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**Colonialism in One Country:
The Deported Peoples in the USSR as an Example of Internal Colonialism**

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The concept of internal colonialism has been applied by sociologists to a number of cases of ethnic, national and racial groups subordinated by more powerful groups within a single state. The analogy between minorities and colonies first developed in the 1960s as both colonized peoples and minorities politically mobilized to assert their collective rights against states ruled primarily by people of European descent. The concept rests on the simple idea that “It is really the structure of oppression that is the essence of the internal colonial situation” (Gonzalez 1974, p. 155). Yet despite the concept’s proliferation throughout the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s to cover African-Americans (Blauner 1969), Mexican-Americans (Moore 1970), Native Americans

(Snipp 1986), Palestinian citizens of Israel (Zuriek 1983), and many other cases it has largely been absent from the work of historians (Hind 1984, p. 543). It has also been largely absent from work on the 'socialist world.' While many of the theorists of internal colonialism have been self-described Marxists of one sort or another, the absence of studies of internal colonialism in the USSR appears to be connected with the general lack of theoretical and comparative studies as opposed to individual case studies by Sovietologists (Motyl 1989).

Nonetheless some work has related Soviet policies to internal colonialism. Goulder (1978) and Viola (2007) speak of the peasantry in the USSR as an internal colony of the USSR, but do not apply the concept to stigmatized nationalities in the USSR. The few studies that use the model of internal colonialism to examine ethnic relations in the USSR have generally focused on the involuntary transfer of wealth from more developed republics to less developed ones (Kaiser 1994, pp. 193-197). In particular these studies have focused on the Baltic republics such as Estonia (Mettam and Williams 2001). Their conception of internal colonialism stems not from Blauner, but rather Michael Hechter's study of internal colonialism in the UK regarding English exploitation of the Celtic periphery (Hechter 1971 and Hechter 1975). That is the economic exploitation of geographically peripheral and culturally distinct territories by a core region within a single state.

The case of the Baltic States, however, seems to fit the model of classic colonialism far better than it does internal colonialism.¹ They were fully independent states forcibly conquered and annexed to the USSR. Their relationship to Russia was much closer to the model of Algeria and France than Scotland and England. Despite massive deportations to Siberia during the 1940s,

¹ Moore makes this same argument regarding Mexican-Americans in New Mexico.

the vast majority of Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians remained in their historic homelands. They did not ever become deterritorialized diasporas within the USSR. Also despite the massive settlement of Russian colonists in the Baltic States, particularly in Latvia and Estonia, they did not ever become marginalized minorities within their national territories. Like European colonies in Africa and Asia they were largely able to maintain their social and cultural institutions during the period of colonial occupation. They thus did not suffer from the most acute problems facing true internal colonies, the near complete loss of native lands, social institutions, and traditional cultures.

One strand of the concept of internal colonialism was developed particularly with regards to explaining the position of subordinated and marginalized racial minorities in the US. This is the strand most famously associated with Robert Blauner. Gilbert Gonzalez noted in his otherwise hostile and very Marxist critique of internal colonialism in 1974, “The model also focuses attention upon the national question, an area of vital concern which has not sufficiently interested the left in the United States” (1974, p. 160). Certain strains of anti-Stalinist Marxism could explain why the peasantry was exploited in the USSR, but not why both the rural majority and urban minority of Russian-Germans, Kalmyks, Chechens, Crimean Tatars and other deported peoples were treated worse than the Russian peasantry as a whole (Gouldner 1978). The theory of internal colonialism, however, provides a model for understanding the dispossession of minority ethnic groups within the borders of a single state. It can be applied to such groups within the USSR just as easily as it can be applied to racial minorities in the US.

Internal Colonialism as a Concept and Model

Internal colonialism posits that the position of marginalized ethnic or racial groups in unified and contiguous states is in many ways analogous to that once suffered by overseas European colonies in Asia and Africa. Hence it is actually more of a model than a theory (Hind 1984, p. 552). Furthermore, a number of key differences exist between classical colonialism and internal colonialism. This is especially true regarding geographically dispersed and deterritorialized groups such as African-Americans (Blauner 1969). These differences include less political self-rule, less social and cultural development, and less demographic concentration in situations of internal colonialism than in classic colonialism (Blauner 1969, p. 398). The traditional social and communal structures of people subjected to internal colonialism are often subject to much greater erosion under the conditions of internal colonialism than in classical colonialism.

The concept of internal colonialism like the history of colonialism in general is quite diverse in the number and types of cases it covers. Just within the US, African-Americans, Mexican-Americans and Native Americans have all been considered by various scholars as internal colonies (Blauner 1969, Moore 1970, Snipp 1986). Not only are the histories of these three groups very different from each other, but there are substantial historical differences within these groups. For instance Moore notes that the forms of US colonial rule Mexican-Americans experienced differed in New Mexico, Texas and California (Moore 1970).² The extraordinary adaptable concept of internal colonialism has not for a variety of methodological reasons been

² For some unknown reason, however, she fails to mention the substantial and well established Mexican-American population in Arizona even in passing.

systematically applied to the modern history of the various nationalities deported by Stalin to special settlements (Motyl 1989; Hind 1984).

Fitting Stalin's Deportations into the Model of Internal Colonialism

The mass deportation of the Russian-Koreans, Russian-Germans, Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks represented a radical change in the legal, social and economic status of these people. For the nationalities with their own national territories such as the Volga Germans, Kalmyks, the four deported North Caucasian nationalities, and the Crimean Tatars it represented a move from being “captive nations” to being “internal colonies” (Snipp 1986). The forced dispersal of these peoples across eastern areas of the USSR and their use as a captive labor force in special settlements and the labor army has strong parallels with the history of one of the first groups analyzed using the concept of internal colonialism, African-Americans (Blauner 1969). The deportations scattered the formerly compact settlements of the Volga Germans, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks. They lost, in the case of the Volga Germans and Meskhetian Turks permanently, their contiguous territories and national economies. Spread out amongst much larger Russian and Central Asian populations, the deportees became integrated into the national economies of Russia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These people thus lost their status as nations within the Soviet Union. The Stalin regime reduced them to mere national minorities without their own territories and economies.³ Deprived of their traditional lands they became an exploited source

³ For a good discussion of the differences between nations and national minorities see Gilbert G. Gonzalez, “A Critique of the Internal Colony Model,” p. 156. He notes that the main difference between nations and national minorities are that the former possess a contiguous territory and separate economy. Although he does note that this territory does not need to have political self-determination or economic autonomy to qualify its inhabitants as being a nation. Diasporas which include many of the groups

of menial labor in remote areas of the USSR. The use of the deported peoples as a source of involuntary labor to develop agriculture, fishing, forestry, mining, construction and industry in Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, the Urals and Far North has many parallels with other ethnically defined categories of unfree workers. Terry Martin has compared the legal and social status of special settlers to state serfs in Tsarist Russia (Martin 2001, p. 312). The ethnic nature of the World War II deportations, however, has not led to extensive comparisons with other cases of such discrimination in other parts of the world.

The confinement of the deported peoples to special settlement restrictions⁴ in Kazakhstan, Central Asia and Siberia meets at least four of the features of colonialism that Blauner argued in 1969 historically applied to African-Americans. First their very presence in these regions as ethnically distinct minorities dispersed among larger Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek and Kyrgyz populations resulted from the Soviet regime forcibly transporting them from their traditional areas of settlement within the Russian Empire and USSR. It thus resembled the violent removal of slaves from Africa and their enslavement in the US. Second just as slavery did much to destroy traditional African culture, the deportations also greatly damaged the culture of the deported peoples. In both cases the disruption of social institutions facilitated acculturation to the cultural norms of the dominant majority. Third, having lost their own institutions the deported peoples came under the administrative control of ethnic Russians and others. This

designated as internal colonies such as African-Americans are not colonized nations like existed in Africa and Asia under European rule, but rather national minorities.

⁴ The Russian-Koreans were not classified as special settlers, but rather as administrative exiles. Despite somewhat less onerous legal restrictions on their life they like the other deported peoples suffered from severe restrictions on their residency and movement, could not generally serve in the military, lacked adequate food, shelter and medicine during the first years of exile and lost much of their native culture in exile.

corresponds to the administrative control over various colonial populations outside of Europe by Whites. Finally, while Blauner's original conception required that the internal colonies be racially differentiated from dominant society, later theorists did not (Blauner 1969, 396). Rather they note that internal colonies only need be ethnically or culturally distinct from the core group dominating the state (Epstein 1971, Hechter 1971, and Mettam and Williams 2001). There is no doubt that the various deported nationalities did in fact differ significantly from the rest of the Soviet population in terms of their ethnic identification and cultural traits. The deported people represented legally inferior, economically exploited and culturally repressed groups in Soviet society.

The deported peoples also suffered from physical segregation and restrictions on their freedom of residency as did African Americans. They remained confined to special settlements from which they could not leave for even short periods of time without NKVD permission until 1955-1956. After their release from the restraints of the special settlement regime the Russian-Germans, Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks still continued to suffer from a blanket ban on living in their traditional homelands for almost the entire Soviet period (Zemskov 2005, p. 283). The legal structure of the special settlement system enforced by the Soviet NKVD imposed residency restrictions on the deported peoples similar to the de-facto ghettoization suffered by African-Americans in the description of Robert Blauner. In both cases the subordinated groups found became economically dependent upon and politically administered by institutions controlled by ethnic outsiders (Blauner 1969 pp. 396-398; Berdinskikh 2005; 119-126; Nekrich 1978, 86-136). Most notable among these administrators in both cases is the role of the police, in the Soviet case the NKVD and later MVD, in maintaining social order and control over these internal colonies (Blauner 1969, pp. 404-406; Berdinskikh 2005, pp. 623-625). The NKVD

reduced the deported peoples to dispersed minorities confined to restricted areas with few surviving cultural and social structures. In many ways this situation was comparable to the predicament of African-Americans who had lost a great deal of cultural and social capital as a result of slavery and constituted a largely ghettoized minority for many years in the US (Blauner 1969, p. 398). The victims of internal colonialism thus suffered considerably more difficulties in organizing effective resistance than did societies subject to traditional forms of colonial rule.

Blauner has little to say on the issue of economic exploitation, one of the primary features of traditional colonial relations. The concept of internal colonialism as developed by later authors, however, does address this problem in great detail. The subordination of internal colonies to less desirable occupation segments in a state along a “cultural division of labor” (Hechter 1975 and Hechter 1978) has been explored in regards to a number of groups outside the USSR. Among these groups are Indians in Peru (Epstein 1971), Blacks in the US (Hechter 1978), and Mexicans in California (Moore 1970). The subordination of the deported peoples of the USSR during the 1940s and 1950s to low paid menial jobs in less developed peripheral areas of the state, often with extreme climatic conditions has a number of similarities with these other cases. Above all it shows an exploitive economic relationship between the ethnic groups treated as internal colonies and society as a whole.

This article will examine the deportation of whole nationalities in the USSR as examples of internal colonialism. In particular it will look at those features of the Stalin regime’s treatment of the deported peoples that correspond to the general framework of internal colonialism. These features are in order of coverage the violent relocation of the deported nationalities, the loss of political, social and cultural institutions, the state’s effort to acculturate these nationalities to the

values of the dominant Russian speaking Soviet elite, the confiscation of their traditional lands and other property, the exploitation of their labor, and finally the imposition of a separate and unequal administrative and legal system on the deportees.

Forced Removal

The mass deportations of whole nationalities in the USSR shared a number of common features that fit into the overall model of internal colonialism. First like in other cases of colonialism the deported peoples were deprived of their indigenous political and cultural institutions. Out of the ten nationalities deported in their entirety by the Stalin regime, seven had autonomous national territories on the oblast level or higher created by the Soviet government that supported a large array of cultural institutions. Only the Russian-Koreans, Russian-Finns and Meskhetian Turks lacked such territories.⁵ These territories also had all the symbolic trappings of sovereign nation-states even though they had no real political or economic autonomy. They thus formed “captive nations” within the USSR (Snipp 1986). The Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Karachai Autonomous Oblast, Kalmyk Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, Karbardian-Balkar Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, and Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic all provided a number rights and privileges to their titular nationalities.⁶ Among these rights and

⁵ The Russian-Finns did have two autonomous national districts in Leningrad Oblast and the Koreans had an autonomous national district in Posets next to the Korean border. Both nationalities also possessed a number of national village soviets. Only the Meskhetian Turks never had any such national institutions what so ever under Soviet rule.

⁶ With the exception of the Volga German ASSR these territories were the home of the overwhelming majority of these nationalities. In contrast only about one third of all Russian-Germans lived in the Volga German ASSR before its dissolution.

benefits were support of native language education and media, affirmative action regarding hiring and promotion in the local government and economy, and the protection of rural lands from settlement by outsiders (Martin 2002). The Soviet government dissolved these territorial state structures and the various national governmental, economic and cultural institutions associated with them during the deportations. This was of course a rather superfluous gesture since their physical removal to Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia of the nationalities that collectively owned these lands and state structures prevented them from benefiting from them in any way. The elimination of these national territories and their institutions deprived the deported peoples of all official symbolic political self government and native language institutions. They lost their schools, newspapers, theaters, museums, libraries and clubs as a result of their internal exile in the USSR.⁷ Soviet internal colonialism towards the deported peoples destroyed their national institutions and subjected them to direct rule by ethnic Russians and other outsiders in the form of the special settlement regime.

Also in common with other cases of internal colonialism the Soviet government violently deprived the nationalities it deported of their traditional lands and their ethnoscares. The analogies of Africans transported as slaves to the Americas and the forced removal of various Native American nations from their ancestral homelands to far away reservations are both apt here. In particular, both the Cherokee “Trail of Tears” and the Navajo “Long Walk” share significant similarities with the later Soviet deportations. Since the vast majority of the deported

⁷ The exception to this rule was the Russian-Koreans. They were placed under “administrative exile” rather than “special settlement” restrictions. The Soviet government reestablished Korean language schools and collective farms for the deported Koreans in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The regime, however, abolished these schools in 1939, two years after the deportation.

peoples were rural inhabitants engaged in agriculture or animal husbandry the connection to the land itself had great importance. But, local geography as well as emotional ties to their recent agrarian past also held great symbolic importance for urban dwellers as well. In addition to the land and its topographical features, various man made physical structures also formed parts of these ethnoscares. The most important of these structures had a religious nature, cemeteries, churches, mosques and temples. Additional important institutional structures included libraries, archives, museums and other buildings housing valuable cultural assets. The deported peoples lost all of this physical, social and cultural capital. In many cases the loss was permanent.

Loss of Culture

The dispersal of the deported peoples amongst alien peoples and the elimination of all institutions in their native languages did much to erode their traditional cultures. Foremost among these losses was knowledge of the languages themselves. Loss of the educational infrastructures they had previously enjoyed before the deportations did much to weaken the knowledge of native languages among the deported peoples. Indeed the Soviet government sought to hasten the acculturation of the deported peoples into the larger Russian speaking Soviet society through its educational policies. On 20 June 1944, the SNK issued instructions mandating that all Chechen, Ingush, Karachai, Balkar, and Crimean Tatar children receive their primary education in the Russian language in their place of exile (Bugai 1992, pp. 227-228). Instruction in their native languages remained completely unavailable during the time of the special settlement regime.

The success of Soviet policies in assimilating the deported peoples to Soviet Russian linguistic and cultural norms is hard to measure. But, the evidence that does exist shows that

among many deported nationalities that Russian replaced their titular language as the primary language used by the group. This is most obvious among those nationalities that already existed as diasporas within the USSR before the deportations. Among the Russian-Germans and Russian-Koreans the percentage claiming their titular language as their native language in Soviet censuses decreased dramatically from 1926 to 1959. For Germans it declined from 94.9% to 75% and for Koreans from 98.9% to 79.3%. These trends continued and by the 1989 census these numbers had further decreased to 48.7% for Germans (Eisfeld 1994, p. 139) and 51.7% for Koreans (Oka 2001, R99). These figures show an increasing identification with the Russian language as a mother tongue. They do not, however, indicate the real level of native language loss which is much greater.

Among the nationalities indigenous to the Soviet Union deported by Stalin the attachment to titular language does not decline very much in the Soviet census data. For instance among Chechens and Ingush the percentage claiming their titular language as their mother tongue only declined from 99.7% in 1926 to 98.7% in 1959. The Kalmyks likewise showed only a slight decrease from 99.3% in 1926 to 91% in 1959. Further census results continued to show a high identification of the titular language as the mother tongue for these groups. The 1979 census put it at 98.4% for Chechens and Ingush and 91.3% for Kalmyks (Simon 1991, p. 395). These figures show only that ethnic identification continued to be strong among these groups not that they retained knowledge of their ancestral languages. A 2005 survey among Kalmyk youth reported that 74% of them could not speak Kalmyk. Indeed only 7% claimed to think in Kalmyk as opposed to Russian (Nuksunov 2009, p. 66). It is clear that even for deported peoples that

managed to return to their ancestral homelands such as the Kalmyks that the years of exile greatly eroded knowledge of their traditional language and culture.

Loss of Property

The amount of land, livestock, agricultural produce, buildings and other physical capital confiscated from the deported peoples in the course of their forced relocation was huge. The Soviet regime redistributed this private and communal property from the deported nationalities primarily to ethnic Russians, however, other groups such as Ukrainians and Georgians also benefited (Polian 2004, pp. 157-163). The mass expropriation of property by the Soviet state has generally been viewed along class rather than ethnic or national lines. This means that analogies to colonialism have been limited. They have not been non-existent, however. Already in 1978 Gouldner noted that the forced collectivization of agriculture and dekulakization transferred a huge amount of wealth from the peasantry to the urban centers of the USSR. He argued that the economic development of the Soviet Union followed a model of internal colonialism where the Soviet countryside served as a vast internal colony for the extraction of resources to benefit the inhabitants of the cities (Gouldner 1978). Of course not all nationalities suffered from collectivization and dekulakization equally. Massive famines afflicted Ukraine and Kazakhstan in the wake of this transformation. Alexander Motyl later suggested that Gouldner's model could be applied to these nations. These national territories involuntarily provided many of the resources for the economic development of the Russian dominated and centered Soviet Union (Motyl 1989, p. 83). To date, however, nobody has systematically applied the model of internal colonialism to the dispossession of the deported peoples. Even more so than the campaigns of the 1930s, the forced removal of the eight nationalities deported in their entirety in the 1940s fits the

model of internal colonialism. The Soviet government confiscated their lands, property and labor. Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians and others then settled their ancestral homes and took over their immovable property.

The communal lands collectively owned by the deported peoples were quite sizable. In total the seven nationalities with “autonomous” territories possessed over 150,000 square kilometers (Polian 2004, p. 44). This is a total land area exceeding the size of present day Tajikistan. After the forced removal of the native nationalities from their lands, the Soviet government settled these areas with people of different ethnic origins (Polian 2004, 157-163). The settlement of the lands of the deported peoples by Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian and other colonists had two major goals. The first and most immediate concern was to prevent the economic collapse of the regions. In particular, the agricultural lands of the former territories of the deported peoples now lacked a labor force. The second reason for the settlement of these lands was to prevent the return of their native inhabitants (Nekrich 1979, p. 60). Along with the replacement of the exiled population in these territories, the Soviet government also renamed almost all of the place names and destroyed many of the buildings and physical structures associated with the previous inhabitants (Polian 2004, pp. 142-153). The Soviet government removed both the native inhabitants of these territories and the evidence of their previous occupation. It then in typical colonial fashion replaced them with new settlers, structures and place names.

Compiling a comprehensive list of private and communal property lost as a result of the deportations still remains an unfinished task. Still the information that does exist indicates that the losses particularly of live stock belonging to kolkhozes inhabited by the deported peoples

were massive. In the eleven southern cantons of the Volga German ASSR, the Soviet government seized from German kolkhozes 908,600 hectares of agricultural land, 33,102 houses, 120,000 head of cattle, over 120,000 sheep and goats, 20,000 horses and 1,500 camels (Krieger 2004, p. 97). Immediately prior to the deportations the Kalmyks of the Kalmyk ASSR had possessed 93,161 head of cattle, 7,476 horses, 2,308 camels, and 8,316 oxen (Bugai 1995, p. 66). They lost all of this wealth in the course of the deportations. The amount of such property forfeited by the Chechens and Ingush as a result of the deportation included 209,181 head of cattle, 236,700 sheep and goats, 18,895 horses, 20,783 oxen (Bugai and Gonov 2002, p. 53). The deportation of the Crimean Tatars involved the confiscation of 80,000 homes, 34,000 gardens, 500,000 farm animals, 360 bee hive complexes, and 40,000 tons of agricultural goods (Uehling 2004, p. 90). The amount of documented property confiscated from the Meskhetian Turks, Kurds and Hemshins included 60,007 head of large horned cattle, 30,049 head of small horned cattle, 55,067 sheep, 2,817 fowl, 8,252,000 tons of grain, and 3,226,000 tons of corn (Bugai 1995, p. 176). The loss of this property deprived the deported peoples of the material means needed for their survival. Deprived of their farms, animals, and other goods the deported peoples became dependent upon the insufficient assistance of the same Soviet government that had ruthlessly separated them from their homelands and property. As a result of material deprivation in exile a huge number of the deportees perished from malnutrition, exposure and disease.

Loss of Life

The Stalin regime relocated the deported peoples to areas completely unprepared to house and feed them. Severe shortages of food, shelter and medicine inevitably led to massive excess mortality among the deportees in Siberia, Kazakhstan and central Asia. It thus followed the

pattern set by other cases of internal colonialism. In particular it resembled the forced relocation of Native American nations such as the Cherokee in 1838 and the Navajo during 1864 in the US.

The most comprehensive study of the demography of the deported peoples is by D.M Ediev. He estimates excess mortality of the various deported peoples from 1944-1952 ranged from a low of 12.6% for the Meskhetian Turks to a high of 30.76% for the Chechens, over 125,000 (Ediev 2003, p. 294 and 302). The percentages for the other nationalities are Russian-Germans 19.7% of their population (1942-1952), Karachais 19% of their population, Kalmyks 12.87%, Ingush 21.27%, Balkars 19.82%, and Crimean Tatars 18.01% (Ediev 2003, p. 294). He calculates the excess deaths due to the deportations for the Russian-Koreans at 16.3% and 17.9% for the Russian-Finns (Ediev 2003, p. 302). In total he estimates that the excess mortality among the ten deported peoples of the Russian-Koreans, Russian-Finns, Russian-Germans, Karachais, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars, Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks exceeded half a million people or over 19% of the number of deportees (Ediev 2003, p. 302). The Soviet deportations like the formation of other internal colonies such as the importation of slaves to the American colonies or forced relocation of Native American nations carried an extremely high human cost.

Exploitation of Labor

The primary factor that prevented the deaths among the special settlers from being even higher was the same one that restrained mortality among the slave population of the New World. The Stalin regime desired to use the deported nationalities as a source of captive labor to develop remote areas of the USSR. Hence it opted not to directly exterminate them through execution as

the Nazis did the Jews or the Hutu Power Movement did to the Tutsis. It also provided the deportees with a minimal amount of food, housing, and medical assistance (Bugai 1992, p. 7, pp. 91-92, p. 165, 236, 239-242). It should be noted that this assistance, however, was deemed insufficient for sustaining the special settlers even by the Soviet authorities. In the summer and fall of 1944 food aid provided to North Caucasian deportees amounted to only 100 grams of flour and 25 grams of cereal a day (Berdinskikh 2005, p. 629). During 1944 and 1945 food assistance to special settlers deported from the North Caucasus, Kalmyk Steppe and Georgia only amounted to an average of 200 grams of bread per person each a day (Berdinskikh 2005, p. 623). The Soviet government directly linked the provision of this assistance with keeping the deportees alive and able to function as a labor force (Bugai 1992, p. 93). This meager aid proved completely inadequate to prevent the death of around a fifth of the special settlers. But, presumably a majority rather than just a very large minority of the deportees would have perished had the government neglected to provide them with any assistance. The internal colonization of the deported peoples like other colonial projects sought to seize resources from the victimized nationalities not exterminate them for the sake of extermination. Along with the land, buildings, livestock and agricultural goods stolen during the deportation itself, the Stalin regime also extracted labor from the deportees.

The special settlers formed internal colonies within the USSR that served to provide the Soviet state with a source of unfree labor to develop the agriculture and industry of regions resistant to voluntary settlement (Berdinskikh 2005, p. 26). In particular the special settlers worked in agriculture, coal mining, forestry, metallurgy, and oil extraction. In November 1948 out of 999,505 special settlers employed in the economy of the USSR a full 526,649 worked in agriculture followed by 80,141 in coal mining, 58,588 in forestry, 33,309 in metallurgy and

20,911 in the oil industry (Bugai 1992, p. 246). Out of 535,742 agricultural workers among the special settlers earlier that year the largest number consisted of Germans. A full 269,092 Russian-German special settlers worked on kolkhozes and sovkhoses. This represented 47.6% of their working population, the remaining larger half worked in various forms of industry particularly those dedicated to the extraction of natural resources. Chechens, Ingush, Karachais and Balkars in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan made up the second largest group employed in agriculture with 145,037 people. This constituted 68.9% of the North Caucasian deportees capable of physical labor. The Crimean Tatars, Greeks, Bulgarians and Armenians only contributed 30,704 workers or 30% of their workforce to agriculture. In contrast the Kalmyks had 23,090 agricultural workers, a full 57.1% of those capable of working and the Turks, Kurds and Hemshins 38,508 such workers or 93.4% of their workers (Bugai 1992, pp. 264-265). Thus the various nationalities exhibited the Cultural Division of Labor described by Michael Hechter as a key component of internal colonialism (Hechter 1978). The ethnic division of labor was common to classical colonialism as well (Eriksen 2002, pp. 81-82). The occupational segmentation of special settlers corresponded to the differences in urbanization and education before the deportations. The majority of the Russian-Germans and Crimean groups were employed in industry, particularly extractive industries such as coal mining.⁸ While the Stalin

⁸ The educational differences between the deported groups were significant. A March 1949 count of special settlers found that the majority of deportees from Georgia and the North Caucasus were illiterate. A full 62% of Meskhetian Turks, 63.1% of Chechens, and 65% of Ingush could not read or write in any language. A little less than half of Karachais 45%, Balkars 46% and Kalmyks 39.2% lacked the ability to read and write. In contrast only 23.6% of Crimean Tatars and 11.1% of the Russian-Germans were illiterate (Zemskov 2005, pp. 177-179). Likewise the Russian-Germans and Crimean Tatars were far more urbanized than the other deported nationalities. A full 28% of Crimean Tatars and 20% of Russian-Germans lived in cities before their deportation. In contrast the number of urban dwellers for the deported North Caucasian nationalities and Kalmyks ranged from 3% to 8% (Polian 2004, p. 158).

regime used the less educated and more rural Kalmyks and Caucasian groups primarily for agricultural work.

There are also more refined Cultural Divisions of Labor among the various deported nationalities. A very large number of Russian-Germans worked as coal miners. By 1 August 1951 out of 633,378 Russian-German special settlers actively employed in the Soviet economy almost 70,000 worked as coal miners (Eisfeld and Herdt 1996, pp. 343-346). This represents over 20% of all Russian-German special settlers working outside of agriculture. Crimean Tatars worked in construction, mining, and silk factories as well as on cotton farms (Bekyrova 2002). A large number of Meskhetian Turks also worked cultivating cotton. The NKVD reported that out of a Meskhetian Turk labor force of 43,042 on 1 August 1950 that 13,360 or 31% worked on cotton farms (Milova vol. i, p. 83). These nationalities filled important labor niches in the economies of Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

Fishing in the far northern regions of Siberia also became filled by deported nationalities. The poor climate, lack of housing and other facilities and difficult nature of the work all made attracting free labor extremely difficult. A significant number of both Russian-Germans and Kalmyks worked for fishing trusts along the northern regions of the Lena, Indirka and Ob rivers in Siberia. During 1942, the Soviet government forcibly relocated for a second time 57,683 Russian-Germans to work in the fishing industry of the extreme northern regions of Siberia's rivers (Belkovets, p. 152). Here they lived in damp mud huts without adequate protection from the cold. A lack of warm clothing, sufficient food, medical care and experience in commercial fishing contributed to an abnormally high mortality rate among these deportees (Bruhl 1995, pp. 102-106; German and Kurochkin 1998, pp. 40-42; Bender 2000, p. 57). Many Kalmyks deported to western Siberia also experienced secondary forced deportations to the far north to work in

fishing trusts along these rivers. They suffered from similar material conditions as those endured by the Russian-Germans. In Omsk Oblast alone 14,174 Kalmyks worked in the fishing industry (Bugai 1995, p. 81). This represented over 15% of the deported Kalmyk population (Bugai 1992, p. 85). On 30 April 1944, the Omsk committee of the Communist Party and the executive committee of the oblast issued a decree titled, “On resettling special settlers-Kalmyks in fishing industry districts in the oblast” (Ivanov 2008, p. 94). During May and June 1944, the Soviet regime transferred 8,597 Kalmyks to the northern regions of Khanti-Mansi, Yamalo-Nenentsi, Tobolsk to work in fishing trusts (Bugai 1995, p. 81). Most of these twice deported Kalmyks ended up in Khanti-Mansi which had 5,999 Kalmyk special settlers by November 1944 (Ivanov 2008, p. 94). The NKVD’s forced relocation of Russian-Germans and Kalmyks to the arctic fishing industry represented a definite subordination of these ethnic groups to undesirable and dangerous jobs. The division or segmentation of labor upon ethnic lines in which marginalized groups are largely confined to such jobs is a key feature of colonial relations.

The occupational segmentation of the special settlers conformed to patterns typical to internal colonialism. The special settlers worked in physically demanding and low paying jobs in regions far from the central urban areas of the USSR. These areas had harsh climates and few free workers have historically been willing to suffer these hardships even when offered generous economic incentives. The exploitation of an ethnically differentiated and subordinated population to develop peripheral lands within a state is one of the defining features of internal colonialism (Snipp 1984, p. 151; Epstein 1971, pp. 188-189). The use of internal colonies for menial labor at lower compensation than the dominant ethnic group in the USSR demonstrates similarities with patterns in the US regarding Blacks and Hispanics and Latin America regarding

Indians (Hechter 1978; Epstein 1971). The special settlers provided a pool of inexpensive labor to work in undesirable jobs in the Urals, Kazakhstan, Central Asia and Siberia. In particular the Soviet state used them to work in agriculture and extractive industries.

Legal Restrictions

The special settlers came under a separate legal administration largely controlled by ethnic Russians, the dominant ethnic group in the USSR. The security organs, the NKVD then the MVD, had primary responsibility for overseeing the affairs of the special settlers. As a result special settlers suffered from a number of restrictions on their civil rights. Most notably the Stalin regime greatly restricted their ability to freely move and choose their residency. On 8 January 1945, the Council of Peoples Commissariats issued Resolution No. 35 on “On the Legal Status of Special Settlers” clearly defining these restrictions. Special settlers could not leave their assigned places of exile without special permission from the NKVD and any attempts to do so were treated as criminal acts. The resolution further obligated the head of each special settler family to report any escapes, deaths or births within his family to his assigned NKVD commandment within three days. Finally the resolution obliged special settlers to maintain the social order of the special settlement regime and obey all orders of the NKVD special commandants. The NKVD special commandants received the power to enforce this order by administratively punishing the special settlers with fines up to a 100 rubles or incarceration of up to five days in jail (Zemskov 2005, pp. 120-121). On 26 November 1948, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet decreed the exile of the deported peoples sent to special settlements to be permanent. It explicitly listed the Chechens, Karachais, Ingush, Balkars, Kalmyks, Germans and Crimean Tatars. The decree also increased the penalty for special settlers attempting to leave

their assigned places of residence without MVD (the successor to the NKVD) permission to 20 years of hard labor. Further, it empowered special courts of the MVD to review all cases of involving unauthorized movement by special settlers. Finally, the decree imposed a five year sentence of imprisonment on any free citizen caught helping special settlers to leave their restricted areas of internal exile (Zemskov 2005, p. 160). The creation of a separate and unequal legal administration and laws regarding the special settlers thus put them in a situation versus the Soviet government analogous to that suffered by colonized peoples.

End of the Special Settlement Regime

During the 1950s, the Soviet Union embarked on a process of decolonization for most of the deported peoples. After Stalin's death, the Soviet government dismantled the special settlement restrictions and allowed the vast majority Karachais, Chechens, Ingush, Balkars and Kalmyks returned home to their restored national territories during the 1950s and 60s (Polian 2004, pp. 194-201). They thus reverted from the status of being internal colonies to once again being captive nations in the USSR. The period of internal colonialism, although extremely brutal and with long lasting effects, had also been in comparison to other examples of colonial rule also very short. The other deported nationalities, however, remained unable to return to their homelands in the USSR. The Russian-Koreans, Russian-Germans, Crimean Tatars and Meskhetian Turks continued to remain dispersed far away from their former homelands in the Soviet Union for most of the Soviet era (Zemskov 2005, p. 283). The process of internal colonialism during the Stalin era left them permanently displaced from their ancestral settlements within the USSR.

Conclusion

The Stalinist deportation of whole nationalities fits well into the basic theoretical framework of internal colonialism developed by sociologists and others since the 1960s. The deportations transformed these nationalities into internal colonies within the Soviet Union. The Stalin regime eliminated their former national state structures and institutions and made them dependent upon the NKVD and other central state organs run out of Moscow. In the process it used a great deal of violence and forcibly confiscated their lands, property and labor. Like in similar cases of internal colonialism that used forced relocation such as the slave trade or the US government's removal of Native American nations to reservations, the Soviet example resulted in a huge death toll. The survivors of this trauma lost many unique aspects of their traditional cultures due to this violent disruption and the loss of their former institutions. They also found themselves relegated to undesirable work in remote areas of the Soviet Union and subject to severe legal restrictions. The experience of internal colonialism during the 1940s has had long term negative effects upon the deported nationalities despite an era of internal decolonization following Stalin's death in 1953.

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