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Title	Soviet Identity Politics in Ukrainian Crimea: Friendship of the Peoples and Internal Borders in the USSR between the 1950s and the 1980s
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Citation	Acta Slavica Iaponica, 40, 125-148
Issue Date	2020
DOI	https://doi.org/10.14943/ASI.40.125
Doc URL	https://hdl.handle.net/2115/84138
Type	departmental bulletin paper
File Information	40_07_pp.125-148.pdf

Hokkaido University Collection of Scholarly and Academic Papers : HUSCAP

Acta Slavica Iaponica, Tomus 40, pp. 125–148

Soviet Identity Politics in Ukrainian Crimea: Friendship of the Peoples and Internal Borders in the USSR between the 1950s and the 1980s

Zbigniew Wojnowski

In July 1976, the Soviet Ukrainian government assigned a recent graduate of the Kherson agricultural institute to his first job posting in Crimea. Keen to encourage the young engineer to stay on the peninsula, representatives of the local authorities met him as soon as he arrived in Simferopol. Although they first emphasized that educated specialists were badly needed in Crimea, local leaders suddenly claimed that all vacancies had been filled as it came to light that R. M. Kerimov was a Crimean Tatar. Kerimov refused to leave Crimea and travelled some thirty miles west to the coastal town of Saki. He arranged a meeting at the town council and got a job straight away because a young woman assigned to work in Saki had recently refused to move to Crimea from her native region in western Ukraine. Kerimov's first three weeks in Saki went by smoothly, but problems started again when he attempted to register as a permanent resident at the local workers' hostel. "Are you a Crimean Tatar?"—the hostel manager was startled upon examining his documents—"Leave right now, ... they might fire me, the man who issues passports has already got in trouble for something like this." As news of Kerimov's ethnic background spread, his boss begged him to leave and even offered to cover the engineer's moving expenses. When Kerimov refused to resign from his job, he was quickly fired and the post he had occupied remained unfilled several months later.[1]

Kerimov's story illuminates the dynamics of Soviet identity politics in Crimea after the wholesale deportations of Crimean Tatars and other non-Russian and non-Ukrainian minorities during the second world war. It first points to the importance of internal borders between Soviet republics, suggesting that Crimea was firmly integrated into Soviet Ukraine after the transfer from Soviet Russian to Soviet Ukrainian jurisdiction in 1954. Educated at one of Soviet Ukraine's institutions, Kerimov travelled to Crimea on instructions obtained from the republic's authorities. Kyiv thus drew on the republic's human capital to address Crimea's economic needs.[2] Secondly, Kerimov's experiences reveal that, as Crimea suffered from labor shortages, agricultural expertise was a marker of high social status. As a specialist in irrigation, Kerimov enjoyed access to the district and municipal authorities and had no problem finding a job

1 Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii, Moscow (hereafter, RGANI), f. 5, op. 75, d. 243, ll. 48–59.

2 It is also striking that the vacancy in Saki was supposed to be filled by a woman from western Ukraine.

on the peninsula. Finally, over thirty years after the deportations, and despite Khrushchev's public condemnation of Stalin's xenophobic policies,[3] ethnicity remained a key marker of belonging in the imagined Soviet community. Kerimov was not allowed to stay in Crimea simply because of the ethnic identity written into his internal passport. Kerimov's experiences illustrate how far xenophobia penetrated local society in Crimea. The authorities in Kyiv, Simferopol, and Saki were at first blind to Kerimov's ethnic identity and seemed not to communicate with each other once they discovered that he was a Crimean Tatar. While the state struggled to enforce its xenophobic policies, the establishment of a Tatar-free Crimea was contingent on the collaboration of local Slavic inhabitants. Fearful of repression and keen to preserve their social and professional status, Kerimov's acquaintances made sure that he left the peninsula.

This article analyses how the Soviet state determined who was a reliable citizen and who was an enemy in Crimea after the death of Stalin and before the onset of Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms. It thus explores the limits of the Soviet concept of "friendship of the peoples." The article is based in part on a rich document collection published under the editorship of Oleh Bazhan. The compilation comprises full transcripts of documents relating to the incorporation and integration of Crimea in Soviet Ukraine produced by the Communist Party, the KGB, and other Soviet state institutions.[4] Documents from Bazhan's collection are supplemented with archival sources I have discovered in Communist Party archives in Kyiv and Moscow. Both groups of sources reveal distinct patterns that allow me to explore how the USSR's identity politics shaped socio-cultural dynamics in Crimea between the 1950s and the early 1980s. My study of post-deportation Crimean identity politics thus shifts away from the usual focus on Crimean Tatar activists in Central Asia and towards developments on the peninsula itself.[5]

The Soviet authorities looked at residents of Ukraine as a particularly useful source of labor for Crimea. The transfer of Crimea from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction in 1954 can be seen as an attempt to re-populate the peninsula with agricultural settlers from mainland Ukraine. This move was underpinned by Khrushchev's reliance on the Ukrainian republican-level government to invest in the development of Crimean infrastructure, especially in the countryside, as well as the hope that large families and even entire villages transplanted to the peninsula from nearby parts of Ukraine would make for a more firmly grounded labor force than a mish-mash of individuals from far-flung parts

3 Nikita Khrushchev Reference Archive, "Speech to the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU." https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm (accessed on June 29, 2018).

4 Oleh Hryhorovych Bazhan et al, eds., *Krym v umovakh suspil'no politychnykh transformatsii (1940–2015): Zbirnyk dokumentiv i materialiv* (Kyiv: Klio, 2016), pp. 5–6. When citing from this edited volume, I provide the original archival reference along with page numbers in Bazhan's collection in square brackets.

5 For example, see Brian Glyn Williams, *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest* (London: Hurst, 2015).

of the USSR. Secondly, the article demonstrates that, while Communist Party officials never established a strong Ukrainian cultural identity for Crimea, they promoted a composite East Slavic rather than a Russian identity on the peninsula after 1954. Identifying loyal citizens as all East Slavs, propaganda downplayed any significant differences between Russians and Ukrainians, but also entrenched in public culture the notion that both Russian and Ukrainian identities were ancient and immutable.[6] While some Soviet citizens mobilized Ukrainian identities to oppose the Soviet state after the Second World War, especially in the western regions of the USSR,[7] and although some post-Stalinist intellectuals and political activists pushed the limits of permissible Ukrainian national expression without rejecting the Soviet system as such,[8] this article shows that Ukrainian ethnic identities, albeit only when refracted through the prism of friendship with Russia, were also a key source of legitimacy for the Soviet state. Crimean identity politics thus reflected developments in other parts of Soviet Ukraine: as Tarik Amar puts it in his study of the borderlands incorporated into the USSR during the Second World War, for example, "Soviet Lviv was not Russified but Ukrainianized, while the Soviet idea of Ukrainian identity presupposed a subordinate relationship to a Soviet version of Russian culture."[9]

Finally, the article shows that the concept of "friendship of the peoples" fueled xenophobia in Crimea. Identifying friends as Slavs, communist party leaders in Simferopol, Kyiv, and Moscow, as well as ordinary inhabitants of Crimea, fanned fears of enemies abroad and ethnic minorities at home, with particularly tragic consequences for Crimean Tatars. That Crimean Tatars suffered from state-sponsored xenophobia is far from a new discovery. The Soviet authorities deported some 263,000 people from Crimea between 1941 and 1945, including 191,088 Crimean Tatars and smaller numbers of Germans, Greeks,

6 Ethnicity became an important administrative category at least partly because Soviet leaders sought to eliminate national inequalities in the 1920s and the 1930s. Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism," *Slavic Review* 53:2 (1994), pp. 414–452. As Serhy Yekelchyk points out, the transfer of Crimea from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction was part of celebrating the 300th anniversary of Ukraine's "reunification" with Russia in 1654. In state-sponsored narratives that accompanied the transfer, Ukrainians emerged as Russians' "younger brothers" who had always strived for East Slavic unity. Twentieth-century Russian and Ukrainian national identities were thus projected onto the past. Serhy Yekelchyk, *Ukraine: Birth of a Modern Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 154–155.

7 For example, see Alexander Statiev, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

8 William Risch, *The Ukrainian West: Culture and the Fate of Empire in Soviet Lviv* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 29–49, 70–81; Serhy Yekelchyk, "The Early 1960s as a Cultural Space: A Microhistory of Ukraine's Generation of Cultural Rebels," *Nationalities Papers* 43:1 (2015), pp. 45–62.

9 Tarik Cyril Amar, *The Paradox of Ukrainian Lviv: A Borderland City between Stalinists, Nazis, and Nationalists* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015), p. 13.

Bulgarians, Armenians, Turks, Italians, and Roma.[10] While the experience of Crimean Tatars in exile and their struggle to return have been well-documented, historians have paid little attention to the impact that Soviet state-sponsored xenophobia had on the Slavic-majority population of post-deportation Crimea.[11] Just as Slavic victims of Stalinist deportations in Kazakhstan some-

10 Nearly 5000 members of deportees' families were also forced to leave Crimea between 1942 and 1952. Most deportees ended up in Central Asia, where they lived under a "special settlement" regime administered by the NKVD. Haluzevyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Ministerstva Vnutrishnikh Sprav Ukrainy, Kyiv [hereafter, HDAMVS], f. 15, o. 1, s. 172, ark. 158–159 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 838–840]. The Soviet regime promoted Crimean Tatar national development in the first two decades of Communist rule, which fueled resentment among local Russian officials. Yet as fears of foreign intervention came to dominate public rhetoric in the USSR, certain ethnic groups were destined for wholesale deportations during the 1930s and the 1940s. As Brian Williams argues, the reason for the deportation of Crimean Tatars could probably be found in Stalin's plans to invade Turkey. Meanwhile, although Stalinist terror targeted all Soviet citizens irrespective of ethnic background, the authorities looked primarily towards Russians and other East Slavs in their search for reliable and deserving citizens. Moscow significantly scaled down affirmative action towards non-Russians and rehabilitated certain aspects of Russian history and culture in an attempt to propagate Soviet patriotism after the mid-1930s. For example, extending control over newly acquired territories in western Ukraine at the end of World War II, they promoted Russians and Ukrainians to positions of responsibility and removed non-East Slavic cultures and people from the borderlands. Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, pp. 57, 71, 97; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923*–1939 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), pp. 311–343, 394–431; Svetlana Frunchak, "Commemorating the Future in Postwar Chernivtsi," *East European Politics and Societies* 24:3 (2010), pp. 435–463.

11 Crimea's incorporation and integration in Soviet Ukraine before the late 1980s has received cursory treatment from historians of Ukraine. For example, Serhy Yekelchyk mentions the symbolic nature of the transfer of the peninsula from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction and briefly states that the transfer intensified Crimea's integration in the Ukrainian economy. Serhii Plokhy likewise stresses that "cut off from Russia... and linked by communication lines to the Ukrainian mainland, the Crimea needed assistance from Ukraine to rebuild its economy." Paul Robert Magosci's history of Crimea, a sweeping study aimed at a popular audience, includes a short chapter on the second half of the twentieth century. The chapter documents how Soviet authorities eradicated memories of Crimean Tatar past on the peninsula, states that the Soviet Ukrainian government faced a major economic and demographic crisis in Crimea, and traces the history of the Crimean Tatar movement for the right to return. Magocsi's work is based on a very limited number of sources which mostly consist of official Soviet publications. Scholars devote little attention to the relations between Slavs and Crimean Tatars in Crimea between the 1950s and the 1980s. The return of Crimean Tatars is studied almost exclusively in the context of the late 1980s and the 1990s. Brian Williams writes about Crimean Tatar settlement in Crimea and nearby parts of Ukraine before the onset of perestroika, but does not explore their interactions with local inhabitants. Williams focuses on the continuing deportations of illegal Crimean Tatar settlers and acts of protest and self-immolation in the Crimean Tatar community. He states that the 1967 decree which exonerated Crimean Tatars from accusations of group collaboration with the German occupation regime during the Second World War crushed "Crimean Tatars dream of returning to their homeland" by stressing that they had

times adopted the identities of colonizers', mobilizing racial and ethnic stereotypes to claim that "Soviet people" were a "civilizing force" among "lazy" and "backward" Kazakhs, citizens in postwar Crimea also repeated state-sponsored slogans about "friendship of the peoples" to obliterate memories of the civilization that had existed before Stalinist terror remade local society.[12] They expressed a sense of pride in a common East Slavic history to claim the status of the rightful inhabitants of the peninsula. The widespread celebration of Crimea as a land of "friendship" between Slavs made it very difficult for Crimean Tatars to register their grievances as they struggled to return to the peninsula after the death of Stalin. Legacies of Soviet-identity politics continue to relegate Crimean Tatars to the status of second-class citizens in Russian-occupied Crimea today.

I. Postwar Demographic Crisis

The transfer of Crimea from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction was part of an attempt to repopulate and to rebuild the peninsula after wartime destruction. By the late 1950s, although the number of Crimean inhabitants had just about exceeded what it had been before the war, the rural population was still significantly smaller than in 1939.[13] The loss of life during the Second World War and outmigration to cities resulted in labor shortages across the Soviet countryside.[14] The problem was further exacerbated as Soviet leaders sought to increase agricultural production.[15] Along with the Virgin Lands and parts of north Caucasus, the shortage of agricultural labor was especially burning in Crimea because the peninsula had lost a quarter of its population during the

taken root in their places of exile. Oleh Bazhan is exceptional in openly acknowledging that Crimean Tatars had (very limited) opportunities to legally return to the peninsula after 1967. Yekelchyk, *Ukraine*, pp. 154–155, 187–188; Serhii Plokhii, *The Gates of Europe: A History of Ukraine* (New York: Basic Book, 2015), p. 298; Paul Robert Magocsi, *This Blessed Land: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2014), pp. 123–133; Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, pp. 126–128, 134; Bazhan, *Krym*, p. 771.

12 Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 187.

13 Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Hromads'kykh Ob''ednan' Ukrainy, Kyiv (hereafter, TsDAHO), f. 1, op. 6, s. 3001, ark. 118–120 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 575–577]; Tsentral'nyi Arkhiv Vyshchykh Orhaniv Vlady ta Upravlinnia Ukrainy, Kyiv (hereafter, TsDAVO), f. 582, op. 20, s. 93, ark. 305–320 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 585–617]; TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 13, s. 865, ark. 49–51 [Bazhan, *Krym*, p. 693].

14 Ol'ga M. Verbitskaia, *Rossiiskoe krestianstvo ot Stalina k Khrushchevu: seredina 40kh – nachalo 60kh godov* (Moscow: Nauka, 1992), pp. 59–60, 80–83, 85, 92; Auri Berg, "Reform in the Time of Stalin: Nikita Khrushchev and the Fate of the Russian Peasantry" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2012), p. 129.

15 At the same time, various administrative measures were taken to improve the performance of the agricultural sector. See Verbitskaia, *Rossiiskoe krestianstvo*, pp. 18–36; Michaela Pohl, "The Virgin Lands Between Memory and Forgetting: People and Transformation in the Soviet Union, 1954–60" (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 1999), pp. 117–118.

ethnic deportations of the 1940s.[16] Although the resettlement of peasants from overpopulated to underpopulated parts of the USSR generally fell within the remit of the central resettlement commission in Moscow,[17] the Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv played a leading role in solving Crimea's demographic crisis. This is because Ukraine had a comparatively large excess of agricultural labor, its inhabitants volunteered to move to Crimea and, in contrast to their Russian counterparts, republican-level authorities in Ukraine were willing to fund the development of rural infrastructure.

Crimea established strong demographic ties to Ukraine during the 1950s. The majority of families arriving in Crimea in 1950 and 1951 hailed from the RSFSR, but Ukraine's central regions turned into the most important source of new labor for the peninsula in 1952, when the local authorities welcomed 1576 families from Ukraine and 1311 families from Russia. Crimea relied on Ukraine's labor reserves even more after the transfer from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction. In the first nine months of 1954, the Crimean authorities registered 392 new families from Russia and 905 new families from Ukraine. Between 1955 and 1959, 17,000 families from Ukraine settled in Crimea, half of them from the Ukrainian-speaking western parts of the republic.[18] Although Russians still outnumbered Ukrainians on the peninsula, and new arrivals from Ukraine no doubt included people identified as Russian in their internal passports, the number of Ukrainians in Crimea increased at a considerably faster rate than the number of Russians during the 1950s.[19]

Crimea's growing dependence on Ukraine's labor resulted from Nikita Khrushchev's attempts to reform Soviet agriculture. In contrast to the Russian republic, where Khrushchev's plans to amalgamate collective farms into larger agricultural settlements all but ground to a halt, the authorities liquidated a much greater number of small and supposedly unviable villages in central parts of Ukraine and, especially, in the western borderlands.[20] They thus up-

16 Resettlement began very soon after the Crimean Tatars were expelled. Verbitskaia, *Rossiiskoe krestianstvo*, p. 90.

17 Pohl, "The Virgin Lands," pp. 171–172.

18 TsDAVO, f. 4626, op. 1, s. 273, ark. 93–95 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 384–387]; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 3001, ark. 118–120 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 575–577].

19 Before the Second World War and the expulsion of Crimean Tatars, Soviet citizens identified as "Russian" in their internal passports had constituted 49% of Soviet citizens in Crimea; Ukrainians made up less than 14% of the local population. In absolute numbers, more ethnic Russians than Ukrainians arrived on the peninsula during the 1940s and the 1950s. By 1959, citizens identified as "Russian" and "Ukrainian" made up 71% and 22% of Crimean population respectively, and most settlements on the peninsula had a clear Russian majority. Still, Ukraine was key to Crimea's demographic growth. Between 1939 and 1959, the number of Ukrainians in Crimea increased by 74% from 153,500 to 267,700, while the number of Russians grew by 54% from 557,500 to 858,300. TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 3001, ark. 118–120 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 575–577]; f. 582, op. 20, s. 93, ark. 305–320 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 585–617]; TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 13, s. 865, ark. 49–51 [Bazhan, *Krym*, p. 693].

20 Verbitskaia, *Rossiiskoe krestianstvo*, pp. 96–97, 159; Berg, "Reform," pp. 3–4, 39.

rooted peasant communities and effectively freed up agricultural labor. Between 1950 and 1953, most of the collective farmers who successfully settled in Crimea came to the peninsula with their entire agricultural brigades or collective farms which were dissolved elsewhere, especially in the regions of Sumy and Chernivtsi. Meanwhile, settlers who moved to Crimea as individual family units were far less likely to stay long-term.[21]

As Khrushchev favored positive incentives over coercion to increase labor efficiency in the countryside,[22] the authorities in Kyiv emphasized that Ukraine provided the most reliable source of collective farmers who would volunteer to resettle in Crimea. Before the death of Stalin, Kyiv had sent peasants from overpopulated parts of the republic to such far-flung provinces of the USSR as Karelia, Sakhalin, and Khabarovsk.[23] Although party agitators were not always successful in encouraging Ukraine's peasants to voluntarily move to Crimea,[24] the republic's leadership nevertheless emphasized that Ukraine's peasants were more willing to move to the peninsula as compared to other parts of the USSR. They thus called on Moscow to revise previous resettlement plans for 1954 which called for thousands of Ukraine's farmers to move to Chita and, as it came to light that RSFSR authorities struggled to mobilize Russia's peasants for resettlement in Crimea, to replace Russian with Ukrainian settlers.[25]

Ukraine's role in Crimea was primarily economic. For old residents, the legitimacy of Ukrainian administration was grounded in the promises to fix local agriculture. Immediately after the transfer from Russia to Ukraine, local inhabitants attended special agitation meetings where some participants publicly expressed the expectation that Ukraine would improve agricultural supplies.[26] To emphasize the close economic ties between Crimea and Ukraine, the authorities drafted local residents to help with harvests in mainland Ukraine.[27] Meanwhile, members of Crimean intelligentsia involved in agricultural and biological research looked at the Ukrainian administration with a mixture of hope and fear, seeking to obtain more funding and to protect their jobs by rebranding themselves as an important part of Soviet Ukrainian scientific communities. Party leaders in Simferopol complained that the local branch of the Academy of Sciences was neglected within the RSFSR, with the head of its

21 TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 8, s. 8862, ark. 139–140 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 154–155].

22 This entailed lowering taxes, raising procurement prices, and increasing the presence of communist party activists in the countryside. Pohl, "Virgin Lands," p. 116. For the most part, these tactics did not work. Reducing the number of collective farms through the 1950s without actually amalgamating peasant settlements meant that the political and social life of collective farms increasingly concentrated in the farm centre, with outlying villages belonging to the same collective farm sidelined. Berg, "Reform," p. 186.

23 TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 8, s. 8862, ark. 139–140 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 150–151].

24 TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 8, s. 1483, ark. 6–7 [Bazhan, *Krym*, p. 103].

25 TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 8, s. 10935, ark. 10–20 [Bazhan, *Krym*, Part II, Documents 40 and 42].

26 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 46, s. 6910, ark. 3–5 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 173–174].

27 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 4252, ark. 69–70, 103–107.

presidium E. N. Pavlovskii spending most of his time in Moscow and Leningrad.[28] The hope was that Crimean scientists would receive more opportunities to conduct research vital to the development of local agriculture within the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences.[29] As fears that Kyiv would dissolve local research institutes spread through the mid-1950s, Crimean biologists sought to protect their status by stressing that their work would benefit not only the peninsula, but the entire south of Ukraine with which Crimea shared similar climatic conditions.[30]

For new settlers in Crimea, the establishment of Soviet Ukrainian administration extended the promise of improved welfare. Through the 1950s and the early 1960s, the authorities relied on local community leaders to encourage Ukraine's rural inhabitants to move to the peninsula. These opinion leaders travelled to Crimea and then organized special agitation meetings back at their collective farms or wrote letters to friends and relatives back home in which they praised the supposedly high quality of life in their new villages. As late as 1965, for example, a Crimean farmer originally from the western Ukrainian region of Volhynia portrayed the peninsula as a land of welfare and educational opportunities:

> I moved to Crimea with my wife and two children in 1960... They gave us a house, helped us obtain a cow and assigned us work which is in line with our professional preparation... We earn good money... We bought a television set. We have a garden in which we grow our own fruit and grapes. Our daughter Svetlana studies at the Yalta agricultural school, and our son works on developing rice paddies. My fellow Volhynians, I pass the sunny greetings from all the resettlers at our state farm [sovkhoz]. Join us, you will not regret it![31]

Regional identities and community bonds from mainland Ukraine were thus mobilized to encourage collective farmers to dream of a better Soviet future in Crimea.

Collective farmers who took seriously Soviet promises of welfare in Crimea relied heavily on republican-level authorities in Kyiv. After decision making on collective farm investment was devolved to the republic level in 1946, Kyiv invested in developing new, larger collective farms, while the Russian authorities, largely under the influence of Khrushchev's chief rival Malenkov, resisted attempts to increase state funding for infrastructure in the countryside.[32] Unsurprisingly, therefore, Crimean agriculture saw little improvement in the years before the transfer from Russia to Ukraine. According to the authorities in Kyiv, few houses were built in rural Crimea before 1954, and new arrivals often found themselves homeless. To remedy the situation, the Kyiv

28 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3669, ark. 96–97.

29 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3669, ark. 110.

30 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 31, s. 358, ll. 110–111, 114–118, 202–203.

31 TsDAVO, f. 4626, op. 3, s. 262, ark. 3–26 [Bazhan, *Krym*, Part II, Document 167].

32 Berg, "Reform," pp. 58–59, 94–96, 114–115.

Central Committee drew up ambitious plans to build new houses at collective farms between 1954 and 1958, to offer loans that would allow collective farms to refurbish existing infrastructure, and to extend tax waivers for new agricultural settlers in Crimea from two to four years. [33] Kyiv would likewise be responsible for organizing and partly funding the building of new schools and kindergartens, predominantly in rural parts of Crimea.[34] Apart from these improvements to the quality of life in the countryside, Kyiv was also responsible for raising agricultural output. In the mid-1950s, republican-level authorities saw orchards, vineyards, and tobacco plantations as the most important part of the local economy, predicting that new irrigation systems would make it possible to increase orchards alone from 17.1 thousand hectares in 1954 to 30.6 thousand hectares in 1958, but also bemoaning the fact that the actual area of orchards under cultivation was twelve percent lower than before the Second World War.[35] Accordingly, the Ukrainian republican institutions would plan and build a new canal to expand irrigated areas in northern steppe regions of Crimea.[36]

Ukrainian authorities in Kyiv were also charged with rebuilding urban Crimea. Despite widespread wartime destruction, no new hospitals were constructed after 1945; the number of schools in 1954 was still lower than in 1940; and inefficient water supply and sewage systems meant that excrement lined Crimean beaches.[37] The Ukrainian government planned large investment projects.[38] Developing Crimean towns required further resettlement from mainland Ukraine and other parts of the USSR. As vacation travel grew, the population of Crimean coastal resort towns of Yalta, Alushta, Alupka, and Simeiz would have to rise from 46,000 to 68,000 in the second half of the 1950s.[39] Some urban development projects required substantial financial commitments from the Ukrainian republican budget. For example, Kyiv would cover over sixty per cent of the costs of building new hospitals and other medical infrastructure.[40] In other cases, such as the rebuilding of the town of Sevastopol between 1955 and 1958, most of the funds would come from the central Soviet budget.[41] Yet money was not the greatest challenge in rebuilding Crimea. Financial resources devoted to reconstruction projects on the peninsula went unused from year to year because the authorities failed to secure both the building materials and the

33 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3672, ark. 5–29; TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 8, s. 10935, ark. 10–20 [Bazhan, *Krym*, Part II, Document 42]

34 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3672, ark. 5–29.

35 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3672, ark. 5–29.

36 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 2051, ark. 7–8 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 176–178].

37 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3590, ark. 93–104, 120–136; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3672, ark. 1–3, 4–29, 31–32, 231–232; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3895, ark. 177–180.

38 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 2110, ark. 121–125.

39 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 4078, ark. 269–270.

40 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3672, ark. 5–29.

41 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3668, ark. 26, 30.

workforce necessary to actually spend them. It would now fall on Ukrainian ministries and republican-level enterprises to organize construction work and to provide engineers and other professionals to ensure the development of housing, sanatoria, and cultural institutions to serve both locals and tourists.[42]

II. UKRAINE'S CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY

As Crimea underwent large-scale demographic and administrative changes, the authorities Kyiv faced a crisis of legitimacy. In the 1950s and the 1960s, they sought to legitimize their power on the peninsula by mobilizing a sense of great power pride and xenophobic sentiment which united old Slavic residents and new settlers in Crimea. Promoting a composite "East Slavic" identity for Crimea, the authorities obliterated memories of Tatar past and downplayed linguistic and cultural differences among Russians and Ukrainians. Soviet-made identities which emerged in Ukrainian Crimea during the second half of the twentieth century were founded on the notion that the Russian-dominated Slavic community was constantly under threat from external enemies and ethnic minorities at home.

Old residents of Crimea were not enthusiastic about the transfer from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction in 1954. Some local leaders hoped that unpopular decisions taken by the RSFSR leadership would now be overturned in Kyiv. For example, in February 1955, obkom officials lobbied the Ukrainian leaders to create three new regions in the town of Simferopol, even though these regions had just been dissolved less than two years before. Their request was denied.[43] More commonly, Kyiv found that increasing Ukrainian institutions' influence over Crimea was tantamount to overcoming local resistance to overlapping demographic and administrative change. As Crimea was transferred from Russian to Ukrainian jurisdiction, the limits of administrative reform were unclear and local officials were not even certain whether Crimea would remain a separate oblast.[44] At public meetings, they also expressed concerns over how the move would affect local salaries and supplies.[45] In the mid-1950s, Crimean cadres feared that they would be replaced by new appointees from Ukraine, particularly as Kyiv hoped that Ukraine would provide a source of new, better-educated party workers for the peninsula, at least some of whom would be able to communicate with new settlers not only in Russian, but also in Ukrainian and Belarusian.[46] To be sure, these fears were not unique to Crimea, as uncertainty about the future penetrated communist party

42 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 2110, ark. 121–125; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3672, ark. 5–29; TsDAHO, op. 1, op. 24, s. 4078, ark. 267–268.

43 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 4078, ark. 258.

44 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 46, s. 46, ark. 3–5; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3889, ark. 17–18.

45 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 46, s. 6910, ark. 3–5; TsDAHO, op. 1, op. 46, s. 6910, ark. 3–5 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 173–174].

46 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3590, ark. 120–136.

cells throughout the USSR after the death of Stalin in 1953. Rank and file Party members across the country were encouraged to engage in discussion at primary party cell meetings and to criticize abuses at the local level.[47] While these attempts to breathe a new life into the Communist Party were directed from Moscow, for Crimean party apparatchiks the instability of the mid-1950s was closely associated with the transfer of power from Moscow to Kyiv. Explaining the need for change, speakers at agitation gatherings devoted to Khrushchev's reforms referred to the needs of the "Soviet people," but also the "Ukrainian republic."[48] The Communist Party of Ukraine did Khrushchev's dirty work on the peninsula as they singled out local party bureaucrats deemed particularly unresponsive to the needs and voices of ordinary communists and, most importantly, collective farmers.[49] There were few competent communists who worked in the Crimean countryside, claimed senior Party apparatchiks in Kyiv, and local leaders could not even collect basic statistical information about rural parts of the peninsula.[50]

Meanwhile, new settlers' hopes for a better future in Ukrainian Crimea set them up for bitter disappointments. Well into the 1960s, Kyiv bemoaned the fact that many settlers only stayed in Crimea for several months because collective farms were still desperately short of housing, while new buildings were of poor quality (some did not have toilets, forcing new settlers to use the facilities at their neighbors' homes). There were visible rifts between old residents and new settlers on the peninsula. In the assessment of the republican-level authorities, problems with housing continued because local leaders in Simferopol were indifferent or even hostile to settlers. Regional authorities sent settler families with children to collective farms with no schools. For their part, collective farm chairmen assigned new houses to old residents of Crimea and refused to share basic equipment or supplies with newcomers, even in cases where they were available in abundance.[51]

During the 1950s, Kyiv saw the promotion of Ukrainian language and culture as a means to win over Crimean inhabitants to the new Ukrainian administration. Apart from symbolic gestures such as the renaming of local sanatoria in honor of Ukrainian literary and historical heroes such as Lesia Ukrainka or Bohdan Khmel'nyts'kyi,[52] the CPU Central Committee sought to incorporate local inhabitants in Soviet Ukraine's cultural and educational institutions. They

47 For example, see Polly Jones, "From the Secret Speech to the Burial of Stalin: Real and Ideal Responses to De-Stalinisation," in Polly Jones, ed., *The Dilemmas of De-Stalinisation: Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 42–51.

48 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 4371, ark. 98–102.

49 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3538, ark. 14–19.

50 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 4380, ark. 79–84; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3590, ark. 82–90.

51 TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 8, s. 10944, ark. 61–70 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 231–235]; TsDAVO, f. 4626, op. 3, s. 262, ark. 3–26 [Bazhan, *Krym*, Part II, Document 167]; TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 9, s. 2589, ark. 159–162 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 617–619].

52 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3889, ark. 35–36.

focused in particular on the intelligentsia. Kyiv thus promised that the publishing house Radyans'kyi Pysmennyk would publish Ukrainian translations of books by Crimean writers.[53] Although the vast majority of Crimean schools continued to teach all subjects in Russian, several hours of Ukrainian language instruction were gradually introduced in most schools during the second half of the 1950s. The Central Committee in Kyiv emphasized that this would allow Crimean school graduates to study at Ukraine's universities.[54] On another level, republican-level authorities made very cautious attempts to cultivate a distinct Soviet Ukrainian identity among recent arrivals to Crimea. Kyiv suggested that Ukrainian translations of Russian-language newspapers be published, albeit only in parts of the peninsula with compact Ukrainian communities.[55] Under pressure from the republican authorities, regional leaders in Simferopol also vowed to open schools where Ukrainian would be the main language of instruction. They were supposed to serve the nearly 10,000 children of Ukrainian settlers who had arrived in Crimea in the early to mid-1950s, most of whom had studied in Ukrainian before resettlement.[56]

State-sponsored Ukrainian culture in Crimea was inevitably refracted through the prism of "eternal friendship" with Russia. The transfer of the peninsula from Russia to Ukraine was itself part of broader public celebrations of the 300th anniversary of Russo-Ukrainian union at Pereiaslav, which Crimean residents marked in various public forums including open-air concerts, special agitation meetings, and exhibitions.[57] At school, Ukraine's Ministry of Education expected instructors of Ukrainian language to highlight ties between "progressive" Russian and Ukrainian writers before and after the revolution of 1917, as well as to promote the idea that Russians and Ukrainians built socialism together in the face of external threats: in oral classes, for example, students were supposed to learn such phrases as "our friendship is stronger than steel" and "the cruel invader will perish."[58] At the same time, despite efforts made in Kyiv, clear hierarchies emerged between Russian and Ukrainian culture in Crimea. For instance, Kyiv insisted that a Ukrainian drama theatre be opened in the industrial town of Kerch to showcase how Ukrainian playwrights tackled contemporary social problems, thereby proving that Ukrainian culture was not confined to folk dance and music. However, under pressure from the Crimean obkom, the repertoire of the Ukrainian theatre which was eventually established in Crimea consisted of musicals, probably because the genre

53 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3648, ark. 223–226.

54 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 2309, ark. 1 [Bazhan, Krym, pp. 356–357].

55 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3648, ark. 114–117.

56 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3648, ark. 227.

57 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3600, ark. 75–78.

58 TsDAVO, f. 166, op. 15, s. 3205, ark. 89–101 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 630–635]; TsDAVO, f. 166, op. 15, s. 3542, ark. 52–55, [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 660–663].

was easier to understand for the predominantly Russophone local audiences.[59] Crimean authorities thus effectively relegated Ukrainian-language theatre to the sphere of entertainment.

Even cautious attempts to promote Ukrainian language and culture in Crimea proved controversial. Old inhabitants of Crimea saw the promotion of Ukrainian-language culture to benefit new arrivals. For instance, plans to establish a Ukrainian theatre on the peninsula raised alarm among local Russian-speaking actors who feared that they would now be forced to move elsewhere. In 1954, Mykola Pidhornyi (Nikolai Podgornyi) had to reassure party activists concerned about the Ukrainianization of public life. In a speech delivered at the regional communist party conference, he emphasized that Kyiv had no track record of forcing the republic's residents to use Ukrainian language in public.[60] Planning cultural activities in Crimea, the authorities in Kyiv toyed with the idea of sending Ukrainian-speakers to head the local publishing house and the radio, as well as to encourage local journalists to devote more attention to Ukrainian economy and culture, but these proposals were crossed out (and seemingly abandoned) in internal Party correspondence from October 1954.[61]

Attempts to promote Ukrainian language and culture in Crimea lost impetus by the end of the 1950s. In particular, the teaching of and in Ukrainian was no longer a priority. Despite ambitious plans to open schools with Ukrainian language of instruction, there were only three such institutions in Crimea in the 1959/60 school year, catering for less than half of one percent of local children.[62] Moreover, although Ukrainian language was supposed to be taught in all Russian-medium schools from grade two upwards, classes were only offered for certain year groups. Some schools (including all schools in Sevastopol, which mostly catered to the children of military personnel from across the USSR) offered no Ukrainian classes at all. No doubt, the limited spread of Ukrainian in Crimean schools was partly due to major staff shortages. In September 1954, Kyiv estimated that only 94 out of 2193 teachers in Crimea spoke Ukrainian, most of whom had no experience of actually teaching the language.[63] More importantly, political pressures from Moscow curbed Kyiv's enthusiasm. Starting in April 1959, in line with all-Soviet education reforms, Crimean parents could choose for their children in schools with Russian language of instruction not to study Ukrainian (meanwhile, all children in Ukrainian-medium schools took

59 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3528, ark. 133–134 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 390–391]; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 31, s. 19, ark. 137 [Bazhan, *Krym*, p. 414]; TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 9, s. 2481, ark. 116–119 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 529–531].

60 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 46, s. 6910, ark. 3–5; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 52, s. 4990, ark. 183–184 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 175–176].

61 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3648, ark. 228–233.

62 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 3001, ark. 118–120 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 575–577].

63 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3648, ark. 227; TsDAHO, s. 1, op. 6, s. 2309, ark. 1 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 356–357]; TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 9, s. 38, ark. 1–5 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 482–484]; TsDAVO, f. 166, op. 15, s. 2591, ark. 71–76 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 577–580].

Russian classes). Some jumped at the opportunity, concerned that Ukrainian instruction took time away from what they deemed more important and practical subjects, as well as by the poor marks which Ukrainian language teachers reportedly gave out left and right.[64] Moreover, as Khrushchev's reforms undermined the status of non-Russian languages in education and pushed teachers to focus more on the development of practical skills and less on the preparation of students for further study, the point that proficiency in Ukrainian would enable local children to study at Ukraine's universities became almost moot.[65] Although only 117 parents decided to withdraw their children from Ukrainian language classes by the end of 1959, proponents of teaching Ukrainian in Crimea were on the defensive.[66] The CPSU Central Committee sent Kyiv unambiguous signals in the autumn of 1959, responding to complaints from a group of parents in Simferopol who claimed that one school director ignored their requests to switch the curriculum from the Ukrainian to the RSFSR program and refused to replace Ukrainian language classes with other subjects. The authorities considered the case serious enough for heads to roll both at the school in question and in Crimea's regional administration. The Ukrainian Ministry of Education received a stern reminder that they must now develop a new curriculum for students who opted out of studying Ukrainian language in the republic.[67] Ultimately, the CPU Central Committee decided to approve special educational plans for Crimea, different from other parts of Ukraine, raising the number Russian at the expense of Ukrainian classes.[68]

While attempts to promote a distinct Ukrainian identity in Crimea proved controversial, the republican leadership found common ground with central Soviet decision makers and regional authorities by employing the rhetoric of great power pride in Crimean public culture. Drawing on anti-Western sentiments, they encouraged residents of Crimea to celebrate the peninsula's role in Russian imperial history. The Ukrainian republican and the all-Soviet ministries of culture even suggested that the Nazi occupation of Crimea was part of age-old conflicts between Russia and the West: they thus agreed to sponsor a movie celebrating the heroism of soldiers who defended the peninsula during both the Crimean War in the 1850s and the Second World War.[69] Unlike

64 TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 9, s. 38, ark. 1–5 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 482–484]; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 3001, ark. 118–120 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 575–577].

65 Yaroslav Bilinsky, "The Soviet Education Laws of 1958–9 and Soviet Nationality Policy," *Soviet Studies* 14:2 (1962), pp. 138–157.

66 Members of the CPU Central Committee in Kyiv also stressed that calls to cut Ukrainian language classes from the curriculum were few and far between, and sometimes resulted from intrigues by a narrow group of particularly hostile parents and teachers. TsDAVO, f. 166, op. 15, s. 3205, ark. 89–101 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 630–635]; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 3001, ark. 118–120 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 575–577].

67 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 4925, ark. 102–104 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 572–574].

68 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 3001, ark. 118–120 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 575–577].

69 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3503, ark. 54–56.

the cautious attempts at linguistic and cultural Ukrainianization, the Crimean regional leadership felt at ease with the celebration of Russian and Soviet imperial history, lobbying Kyiv (with only partial success) to devote more money to anniversary celebrations and a new museum devoted to the defense of Sevastopol in 1855.[70] Such state-centric narratives helped legitimize Ukrainian administration in Crimea insofar as they downplayed distinctions between Russians and Ukrainians and, by extension, between old Slavic residents of the peninsula and new settlers. The rhetoric of great power pride reverberated in Crimean public culture, especially at times of crisis. During the 1956 invasion of Hungary and the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, for example, local residents attended special agitation meetings where they expressed their unwavering loyalty to the "Soviet Homeland" threatened by ungrateful socialist neighbors, German revanchists, and American imperialists.[71] What Soviet citizens in Crimea said in these highly controlled contexts does not provide access to "genuine opinion," of course, but it reflects the nature of acceptable public discourse which stressed that "Soviet people" were constantly threatened by enemies.

Blurring the lines between Tsarist and Soviet history, the authorities portrayed Crimea not as a Soviet socialist land under attack by ideological enemies, but rather as an ancient Slavic soil under threat from foreigners abroad and ethnic minorities at home.[72] In 1954, a special exhibit devoted to the incorporation of Crimea in Ukraine celebrated Russians and Ukrainians fighting against Turks and Tatars.[73] Even the Crimean Tatar khans' palace in Bakhchisarai was meant to become a Slavic landmark. Before the expulsion of Crimean Tatars, the palace had contained an exhibit about the Crimean Khanate, but it stood empty during the 1950s. Officials at the propaganda department of the CPU Central Committee were nevertheless concerned that the tens of thousands of tourists who braved the uncomfortable road from Crimea's south coast to Bakhchisarai every year were overly impressed with the "power of the khans" exemplified by the building. They therefore suggested that a new exhibit showcasing restoration works at the palace conducted by "Russian masters" in the nineteenth century be prepared. Warning that the museum should not focus on the art and architecture of Soviet period which "would look primitive compared to the old palace," Central Committee officials in Kyiv stressed that the exhibit would showcase the close economic and cultural links between Crimea and Ukraine, as well as between Ukrainians and Russians. At heart, this was an unabashedly xenophobic narrative which portrayed entire ethnic groups in black-and-white terms. The Crimean Tatar palace was now supposed to expose the "parasitic nature of the so-called Crimean state, which existed thanks to bandit raids on

70 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3655, ark. 223–226; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3503, ark. 63–67, 71–76.

71 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 4377, ark. 102–105; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, s. 29, ark. 83–86; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, s. 37, ark. 55–56a.

72 Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, p. 114.

73 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3655, ark. 76–78.

Russian and Ukrainian lands," as well as "the heroic struggle of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples against the Tatar-Turkish occupiers."[74] In later years, these narratives were echoed in official Soviet Ukrainian history textbooks which celebrated Russian and, to a lesser extent, Ukrainian resistance against the Golden Horde, the Ottoman Empire, and the Crimean Khanate in Crimea and south Ukraine.[75]

Soviet identity politics in Crimea was xenophobic not only because it vilified old Turkic inhabitants who was subjected to wholesale deportations, but also because it "discursively cleansed" Tatars from the local public sphere.[76] The Crimean regional leadership put pressure on Moscow and, after 1954, on Kyiv to change place names "in light of the changed composition of the population after the Second World War" (this odd phrasing suggests that the history of Tatars and their deportations was sometimes even cleansed from internal party documents). Although farms and train stations had changed from Turkic to Slavic-sounding names in 1948 and 1952, local leaders complained that rivers, mountains, and lakes still carried the "old, Tatar names, which are not understandable for most of the population of Crimea." Their recommendations were not always taken into account, yet it is striking that the authorities tried very hard to forget the Tatar past in Crimea, just as their counterparts in western Ukraine obliterated memories of a multifaceted German, Hungarian, Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian histories of the borderlands.[77]

III. INTERETHNIC CONFRONTATIONS

How to deal with Crimean Tatars was not just a historical question. Although the deportees from Crimea were not allowed to return even as they were freed from "special settlement" in Central Asia in 1955 and 1956, other ethnic groups such as the Chechens and the Ingush moved back to their homelands during the second half of the 1950s,[78] and de-Stalinization held out the promise that the tide would turn for the Crimean Tatars, too.[79] In September 1967, in response to mounting pressure from Crimean Tatar activists, the authorities allowed very small groups of Crimean Tatars to return to Crimea. This modest concession, combined with the continuing promotion of an East Slavic identity in Crimea,

74 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 30, s. 3655, ark. 74–75, 82–88.

75 Iu. Iu. Kondufor, *Istoriia Ukrains'koi RSR: Korotkyi narys* (Kyiv, 1981), pp. 47–51, 108.

76 Rory Finnin, "Forgetting Nothing, Forgetting No One: Boris Chichibabin, Viktor Nekipelov, and the Deportation of the Crimean Tatars," *The Modern Language Review* 106:4 (2011), pp. 1093, 1095; Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, pp. 111, 114.

77 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 6, s. 2143, ark. 27–28; TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3672, ark. 1–3, 4–29, 31–32, 231–232. On the western borderlands, see Amar, *The Paradox*.

78 Michaela Pohl, "'It cannot be that our graves will be here': The survival of Chechen and Ingush deportees in Kazakhstan, 1944-1957," *Journal of Genocide Research* 4:3 (2002), pp. 401–430.

79 RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 56, ll. 180–205. Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, p. 108.

intensified interethnic tensions as the 1967 decree resulted in significant uncontrolled migration of Crimean Tatars to the peninsula in the following years.[80]

Regional apparatchiks in Crimea and the republican authorities in Kyiv pursued an overtly xenophobic policy during the 1950s. In 1954, some 2500 deportees from Crimea were released from special settlement (they belonged to ethnic minorities other than the Crimean Tatars). While the deportees sought to convince the local authorities that they could mobilize all members of their ethnic communities to return to Crimea and thus help resolve the problem of agricultural labor shortages, the head of the Crimean executive council M. Kuzmenko raised alarm among the republican-level leadership. As a few dozen Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians and Germans returned to Crimea in the first five months of 1954, Kuzmenko made no secret that the Party and state authorities primarily concerned themselves with satisfying the interests of Slavs:

> Taking into account that Crimea is a borderland zone and a region inhabited by recently resettled populations, and that the arrival of deportees with their pretensions for homes and property causes unease among the population and discourages them from staying in Crimea, we suggest that you prevent the deportees from arriving.

Clearly prejudiced against the deportees, Kuzmenko highlighted the case of a drunken Greek man who tried to force people out from his house in the village of Zavodskoe.[81] Kyiv listened to the warning signals from Simferopol, with Alexei Kyrychenko informing Khrushchev that deportees' demands for housing put off Slavic residents of the peninsula.[82]

Groups of Crimean Tatars began to arrive in Crimea in 1957 and 1958. Officials at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine were alarmed by their interventions in local identity politics. Mykola Pidhornyi underlined that a "significant number" of Crimean Tatar intelligentsia used trips to Crimea to collect archival materials and other historical evidence to prove that Crimea was a Crimean Tatar land and thus to justify their demands for return—an obstacle, in his view, to the "cultural and economic development" of Crimea by Slavic settlers.[83] Through the 1960s, Crimean Tatar visitors to the peninsula confronted communist party authorities about public portrayals of local history.[84]

These localized confrontations were enmeshed in a broader conflict between Crimean Tatars and the Soviet authorities. Activists who lobbied for the right to return to Crimea created the earliest independent social movement in post-Stalinist USSR. During the late 1950s and the early 1960s, they evoked

80 Williams, *The Crimean Tatars*, pp. 127–128.

81 TsDAVO, f. 1, op. 17, s. 59, ark. 159–162 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 783–785].

82 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 3614, ark. 1–2 [Bazhan, *Krym*, Part III, Document 1].

83 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 4740, ark. 71–72 [Bazhan, *Krym*, Part III, Document 9].

84 Haluzevyi Derzhavnyi Arkhiv Sluzhby Bezpeky Ukrainy, Kyiv (hereafter, HDASBU), f. 16/5A, por. 5, ark. 43–44 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 800–801].

promises of ethnic equality and hovered on the margins of what the authorities considered "legal." In 1956, widely publicized calls for citizens to resettle in Crimea, though targeted at ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, sparked off a letter writing campaign among Crimean Tatar war veterans and party members who underlined their loyalty to the Soviet state and the Communist Party and stressed that they had the necessary expertise in agriculture. The limited cultural openings of Khrushchev's Thaw convinced some Crimean Tatar activists that they could now overturn Stalinist-era portrayals of all Crimean Tatars as "traitors" during the Second World War. "Why should the Ukrainian people oppose the return to Crimea of its indigenous inhabitants?," asked the authors of one letter, clearly aware that ethnicity was a marker of loyalty in the Soviet community. "The Tatars liberated the Ukrainians from German occupation."[85] Activists also travelled to Moscow to lobby top Party leaders and, to the alarm of the KGB, collected signatures under petitions to restore the Crimean ASSR among the deportees in Central Asia.[86] Just as the Tatar past was often cleansed from the public sphere in Crimea, these complaints were swept under the carpet among the senior leadership in Moscow. In internal correspondence within the CPSU Central Committee, apparatchiks reassured each other that most Crimean Tatars were perfectly happy in Uzbekistan, and only the most obstinate members of the intelligentsia and former party apparatchiks, who had lost the most after the abolition of the Crimean autonomy, insisted on returning.[87] Crimean Tatar ideas reverberated among some members of the Ukrainian and Russian intelligentsia.[88] By the second half of the 1960s and the 1970s, Crimean Tatar activists crossed over into the sphere of dissent. Illegal publications such as *Khronika Tekushchikh Sobytii* publicized their plight and appealed to communist parties abroad to exert pressure on the Kremlin. Crimean Tatars maintained contacts with dissidents in Ukraine, including Leonid Pliushch, and passed documents concerning their activities to the West with the help of Andrei Sakharov.[89]

In response to mounting Crimean Tatar pressures, the KGB lifted the wholesale ban on Crimean Tatar return to Crimea on 5 September 1967. The head of the Ukrainian KGB Nikitchenko insisted that this would help take the wind out of the sails of the Crimean Tatar movement for the right to return.[90]

85 RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 56, ll. 180–205.

86 HDASBU, f. 16/3, por. 4, ark. 93, 170–172 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 792–794], HDASBU, f. 16/5A, por. 5, ark. 271–280 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 807–811].

87 Another response to the rising wave of complaints was to place emphasis on improving Crimean Tatars' living conditions in Uzbekistan. RGANI, f. 5, op. 31, d. 56, ll. 151–154.

88 During his performances in early 1960s Kharkiv, for example, the poet Chichibabin not only hinted at the colonial nature of Soviet rule in Crimea, but also encouraged his audiences to ponder their own complicity in the repression of Crimean Tatars. Finnin, "Forgetting Nothing," 1103, 1111.

89 *Khronika Tekushchikh Sobytii*, April 1968; HDASBU, f. 16/3, por. 11, ark. 124–128 [Bazhan, *Krym*, 841–843]; HDASBU, f. 16/7, por. 8, ark. 354–360 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 852–855].

90 HDASBU, f. 16/1, opr. 5, ark. 231–235 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 820–822].

In his view, the change was little more than a symbolic gesture: to stop a massive influx of Crimean Tatars, Nikitchenko still suggested that the authorities quickly fill vacancies on the peninsula with ethnic Ukrainians from the western borderlands.[91] Five years later, arguing that legal channels to return should remain open, he emphasized that Crimean Tatars would not move *en masse* because they found it difficult to sell their houses in Uzbekistan or to make ends meet in Crimea.[92] Lifting the ban on return did not mean that Crimean Tatars could move freely—they still needed to obtain an official permit and local *propiska* (registration). While the Uzbek party authorities selected families for resettlement, apparatchiks in Crimea did not always approve their candidates, as they were only interested in agricultural laborers. The Crimean regional authorities further sought to limit the impact of Crimean Tatar settlement by insisting that new arrivals be spread across the peninsula in Slavic-majority collective farms.[93] Ultimately, opening opportunities for legal return to Crimea had little impact.[94] Between September 1967 and July 1972, 3177 Crimean Tatars returned to Crimea through the legal channels.[95]

Raising hopes for return, the law of September 1967 heightened tensions on the peninsula. The experience of applying for legal return turned some Crimean Tatars against the authorities. When a Crimean Tatar hairdresser was told that he and his wife would not be allowed to return because they were not collective farmers, he reportedly told a group of officials in Uzbekistan:

> You will not impose your jobs on us. Our people will live and work where they want... When our people return to Crimea, you Russians and Ukrainians will have nothing to do there, we will take your place, you will only serve us... And if you don't do that, we will chase you out of Crimea, just like you chased us out.[96]

The limited reach of the law evoked anger among Crimean Tatars. Already in the autumn of 1967, the KGB reported the views of Crimean Tatar activists who saw the law as a token gesture intended to destroy the movement for the right to return. Suleiman Asanov, Bekir Umerov, Timur Dakchzhi and others travelled in the region to gather evidence that the authorities continued to prevent Crimean Tatars from settling on the peninsula.[97] Some Crimean Tatars whose opinions were registered by the KGB suggested that the official rhetoric of ethnic equality was used to mask the reality of everyday xenophobia. L. A. Zatulaev who visited Simferopol in October 1967 reportedly claimed that "if you find a house to buy, they do not refuse to register you, but they will pressure

91 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 2, ark. 215–220 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 815–817].
92 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 4, ark. 78–81 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 833–834].
93 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, s. 72, ark. 22–29 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 827–830].
94 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, s. 72, ark. 15–16 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 824–825].
95 HDAMVS, f. 15, op. 1, s. 172, ark. 158–159 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 838–840].
96 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, s. 72, ark. 22–29 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 827–830].
97 HDASBU, f. 16/5A, por. 5, ark. 271–280 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 807–811].

the current owner until he says he has changed his mind and refuse to sell."[98] In a similar vein, a prominent Crimean Tatar activist Iu. B. Osmanov criticized the law which overtly lifted the ban on return for ignoring the national dimension of Soviet discriminatory policies. Crimean Tatars were ostensibly given all the rights of Soviet citizens, he underlined, but dispersed returnees to Crimea would not be able to access schooling in their own language or to cultivate community bonds unless the Crimean Tatar autonomy were restored.[99]

In the aftermath of 1967, the KGB struggled to control Crimean Tatar behavior. Activists for the right to return staged public meetings for young Crimean Tatars in Crimea and neighboring Ukrainian regions where they discussed news obtained from foreign radio stations and taught the history of the Crimean Tatar khanate. They also organized celebrations of Muslim holidays such as Kurban Ait, during which they addressed dozens of Crimean Tatars settling in Soviet Ukraine.[100] Moreover, mass visits by Crimean Tatars to local communist party authorities became more frequent in the first few months after September 1967. Although the KGB was aware that activists headed by Bekir Aliev travelled across Crimea to organize a mass visit of Crimean Tatars to the authorities in Simferopol, for example, they did not manage to prevent two hundred people from filling out the corridors of the local communist party committee on 12 October 1967. Ten people were taken in for questioning, six were arrested, active participants were given official warnings by the KGB, and the rest were dispersed by the militia.[101] Similarly, as Crimean Tatars planned to mark the 24th anniversary of the deportations in May 1968 by putting up tents in central Simferopol, the KGB prevented 800 people from entering Crimea. Nevertheless, 300 Crimean Tatars managed to enter the peninsula and began to gather in Simferopol on 17 May. Almost a hundred people were subsequently deported.[102] Faced with these challenges, the authorities resorted to the tried-and-tested xenophobic propaganda. The KGB emphasized that a show trial of Crimean Tatar wartime collaborators staged in 1972 helped undermine Crimean Tatar activities on the peninsula.[103]

Illegal Crimean Tatar settlement in Crimea and the neighboring Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Zaporizhia provided a consistent challenge for the KGB between the 1960s and the 1980s. The law of September 1967 encouraged a growing number of Crimean Tatars to visit the peninsula and to settle there without official permission. Within days of the ban on return being lifted, groups of Tatars came to inspect their former properties.[104] Among the few Crimean Tatars who arrived on the peninsula through the official channels, many claimed that

98 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 2, ark. 215–220 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 815–817].
99 HDASBU, f. 16/5A, por. 5, ark. 271–280 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 807–811].
100 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 4, ark. 78–81 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 833–834].
101 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 7, ark. 125–126 [Bazhan, *Krym*, p. 814].
102 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 5, ark. 256–259 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 852–556].
103 HDASBU, f. 16/3, por. 11, ark. 124–128 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 841–843].
104 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 6321, ark. 33–37 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 804–807].

they would now offer housing to their friends and relatives who did not yet have permission to return.[105] Thousands of Crimean Tatars wishing to settle on the peninsula bypassed official channels by buying homes from local Slavs at two or three times the market price. The sellers would normally leave Crimea after the purchase was complete, making it difficult to nullify the transaction, though Crimean Tatars still faced more obstacles in legalizing such unofficial purchases *post factum* as compared to other ethnic groups.[106] Between 1968 and 1974, 2493 Crimean Tatars settled in Crimea through the legal channels, but the authorities were aware of a further 1196 individuals who arrived without official permission (*samovol'no*).[107] The KGB discovered more cases of what it considered illegal settlement in Crimea after the mid-1970s.[108] At the end of 1985, they were aware of 2973 Crimean Tatars who arrived in Crimea and the neighboring Ukrainian regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson through the official channels, and 4691 who came without permission.[109] Although the authorities used fines and criminal cases to punish both illegal settlers and Soviet citizens who sold houses to them,[110] they claimed to only have expelled 316 Crimean Tatar settlers from Crimea between 1967 and 1985 (a further 365 families left of their own volition, most of whom had come through the official channels).[111]

The arrival of Crimean Tatars sparked interethnic tensions on the peninsula. Even before 1967, visiting the villages from which they had been expelled, Crimean Tatars attracted the attention of the KGB as they informed local Slavs about the movement for the right to return. Property rights were at the root of rising conflicts. In 1965, for example, three Crimean Tatars reportedly moved in to a house occupied by a local Slavic woman, simply announcing that "this is our house and we will live here now." Cultural rights also featured prominently in conflicts as reported by the KGB. For instance, five Crimean Tatars confronted two women when they found out that houses had been constructed at the site of former cemeteries:

> You will not get away with this, we will achieve what we have set out to do. We will come back here and deal with you. We will take revenge for your having disrespected our ancestors.[112]

105 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 4, ark. 78–81 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 833–834].

106 HDASBU, f. 16/7, por. 8, ark. 354–360 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 852–855].

107 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, s. 1090, ark. 18–20 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 849–851].

108 They claimed that 2958 Crimean Tatars had arrived on the peninsula as part of official resettlement between 1968 and 1976, with a further 3679 settling without permission. Over a thousand Crimean Tatars lived in Crimea without *propiska* at the end of 1976. HDASBU, f. 16/7, por. 75, ark. 91–94 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 861–862].

109 HDASBU, f. 16/7, por. 8, ark. 354–360 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 852–855].

110 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 25, s. 1250, ark. 4–5 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 856–857]; HDASBU, f. 16/7, por. 75, ark. 91–94 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 861–862].

111 HDASBU, f. 16/7, por. 8, ark. 354–360 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 852–855].

112 HDASBU, f. 16/3, por. 4, ark. 170–172 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 793–794].

In their reports to the Communist Party, the KGB focused on particularly hostile confrontations, tending to portray the Crimean Tatars as aggressive and violent. It is difficult to judge how widespread such instances were or how accurately the KGB conveyed what happened, but it is clear that the leadership of Soviet Ukraine saw Crimean Tatar visits to the peninsula as a threat to the local Slavs.

As the authorities allowed small numbers of Crimean Tatars to move back to the peninsula in 1967, xenophobic confrontations between Slavic inhabitants and the returnees intensified. Activists for the right to return encouraged Crimean Tatar visitors to Crimea to speak to local inhabitants.[113] Reactions varied: through the autumn of 1967, Soviet citizens of Russian and Ukrainian background inundated party and state institutions with letters, sometimes lobbying on behalf of Crimean Tatars who were still refused official registration on the peninsula, but also expressing fears about their property.[114] To preserve their privileges on the peninsula, some locals took matters into their own hands. Several days after the ban on Crimean Tatar return was officially lifted, for example, a group of men in a village near Bakhchisarai apprehended four Crimean Tatars taking pictures of local houses and gave them over to the authorities. The KGB also reported on tense conversations during which Crimean Tatars reportedly claimed that "all of this will be ours soon"—these confrontations happened in small groups and not in public, which suggests that the KGB learned about them from Slavic citizens who encountered the Crimean Tatars.[115] As thousands of Crimean Tatars settled in Soviet Ukraine's southern regions during the 1970s, the KGB reported on tensions associated with immigration. Crimean Tatars stood apart from local Slavs as, in the KGB's view, they spoke poor Russian and engaged in "backward" and "unsanitary" religious practices. Local schools were overloaded with Crimean Tatar children who tended to socialize within their ethnic community.[116] Claiming that Crimean Tatar attempts to settle illegally on the peninsula evoked the "outrage and resistance" of the local population, the head of the Ukrainian KGB Nikitchenko added that the authorities only just about managed to prevent "mass unrest," though it is not clear whether he referred to potential interethnic clashes.[117]

IV. CONCLUSION

Vladimir Putin evoked the myth of the "friendship of the peoples" to justify the Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014. Suggesting that borders between Soviet republics did not matter, he dismissed the transfer of the peninsula from Rus-

113 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 5, ark. 96–98 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 830–832].

114 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 2, ark. 215–220 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 815–817].

115 TsDAHO, f. 1, op. 24, s. 6321, ark. 33–37 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 804–807].

116 TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 3, s. 6691, ark. 1–3 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 836–837]; TsDAVO, f. 2, op. 13, s. 7381, ark. 35–37 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 845–847].

117 HDASBU, f. 16/1, por. 5, ark. 96–98 [Bazhan, *Krym*, pp. 830–832].

sian to Ukrainian jurisdiction as a mere formality, thus effectively questioning the salience of post-Soviet borders. Yet this article shows that Crimea became Ukrainian after 1954. The peninsula established strong demographic ties to mainland Ukraine, with Kyiv resettling inhabitants of the republic's central and western regions to the peninsula's collective farms. It was also largely the republican-level leadership who invested in Crimean infrastructure, particularly in rural regions. Although the communist party leadership in Moscow retained ultimate power, borders between Soviet republics strongly affected socio-economic dynamics in the USSR. The Russian occupation of Crimea in 2014 severed strong economic and human ties which had bound the peninsula to the Ukrainian mainland over the previous sixty years.

At the same time, Crimea never acquired a strong Ukrainian cultural identity. Kyiv made only very modest attempts to spread Ukrainian language and culture in Crimea, especially in the 1950s, as well as to integrate the local intelligentsia in Ukraine's cultural institutions. These moves proved controversial, and clear hierarchies between Russian and Ukrainian language and culture were preserved in Crimea. Equally important, Crimean culture after 1954 was not simply Russian. Through education, in the press, and in various public spaces such as museums, the leadership of Soviet Ukraine promoted a composite "East Slavic" identity in Crimea. This East Slavic identity was grounded in a sense of pride in both Tsarist Russia's and the USSR's victories over external enemies who threatened Crimea. More disturbingly, the authorities promulgated ethnocentric and xenophobic narratives which presented Crimea as an ancient "Slavic soil": its non-Slavic inhabitants, who had made up a quarter of the peninsula's population on the eve of World War II, were unambiguously portrayed as outsiders who attacked Russians and Ukrainians. Narratives of "East Slavdom" were simple, legible, and largely uncontroversial among the Russians and Ukrainians of Crimea, helping the leaders of Soviet Ukraine to legitimize overlapping attempts at demographic and administrative reform. They reverberated on a popular level. Fearful for their properties and armed with the xenophobic stereotypes promoted in Soviet public culture, residents of Crimea policed their local communities and denounced members of non-Slavic minorities to the authorities. As Russia legitimizes its rule in Crimea by evoking a sense of Soviet nostalgia, claiming that its aggressive foreign policy restores harmony and "friendship of the peoples" destroyed by Ukrainian nationalists after 1991, local residents do not have to confront the legacies of the xenophobic practices which underpinned the imagined Soviet community.

The Crimean case shows that both Russian and Ukrainian identities were markers of loyalty in post-Stalinist USSR. Deciding whom to resettle in Crimea, the authorities made no distinction between citizens identified as "Russian" and "Ukrainian" in their internal passports. The prominence of the East Slavic myth in Soviet public culture suggests that Russian and Ukrainian identities in modern-day Crimea are not reliable markers of attitude towards the Soviet past or the post-Soviet present. The fault lines dividing Crimea today do

not run along the Russo-Ukrainian ethnic divide, but rather expose conflicting visions of the peninsula grounded in Soviet-made ideas which equated East Slavic background with loyalty, and visions of a post-Soviet Crimea associated with attempts to overcome the legacies of xenophobia.