

Williams, Brian Glyn. *The Crimean Tatars: From Soviet Genocide to Putin's Conquest*. Hurst & Company, London, 2015. xviii + 217 pp. Maps. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. £20.00 (paperback).

THIS is a timely book, given the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014 and subsequent campaign against Crimean Tatar rights. The Kremlin has been promoting the rival idea that 'Crimea is as sacred to Russia as Jerusalem's Temple Mount is to Judaism and Islam', in which the Crimean Tatars may play some role as a 'native' people, but only alongside now marginal groups like the Pontic Greeks.

Nevertheless, Glyn Williams is not afraid to make bold claims. The first is that the Crimean Tatar Khanate before Russian annexation was an essentially dynastic, even imperial polity. In the nineteenth century there were still substantial differences between three key groups: coastal Yaliboyu, mountain Tats and steppe Nogai. There were twenty-two dialects (p. 52). The modern sense of Crimean Tatar national unity was created by four factors: the homogenizing effects of national activism before 1917 and Soviet rule from 1921 to 1944, the trauma of the Deportation (*Sürgünlik*) of May 1944 and the experience of exile in Central Asia.

The second major claim is just how important Soviet rule was in this process. The national movement had done much of the work before 1917, when both the pan-Turkic ideas of Ismail Gasprinsky and the Young Tatars' (*Genc Tatarlari*) idea of 'island Crimea' as a natural homeland were widespread. But, as elsewhere in the USSR, Soviet rule developed much of the ideology. Institutions mattered. 'While the Crimean ASSR [Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic] was not officially an ethnically-based republic on paper [...] it had all the hallmarks of a national republic. For all intents and purposes, the Crimea ASSR was, from 1921–1945, established as an unofficial Crimean Tatar republic and the Crimean Tatars were the state-sponsored "native people" (*korennoi narod*) of this autonomy' (pp. 59–60), like Dagestan, Nakichevan and Nagorno-Karabakh.

Soviet Crimean Tatar intellectuals helped create 'a common Crimean Tatar grammar and language based on the central mountain dialect, which was a hybrid Nogai (Kipchak), Tat (Oghuz) language known as the *Orta Yolak* (Middle Road)' (p. 75). Paradoxically, given its crucial importance to modern Crimean Tatar nationalism, they also developed the idea that the Crimean Tatars' 'roots (*koreny*) could be traced back' beyond the thirteenth century Mongol conquest' (p. 75) to groups like the Kipchaks, Scythians and even the Huns.

Glyn Williams goes on to attribute the fall of the 'national Communist' Crimean Tatar leader Veli Ibrahimov in 1928 to his opposition to the plan to

move Soviet Jews to the Crimean steppe and his preference for shifting local Crimean Tatars there instead (p. 82), backed up by “the gradual repartition of Crimean Turks from abroad” (p. 79, quoting Edige Kirimal).

The third major claim is that, despite this new-found unity, ‘Crimean Tatars are still aware of their original sub ethnic-geographic origins and all can tell you whether they are a Yaila Tat, Yaliboyu Tat or Nogai, their contemporary identities are more profoundly shaped by their exile experiences. Those who lived in Tashkent, for example, consider themselves to be cosmopolitan and talk of this great Central Asian city’s restaurants, efficient subway system, museums and so forth. Those from Samarkand have a certain nostalgia for that city’s *chaihanas* (traditional tea shops), and longing for the soil which grew “Uzbekistan’s best grapes” (p. 150).

The Russian occupying authorities have sought to play divide-and-rule; but there is little evidence to date that they have been able to exploit these underlying divisions. The leaders of the mainstream Mejlis have been exiled to ‘continental’ Ukraine. Pro-Russian groups like *Qirim* (‘Crimea’) and *Qirim Birliġi* (‘Crimea Union’) seem largely to have been created by money, political technology and pressure on vulnerable groups like the few surviving Crimean Tatar businesses to conform. Kyiv has belatedly recognized both the Mejlis and the Crimean Tatars’ ‘rooted’ status after years of relative neglect. The seventieth anniversary of the Deportation in May 2014 was a mooted affair. The troubled history of the Crimean Tatars continues.

UCL SSEES

ANDREW WILSON

Clark, Roland. *Holy Legionary Youth: Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY and London, 2015. xiii + 271 pp. Illustrations. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$39.95.

THIS book is a welcome addition to the works available in the English language on the history of the Romanian Legionary movement, which is generally regarded as the third most popular fascist movement in interwar Europe. In writing this volume, Roland Clark has undertaken exhaustive research in the Romanian National Archives, as well as those of the Securitate. In addition, Clark has drawn on published primary sources, legionary memoirs and the many newspapers and periodicals produced by the movement and its sympathizers. The volume spans the time period from the early 1920s, positioning the Legion’s origins in the ‘communities of violence’ created by the antisemitic student movement, through to the movement in exile in Western Europe and South America in the 1960s.