

CultureTalk Ahiska Turks Video Transcripts: <http://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu>
Surviving Everyday Life

English translation:

[The question is asked in Russian from the beginning of the video until the 10th second.]

- You did not have a *propiska*,¹ meaning people did not have the chance to get an education and work for the government -- is this right?

- This was the case. Umm... If the people... were to go somewhere to work, [if] they didn't have *propiska*, they were not admitted to work. Umm... If they were to apply for an institute after school, indeed even when they were in school ... to Abkhaz Turks, since these people are Turkish, they don't know the language well, umm... they were placed in separate classes from the Russians -- I mean from the people who lived in Krasnodar -- this is how they were educating children, in Turkish classes. Umm... they were not bringing people together with the Russians, not even the children. What wrong have these kids done to them?! Even the children were discriminated against; children did not have the privilege to get the same education with them. After they finished school, even if you intended to apply to an institute or a job, you did not have a *propiska*. Umm... they said "you cannot apply, you do not have the right to"; they did not admit people to the institutions. For seventeen years, the children were deprived of science and education.

[The question is asked in Russian from 0:59 to 1:06]

- Umm... If they did not have an opportunity to study and get jobs, what did the Turkish people do for these 15 years?

- Umm... You see, during these fifteen or seventeen years, umm... people's... own... umm... for instance, they came from the Middle East, umm... we... people... who are educated and [are] respected people. Doctors, teachers, umm... what else... you see, umm... even engineers, I mean, all people were in this situation; rather than all, maybe I should say a lot, but without a *propiska*, they were not allowed to work in their own profession. Doctors could not work as doctors, engineers could not work as engineers -- they did not let them do so. But these people had to survive, take care of their children. What were they supposed to do?! So these people, you see, held on to the land. There was no other solution. They held on to the land. Umm... they were buying land. Maybe then the value of that piece of land for the government was, ummm... 1000 rubles or maybe it was 200 rubles, but they realized that these people do not have any other chance of surviving other than that they are going to buy these lands. The farms in that area, you see, the owners, started to sell these lands to these people, umm... for 3000 dollars, oh I am sorry for 3000 rubles, 4000 rubles, 10,000 rubles. I mean, from year to year the value of the lands started to increase. These people worked on these soils for exactly fifteen

¹ *Propiska* is a state registration within a certain area, in some cases limiting one's ability to commute and apply for job.

years, for seventeen years. And by working, I mean, people were coming and buying the soil, raising crops, then after that they were getting the harvest, and they were watering it and taking care of it with such effort. One day you see, Kazakhs said “what do you think you are doing? What is going on? This is our soil; you do not have the right to work it here”. Umm.... Sometimes they were taking the harvest; sometimes they were torturing them; sometimes they were charging them a fine. In the end, until the harvest was fully grown, these people were encountering many difficulties. It required a great effort to gather the harvest. After that, they had to sell it. They needed a car to take the harvest to where they could sell it, but to commute they also needed a *propiska*. When they were stopped on the way, they had to pay fines because they did not have a *propiska*, and when they were in the market place, they were being abused by Kazakhs along with the policemen. Umm... the people did not have a *propiska*, so whenever they saw a Kazakhs soldier coming, they would hide somewhere. Or if they were caught, they were kept under arrest. For a day or two they would be tortured. They were kept locked up, and then they would release people in exchange for money. People were set free only if they had money. They were being released after they paid, but then the same thing would happen the next day. You see, I mean, under that kind of torture, umm... abuse, umm... persecution, people lived for seventeen or fifteen years and were tormented. The persecution of [these] people was very intense, very intense.

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