

them, as they firmly believe that descent should play a central role. When the Soviet state crumbled, Cossack paramilitary troops stepped in on their own initiative to maintain law and order. The Cossack organization was granted recognition through the establishment of public financial support, the founding of military academies for Cossack recruits, and separate Cossack military units in the Russian army during Yeltsin's presidency. Support is nevertheless not firm, and many of the decrees granting Cossacks special rights have stalled in the Duma. Cossacks are proponents of Russian nationalism and have been involved in violent episodes directed at other ethnic and religious minorities. The support of the Cossack movement and its political projects has lost some of its clout, as the Russian state has become consolidated. Cossackdom nevertheless remains a potent political symbol in Russia.

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Crimean Tatars

Crimean Tatars are the native Turkic people of the Crimean peninsula, located on the northern shores of the Black Sea. According to the 2001 census, the population of Crimea (Ukraine) is 2,031,000, of which the Crimean Tatars constitute around 15 percent (Russians make up 65–70% and Ukrainians 10–15%). Apart from those who returned to Crimea from exile under the Soviets, there are also Crimean Tatars living elsewhere in Ukraine, Uzbekistan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and other ex-Soviet Republics. It is estimated that the total population of Crimean Tatars ranges from 300,000 to 500,000 within the territory of the former Soviet Union (except Ukraine). Large diasporic communities of Crimean Tatars also reside in other countries, such as Turkey (around 5,000,000), Romania (30,000), the United States (30,000), Bulgaria (15,000), and Germany (20,000). Crimean Tatars adhere to Sunni Islam. Their language includes elements of Kipchak and Oghuz, the two principal Turkic groups. In terms of grammar and vocabulary, modern Crimean Tatar language is closely related to the Turkish spoken in Turkey.

The earliest known existence of Turkic peoples in Crimea dates to the time of the Huns who, during their westward drive, invaded parts of the Crimean peninsula in the second half of the 4th century CE. By the end of the 7th century, Crimea had become part of the Turkic Khazar Empire. With the gradual disintegration of the Khazar Empire, a new wave of Turkic peoples, the Pechenegs, invaded the steppes north of the Black Sea, and a large group of them

forced their way into Crimea, where they settled down during the early 10th century. Within less than a century, another influx of Turkic horsemen, the Cumans (Kipchaks), followed the Pechenegs. The Cumans dominated Crimea for more than two centuries, with the exception of certain coastal cities ruled by the Byzantines and later by the Venetians and Genoese. The Cumans left a very strong cultural and linguistic legacy in the contemporary culture of Crimean Tatars.

In the 1240s, the armies of the Mongol Genghis Khan occupied Crimea. Soon after, when the Great Chinghiside Empire practically disintegrated, Crimea became part of the western branch of the Mongolian Empire, the Golden Horde. Within less than a century, the Golden Horde became thoroughly Turkified and Islamicized, as ethnic Turkic peoples far outnumbered Mongolians. Several Turkic tribes and groups settled in Crimea then and gradually amalgamated with the conquered population, which also included many Turkic elements. Thus, Turkification and Islamization of the largest part of the peninsula ensued throughout this era. Since the 13th century the Turkic-Muslim (as well as the Turkified and Islamicized) population of Crimea has come to be called "Crimean Tatars."

Upon the disintegration of the Golden Horde, a Chinghiside prince, Hacı Geray, after unsuccessfully attempting to seize the throne of the Golden Horde, settled in Crimea and declared himself the Khan of Crimea around 1428. His domains included Crimea and the Kipchak Steppes situated north of the Crimea. In 1475, Mengli Geray I concluded an agreement

with the Ottoman Empire whereby the Crimean Khanate accepted Ottoman overlordship. Henceforth, Crimean Tatar armies joined the military expeditions of the Ottomans upon the request of the Sultan.

The Crimean Khanate remained a mighty power in Eastern European politics for the succeeding three centuries. As its dominions extended from the North Caucasus to the Dnestr River, the khanate essentially played the role of a buffer state between Muscovy and the Ottoman territories. During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Crimean Khanate effectively curbed the southward expansion of Muscovy. The Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774 terminated the Ottoman suzerainty over the khanate. Following a decade of civil strife actively provoked by Russia, Empress Catherine II formally annexed Crimea to the Russian Empire in 1783.

The characteristic feature of Russian rule was vigorous effort by the tsarist administration to colonize and Slavify Crimea. Repressive Russian rule and the large-scale expropriations led to massive emigration of Crimean Tatars to Ottoman Turkey. As a result, from the 1860s on, Crimean Tatars effectively lost their status as the majority population in the Crimea.

Still, the national education drive of the Crimean Tatar reformist İsmail Bey Gaspralı resulted in initiating a wholesale national movement. By the 1910s, a Crimean Tatar intelligentsia and a number of underground groups aiming at the liberation of the Crimean Tatar people came into existence. With the outbreak of the March 1917 Revolution in Russia, these nationalist groups soon took control of Crimean

Tatar affairs in Crimea. In November 1917, direct democratic elections led to the formation of a Crimean Tatar Qurultay (National Parliament). In December, the Qurultay declared an independent Crimean Democratic Republic. After a brief armed struggle, Russian Bolsheviks invaded the peninsula and succeeded in overthrowing the newborn republic. Up to 1920, Crimea changed hands three times between the White and Red Russian armies, neither of which sympathized with the national aspirations of Crimean Tatars.

In November 1920, the Red Army finally invaded and occupied Crimea, and in October 1921, the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Crimean ASSR) was declared. Crimean Tatars, like other national groups in the Soviet Union, suffered under the dekulakization, that is, the collectivization of agriculture, the famines, and the Great Terror of the 1920s and 1930s. By 1938, the Crimean Tatar national intelligentsia was virtually liquidated.

Soon after the beginning of the German-Russian war during World War II, the German armies occupied Crimea in the fall of 1941. In April 1944, however, the Red Army recaptured the peninsula from the Germans. On May 18, 1944, the entire Crimean Tatar population, to the last person, was deported from Crimea by the People's Commissariat for Public Affairs (Narodnyy Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del—NKVD) and Red Army troops. The dreadful journey, which took place in sealed cattle cars crammed with people without adequate food, water, or sanitary and medical care, lasted at least three weeks and cost half of the deportees their lives. The cars were destined for the Urals,

Siberia, and Central Asia, where survivors were assigned to special settlements resembling concentration camps without adequate housing, means of subsistence, or social facilities, and without permission to leave their designated settlements for 16 years.

In the meantime, the authorities eradicated virtually every trace of Crimean Tatar culture. Russian toponyms replaced all Tatar ones, while even the term "Crimean Tatar" was removed from the encyclopedias and censuses. A massive settlement of Russians in Crimea commenced. In 1954, Crimea was incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR.

In 1956, the Crimean Tatar National Movement was formed in exile to demand the return to the homeland. It became one of the earliest national-democratic movements in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union. The Soviet response was the imprisonment, arrest, and harassment of the activists of the movement. However, the Crimean Tatar National Movement, with the conspicuous support of the Crimean Tatar population in exile, continued its activities. The flow of petitions with tens of thousands of signatures, numerous deputations to Moscow, and mass demonstrations and meetings persisted. This state of affairs lasted until Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost.

In July 1987, the Crimean Tatar National Movement organized its first public meeting on Red Square in Moscow. Following this event, the government formed a number of successive state commissions to deal with the Crimean Tatar problem, but none took any concrete or constructive steps to enable Crimean Tatars to reclaim

their homeland. Frustrated by such delays, a centralized Organization of the Crimean Tatar National Movement (OCTNM) formed in exile in 1989, defied the Soviet authorities, and urged exiled Crimean Tatars to return to the Crimea illegally.

In January 1991, the leadership of the Crimean regional Communist Party declared the establishment of the Crimean ASSR. Crimean Tatars vigorously opposed this new formation, arguing that this did not constitute the reestablishment of the former Crimean ASSR in which Crimean Tatars had enjoyed their preeminent status as the native people. Upon the initiative of the OCTNM, elections for the Qurultay were conducted among Crimean Tatars in exile and in Crimea. On June 22, 1991, the second Qurultay convened in Akmescit (Simferopol). The Qurultay thereupon delegated its powers between its plenary sessions to the Millî Meclis (National Council), which was elected from among the Qurultay deputies.

Although the Qurultay and Millî Meclis have not been granted an unequivocal recognition on the part of the Ukrainian government since their foundation, they act as de facto representative bodies of the Crimean Tatar people. Throughout the 1990s a number of diplomatic crises occurred between Ukraine and Russia over the status of Crimea. While the Russian population of the peninsula stood for the annexation of Crimea to Russia, the Crimean Tatars staunchly refused such a possibility and defended the Ukrainian territorial integrity.

Currently, the problems of Crimean Tatar returnees are still far from being solved. The issues of the restoration of

their rights previous to the deportation, the threateningly high rates of child deaths, low living standards, landlessness, and unemployment as well as the strong desire for national educational and cultural institutions continue to trouble Crimean Tatar society.

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Croats

Croats, or Croatians (*Hrvati*, pl.), are the majority population in Croatia, a southeastern European country with 4 million people (2001) having Zagreb as its capital. A worldwide diaspora, estimated at about the same size, includes those living in the neighboring countries of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, and Slovenia after the dissolution of Yugoslavia; descendants of Croats who moved to present-day Austria,