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PREPARING FOR THE 1949 DEPORTATIONS, OPERATION PRIXBOI IN THE ESTONIAN S.S.R.

Aigi Rahi-Tamm, PhD, Andres Kahar, BA.

The Operation known as the 1949 Deportations was the biggest violent undertaking carried out by the Soviet authorities, simultaneously, in all three Baltic States. It meant the shipping of about 91,000 people out of their homelands. Deportations have been fairly thoroughly dealt with in Estonian historiography. Lists of the deportees have been published; the timeline of events has been documented, as well as the individuals and institutions associated with carrying them out; and several autobiographies have been published. Nevertheless, we still have, in addition to the already existing materials, a need for studies that would focus more upon the people at the core of these events; that would more thoroughly analyse the effects and results of these events, as well as the Soviet period as a whole.

2 The association “Eesti elukood” (Estonian Biographies) has been dealing with the collecting of biographies since 1989. The best of these biographies have appeared in the series “Eesti elukood”, 1-11, 2000-2003. Some of these biographies, including those of the deportees, have been published, and commented upon by appropriate experts, in the book: She Who Remembers, Survives, Interpreting Estonian Women’s Post-Soviet Life Stories. Eds. T. Kirs, E. Kõivassar, M. Lauristin. Tartu, 2004.

To date, the main stress of the research dealing with the March Deportations has been placed upon studying the activities of the Party and the Ministry of the Interior (MI). Much less research has been done about the role played by the State Security Agency, and its local sub-units, in the preparatory stage of the Operation, primarily due to the limited availability of sources. But it was, specifically, the Ministry of Security (MS) that bore the brunt of being basically responsible for making the necessary preparations for the Operation, from determining who was to be deported, to the details concerning the placing of the deportees on the trains. Therefore, the main stress of this article has been placed upon the preparatory work that needed to be done for this Operation. The article has been based, mostly, upon archival documents available in Estonia, as well as upon studies that have been published in Estonia. The work done by Latvian and Lithuanian colleagues has been of great help, as have been the materials in Russian archives. A list of recommended relevant literature can be found at the end of the article.

The decision to deport, and determining who was to be deported

The decision to carry out the March Deportations was made in Moscow, on 18 January 1949, at a session of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU. On 29 January, this was also followed by a corresponding Resolution, Nr. 390-1399s, by the Council of Ministers (CM) of the U.S.S.R. To use Soviet terminology, these deportations were aimed at kulaks, nationalists, and bandits, as well as their families.

The determining of the deportees was begun in February. Years ago, in the course of carrying out a micro-analysis of one Estonian county, Tartumaa, I put together a questionnaire for the deportees, in which there was also a query concerning the reasons for having been deported. The re-

sponses to this question varied greatly. In the case of so-called kulaks, the situation was somewhat simpler. On 30 August 1947, the Council of Ministers of the Estonian S.S.R. issued Resolution Nr. 654, concerning the taxation of farm households, with which, higher tax rates were imposed upon kulak households. Also, the resolution listed the characteristics of a kulak household, such as, making use of hired help and agricultural machinery, etc. Every year, the executive committees of the various townships had to present to their county Executive Committee, for confirmation, lists of kulak households. Therefore, people knew, which families had been labelled as being kulaks, so that those who had been deported as kulaks, have brought this forth as the main reason for their deportation.

But, the concept of nationalist, was, and is, to this day, much less understood by the general public. Many have stated that they never understood why they had been rounded up and taken away. On their way, together, to Siberia, they tried to ponder over the reasons for being deported. It was possible to tie it in with the earlier arrests of members of their families, and, for the deportees, this truly seemed to be the most compelling argument. It was quite common to refer to the fact that the deportation had taken place as the result of a local individual informing upon them, which had been done out of hatred, for revenge, or out of greed. For instance, the story about how a “new land recipient” wanted to get his hands on the furnishings of a wealthier neighbouring farm, including, the farm’s fancy wall clock. The “recipient”, therefore, went and informed on the neighbour, as a result of which, the neighbours were deported, and the desired wall clock found a new owner. There are plenty of other stories similar to this one. There are recollections of the angry threats that had been directed at them about being sent to Siberia soon, which were made by Party Organisers and village Activists in the period immediately before the deportations. Stories concerning possible deportations continued to circulate among the people from the June 1941 Deportations on, and were being passed on almost throughout the Soviet period. At any rate, in the recorded autobiographies, there are many examples of how, even in the 1960’s, some families had put suitcases, with the most basic necessities, aside, into a quiet corner, in case they would be, unexpectedly, taken away.

In the Bachelor of Arts thesis that Andres Kahar presented to the Tartu University Faculty of History in the spring of 2007, he concentrates, specifically, upon the determining of deportees by the MS. In the course of writing this paper, all the files (363 of them) of the deportees of one county – namely, Saaremaa – were thoroughly sifted. Through this process, the whole procedure for determining the deportee families became very clearly evident. Among other things, it was possible to confirm the fact that no one’s personal accusations were used as a basis for deportation. The determining of individuals and families was done only by the E.S.S.R’s Ministry of Security (MS), within its own system, and without encompassing local administrations, Party structures, Militiamen, nor Activists.

In January of 1949, it became clear what was the quota of families to be deported that had been assigned to the Estonian S.S.R. 7,500 families were to be sent out, with the counties having to divide this number up amongst themselves. Thereafter, began a phase of rapid assembling of identification papers and the formulation of documents in the MS’s city and county offices. The documentation necessary for the sending out of each family was put together into an official file, within the Department overseeing the region that the family resided in.

Documents and facts concerning the deportees were obtained from various institutions, from the beginning of February until the middle of March. Documents concerning nationalists/bandits were obtained mostly from the MS’s “A” Department (Archives Department). These would, for instance, be copies of judgements made by Military Tribunals, arrest orders, decisions made by Special Councils, as well as evidence of a compromising nature (for instance, proof of service in the German army, the Omakai). Documents were also issued by Military Counter-Intelligence (copies of Tribunal judgements). Similar copies of documents (among other things, excerpts from interrogation transcripts) originated also from local County Security Departments. These also include excerpts from Agency materials, from reports concerning Chekist-military opera-

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4 After re-occupying Estonia in 1944, the Soviets continued to carry out their program of distributing the land of farmers, who had more than 30 hectares, to landless agricultural labourers, who were, thus, called “new land recipients” (uusmaasanajad). But these “recipients” were not able to enjoy their new holdings for long, since, in 1949, most farmland was forcibly combined into collective and state farms. Translator

5 The “Omakai" (Home Guard) was a voluntary militia organised during the German occupation of Estonia (1941-1944), which the German authorities used as an auxiliary security force. Translator

tions (mostly about bandits, including killed bandits and illegals) during the period covering January 1945 to January 1949. Memorandums, concerning family members who had escaped abroad (mostly statements by the Counter-Intelligence Departments of Border Guard Detachments), were the main evidence being used in the "families of émigré nationalists" category.

In the case of kulaks, the judicial basis for sending them out was the 14 March Estonian Council of Ministers Directive Nr. 014, along with its Addendum consisting of the lists of kulaks compiled by the County Executive Committees. But since this list was completed too late, not until the second week of March, then the County Security Departments had to, on their own, also determine, which ones were the kulak families, and obtain the appropriate documentation. This was done: by using the decisions made by the local Executive Committees, in 1947-1948, to determine, which families were kulaks; by using the documentation of Township Executive Committees, that Security Agents went to obtain from Township Executive Committees; by using Agency reports containing compromising facts (including memorandums concerning those who had fled abroad, but which, in the case of kulaks, was not the main reason for being deported, but which was used as additional evidence); just as, by using copies of interrogation transcripts, arrest warrants, accusations etc. Thus, the Security Departments also determined, on their own, and in secret, the individuals who had been categorised as kulaks. And since it was an everyday occurrence that personnel from Security would visit the Executive Committees to examine the registries of households, and to converse with the local officials, then their activity, in this connection, did not attract any special attention. The Agents did not reveal the objective of their inquiries, and were, as a matter of fact, forbidden to do so.

The result was, that even before the Executive Committees' lists of kulaks could be confirmed, the Security Departments had determined, on their own, those who had already been officially labelled as kulaks, and had established appropriate files dealing with them. The local administrations did not, on their own, draw up lists of deportees, nor were they informed about the deportations ahead of time. It would be essential to also stress that not all of those who had been labelled as kulaks were automatically included among the deportees. In Tartumaa County, for instance, there were, on 14 March, 681 families, or 2,328 individuals, listed as kulaks. Of those, we find the names of 1,687 individuals among those assigned to be deported. Meaning, that 641 individuals had been left out. But, later, the list had been enlarged by the addition of 292 kulaks who had not been in the list originally. If someone, from amongst the families labelled as kulaks, was, in the course of the intermediate days (during the time span of 14-24 March) no longer regarded as a kulak, then they were, also, no longer included among those individuals to be sent out, and their file was destroyed. In the course of the deportation operation, there was a fair amount of confusion surrounding those families that were no longer regarded as being kulaks. Some of them were deported, despite everything. But some actually succeeded in disputing their expulsion, and managed to, thereby, avoid being sent to Siberia.

The activities of the Security Departments were primarily based upon the objective of being able to prepare the required quantity of files by the assigned deadline. It is obvious that it had not been possible, by this deadline, to identify all nationalists, nor to compile all the accusations that had been raised against them. The determining of those who were to be sent out was based upon the formal requirements that had been stipulated in the 29 January U.S.S.R. CM Resolution (the identifying of kulaks, the existence of a nationalist/bandit in the family). People's actions, mentality, activities during the German occupation, relations with family members who had been repressed by the Soviet authorities, etc. were not of major importance. There was not even enough time to sort this all out. Just as no attempt was made, through the Agency, to identify and deport all those with an anti-Soviet mentality. Also, there was not enough time to compile files that would deal with all convicted nationalists and their families. Thus, there were, among the deportees, individuals with various degrees of pending charges, and even, Soviet Activists. One of many examples originates in Viljandimaa County, in Raudna Township, where a local Activist, Anna Valin, was recruited into the Operation. She was present at the training session that was held for the recruited Activists, while, at the same time, she, herself, had been listed as being one of those to be sent out. Meanwhile, some individuals who were known, among the people, to have been active during the German occupation, who had served in the German military or the Omaakaise, were not sent out. As a result, people were confused about the so-called level of gravity of the various offences, and the means with which these were to be punished. This, in turn, led to the episodic interpretation of the various situations. This included the spreading of stories about the active participation of informers, which, to this day, are constantly and vehemently re-processed by the common gossip-mills.

The compiled files were sent, so as to be ratified by the minister of security, and in the case of nationalists/bandits, to also be approved by the prosecutor, from the counties on to the MS central structure in Tallinn. An MS working group wrote summaries of the files, which included data
concerning the reason for being sent out (the name of the nationalist, bandit, or kulak, along with a summary of their anti-Soviet activities), as well as the names of the family members who had also been assigned to be sent out. If necessary, additional compromising evidence was obtained. After being signed and registered, the files were returned to the county of origin. This all was completed, approximately, by 18 March.

Drawing up the Operation’s action plan

Simultaneously with the compiling of the files, the county Security Departments were also dealing with formulating concrete action plans. Calculations had to be made concerning the personnel, transport facilities, communications equipment that would be needed for the Operation. This all depended on the number of families that had to be deported. Plans also had to be made for how and where the operative groups were to be assembled, as well as how they would cope with possible attacks by the Forest Brethren, etc.

It is very obvious, that the human resources of the Ministry of Security would not have sufficed for carrying out such a massive operation. Reinforcements had to be obtained from the Ministry of the Interior, the military, the Border Guard. Local Activists and officials would serve as auxiliaries. But this meant the encompassing of the representatives of other institutions into the process. The decision to carry out the Deportations became known, right away, at the higher leadership level of the central Party and other power structures. At first, in Estonia, only a few members of the Party Central Committee and the Council of Ministers, Ministry of Security personnel directly involved with making preparations for the Deportations, as well as the top leadership of the Ministry of the Interior were aware of such a decision having been made.

The U.S.S.R. interior minister’s Decree Nr. 00225 “pertaining to the sending out of kulaks and their families, the families of bandits and nationalists, from the territory of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia”, dated 12 March, specified the tasks of the Ministry of the Interior’s sub-structures in connection with the Deportation Operation, both in Moscow and on the spot, including the assignments of the four Siberian Oblast Departments that would be dealing with receiving the special shipments. As a result of, both, this Decree, as well as the E.S.S.R. Council of Ministers’ adoption of the 14 March Ruling, the number of people who knew what was about to happen grew noticeably. At the same time, this did not mean that all of the personnel of an institution that had been encompassed were informed. The circle of the “informed” included only individuals directly involved with making preparations for the Operation. Even county Party and Council Activists were briefed, practically, just as the Operation was about to be launched. All the relevant documents that were distributed, before the Operation, stress its secret nature. All the activities connected with it had to be carried out on a strictly conspiratorial basis, and with seemingly innocent pretexts. The divulging, in even the slightest manner, of what was about to take place, was forbidden and punishable.

Preparations for the Operation were made under the guidance and control of the Ministry of Security. At the beginning of February, Major General Ivan Jermolin was sent, as the special trustee of the Ministry of Security of the U.S.S.R., to the Estonian S.S.R. to coordinate the preparatory work. And, in turn, special trustees of the SS central apparatus were sent out to the Security Departments in the counties. During the second week of March, every Department, along with the special trustee assigned to it, had to draw up an action plan, which was sent on to Tallinn, to the minister of security. Boris Kumm. The MS’s general plan of action was based upon these action plans, and was forwarded, on 17 March, to the general secretary of the Estonian Communist Party’s Central Committee, Nikolai Karotamm. A day later, in the counties, on 18 March, began the organizing of the Operative Groups, which were to carry out the Operation.

The Operation’s Central Headquarters was located in Riga, where the U.S.S.R. minister of security’s first deputy, Lieutenant General Sergei Ogoltsin, was also posted, and, to whom, detailed information about the development of the Operation was dispatched. The carrying out of
the Operation in Estonia was coordinated by E.S.S.R. Minister of Security Kummen, and the U.S.S.R. MS’s trustee in the Estonian S.S.R., Major General Jermolin. Under them was a 12-member Headquarters Operative Team consisting of the representatives of the various services, under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel V. Vedeyev. Presumably, Ministry of the Interior, Party, and the Council of Ministers representatives were also part of this Headquarters unit. Analogous headquarters were formed in the counties. Before the launching of the Operation, a U.S.S.R. deputy minister of security, Lieutenant General Afnassii Blinov, was also assigned to Tallinn, and another deputy minister of security, Lieutenant General Nikolai Gorinski, was dispatched to Vilnius.

Differing statistical calculations exist about the forces that would, supposedly, be needed for carrying out the Operation. According to the preliminary (drawn up during the last days of February) plans formulated by Lieutenant General P. Burmaki, who was in charge of preparing the MS’s Internal Forces for the Operation, it would have been necessary, for carrying out the task in Estonia, to employ 2,198 Security Agents, 5,953 military personnel, 3,665 Destruction Battalion personnel\(^1\), 8,438 Party Activists. Thus, a total of 20,254 people. But it became, very quickly, apparent, that in Estonia, there were only 634 Security Agents, so that it was necessary to bring in an additional 1,341 Agents. Just as it was necessary to bring in about 4,350 military personnel. The latter arrived in Estonia at night, during the time span of 10-15 March, primarily, from the Sortavala Training Centre (Karlala), the 13th Motorised Rifle Regiment (Leningrad), the 7th Division (Minsk), and the 1st Division (Moscow). This also included 1,400 transport personnel. All together, the local forces, which consisted of 12,472 people, were reinforced with 5,591 individuals.\(^1\)

Along with the military personnel, the political apparatus of the various detachments was also dispatched to the special assignment. The political personnel dealt with the ideological indoctrination, as well as the ensuring of the discipline, of the soldiers, by monitoring the men’s conduct after they had been deployed to the Operative Groups. When assigning the soldiers to the Operative Groups, care was taken to make sure that, even in the case of the military personnel, there would be at least one Party Member, or an officer who was a Young Communist, in every Group. This Party-connected individual would be ideologically prepared for the Operation, thereby ensuring the Party’s control over the military personnel.\(^1\)

In accordance with the 12 March U.S.S.R. interior minister’s Decree 00225, the Ministry of the Interior (MI) had to draw up its own action plan, and to coordinate it with the Ministry of Security (MS). The MI’s task was: to provide increased security for maintaining law and order, as well as for guarding the state’s borders; to obtain and equip the personnel for the special transport trains and the loading stations (operative medical personnel, military convoy guards). The MI was also obliged to provide the MS with any of its personnel that the MS might have need of. Altogether, there were plans for putting 1,275 men at the disposal of the MS. About half of them were made use of in Tallinn, while the rest of the men were deployed throughout the counties. To coordinate activities, a special Headquarters Unit was established in E.S.S.R. Interior Minister Aleksander Resiev’s office. The process for appointing special trustees within the MI’s structure was analogous to that of the MS. First of all, a special U.S.S.R. MS trustee was dispatched from Moscow\(^3\) to a republic MI, and from there, in turn, special trustees were assigned to Regional Departments. The special trustees arriving in the regions, on 18-22 March, informed the local Department heads about the deportations and the tasks associated with the Operation.

The demand, that the national borders be secured even more, was brought about by the fear that people would try to escape to Finland and Sweden. It was also thought that one possible scheme would be, that some of those individuals who had managed to avoid being captured, would try to start living with relatives who resided in the Border Zone, where they could make preparations for fleeing abroad. That is why the MI Department heads in the counties next to the border were instructed to tighten up local security arrangements; to keep a watchful eye on the registration of residents in the Zone; to intensify document checks in the

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\(^1\) The “Destruction Battalions” (Hävituskohveruskot) were used in rural areas where the Soviet authorities were heavily armed units, organized in rural Estonia by the Soviet authorities that were used as an auxiliary security force. These lightly armed units were often employed in various counter-insurgency operations aimed at the Forest Brethren and other anti-Soviet elements. Since the Battalions were used to intimidate the local population, they were generally despised throughout rural Estonia.\(^1\)

\(^3\) According to the 12 March U.S.S.R. MI Decree, Lieutenant General Petrov was assigned to be the U.S.S.R. MI’s special trustee in Estonia. But, in the U.S.S.R. MI reports, there appears the name of Major General Rogatkin, as having been the trustee.
immediate vicinity of the border and in the nearby area, even in the case of individuals who had a permit for being in the Border Zone.\footnote{ERAF. C. 17/1, i. 1, u. 139, p. 281.}

**The Operative Forces go into action**

By 21 March, the MI had formed, out of the previously existing human resources, the additional personnel that had been sent, and the 392nd Convoy Regiment, 19 Convoy Detachments for sending off the special transport trains from Estonia. Each Detachment consisted of 76 officers, 456 escorting soldiers, 57 medics – a total of 889 people. In the course of the Operation, the number of people participating in the escorting of one of these special trains grew to 696.\footnote{ERAF. C. 17/1, i. 1, u. 139, p. 292.} Every special train had to be conveyed by a unit consisting of at least 24 soldiers. Before that, detailed plans for putting together a special train had to be drawn up – how to organise the receiving of the contingent of deportees, how to guard them, how to send them off. Where necessary, a few interpreters were also deployed to the loading stations. They were recruited, mainly, from amongst the officers of the MI's central apparatus.

Starting on the 21 March, the Forces were deployed to the various counties. The MS and MI combined detachments tried to find, near the train stations, suitable places for loading the deportees onto the trains. These loading sites had to be on dead end roads, and had to be isolated. Therefore, some of these sites were located kilometres away from the closest town. In the loading sites that it had been possible to set up in the relative vicinity of train stations, multiple problems arose.\footnote{In Kellia, for instance, where a large crowd, consisting of the deportees' relatives and acquaintances, had gathered, the guarding of the train became complicated. Therefore, a reinforcing detachment of soldiers was brought from the 392nd Convoy Regiment, so as to increase security. On 27 March, when a record number of people had gathered at the station, 2 deportees tried to escape from the train. They took advantage of a moment when the guards were distracted by having to keep bystanders away from the train. One escapee was caught and was put on the train, while the other one managed to disappear. ERAF. C. 17/1, i. 1, u. 139, p. 281.}

Although the preparations being made for the whole Operation were being systematically concealed, the concentrating of military personnel and motor transport vehicles, especially, attracted the attention of the local population, and indicated that something secret was being organised. For instance, in the Town of Pärnu, where a problem arose with the obtaining of motor transport vehicles, an ECP and CM regulation was issued concerning the mobilisation of all automobiles in Pärnu. Militia check-

points were set up on all roads leading out of the city, which, on 24 March, stopped automobiles and directed them to proceed to assembly points. These, the vehicles were checked out by automobile inspectors, and the drivers' documents were taken away. In this manner, a sizeable amount of automobiles were assembled in Pärnu. But activity of this nature gave rise to many rumours among the people. And the stories were varied – it was thought that war was about to break out, that a general mobilisation was about to be declared, that a major deportation was about to be carried out, that a large-scale evacuation was about to begin, etc.

The success of such a large-scale operation was dependent upon its unexpectedness, so as to prevent people from fleeing or panicking, as well as to avoid attacks by Forest Brethren, which were also feared. Military reinforcements were brought into areas where the Forest Brethren were especially active. Also, the existing network of Agents and informants was put on special alert, so that they would, in case such activities became apparent, give timely warning. Guards were posted at railroad tracks, bridges, and dams, and patrols were sent out (265 men). Out of fear of subversive and diversionary acts, special security measures were enacted on 24 March, at 23:00 hours.\footnote{ERAF. C. 17/1, i. 1, u. 139, p. 152.} Many other important sites, like various official buildings, oil storage facilities, motor vehicle depots, grain elevators, factories, and financial institutions were placed under 24-hour guard. Also, the number of night patrols was increased.

During the week preceding the Operation, the Operative Groups were formed and were assigned leaders. In the assigning of Group leaders, preference was given to MS and MI personnel who were familiar with the particular area that the Group was to operate in. Before the launching of the Operation, the leaders had to familiarize themselves with the locations of the farms assigned to the Group, and with the various approaches to the farms. Later, when the mistakes that had been made in the course of the Operation were analysed, the lack of the Groups' familiarity with their assigned area was the fault that was made note of the most often. For instance, in the case of Ambla Township, in Järvamaa County, it was discovered, on the morning of 25 March, that there were no passable roads leading to some of the farms. Therefore, the Operative Group in that area had to move about on horseback, or on foot. Thus, the deporters arrived at their assigned farms hours later than the assignment called for. The families from Piirisaaare (an island in Lake Peipsi), on the other hand, were never deported, since the Laaksaaare-Piirisaaare ice road, connecting the
island with the mainland, was beginning to melt, and no one dared cross the ice with horses.

Operation Pribol was officially launched in the early morning hours of 25 March - in the capital cities at 04:00, in the counties at 06:00. Appropriate orders were issued 6 to 10 hours before the beginning of the Operation. The Operation had to be carried out within 3 days. The Operative Groups went into action. Every Group was given a number, and were assigned definite families that the Group had to send out. For every family there was 1 soldier, or Destruction Battalion combattant, 2-3 Activists. It was estimated that every Group would, on the average, have to deal with 3-4 families, but this number was constantly being increased.

The Activists being made use of in every Group were recruited by Party Organisers, who received this assignment from the local ECP Committee's secretary-general, who, in turn, had been instructed by the ECP CC and CM trustee. These trustees arrived in the counties by 22 March, at the latest. Reports concerning the recruiting of Activists, of how they were specifically chosen, or, on the other hand, how they happened to be pressed into serving in the Operation just by chance, are contradictory. The Valgamaa County Activists, for instance, were picked out by ECP County Committee Secretary-General Ovsiannikov, who found the suitable individuals from amongst CP members, membership candidates, Young Communists, and Party employees. From amongst them, Karula Township Party Executive Committee (EC) Deputy Chairman Kärk, Helme Township EC Chairman Saarmets, Valga Power Plant Party Member Grossman, Party County Committee Agitation and Propaganda Department Director Kint, Sangaste Township Party Committee Secretary Kollo, and EC Deputy Chairman Vainola were especially noteworthy for their energetic participation.21 At the same time, there are also plenty of examples, where people were recruited into the Operative Groups just by chance. For instance, people leaving a cinema, who, along with others, were taken to the offices of the Township Committee, and were not permitted to leave until the beginning of the Operation. It was the job of the activists to lead the Groups to the assigned farms, and to make a list of all the deportees' possessions.

The deportation process itself was supposed to proceed in the following manner: "The Operative Groups, having been assigned their number of special contingent households, are taken, by car, to their district of activity, after which, stealthily, and on foot, they approach the buildings of their objectives, and blockade them simultaneously, with 3 individuals assigned to a farm. Having completed the blockading of the objectives, the Group leader, at a predetermined time, enters the house accompanied by soldiers, checks the identity of the family members, conducts a search of the farm, thereafter informs the head of the family of the government's decision to send them out, gives them time to put their things together, and fills out the appropriate documents. At the same time, the Group leader arranges for the transporting of the special contingent to the assembling point, or directly to the loading station. The Operative Group is responsible for the organised guarding of the objectives while they are being convoyed."

In the case of an armed attack, the Group leader was to order the convoy to "lie down", and, at the same time, to implement measures for eliminating the attackers, signalling, if necessary, with a red signal rocket, to neighbouring Operative Groups to come to their aid. After completing their assignment, the Group leaders and soldiers were to remain, in accordance with the senior Security Agent's instructions, and assist the other Operative Groups. They could also be deployed to loading stations.

Some results of the Operation

But the carrying out of the Operation did not take place as smoothly as it had been planned. Despite all the efforts, very many people were not sent out. Throughout the whole Operation, attempts were made to catch those who had hidden themselves - ambushes were set up at the farms and apartments of the potential deportees, attempts were made to locate escapees through their relatives, family members were interrogated on the spot, and the Agency carried out searches for them. In the Town of Pärnu, for instance, the MS issued an Order to search the homes of all known relatives and friends of fugitives, using information obtained from the official address bureau for this purpose. On the third day of the Operation, during the night of 27-28 March, an extensive dragnet was conducted in Pärnu (at the orders of E.S.S.R. Interior Minister Resve's deputy, Pastelnjak). It was claimed that it was necessary to carry out a thorough check of all internal passports. For this purpose, the security personnel in Pärnu were reinforced with 50 MI employees and 45 Activists, who were organised into 7 groups. In the course of checking identification papers, 42 fugitives were caught. Analogous dragnets, under the guise of checking identity papers, for people who had tried to hide themselves, were also carried out in other towns, for instance, in Võru.

21 EGRA C. 17/1, l. 1, u. 139, pp. 218-219.
In some cases, Operative Groups drove to locations in neighbouring counties, from which appropriate information had been sent, to catch fugitives. Minors that had been left home alone, were brought, by the Operative Groups, to the assembly points in the hope that their parents would then, on their own, come to the assembly point or train station. This tactic gave results, since parents, usually, "came out" voluntarily. According to regulations, minors, without grownups, could not be taken away. There are even cases, where children were released at the last minute.

At the end of the Operation, it was reported to Moscow that 20,702 people had been deported from Estonia, which was, at any rate, less than planned. There were no follow-up mass deportations in Estonia. As opposed to Lithuania, where, on 10-20 April, an extensive dragnet was conducted to catch fugitives from the March Deportations. The result was, that 2 additional trainloads of people, 2,927 individuals, were taken away. The deputy interior minister of the USSR, V. Rjasnoi, called this an especially dangerous contingent, and they were sent to Bodaibo Trest, to the Lenzoloto gold mine.12

After the Deportations, a question remained "hanging in the air" in Estonia also - what to do with the people who had been able to avoid being sent out? E.S.S.R. Interior Minister Resev proposed that the MI could participate in the searching for and arresting of these individuals. Likewise, Resev recommended that these people be apprehended by means of a stricter interior passport regime. He also asked that instructions be issued concerning how individuals who had been apprehended should be sent out of Estonia.

During the summer, the search for fugitives from the Deportations became more extensive. On 12 July 1949, the E.S.S.R. interior minister issued Directive Nr. 2138, which marked the launching of an anti-crime campaign, as well as the more intensive indictment of; those who had tried to avoid special resettlement, and illegal individuals, as well as miscellaneous criminal elements. In the follow-up orders issued by the security and interior ministers, according to which, the extensive apprehension of those who had managed to escape the Deportations was becoming, ever more, the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, it was proposed to the Security Departments that they give comprehensive assistance to MI operatives in apprehending and indicting illegal individuals (kulaks, those who aided the bandits, nationalists, and the family members of ban-


13 ERAF. C. 131, i. 1, u. 151, pp. 56-65.
Bibliography:


