strengthening the regime of settlement for those exiled by Supreme organs of the USSR in the period of the Fatherland War Chechens, Karachais, Ingush, Balkars, Kalmyks, Germans, Crimean Tatars and others, that at the time of their resettlement there was not a specified length of their exile, establishes that those resettled to distant regions of the Soviet Union by decrees of people in the high leadership are exiled forever, without the right to return to their previous places of residence.

For the voluntary leaving (flight) from places of obligatory settlement those exiles that are guilty will be subject to being prosecuted for criminal acts. It is determined that the punishment for this crime is 20 years of hard labor.

Cases related to the flight of exiles will be reviewed by Special Boards of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR.

People, guilty of harboring exiles, fleeing from places of obligatory settlement, or assisting their flight, giving permission for exiles to return to their places of previous residence, and rendering them help in accommodations in their places of previous residence, are subject to criminal penalties. It is determined that the sentence for this crime is deprivation of freedom for a period of five years.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibidem, doc. 98, p. 104.

Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR  
N. Shvernik  
Secretary of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR  
A. Gorkin  
Moscow, Kremlin  
26 XI 1948<sup>40</sup>.

The restrictions in the documents make it clear that Crimean Tatars like other special settlers and unlike most of the Soviet population were second class citizens. Unlike the kulaks, but similar to the Germans, Chechens, Karachais, and Kalmyks the second class nature of Soviet citizenship for the Crimean Tatars was clearly based upon their *natsional'nost'*. These restrictions remained on the Crimean Tatars and other national deportees classified as special settlers until after Stalin's death. They were only lifted during the reforms instituted at the start of Khrushchev's tenure.

### **Release from the Special Settlement Restrictions**

On 28 IV 1956, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet passed an ukaz freeing the Crimean Tatars along with Balkars, Turks, Kurds, and Hemshils from the special settlement restrictions. This decree, however, also prohibited these people from returning to their previous areas of settlement or returning to them any of the property they lost during their resettlement. The Crimean Tatars thus remained largely confined to Uzbekistan for most of the remaining Soviet period<sup>41</sup>. It should be noted that this decree only came out over three years after Stalin died on 5 III 1953. It was only after Khrushchev had consolidated his control over the CPSU that he could parole the Crimean Tatars. But, even then unlike the Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, and Karachais they were not allowed to return to their homeland during his tenure. They along with the Russian Germans and Meskhetian Turks remained in internal exile in the Soviet east until the reforms of Gorbachev in the late 1980s.

### **Conclusion**

The deportation of the Crimean Tatars to Uzbekistan and the Ural in May 1944 represented a brutal implementation of Stalinist nationality policies. The NKVD dispersed them across a territory much larger than their ancestral homeland in

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<sup>40</sup> Reproduced in: V.N. Zemskov, *Spetsposelentsy v SSSR, 1930-1960*, Moskva 2005, p. 160.

<sup>41</sup> *Deportatsiia narodov Kryma...*, doc. 185, pp. 192-193.

the Crimean peninsula and deprived them of sufficient quality and quantity of housing, clothing, food, and medicine to prevent them from losing a huge number of people to premature deaths from hunger, disease, and exposure. One way the Crimean Tatars in Uzbekistan tried to reduce this deprivation was to move from the kolkhozes to industrial and construction sites where salaries provided a more stable source of income than on the collective farms. Nonetheless conditions were extremely difficult for the Crimean Tatars for most of the late 1940s and they remained under severe legal restrictions as special settlers until 1956.

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## Abstrakt

J. Otto Pohl

### **Sowiecka deportacja Tatarów Krymskich do Uzbekistanu i na Ural w 1944 r. jako specjalnych osadników**

Wkrótce po odzyskaniu Półwyspu Krymskiego spod okupacji niemieckiej w 1944 r., reżim Stalina podjął decyzję o przymusowej deportacji ludności krymskotatarskiej do Uzbekistanu. Decyzja ta została oficjalnie podjęta 11 V 1944 r. i zrealizowana w dniach 18-20 V 1944 r. W ciągu tych trzech dni NKWD zebrało blisko 200 000 Tatarów Krymskich i wysłało ich pociągiem na wschód w kierunku Azji Środkowej. Zdecydowana większość deportowanych trafiła do Uzbekistanu. Ponad 150 000 deportowanych Tatarów Krymskich przybyło do Uzbekistanu latem 1944 r. Rząd radziecki przesiedlił ponad jedną trzecią deportowanych mężczyzn, kobiet i dzieci do obwodu taszkienckiego poza stolicą republiki. W Uzbekistanie NKWD początkowo osiedliło większość deportowanych w kołchozach i sowchozach, by pracowali jako robotnicy rolni. Malaria, niedożywienie i inne choroby pochłonęły życie dziesiątek tysięcy Tatarów Krymskich w ciągu pierwszych kilku lat ich pobytu w Uzbekistanie. Te śmiertelne warunki materialne



przekonały wielu Tatarów Krymskich do znalezienia pracy w kopalniach, fabrykach i na budowach, gdzie mieli lepszy dostęp do leków i żywności.

Władze sowieckie wysłały ok. 30 000 Tatarów Krymskich na Ural i do innych regionów RFSRR. Na Uralu NKWD zatrudniło deportowanych Tatarów Krymskich do prac leśnych przy wycince drzew. Rząd radziecki objął Tatarów Krymskich zarówno w Uzbekistanie, jak i na Uralu specjalnymi ograniczeniami osiedleńczymi, dotyczącymi miejsc zamieszkania i pracy do 28 IV 1956 r. Jednak nawet po tej dacie nie pozwolono im wrócić do domu. W niniejszym artykule zostały przeanalizowane ich warunki materialne i prawne od 18 V 1944 r. do 28 IV 1956 r., czyli okresu 12 lat, który miał traumatyczny i długotrwały wpływ na rozwój narodu Tatarów Krymskich. Podstawę źródłową niniejszego artykułu stanowią głównie dokumenty archiwalne z Archiwum Państwowego Federacji Rosyjskiej (GARF). Do niektórych z nich autor miał bezpośredni dostęp, podczas gdy inne są reproduktowane w opublikowanych zbiorach dokumentów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Tatarzy Krymscy, sowieckie deportacje, specjali osadnicy, Półwysep Krymski, Uzbekistan

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