

CRIMEAN TATARS' SURGUN IS GENOCIDE!

It is not surprising to read some historian's denial of the planned destruction of an entire population of the indigenous people of Crimea as "genocide." The timing of such denial is interesting indeed. As Crimean Tatars are getting ready to commemorate the 67th anniversary of their Surgun-mass deportation from Crimea by the Soviet authorities, a historian declares that the crime committed against Crimean Tatars by the Soviet authorities is not genocide. I do not intend to argue the technical definition of "Genocide" as to what constitutes genocide and what does not. It is also not my intention to have a scholarly discussion with historians who have already decided that brutally uprooting of the entire Crimean Tatar population, mostly women, children and elderly by the Soviet authorities in the early morning hours of May 18, 1944 while most of able-bodied Crimean Tatars were serving in the Soviet military can not be considered as genocide. Instead I will mention some facts submitted by victims of Surgun as petitions to Soviet authorities signed by (in some cases 60.000 to 130.000) Crimean Tatars. I will also very briefly touch upon the current status of the Crimean Tatar people who survived "Surgun" and some of whom succeeded in returning to their homeland where they continue to suffer discrimination by local authorities as well as people who replaced the deported Crimean Tatars.

It is important to know that the entire Crimean Tatar population (*with the exception of the inhabitants of a few Crimean Tatar fishing villages on the Arabat strip who were accidentally forgotten by the authorities but were brutally massacred later to complete the preplanned destruction of the entire Crimean Tatar population in Crimea*) was brutally uprooted in the early morning hours and ordered to get ready in most instances in 15 minutes to leave their homes. In this preplanned and well organized action by the Soviet authorities, the Crimean Tatars were loaded on waiting trucks, taken to the nearest railroad station and once again loaded on waiting cattle wagons to be brutally deported to destinations they did not know at that time. *"Of the 238,000 Crimean Tatars deported 113,000 were children under age 18 and 93,000 were women and "Of the total of 238,000 deported 110,000 (46%) died... (Chronicle of Current Events, No. 28-31. December 31, 1972, p.141).* Yes, almost half of the deported Crimean Tatars perished within a year of this barbaric deportation.

I would like to quote just one victim of this well planned deportation-genocide which targeted the entire Crimean Tatar population of Crimea. The following describes Tenzile Ibrahimova's compelling experience:

"... We were expelled from the village of Adzhiatmak in Fridorf district on May 18, 1944. The expulsion took place very cruelly; at three o'clock in the morning, when the children were still asleep, some soldiers came in and said that we should be out of the house in five minutes. We were not allowed to take with us either possessions or food... Once they'd chased us out of the village they kept us hungry for several days... The children were starved and cried continuously. My husband was fighting at the front; I was alone with three children.

Eventually they loaded us into cars (trucks) and took us to Evpatoriya. From there they loaded us like cattle into goods wagons, which were crammed to overflowing. After twenty- four days we arrived in Samarkand region...Katychin district to the 'Pravda' Collective Farm. We worked and starved... from our village they had taken thirty families, of which five families remained alive, though not all members...rest had perished of hunger and illnesses...My niece Menube Sheikhislamova with eight children, was deported with us; her husband had been in the Soviet Army from the first days of the war

and had been killed. And the family of this fallen soldier perished of hunger in exile in Uzbekistan. Only one little girl Pera remained alive, but she became a cripple, as a result of the horror she had experienced, and of hunger...” Chronicle of Current Events-Journal of the Human Rights Movement in the USSR, No.28-31, December 31, 1972, pp.140-141

This is the testimony of just one victim, which this author uses frequently to demonstrate the severity and the inhuman treatment of the Crimean Tatars by the armed Soviet soldiers. There are hundreds and thousands Tenzile Ibraimovas who experienced such treatments and losses. Some of these victims managed to survive the Soviet Genocide of the Crimean Tatar people, and some are fortunate enough to be able return to their ancestral homeland yet to continue to be mistreated in their ancestral homeland. Their compelling stories are being recorded by the Crimean Tatar Mejlis to be published and introduced as further evidence of the “Genocide” the Crimean Tatar people suffered and continues to suffer.

Yes, there are 260,000 Crimean Tatars most of whom were able to return to Crimea on their own, without government assistance. Yes, there are some Crimean Tatars who are doing well in Crimea. But it is a fact that after sixty seven years since *Surgun* many Crimean Tatars continue to be discriminated against, mistreated, and treated as strangers in their ancestral homeland. Furthermore, there are over 200,000 Crimean Tatars, victims and the children of the victims of the former Soviet Unions Genocide committed against the Crimean Tatar people, who still remain in their original places of exile, unable to return to Crimea on their own.

Considering all the facts related to Crimean Tatars, and also considering their current struggle in the Crimea, I respectfully submit that *Surgun* is not just “genocide”, it is an “ongoing genocide” committed against the indigenous people of the Crimea, the Crimean Tatars.

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