

The Phenomenon of Ethnic Deportations
in the Soviet Nationality Policy:
Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks Case.

A Thesis Presentation by Aga-Ali N. Kemalođlu (ov)
Submitted to

The Faculty of Economic, Administrative and Social Sciences
in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of Master in
International Relations

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Bilkent University
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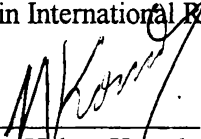
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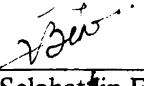
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Ağa-Ali

Kemaloğlu (ov).

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ÖZET

Sovyetler Birliğinde ilk örneklerini yarımyüzyıldan da geriye gidildiğinde rastlanabilecek etnik ve dini sürgünler, azınlıklar ve rejim arasındaki ilişkiyi ve imperiyanın nihai parçalanışını anlamak açısından, Sovyet tarihinin önemli bir parçasıdır.

Özel olarak Ahıska Türkleriyle (üzerinde çalışılan küçük bir grup) ilgili olan bu çalışma yüzyılın yarısı boyunca dünya kamuoyuna habersiz olduğu, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında eski SSCB'de Stalinist rejim tarafından Birlik Avrupa'daki toprakları üzerinde yaşadıkları anavatanlarından Sibirya, Orta Asya ve Kazakistan'a topluca sürülmüş olan çeşitli etnik ve dini grupların analiz ve dökümantasyonu şeklindeki çalışmalar arasına dahil edilebilir.

Ahıska Türkleri'nin atalarının anavatanlarından sürülmesinin ardındaki tarihsel koşullar ve politik nedenler nelerdir?

Sürgüne gönderilen diğer milletlerle karşılaştırıldığında, Ahıska Türklerinin sürgününün belirleyici özellikleri nelerdir?

Adı geçen milletin geleceği ve sürgünden dönüşü için olası perspektif çözümler nelerdir?

Bütün bunların Türkiye'nin dış politikasına etkileri nelerdir?

Bu tez, yukarıdaki soruları tarihin ışığında, günümüzün politik ve uluslararası Konjonktüründe yanıtlayabilmek amacıyla yazılmıştır.

" I wish to touch on one more method of running our party ... a method that has been raised to a system of deportation, of exile in various forms".
V. I. Ul'ianov (Lenin) (1).

Abstract

The phenomenon of the ethnic and religious deportations in the Soviet Union, which had precedents reaching back more than the half-century, are themselves an important and integral part of the Soviet history, to understand the relationship between minorities and regime and ultimate break-up of the empire.

This study, which is concerned specifically with the Ahıska (Meskhetian)* Turks (a little studied group), belongs in that general classification of works dealing with the analysis and documentation of the numerous other ethnic and religious groups in the former USSR that were suffered deportations *en masse* from the basically European part of the Soviet Union (homeland) to Siberia, Central Asia and Kazakhstan during the Second World War by the Stalinist regime, and within half of the century was *incognito* for world community.

"The Meskhetian case is unprecedented in All-World History. Even Jews have not been fallen in such misfortune. They experienced odious pogroms in Tsarist Russia, Nazi gas chambers, Soviet anti-Semitism but nobody has never deprived their nationality". **Merab Kostava, Georgian Human Rights Activist (2).**

Chapter I: Introduction.

The phenomenon of the "deportations" (3) in the Soviet nationality policy influenced on the destiny of almost all near-abroad nations in the Soviet Union (near to 3,5 million people) and is considered as "*nebula*" in Soviet history.

The international humanitarian organizations have asserted this action as the odious treason against civilization after receiving publicity in 20 years.

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights asserted it as following:

"In any circumstances, the aspiration of collective guilt and punishment by reason of ethnic affiliation was a great crime which its victims still suffer"(4).

Meanwhile, deportations of whole innocent nations from their ancient homeland is not only a manifestation of lawlessness initiated by Stalin and his successors, but it is an integral part of the history of the Soviet Union and society, its spiritual culture.

On the other hand, this policy had also a pragmatic target: recolonization (settlement of near-abroad regions by "reliable" population). Of course, this policy was not original by itself. It was inherited by the Bolsheviks from Imperial Russia, which in its turn was aspiring to establish reliable, trustworthy barriers against possible invasions and for expansionism.

Because of the strict secrecy of keeping archive materials in the Soviet Union and even during and after "Glasnost" period, this issue is little studied in the Soviet history. However, the tragic consequences of those crimes committed half-century ago is impossible to conceal today and inevitably it has its affect on current political climate in the regions of their exile.

As is known, from 1937 up to 1949, various Soviet ethnic groups, which in Stalin's view either welcomed, or not opposed or could not oppose the Germans and the Japanese,

were to be deported en masse from their historical homelands to Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia. Ten out of them (the Germans, the Chechens, the Koreans, the Crimean Tatars, the Ingushs, the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks, the Kalmyks, the Karachays, the Kurds, and the Balkars) had been deported en masse. Such groups like the Balts (Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians), Poles, Western Ukrainians, Finns, Greeks, Bulgarians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Aisors were only partially deported.

While those nationalities share a common grievance, each has its own set of specific problems. Five have no national homeland in a country where territorial autonomy is the traditional corner-stone of national existence.

Western scholars frequently employ models of rational decision making to understand the Soviet nationality policy. However, it is not enough to understand the whole stratagem of Soviet treatment of the National Question, particularly to those national minorities who settled in frontier area of its borders.

How to explain those selectivity of deportations among Muslim nations of Caucasus? How to adopt western rational models in explaining partial deportation of the Balts, the

Ukrainians, the Poles , the Azerbaijanis? What sort of criterion or criteria were used for justification of such a serious political action as deportation. And even the policy of rehabilitation of those people is also an *enigma* for those who try to explain it by using pertinent models.

Another very important question in regard to this is, whether the German invasion (World War II) was the basic cause of deportations or it was just an opportunity for the Soviet Regime to punish so-called "oppressive nations"? The fact is, Lenin, in his basic principles of nationality policy, strictly demanded to distinguish nationalism of "oppressed nations" from nationalism of "oppressing nations", nationalism of "a great nation" and nationalism of "a small nation". He suggested that "internationalism on the part of the oppressor or the so-called "great" nation (even though it be great only in the violence of its oppression), must consist not merely in a formal assertion of equality among nations but in such inequality by which the oppressing great nation compensates for that inequality which actually exists in life... What is needed is to compensate in one way or another by one's treatment of or concessions to the other nationalities for that distrust, that suspicion, those insults which were inflicted upon them in the past by the government of the "great-power" nation" (5).

It is assumed that this Lenin's theory of class approach adopted for resolving the national question in Soviet Union had its continuation in Stalin's interpretation and implementation.

On an example with Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks, we will try to trace and disclose the politico-historical conditions, causes and consequences of the Soviet policy of deportations, which should be underlined as principal purpose of this study. This case sheds the light also on the Soviet-Turkish relations during World War II.

Ahıska (Meskhetian Turks) is one of the largest (after the Volga Germans, the Chechens and the Crimean Tatars) group of deported nationalities. They now exceed 200-300 thousand members.

Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks, who underwent a "second deportation" in 1989 after becoming victims of ethnic violence in Fergana (Uzbekistan), their home in exile, are also jeopardized by recent changes in the Soviet system.

The struggle for justice which has been waged for years by them, and by others on their behalf, is complicated by

the devolution of power from Moscow to the independent Republics. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union responsibility for the crimes committed under Stalin, its present political paralysis also seem to be dissolved together with former Union. The Government of their former Georgian homeland, which has now proclaimed its independence, is using force to prevent their free return and openly hostile to their claims and aspirations. "This situation is a difficult challenge to the global human rights movement"(6). Now many Meskhetians are living in tents or other temporary homes, scattered around various republics.

It is clear now, that the criterion for exclusion and deportation of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks during World War II was ethnic identity. (Ahıska) Meskhetian Turks consider themselves ethnically a part of the Anatolian Turks. Recent developments in Fergana "made possible" publication of different hypotheses about the ethnic origin of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks. There are different versions of their ethnic origins: Muslim or Turkified Georgians, ethnic Turks, or a homogeneous group which included Turkic and non-Turkic ethnic groups, who used to live in Ahıska, Meskhetia (Georgia) until November 1944 (deported en bloc).

However, to some extent, this issue acquired a political character. Since Georgia refused to allow Meskhetian Turks to settle in Georgia from where they were deported in 1944, they appealed to the Turkish Government. In its turn, although Turkish Government is disposed to help the Soviet Turks, it was unable to accept so many refugees.

In this study, we also will display implementations of Meskhetian case for Turkish foreign policy from historical, international relations and political point of view. In this respect, this subject also closely related with emigration and immigration policy of Turkey and the settlement of immigrants on Turkish territory. So, the important role of Turkey in resolving this issue jointly with interested sides is obvious.

Finally, discussing Soviet policy of nation deportations including Meskhetian case, it is logically necessary first of all to rediscover Meskhetians' history. A clear understanding of the past will allow to realize the dialectics of the recent events and then we can better evaluate politico-historical consequences of those "enigmas" caused by the Stalinist regime.

What were the historical conditions and political reasons of the deportation of the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks from their ancestors homeland?

What were the distinguished characteristics of the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turk's deportation in comparison with other deported nations?

What are the possible perspective solutions for this nation in the future and their return from exile?

What are the implications of all of this for Turkish foreign policy?

It is attempt of this thesis to answer these questions in the light of history, current political and international conjecture.

"The writing of national history is most often a labor of love performed by patriots, who in the process of creating a narrative unity for their people's past, serve as both chroniclers and inventors of tradition their selection of an ethnic group or a specific territory as the focus of a history spanning many centuries-in the case of the Caucasian peoples, several millennia - is predicted on an assumption that nationality or geographical space is the most appropriate boundary for or historical investigation.

The consequent synthesis will primarily be meaningful to the inhabitants of that cultural space, either as a contribution to self-knowledge or as advertisement for the outside world".

Robert Suny (7).

Chapter II: Historical Background of Ahıska (Meskhetia) and Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks

Brief Ethno-History of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks

Those who describes themselves today as Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks are ethnically a heterogeneous group. They have in common that they are all either Turkish, Turkic or Turkified, that they previously inhabited Meskhetia or Meskhet-Dzhavakheti or Ahıska, which included territory of former small Georgian princedoms: Samtzkhe-Saatbago, Samtzkhe, Dzhavakheti, Shavsheti, Klarcheti and Tao (Turkish version: Atabegler Yurdu) until the 16th century.

A favorite legend of Meskhetians related how God came upon the Meskhetians only after he had parceled out all the

countries of the world to other nationalities. The Meskhetians were in a typically festive mood and invited the Creator to join them in song, dance, and wine. The Lord so enjoyed Himself that He decided to give these merry and carefree people the spot on the Earth that He had reserved for Himself: the valleys and hills that lie to the Southern of the Great Caucasus Mountains (8).

Unfortunately, the actual ethnogenesis of the Meskhetians is far more obscure than this anecdote allows, and to probe its mysteries scholars have used linguistic as well as historical and archeological evidence.

The question of the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks' ethnic origin is not merely an abstraction but weighs heavily on their current and future destiny. The refusal of most Meskhetians to consider themselves as anything but "Turks" at least creates complication in their drive to return to Georgia.

The widely-distributed version is that "the Meskhetian Turks are Georgian in origin. After their homeland came under Ottoman rule in the 16th century, they underwent an intensive process of Turkification, as a result of which the majority adopted Islam and the Turkish language. Under the

Treaty of Edirne/Adrianople (1829), only the southern part of (Ahiska) Meskhetia remained in Turkish hands. The northern part was incorporated in the Tsarist Empire, which had recently annexed by Georgia" (9).

However, it is a very simplistic and not well-grounded argumentation. The two Soviet authors writing in the scholarly journal *Sovetskaia Etnografiia* give the following thumbnail description of the Meskhetians:

"The Meskhetian Turks (who call themselves "Turks") are a little-studied group now undergoing a process of consolidation into a separate (*samostoiatel'nye*) people distinct from the Anatolian Turks, until November 1944 they lived in Southern and South-Western districts of Georgia located South of the Meskhetian ridge. They speak a Turkish language of the Oghuz sub-group of the Turkic group of the Altay-Ural family. In religion they are Sunni Muslims (Hanefi school). The basis of their traditional economy is agriculture and livestock raising. The traditional culture of the Meskhetian Turks is close to that of the Turks. At the same time, it should be noted that Georgian influence is clearly traceable (e.g. in clothing, food, housing and certain elements of spiritual culture)"(10).

That interpretation is given credence by the persistence of Turkic version. One important quality missing from much of our present work about the disputed issue might be brought to it. It has to do with the medieval chronicles of initial settlement of Turkic tribes (basically Qipchaks) and even the existence of a Turkic State (Atabegler; the Georgian version: Saatbago, 1267-1578) before Ottoman conquest of Meskhetia-Dzhavakheti. The historiography of nationalities have their obvious limitations in narrowness of focus if we exclude medieval chronicles or epics. It is also very valuable for much factual detail present historiographical and critical problems that are heightened by the ideological and political sensitivity of the subject.

Not surprisingly, those Turkic people who inhabited Ahiska (Meskhetia) before the Ottoman conquest were Orthodox Christians. Georgian monarchs closely cooperated with Orthodox Qipchaks. According to Ronald Suny "To build up his army and increase the population of his country, David II invited foreigners to join his forces and to settle depopulated areas in Georgia. 40 thousand Qipchak Turkish warriors, with their families moved into Georgia from the North Caucasus. The Qipchaks nomads were soon converted to Christianity and mixed with the Georgian population. Many rose to high state positions since the King found Qipchaks

useful against both his external enemies, the Seljuk Turks, and the independent nobles who resisted his policies of centralization." (11). It should be also added to this that, the new Turkic settlers, who came with Ottomans, called indigenous population of Ahıska as "Çinçavats". According to interpretation of Kırzioğlu (12). "Çin" was named one of the Qipchak tribes from Turkestan and "Çavat", ostensibly, meant Dzhavakheti (Meskhetia). In other words, it possibly meant Turks from Dzhavakheti. Most of the aristocracy (Beyler) of Çinçavats carried well-known Georgian surnames like Himshiashvili, Abashidze, Sharvashidze and etc., even after the Ottoman conquest. At present, some of the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks continue to carry Georgian surnames. However, it can not be used as an argument in the Georgian ethnic origin of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks. There are also hundreds of well-known Georgians who carried Russian surnames like Tsitsianov, Anazonnikov, Andronikov. Neither Russians, nor Georgians can deny of their Georgian origin.

To the previous description it should be added that the population which calls themselves Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks envelops also other ethnic groups-Turkic in origin: Karapapakh (Terekeme) Azerbaijanis, Turkmens (Turkomans) and not Turkic: Muslims such as Kurds and Hemshins (Islamized Armenians). who started to settle in Ahıska (Meskhetia)

after the Ottoman conquest of Meskhetia in the 16th century. No doubt, those ethnic groups should be considered as the indigenous population of the Ahıska (Meskhetia) too. The deportation of all Muslim population from Meskhetia in 1944 brought the name Meskhetian Turks (*Turki Meskhetintsy*). According to Khakhova, it gave birth to a process of "consolidation into a separate people belonging to the Anatolian Turks" (13).

The new settlement of Turkish (Turkic) people in Ahıska (Meskhetia) from Anatolian region started from 1545, following the conquest of Western part of Samsheti by Ottomans. The creation of Ahıska Paşalık or the Georgian Province (Eyalet) in March 21, 1590 by the Ottomans consolidated the status of Ahıska Turks in Georgia. It also should be underlined that the proponents of the "Georgian" version insists on "turkification" argument of the indigenous population. However, "turkification" can not be accepted as an argument even in this case. It is well-known that national factor did not played dominant role within the borders of the Ottoman Rule. According to Marc Raeff, "...conquests in 16th century meant only the end of independent international status, but it did not necessarily entail a noticeable change in the social and economic organization of the conquest people" (14). It is also

confirmed by the fact that Ottomans more than 5 centuries were the dominant power in one of the ethnically diverse region of Europe like Balkans. However, neither Croatians, nor Serbs nor Bosnians have lost their national identity. Some of them accepted Islam, but not Turkified. The glaring example in Caucasia are Ajaras, who belong to Georgian ethnico-linguistical group but they are Sunnite Muslims and call themselves as Ajaras (not Georgians or Turks).

According to reports received by Dr. Rasma Karklins from Soviet-German emigrants from Central Asia, the deported Meskhetian Turks' national awareness was divided between Islam and their Turkishness as a strong sense of belonging to the Turkish nation and culture. (15).

Taking all these arguments into account, it should be concluded that the arguments against consideration of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks as ethnic Turks does not seem satisfactory.

The Ahıska Province (*Paşalık*) was consisted of 21 "sancaks (districts) Ahıska (Akhaltsikhe), Ahılkelek (Akhalkalaki), Posof (Poso), Çıldır (Çaldır), Aspinza (Aspindza), Hirtız (Khertvisi), Ardanuç (Artanudzhi), Oltu (Olti), Artvin (Artvini or Livanu), Nis'f, Yusufeli

(Perterek), Şavşat (Shavsheti), Panak (Banak), Mamervan, Ardahan Büzürg (Artaani), Ardahan Küçük, Çaçarak, Altun Kale or Kobliian (Okros-Tsikhe), Oshe (Oskhe), Ajarayı Ülya (Upper Adzharia), Ajarayı Süfla (Down Adzharia).

This province has functioned until 1829, when the northern part including Ahıska (Akhaltzikhe) and Ahılkelek (Akhalkalaki) was annexed to the Russian Empire.

Under the Ottoman rule, starting from 1625, all Georgian Beys (Aristocracy) of Ahıska Paşalık officially accepted Islam. However, acceptance of Islam by other category of population (peasants, artisans) has been continued until 18th century.

To become firmly established in this ethnically diverse region Ottomans brought and settled here the Anatolian Turks from particularly Konya, Tokat, Yozgat and other places. They amalgamated with other Muslim indigenous population living in that region. Later on, Kurds also were settled there.

In 1752, Georgian King Solomon I, who was enthroned in Imereti, strove to consolidate the royal authority and to unify the existing princedoms under his rule. He started to

look for an alliance with Russia against the Ottomans and Persia. In 1783 a treaty between Russia and Georgian Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was signed at Georgievsk.

During the Russo-Turkish War in 1806-1812, Russian commanders captured Poti, Suhum-Kale, and Ahilkelek (Akhalkalaki). In the following war (1828-1829) Russia conquered Ahıska (Akhaltsikhe) as well. In 1877-78, Ottomans lost Çürüksu (Kobuleti), Batum, Kars, Ardahan, Artvin, Ardanoç, Borçka, Şavşat, and part of Hopa. The Saint Stephanos and Berlin treaties confirmed those territories for the Russian Empire. Thus, Tsarist Russia became the ruling power in all of Georgia and adjacent areas.

Under the Russian Rule the previous system of administration was abolished. The country was divided into districts, each governed by a Russian officer. Administration and legal proceeding were conducted in Russian, a language unknown to the population.

Former Ahıska Province was divided into *uyezds* (districts) with subordination to Tiflis *Gubernia* (Province). During its colonial regime, Russian administration settled more than 30,000 Armenians from Northern-Eastern Anatolia and 20,000 Russian Dukhobors in

different places of Ahıska (Akhalt्सikhe) and Ahılkelek (Akhalkalaki) uyezds. A policy of national oppression was directed not only against Muslims but also against the Christian Georgians too. The Georgian language was forcibly ousted from political and cultural life. In the very first years after Georgia's annexation by Russia, a number of insurrections took place against the Russian colonial rule. Some people left their homeland and escaped to Turkey (16). The Vice Roy of the Caucasus A. I. Bariatinskii wrote to Tsar Aleksandr : "Russia had become for Asia what Western Europe had represented for so long Russia - the source and bearer of the world's most advanced civilization. A model administration in the Caucasus would serve as a showcase of Russian colonial policy" (17).

Post-Revolutionary Developments and Establishing of Present Borders.

In 1917 in Transcaucasia as in Central Russia, the February Revolution gave birth, not to a single political authority, but what contemporaries referred to as *dvoevlastie* (dual power).

The new Provisional Government and the Soviets in Petrograd designed their local agency in Transcaucasia (the

Osobyi Zakavkazskii Komitet or OZaKom). Later on, it was established the United Regional political authority (ZaVKom, November 14, 1917) and legislature, the Seim of Democratic Federate Republics of Transcaucasia (January 23, 1918). In February, 1918, the Turkish army began moving across the pre-war border and entered in Transcaucasia after Russian retreat. In March 3, 1918, the Bolshevik Government signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. According to this Treaty, Kars, Ardahan, and Batum were returned to Turkey. For the sake of historical objectivity it is necessary to scrutinize the context of this agreement, related with our inquiry.

It is known that the resolutions concluded in Brest-Litovsk (March 3, 1918) was turned down by Soviet Government later on as an agreement "dictated" by Bourgeois Governments. According to the Item 4 of the given treaty, only plebiscite would determine the political future of the Southern part of Ahıska (Meskhetia) : Ardahan, Ardauç, Oltu, Artvin, Batum and Kars. According to the results of the plebiscite, in which 87,048 people participated, 97,8% of them voted for joining to Turkey (18). In addition, the plebiscite displayed that more than 90% of the population was Muslim.

After its proclamation, the fragile Democratic Federative Republic of Transcaucasia lasted only a month before each major nationality decided to take its fate into its own hands. In May, 1918, Georgia declared its independence from Russia and later, Georgian Prime Minister Noe Ramishvili concluded an agreement with Turkish Commander in Batum accepting the return of Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki to Turkey and restoring the previous border which existed before 1828. According to Montreux Agreement, Turkish Armies withdraw from Transcaucasia within the month at the end of 1918 and were replaced by British. In October 1918, it was proclaimed the Provisional Ahiska Government under the leadership of Omer Faik Nemanzade and it was unified with the Turkish Kars National Council. However, the occupation of Kars by British Forces (April 1919) put an end to this Government.

In February 25, 1921, with the Red Army's arrival, the Bolshevik Government was established in Georgia. Just in a month (March 12, 1922), Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan signed the Treaty forming the Federal Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia and it was accepted in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic.

In March 16, 1921, the USSR and Turkey signed Moscow Treaty, according to which eight of the former Ottoman sancaks were left within Georgian Borders (Bedra, Azgur, Ahilkelek, Hirtiz, Çeçerek, Ahıska, Altunkale, Ajara). Thus, present borders between Turkey and the Soviet Union (Georgian-Turkish border) were established.

It would be helpful to scrutinize the context of this treaty in respect to our inquiry. Due to Moscow Treaty (March 16, 1921), Batum as well as Kars and Ardahan should be returned to Turkey. However, Batum was left to the Soviet Russia in exchange for some territories in Eastern Part along with Arpaçay and Aras rivers. This was achieved, basically under Stalin's personal interference in the negotiation process (19).

Of course, then the Soviets have understood the importance of Batum and the surrounding area. They were basically concerned with oil pipeline route coming from Baku. The surrounding area (Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe) had vitally important from the geopolitical as well as geoeconomic point of view (20).

At the present time, when oil pipeline route from Apsheron peninsula and Central Asia region became a subject

for interest and concern of all the business and political world, it is becoming obvious the foresight of Comrade Stalin.

In the 1926 Soviet census, the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks were listed as *Turki* (Turkish). They then numbered 137,921 and constituted 5,2% of the population of the Georgian S.S.R. In the Soviet Encyclopedia issued in 1929 it was mentioned that 55% of Ahıska (Meskhetia) consisted of Turks. Only 5□□% of them were literate. Schooÿÿ switched to teaching in Azerbaijani Turkish, and the Meskhetians began to be called Azerbaijani Turks.

In 1924, Stalin offered to the well-known leader of the Ahıska Turks, Omer Faik Nemanzade to change his nationality (from Turkish to Georgian) and be a model for the rest of Turks. However, this "request" was rejected. Later, he was forced to commit suicide under NKVD tortures. The same "offer" was directed to the Ajaras too (21).

Since 1930, repressive measures started against those "refractory" nations. The leaders and intelligentsia were physically eliminated. The Turkish surnames of Meskhetians have been changed to Georgian by force. Some of the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks managed to escape to Turkey.

Political Preconditions and Causes of Deportation

Antoine de Saint-Exupery' once said that "if the politics not be engaged in people, people will be engaged in politics" (22). Now with sorrow should be agreed with French writer and establish the fact that Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks as other deported people of the Soviet Union ruthlessly became hostages of Stalin politics without their consent.

The November 15, 1944 became for Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks the most tragic landmark in their history; the last day of staying in their homeland. They were suddenly rounded up by the NKVD troops (forerunner of the KGB) and American lend-lease trucks were used to transport the victims to railheads for the trip to the arid steppes of Central Asia and Kazakhstan from Meskhetia and adjacent areas of Georgia along the Soviet-Turkish frontier.

Removal of the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks from their homeland followed the general pattern of the earlier wartime

deportations of the Volga Germans, Karachays, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingushs, Crimean Tatars, and Balkars.

Compared with other deported peoples, the operation against the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks is relatively poor documented. A Soviet source, citing figures obtained from the Meskhetians themselves, gives the number of deported as 115,000 (23).

Adding that due to the fact that practically the entire male population had been called to active army service (40,000) the action was carried out in a very short time. With were deported the local Turkmens, and three other small ethnic groups: Turkic Karapapakhs (Azerbaijanis), Kurds and Hemshins. "It was their common fate that welded them into one people" (24). From now on, those people were called officially as Meskhetian Turks (*Turki Meskhetintsy*). Although, even during and after exile those people continue to call themselves as *Ahıska Turkleri* (Ahıska Turks).

Vadim Tiutiunnik, the Russian historian, cites one man's recollection. "I recently finished secondary school. During the night, we were put in Studebakers and driven to Akhaltsikh through mountainous ways. Some trucks turned over in precipice. In Akhaltsikh we were crowded like cattle into

freight cars full to overflowing (18 families, 30-40 people in one goods wagon) and doors were boarded up. The trains carried us for 28 days until we reached the hungry Uzbek steppes, Mirzaçöl (now Uzbeks call this place-Gülistan (rosegarden): our hands made it flowering)" (25).

On the way, some of the people died (mostly children and old people). Some of women died as a result of swelling of bladder and uterus (26). Lavrentii Beria, head of the NKVD, which run the operation, reported to Stalin that 115,000 Turks had been deported (27). Years later, the (Ahıska) Meskhetian Turks were to estimate that 30,000-50,000 of their number perished in the first eighteen months of exile along from hunger and cold (28).

The reason for their deportation is still obscure and subject to different interpretations. In other cases the nationalities subjected to repression were publicly accused of treason and other crimes against the Soviet state, particularly collaboration with the German invaders during World War II. Thus, the Volga Germans were charged with harboring "thousands and tens of thousands of wreckers and spies", a charge which has long since been disproved. In some other cases, no justification was given. Even, where a reason was offered, as for those charged with collective

guilt for wartime collaboration with the enemy, there was a lack of logic. For example, if it was true that some members of the nationality had aided the Germans many others had fought heroically against them and been decorated for their actions; those heroes, too, lost their homes and were sent into exile on their return from the front. Moreover, all other nationalities including the Russians, had also their collaborators, even on a proportionally larger scale than the accused nationalities, but they were not subjected to collective repression. Some of the deported nationalities had or no contact with the Germans .

If there is a consistent explanation, it appears to lie in a paranoidal fear on Stalin's part of future "fifth columns" that might undermine the security of the Soviet State on behalf of foreign powers. For example, the Koreans settled in the Soviet Far East were deported to Central Asia, far from their Korean homeland, because of possible collaboration with Japanese. The (Abiska) Meskhetian Turks not only had not collaborated with the Germans, but had no contact with them. The areas they lived, i.e., "Meskhetia" (Abiska), had never been occupied by the Germans. Evidence has now come to light that Lavrentii P. Beria, playing on Stalin's fears, suggested some of the peoples to be deported.

Thus, he wrote to Stalin branding the Meskhetian Turks as associates of Turkish intelligence. Stalin was apparently persuaded that the presence of a Turkic minority near his border with Turkey could undermine his future plans to put pressure on that country (29).

In fact, unlike the other deported nationalities, the Meskhetians were never publicly charged with crimes as a nation. Moreover, the deportation of the (Ahiska) Meskhetian Turks was never announced and, as they did not enjoy any form of national autonomy. It could not be deduced from alterations to the maps as in the case of some of the other deported peoples. Indeed, it may not even have been known to those responsible for the second edition of the Large Soviet Encyclopedia since the relevant volume published in 1954 still recorded the Meskhetians as living in Georgia (30).

The first, the outside world learnt of their deportation was from the publication of an Order of the USSR Supreme Soviet of 30 May 1968 (in 24 years).

The reason for their deportation be sought not in any real or potential collaboration with the Germans as was the case with the Crimean Tatars, the Volga Germans, and other

nationalities who suffered the same fate, but rather in strategic considerations, specifically, the need to clear the area of potential pro-Turkish elements prior to extending Soviet operations into North-Eastern Turkey (31).

(Ahıska) Meskhetian Turks were deported at the end of 1944. when Soviet troops recaptured all occupied Soviet territories by Germans. By that time, military actions were going on the territory of Eastern Europe (Poland, Romania, Hungary), ten of thousands miles from Meskhetia. The coming crush of the Hitler Germany was obvious. It was only problem of time. So, the possible collaboration of (Ahıska) Meskhetian Turks with Germans and with Turkish intelligence and possible joining with Turkey was also far from true. This fabrication was taken to such extent that even Christian Mingrels (small Georgian ethnic group in Georgia) were charged for ties with Turkey.

Khrushchev in his secret report to XX Congress of CPSU, at the night of February 24-25, 1956, accused Beria of having fabricated the Mingrelian case:

"Could the Georgians, comparing the situation in their republic with the hard situation of the working masses in Turkey, be aspiring to join Turkey? In 1955, Georgia

produced 18 times as much steel per person as Turkey, Georgia produces 9 times as much electrical energy per person as Turkey.

According to the available 1950 census, 65% of Turkey's total population are illiterate, and of the women, 80% are illiterate. Georgia has 19 institutions of high learning which have about 39,000 students: this is 8 times more than in Turkey (for each 1,000 inhabitants). Prosperity of the working people has grown tremendously in Georgia under Soviet Rule.

It is clear that, as the economy and culture develop, and as, the socialist consciousness of the working masses in Georgia grows, the source from which bourgeois nationalism draws its strength evaporates.

As it developed, there was no nationalistic organization in Georgia. Thousands of innocent people fell victim of willfulness and lawlessness. All of this happened under the "genial" leadership of Stalin, 'the Great Son of the Georgian nation', as Georgians like to refer to Stalin" (32).

Thus, we can come to the conclusion that there were no ground for possible indications on collaborations with Turkey in that time.

Soviet-Turkish relations of that time may shed the light on this issue too.

It is known that Turkey, despite long-term negotiations and diplomatic persuasions by Great Britain and the United States, only in February 23, 1945 (at the end of World War II) proclaimed war to Germany and Japan and joined to War on the side of Allies. However, for the Soviet leadership it was not satisfactory. In his secret and personal letter (#297), July 15, 1944, to the Prime Minister, Mr. W. Churchill, Stalin writes :

"The question of Turkey should be examined in the light of the facts with which the Governments of Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the U.S.A., have been familiar since the negotiations with the Turkish Government at the end of last year. You will no doubt recall how insistently the Governments of our three countries proposed that Turkey should enter the war against Hitler Germany on the side of the Allies as early as November and December 1943.

But nothing came of this. As You know, on the initiative of the Turkish Government we resumed negotiations with it last May and June, and twice made the same proposal that three Allied Governments made at the end of last year. Nothing came of that either. As regards any half-hearted step by Turkey, I do not at the moment see how it can benefit the Allies. In view of the evasive and vague attitude which the Turkish Government has assumed in relation to Germany it is better to leave Turkey to herself and to refrain from any further pressure on her. This implies of course that the claims of Turkey, who has evaded fighting Germany, to special rights in post-war affairs will be disregarded" (33).

These tensions between two countries could affect the destiny of (Ahıska) Meskhetian Turks, who were considered as an obstacle for Soviet post-war expansionist plans.

On May, 30, 1953, the U.S.S.R. sent Turkey a declaration renouncing claims made by the Armenian and Georgian SSR's in 1945 to Turkish territory (South Ahıska, Meskhetia) and stating that the U.S.S.R. considered it possible to reach a settlement on the problem of the Straits which would be acceptable to both States. In its reply of July 17, 1953, Turkey noted the declaration concerning renunciation of

territorial claims and reminded the USSR that the question of the Straits was regulated by the Montreux Convention (34).

Exile and "Special Settlement" Regime.

According to Helsinki Watch Report, the Meskhetians seem to have derived a curious but short-lived benefit from the fact that they were not placed under the stringent "special settlement" (*spetsposelenie*) regime until after first six months of exile (35). However, many deaths occurred after their privileged status was changed.

R. Conquest described them as having at first to dig holes in the bare ground in which to live, with many dying of intense cold and hunger until the survivors later built mud huts without windows (36).

Their freedom of movement was restricted to the immediate area to which they had been deported, the penalty for unauthorized departure being up to 20 years hard labor, and their lives were at the mercy of the often sadistic local MVD commanders to whom they had to report once a month. The 5,000 ruble advances they had been given to set

themselves up" turned into millstones round their necks when, in an act of gratuitous cruelty, they were made to pay them back with 5,000 new rubles after the 1947 monetary reform which substituted one new ruble for ten old (37).

Only after the death of Stalin (March 5, 1953), and his replacement by Khrushchev, "punished nations" including (Ahiska) Meskhetian Turks could receive release from "special settlement" restrictions and *pro forma* rehabilitation. In his Secret Speech to the Twentieth Party Congress (February 24-25, 1956), Khrushchev admitted that: "No man of common sense, can grasp how it is possible to make whole nations responsible for inimical activity, including women, children, and old people. Communists and Comsomols, to use mass repression against them. Mass arrests and deportations of many thousands of people, execution without trial and without normal investigation created conditions of insecurity, fear and even despair" (38).

However, in Khrushchev's report Meskhetian Turks were among those, whom he passed over in silence when casting Stalin for deportations.

According to Ann Sheehy and Bohdan Nahaylo, there were also unpublished decree of 31 October 1957 in connection

with the Meskhetians, but it is known how this supplemented or modified decree of 28 April 1956. As with Crimean Tatars, strategic considerations were no doubt behind the decision not to allow them to return to their homeland on the Turkish border.

The Emergence of the Meskhetian Turkish National Movement to Return to Homeland after Rehabilitation.

The relatively liberal climate after the Congress emboldened the Meskhetians to begin a struggle to return to their homeland, a struggle which continues to the present day. After the Congress, small groups of (Ahıska) Meskhetian Turks had begun attempts from time to time to enter the Meskhetian Region of Georgia only to be stopped at the republican border or arrested later and re-deported by the authorities. At the end of 1956 representatives of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks went to Moscow to ask for it to be lifted. In reply, they were told that they were Azerbaijanis and could "return" to Azerbaijan. They were recruited to develop the hungry Mugan steppe in Azerbaijan and many went in order to be nearer to their homelands.

At the same time they continued their efforts in Moscow and the in Georgian capital, Tbilisi, to obtain permission

to return to their homeland, but all in vain. 245 families who ignored the ban and took up residence in Georgia were expelled between July 1960 and February 1961 on the orders of the then Georgian First Secretary, Mzhavanadze.

In February 1964, the Meskhetian campaign moved into a new phase when they set up a Turkish Society for the Defense of the National Rights of the Turkish People in Exile with a Provisional Organizing Committee for the Return of the People to the Homeland under the chairmanship of Enver Odabaş (ev), a history teacher and Second World War veteran. The committee was elected at the first meeting of the People on a collective farm in Tashkent province, which was attended by over 600 delegates from Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Caucasus with mandates from local assemblies of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks.

To demonstrate that their intentions were not in any way anti-Soviet, they invited representatives of the authorities to the meeting and sent a complete record of its proceedings to Party and government leaders. Besides electing the Provisional Organizing Committee, the meeting chose 125 representatives to go to Moscow. "Unlike the Crimean Tatars, the Meskhetians do not seem to have maintained a permanent

lobby in Moscow, but to have relied on the dispatch of frequent delegations" (39).

The Meskhetians continued to meet with nothing but rebuffs from the authorities. Either they got no hearing at all, were told that no changes would be made in their status, or were fobbed off with promises of a solution at some future date. At the same time the KGB tried to intimidate Odabaş (ev) and other leaders, and did their best to disrupt national gatherings. When over 6,000 Meskhetian delegates assembled in the town Yangiyul near Tashkent in April 1968 for their 22nd meeting of the People, they were surrounded by troops, police with truncheons, and fire engines. On the other hand, the Crimean Tatars gathered the same month in nearby Çirçik, the meeting passed off without incidents, but when the delegates left, some of them were picked up and 30 were kept in detention cells for two to six months. Not long after this, the authorities evidently decided some gesture must be made to mollify the Meskhetians. Since no charges had ever been made against them of which they could be publicly cleared, the only concession that the authorities could make was to grant them the right to return to Ahıska (Meskhetia) and this they did—on paper.

On April 19, 1969, the Soviet authorities retaliated by arresting in Azerbaijan the President of the Temporary Organizing Committee for the Return of the Meskhetian Turks to their Homeland, "Vatan" the historian Enver Odabaş (ev). He was released after his people had demonstrated and telegrams had been sent to Leonid Brezhnev and the Head of the Azerbaijan Communist Party. However, continuing Meskhetian agitation led to his being arrested again in October of that year and in August 1971. After the third arrest, Odabaş (ev) was sentenced to two years "deprivation of liberty". Meanwhile, some Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks, in despair, had given up the campaign to return to Georgia and began to agitate for emigration to Turkey.

On May 30, 1968, an Order of the Presidium of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet was issued canceling the decree of 28 April 1956 and 31 October 1957 and explaining that the "Turks, Kurds, Hemshins and Azerbaijanis, formerly resident in the Ajarian ASSR and the Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki, Adigeni, Aspindza and Bogdanovka districts of the Georgian SSR, and members of their families enjoy the right, like all citizens of the Soviet Union, to reside on the whole territory of the U.S.S.R in accordance with the existing legislation on employment and the passport regulations" (40). However, the Order went on to note, in words ominously

familiar from the decrees rehabilitating the Volga Germans and Crimean Tatars that these peoples had "taken root" on the territory of the Uzbek, Kazakh, and other Union Republics. "It is difficult to understand how the authorities could have thought that the Meskhetians would be mollified by this Order when events were to show that they were not, in fact, prepared to allow them to return to Ahıska (Meskhetia) or even Georgia. After their recent experience with the Crimean Tatars, they could hardly have believed that the (Ahıska) Meskhetian Turks did not, after all, want to return to their homeland.

On the other hand, the Order can scarcely have been issued for foreign consumption when it merely informed the outside world of a hitherto unknown and still unremedied Stalinist crime. Perhaps in some tortuous fashion Moscow thought it would somehow make the Meskhetians feel better, or its tacit admission of a past injustice simply salved their own conscience. The authorities knew that they would have little difficulty in keeping the Meskhetians out of Meskhetia since it lies predominantly in the restricted frontier zone where movement is very closely controlled.

The Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks spent the first year after the Order was issued in vain efforts to exercise their

supposedly newly-restored right to reside in Georgia. No doubt realizing from the experience of the Crimean Tatars in the previous months that it would be useless for them to try to take up residence in Georgia on the basis of the Order without further official sanction, representatives went to Moscow to ask for an organized return to their homeland, but no one would hear them. In July 1968, 7,000 Meskhetians gathered in Tbilisi to press their case further. They were beaten up by the police and searched for weapons but refused to disperse. Finally, a few were received by Mzhavanadze, who said there was no room for them in Meskhetia but 100 families a year could settle elsewhere in Georgia. If this did not satisfy them, he added, they should go to Moscow. This the Meskhetians did, and in November they eventually received verbal permission from an official of the Central Committee to settle in various parts of Georgia. They were told that 15-30 families would even be allowed to settle in Meskhetia. However, when they decided to put this promise to the test, they found all kinds of obstacles put in their way. They were refused to be released from their jobs and the local military register, and they were denied transport for their possessions. Many families, who abandoned the latter and went to Georgia, were expelled. Nonetheless by June 1969 some 500 Meskhetian families had settled on the coastal marshy plain of Georgia (the legendary Colchins),

where they were given a friendly welcome by the local population. But their success was short-lived as on 7 or 10 June they were all rounded up, put on trains and expelled.

The first sign that the Meskhetians were despairing of ever being allowed to live again in Meskhetia came two months later in August 1969, when the 120-strong 33rd delegation to Moscow visited the Central Committee offices and was told in an offensive manner that their demands would not be granted. In reply, the delegates left a declaration renouncing their Soviet citizenship. The next day they were rounded up and deported from Moscow under escort.

When the Soviet census was taken on 15 January 1970 most of the Meskhetians seem to have chosen to revert to their earlier designation of Turks. The 1959 census had shown 35,000 Turks in the Soviet Union, of whom 21,000 were in Uzbekistan. These were presumably, mostly Meskhetians. The 1970 total was 79,000, a rise which clearly can not be accounted for by natural increase alone. The fact that the proportion of Turks claiming Turkish as their native tongue rose from 82,2% in 1959 to 92,3% in 1970 might also be seen as an evidence of a growing determination among the Meskhetians to cling to their own culture. (It is difficult to estimate the total number of Meskhetians since many must

still be recorded as Azerbaijanis or other nationalities. The figure of 200,000 given in Chronicle of Current Events, # 7. (41) was probably rather closer to 300,000, than the half-million claimed in the same Meskhetian appeals.

The initiative to appeal to the Turkish Embassy in Moscow to allow any Meskhetians who wished to go Turkey to do so was taken by Odabaş(ev) and other Committee members on April 1970. Their move was approved at a Meeting of the People in the Saatli district of Azerbaijan on May 2, 1970, in a resolution which said that, if the Supreme Soviet was not prepared to grant the Meskhetians' demands for the punishment of those responsible for their deportation, for the formation of a province in the Georgian SSR and their return to Meskhetia, it should be asked to permit emigration to Turkey. This Resolution, including the new demand for an autonomous republic or province, has formed the basis of Meskhetian policy ever since. On March 15, lists of those wishing to go to Turkey if they were not allowed to return to Meskhetia were given to the Turkish Embassy in Moscow. In May 1971, a delegation of 61 representatives tried unsuccessfully to visit the Embassy after its demands had been categorically rejected at the Supreme Soviet and Central Committee offices. Its three leaders, who attempted to visit the Embassy again later by appointment with the

consul, were detained and sentenced respectively to 15 and 12 days in prison. The attitude of the Turkish authorities to Meskhetians is not known but, according to the Chronicle, Islam Kerimov, a young Meskhetian leader who tried to commit suicide after he was arrested in December 1970, was released as a result of intervention by the Turkish Embassy (42).

In 1971 the Meskhetians also started to appeal to the United Nations. In 4th May, the Council of Elders sent to UN a copy of a letter to the Soviet leaders. Another appeal to the Soviet leaders, unanimously adopted, at a meeting of the People on 18th July 1971 attended by several hundred delegates from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Tadjikistan and Kabardino-Balkaria, was copied to UN and the Turkish Parliament, President, Government, and People.

The Meskhetian's attempts to enlist foreign support for their case evidently riled the authorities, and in the following months Odabaş(ev) and other leaders (Niyazov, and Izetov and Kerimov) were arrested and sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. Odabaş(ev) himself, who had been summoned to court at least six times before, on one occasion in April 1969 owing his release to a mass protest by his fellow-Meskhetians, was given two years in Baku on 24 August

1971 on a charge of adding common land to his private garden plot. But the imprisonment of Odabaş (ev) and the others did not stop the Meskhetians sending appeals to the United Nations and Turkey. In one dated 14 July 1972 to Leonid Brezhnev, Kurt Waldheim and the Turkish Premier Ferit Melen, and another of 20 September 1972 to Waldheim only, Reşit Seyfatov, a Communist and member of the Committee for the Release of Turks from exile, asked for the dispatch of a United Nations commission to examine the situation of the Turks in the U.S.S.R. and also for help in obtaining permission for the Meskhetians to return to Meskhetia or leave the country.

During the 70's while the campaign for return to their historic homeland has continued, the majority of Meskhetians appeared to have experienced difficulty in deciding whether they are Georgians or Turks. This problem has been reflected in the division among Meskhetian activists with regard to tactics and aims.

The Meskhetian Turks have campaigned for their return, if not to Meskhetia, then at least to Georgia, and are reported to be prepared to "settle in any district, if necessary, in small groups". Faced with the intransigence of the Soviet authorities in 1976 they successfully turned for

support to the Georgian and Moscow Helsinki monitoring groups. The prominent Georgian human rights activists Merab Kostava and Victor Rtskhiladze championed their cause before their arrest in 1977 and subsequent imprisonment for human rights activities, and even reproached the editors of a *Chronicle of Current Events* for referring to the Meskhetians as Meskhetian Turks. In January 1977 the Moscow Helsinki monitoring group issued a short report entitled "On the situation of the Meskhetian-Georgians" had sent to the group's chairman Dr. Yurii Orlov. In this document the Moscow Helsinki monitors stated that they had received "Lists with the signatures of more than 1,100 heads of families, representing nearly 7,500 people" appealing for the right to return to their homeland. The Meskhetian Turks continue to demand their return to Meskhetia, even this repatriation were to be extended over several years.

Having met with no possible response from the Soviet Authorities, they have appealed unsuccessfully for support to the Turkish Government. Many of them demanded settlement in Turkey. The more militant activities are reported to have considered calling for the annexation of Meskhetia to Turkey, if the Soviet government continues to ignore their demands. The Meskhetian Turks have not appealed directly to

the Moscow Helsinki monitoring groups but have sent it copies of the resolutions of their congresses.

In their new appeal addressed to Leonid Brezhnev with a copy to the Georgian Party First Secretary, Edward Shevarnadze, (May 25, 1970), the Meskhetians stated that over the past 33 years they had sent 38 delegations to Moscow and submitted more than 160,000 individual and collective statements to the Soviet authorities. The appeal describes how the authorities continually refused to deal with the Meskhetian problem, referring them from one office to another. In January 1977, for instance, a Meskhetian delegation was told in Moscow that their question was being dealt with the Georgian Council of Ministers. In Tbilisi, the Meskhetian representatives were told that they had "the right to live anywhere on Georgian territory", provided that the local authorities would accept them. On approaching these authorities, the Meskhetians were given the reply that "we will accept you with pleasure if the Georgian Council of Ministers permit it". The Meskhetians then returned to Tbilisi and requested the Council of Ministers to instruct the local authorities accordingly. This time they were told: "We have already explained everything to you, there will be other reply". The authors of appeal conclude by saying, "after all this, we came to the conclusion that all

resolutions and edicts regarding the Meskhetians from the highest organ of the U.S.S.R are more formalities" (43).

Finally, it should be concluded that, to a large extent, the national consciousness of the Meskhetians has been forged by the experience of exile. In 1969, the samizdat journal *Chronicle of Current Events* said of the Meskhetians: "The Meskhi are an ethnic mixture of Georgians, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Kurds and Turkmens. What they have in common has been created by their past experience of Turkish influence and their Muslim religion, and the persecutions they have suffered during the last twenty-five years have strengthened their unity as a nation" (44). Given etno evolution of Meskhetian Turks seems more historically objective than those of pure pro-Georgian or pro-Turkish versions.

Ethnopolitical Tendencies in Georgia and the Meskhetian Question.

Gorbachev's "Perestroika" and "Glasnost'" policies brought the "Meskhetian question" within the lengthy chain of other tangled nationality problems of the Soviet Regime on political agenda.

Yet as of January 1989, after more than two decades of active struggle and numerous official appeals to the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet, the All-Union census recorded only 1,375 Meskhetians ("Turks"-fewer than one percent of the total-as resident in Georgia). Despite this, there appeared new materials about Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks in mass media, earlier censored by authorities. Soviet public had opportunity to be familiar with the information on the circumstances surrounding the deportation of the Soviet nationalities including Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks during World War II. According to Elizabeth Fuller : "Over the past three years or so the native-language press of Georgia has sporadically shed the light on the Turkified Georgians deported by Stalin to Central Asia in 1944. Today, however,

such materials have carefully avoided any mention of either the circumstances or the rationale for their deportation." This omission has been rectified in a recent article in the Georgian literary weekly, *Literaturuli Sakartvelo* (March 25, 1988) (45).

There were proposed different assortments and recipes for treatment of the problem. The most popular, which reflected also official position was formulated by Georgian historian Beridze in his article *Literaturuli Sakartvelo*, June 7, 1985, "Georgians Muslims deported by Stalin Permitted to Return" (46).

Beridze goes on to identify, if somewhat tentatively, two interconnected factors that he considers furnished the rationale for the deportation of the Meskhetians in 1944. First, he says, the local population had allegedly continued to maintain contact with the Southern districts of Meskheta ceded to Turkey in 1921. Second, he submits, "the incorrect orientation" of 19th-20th century propaganda, which argued that Muslims were de facto Turks, had given rise to a pro-Turkish orientation among the Meskhetians. The deportation of the Meskhetians, according to Beridze, brought about one positive change—namely, that life "alongside other ethnic

groups" served to heighten their perception of their own national identity".

After hailing the repatriation of the Meskhetians as comparable with the liberation of Meskheta from Turkish rule in the 19th century, Beridze proceeds to advocate a "careful selection" of those who will be permitted to settle in their traditional homeland. Specifically, he proposes that this privilege be extended only to ethnic Georgians. (He does not, however, say how it would be possible to establish with any accuracy which Meskhetians belong to this category, particularly since, as he points out, there are cases in which four brothers are nominally an Azerbaijani, a Turk, a Kazakh and a Georgian). The Kurds and Turkmens who were deported along with the Georgian contingent but who never subsequently became Georgianized, should, Beridze argues, be excluded, as their return" would again give rise to ethnic discord". The "pro-Turkish oriented Meskhetians" should like-wise, in his opinion, be barred from returning to Meskheta.

How is one to account for Beridze's proposed policy of discrimination? Two factors may be of relevance. After the World War II, many abandoned villages in Meskheta were settled by Muslim Georgians from Ajaria. Those villages are

regarded by some Georgians as a bulwark against the largely Armenian and Azerbaijani populations of the raions to the east. Members of the Georgian intelligentsia have for a period of several years been expressing concern over the implications of the non-Georgian population of the republic - in particular, the Azerbaijanis, the Armenians and the Kurds. On at least one occasion, the expanding non-Georgian population might encroach on traditionally Georgian lands. The return to Meskhetia of the ethnically Georgian section of this former population would serve to strengthen the Georgian presence in the area - a strategy that assumes especial urgency in the light of recurrent proposals in the context of the Mountainous-Karabakh dispute that the frontiers of the three Transcaucasian republics be redrawn to take into consideration the ethnic composition of the border areas.

Thus, under the newly independent government of Georgia, the Meskhetians' prospects of regaining their homeland appear to have become even bleaker than in the days when Soviet power prevailed.

It is known that Georgia was among the first Republics who challenged the Soviet government in its demands for independence. It was also the first Soviet Republic to

demonstrate what a real civil war and inter ethnic the post-communist world could be like.

In fact, the struggle for independence from the central government was accompanied with ethnic conflicts. At the end of 1988 J. Ioseliani created an armed organization "Mkhedrioni". A crisis began in South Ossetia. From March to April 1989 numerous meetings and demonstrations started in Tbilisi, demanded the adaptation of the declaration on Georgia's independence, annulment of autonomies, and the withdrawal of the Soviet troops from Georgia. In April 9, 1989 a large and peaceful national demonstration in Tbilisi was brutally suppressed by Soviet troops. From July 1989 on armed clashes between the Abkhazians and Georgians started in Abkhazia. Under these circumstances, Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks inspired by the Glasnost' policy of Gorbachev and new changes in the Soviet nationality policy started their activity to return to the homeland. Yusuf Serverov and Enver Odabaş (ev), who were living in Kabardino-Balkar Autonomous Republic created "Vatan" (Homeland) organization which was registered by the Central government. They consolidated political activities of all-Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks who lived in Northern Caucasus, Azerbaijan, Central Asia and Kazakhstan.

Of course, under such tense political situation it was too optimistic to raise the question about the return of the Abiska (Meskhetian) Turks to Georgia.

It is usually assumed that ethnic conflicts in the autonomous border regions of South Osetia and Abkhazia were "Kremlin's provocation", against the Georgian independence movement, and the Meskhetian question was also inspired from Moscow and asserted as a "threat" to Georgian sovereignty.

If the same "scenarios" took place almost in all Soviet Republics (save the ethnically homogeneous Armenia), to certain extent this assumption could be justified. However, in Georgia, they generally fail to explain the motives for ethnic violence in the post-communist society. There are two main reasons why conflicts like the one in South Osetia were hard to avoid in the process of the breaking-up of the Soviet Union. The first is that the absence of a civil consciousness, which expressed itself in a dichotomy between the concepts of citizenship and nationality. Nationality was considered to be a purely ethnic and non-political characteristic of individuals and groups, while citizenship, on the contrary, was seen as a mainly external relationship linking individuals and groups with the state. This dichotomy between nationality and citizenship was reinforced

by the Soviet system of passport registration, which had a special entry for an individual's nationality as distinct from his or her citizenship.

After the demise of the Soviet Union, it was difficult for both majorities and minorities in the newly independent republics to consider their belonging to new nations in a non-ethnic sense. Since 1988, the Georgian media has presented the issue of Georgian nationhood in predominantly ethnic terms.

The minorities (usually called the "non-Georgian population") have routinely been described as "guests on our soil". They were quite welcome as long as "they behaved in a proper way" - though not everybody expressed confidence that they would.

It was quite popular to discuss "demographic" topics, such as the possibility of increasing the birth rate among ethnic Georgians (who, according to the 1989 census, comprised 70% of the population, since this birth rate was much lower than that of the Armenian and, especially Azerbaijani minorities. Soviet-style settlement control measures (*propiska*) were demanded from the authorities to prevent the spreading of minority (mostly Azeri) populations

from the densely populated areas to other parts of Georgia. The government was asked to encourage the resettling of ethnic Georgians in regions where non-Georgians constituted a majority. This settlement policy was intended to shift the ethnic balance in favor of the Georgians .

The second reason why conflicts like this were hard to prevent from reaching the violent stage was that territory, or "soil" was at stake. The newly independent states contained disputed territories, which were claimed by different ethnic communities as "theirs". It was these conflicting territorial claims, more than the alleged mistreatment of minorities by the majority, which lay at the heart of conflicts like those in South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Mountainous-Karabag and Trans-Dniestr. Mistreatment of, or discrimination against, minorities were used by the advocates of secessionism in order to mobilize their own communities or to gain recognition for their cause from the international community, as public opinion in modern democratic states is indeed sensitive to arguments that can be translated into the language of "minority rights".

All these discussions were made for objective understanding of ethnic definition of nationhood in Georgia and current Georgian Government policy towards minority

populations. So, no wonder, that the new democratically-elected President of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, addressed the Meskhetian question at a meeting held on February 27, 1990, at which he, as reported by a Georgian newspaper, "convincingly stated the impossibility of resettling the Meskhetian Turks in Georgia and expressed a sharp protest at the efforts being taken in that direction behind the back of the Georgian people" (47). "Excessive tolerance towards other nationalities is the luxury, which is permissible only for other countries, not for Georgia.... Georgia is not England and France. Georgia is under the threat to be swallowed by other nations, which were sent here by Kremlin, the Russian Empire: Azerbaijanis, Armenians and even Ossetians - they all are not indigenous population, and are enemies of Georgian People" (48).

One of the arguments used by Georgians hostile to the Meskhetians' return is that there is no room for them. This claim is refuted by the facts which display that out of 223 villages from which they were exiled, 84 out of them no longer even exist, that the population of their territory has decreased by 150,000 and that 70% of the land is no longer cultivated. According to the results of two official special Commissions from Moscow, which studied the possibility of settlement of Meskhetian Turks in Meskhetia-

Dzhavakheti: today there is the opportunity to settle all refugees from Fergana region.

Here comes the documented testimony given by the Georgian historian, Guram Mamulia related with resettlement of Meskhetia. "After Meskhetian Turks were exiled there was organized certain propaganda among Georgians. It was necessary to resettle already depopulated frontier area. Georgians didn't want to live there. That is why, the resettlement was realized under the force, basically from Western Georgia. Special troops were involved in this 'business'. They were destroying Georgian houses in Western Georgia and under the force authorities deported them to Meskhetia. It was going on during winter. Climatic conditions were harsh. Almost all babies perished. In addition, authorities established special military regime, that nobody could escape" (49).

Now, even those who professes sympathy for the Meskhetian cause cautioned that their immediate return to their ancestral land in Georgia could trigger violence, in part, because many formerly Meskhetian homes are now occupied by Armenians, who would be alarmed by an influx of Muslims (50).

Fergana Pogroms and New Deportation

The anti-Meskhetian riots and massacres in June 7, 1989 in Fergana gave new urgency to the problem of finding homeland. The scale of the disaster for the Meskhetians is reflected by the fact that the All-Union census taken at the beginning of that year showed 106,000 Meskhetians ("Turks") more than half the total in the country to be living in Uzbekistan (51). Another 21,000 were in neighboring Kirgizia, which was also affected by the disturbances. The riots began when busloads of Uzbek youths descended on Meskhetian homes, setting them on fire and assaulting the inhabitants. According to the official version, "the rioting was off by a marketplace dispute over the price of strawberries". But the roots of the dispute were more complex. Before order could be restored by security forces brought in from other parts of the Soviet Union, scores of Meskhetians (and a few members of other nationalities) had been killed. Many others had been wounded, and all but about 30,000 were hastily evacuated from Uzbekistan (52).

"If there were sinister forces behind this well-organized bloodshed and destruction, they have never been identified although in a series of trials lasting for more than two years after the incidents, numerous individual

perpetrators were convicted and some were sentenced to death (53). By some accounts, the trouble was motivated by jealousy over the Meskhetians' superior socioeconomic status in a region with a high incidence of indigenous unemployment. Others have speculated that it was staged by organized crime elements in Uzbekistan to "show muscle" to the authorities, and that the Meskhetians were only random victims (a hypothesis made unlikely by the fact that the rioters had maps in their possession showing Meskhetian homes). On the other hand, the Uzbek press has published the charge that the actions were the result of a conspiracy masterminded by high officials working in Moscow's interest to obtain manpower for labor-short rural areas of the Russian Federation by frightening the Meskhetians away from their homes in Uzbekistan. Indeed, a large number 65,000 of the Meskhetian Turks' refugees were transported to the R.S.F.S.R. (54).

Before the riots, Fergana *oblast'* (province) was the highest densely populated area in Uzbekistan 3,150,000 people (22% of total population, 78 people per square km (31,6 people, per sq. km., average in Republic). Only 0,5% (15,000) were Meskhetian Turks or 14% of all Turks who lived in Uzbekistan (55).

So, one can now only guess at how the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks inspiration to return to homeland would have threaten the Uzbek majority's independent movement if Meskhetian leaders had not opposed to it and just attracted Moscow's attention on their national rights in exile. However, if it was a covert plot of the KGB, why the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks were selected as "scapegoats" for that? Nobody so far gave a well-grounded answer to that question.

To understand, of course, this "issue" should be analyzed in context of all other events happened not only in the Uzbekistan, Central Asia, but in all Soviet territories. As a matter of fact, the Meskhetian massacre coincided with the riots on ethnic grounds in Novy Uzen (Gur'ev region, Kazakhstan). Kazakhs demanded the expulsion of all people of Caucasian origin. At the same time illicit seizure of lands in the outskirts of Frunze (Bişkek) in Kyrgyzstan began. In Tajikistan, a national opposition movement "Rastokhez" (Revival) was set up. In the Caucasus and Transcaucasus region the People's Front of Azerbaijan and the First Congress of the Armenian National Movement was being organized. Armed clashes between Abkhazians and Georgians erupted in Abkhazia. The first Congress of the Mountainous People of the Caucasus took place in Nalchik. In the Baltic Republics activated movement against the presence of Russian

troops and for full independence from Kremlin. Similar movements were observable in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus , Tatarstan, Bashkordistan and others.

Peter King classifies the ethnic turmoil in the former U.S.S.R. in three types of conflicts : between the Center and the periphery (the republics); between the republics; and within individual republics. In fact, all the three types of conflict existed in Uzbekistan. Domestic conflicts with Meskhetian Turks coincided with inter-republic conflict with Kirgizia over Osh, and Tajikistan over Samarkand district, and the conflict between Central Government and Republic (56).

Although, each type of conflicts is classified conditionally, and each case has its peculiarities from the politico-historical point of view, the determinant factor for causing and spreading of inter-ethnic conflicts should be considered as a failure of the socio-economic reforms. Moreover, "the ordinary economic policy of Moscow towards the republics is experienced "as a kind of permanent blockade or at least as an "economic cold war". That is, the republics feel dominated, exploited, and frustrated by the militarized monopolism of the all-Union economic ministries (57).

It was a case for Soviet Central Asia and particularly for Uzbekistan. According to Tair Tairov, the roots of conflict in Soviet Central Asia lie in the colonial policies of the Soviet Empire. The economic policy of "cotton independence" proved to be an environmental and socio-political tragedy for Central Asia (58). This policy has led to an ecological catastrophe of global dimensions - the drying up of the Aral Sea, 60% of a population are living in the rural areas., half of them with standard of living below the poverty line. The Uzbek Youths met "*Perestroika*" in unemployment, or with low wages and poor living conditions, getting no relief or credits from the state.

In his article Marat Abdullaev compared the outbreaks of violence in Uzbekistan's part of the Fergana Valley in 1989 and in Osh oblast', Kyrgyzstan's share of the valley, in 1990 (59). The most notable similarity between the two events, according to Abdullaev, was the attackers' perception that gave them a more favorable economic situation. Uzbek residents of the Fergana Valley explained the 1989 attacks on Meskhetian Turks by saying that the Meskhetians were primarily employed in trade and service organizations, and therefore lived better. The Kyrgyz said

the same thing about the Uzbek domination of trade and services in Osh.

The 1989 Fergana riots caused a crisis in other regions of the Soviet Union too. Refugees from Fergana and other parts of Uzbekistan moved through the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan, some settled in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. More than 60000 Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks were settled to different parts of the RSFSR, basically to agrarian regions like *Nechernosem'e*: Belgorod, Rostov, Orel, Tula, etc.

The Fergana disaster had swollen the Meskhetian population of Azerbaijan to 135,000 compared with a pre-disaster population there of 35,000 (4 fold). Azerbaijan had by that time near half-million its own refugees from Armenia and Mountainous-Karabagh Region. However, they met new refugees from Uzbekistan as their own with understanding and certain degree of hospitality. The modest humanitarian aid which was provided for Azerbaijan by different organizations was distributed among all refugees irrespective of their ethnic identity.

However, in Stavropol krai, President Gorbachev's birthplace and his early spring board as the local Party leader, things were said to be very bad for the Meskhetians.

Helsinki Watch Report informants maintained that their co-ethnics could find there very little housing and even if they did, they could not receive a *propiska* (the police permission to reside). Without a *propiska*, they could not get jobs, nor could their children go to school. Furthermore, the local authorities and members of the general public were demanding everyday that they leave the area. According to recent developments, Cossaks in the Krasnodar area even staged several pogroms against Meskhetian Turks (60).

In March 11, 1990, at a press conference, in Moscow, the chairman of the Meskhetian "Vatan" Society, Yusuf Serverov, complained that the Meskhetian refugees were really welcome, only in five labor-short *oblast'* (province) of the R.S.F.S.R.'s - Non-Black -Earth-Region (*Nechernozem'e*), but that on arrival there 16,000 people had been dispersed to 3,000 farms in 156 different districts. (61).

"Tell me," Serverov asked, "what kind of national culture and language can there be if 12,000 people are spread over 156 districts?". At the end of June, 1989, the month in which the riots had taken place, the U.S.S.R. Minister of the Interior, Vadim V. Bakatin, gave permission to Meskhetian representatives to visit some of the refugees

in that republic. The latter were formed to be living in "break-down, remote huts without roads, stores or schools". they had been given rags to wear and decrepit used matters to sleep on. They were unaccustomed to the harshness of the winters (62).

Moreover, the surrounding Russian rank-and-file were perceived as disliking Muslims. One of the biggest causes of discontent was the fact that they had to bury their dead in Russian cemeteries or transport the bodies to the North Caucasus for burial. As a result many fled to Azerbaijan, increasing the pressures on the Meskhetian communities there. Others fled to the more southerly parts of the R.S.F.S.R.: to Chechenia-Ingushetia and Kabardino-Balkaria in the North Caucasus, and to Krasnodar and Stavropol *krays* (territories) in Southern Russia. Some Meskhetians, possibly driven by desperation, were now attempting to return to the homes from which they were evacuated in the Fergana Valley. They admitted candidly that they faced considerable difficulties, since at the time of the evacuation many had sold their houses at disaster prices, and were now having trouble reclaiming them from the legal owners, who are naturally asking market prices.

In the face of such a gloomy picture, there were few developments which seemed to offer at least a ray of hope for amelioration of the Meskhetian's straits. On May 6, 1991, the law on the rehabilitation of the deported peoples have been adopted by the R.S.F.S.R. Supreme Soviet (63). The most noteworthy features of this law was its recognition of the right of deported peoples to restore any national-state formations that existed prior to their deportation, and its provision for the implementation of measures "to restore national-territorial borders that existed prior to their forcible, anti-constitutional alteration". Later on, in August 6, 1991 USSR Cabinet of Ministers accepted decree "On organizing the return of Crimean Tatars to the Crimean ASSR and guarantees for their establishment there. "The decree recommended that the governments of the RSFSR, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan and Kyrgyzstan get up commissions where there are concentrations of Crimean Tatars to deal with the problems of their return" (64).

R.S.F.S.R Supreme Soviet adopted analogous decrees recommended to pertinent authorities on the inquiry of the possibility of a recreation of the Volga German ASSR and the return of the Prigorodnyi raion (district) of North Ossetia to Chechen-Ingushetia.

Thus, Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks were waiting for their turn. The Chairman of the U.S.S.R. Council of Nationalities, Refik Nishanov appealed on July 18, 1991 to the Georgian President Zviad Gamsakhurdia to allow those Meskhetians who wish to do so to return to Georgia. Gamsakhurdia opposed the return of the Meskhetian Turks to Georgia on the ground that they were Muslims and the majority of them did not speak Georgian (65).

On July 30, 1991, Western news agencies reported from Moscow that up to 1,000 Meskhetians demonstrated outside the Kremlin, in July 30, 1991 in the hope of bringing their plight to George Bush's attention. Many Meskhetians fled Uzbekistan following the violence of 1989, but have not been allowed to resettle in Georgia. At the same time the All-Union TV information program "Vremia" quoted a Georgian presidential decree permitting Georgians made homeless in the April 30 earthquake to settle in the raions formerly populated by Meskhetians (66).

After the demise of the Soviet Union, 9 successor states to the U.S.S.R., unified in CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) signed the draft agreement on restoring the rights of deported individuals, national minorities and peoples in Minsk in July 29, 1992. The draft provided for joint efforts

to deal with the social problems of deportees, including ensuring guarantees for pensioners and assistance and tax breaks for those resettling in the areas from which they were deported. Since Georgia was not a CIS member then and did not sign the agreement, the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks were not covered by it.

After Georgia became member of the CIS (September 21, 1994), a delegation from Russia's Ministry for Nationality Affairs has signed a protocol with Georgian officials on cooperation in solving the problem of the return of Meskhetian Turks and others from Russia to Georgia. The Georgian authorities were, however, reluctant to agree to the Meskhetians' return. The agreement with the Russian delegation indicates a change in Georgian policy. Some officials underlined that the agreement with the Russian delegation indicated a change in Georgian Policy. However, this "change" remains rather ticklish and depends on certain domestic factors in Georgia as well as external.

As can be seen, the use of official mass deportation policy towards certain national groups of the Soviet Union in during the period of 1937-1949 suggests that it was employed by the Soviet leadership primarily as a means to establish reliable, trustworthy barrier against possible invasions and as a preparation for post-war expansionism of the Soviets. This can reinforce the view that decisions concerning the use of mass deportations were made on the basis of a specific calculus of utility as well as on the basis of the antinational proclivities of the leadership.

During post-Stalinist evolution of the Soviet system less has been changed towards these "punished people". Today, these ten peoples have a combined census population of just under five million. Five have no national home republics in a country where territorial autonomy was the traditional corner-stone of national existence.

Not one of these nationalities - or its members has ever received any compensations for the harm done to them.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the devolution of power from Moscow to the independent Republics, where those national groups had been deported to or settled in complicated the struggle for justice which had been waged by them. This situation is asserted as a difficult challenge to the global human rights movement.

One of the largest of these nationalities which numbers in excess of three hundred thousand members are Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks. The principal distinguishing feature of this group is that they regard themselves as doubly victimized for having had to undergo "two deportations". The first is in November 1944, when they were deported to Central Asia, from Ahiska (Meskhetia), Georgia. The second happened in June 1989, when they became targets of ethnic violence and were hastily evacuated to other parts of the USSR. Unlike other deported nationalities, the Meskhetians were never publicly charged with any collective crimes as a nation.

Two factors complicate their return to homeland. First, the Georgian Government which is considered the successor to the government that abused these peoples (the Soviet Union) is using force to prevent their free return and is openly hostile to their claims and aspirations. Second,

terogeneous ethnic make-up of the Ahıska (Meskhetian) rks complicated their drive to return to Georgia and it ighs heavily on their current and future destiny.

The ethnogenesis of those people, who should be nsidered as a purely ethno-historical subject, became an sue of political speculations, which "demand" certain thnic testimony" and then to make decision if those people ve the juridical right to live in their traditional meland or not.

In essence, the Turks from Ahıska or Meskhetia as other rginal ethnic groups have been formed in the area of teractions of two ethnic cultures: Georgian and Turkish.

unified in itself representatives of both people but longing predominantly to the Turkish language and culture.

is confirmed by their Anatolian dialect and their ligion. The same "mechanism" of the ethnoformation should

applied to the Ajaras, who have been formed with edominant Georgian cultural substrate. Such marginal and hnomarginal cases with dual ethnic origin and with the edominance of one of the ehnic factors are common enomenon in the near-frontier area of many states. In all ose disputable cases ethnic origin is defined on the basis personal self-consciousness of people. This principle is

considered as predominant in world practice and used by UN commissions for census and other assortments of the world population.

The reason for the Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks deportation could be sought primarily in their ethnic origin, because other charges such as collaboration with the Germans and the Turkish intelligence have been disproved by historical facts and documents. If there is a consistent explanation, it appears to lie on the paranoidal fear on Stalin's part of future "fifth columns" that might undermine the security of the Soviet State on behalf of foreigners. Since Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks were deported at the end of World War II, it gives ground to assume that it has been done for the sake of future expansionism to the Northern Turkey. Moreover, the existing "unrest" of the Soviet Union with Turkish "neutrality" during World War II, so should be added to the factors which affected the destiny of Ahıska (Meskhetian Turks).

Until its dissolution, the Soviet Union, since 1945 frequently put in negotiation agenda with Turkish Government claims made by the Georgian and Armenian SSR's to Turkish territory (South Ahıska/Meskhetia).

The struggle of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks for return to their homeland and getting back their national rights started immediately after having received a pro forma rehabilitation by the Khrushchev Government in 1956.

The new phase in consolidation of efforts for Meskhetian Turks's return to their homeland started with Gorbachev "*Perestroika*" policy. By that time, Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks activated their legal political activity. However, this period is characterized with tragic consequences for the Meskhetian Turks. In June 1989, when they became the targets of nationalistic pogroms and attacks in their settlements in exile : Uzbekistan. They were resettled in different areas of the Soviet Union, under dire circumstances. It should be concluded, that to a large extent, the national consciousness of the Meskhetians has been forged by the experience of deportations.

Since Georgia refused to permit to Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks to resettle in Georgia (their homeland), some of them appealed to the Turkish government. It is assumed that group appeals to Turkey from Soviet Turkic Republics and sudden "exodus" of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey (1989) caught authorities of Turkey totally unprepared and put off Meskhetian Turks' appeals to

the Turkish government. Although, the Turkish government is disposed to help the Soviet Turks, it was unable to accept so many refugees at once. Meanwhile, certain measures have been taken towards handling of this issue. 500 Ahıska Turkish families were permitted to immigrate in Turkey (2,000 people) during 5 years. However, it covered the problem only partially.

Thus, gradually we came to the question: what are the implications of all this for Turkish foreign policy? To follow Zbignev Brzezinski rule: "We must not spend too much time on this question, because we are not in the business of making policy but to some extent the problem does have interesting, intellectual complications" (67).

It seems that Turkish politicians generally have been unaware of significance of the problem of the deported Turkic nationalities such as the Crimean Tatars, Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks and others. In comparison, German Government, since 1956, put the question of deported Volga Germans on agenda in several negotiations with the Soviets. In his speech in Moscow, 1989, German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher declared : "I wish to stress that the FRG has an interest in the Germans staying in the Soviet Union". Accordingly, the Germans are now concentrating on a demand

for restoration of the national territorial autonomy that they enjoy before deportation. For Turkish foreign policy, from early 1950 until 1990's, the existence of the problem of deported innocent compatriots seemingly tended to be swept under the rug. Only recently, some Turkish policymakers admitted the fact that continuing to ignore them seems unrealistic because the problems are becoming increasingly important and in many respects are crucial to the future of pursuing a definite policy in the Turkic republics of the former USSR. According to V. Naumkin, the Russian political scientist, "during Gorbachev liberalized regime, not the State (Turkey), but rather private companies and individuals started establishing contacts with the Turkic republics. Official relations remained unchanged, but Turkish tourists began visiting the USSR, and the press and television expanded their coverage of life of the Soviet Turkic population". It seems that official opinion, has been poorly acknowledged in those issues (68).

After several picketings in front of the Turkish Embassy in Moscow for permission to emigrate to Turkey and petitions that were brought by representatives of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks to Presidents of T. Özal and S. Demirel during their visits to the Central Asian Republics, Meskhetian Turks received at least some attention to their

problems and were officially recognized as "soydaşlar"-
(coethnics) (69).

In November 27, 1992, Turkish Parliament accepted the Law # 92/3706 according to which 500 families in 1992-1993 who were living in extraordinarily critical conditions were allowed to be settled in Turkey. This Law restrained the immigration of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks in Turkey up to 2,000 people during two years. However, at present time more than 200,000 people remain under "extraordinary circumstances" (70).

In their petition to the President of Turkey T. Özal during his visit to Alma-Ata (Kazakhstan), representatives of Ahıska (Meskhetian) Turks formulated their request as follows: "We, with understanding, accept those difficulties that are experienced by Turkey with immigrations. However, the acceptance of 5-10 thousands of Ahıska Turks extending to few years, could mollify aggressive attacks of the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Kirghiz. We could have then said that Turkey is behind us and we could have felt more secure". In addition, a recurring complaint of the Meskhetians is that they have been unable to produce spokesmen of genuine stature who could represent them effectively in national and international fora (71).

While we touched upon the Turkish immigration policy, we should discuss this issue further in respect to our inquiry.

The Post-Cold-War era brought to Turkey new flow of immigrants from the Soviet Union, Balkans, Central Asia, Afghanistan, Near East. According to the Turkish State Statistical Institute, from 1985 to 1990 there numbered more than one million immigrants moved to Turkey. The basic reason for those immigrations is the increasing of ethnic and religious intolerance and discrimination in their home countries. Although, Turkey posses a certain "absorbing" potential for immigrations, it has its limits.

There are few points which make this issue painful for Turkey. The first is that the flow of immigrants is rather unexpected and unforecasted by officials. For example, 200,000 Turks emigrated from Bulgaria to Turkey in 1989 within a few days and caused very serious problems for local authorities. This emigration coincided with the emigration from Afghanistan. Later on, more than 500,000 Peshmerges (Kurds and Turkmens) were forced to move in Turkey under Saddam's "chase" during the Gulf War. Here should be added other refugees from Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union and

Iran. All these immigrations literally caught Turkey totally unprepared.

The second point is related with the dispersion of these peoples (national units) on the Turkish territory. It is known that many of these refugees were settled in Eastern Anatolia, which from socio-economic point of view is the least developed part of Turkey. Later on, these people felt compelled forced to move to Western parts of the country with hope of find appropriate jobs. This migration exacerbates the already complicated urban situation in the Turkish cites.

In March 17, 1983, Turkish Parliament ratified the Law of Creation of the High Commission involving practically all State ministries such as Foreign, Internal, Finance and ets. However, this Commission is basically an executive organ rather than being an analytical and forecasting institution.

It is admitted that issue of international migration has reached the top level of political agendas in industrialized countries and in international organizations. This also applies for Turkey which experiences absence of realistic scenarios in forecasting migration particularly from the Turkic Republics and other lands. The size of a

country's future population and labor force is fairly predictable, but the number of people who will migrate, is far more unpredictable. Equally unpredictable are the circumstances, such as political instability or upheavals, oppression and war, religious and ethnic conflicts, ecological disasters, desertification and famine, all of which may contribute to migration and refugee flows.

Finally, the Ahiska (Meskhetian) Turks' case (as the cases of other mass deported nationalities) is subject of concern from two points of view: human rights and migration problems. This study is intended to focus attention on the present situation of the nationalities deported en masse in the Soviet Union and the status of their ongoing struggle for national autonomy and territorial rights. It was undertaken because like Helsinki Watch Group, which promoted observance of domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords, is committed to the principle that grave abuses of human rights, even if committed long ago, should be disclosed and acknowledged, since the sufferings of the victimized the punishment peoples caused by the abuses continue today. It is also believed that the successor states of the ex-Soviet Union, that abused these peoples, owe them an assistance and

good faith efforts to redress their grievances.

On the other hand, as it has been mentioned those Soviet nationalities who suffered mass national deportation from their homeland under the Stalinist regime have a combined census population of just under five million. Those people should be considered as potential emigrants. Since the questions of ethnicity and nationalism are also burning issues in the Western World (including Turkey) as a result of migration above all from Euro-Asian regions, this issue should attract close attention of those countries and required additional study.

1. Some Milestones from Lenin's Writings. Wolfe, Bertrem D. Khrushchev and Stalin's Ghost. Background and Meaning of Khrushchev's Secret Report to the 20th Congress on the Night of February 24-25. (London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956), 290.

*-Since the terms *Ahıska* and *Meskhethian Turks* are both used in the contemporary literature and justified by the Turkish and Georgian toponymical versions, I shall use both terms.

2. Samizdat Archives : AC # 2758. Merab Kostava, Georgian Human Rights Activist. "Historical Inquire: Meskhethian Turks or Meskhethian Georgians". (Tbilisi. 19/6/1976), 4.

3. In the contemporary literature the term "deportation" is widely applied also for those people who under the provoked erroneous charges were exiled from their homelands in the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the most of the dictionaries (e.g. Random House Webster's College Dictionary, 1992, p.363) give following definition: " D. is the lawful expulsion of an undesired alien or other person from a state". To avoid such sort of delusions, we use D. as an exile of deportees from their traditional homeland.

4. Critchlow James. "Punished Peoples of the Soviet Union. The Continuing Legacy of Stalin's Deportations". September 1991. A Helsinki Watch Report. (Washington, D. C.: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 3.

5. Wolfe, Bertrem D. Khrushchev and Stalin's Ghost. Background and Meaning of Khrushchev's Secret Report to the 20th Congress on the Night of February 24-25. (London: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956), 273-274.

6. Critchlow James. "Punished Peoples of the Soviet Union. The Continuing Legacy of Stalin's Deportations". September 1991. A Helsinki Watch Report. (Washington, D. C.: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 5.

7. Suny, Ronald G. The Making of the Georgian Nation. (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd. Publishers, 1989), xiii.
8. Ibid., 3.
9. Sheehy A., Nahaylo B. "The Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans and Meskhetians: Soviet Treatment of Some National Minorities". (London: Minority Rights Group Report. Report no. 6. 3rd edition, 1980), 24. Radio Liberty 32/86. Georgians Muslims Deported by Stalin Permitted to Return. (January 14, 1986), 1. Radio Moscow-1 Broadcast of March 11, 1990, Transcribed in Radio Liberty Soviet Media News Budget of that Date), 1.
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12. Kırzioğlu, Fahrettin M. Yukarı-Kür ve Çoruk Boylarında Kıpçaklar: Ahıska/Çıldır Eyaleti: Tarihinden. VII Dizi, Sayı 121. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1992), 201-202.
13. Khakhova. A. "Meskhi". Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie: Izdanie Etnograficheskogo Otdela Imperatorskogo Obshchestva Lyubiteley Estestvoznaniya, Antropologii I Etnografii. Moscow, No. 3. 1891.:.1. Cited in Critchlow James. "Punished Peoples of the Soviet Union. The Continuing Legacy of Stalin's Deportations". September 1991. A Helsinki Watch Report. (Washington, D. C.: Human Rights Watch, 1991), 52.
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