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## Editor's Introduction

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## Editor's Introduction

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Even though issue 9.1 is not a special issue, the first three papers have a thematic focus. The anthropologist Greta Uehling, the political scientist Stephen Blank, and the social psychologist Karina Korostelina employ different disciplinary perspectives to analyze the historic and ongoing violence against the Crimean Tatars in the Soviet Union and today's Russia.

Between the 1930s and 1950s, the Soviet government under Joseph Stalin's direction forcibly removed entire national groups from strategic areas of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> These groups included the Balkars, Chechens, Crimean Tatars, Finns, Georgian Kurds, Germans, Ingush, Kalmyks, Karachays, Khemshils, Koreans, Meshketian Turks, Poles, Pontic Greeks, and many others. More than two million people from these groups were deported from their traditional homelands and forced to resettle in other parts of the Soviet Union under the pretext that they were inherently treasonous. Hundreds of thousands died along the way, and thousands more died in exile of hunger, disease, and exhaustion. The forced deportations of these national groups accompanied state-initiated attempts to starve to death other national groups, from Ukraine to Kazakhstan; state dekulakization policies intended to liquidate the imagined class enemies of prosperous and exploitative peasants; Stalin's notorious political purges; and the extrajudicial execution of over one million citizens.<sup>2</sup>

Uehling, Blank, and Korostelina take up the case of the Crimean Tatars, who were deported from Crimea in May 1944, one month after the German army retreated. Within two days—without knowing where they were going nor why—nearly 200,000 people were loaded into cattle cars and transported to Uzbekistan, the Volga basin, and Siberia. In June, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Armenians were also accused by the Soviet government in Moscow of collaborating with the German occupation during the Second World War, and were forcibly removed from Crimea too. Historians have estimated that forty percent of the Crimean Tatars who were deported died during the forced evacuations, or died in exile within twelve months. For the next two decades, the Crimean Tatars were given special settler legal status—which prohibited them from returning to Crimean lands.<sup>3</sup>

The cannon of genocide studies has not widely considered Soviet genocides. Indeed, until recently, even the most deadly cases of Soviet horrors, such as the Ukrainian and Kazak state orchestrated famines, easily could have been termed forgotten genocides. Crimean Tatar political activists, however, first began using the term "genocide" in the 1970s to describe their treatment at the hands of the Soviet state, to qualify their suffering as an international crime, and to lend credibility to their international human rights campaign.<sup>4</sup> Outside this community of Crimean Tatar activists and the international Tatar diaspora, the case of the Crimean Tatars was not widely considered a genocide. For this and many other reasons, the plight of the Crimean Tatars has been under-studied in our field, and beyond.

In 2014, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and annexation of Crimea called attention to the importance of studying this historical case. As Uehling, Blank, and Korostelina each argue, the unsettled legacy of Soviet-era genocides against the Crimean Tatars has had lasting consequences that shape the present situation the Crimean Tatars face in Russian Crimea. Together, the articles make clear that the social and political implications of how this history of genocide is remembered in Crimea, Ukraine, and Russia—and the complicated and contested relationship between the past and the present—is necessary for understating the social, cultural, and political dynamics of the current repression faced by Crimean Tatars in the wake of the Russian annexation of Crimea.

The following four papers in this issue illustrate perfectly the wide range of disciplines and topics the research on genocide comprises. However, all of them cover topics that are central for every serious attempt of preventing extreme collective violence. As different as they might appear on the first view, three of these articles offer different perspectives on a very similar topic. Namely, how a social and psychological environment is created that leads to or enables the killing, robbing, and raping of defined groups. Paul Morrow, a political scientist, adds to the literature on norm transformation, which is being discussed as a crucial factor of all genocidal processes. Morrow

sees social norms as not only highly relevant for individual and collective action, but argues that norm changes should be taken into account when assessing legal and moral accountability within the context of mass violence. Rhiannon Neilson, an expert on international relations and peace and conflict studies, introduces the concept of “toxification” as a crucial aspect for the escalation towards genocidal violence. This discursive branding of the victims to be seen not only as enemies or non-human(s), but an imminent danger for each individual and the national group as a whole, is presented as a more precise warning sign for such violence than the often used concept of dehumanization. The anthropologist Anthonie Holslag explores the explanatory usefulness of the social anthropological concepts of selfing and othering in regard to collective violent behavior. This issue concludes with a paper by Kelly Maddox on the UN Genocide Convention and the failure to prevent genocide. The historian is concerned with the political bodies and mechanisms that should help to stop extreme collective violence but, so her depressing conclusion finds, has failed to do so.

It seems worth mentioning that the concept of genocide used in many of the papers in this issue focuses not so much on the physical destruction of a people, but rather on the violent transformation of societies as a whole by collective and organized action. Or, in the words of Daniel Feierstein, the authors have chosen not to define genocide as a single event, but as a social practice.<sup>5</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 J. Otto Pohl, “Stalin’s Genocide Against the ‘Repressed Peoples’,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, 2 (2000): 267–293. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/713677598>
- 2 Norman Naimark, *Stalin’s Genocides* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
- 3 For further study, see: Nikolai Bugai, *The Deportations of Crimean Peoples: Documents, Facts, Commentaries* (Moscow: INSAN, 2002); Aurélie Campana, “The Soviet Massive Deportations: A Chronology,” *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, [online], published on 5 November 2007, accessed 8 May 2015, URL: <http://www.massviolence.org/The-Soviet-massive-deportations-A-chronology>, ISSN 1961-9898; Jean-Jacques Marie, *Les Peuples Déportés d’Union Soviétiques* (Brussels: Editions Complexe, 1995); Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Terry Martin, “The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing,” *The Journal of Modern History* 70 (1998): 813–861; Aleksandr Nekrich, *The Punished Peoples. The Deportation and Fate of Soviet Minorities at the End of the Second World War* (New York: Norton & Company, 1978); J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999); Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2003); Roman Serbyn, “Lemkin on Genocide of Nations,” *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 7, 1 (2009): 123–130; Roman Serbyn, “The Ukrainian Famine of 1932-1933 as Genocide in the Light of the UN Convention of 1948,” *The Ukrainian Quarterly* 62, 2 (2006): 181–194.
- 4 Reza Baraheni, Pavel Litvinov, and Martin Sostre, “Free Mustafa Dzhemilev,” *The New York Review of Books*, July 15, 1975. Available from <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1976/jul/15/free-mustafa-dzhemilev/>.
- 5 Daniel Feierstein, *Genocide as a Social Practice: Reorganizing Society Under the Nazis and Argentina’s Military Juntas*, trans. Douglas Andrew Town (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2014).