



Deportation of Meskheta Turkish People: Its Causes and Consequences

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Abstract: *The article analyzes the deportation policy of the Soviet state in the 30s and 50s of the XX century and its consequences. It also seeks to shed light on various aspects of the migration of Meskhetian Turks to their homeland in the Fergana Valley in the 1980s.*

Keywords: *Deportation, repression policy, national issues, Vatan international community, border security, border zone, historical justice.*

The policy of repression of peoples, that is, deportation [1] became a component of the policy of the former Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1950s. Especially during the Second World War, the former Soviet state intensified its policy of repression against the peoples within it. The peoples living in the border regions - Finns, Poles, Kurds, later Meskheti Turks, Khamshals - were forcibly deported to other regions of the country for the sake of political interests, i.e. to ensure "border security" [2].

During the regime of I. V. Stalin, one of the peoples who suffered from the deportation policy and were subjected to violence was the Turkish people. They have lived for centuries in the historical Meskheti-Javakheti region of Georgia, in the southwestern part of present-day Georgia.

On November 14, 1944, a decree was issued to deport citizens whose mosques belonged to the Turkish nationality from their homes to Central Asia. Although the reason for the relocation was not explained in the decree [3], the presumed disloyalty to the Soviet authorities, i.e., the possibility of crossing over to the side of a hostile neighboring country - Turkey, like other forcibly relocated peoples, was considered the "guilt" of this people and was the "ground" for the relocation [4]. . However, during the Second World War, more than 40 thousand men of this "guilty" nation participated in the war on the part of the former Soviet state and sacrificed more than 26 thousand people in exchange for protecting the territory of the Soviet state [5]. The alleged injustice (deportation) against them was actually no less than the crimes committed by the Nazis during the Second World War.

Suleiman Barbakadze, the president of the International Society of Turks of the "Vatan" mosque operating in Moscow, told "Nezavisimaya newspaper" that over 92,000 people were displaced from 224 villages of Georgia in about one night [6]. Deportation of Meskheti Turks was completed in January 1945 [7]. It should also be noted that the exact number of Turks expelled from Georgia as a result of deportation cannot be determined (their number is indicated in the literature from 96,000 to 200,000 [8]), because it is not known how many of them died during the deportation [9]. Also, for a long time, the number of people of Meskheti Turks remained uncertain, because the majority of people belonging to the Meskheti Turk nationality were registered as belonging to the Azerbaijani and Georgian nationalities in the state statistical documents. In 1956, they were informed that the forced resettlement of Turks to Central Asia and Kazakhstan was cancelled. However, at that time, their historical place of residence was included in the so-called border zone - a separate territory along the border of the USSR. Coming to this place and living in it was strictly restricted. In fact, it

was another injustice done to the Turks, saying that they were forbidden to return to their country [10].

Thus, in 1944, most of the Meskhetai Turks deported to Central Asia were settled in Uzbekistan.

In Uzbekistan, one of the large groups of Meskhetai Turks was settled in the Fergana region. Their largest local groups lived in the city of Kuvasoi, as well as in the cities of Fergana, Margilan, Kokan, Toshlok, Komsomol town, several villages of Kirguli, Okhunboboev (former Margilan), Kuva, Rishton, and other places of Fergana region. A number of such families were also among the residents of Gorky town in the Kirov region, west of Kokan [11].

After settling in our republic, most Turks living in Tashkent and Syrdarya region were mainly engaged in agricultural production, while representatives of these people living in Samarkand region and Fergana valley were engaged in industrial and construction work [12].

Although the Meskhetai Turk people lived peacefully in Uzbekistan for a long time, their desire to return to their homeland did not disappear. This idea has been passed down from one generation to the next. For this purpose, they held meetings several times during the former Soviet period. In particular, 10 meetings were held from 1962 to 1989 [13]. Their main goal, i.e. returning to their homeland, was discussed at these meetings. The repatriation activities of the Meskhetai Turkish people have become particularly active in the Fergana region, especially in the city of Kuvasoy, where they lived in large numbers. Activists of these people demanded to resolve their national issues before the Center (Moscow) and transfer their homeland to the southern regions of the Georgian SSR. In this respect, they formed an initiative group, sent their representatives to the Center several times, held meetings among the population and discussed ways to solve their national issues.

Field surveys showed that almost all Turks wanted to return to their motherland. They believed that the solution to this problem lied in the removal of restrictions on migration to Meskhet-Javakheti regions [14]. Therefore, they appealed to the higher authorities of the USSR 154 times for the return to Meskhetia for 45 years [15]. However, this restriction was not removed from 1944, when the Turks were deported, until the end of the 80s.

In the second half of the 80s of the 20th century, the leadership of the USSR did not have the opportunity to solve the national issue related to the return of Meskhetai Turks to their homeland, nor was it interested in it. It was also influenced to some extent by the fact that it was hindered by the Georgian SSR [16]. Because Georgians now live in the areas where the Turkish people were deported, restoration of historical justice could cause new problems in Georgia. At the same time, the main reason for the deportation of the Meskhetai Turks from the Georgian SSR, that is, the danger of their merging with their blood relatives in Turkey, was still a cause of concern for the Soviet leadership. This factor was the main obstacle to their migration to their homeland. The well-known Georgian writer Ch. Amiredjibi also expresses a similar opinion. In his opinion, if the Meskhetian Turks were settled in the Caucasus, then the position of the Islamic religion will be strengthened there. This situation could have caused the region to completely fall out of the hands of the Russians [17].

In such conditions, the leadership of the Center could not remain indifferent to the processes of national revival in Uzbekistan (this process intensified in the late 80s of the 20th century and ultimately required the declaration of independence of Uzbekistan from the USSR) and the national problem of the Turkish people. Because these factors could serve as an accelerating factor of the process of disintegration of the Union.

The similarities between the inter-ethnic conflicts that took place in Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, the Baltic republics, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and other places of the Soviet Union in the late 80s of the 20th century indicate that the conflicts in these regions were part of the Soviet national policy in the previous period. As well as being the result of mistakes made, the Center had a direct hand in their origin.

Among these conflicts, the bloody event that took place in the Fergana Valley of Uzbekistan in May-June 1989, which was called the "inter-ethnic conflict" between Meskheti Turks and Uzbeks, caused a great stir. The special bodies of the former Soviet state, which took advantage of the conflicts in the socio-economic spheres that had been ignored for years, organized the "Fergana events". Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks had nothing to do with the origin of this tragedy. In fact, as mentioned above, the inter-ethnic conflicts in Uzbekistan were necessary for the Center to pursue a tougher policy.

To make a story short, the national policy of the former Soviet state, based on the Marxian-Leninist doctrine, imbued with the spirit of colonialism, denying nationality, aimed at its loss, had an active negative effect on the national problems and the complication of inter-ethnic relations in the Ferghana Valley in the 80s of the 20th century.

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