

CultureTalk Ahiska Turks Video Transcripts: <http://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu>
Forced Relocation to Central Asia

English translation:

And in the year 1944th,¹ on the 14th of November... umm... with a two-hour notice they gathered people... they were gathering people in groups. They were telling those people that “you... since there is a war, a fight going on in here, in order to protect you... we will relocate you, or else you could die. We need to protect you. Therefore we will, for only a couple of months, remove you to another location, and then you will return.” With such a promise... umm... they were telling them to collect all of their belongings in two hours and leave from there. But up until then, our people in Abkhazia ... mm... were working on their exile.² The railroad went up to Abkhazia; our people were working there on the construction of the railroad. Apparently, they were the ones constructing the railroad that would be used to exile them. You see, on the 44th year (1944), the 14th of November... umm... they packed people in wagons within two hours. According to what our elderly say... umm... per wagon, per each cattle wagon... where loads are carried... these are not the kind of wagons that transport people.... umm... in those [wagons], umm... they packed 50 people, 40 people, 50 people per wagon... umm... along with their luggage, with whatever they were able to take along with them. Now, of course those wagons are not suitable for people to survive. It [the wagon] doesn't have a bathroom... [it] doesn't have a warm spot, a place to sleep, and, furthermore, it's the 14th of November -- it's winter time. The outside temperature... according to what our elderly say, was 15 – 20 degrees cold. I mean with that kind of torture... umm... they were packing all those people in wagons, and all those people were kept waiting for everyone to pack their things for about a day or two in that cold.

Everyone... umm... from five regions, until 220 towns were emptied, until all of them were packed in wagons, people were kept waiting in the wagons, and then either on the 16th of November or the 17th of November... wagons moved towards the direction of the Middle East.³ They were moving towards the direction of the Middle East... umm They traveled either for a month or 40 days. This journey included... I mean, at which ever station they came to the wagons were unlocked in those stations. I mean, the wagons were actually locked with a bolt... umm In every station they were unlocking the wagons... umm... they were checking to see who was alive [and] who was not. Umm.... Meanwhile, people who were dead were removed from the wagons; people were given food in every station... umm... I mean people, all throughout the journey, about a month or 40 days ... Umm... 30,000 people died, 17,000 of whom were children, I mean, throughout a month-long journey, you see. ... Umm.... Who were the people loaded on the wagons? 40,000-50,000 lives were already at war here, 90,000, some say 106,000 people from... umm... from the Abkhazia people were brought to the Middle

¹ 1944 - colloquially, they refer to actual years with enumeration suffix.

² Unwittingly, they were constructing the means of their own exile.

³ The “Middle East” referred to here is the “Greater Middle East,” extending beyond the Near Eastern countries to include those of Central Asia.

East. Who was included in this group of 106,000 people? Children, the elderly, disabled people who... umm... whose hands... umm... [those] who weren't able to fight were left in Abkhazia. These people, I mean after about a month-long journey, were brought to the Middle East. Where in the Middle East? To Kazakhstan ... umm ... to Kyrgyzstan, to Uzbekistan... umm... and... these three countries to Kyr... to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan... to these countries 106,000 or 91,000 lives, people, were relocated to and distributed here.

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