

*(The attached is the speech I had prepared (and partially delivered at the special party in Turkish House on December 17, 2021, due to time restriction) for the 60th Anniversary of founding of our Association. As one of the original members I witnessed the growth of our community from a handful of families to today's much larger one. I am proudly sharing this brief history of our unique community with those who may be interested.)*

*Happy Holidays, and a Happy, Healthy and Peaceful New Year to all!*

**Mubeyyin Batu Altan**  
**American Association of Crimean Tatars (Turks)**  
**New York**  
**11/26/2021**

## **60th ANNIVERSARY OF FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF CRIMEAN TATARS**

Consul General Reyhan Özgür, Consul General of Ukraine, Oleksii Hobulov, distinguished guests, member of Crimean Tatar community, ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to celebrate our community's historic milestone, the 60th anniversary of the founding of the American Association of Crimean Turks (Crimean Tatars.). I extend our sincere gratitude and thanks to Consul General Reyhan Özgür, whose generous and kind support made this historic event possible. Thank you, Consul General, thank you very much indeed! I would also like to thank Consul General Oleksii Holubov and all of you for joining us on this historic occasion.

Crimean Tatar community is one of the oldest Turkic communities in the greater New York area. We have been actively supporting the activities of the greater Turkish community from early on, for many years. We have been an active supporter and participant of the annual "Turkish Day- Türk Günü" from the beginning.

Even though we are demographically not a large community, I am proud to say that our community has accomplished the following important firsts. We were one of the first Turkic community to purchase its own community center. We were the first Turkic community to open its own house of prayer, Mesçit, became known as "Kırım Camii", not only for its members but also for other Turkic communities.

We were the first Turkic community to have its own soccer team for our young members to compete in the local soccer league for many years. We were one of the first, if not the first, to have its own National Muslim Cemetery, we were one of the first, if not the first, to open its own school, The İsmail Bey Gaspıralı School where Turkish and Crimean Tatar languages along with

our history are taught. As of late 1968, our community became the first and the most active supporter of our compatriots' historic Crimean Tatar National Movement our compatriots had launched in the Soviet Union.

We believe that The Crimean Tatar Community has set an excellent example for other ethnic groups, example of survival by hard work and determination. How was this unique community established? Crimean Tatar community consists of three different groups, the Early Settlers, the Turkish Group and the Central Asian Group, who immigrated to the United States at different time periods.

### **The EARLY SETTLERS**

The first group is “The Early Settlers” whom we proudly call our “Founding Fathers”. This group consists of families who survived the Second World War and had lived in Refugee Camps in various European countries mainly in Germany, Austria, Italy. Many of them, including my family, immigrated and settled in various cities Turkey such as Eskişehir, Bursa, Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, and others, with the assistance of the United Nations Refugee Organization. They lasted in Turkey about 10 years before they emigrated, this time to the United States of America because of economic reasons. Some of these refugee families emigrated to the United States in late 1950s (1958-1959), early 1960s (1961-1962) and settled in Brooklyn New York. This group of about 10-15 families, known as Mülteciler (Refugees) was the original Crimean Tatar community, they did not have a community center, their community center was their apartments where they were socializing by visiting each other, discussing their future in this country. They all knew what it meant to lose a homeland. Their national identity and their homeland were brutally stolen by the brutal Stalinist regime. This fact alone was enough to strengthen their determination to set a goal for themselves, to protect, preserve and maintain their national identity. They wanted to assure their children that they’ve never experience the horrors they lived through under the brutal Stalinist regime. “The Early Settlers” decided to officially organize and establish an “association” which will enable them to preserve and protect their national identity. Thus, on November 14, 1961, the American Association of Crimean Turks was officially founded. It was this group, the “Early Settlers”, who laid a solid foundation for the future of our community.

### **THE TURKISH GROUP** **Türkiye’den Gelenler**

The Crimean Tatars from Turkey began to arrive in the United States and settle in Brooklyn where there already was a small Crimean Tatar community. These newcomers were

born, raised, and educated in Turkey. Their parents and grandparents were born in Crimea and immigrated to Turkey in the late 19th Century until mid 1930s. These newcomers joined the original group and became the most active members of our community. They had no problems integrating into the already existing community.

Our community with the addition of the Turkish group was expanding with that the needs of the community were also increasing rapidly. Holding Bayram prayers in the basements of large apartment buildings was no longer sufficient. Therefore, a second floor of a two-story building between Church and Flatbush Avenues was rented and renovated to meet the needs of the community. This simple rental unit was used as a center to have conferences, special meetings and also as a house of prayers for Friday and Bayram prayers.

As the community continued to grow, its need for a much larger space became inevitable. Finally, the community, after some special “members only” meetings in 1971, decided to purchase a permanent community center, and asked each family to donate \$600. Because of its convenient location our current building was selected. This was an old “Sewing Factory” in need of total renovation, which the members of the community provided. Within a year The American Association of Crimean Turks moved into its new Community Center, which has been our permanent home for the past fifty years.

### **THE CENTRAL ASIAN GROUP**

The third group of Crimean Tatars began to arrive in the United States in the late 1980s and 1990s. Most of them are the children of Crimean Tatars who were forcibly and brutally deported from their homeland Crimea to Central Asia on May 18, 1944. Most of them were born, raised and educated in Uzbekistan. They speak Crimean Tatar, and Russian as their main languages. These new members also had no problems integrating into our existing community. They are currently the most socially and culturally active group of our community members. Among them we have highly talented musicians, folk dancers and singers who not only perform our national music and dances at various festivals, but also teach the new generation of Crimean Tatars to preserve our national culture, and identity just as the “Early Settlers” had envisioned. It is important to note that all three aforementioned groups of Crimean Tatars who emigrated from different countries and had different backgrounds did not encounter significant difficulties joining their new community.. They proudly continue to work together to pursue the initial goals set by the early settlers, our founding fathers.

Currently our community center is undergoing a major renovation, reconstruction, which prevented us from getting together to properly celebrate this historic milestone, the 60th anniversary of founding of the American Association of Crimean Turks (Also known as The American Association of Crimean Tatars.) We took a giant step towards establishing ourselves

as a community by purchasing our own Center 60 years ago. Now, sixty years later we have taken another giant leap and decided to totally reconstruct and renovate our historic, original community center. By presenting a modern “community center” to our new generation we want to assure that they will carry on the torch of our survival as Crimean Tatars. I am highly confident that our next generation will be successful. In kkm

Thanks again Consul General Reyhan Özgür for your generous support that made this historic day, a day to remember. Thank you Consul General of Ukraine in New York Oleksii Holubov, and thank you all for joining us tonight.

***Mübeyyin Batu ALTAN, original member  
of The Crimean Tatar Community,  
American Association of Crimean Tatars  
New York  
December 17, 2021***