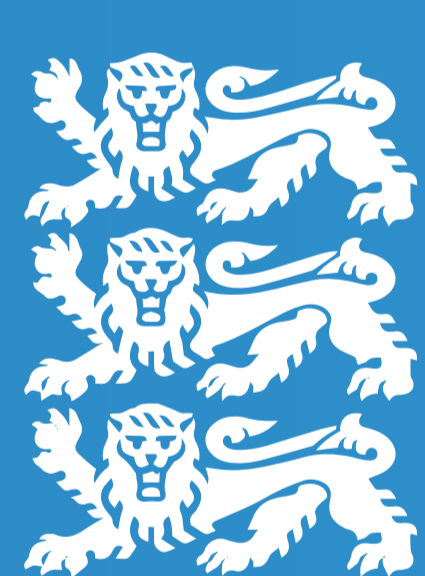


Crimean Tatars

Indigenous people of Crimea



REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA
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CRIMEAN TATAR
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Origins of the Crimean Tatars and their path to becoming a nation



The Crimean Tatars are the indigenous people of Crimea

They speak the Crimean Tatar language and their religion is Sunni Islam. The Crimean Tatar ethnicity developed through the assimilation of the peoples who have inhabited the Crimean Peninsula throughout history – the Tauri, Scythians, Sarmatians, Goths, Huns, Kipchaks, Mongols and others.



The “tamga” was originally an abstract tribal seal historically used by Eurasian nomads, later genealogical symbol of the ruling dynasty of Crimean Khans – the Girays. Now, national symbol of the Crimean Tatars.



Map of Crimea in the regional context from ca 1630 (Mercator projection)

The 15th century is considered the final stage of the Crimean Tatars' ethnogenesis. The Crimean Tatar state – the Crimean Khanate – developed during that period.



Origins of the Crimean Tatars and their path to becoming a nation

1441-1783

Crimean Khanate, the first democratic and secular Islamic state in the world; Crimean Tatars' ethnogenesis, society, culture and language developed at this time.

8 (19) April 1783

The independent state of the Crimean Tatars was abolished. At the time of the Russian annexation, 98% of the population was comprised of Crimean Tatars.

End of the 18th century
- end of the 19th century

The extensive migration of Crimean Tatars to Turkish areas (up to 250,000 people), which was caused primarily by the redistribution of land and religious discrimination. At the same time, the settlement of Russians (and other peoples from the Russian Empire, incl. Estonians) to Crimea.

End of the 19th century
- Beginning of the 20th c.

The national awakening of the Crimean Tatars.

November 1917

The First Kurultay, the representative body of the Crimean Tatars, an independent Republic of Crimea is established.

20's of the 20th century

The Peoples' Republic of Crimea is abolished by Russia. During the mass destruction and famine that followed (1921-22) up to 175,000 people perished.

October 18th 1921

The Crimean ASSR is created which is part of the Russian SFSR.

May 18th 1944

Almost all the Crimean Tatars are deported from Crimea, primarily to Central Asia. They are forbidden from returning home.

June 30th 1945

The Crimean ASSR is abolished and the Crimean Oblast is created.

February 19th 1954

The Crimean Oblast is transferred to the Ukrainian SSR.

September 5th 1967

The Crimean Tatars are rehabilitated; and the accusations against the people are declared unfounded. They are granted the right to return to their homeland, although this is actually impossible.

1989

The deportation of the Crimean Tatars is declared to have been unlawful and massive return of Crimean Tatars begins.

February 12th 1991

The autonomy of Crimea is restored.

June 26th 1991

The Second Kurultay, the representative body of the Crimean Tatars, is established. A declaration of independence is adopted, and the Mejlis, the highest governing body, is elected.

February 20th 2014

Russia occupies Crimea.

April 26th 2016

Mejlis of Crimean Tatar people declared extremist organization and banned by occupying authorities in Crimea

September 29th 2016

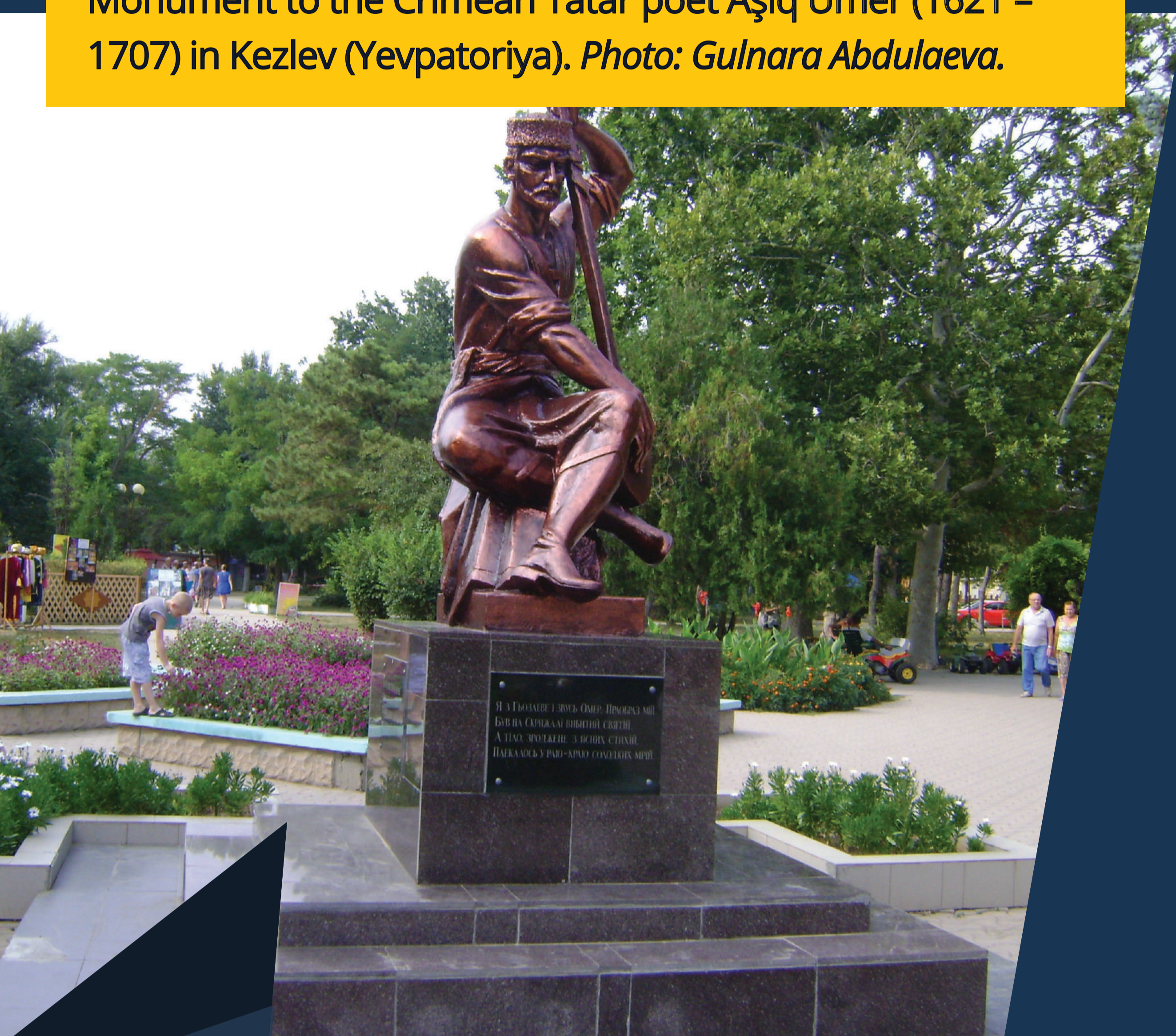
Russia's Supreme Court upholds decision to ban Mejlis.



The cultural heritage of the Crimean Tatars

The first known written source related to the Crimean Tatars is the *Codex Cumanicus*, a Turkish-Tatar linguistic manual, which appeared in the Crimea in the 12th century.

Monument to the Crimean Tatar poet Aşiq Ümer (1621 – 1707) in Kezlev (Yevpatoriya). Photo: Gulnara Abdulaeva.



The Crimean Khans' palace in Bakhchysaray – the residence of Crimea's rulers and main political and cultural centre of the Crimean Tatars. Painting by Carlo Bossoli (1857).

The distinctive Crimean Tatar culture and national identity developed during the Crimean Khanate period. The capital of Bağçasaray (Bakhchysaray), and other cities – Qırq-Yer (Çufut Qale), Solhat (Staryi Krim), Qarasuvbazar (Belogorsk), Kezlev (Yevpatoriya) – were important cultural, political and economic centres.

Unfortunately the majority of palaces, mosques, caravanserais and mausoleums from the Crimean Khanate era have not survived

From the 14th to late 18th century, the Crimean Tatar language, literature, architecture, and handicraft traditions (especially artistic metalworking, rug weaving, and ornamental metal art), as well as, the national way of life developed in these centres.

Haytarma folk dance, one of the national symbols of Crimean Tatars. Photo: Andrey Shvachko.



Traditional Crimean Tatar costumes. Photo: Smail Nebiyev



Traditional Crimean Tatar handicraft by Rustem Skibin.



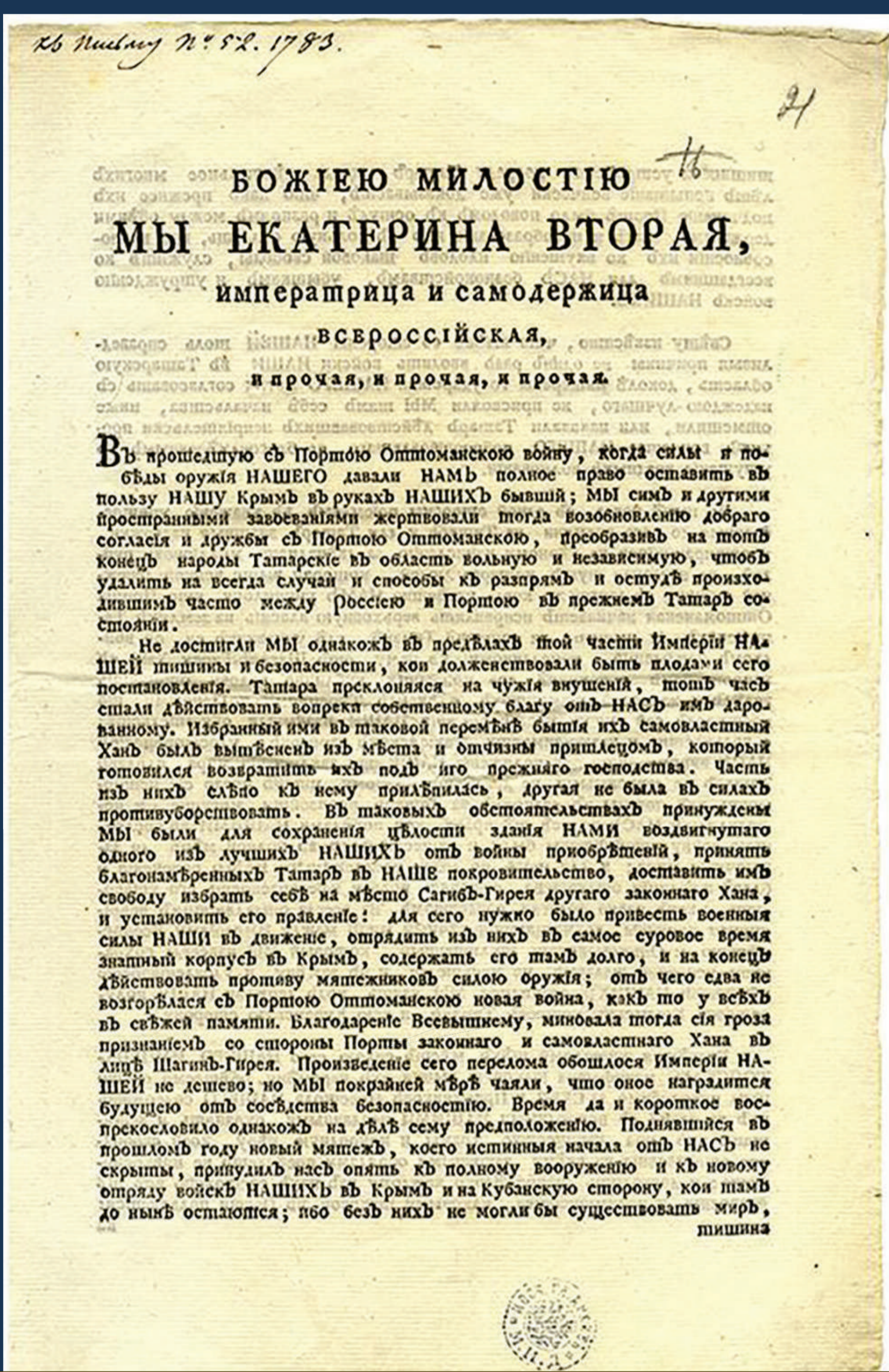
The indigenous people forced into exile

The first occupation of Crimea in 1783

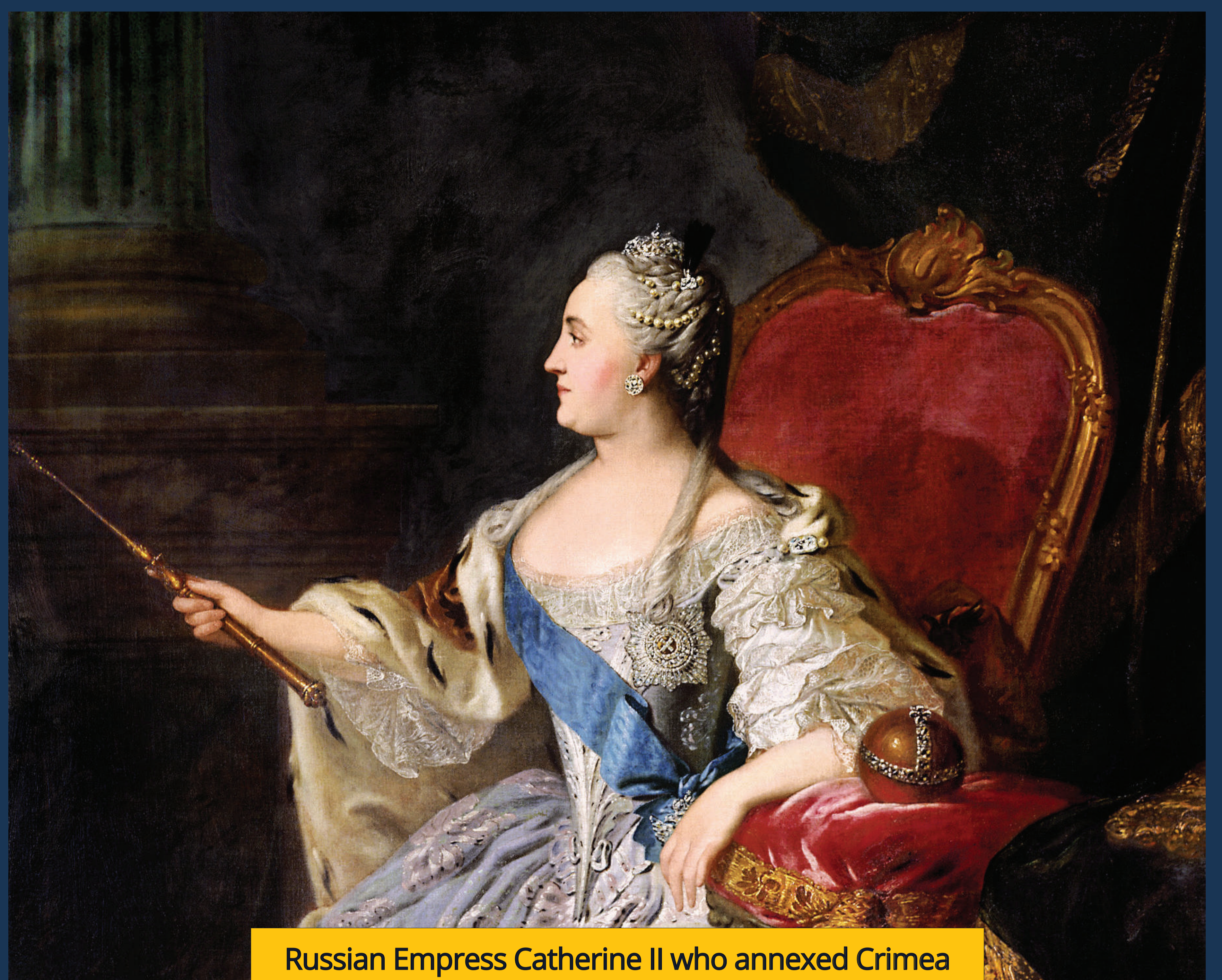


Last Crimean Khan Sahin Giray (1745-1787)
Drawing by Andrey Bolotov

The massive emigration of Crimean Tatars from their homeland started immediately after Russia annexed the peninsula in 1783. In the 18th and 19th centuries, three major waves of outward migration by indigenous Crimean Tatar people took place.



Manifesto proclaiming the 1783 annexation
of Crimea by the Russian Empire



Russian Empress Catherine II who annexed Crimea
Painting by Fyodor Rokotov

The main reasons behind the forcible resettlement of the Crimean Tatars to the Ottoman Empire, Romania and Bulgaria were the Russian Empire's repressive policies, redistribution of lands and religious discrimination. The colonisation of the northern coast of Crimea and the Black Sea also started at this time. Inhabitants from other regions of the Russian Empire were called in to "expropriate" or "absorb" the region.

Arrival of Catherine II in Feodosiya. Painting by Ivan Aivazovsky
(1883, commissioned for 100th anniversary of Crimea's annexation)



View of Karasubazar. Painting by Painting by Carlo Bossoli (1850s)



View of Crimean steppes. Painting by Carlo Bossoli (1850s)



Rebirth

of the Crimean Tatar national culture

The 1880s marked the beginning of a period of development for Crimean Tatar socio-political thought and culture.

National schools and a national theatre were opened and the first books were published. A brief but brilliant period of intellectual flowering occurred in the 1920s and early 1930s.



Crimean Tatars and a mullah ca 1862.
Image: Wikipedia

1st Kurultay of Crimean Tatars was held on December 9, 1917 in Khan's palace in Bakhchisaray.

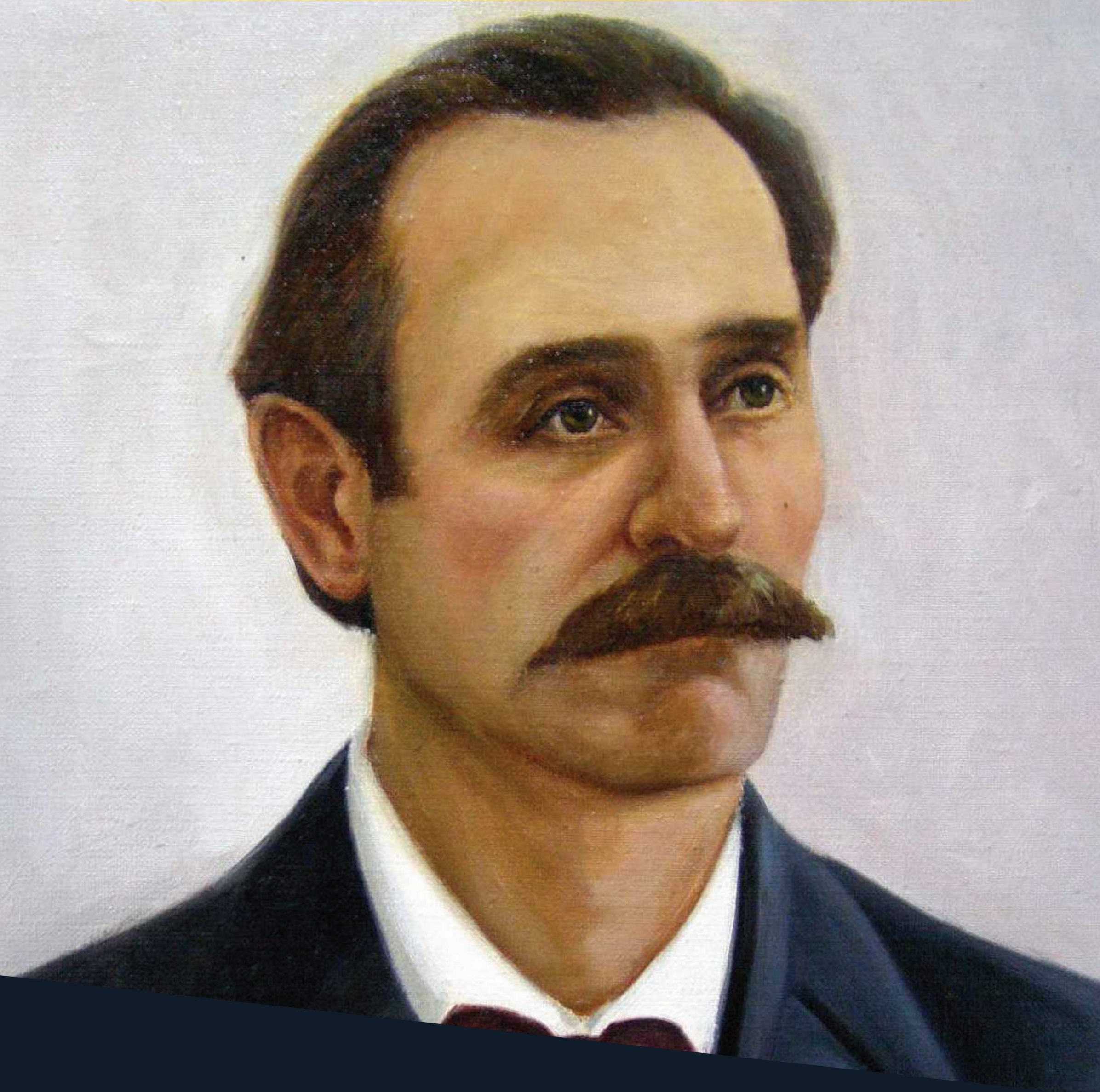


The Crimean Tatar language was granted official status and became the language of public administration. Museums and theatres were also opened and periodicals were published in Crimean Tatar language. Painting and national handicrafts flourished. The first studies of Crimean Tatar history, ethnography and archaeology were conducted at this time. In 1926, the first Crimean Tatar artistic film, Alim Azamat-oglu, was produced.



Crimean Tatar theatre (ca 1920)

Ismail Gasprinski (1851-1914): Crimean Tatar educator, writer, publisher and politician.



Crimean Tatar school (1910). By 1930, 387 elementary schools operated with Crimean Tatar as the teaching language. Teachers for Crimean Tatar schools were trained in 4 pedagogical institutes.



Deportation of the Crimean Tatars

— in 1944 and forced emigration —

During World War II, the Crimean Tatars were deported by the Soviet Union. The pretext was an accusation of collaboration with the German occupation forces.



Scene featuring the 1944 deportation from the feature film Haytarma (2013). No historical photos of the deportation are currently in public domain.



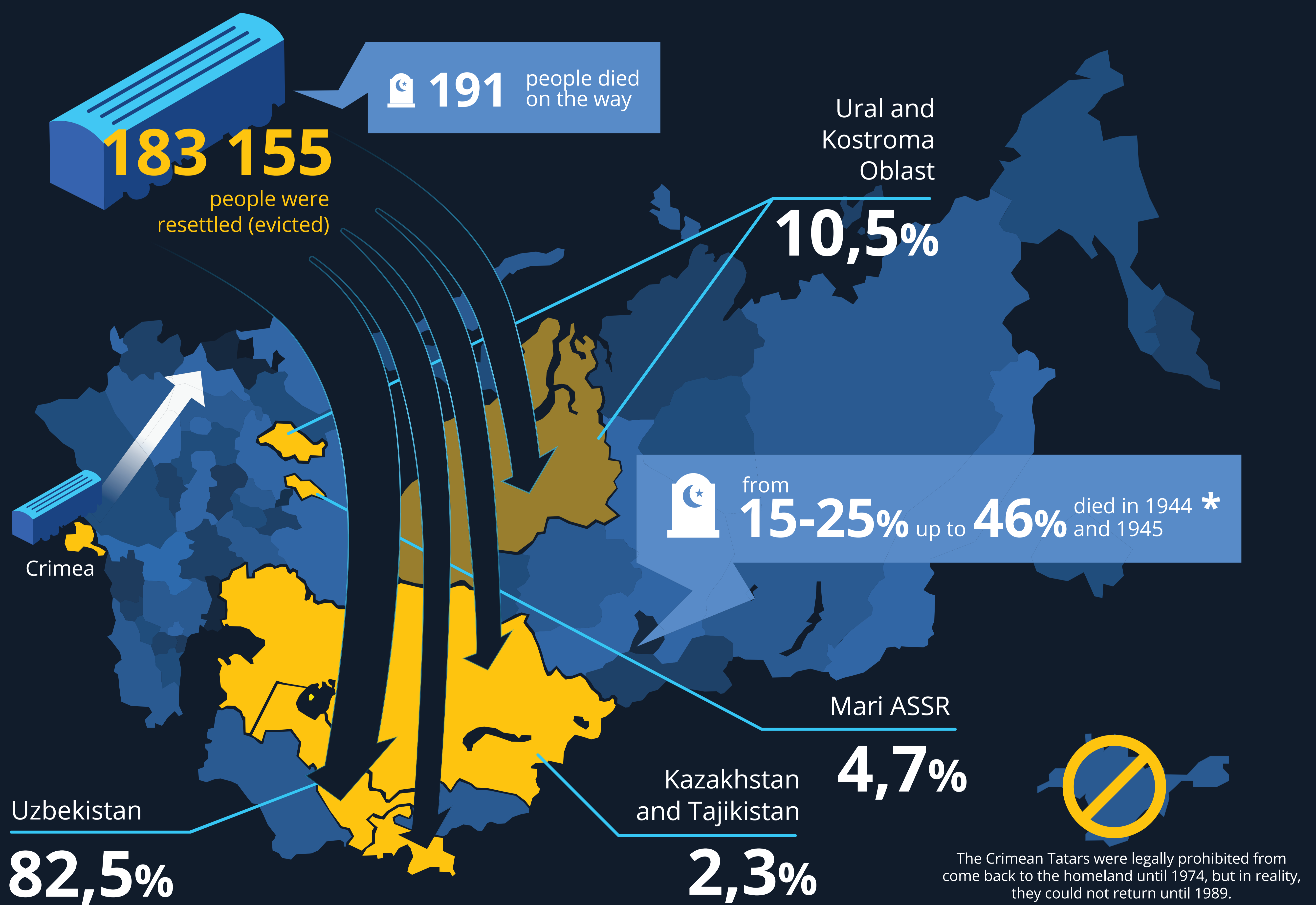
The Deportation Operation

The deportation “operation” occurred from 18 to 20 May 1944. 193,865 Crimean Tatars were deported from their historical homeland, and 46.2% of them perished due to the deportation. It was a moral and physical destruction of a people – essentially, genocide of the Crimean Tatars.

Deportation Map

The deportations started in the early morning of 18 May 1944 and ended at 4:00 pm on May 20th.

Infographics by: tochka.net & istpravda.com.ua



At the end of the 1930s, the Stalinist regime had already doubled down on the repression and Russification of the Crimean Tatars. A large part of the national intelligentsia was killed, sent to prisons and labour camps. They were later deported along with the rest of the people. After the deportation ended, the activities of the Crimean Tatar institutions on the peninsula were terminated; geographic place names were Russified; and towns and villages were resettled with people from the other Soviet republics.



Non-violent resistance and return to Crimea

The mid-1950s marked the beginning of the Crimean Tatars' non-violent struggle for reinstating their people's rights and returning to their homeland. In the mid-1960s, initiative groups were already active in all the Central Asian and Russian communities.



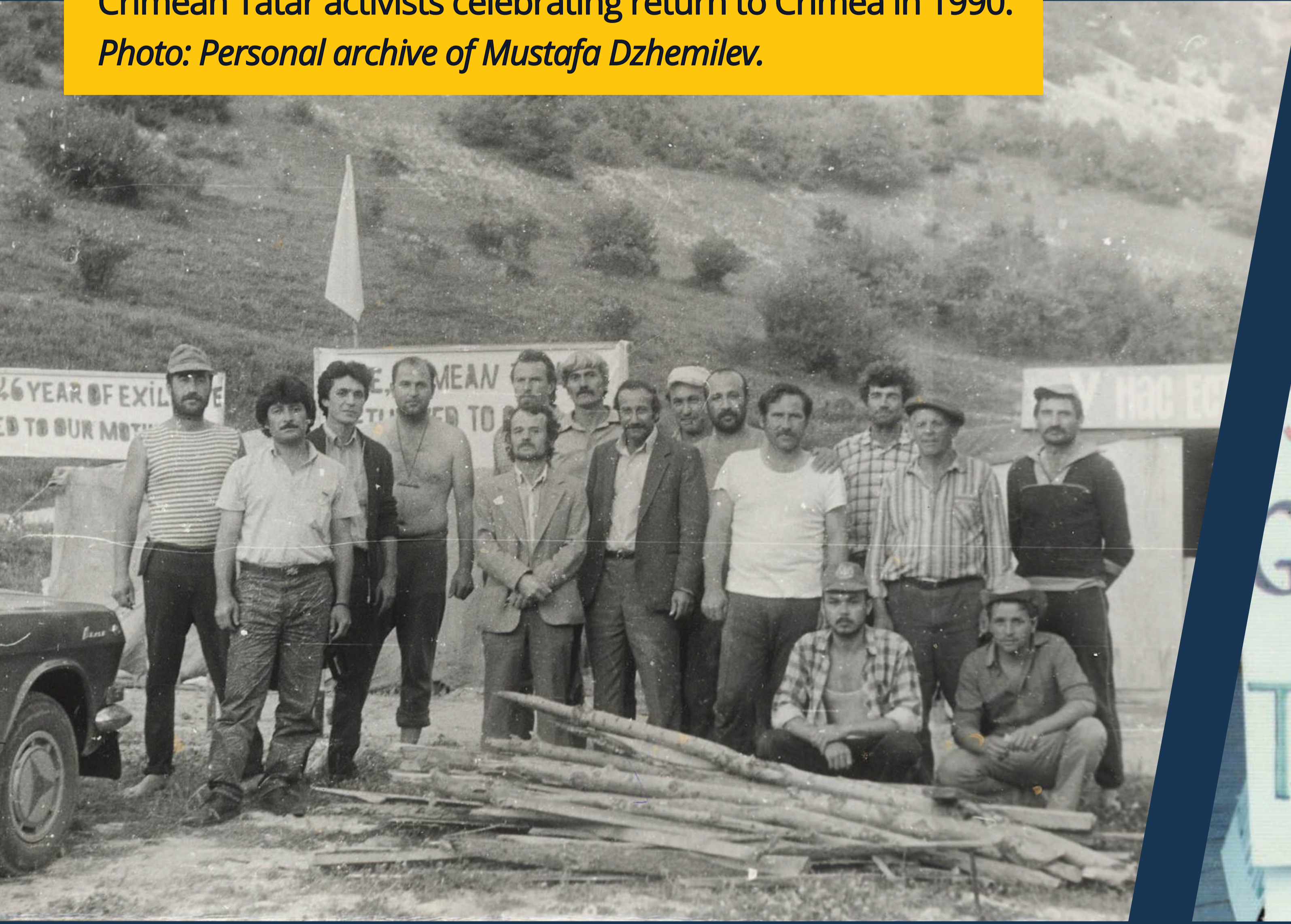
Andrei Sakharov (1921-1989), academician and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, was among the most prominent defenders of human rights of the Crimean Tatars in the Soviet Union. In this photo, Mr. Sakharov (left) together with Crimean Tatar national leader Mustafa Dzhemilev and his wife Sofinar Dzhemileva in 1986. *Photo: Courtesy of Sakharov Archives (Moscow)*

Regional centres took shape in the large cities. Activists held mass demonstrations, defended Crimean Tatars in political trials, and published underground literature.



In 1967, the Crimean Tatars were formally rehabilitated, but not allowed to return to their homeland. The massive return to Crimea started in the late 1980s. By 1996, about 240,000 people had returned to their homeland.

Crimean Tatar activists celebrating return to Crimea in 1990. *Photo: Personal archive of Mustafa Dzhemilev.*



Crimean Tatar international advocacy during the Soviet period. *Photo: Personal archive of Mustafa Dzhemilev.*



The occupation of Crimea in 2014



"Little green men", or masked Russian soldiers in unmarked green army uniforms occupying Simferopol airport in February, 2014.
Source: UKRINFORM

The Russian Annexation of Crimea

On 20 February 2014, Russia once again started the **annexation of Crimea**. On February 26th, a resistance rally, led by Crimean Tatars, took place in Simferopol outside the Crimean Legislative Council (Verkhovna Rada). Over a number of days, unidentified Russian military personnel seized control of the peninsula.

After an illegal referendum, Crimea was annexed by Russia. Crimean Tatars expressed active support for preserving the territorial integrity of Ukraine, and took to the streets to express opposition to the annexation of Crimea by Russia. A wave of repressions aimed at Crimean Tatars began.



On February 26, 2014, the Mejlis of Crimean Tatar people organized a massive rally in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity in front of the Supreme Council (Verkhovna Rada) of Crimea in Simferopol. February 26 is now marked across Ukraine and internationally as the Day of Crimea's Resistance to Russian Occupation. *Photo: UHHRU*



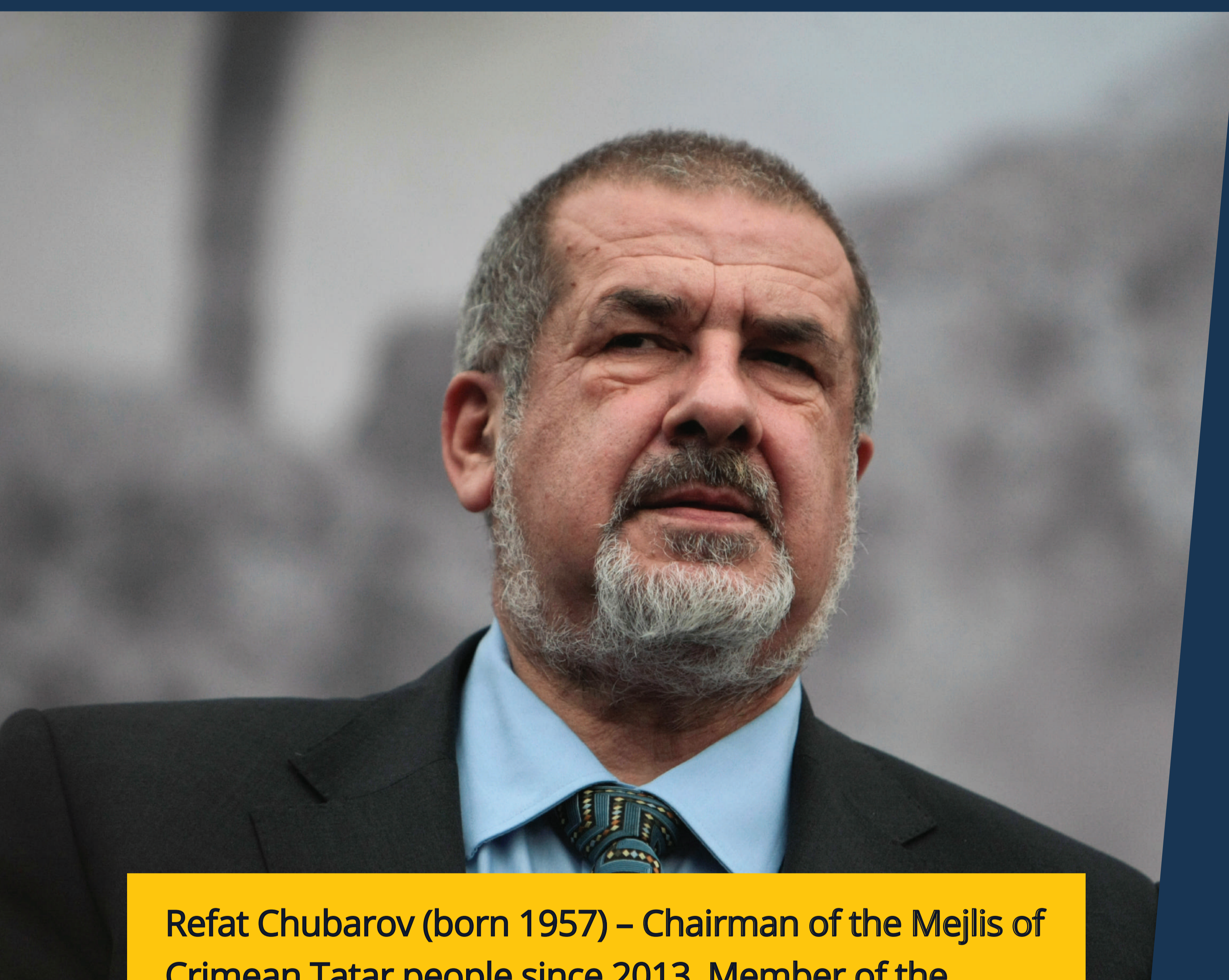
Crimea under Russian occupation

Part 2

The first repressions against Crimean Tatars occurred immediately after the illegal annexation of Crimea. Eleven people went missing, and another eight were found dead. The Crimean Tatar leaders were accused of extremism. A criminal case was launched against many of them, and they were forbidden from entering Crimea. For the purpose of intimidation, the homes, mosques and madrasas of the Crimean Tatars were searched.



Mustafa Dzhemilev (born 1943) – a symbol of the nonviolent struggle of the Crimean Tatars for freedom and human rights, Chairman of the Mejlis of the Crimean Tatar People (1991-2013), Member of Ukraine's Parliament. *Photo: UKRINFORM*



Refat Chubarov (born 1957) – Chairman of the Mejlis of Crimean Tatar people since 2013, Member of the Ukrainian Parliament. *Photo: UKRINFORM*

There were detentions, interrogations and arrests. After the illegal annexation, those who refused to take Russian passports came under political, social and work-related persecution. Over 20,000 Crimean Tatars were forced to resettle in mainland Ukraine.

March of solidarity in support of the Crimean Tatars, Ukrainians and people of other nationalities who reside in a temporarily occupied Crimea. *Photo: Serhii Simonov*



Crimea: Life Under Occupation

Infographic by: Ukraine Crisis Media Centre

1783 CONQUEST OF CRIMEA BY THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE

1944 CRIMEA IS A REGION OF THE RSFSR

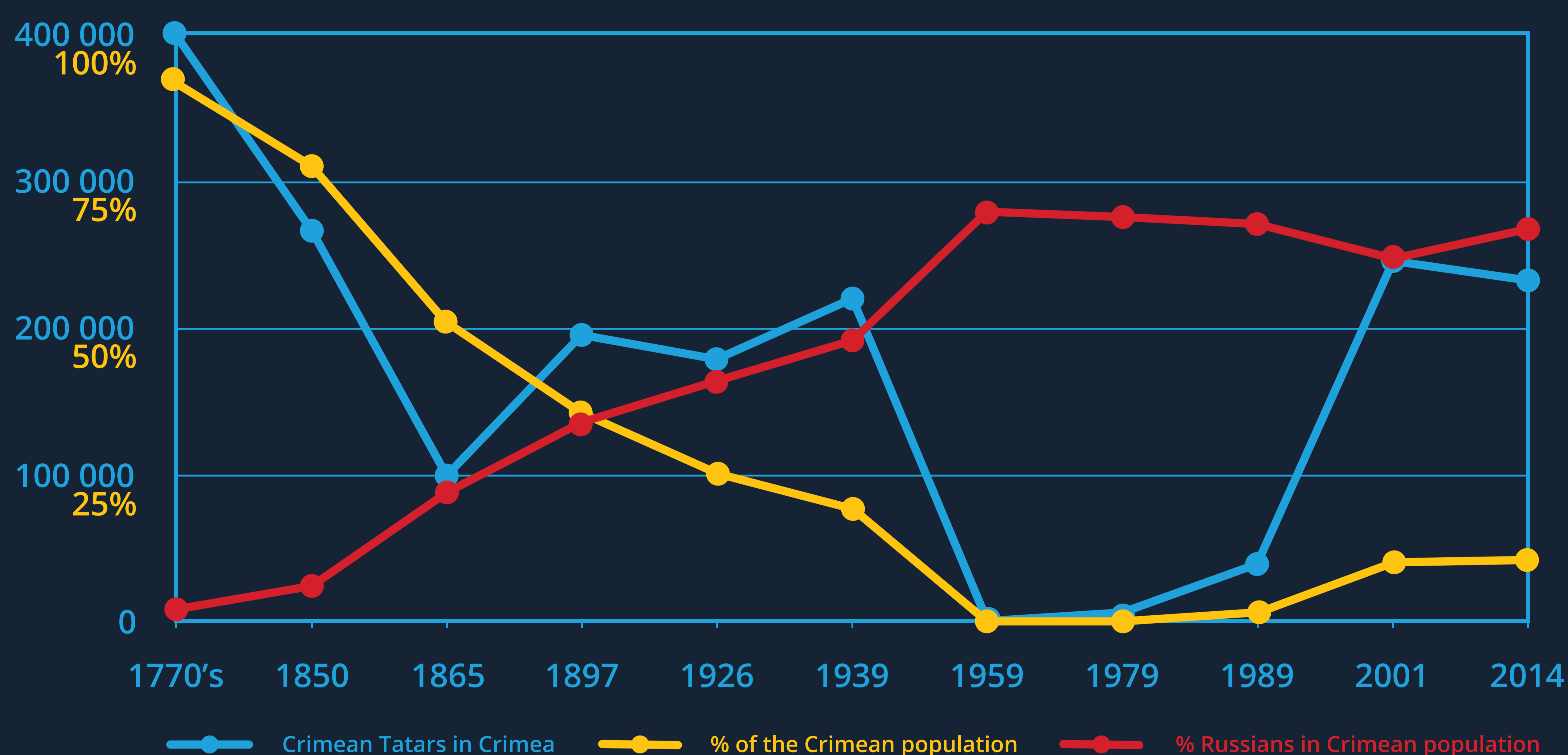
2014 CRIMEA IS OCCUPIED BY RUSSIA

1783 EMIGRATION AND EXCLUSION

1944 DEPORTATION OF 200,000 CRIMEAN TATARS

2014 OPPRESSION AND...

Changes in proportions of Crimean Tatars and Russian population in Crimea.



Source: Yevhenil Chak/krymr.org (RFE/RL Graphics)

