

# THE DEPORTATION OPERATION “PRIBOI” IN 1949

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The operation known as the 1949 deportations was the most massive violent undertaking carried out by the Soviet authorities simultaneously in all three Baltic states.

Deportations have been fairly thoroughly dealt with in Estonian historiography.<sup>1</sup>

Lists of the deportees have been published;<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup> The present study is mostly based on archive records available in Estonia and papers published in Estonia.<sup>4</sup> Also the works of Russian, Latvian and Moldovan historians<sup>5</sup> and

materials from Russian archives have been of considerable use.<sup>6</sup>

## THE PLANNING OF DEPORTATIONS

It is not unequivocally clear even today when or by whom the idea of a large deportations operation in the Baltic states was first mentioned. The necessity of deportations had been mentioned both in the context of the sovietisation of agriculture and suppression of the Forest Brothers movement. In early 1948, Andrei Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (hereinafter the CPSU CC) received a report from the officials who had inspected the situation

**1** Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Nõukogude repressioonide uurimisest Eestis” (On the Study of Soviet Repressions in Estonia) in *Eesti NSV aastatel 1940–1953 : Sovetiseerimise mehhanismid ja tagajärjed Nõukogude Liidu ja Ida-Euroopa arengute kontekstis* (Estonian SSR in 1940–1953 : the Mechanisms and Consequences of Sovietisation in the Context of Developments in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe), compiled by T. Tannberg, Tartu, 2007, pp. 30–64. This collection of articles is posing economic, cultural and other problems of post-war years.

**2** *Küüditamine Eestist Venemaale : märtsiküüditamine 1949. 1.–2. osa* (Deportation from Estonia to Russia : deportation in March 1949. Volume 1–2), in series: *Repressseeritud isikute registrid, 4. ja 5. raamat* (Repressed persons records, Book 4–5), compiled by L. Õispuu, Tallinn, 1999–2003; *Küüditamine Eestist Venemaale : juuniküüditamine 1941 & küüditamised 1940–1953* (Deportation from Estonia to Russia : deportation in June 1941 & deportation in 1940–1953), in series: *Repressseeritud isikute registrid, 6. raamat* (Repressed persons records, Book 6), compiled by L. Õispuu, Tallinn, 2001.

**3** We have had both individual memories and collections of memories published. The regional Memento organizations have compiled books on deportations across counties, revealing lists and memories put together. Some examples of them: *Küüditatud 1949 : Lääne-Virumaa* (Deportees of 1949 in Lääne-Virumaa), compiled by Ö. Nurk, Rakvere, 1999; *Sakalamaa ei unusta : sari, 12 köidet* (Sakala County Will Not Forget : seeries, Part 1–12), edited by E. Piir, Viljandi, 1991–1997, etc. The association *Eesti elulood* (Estonian Biographies) has been dealing with the collecting of biographies since 1989. The best of these biographies have published in the series: *Eesti rahva elulood. I–II osa : sajandi sada elulugu kahes osas* (Estonian Biographies. Part 1–2 : Hundred Biographies of the Century in Two Parts), compiled by R. Hinrikson, Tallinn, 2000; *Eesti rahva elulood. III osa, Elu Eesti NSV-s* (Estonian Biographies. Part 3, Life in ESSR), compiled by R. Hinrikson, Tallinn, 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. Kirss, E. Kõresaar & M. Lauristin, Tartu, 2004.

**4** Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Deportations in Estonia, 1941–1951” in *Soviet deportations in Estonia: impact and legacy : articles and life histories*, eds. K. Kukk & T. Raun, Tartu, 2007, pp. 9–52; Andres Kahar, *Eesti NSV Riikliku Julgeoleku Ministeeriumi tegevus 1949. a märtsiküüditamise ettevalmistamisel Saaremaa osakonna näitel : bakalaureusetöö* (The Role of the Ministry of State Security of the ESSR in the Preparation of March Deportations of 1949: the Case of the Saaremaa Department : Bachelor’s Thesis), Tartu, 2007; “*Dokumente 1949. aasta märtsiküüditamisest*” (Documents on the March 1949 deportation), compiled by V. Ohmann & T. Tannberg, *Monthly Akadeemia*, No. 3, 1999, pp. 620–630; No. 4, pp. 821–831; No. 5, pp. 1051–1058; No. 6, pp. 1281–1291; No. 7, pp. 1510–1517; No. 8, pp. 1736–1743; No. 9, pp. 1993–2005; No. 10, pp. 2176–2181; No. 11, pp. 2417–2424; No. 12, pp. 2684–2655; No. 1, 2000, pp. 150–157; *Võimatu vaikida* (Impossible to Remain Silent), Volume 1–7. Written and compiled by H. Sabbo, Tallinn, 1996–2004.

**5** Heinrihs Strods & Matthew Kott, “The File on Operation “Priboi”: A Re-assessment of the mass deportations of 1949”, *Quarterly Journal of Baltic Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1, 2002, pp. 1–36; *Aizvestie 1949. gada 25. marts. 1–2* (Deportations in Latvia on 25 March 1949. Part 1–2), Riga, 2007; Виктор Бердинских, Спецпоселенцы : политическая ссылка народов Советской России (Special settlers : Political Banishment of the Nations of the Soviet Russia), Moscow, 2005; Виктор Земсков, Спецпоселенцы в СССР, 1930–1960 (Special settlers in the USSR, 1930–1960), Moscow, 2003; История сталинского Гулага : конец 1920-х–первая половина 1950-х годов. Том 1, Массовые репрессии в СССР (History of the Stalinist Gulag : Late 1920s–Early 1950s. Vol. 1, Mass Repressions in the USSR), compiled by I. A. Zyuzina, edited N. Werth & S. V. Mironenko, Moscow, 2004; Сталинские депортации, 1928–1953 (Stalinist Deportations, 1928–1953), compiled by N. L. Pabol & O. M. Polyan, Moscow, 2005; История сталинского Гулага : конец 1920-х–первая половина 1950-х годов. Том 5, Спецпереселенцы в СССР (History of the Stalinist Gulag : Late 1920s–Early 1950s. Vol. 5, Special Resettlers in the USSR), edited by T. V. Tsarevskaya-Dyakina, Moscow, 2004; Валерий Пасат, Трудные страницы истории Молдовы. 1940–1950 годы (The Devastating Pages of Moldovan History, the Years 1940–1950), Moscow, 1994; В. Царанов, Операция “Юг” : о судьбе зажиточного крестьянина Молдавии (Operation “South” : about Destiny of Prosperous Moldavian Peasantry), Chisinau, 1998; Павел Полян, Не по своей воле ... : история и география принудительных миграций в СССР (Against one’s will ... : history and geography of forcible migrations in the Soviet Union), Moscow, 2001.

**6** State Archives of the Russian Federation (Государственный архив Российской Федерации (ГАРФ), hereinafter abbreviated as GARF), Russian State Military Archives (Российский государственный военный архив (РГВА), hereinafter abbreviated as RGVA).

in the Baltic states, which claimed that the formation of kolkhozes in the “*Pribaltika* was hindered by bourgeois nationalists and their armed gangs” and their counter-activities, as well as the “farm system” in general.<sup>7</sup>

On 18 January 1949, the party leaders of all three Baltic republics were called to Iosif Stalin in Moscow. The progress of their interview with Stalin may be observed from the notes taken by Nikolai Karotamm, 1st Secretary of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party (hereinafter the ECP CC), which show that the subject of ‘kulakism’ was concluded with Stalin’s words: “...we shall deport them. But this must be done fast, so that the issue could not be worrying the villages much longer”.<sup>8</sup>

Several reports and certificates confirm that figures concerning the families of ‘kulaks and nationalists/bandits’ were constantly delivered to Moscow in early 1949. On 20 January 1949 the ESSR Ministry of State Security (MGB) sent a top secret note to the USSR Deputy Minister of State Security, Lieutenant General Sergei Ogoltsov,<sup>9</sup> according to which 3077 ‘kulak’ households, 851 families of ‘bandits and illegals’, 5048 of convicted ‘bandits’, 745 of executed ‘bandits’ and 939 families helping ‘bandits’ had been identified.<sup>10</sup> A total of 10,660 anti-Soviet families. On the same day the ESSR Minister of State Security, Boris Kumm, sent a report to the USSR Minister of State Security, Viktor Abakumov, on the status of collectivisation in the ESSR and on the state security measures in the battle against ‘kulak’, ‘bourgeois-nationalist’ and ‘bandit’ elements in the villages.<sup>11</sup>

The document that formed a basis for the deportation, decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR No. 390-139ss, also defined the quota for families and persons to be deported from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania respectively. The Estonian quota was 7500 families, the Latvian quota 13,000 families and the Lithuanian quota 8500 families. The prescribed

quota were about one quarter short of the total number of ‘hostile-minded families’ registered in Estonia at the time. The proportions of different categories of deportees to be selected for filling the prescribed quota were obviously left to the discretion of Nikolai Karotamm and Arnold Veimer, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the ESSR. By orders of Lavrenti Beria, deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, the proportions of different categories were to be specified by 15 February.<sup>12</sup> By discussing the issues related to deportations with the leaders of the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian SSR, Moscow also gave them part of the responsibility for the events that were to follow.<sup>13</sup>

## THE DECISION TO DEPORT

The decision to carry out the deportation was made in Moscow, on 18 January 1949, at a session of the Politburo of the CPSU CC. On 29 January, and was followed by a corresponding decision, No. 390-139ss, by the Council of Ministers of the USSR ‘On the deportation of kulaks and their families, illegal persons, families of bandits and nationalists killed in armed conflicts or convicted in court, legalised bandits continuing resistance activities, and their families, as well as persons assisting the families of repressed bandits, from the territories of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia’.<sup>14</sup> This decision, consisting of 10 articles, also specified the number of persons and families to be deported, the deportation destinations and the more important tasks in the course of the operation (see Annex 1).

In total, 87,000 people were to be deported from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania: 25,500 from Lithuania, 39,000 from Latvia and 22,500 from Estonia. They were sentenced to special exile in the Yakutian ASSR, the Krasnoyarsk and Habarovsk krais, and the oblasts of Omsk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk and Irkutsk. In order to implement the decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, the MGB

<sup>7</sup> Meelis Saueauk, “*Eestimaa Kommunistliku Partei rollist märtsiküüditamise läbiviimisel 1949. aastal*” (On the role of the Estonian Communist Party in the March Deportations of 1949), Quarterly *Tuna*, 2009, in publishing.

<sup>8</sup> Tõnu Tannberg, “*Moskva institutsionaalsed ja nomenklatuursed kontrollimehhanismid Eesti NSV-s sõjajärgsetel aastatel*” (Moscow’s Institutional and Nomenclatural Control Mechanisms in the Estonian SSR in the Post-War Period) in *Eesti NSV aastatel 1940–1953*, p. 253.

<sup>9</sup> Sergei Ogoltsov was also in charge of the deportation implemented in Lithuania in May 1948.

<sup>10</sup> Operative notice from the Deputy Minister of State Security of the ESSR Mikhailov to the Deputy Minister of State Security of the USSR Ogoltsov, 20 January 1949, Department of the Estonian State Archives (*Eesti Riigiarhiivi filiaal*, hereinafter ERAF) 1315M-1-158, p. 238.

<sup>11</sup> The report of the ESSR Minister of State Security, Boris Kumm to the USSR Minister of State Security, Viktor Abakumov, 20 January 1949, ERAF 1315M-1-182, pp. 1–23.

<sup>12</sup> Karotamm’s notes on notices sent to Beria, ERAF 1-47-47, pp. 32–36.

<sup>13</sup> About the role of ECP see: M. Saueauk, “*Eestimaa Kommunistliku Partei rollist märtsiküüditamise läbiviimisel 1949. aastal*”, Quarterly *Tuna*, 2009, in publishing; Елена Зубкова, *Прибалтика и Кремль 1940–1953* (Baltics and the Kremlin 1940–1953), Moscow, 2008, pp. 180–190.

<sup>14</sup> *The text of this resolution has been published: Lietuvos gyventojų tre mimai: 1941, 1945–1952 m.: dokumentų rinkinys* (The Deportation of Lithuanian Inhabitants: 1941, 1945–1952: A collection of documents), Vol. 1, Vilnius, 1994, pp. 303–305; История сталинского Гулага. Vol. 1, pp. 517–519.

had to guarantee the custody and transport of the deportees to railway stations. It was up to the MVD to escort and transport them further. They were also responsible for guarding the deportees en route, for administrative surveillance at their destinations and for organising their employment in Siberia. Also the Ministry of Finance of the USSR (allocating the resources to cover the costs), the Ministry of Communications of the USSR (allocating the railway carriages) and the Ministry of Economy of the USSR (en route catering) and the Ministry of Healthcare (medical assistance en route) were involved in the operations. Also the Soviets of the Working People's Delegates of the deportation destinations were to be informed of the need to house the deportees. The operation was planned to take place on 20-25 March. Two months were left for preparations.

## PREPARATIONS FOR THE OPERATION

As Nikolai Karotamm wrote in his diary, at the end of the 18 January meeting Stalin ordered Beria to start the preparations for the operation.<sup>15</sup> This was to be followed up by the relevant instructions in the form of the MGB and MVD directives. The USSR Minister of Internal Affairs Directive<sup>16</sup> no. 00225 dated with 12 March 1949, 'The deportation of kulaks and their families, the families of bandits and nationalists from the territory of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia', assigned the tasks of deportation to subunits of the MVD in Moscow as well as locally, and among others, four oblasts in Siberia were ordered to take in a special contingent of 100,000 for resettlement.<sup>17</sup> The MGB directive about implementation of the deportation has not been found; it is only known that on February 28, the Minister of State Security signed instruction no. 0068 'The deportation of special categories from the territory of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia'.<sup>18</sup>

## THE HEADQUARTERS

The preparation and implementation of the deportation operation was committed to the USSR MGB by a decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 29 January 1949. Lieutenant General Sergei Ogoltsov, Deputy Minister of State Security of the USSR, was to bear responsibility for the general progress of the task. In the preparatory stage of the operation (until the middle of March), he and his staff probably operated from Moscow. The immediate performance of the operation in all three Baltic republics was conducted from Riga. Before the launching of the operation, a USSR deputy minister of state security, Lieutenant General Afanasi Blinov, was also assigned to Tallinn, and another deputy minister of security, Lieutenant General Nikolai Gorlinski, was dispatched to Vilnius.

In late February or early March 1949, also Lieutenant General Pyotr Burmak, commander of the USSR MGB troops, set up his headquarters in Riga. The staff members included also Andrei Golovko, commander of the MGB troops of the Baltic military district,<sup>19</sup> Pyotr Leontyev, commander of the MGB troops stationed in Riga, signals chief Colonel Kotov, transport commander Lieutenant-Colonel Spektor and Colonel Ryshov, representative of the command of the USSR MGB troops.<sup>20</sup> The headquarters of Lieutenant General Burmak were in charge of supervising and co-ordinating the actions involving the MGB troops.

In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania the actual preparations were made and the activities were co-ordinated by the USSR MGB special representatives – in Tallinn, Ivan Yermolin.<sup>24</sup> In Estonia, the preparations for the operation began with the arrival of the USSR MGB special representative. Already in February, also MGB officers dispatched from other parts of the USSR started arriving in Estonia. Obviously soon after the arrival of the USSR MGB special representative, the so-called union-republic-level special repre-

<sup>15</sup> Nikolai Karotamm's diary, ERAF 9607-1-302, pp. 1–3.

<sup>16</sup> Six months later, a commission of the MVD monitoring the implementation of the decrees and rulings of 1949 of the Council of Ministers' of the USSR drew attention to the long interval between those decrees and the resulting MVD directives. It pointed out that although the decree of the Council of Ministers' about the deportation from the Baltics was approved on 29 January, the supervisor of the Special Exile department only learned of it on 2 March, and the MVD directive was written only on 12 March 1949, i.e., 13 days before the operation was to start. The commission did not understand this sort of delay. – GARF P 9479-1-456, p. 102.

<sup>17</sup> *Võimatu vaikida. II* (Impossible to remain silent. Vol. 1), written and compiled by H. Sabbo, Tallinn, 1996, pp. 845–850.

<sup>18</sup> J. Riekstiņš, "Genocīds 1949. gada 25. martā deportācijas akcija Latvijā" (Genocide. Deportations in Latvia in March 25, 1949), *Periodical Latvijas Vēsture*, No. 2, 1991, p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> Major General, then Colonel Andrei Sidorovich Golovko was, until 17 July 1941, commander of the 22nd NKVD Rifles Division, which at the time fought in Latvia and Estonia.

<sup>20</sup> Heinrihs Strods, "The USSR MGB's Top Secret Operation "Priboi" ("Surf") for the Deportation of Population from the Baltic Countries, 25 February; 23 August 1949", *Crimes against Humanity. Latvian Site*, <<http://vip.latnet.lv/lpra/priboi.htm>>, (accessed 24 November 2008).

<sup>21</sup> A few months later, General Yermolin also co-ordinated the deportation operation "Yug" (South) in the Moldavian SSR.

sentatives were dispatched to county departments of the MGB. "Union-republic-level special representative" was the denomination of the representatives of the MGBs of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian SSR, selected from the leading officers of the central apparatus (or departments) and dispatched to the counties by their respective Ministries. Their post was called 'special representative of the USSR MGB' and their task was the supervision and co-ordination of the preparations of the operation (see Annex 2).

After the arrival of special representative Yermolin, an operative staff was formed at the ESSR MGB for conducting the Tallinn operation, with Major Zaporoshtchuk as the chief of staff. The staff supervised and co-ordinated the activities of the MGB in the initial stage of the preparatory work – the composing of files. Later on, when also other ministries and the military were involved in the work (14–18 March 1949) a new staff of 12 members was formed at the ESSR MGB, consisting in addition to officials from different services of the MGB, also of the officials of the MVD, the ECP and the Council of Ministers of the ESSR. Lieutenant Colonel Vedeyev, deputy of the Minister of State Security of the ESSR, was appointed the staff commander. At the same time, similar staffs were also set up in the counties.

Preparations for an operation of such major scale presumed a detailed action plan determining both the contingent of deportees and the appointment of executing staff, and drawing up specific plans and instructions.

### SELECTION OF THE DEPORTEES

MGB special representatives, who were to be in charge of launching the selection of families to be deported, were dispatched to all counties. Proceeding from the decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 29 January 1949, the decisions of deportation were to be based on the existence of a 'nationalist/bandit' family member or classification among the 'kulak' families. The first task of the MGB official was to find documentary proof of the "offence". The quota of families to be deported allocated to Estonia (7500 families) was distributed between counties. After that, registration files were composed and necessary documents drawn up. This procedure was started in mid-February. At the same time, additional

work force was dispatched to Estonia from the MGBs of other union republics, oblast administrations and departments; the additional staff was at first mostly used for drawing up deportation documents. The families to be deported were selected on the basis of records from the "A" department of the ESSR MGB (investigation files of the 'nationalists' punished by the MGB), the card files of the county security department (information about 'bandits/illegals'), from the executive committees of the rural municipalities (information about the 'kulak' families), the border guard and the navy (information about emigrated individuals). The work was co-ordinated by the "A" department of the ESSR MGB.

The most widely used proof was constituted by documents submitted by the central apparatus of the ESSR MGB and the counter-intelligence departments of the army – copies of the war tribunal sentences of the 'nationalists' ja 'bandits', orders of arrest, extracts of the decisions of the MGB extraordinary council, certificates containing compromising material (e.g. records of service in the German army or *Omakaitse*)<sup>22</sup> etc. In the registration files of active or killed 'bandits' and illegal persons, there are memoranda drawn up on the basis of various agency records, extracts from agency cases, reports on Chekist-military operations, interrogation minutes, etc.

In case of the kulaks, the selection was based on the lists of kulaks approved by the local executive committees. On 30 August 1947, the Council of Ministers of the Estonian SSR issued a Resolution No. 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 workforce and agricultural machinery, etc. Every year the executive committees of the rural municipalities had to present the lists of kulak households to resp. county Executive Committee for confirmation.<sup>23</sup>

In case of the kulaks, the judicial basis for their deportation was the ESSR Council of Ministers Resolution No. 014 issued on 14 March 1949, along with its addendum consisting of the lists of kulaks compiled by the county executive committees. But since this directive was completed too late, not until the second week of March, then the MGB county

<sup>22</sup> On collecting compromising data see Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Archives at the service of Soviet repressive organs. Compilation of the card index of "politically coloured persons" in Estonia in 1940–1957" in *The Communist Security Apparatus in East Central Europe, 1944–1945 to 1989*, Materials of a conference, Warsaw, June 16–18, 2005, in publishing; Aigi Rahi-Tamm, "Politiniu atspalviu speckartotekos" sudarymas estijoje 1940–1957 metais", *Periodical Genocidas ir rezistencija*, No. 2 (20), 2006, pp. 110–116; Aigi Rahi-Tamm, „Politini atspalvi "specialioji kartoteka Estijoje 1940–1957 metais", *Genocide und Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania*, <<http://www.genocid.lt/centras/lt/453/a/>>, (accessed 10 November 2008).

<sup>23</sup> *ENSV Teataja* (ESSR Gazette) 1947, 25, 218.

departments had to determine on their own, 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 the kulak families;
- the documentation of rural municipalities' executive committees, which the MGB agents obtained from rural municipalities' executive committees;
- agency reports containing compromising facts (including memoranda concerning those who had fled abroad, but which, in the case of kulaks, was not the main reason for being deported, but was used as additional evidence);
- the copies of interrogation transcripts, arrest warrants, indictments etc.

Thus, the MGB county departments also determined on their own and in secret the individuals who were to be categorised as kulaks. And since it was an everyday occurrence that MGB agents 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 MGB county departments had identified 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 draw up lists of deportees on their own, nor were they informed about the deportations ahead of time. It would be essential to stress also that not all of those who had been labelled as kulaks were automatically included among the deportees. Yet some names initially not included in the lists were added later. If any of the families classified as kulaks had been excluded from that category within the period of 14–24 March 1949, they were to be excluded also from the list of deportees, and their files were destroyed. In reality, the information about changes in the official list of families classified as kulaks did as a rule not reach the MGB county departments preparing for deportation, especially if a family was excluded from the kulak category a few days after the start of the operation. Therefore, families excluded from kulak status caused confusion during the operation. Some of them were deported despite everything. But some actually suc-

ceeded in disputing their expulsion and managed to avoid being sent to Siberia.

In the course of detailed research of the register sheets of the deportees the whole procedure of selecting families for deportation becomes evident. This enables us to state that the selection of individuals and families was done only by the ESSR MGB within its own system and without encompassing local administrations, the ECP structures, militiamen, or activists. People with various charges could be found on the deportation lists. The activities of the MGB county 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 charges that had been raised against them. The selection of those who were to be deported was based upon the formal requirements that had been stipulated in the 29 January 1949 resolution of the USSR Council of Ministers (the identifying of 'kulaks', the existence of a 'nationalist/bandit' in the family). The actual activities of a person, e.g. during the German occupation, were not considered to be of primary importance. The intention was not to deport all the families of those classified as kulaks or punished by the Soviet power. The MGB's method of compiling the necessary records for deportation (i.e. selecting people to be deported) owed its nature to shortage of time – about one month had been left for completing the task. Therefore, the background checks were very superficial and many errors were made in both names and addresses, and also the 'circumstances precluding deportation' often remained unidentified. Therefore, the graveness of the so-called offences and the imposed punishments were largely perplexing to people, leaving space for free interpretations, including the rumours, still vital in the present day, about eager informers buying themselves free from the hands of deporters.

After the nationalists/bandits and the kulaks had been selected, also the family members to be deported were identified, as well as their addresses and financial status. In addition, circumstances precluding deportation were investigated – those were special services to the Soviet state (participation in the Great Patriotic War in the Red Army, in partisan groups, having received state decorations).<sup>24</sup> In the administrative affairs of the MGB, this procedure was called "establishments" ( *установки* ) and the main burden of it lay on the county departments of the MGB.

<sup>24</sup> It was not allowed to deport families whose members had served in the Red Army, received state decorations or served the Soviet power, but often possibilities were found to bypass this requirement, usually under the pretext that the person with merits did not belong to the same household as the persons to be deported. Most often, there was no time for checks to be made. Mostly, the information came from the local army commissariat.

The "establishments" were crucial to the success of the operation. The formation and staff of operative groups depended on this information, as well as transport calculations and planning of the activities of operative groups. In case some of the family members marked for deportation had a separate address, the respective MGB department was also informed. The more specific the „establishment“, the sooner could the operative groups reach their destinations during the operation, and the scarcer the chances of escape for deportees. In advance, it may be mentioned that in districts where the conductors of the operations were later accused of failure, also the names of the MGB operatives guilty of faulty „establishments“ were listed. Owing to the great hurry, erroneous „establishments“ were common everywhere.

On the basis of gathered information, a summary certificate was drawn up for each family, approved by the head of county department of the MGB or his deputy. The documents were bound and sent to the central MGB apparatus in Tallinn. There, a working group had been set up for going through the documents, consisting of the officials of operative staff of the central departments (operatives, investigators, division heads and their deputies) and the extra workforce dispatched from other institutions subordinated to the. They drew up a summary on each family, which included data concerning the reason for deportation (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 selected for deportation. If necessary, additional compromising evidence was obtained.

The document was to be approved by Boris Kumm, Minister of State Security of the ESSR. The summaries about the families of nationalists/bandits were also to be sanctioned by Kaarel Paas, Prosecutor of the ESSR. The summary also included the requirement for confiscation of property (not specifically mentioned in case of kulaks). The summary was concluded by a proposal for the deportation of the family from the territory of Estonia to remoter parts of the USSR, and signed by one of the department heads or deputy heads of the central apparatus of the ESSR MGB. The compilation of the files of the kulaks was supervised by Major Alfred Pressmann, head of the "A" department, who had to confirm the accuracy of extracts made from the kulak lists of the executive committees of the counties. Most of the summaries of the kulak's files are signed by him.

The difference in the summaries of the files of nationalists/bandits and kulaks is a result of different orders of deportation. In case of the kulaks, it was the Resolution No. 014 of the Council of Ministers of the ESSR from 14 March 1949. Nationalists/bandits, on the other hand, were deported by a decision of the Special Council of the USSR MGB, which did still not exist in March 1949. Therefore, at the time of the deportation, the summaries served as a basis for deportation and were sanctioned by the prosecutor.

Later, the summaries served as a basis for the decisions of the Special Council of the USSR MGB, and therefore the personal data they contained had to be accurate. In case of errors discovered during the deportation procedure or in cases when a person entered into the summary had not been deported or deportation of persons not included in the summary, another additional or retrospective summary was drawn up after the deportation, from 3 April to 15 June 1949. In those summaries, mistakes were corrected, the actually deported persons were listed and those who had escaped deportation were deleted. The persons who had escaped deportation were not included in the retrospective summaries, as if their deportation had never been intended. In exceptional cases – if the failure to deport an individual had not been documented for some reason, but a decision of the Special Council had still been drawn up in Moscow, the ESSR MGB was to arrest such a person later and deport him. After being signed and registered, the files were returned to the county of origin. All this was completed approximately by 18 March.

From Estonia, 7500 families were to be deported, 3077 of them kulaks and 4423 families of nationalists and bandits. From the report submitted by ESSR Minister of State Security Kumm and the USSR MGB representative Yermolin, from 14 March 1949, by that time registration files had been compiled on 9407 families, of those 3824 kulaks and 5583 nationalists/bandits. This way, there was also a reserve consisting of 1907 families, of those 747 kulaks and 1160 bandits/nationalists. Two days later, on 16 March 1949, the previous report has been specified, and a calculation not only by families, but also by individuals was submitted. 7500 families meant 22,326 individuals, a major part of whom, 9935, were women. There were also 7582 men and 4809 children under 15 years. There were 5336 members in the reserve families. All in all, documents had been prepared for 27,662 individuals.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Reports of the Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm and special representative of the USSR MGB Yermolin to the Minister of State Security of the USSR Abakumov, 14 March 1949 and 16 March 1949, Archives of the Estonian Police Board (*Eesti Politseiameti arhiiv*, hereinafter PAA) 17/1a-1, pp. 155–159.

## DRAWING UP THE OPERATION’S ACTION PLAN

Simultaneously with the compiling of the files, the MGB county departments were also engaged in preparing detailed action plans. Calculations had to be made concerning the personnel, transport facilities, communications equipment that would be needed for the operation. All this 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 brothers, etc.

It is very obvious, that the human resources of the MGB would not have sufficed for carrying out such a massive operation. Reinforcements had to be obtained from the MVD, the Soviet Army, and the Border Guard. Local activists and officials would serve as auxiliaries. But this meant implicating 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 ECP and other power structures. At first, in Estonia only a few members of the ECP CC and the ESSR Council of Ministers and ESSR MGB personnel, directly involved with making preparations for the deportations, as well as the top leadership of the ESSR MVD were aware of such a decision having been made.

The Decree no. 00225 of the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs “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 1949, specified the tasks of the USSR MVD sub-structures in connection with the deportation operation both in Moscow and on the spot including the assignments of the four Siberian MVD oblast departments that would be dealing with receiving the special shipments.<sup>26</sup> (See Annex 3) As a result of both this decision as well as the ESSR Council of Ministers’ adoption of the 14 March 1949 decree,<sup>27</sup> 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 the ECP and Soviet activists in the counties 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.

On 8 March 1949, the order of the ESSR Minister of State Security Kumm and the USSR MGB special representative Yermolin concerning submission of action plans proceeding from the project drawn up by the chief of the operative staff Yermolin, was sent to the county departments of the MGB.<sup>28</sup> The plan had to include:

- 1) the number of forces (operative officials, typists, military, activists) needed, where and how they were to be employed, and how much of the named personnel could be found on the spot and how many more were to be supplied;
- 2) how many of the necessary means of transport were available on the spot, and how many were to be supplied;
- 3) the same about means of communication;
- 4) a description of the procedure of the operation (how to organise assembly stations), what pretext was to be used for convening the activists and mobilising transport, how the operative groups would be acting, what were the tasks of the operative group leaders, how communications with the headquarters were to be arranged, and preparedness for possible armed attacks).

The plan was drawn up and approved by heads of the county MGB departments and the special representative dispatched to each county. The plans of different counties were quite different in scope, varying from extremely detailed to quite laconic descriptions of action. The plans were sent to Tallinn by 14 March 1949. On the basis of the plans, a common action plan of the MGB was drawn up and forwarded on 17 March 1949 to the 1st secretary of the ECP CC Nikolai Karotamm.<sup>29</sup> Simultaneously the organising of the operative groups began in the counties. The operative groups were formed on the basis of summaries

<sup>26</sup> *Võimatu vaikida*. Vol. II, pp. 845–850.

<sup>27</sup> Immediately before the launching of the Operation, on 22 March, the ESSR Council of Ministers adopted Supplementary Decree 015 with which a certain number of kulak families were added to Decree 014.

<sup>28</sup> Vladimir Pool, “Operatsioon “Priboi”. Hilinenud reportaa märtsiküüditamisest” (Operation “Priboi”. A delayed account of the March deportation), *Daily Õhtuleht*, 24 March 1992.

<sup>29</sup> Notice from Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm to ECP CC 1st Secretary Karotamm, 17 March 1949, ERAF 1-14-87, pp. 43–45.

approved by the Minister of State Security of the ESSR, and therefore the work could only be started after the files had arrived back in Tallinn.

On 13 March, an operative meeting was held in the ESSR MGB headquarters in Tallinn, and the procedure of the operation was discussed. In addition to the Estonian leaders, also the general commander of the "Priboi" operation, Lieutenant General Sergei Ogoltsov, Deputy Minister of State Security of the USSR, as well as heads of all county departments and the county MGB special representatives were present. The ESSR MGB was ordered to report on total readiness on 18 March 1949.<sup>30</sup>

On 17 March 1949, the 24-item action plan of the ESSR MVD was drawn up by Lieutenant Colonels Alexei Smirnov (Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR) and Oskar Avik (head of the mobilisation department).<sup>31</sup> The plan specified the tasks requiring additional staff, and the necessary technical equipment.

The preparations had reached a stage where the number of institutions and people involved was growing daily. This meant that new operative headquarters with an enhanced staff had to be formed; the new chief of staff was Deputy Minister of State Security of the ESSR Vedeyev, and Zaporoshchuk was appointed his deputy. The staff personnel also included the signals chief Major Vasilyev, deputy special representative of the MGB in army matters Colonel Serikov, and deputy special representative in the field of rail transport, Colonel Davydov.<sup>32</sup> In addition, the staff included probably an officer responsible for car transport, an official of the MVD, and others. Issues related to the activists of the CP and the Soviets were probably solved directly through the 1st Secretary of the ECP CC Karotamm. Also the ECP CC sent its representatives to the counties.<sup>33</sup>

On 18–22 March 1949, staff offices with similar personnel and functions were formed also in

the counties. The staff offices probably included representatives of the ECP CC and the Council of Ministers of the ESSR as well as the 1st secretaries of the ECP county committee. It was strictly forbidden to inform the secretaries of the operation beforehand.<sup>34</sup> The headquarters also included operative and technical staff (typists, cryptographers, etc).

### CALCULATION OF THE NECESSARY FORCES

According to calculations, 1875 operative groups were to be formed for the deportation of 7500 families – one operative group was to be in charge of the deportation of 4 families. Different 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 Burmak, who was in charge of preparing the MGB's internal forces for the operation, it would have been necessary for carrying out the task in Estonia to employ 2198 MGB operatives, 5953 military personnel, 3665 destruction battalion personnel and 8438 Party activists. Thus a total of 20,254 people. But it became very quickly apparent that in Estonia there were only 634 MGB officials, so that it was necessary to bring in an additional 1341 MGB operatives. Just as it was necessary to bring in about 4350 military personnel. The latter arrived in Estonia at night during the time span of 10–15 March 1949, primarily from the Sortavala training centre in Karelia, from the 13th regiment of the MGB troops in Leningrad, and another regiment from the 7th division of MGB troops in Byelorussia, and 1200 men from the railway guard corps. This also included 1400 transport personnel. Altogether the local forces, which consisted of 12,472 people, were reinforced with 5591 individuals.<sup>35</sup> According to Vladimir Pool, 1193 MGB operatives from all over the Soviet Union were brought to Estonia as reinforcement: from the northern oblasts, Kazakhstan, and Siberia.<sup>36</sup> By 14 March, only 450 of the operative staff had arrived.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the rest of the

<sup>30</sup> Report of the Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm and special representative of the USSR MGB Yermolin to the Minister of State Security of the USSR Abakumov, 14 March 1949, PAA 17/1a-1, pp. 156–157.

<sup>31</sup> Action plan of the ESSR MVD for the implementation of the directive No. 00225 from 12 March 1949 and the cable of the USSR MVD No. 1606 from 16 March 1949, approved by the Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev on 17 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 1–5, published in *Monthly Akadeemia*, No. 4, 1999, pp. 821–825.

<sup>32</sup> V. Pool. "Operatsioon "Priboi"; Deputy of the MGB special representative in the field of troops Colonel Serikov's and deputy in the field of rail transport Colonel Davydov's calculations of loading stations, approved by the Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm and the USSR MGB special representative Yermolin, from 16 March 1949, PAA 17/1a-1, p. 151.

<sup>33</sup> Arnold Meri, "Volinikuna Hiiumaa!" (As a Special Representative at Hiiumaa), *Daily Edasi*, 19 February 1988.

<sup>34</sup> On the 7th Plenary Session of the ECP CC, Boris Kumm confirmed that he had no right to inform the secretaries about the matter. Address on the 8th Plenary Session of the ECP CC, ERAF 1-4-890, pp. 283–285.

<sup>35</sup> The number of military personnel, in the course of preparing for the operation, was constantly changing. Of the MGB internal forces personnel available on the spot, 900 were stationed in Estonia, 2500 in Latvia, 9500 in Lithuania. – Burmak's certificates on the forces necessary for conducting the operation, 25 February 1949, RGVA 38650-1-408, pp. 3–9.

<sup>36</sup> V. Pool. "Operatsioon "Priboi".

operative staff must have arrived within 14–24 March. Entries in the registration files indicate that the first reinforcements arrived at the central apparatus of the ESSR MGB on 21 February.

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 ensuring the discipline of the soldiers by monitoring the men's conduct after they had been deployed to the operative groups. When assigning soldiers to the operative groups, care was taken to make sure that even in case of the military personnel there would be at least one CP member or an officer who was a YCL member in every group. This Party or YCL member would be ideologically prepared for the operation thereby ensuring the Party's control over the military personnel.<sup>38</sup> On 6–9 March 1949, the personnel of the troops was checked, as well as weapons and means of transport and communications. The personnel was checked "from all aspects" (рт тупноон); undisciplined or morally unreliable military were not allowed to participate in the operation.<sup>39</sup>

In accordance with the decision no. 00225 issued by the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs on 12 March 1949, the MVD had to draw up its own action plan and to coordinate it with the MGB. The MVD'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);
- to provide the MGB with any of its personnel that the MGB might have need of.

Altogether there were plans for putting 1275 men at the disposal of the MGB.<sup>40</sup> About half of them were made use of in Tallinn, while the rest of the men were deployed throughout the counties.

The process for appointing special representatives within the MVD's structure was analogous to that of the MGB. First of all, a special USSR MVD special representative was dispatched from Moscow<sup>41</sup> to the ESSR MVD and from there in turn special representatives were assigned to MVD county departments. The special representatives arriving in the counties on 18–22 March 1949 informed the local department heads about the deportations and the tasks associated with the operation.

To coordinate activities, a special Headquarters was established in the ESSR Minister of Internal Affairs Aleksander Resev's office,<sup>42</sup> which kept contact with the ESSR MGB headquarters, waiting for orders. Resev's headquarters also included Major General Vladimir Rogatin from the USSR MVD, Major General Yevgeni Kemerov, commander of the 48th division of convoy troops, deputies of the ESSR Minister of Internal Affairs Smirnov and Sanchuk, Lieutenant-Colonel Avik, head of the mobilisation department of the ESSR MVD, Lieutenant Colonel Matviyevskiy, senior assistant to the head of the convoy troops department of the USSR MVD, Lieutenant Colonel Kadukov, signals chief of the 48th division of the convoy troops, Major Reshetov, deputy head of the Special Transport Department for the South-Western District of the USSR MVD.<sup>43</sup> (see Annex 4)

All events occurring in the course of the operations were to be reported to Aleksander Resev, Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR. At the end of the operation, the heads of the MVD county departments and the representatives were also to submit a report to Resev, covering both the preparations for the operation and the loading of the echelons as well as extraordinary incidents such as removal of individuals from the trains, casualties, diseases, problems with infants, attempts to escape, letters to relatives that the deportees cast out of the trains, etc.

The demand to strengthen security on the state borders was brought about by the fear that people would try to escape to Finland and Sweden. On 25

<sup>37</sup> Report by the Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm and the special representative of the USSR MGB Yermolin to the Minister of State Security of the USSR, 14 March 1949, PAA 17/1a-1, p. 156.

<sup>38</sup> Report submitted by Major General Leontyev, commander of the 5th Rifle Division of the MGB internal troops, and Colonel Gromov, head of the political department, to Burmak, commanding officer of the internal troops, on the progress of the operation "Priboi" from 12 March to 2 April 1949, 8 April 1949, RGVA 38650-1-1336, pp. 426–427.

<sup>39</sup> Report submitted by Commanding Officer of the USSR MGB internal troops Burmak to the Deputy Minister of State Security of the USSR Ogoltsov, May 1949, RGVA 38650-1-408, p. 441.

<sup>40</sup> *Võimatu vaikida*. Vol. II, p. 865.

<sup>41</sup> According to the 12 March 1949 USSR MVD Decree, Lieutenant General Petrov was assigned to be the USSR MVD's special representative in Estonia. But, in the ESSR MVD reports, there appears the name of Major General Rogatin, as having been the special representative.

<sup>42</sup> *Võimatu vaikida*. Vol. II, p. 872.

<sup>43</sup> Report from Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev to the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov, 12 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 279v.

February 1949 the Commanding Officer of the NKVD Border Guard Troops Leningrad District Lieutenant General Grigori Stepanov sent a letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR, warning of increased tensions on the border which necessitated increased surveillance in counties along the border. According to General Stepanov some 'kulaks', 'bandits' and other 'anti-Soviet elements' were planning to flee to the shores of the Gulf of Finland in order to escape to Finland and Sweden. They were to use already prepared floatable crafts or to requisition these from the piers using guns. One possible scenario for escaping was that those who had managed to elude the round-up would try to go and live with their relatives in the border zone, to prepare for an escape abroad. This prompted the USSR Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Ivan Serov to make a separate declaration which stressed that not one 'anti-Soviet element' destined for elimination was to escape abroad! Lieutenant General Stepanov promised to use reinforcements to guard the border and to increase control during the course of the entire operation. The officers of the border guard units were given orders to that effect.<sup>44</sup>

By 21 March 1949 the MVD had out of the previously existing human resources formed the additional personnel that had been sent, and the 392nd Convoy Regiment with 19 convoy detachments for sending off the special echelons from Estonia. Each detachment consisted of 76 officers, 456 escorting soldiers and 57 medics – a total of 589 people.<sup>45</sup> In the course of the operation the number of people participating in the escort of one of these echelons grew to 696.<sup>46</sup> Every echelon had to be convoyed by a unit consisting of at least 24 soldiers. Before that, detailed plans for putting together an echelon 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 ESSR MVD's central apparatus.

According to the MGB calculations (as of 16 March) the operative groups consisted of a total of

2611 persons, of those 1854 individuals from the MGB, 585 from the MVD and 172 from the military counter-intelligence department of the MGB. The members of the involved internal troops included 5109 men from the MGB system, 767 from the MVD and the militia, and in addition 3053 fighters from the people's defence (destruction) battalions, 8929 people all in all. In addition, the operative groups included 9375 ECP activists and kolkhozniks. In total, the staff executing the operations was calculated to consist of 20,915 individuals. An additional reserve of 706 men was allocated to the loading stations in railway stations and the reserve groups; of those, 260 were operative officials and 446 from the internal MGB troops.<sup>47</sup>

For the secret assembling of the MGB troops the commander of the MGB troops Lieutenant General Burmak had drawn up a "Plan for Ensuring the Secret Assembling of Armed Forces in Areas of Activity", which was approved by Lieutenant General Ogoltsov on 7 March. According to that plan, soldiers of the internal troops arriving from outside the Baltic states were, until the start of the operation, to be kept in ignorance of the tasks awaiting them. The officers received information packages with their instructions immediately before their arrival at their destination. The concentration of internal troops to the Baltic states was explained as a spring training manoeuvre. On the basis of Burmak's plan, the MGBs of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian SSR drew up their own plans of measures, considering the local circumstances. The ESSR MGB plan has not been found in the Estonian archives, but it is probably analogous to the similar plan of the MGB of the Latvian SSR, called: "A plan of anti-banditry struggle and deployment of military units in training; drawn up in accordance with the plan of the General Staff of Internal Troops". According to Heinrihs Strods, who had access to the plans in the State Military Archives of Russia, the plan devised for Estonia was especially rich in detail.<sup>48</sup>

The soldiers and officers of the internal troops were transported to the Baltic states by echelons between 10 and 15 March 1949. They were mostly

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Lieutenant General Stepanov, commander of the USSR MVD border guard troops, to Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 25 February 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 161–161v. The entire document has been published in *Monthly Akadeemia*, No. 8, 1999, pp. 1736–1737.

<sup>45</sup> Report from the special representative of the USSR MVD Major General Rogatin to Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Lieutenant General Ryasnoy, 12 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 261, 279v.

<sup>46</sup> Certificate by Lieutenant Colonel Avik, head of the mobilisation department of the ESSR MVD, for a report to be submitted by the ESSR MVD, 9 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 292.

<sup>47</sup> Report of the Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kummi and special representative of the USSR MGB Yermolin to the Minister of State Security of the USSR Abakumov, 16 March 1949, PAA 17/1a-1, pp. 158–159.

<sup>48</sup> Heinrihs Strods, "PSRS Valsts drošības ministrijas pilnvarotais pārstāvis Baltijas valstīs iedzīvotāju izsūtīšanas operācijai "Krusta banga" (Priboj)" (The Top Secret Operation "Surf" (priboi) Carried out by the State Security Ministry to Deport Inhabitants from the Baltic States), *Quarterly Latvijas Vēsture*, No. 2 (30), 1998, pp. 40–42.

unloaded in military areas of residence and only by night. On 16–23 March, the additional forces were used in anti-banditry struggle. Within that period, 14 operations were conducted in the Baltic States, and 54 'bandits' were killed and 94 arrested in the course of the operations. The most extensive exchange of fire took place in Jelgava County in Latvia, where 15 forest brothers were killed and 10 arrested on 17 March.

On 23–24 March, the military were distributed into counties.<sup>49</sup>

## THE OPERATIVE FORCES GO INTO ACTION

Although the decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR ordered the operation to be conducted between 20 and 25 March, that proved impossible to manage. It is not known when it was decided to postpone the start of the operation. Probbaly, the first delays occurred already in the course of compiling the files – the counties were unable to prepare the assigned number of files. This caused further delays already in drawing up the action plans.

Starting on 21 March, the forces were deployed to the various counties. The combined MGB and MVD detachments tried to find suitable places near the train stations 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. In Keila, 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 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.<sup>50</sup>

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 Pärnu, where a problem arose with obtaining motor transport vehicles, an ECP and ESSR Council of Ministers regulation was issued concerning the mobilisation of all automobiles in Pärnu. Militia checkpoints 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. There the vehicles were checked out by automobile inspectors, and the drivers' documents were taken away. In this manner a sizeable number 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 the forest brothers, which were also feared. Additional 140 military were transported to areas of active forest brotherhood. A reinforcement of 455 MVD border guard soldiers and officers was deployed to Saaremaa and Hiiumaa for the period of the operation.<sup>51</sup> Also, the existing network of agents and informants was put on special alert, so that they would, in case such activities became apparent, give a 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 11 p.m.<sup>52</sup> 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.

<sup>49</sup> Report from Burmak, commanding officer of the internal troops of the USSR MGB, to Deputy Minister of State Security Ogoltsov, May 1949, RGVA 38650-1-408, p. 442.

<sup>50</sup> Report from Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev to Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov, 12 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 281.

<sup>51</sup> Report from Burmak, commanding officer of the internal troops of the USSR MGB, to Deputy Minister of State Security Ogoltsov, May 1949, RGVA 38650-1-408, pp. 439–440.

<sup>52</sup> Report from Colonel Konikov, chief of staff of the 23rd division, and Colonel Skachkov, commander of the 51st Rifles Regiment, to USSR MVD special representative Rogatin, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 152.

For instance, in the evening of 21 March, a patrol was sent to the streets of Viljandi (10 officers and 10 sergeants from the administration of the POW-camp No. 286), which moved around for 12 hours, from 9 p.m. to 9 a.m. As anti-soviet rumours were gathering force among the population, the whole operative staff were dispatched in civilian clothes to several popular gathering sites to investigate the public sentiments.<sup>53</sup>

During the week preceding the operation, the operative groups were formed and the leaders were assigned. For each family, also a soldier or a fighter of people's defence battalion and a couple of activists were allocated. In the assigning of group leaders, preference was given to MGB and MVD personnel who were familiar with the particular area that the group was to operate in. It was generally attempted to allocate families within close distance of each other for each group.

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. In reality, probably due to the shortage of time, and maybe for conspiracy reasons, this was often omitted. 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 rural municipality in Järva 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 Piirisaare (an island in Lake Peipsi), on the other hand, were never deported, since the ice road, connecting the island with the mainland was beginning to melt and no one dared cross the ice with horses.

The activists being made use of in every group were recruited by *partorgs*, who received this assignment from the local ECP Committee's 1st secretary, who, in turn, had been instructed by the ECP CC and ESSR Council of Ministers special representative. These special representatives 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 Valga County activists for instance were picked out by ECP County Committee 1st Secretary Ovsyannikov, who found the suitable individuals from amongst ECP members, membership candidates, YCL members and ECP officials. From amongst them, Karula rural municipality executive committee deputy chairman Kärk, Helme rural municipality executive committee chairman Saarmets, ECP member from Valga Power Plant Grossman, ECP Valga County Committee agitation and propaganda department head Kint, Sangaste rural municipality ECP committee secretary Kollo, and executive committee deputy chairman Vainola stood out especially with their energetic participation.<sup>54</sup> 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 rural municipality executive committee and were not permitted to leave until the beginning of the operation.

In the evening of 24 March, the ECP and YCL members, activists etc, were convened under the false pretext of discussing the spring sowing, an ECP meeting etc. As the local *partorgs* ECP functionaries were required to convene a considerable number of people within a short period of time, the possibility to gather a sufficient amount of people depended on the local ECP leader's mettle, or his ability to attract people to the event (at some locations advertisements were made for cinema, buffet, a meeting with Nikolai Karotamm, etc.). Therefore, the company thus collected was often motley. The cases when also individuals selected for deportation were present on the activists' meeting were not exceptional. Such individuals were arrested at the very start of the operation. The above description of the excellent conduct of Ovsyannikov, 1st secretary of the Valga County Committee of the ECP, is therefore probably a glorification in retrospect.

The participants received their instructions immediately before the start of the operation. Nikolai Karotamm's instructions to the activists were the following: "In rural municipalities, conduct the gatherings without any unnecessary ears present. Send them out to the operation directly from the instruction room. The deportation note is not to be handed to the deportee. [...] The activists are to stay in the household. Within the same day, most extensive political explanatory work is to be carried out. To explain who was deported and why. To confirm that

<sup>53</sup> Report from Shumarin, special representative of the ESSR MVD in Viljandi County, to Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 30 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 221.

<sup>54</sup> Report by the Valga County department of the ESSR MVD Captain Erm to Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 30 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 218-219.

**TABLE 1. DELIVERY OF CARRIAGES TO THE LOADING STATIONS ON 24–25 MARCH<sup>57</sup>**

Echelon no.	Carriages	Date	Time	Loading Station	County	Head of the Loading Station	Deportees
97301	67	25th	4.35 a.m.	Rakvere	Viru	Major Zavjalov	600
97302	21/43	25th	2.10 a.m.	Rakvere/Jõhvi	Viru	Major Galkevich	300
97303	58	25th	1.55 a.m.	Tapa	Järva	Major Stepanov	480
97304	43/10	25th	2.03 a.m.	Kehra/Tapa	Harju	Major Ivanov	700
97305	58	24th	11.14 p.m.	Ülemiste	Pärnu	Major Buzin	320
97306	58	24th	11.50 p.m.	Ülemiste	Tallinn	Captain Ots	490
97307	57	25th	4.00 a.m.	Keila	Harju	Captain Lazarev	400
97308	63	25th	5.00 a.m.	Risti	Pärnu	Lieutenant Colonel Hanson	950
97309	58	25th	2.32 a.m.	Haapsalu	Lääne	Lieutenant Colonel Kuditski	500
97310	13/47	24th	10.08 p.m.	Haapsalu/ Paldiski	Saare, Hiiu	Major Zavolotski	330
97311	58	25th	3.08 a.m.	Jõgeva	Tartu	Captain Zykov	547
97312	20/30	24th	11.26 p.m.	Jõgeva/ Veriora	Võru	Major Andreyushkov	310
97313	57	25th	4.58 a.m.	Jõgeva	Viljandi	Captain Petrov	400
97314	57	24th	21:47	Tartu	Tartu	Lieutenant Colonel Vallik	400
97315	60	25th	4.30 a.m.	Elva	Tartu	Captain Aleksin	420
97316	57	25th	1.47 a.m.	Keeni	Valga	Major Ulyanov	400
97317	58	25th	4.46 a.m.	Puka	Viljandi	Lieutenant Colonel Raud	500
97318	15/13	25th	1.10 a.m.	Võru/Puka	Võru	Major Paukson	-
97319	58	25th	3.54 a.m.	Võru	Võru	Major Voronov	510

the others would not be deported. To engage kolkhoz members in the process of deportation.”<sup>55</sup>

The decision on the deportation was announced to the activists at the moment when the leaders of the MGB operative groups arrived with the troops, and armed guards were posted at the doors. Then it was announced that the deportation of kulaks and enemies of the people would begin. After that, the local inhabitants were divided into operative groups. People not allocated to the operative groups were usually detained at the rural municipality houses until the next morning or noon.

## CONDUCTING OF THE OPERATION

In the night of March 24–25 from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. echelons that had been waiting at the Pskov and Gatchina stations arrived.<sup>56</sup> The supervisors of the echelons, who were officers of convoy troops, were given specific instructions, money and bookkeeping documents. The following table provides an overview of the locations, arrival and volume of the echelons allocated to each loading station (the number of carriages and people intended to travel in them).

Operation “Priboi” was officially launched in the early morning of 25 March – in the capital cities at 4.00 a.m., in the counties at 6.00 a.m. Appropriate

<sup>55</sup> Lembit Raid, “*Kas peremees või käsualune? Parteiarhiivi materjalidest, III*” (Master or Underling? From the Materials of Party Archives, Part 3), Periodical *Kleio*, No. 2 (12), 1995, p. 46.

<sup>56</sup> Report of the USSR MVD special representative Rogatin to the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Rjasnoy, 31 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 262.

<sup>57</sup> Scheme of the loading stations, 24 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 15v, published in Monthly *Kultuur ja Elu*, No. 2/3, 1999, pp. 20–21.

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 was assigned definite families that the group had to send out. It was estimated that every group would, on the average, have to deal with 3–4 families, but this number was constantly being increased. In order to fulfil the stipulated quota, also the number of operative groups was increased, so the total number of participating operative groups was 2099.<sup>58</sup>

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 deport them, 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 people being convoyed 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.<sup>59</sup>

Characteristic of all deportations were the tears, despair, and anxiety of people aroused from sleep in the early hours of the morning. In certain cases the operative groups were briefed on the political beliefs of the deportee or his family, which apparently was necessary. Certainly not all members of an operative

group were of one mind, a fact that those who compiled the reports have with few exceptions dared to admit.

The packing was to be completed in great hurry. The time allowed for packing, as well as the amount and nature of the luggage was to be of utmost importance later for the survival of the deportees. Compared to the earlier deportations, a considerable amount of luggage was allowed in 1949. For instance, people deported from East Poland in 1940, had only been allowed 500 kg of luggage, which during the June deportations of 1941 was reduced to 100 kg. Those deported as Germans in 1945 were allowed a ton of luggage per family, and in 1949 the amount was 1.5 tons. No one probably managed to pack in the whole of allowed weight, as many did not even possess so many belongings. On the other hand, the two hours allocated for packing were often reduced to a few dozen minutes. People apprehended outside their homes had to leave practically empty-handed and could only hope for the assistance of others. Third, people were mostly on the verge of desperation and unable to think rationally what kind of things would be useful in the circumstances of Siberia. Here, much depended on the locals belonging to operative groups, who gave advice on which objects to pack. Several cases are known when soldiers and even officers in charge of the groups advised the deportees on what to pack in their luggage, proceeding from their own experience. There were people among them whose families had been deported earlier. In Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the deportations were a great shock. In the Soviet Union, where millions of people had been deported in 1920–1940, it was still a familiar phenomenon despite the secrecy of the state security system.

While the operative staff and the guards were delivering the deportees to the loading stations, the ECP and Soviet activists were left behind at their living quarters to list the property left behind and hand it over to the local administration. The property of the deportees was to be confiscated and its realisation was to be organised by the chairmen of executive committees and members of the village soviets (the cattle of the deported farmers was handed over to the kolkhozes that were under formation at the time).<sup>60</sup> This made the 'activists' implicated in the operation accomplices of the deportation in the eyes of the local

<sup>58</sup> Report from Burmak, commanding officer of the internal troops of the USSR MGB, to Deputy Minister of State Security Ogoltsov, May 1949, RGVA 38650-1-408, p. 439.

<sup>59</sup> Plan for devising the operation "Priboi", drawn up by the Saaremaa county department head of the ESSR MGB Vasili Zagreblov, and special representative of the ESSR MGB at Saaremaa Vladimir Shevelkov, approved by the Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm and special representative of the USSR MGB Yermolin, 14 March 1949, PAA 17/1a-1, p. 188.

<sup>60</sup> Decision of the Council of Ministers of the ESSR No. 016 on the realisation of property confiscated from kulak households and handing it over to kolkhozes in the ESSR, published in: *Võimatu vaikida*. Vol. II, pp. 854–855.

population, and created tensions that lasted for half a century, some of them are present even today. The deportees and their families remembered mostly the local activists who participated in the operation as guides or recorders of the assets, and not the unfamiliar operatives, officers or other staff issuing orders.

The leader of the operative group was responsible for conducting the operation on local level, his tasks also included registration and communications with the local headquarters. He was also supposed to fill in a number of documents (an interrogation sheet on the individuals present, search records, etc.) and submit a report on the accomplishment of the task. On the basis of all those documents, the head of the county department of the MGB later drew up a summary report to the Minister Boris Kumm. Unfortunately, a considerable amount of the reports of the leaders of the operative groups have not been preserved, and therefore many details remain unclear till today.

People arrested at home were then gathered into the local assembly stations of the rural municipalities, usually into the rural municipality administration house, whence they were delivered to the loading stations or harbours (on the islands) on the same or the following day depending on circumstances. If a family to be deported lived close to a loading station or harbour, they were taken to a train or boat directly from home. The people deported from Saaremaa were taken to Paldiski Port on the mainland via the Jaagarahu harbour. The freight boats “Vishera” and “Läänemaa” were used for the transport of deportees, guarded by two navy trawlers and one submarine fighter of the MVD border guard,<sup>61</sup> which had probably been dispatched by the Tallinn MGB headquarters. People deported from Hiiumaa were taken to Paldiski from the Lehtna harbour and loaded on the echelon there. On 26 March, additional 6 people were detained on Hiiumaa and taken to Tallinn by plane.<sup>62</sup> As to the islands of Abruksa and Vilsandi, the deporters did not find a boat fit to moor on those coasts, so no deportations were carried out.

Both the officials of the MGB and the MVD were responsible for loading the deportees on the ech-

elons. With the loading on the echelon, the MGB's leading role and responsibility for the deportees was over, and the supervision and responsibility were taken over by the MVD at that point. A MGB employee responsible for delivering the carriages to stations was allocated to each echelon, as well as a commandant in charge of receiving the people at the loading stations (appointed by the MGB). In each loading station, one of the ESSR MVD officers was appointed a loading station commander, whose duty it was to guide the deportees in the station, receiving their luggage from the MGB officials, guaranteeing public order in co-operation with the commandant, and dispatching the echelons in co-operation with the railway officials.<sup>63</sup> To each echelon, also a convoy chief (from the mVD convoy troops) and an echelon chief was appointed, with operative and economic deputies. The latter was also in charge of the physicians and other medical personnel.<sup>64</sup> If necessary, also some interpreters were dispatched to the loading stations.

Special attention should be given to the operative deputy of the echelon commander, whose main task was to prevent escapes and to apprehend the escapees. In case of escape, they were responsible for capturing the escapees and organising pursuit, they also had to provide pursuers with information about the escapee. In order to prevent escapes, information about suspicious individuals was gathered from the operative staff – it was supposed that there were more suspect individuals among singles than those who were deported as whole families. For instance, in the echelon No. 97312 that was dispatched from Jõgeva, all single deportees, suspected of intentions to escape, were placed in a separate carriage.<sup>65</sup> On the echelon's way to Siberia, also informers were to be recruited, as there had to be at least two informers in each carriage. During the walks of the deportees, distribution of food, fuel, etc., the sentiments of the deportees were to be investigated in order to get on good terms with suitable individuals who could later be put to ‘operative use’. Above all, information about persons who might try to escape, send letters or procure alcoholic beverages was considered important.<sup>66</sup> Dangerous individuals and those inclined to escape were to be isolated and placed

<sup>61</sup> V. Pool. “Operatsioon “Priboi””.

<sup>62</sup> Report from ESSR MVD special representative Major Matonin to Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 28 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 246v.

<sup>63</sup> List of loading station heads drawn up by Smirnov, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR, 19 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 164.

<sup>64</sup> List of officials accompanying the echelons, compiled by Smirnov, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR, 19 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 18–31.

<sup>65</sup> Report from head of the Jõgeva loading station Zykov to the Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 29 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 183v–184.

<sup>66</sup> A Notice on the Main Duties and Tasks of the Operative Deputy of the Echelon Commander, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 46, published in Monthly *Akadeemia*, No. 5, 1999, p. 1058.

under reinforced guard. Still, at least 12 persons managed to escape from the echelons.<sup>67</sup>

The echelons moved along pre-determined routes. In Estonia, the railway lines used for the operation were divided into seven sections. Those were controlled by 350 military, in charge of the security of technology and the railway dike. The military had been placed on their posts along the rails in pairs, and the density was about one watch-point for 7–8 kilometres.<sup>68</sup> Squads patrolling the surroundings of the railway lines also picked up the letters thrown out of echelons. For instance, the squads of the 51st regiment of the MVD railway troops picked up 94 letters, informing of the deportation to Siberia, sending regards to relatives, taking farewell of Estonia, complaining of lack of water, light and conveniences in the carriages, and containing various anti-Soviet statements.<sup>69</sup> The letters also contained appeals of retaliation to fellow-countrymen.<sup>70</sup>

But the carrying out of the operation did not take place as smoothly as it had been planned. Despite all the efforts a lot of people were not sent out. The main reason was that people had been staying away from home. 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 agents carried out searches for them. In the city of Pärnu, for instance, the MGB department 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 ESSR Minister of Internal Affairs Resev's deputy, Pastelnyak). 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 MVD 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 cities, for instance in Võru.

In some cases, operative groups drove to locations in neighbouring counties, from which appropriate information had been sent, to catch fugitives. Minors who 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 were even cases of children being released at the last minute.

The operation that had started in the small hours of 25 March and should, according to plans, have been completed within three days, actually lasted until late night of 29 March. The dispatching of the echelons began in the second half of 26 March, and the last echelon departed at 9 p.m. on 29 March. If the first echelons did not contain the allocated number of people, the last ones, containing also all deportees who were apprehended later, were highly overpopulated. 112 carriages were never used.<sup>71</sup>

The deportees were placed to the echelons on the basis of documents compiled by the MGB officials. Many documents were faulty, names and addresses inaccurate, also individuals who were not to be deported had been entered into documents. There were cases when a deportee without any documents had to wait beside the echelon for ca 10 hours before new documents had been compiled and they could be admitted to the echelon.<sup>72</sup> In the echelon No. 97319 in Võru, people were placed directly into carriages without a previous check of documents. The MGB officials who had delivered them to the station left to have a rest or deliver new deportees, bringing the documents with them. In the dark carriages, packed with

**67** Information from Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev to Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm on individuals escaped from the echelons, 7 May 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-140, pp. 304–305.

**68** Report from Colonel Konikov, chief of staff of the 23rd division, and Colonel Skachkov, commander of the 51st Rifles Regiment, to USSR MVD special representative Rogatin, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 155.

**69** Report from the USSR MVD special representative Major General Rogatin to Lieutenant General Ryasnoy, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR, 31 March 1949; report from Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev to Minister of Internal Affairs Kruglov, 12 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 264, 282.

**70** Report from Colonel Konikov, chief of staff of the 23rd division, and Colonel Skachkov, commander of the 51st Rifles Regiment, to USSR MVD special representative Rogatin, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 155.

**71** Report of the USSR MVD special representative Rogatin to Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Ryasnoy, 31 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 262–263.

**72** Report from Captain Aleksin, head of the Elva loading station, to Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Smirnov, 28 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 185–185v.

people, identification was impossible.<sup>73</sup> As the last echelons could not be detained any longer, they were dispatched with partly compiled documents. There were arguments about the placing into carriages and removing from carriages of people delivered to the station without or almost without luggage, as well as diseased and aged people and infants.

The problems with heating and diseased people started to occur already in Estonia, and were aggravated on the way to Siberia. As the stops of the echelons proved to be longer than expected, the heating reserves were consumed prematurely by several echelons. The medical staff had a scanty store of medicines, in some echelons, they were non-existent.<sup>74</sup> Six diseased people were removed from the echelon No. 97314 in Tartu: a man with croup pneumonia, a 14-year-old child with scarlet fever and 7-year-old with tuberculosis, who were dispatched to hospital with their mothers. In addition, a 3 months old infant, who was to be deported with his mother, was left in the care of his father. As the baby needed artificial food, which was not available in the echelon, the baby was left with the father and the mother remained in the echelon.<sup>75</sup> In Võru, in the echelon No. 97319, a three-weeks-old baby died in the course of the loading, and a woman was removed from the echelon due to starting labour.<sup>76</sup> In the echelon No. 97304 at Tapa, a woman poisoned herself.<sup>77</sup> In the echelon No. 97310 (Saaremaa-Hiiumaa) a woman hanged herself. There were other incidents. According to the report of Captain Kovalenko, deputy head of the 3rd special department of the ESSR MVD from 30 May 1949, 45 people died under way, 62 were removed from the echelons due to disease, and 6 on the orders of the MGB.<sup>78</sup>

A careful register of the deportees was kept during the whole operation. The quota – to deport 7500 families from Estonia – was to be fulfilled. In every

two hours, the information about the uptake of the carriages was sent to the MVD via the MVD transport department. On the phone, data was also constantly forwarded to the operation leaders.<sup>79</sup> In the MGB, where the data constantly delivered from all counties was entered into a table according to individual categories, the officials started to calculate the quota fulfilment percentage on the third day of the operation. As of 6 a.m. on 28 March, 99.7% of the planned number of families had been apprehended, although by individual figures, the quota fulfilment rate was lower, 87.4.<sup>80</sup> By the morning of 29 March, the percentage had grown. Of the families to be deported, 103.9% had been caught, although the percentage of individuals still remained lower than planned, or 90.76%.<sup>81</sup>

**TABLE 2. CERTIFICATE ON THE RESULTS OF OPERATION “PRIBOI”, ISSUED BY DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF ZAPOROSHCHUK ON 30 MARCH 1949<sup>82</sup>**

<b>Category</b>	
Kulak families	2870
Families of underground bandits/nationalists	375
Families of bandits killed in armed conflict	143
Families of convicted bandits/nationalists	4204
Families of legalised bandits	32
Families of convicted assistants to bandits	277
Families total	7901
Men	4507
Women	10,280
Children	5744
People in total	20,531

<sup>73</sup> Report from Major Voronov, head of the Võru loading station, to Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 29 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 196v–197.

<sup>74</sup> Report from Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev to Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov, 12 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 281v.

<sup>75</sup> Report from head of the Tartu loading station, First Lieutenant of Militia Vallik, to Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 2 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 179.

<sup>76</sup> Report from Major Voronov, head of the Võru loading station, to Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 29 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 195.

<sup>77</sup> Report from Colonel Konikov, chief of staff of the 23rd division, and Colonel Skachkov, commander of the 51st Rifles Regiment, to USSR MVD special representative Rogatin, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 156.

<sup>78</sup> Certificate of Captain Kovalenko, deputy head of the mobilisation department of the ESSR MVD, on the arrival of the deportees at their destined locations of exile, 30 May 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-140, p. 330.

<sup>79</sup> Report from Major Ivanov, commander of the Kehra loading station, to Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Smirnov, 29 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 166.

<sup>80</sup> Report on the progress of the deportation operation, 28 March 1949, 6:30 a.m., PAA 17/1a-1, p. 292.

<sup>81</sup> Report on the progress of the deportation operation, 29 March 1949, 2:30 a.m., PAA 17/1a-1, p. 285.

<sup>82</sup> Final report from Zaporoshchuk, deputy chief of staff of the operation “Priboi”, on the individuals deported in the course of the operation “Priboi” from the territory of the ESSR, 30 March 1949, PAA 17/1a-1, p. 329.

The figures concerning deportees vary to a certain extent in later documents. For instance, according to the information of Major General Rogatin, representative of the USSR MVD, from 31 March 1949, 7488 families (20,535 people)<sup>83</sup> had been deported from Estonia. The information submitted to Karotamm by Colonel Mikhailov, deputy to the Minister of State Security of the ESSR, speaks of 7552 families and 20,702 deportees.<sup>84</sup> In later documents, the most widespread figures are 7553 families and 20,660 persons. This figure is also present in the certificate of Colonel Valentin Moskalenko from the Ministry of State Security of the ESSR from 1952.<sup>85</sup> This is certainly not the final number of deportees. There were also the heads of kulak families, who were currently imprisoned or in preliminary captivity for failure to fulfill the quota, and were later, after the end of their sentence, dispatched to join their families in Siberia.<sup>86</sup> There were also ‘volunteers’ who followed their families to Siberia and were registered there as deportees. And the children born in Siberia. Nor must we forget the persons who escaped deportation and went into hiding afterwards, and were killed during raids or imprisoned and sent to prison camps.

The final conclusions of the deportation operation were made in August 1949, when a large number of persons were decorated with military decorations (the Order of the Red Banner, the Order of the Patriotic War) for outstanding services during the deportation operation.<sup>87</sup>

## THE POST-DEPORTATION SITUATION IN ESTONIA

Despite the large percentages initially reported, eventually all institutions involved in the leading of the operation had to admit faults in their work, the heaviest of those being the large number of individuals that had managed to escape deportation.

The people were shocked, and feared another wave of deportations.<sup>88</sup> There were rumours about a plan to deport nearly 90% of Estonians.<sup>89</sup> There were no follow-up mass deportations in Estonia. As opposed to Lithuania, where on 10–20 April 1949 an extensive dragnet was conducted to catch fugitives from the March deportations. The result was, that 2 additional trainloads of people, 2927 individuals, were taken away. The USSR Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Vasili Rjasnoy called this an especially dangerous contingent and they were sent to Bodaibo Trest, to the Lenzoloto gold mine.<sup>90</sup>

The operation had certainly reached one of its goals – the people’s resistance to kolkhozes was broken, and the economic independence of the remaining farmers liquidated.<sup>91</sup> According to the ECP CC, about one half of the Estonian farming households had joined kolkhozes by 10 April. New kolkhozes were formed every day. If on 20 March, there were 641 kolkhozes in Estonia, uniting 11,402 households or 17% of all Estonian farms, then on 10 April there were 2079 kolkhozes consisting of 55,424 households or 43%. By that time, another 14,669 households had filled in an application to join kolkhozes.<sup>92</sup>

But did the deportation fulfill its second goal, suppressing the resistance of forest brothers? To understand that, a closer look should be taken at a later

<sup>83</sup> Report of the USSR MVD special representative Major General Rogatin to Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Lieutenant General Rjasnoy, 31 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, pp. 261–267, published in Monthly *Kultuur ja Elu*, No. 2/3, 1999, pp. 38–41.

<sup>84</sup> Notice from Deputy Minister of State Security of the ESSR Mikhailov to ECP CC 1st Secretary Karotamm, 16 April 1949, ERAF 1-14-87, pp. 51–52.

<sup>85</sup> Certificate by Minister of State Security of the ESSR Moskalenko to Deputy Minister of State Security of the USSR Savchenko, 26 May 1952, ERAF SM 17/2-1-306, pp. 3–6.

<sup>86</sup> Aigi Rahi, 1949. *aasta märtsiküüditamine Tartu linnas ja maakonnas* (Deportation of March 1949 in the City and County of Tartu), Tartu, 1998, pp. 29–30.

<sup>87</sup> On those who received decorations see “*Dokumente 1949. aasta märtsiküüditamisest*”, Monthly *Akadeemia*, No. 1, 2000, pp. 150–155; *Võimatu vaikida*. Vol. II, pp. 868–870, 880–884; Margit Mariann Koppel, “1949. aasta märtsiküüditamine” (Deportation of March 1949), Periodical *Kultuur ja Elu*, No. 2/3, 1999, pp. 30–33. The names of decorated individuals were partly published in the 25 and 26 August issues of the newspaper *Pravda* in 1949.

<sup>88</sup> Report from Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev to Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov, 12 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 282v.

<sup>89</sup> Report from Captain Erm, head of the Valga County department of the ESSR MVD, to Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev, 30 March 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 220.

<sup>90</sup> Arvydas Anu auskas, *Lietuvi tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940–1958 metais* (The Soviet Extermination of the Lithuanian Nation 1940–1958), Vilnius, 1996, p. 325.

<sup>91</sup> David Feest, *Zwangskollektivierung im Baltikum : die Sowjetisierung des estnischen Dorfes 1944–1953*, Köln, 2007.

<sup>92</sup> Report from Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev to Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov, 12 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 282v.

course of events. The MGB troops deployed in Estonia started to leave on 3 April 1949, and before that, they were used for pursuing people hiding in the forests.<sup>93</sup> In the following months, the retaliation for relations deported to Siberia gathered momentum, and attacks against Soviet officials, *partorgs* ECP leaders, kolkhoz chairmen, security officials and their auxiliaries became more frequent, often culminated with an exchange of fire and ended with wounds and casualties.<sup>94</sup> The period of active resistance ended in 1953.<sup>95</sup>

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? In Estonia, 9512 people managed to avoid deportation for various reasons (being out of home or at an unknown place, suffering from grave illness, under arrest, or hiding from the deporters).<sup>96</sup> The Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Aleksander Resev proposed that the ESSR MVD could participate in the search and capturing of such people. Resev also recommended the registration of such people by means of reinforced passport regime. He also turned to Colonel General Sergei Kruglov, Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR, for instructions for the deportation of such individuals from Estonia.<sup>97</sup>

There was another category of people, on whom Resev asked Moscow to express their views. On 10 March 1949, when the last of the lists of March deportees was being compiled the ESSR Minister of Internal Affairs, Aleksander Resev, sent an inquiry to the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs, Sergei Kruglov, about minors who had been sent to special exile with their parents in 1941 and 1945. By 1949, many had come of age and returned to Estonia. Resev requested regulations about their return, were they to be arrested or charged with, for example, the criminal offence of escaping?<sup>98</sup> Consequently the burden of guilt of

these people did not expire with time in the eyes of the Soviet authorities; people who had already been punished could be punished again on the basis of the same charge. According to Memento, at least 800 people, deported as children and now returned to Estonia, were arrested. After some time in prison camps, they were sent back to their place of exile.<sup>99</sup>

During the summer, the search for fugitives from the Deportations became more extensive. On 12 July 1949, the ESSR Minister of Internal Affairs issued directive no. 21ss, which marked the launching of an anti-crime campaign as well as the more intensive indicting 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 state security and internal affairs ministers, according to which, the extensive apprehension of those who had managed to escape the Deportations was becoming, ever more, the responsibility of the MVD, it was proposed to the MGB county departments that they give comprehensive assistance to MVD operatives in apprehending and indicting illegal individuals (kulaks, those who aided the bandits, nationalists, and the family members of bandits) who had managed to avoid special resettlement and formed a base for banditry.<sup>100</sup>

In accordance with the directive of the Ministry of State Security of the USSR No. 0065-44g, lists for the registration of members of kulak households not deported in March 1949 were compiled.<sup>101</sup> On 9 August 1949, the list consisted of 174 families, and information on 12 more families were added on 12 September – the list was constantly updated.

Until 1953, the issue of undeported individuals emerged several times. For instance, it was discussed in connection with the purge of Tallinn as a border

<sup>93</sup> Report from Burmak, commanding officer of the internal troops of the USSR MGB, to Deputy Minister of State Security of the USSR Ogoltsov, May 1949, RGVA 38650-1-408, p. 447.

<sup>94</sup> ristviide mõnele raportit tekstile, mis käsitleb metsavendlust jms

<sup>95</sup> Tõnu Tannberg, “*Julgeolekuorganite tegevusest metsavendluse mahasurumisel 1953. aasta esimestel kuudel*” (On the role of the security structures in the suppression of the forest brothers in the first months of 1953), *Monthly Akadeemia*, No. 3, 2005, pp. 554–572.

<sup>96</sup> Certificate by Minister of State Security of the ESSR Moskalenko on individuals deported and respectively not deported in 1949 and in 1951, May 1952, ERAF SM 17/2-1-306, p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> Report from Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Resev to Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov, 12 April 1949, ERAF SM 17/1-1-139, p. 282v.

<sup>98</sup> GARF P 9479-1-455, p. 77. Resev had used the case of the Kigaste family as an example. In June, 1941, Eha Kigaste, her daughter Maime and son Henu were sent to the Kirov oblast. In March 1947, they escaped to Estonia. On February 11, 1949, they were arrested and charged with escaping under Article 82 of the Criminal Code of the Russian SFSR. To be more specific, that the head of the family, Edgar Kigaste had been an official in the Ministry Internal Affairs of the Republic of Estonia, the head of the propaganda department, and one of the leaders of the Pro Patria Union, who had successfully gone into hiding and escaped to Sweden. His wife Eha was sent to the camps for 3 years, and was banished again (until 1958) after serving her sentence. The daughter, Maime, was married in Estonia, but was banished again to the Kirov oblast in November, 1950. She was released in 1956. The son, Henu, was sent back into exile on a convict transport, regardless of the fact that no other family members lived at the destination at the time. Henu was also released in 1956.

<sup>99</sup> *Küüditamine Eestist Venemaale : juuniküüditamine 1941 & küüditamised 1940–1953*, pp. 297, 804.

<sup>100</sup> Order of the Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm to heads of city and county departments of the ESSR MGB, 29 July 1949, ERAF 131SM-1-151, pp. 56–65.

<sup>101</sup> Lists of kulaks who avoided deportation, ERAF 4K-1-25.

**TABLE 3. DEPORTEES OF MARCH 1949 DIVIDED BY AGE, SEX AND NATIONALITY<sup>106</sup>**

State	Echelons	Families	People	Men	Women	Children
Estonia	19	7471	20,480	4566	9866	6048
Latvia	33	14,173	41,708	11,135	19,535	11,038
Lithuania	24	8985	28,656	8929	11,287	8440
Total	76	30,629	90,844	24,630	40,688	25,526

city. In the letter No. 113858 of Shubnyakov, deputy head of the 2nd Main Administration of the USSR MGB, from 27 January 1951, the following position is expressed: “On the orders of the Deputy Minister comrade Ogoltsov, this contingent is to be registered, although their deportation is *temporarily* [my emphasis, A.R-T.] not going to take place”.

Another party interested in another deportation were the Siberian oblast administrations of the MGB, who were constantly making inquiries. The greatest number of inquiries about the possibility of deporting the undeported members of the kulak and nationalist families to the new place of residence of their relations came from the oblasts of Omsk and Novosibirsk. ESSR MGB had not received the relevant orders from the USSR MGB, and there were no additional deportations. Still, the ESSR MGB approached Moscow several times with this problem, and asked for the stipulations of higher instances on “how to proceed in the future with the people who avoided deportation, how are their files to be compiled and how are the deportations to be organised in practice? If the answer is affirmative, it is recommended that orders be issued also to the prosecutor”.<sup>102</sup>

Mass deportation of peaceful citizens from their homeland has a two-fold impact: both on those who were taken away and on those who remained in Estonia. In most cases the deportation was not connected with the activity of a person himself or herself. Thus the person punished needed to have no personal ‘guilt’, it sufficed to have a suspect family connection. The family was not absolved from their responsibility even when the so-called culprit had been imprisoned or died in a hard labour camp by the time the family was deported. By Soviet laws death did not exculpate the offender’s family from responsibility. Since the circle of those to punish was

so extensive, no one could be confident that they would not be next in line.

Russian historian A. Suslov drew attention to the fact that there were a great number of people in the Soviet Union who were labelled as ‘special contingent’ (тр поу о оу). In present-day researches on Soviet society, such people should be analysed as a separate social group, who had to fulfil a number of social functions – they had to serve as a scary example for the rest of the population. Similarly, the destiny of close relatives of the ‘special contingent’ is worth being researched from the aspect of their relationships under Soviet rule.<sup>103</sup>

## ON THE FURTHER FATE OF THE MARCH DEPORTEES

On the last days of March 1949, 19 echelons were dispatched from Estonia. 9 echelons were sent to the Novosibirsk oblast, 6 to Krasnoyarsk kray, 2 to Omsk oblast and 2 to Irkutsk oblast. The deportees were distributed in the areas by a commission consisting of the CPSU secretary and chairman of the executive committee of the relevant area, as well as the local MGB and MVD leaders. In general, the deportees were settled in less developed areas. 96.9% of the deportees from the Baltic states started out in the sovkhoses, kolkhoses and forest farms with the poorest prospects. Only 2.1% was employed in industry.<sup>104</sup>

For the financial leaders of Siberia, the 1949 deportations also meant additional labour. Unfortunately, the deported contingent did not meet their expectations. Among the people deported from the Baltic states, there were 2850 single elderly people in the age over 70, 146 invalids and 185 children deported without parents or relations.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>102</sup> Certificate by Minister of State Security of the ESSR from Deputy Minister of State Security of the USSR Savchenko, 26 May 1952, ERAF 17/2-1-306, pp. 4–5.

<sup>103</sup> A. Сулов, “Системный элемент советского общества конца 20-х – начала 50-х годов: спецконтингент” (Special Contingent : A Systematic Element of the Soviet Society from Late 1920s to Early 1950s), Periodical Вопросы истории, no. 3, 2004, pp. 125–134.

<sup>104</sup> H. Strods, “PSRS Valsts Dro bas ministrijas piln gi slepen Baltijas valstu iedz vot ju izs t anas oper cija “Krasta banga””, p. 45.

<sup>105</sup> Report from Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov to Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR Malenkov on the distribution of deportees in Siberia, 21 June 1949, GARF P 9479-1-475, pp. 231–232.

<sup>106</sup> GARF P 9479-1-475, p. 114.

In order to strengthen control, special commandantures were established in 1945, proceeding from the USSR CPC decision No. 35 ‘On the legal situation of people in special exile’. 138 new special commandantures were set up for the surveillance of 30,630 families deported from the Baltic States in March 1949.<sup>107</sup> The task of the special commandantures was to survey the presence and the movements of the deportees, checking the general sentiments, censorship of the mail and prevention of escapes. The deported people were tied to a concrete region which they were not allowed to leave.

The fate of the deportees was determined by the circumstances, and by the people they had to adapt to and live among, fighting hunger, cold, hard work and humiliation. At first they were accommodated in clay or mud huts, barracks, various auxiliary buildings, occasional sheds that were most unsuitable in the Siberian severe climate. Many of them lived as subtenants in local inhabitants’ small houses. When comparing the situation of the deportees of 1941 and the post-war deportees, a certain improvement of living conditions can still be noted. Living conditions in general improved in 1950–1951, which is clearly indicated by the drop in mortality rates. 60% of those deported in 1941 died; in 1949, the mortality rate was approximately 10–15%. Of the deportees, 15% were over sixty years old, and their death rate was highest. Their demise was accelerated by the emotional shock of being forced to leave their homes, and the hard living conditions.<sup>108</sup> Statistics certainly reflect the fact that before the war the heads of families were separated and placed in camps where mortality was extraordinarily high. When family members living apart were allowed to be reunited and when living, working conditions, diet and medical care were improved, the birth rate started rising toward normal levels.

The living and working conditions of the deportees were very different in different districts, and this could make a drastic difference to their destiny. Therefore, over-generalisations should be avoided when dealing with these issues.<sup>109</sup> One of the most important factors for a family’s survival in Siberia was the composition of the family. In a household

where the mother was the only one with employment and had to feed the children as well as one or two grandparents, serious subsistence difficulties could occur. Such families were bound to struggle for survival throughout their stay in exile. If there was a man in the household and the children were older (and usually, due to circumstances, left school and started earning a living for the family), it was easier to come to grips with the situation. Bread was given for the day when they went out to work. In accounting working days the rest of the family members who were not able to work were not taken into consideration, the rations were meant only for a single worker who then had to feed both children and grandparents. Besides, their earnings were detained for months. At first, the support of Estonian relatives was very important. Packages sent to Siberia saved many families from the worst.

The life of the deportees was subjected to strict surveillance, and errors were cruelly punished. If a deportee escaped or assisted an escape, he or she was, according to the enactment of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 26 November 1948, facing criminal charges according to Article 82 of the Criminal Code of the Russian SFSR.<sup>110</sup> Escape was punished by 20 years of hard labour. Administrative charges meant fees and detention. To prevent escapes, the potential fugitives were resettled to more secluded areas, mainly to the more northward and severe region of Krasnoyarsk. Violations of the regime, potential displays of anti-Soviet attitudes (e.g., singing together Estonian songs on the eve of the anniversary of the Republic of Estonia) were followed by arrests and sending to prison camps in which case the arrested persons’ children were taken to a Siberian children’s home or orphanage.

All the measures described above served a definite purpose. By such violent methods, the deported people were to be integrated into the permanent population of Siberia. When in 1941 the people were deported to Siberia without a definite deadline, then beginning with 1949 they were deported to Siberia permanently.<sup>111</sup> In 1952 the status of those who had been deported in 1941 was revised. The

**107** Lieutenant Colonel Kallistov, Colonel Lyutyi, Lieutenant Colonel Vahmyanin, report to Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov, 18 October 1949, GARF P 9479-1-456, pp. 98–102.

**108** Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “Deportationen und Verfolgung in Estland 1940–1953” in *Vom Hitler-Stalin-Pakt bis zu Stalins Tod: Estland 1939–1953*, Hamburg, 2005, p. 222; *Küüditamine Eestist Venemaale: märtsiküüditamine 1949*. Part 1, pp. 346–351.

**109** Aigi Rahi-Tamm, “On the border of tears and laughter. Life Histories of Estonian deportees from a historian’s viewpoint” in *L’aspect dans les langues et les théories: similitudes et différences: [colloque international: 17-18 novembre 2006, Tartu] = Aspect in languages and theories: similarities and differences Studia Romanica Tartuensia*, in series: Studia Romanica Tartuensia, Vol. 6, Tartu, 2007.

**110** Description of the Minister of State Security of the USSR Ignatyev on the application of deportations, 1952, GARF P 9479-1-611, pp. 9–12.

**111** Description of the Minister of State Security of the USSR Ignatyev on the application of deportations, 1952, GARF P 9479-1-611, pp. 4–15.

name of ‘forced settlers’ was dropped and the term ‘specially settled persons’ was taken into use; and also those persons were sentenced to live in Siberia permanently.<sup>112</sup>

## LATER DEPORTATION OPERATIONS – JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES, DEPORTATION OF ESTONIANS AND LATVIANS FROM THE PSKOV OBLAST

In September 1948, the so-called ‘liquidation action’ of Jehovah’s witnesses was launched in the Soviet Union.<sup>113</sup> The ‘O’ department of the USSR MGB, specialising on the struggle against ‘anti-Soviet elements’, operative work among the clergy, revealing of the printers of anti-Soviet leaflets and anonymous documents, was in charge of this operation. In 1949, a lot of trouble was taken to neutralise the underground organisation of Jehovah’s witnesses and the literature they printed.<sup>114</sup> In 1948–1951, 72 Jehovah’s witnesses or persons related to them were arrested and convicted for anti-Soviet propaganda.<sup>115</sup> In parallel with the arrests, also a more extensive deportation operation was planned, and carried out simultaneously in all Baltic states, in Moldavia, West Ukraine and Byelorussia in the small hours of 1 April 1951.

In 1951 the deportation of Jehovah’s witnesses was carried out at the same pace as the March 1949 deportation that had preceded it. The active preparation time for this operation was the shortest yet, about a month. The deportation of Jehovah’s Witnesses had been on Stalin’s agenda in October 1950, when he had recommended that the deportation be carried out in March–April 1951, but there was no subsequent resolution to that effect from the Council of Ministers. Consequently Viktor Abakumov, the USSR Minister of State Security asked Stalin on 19 February 1951 to review the project once more and make a decision about it.<sup>116</sup>

As is evident from Abakumov’s report to Stalin there was a fierce campaign against the Jehovah’s Witnesses in all the western union republics in the years 1947–1950. During this time 1048 most active members of the sect were arrested, 5 underground printing presses were discovered and 35,000 leaflets, flyers and other anti-Soviet literature confiscated. In spite of this the movement seemed to gain momentum. The attitude of the Jehovah’s Witnesses against collectivisation and conscription into the Soviet army, their distribution of anti-Soviet literature and recruitment of new members were especially mentioned. Local MGB officials had identified over 300 leaders of the Jehovah’s Witnesses in the entire region and the MGB deemed it necessary to arrest them and at the same time banish their families to the oblasts of Irkutsk and Tomsk. Altogether it was planned to banish 8576 individuals or 3048 families, including 250 individuals (130 families) from Estonia. The matter had been coordinated with the Party Central Committee secretaries of the union republics including 1st Secretary of the ECP CC Ivan Käbin. In his view, the banishment was necessary.<sup>117</sup>

On 3 March 1951 The Council of Ministers of the USSR also approved the decision to deport, and according to its decree no. 667-339 the deportation of active Jehovah’s Witnesses and members of their families took place from the western oblasts of the Ukraine and Belorussia, and from the Moldavian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian SSR’s.<sup>118</sup> People deported on the basis of their creed were banished in perpetuity according to the decision of the MGB Special Council.

In implementing the operation the MGB and MVD were given assignments similar to the ones they had during the March deportation of 1949. Every republic enacted its own plan of deportation, which was coordinated with the USSR Council of Ministers decree of 3 March 1951 and the MGB direc-

**112** В. Бруль, “Депортированные народы в Сибири (1935–1965 гг.). Сравнительный анализ” (Deported people in Siberia (1935–1965). A comparative analysis) in Наказанный народ : репрессии против российских немцев : по материалам конференции “Репрессии против российских немцев в Советском Союзе в контексте советской национальной политики”, проведенной Немецким культурным центром им. Гете в Москве совместно с Обществом “Мемориал” 18–20 ноября 1998 года (A punished people : Repressions of ethnic Germans in Russia : Material of a Conference, 18–20 November 1998), Moscow, 1999, p. 103.

**113** Extraordinary notice from Minister of State Security of the ESSR Kumm and head of the 5th department of the ESSR MGB Nikolski to head of the 5th Administration of the USSR MGB Volkov, 8 January 1949, ERAF 131SM-1-183, pp. 1–3.

**114** Extraordinary notice from the Deputy Minister of State Security Mikhailov to head of the USSR MGB “O” department Lubrovin, 28 September 1949, ERAF 131SM-1-185, pp. 1–8. On the activities of the “O” department of the ESSR MGB in the surveillance of the clergy see Riho Altnurme, *Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteriusu Kirik ja Nõukogude riik 1944–1949* (Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church and Soviet State 1944–1949), Tartu, 2001, pp. 55–57.

**115** Notices from the ESSR MGB “o” department to the USSR MGB “O” department, 1949, ERAF 131SM-1-185. The list of people arrested in 1948–1951 is published in the book: Silver Silliksaar, *Sinasilmitsi Siberiga : mälestusteraamat 1951. aasta küüditamisest* (Eye to Eye with Siberia : A Memoir of the 1951 Deportation), Tartu, 2001, pp. 278–279.

**116** В. Пасат, Трудные страницы истории Молдовы, pp. 612–613.

**117** Ibid.

tive no. 00193, dated 5 March 1951. USSR Minister of Internal Affairs Kruglov's directive no. 00149 of 27 March 1951, dealt with the transportation of the deported, and the ESSR Ministry of Internal Affairs had to co-ordinate its plan with it.<sup>119</sup> All this came to pass in the early hours of 1 April 1951.

In the course of the operation all in all 2620 persons were deported. 281 persons were abducted from Estonia. However, only the activities of one-third of them can be associated with the movement of Jehovah's Witnesses. 27 carriages prepared for the transport of deportees were collected into four stations (Ülemiste, Tapa, Tartu, Võru). The final formation of the special echelon No. 97392 took place in the Pskov station, where the trains with Jehovah's witnesses arrived from Latvia, Lithuania, and Kaliningrad oblast. The deportees from Estonia were taken to Tugan region in Tomsk oblast.

Also the deportation of individuals of Estonian and Latvian nationality from the Pskov oblast falls into the same period. At the time of Estonia's annexation by the USSR in 1944, part of the former Petseri County and the so-called Narvatagune area were separated from the territory of Estonia and annexed to Russian SFSR. Also part of the Latvian Republic's territory was annexed to Russian SFSR. The purging of these areas from 'ethnically alien elements' was carried out in May 1950.<sup>120</sup> The deportation took place in accordance with the decree No. 5881-2201ss of the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 12 December 1949, according to which 425 families (1563 people) from the Pskov oblast were to be sent to special exile in Krasnoyarsk kray for all time. This subject calls for separate research and presumes also research in Russian archives.

## RELEASE FROM FORCED EXILE

After Stalin's death conditions started changing for the exiles. In March 1953 the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet passed an amnesty law which allowed the release of those sentenced to terms up

to five years for political reasons. The amnesty was not extended to those who had been repressed on 14 June 1941. In the summer of 1953 there were plans to reduce the administrative monitoring of those sent to special exile, but unfortunately nothing came of it.<sup>121</sup> Finally, it became obvious that the political and economic grounds for keeping millions of deportees in custody were weak.

The first decisions regarding the release of people from special exile were made in 1954.<sup>122</sup> As late as 1953 the MVD held that children under the age of 16 should be left in exile in perpetuity, and that they should be registered as a matter of course.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless, the next year the decision about children became more lenient. Under the decree of 16 July 1954 all children of special exiles born after 31 December 1937 were to be struck from the registry during the next month. All children under the age of 16 were freed of the restrictions placed on exiles, and those older than 16 were allowed to study at a school of their choice. Among the 6700 persons deported from Estonia in 1941 there were 1591 minors; however, among the 13,480 deported in 1949 there were 6607 minors.<sup>124</sup> Whether these children could return to Estonia or not depended on whether they had relatives in Estonia, the closeness of these relatives, and whether they agreed to take the children in. Their parents were not allowed to return home yet.

The release was implemented in stages, according to categories. The Minister of Internal Affairs required that the release of all the people deported from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania first be approved by the local ministries of Internal Affairs. This was to prevent undesirables from returning.<sup>125</sup> Cases where the head of the family was released from prison camp, while his family still had years to spend in exile occurred more and more frequently.

The breakthrough in release from Siberia came in 1956, but even then, release was not automatic. First the exile or one of his relatives had to submit an application for release. As these applications started to accumulate, the reading of them started to lag.

**118** The project of the decrees of the Ministers' Council of the USSR has been published: В. Пасат, Трудные страницы истории Молдовы, pp. 614–615.

**119** Deportation plan drawn up by Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR Major General Lombak, 30 March 1951, ERAF SM 17/1-1-180, p. 66.

**120** Directive by Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Kruglov 00158, 2 March 1950, GARF P 9401-1a-12, pp. 221–230.

**121** J. Riekstiņš, *Aizvestie. 1941.gada 14. j. nijs* (Deportation in Latvia on 14 June 1941), Riga, 2001, p. 737.

**122** On July 16, 1954, MVD issued directive No. 00597 in accordance with decree No. 1439-649ss, dated July 5, 1954 of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The directive removed restrictions from some of the categories of special exiles. – ERAF SM 17/2-1-306, p. 52.

**123** Certificate from Minister of State Security of the USSR Ignatyev to the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the USSR on individuals deported from the Baltic states, Moldavia, West Ukraine and Byelorussia in 1941 and 1949, 1952, GARF P 9479-1-611, p. 266.

**124** Certificate by the ESSR Prosecutor V. Raudsepp and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court R. Simson on the individuals deported from the ESSR in 1941 and 1949, 24 September 1965, ERAF SM 17/2-1-306, p. 26.

**125** Directive No. 0530 of the Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR, 2 December 1955, ERAF SM 17/2-1-306, p. 53.

The status on 1 January 1960 according to authorities was 377 deportees from Estonia still in special exile, of whom 126 were ‘bandits-nationalists’, 255 their family members, 6 Jehovah’s Witnesses and 20 persons deported in 1941.<sup>126</sup> The last releases were carried out as late as in 1965.

Confiscated property was not returned to those released, nor did release give former deportees the right to return to their former places of residence without the permission of the Council of Ministers of the ESSR. Former prisoners and deportees were not allowed to live in Tallinn, Tartu or other large cities, on the islands or in border zones; it was very difficult for them to find a place to live. Restrictions

in the occupations they could practice, in the fields of study they could choose and other assorted harassments would shadow the life of the deportees for years. Adapting to instruction in their mother tongue brought new traumas to children. Because of their poor Estonian, they often had to repeat grades; some continued their studies in Russian schools. For some the return and acclimatisation to Estonia was considered more painful than the deportation. One was returning after all to the longed-for homeland and to one’s own people but instead of being warmly welcomed, they were often received with an averted gaze or outright contempt. People did not want to associate with the so-called marked individuals.<sup>127</sup>

**126** Certificate on the release from exile of individuals deported in 1941–1951, 16 February 1960, ERAF SM 17/2-1-306, pp. 34–34v.

**127** Amir Weiner, “The Empires Pay a Visit: Gulag Returnees, East European Rebellions, and Soviet Frontier Politics”, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 78, No. 2, 2006, pp. 333–376; Terje Anepaio, “Boundaries in the Soviet society – the case of the repressed” in *Making and breaking of borders: ethnological interpretations, presentations, representations*, edited by T. Korhonen, H. Ruotsala & E. Uusitalo, in series: Studia Fennica. Ethnologica, Vol. 7, Helsinki, 2003, pp. 67–78.

## **ANNEX 1. DECISION NO. 390-138S OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE USSR ON THE DEPORTATIONS OF 1949**

Decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR from 29 January 1949 on *“The deportation of kulaks and their families, families of bandits and nationalists residing illegally, convicted or killed in armed conflicts, legalised bandits continuing resistance and their families, as well as helpers of the families of repressed bandits, from the territory of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.”*

Moscow, Kremlin, 29 January 1949

Council of Ministers of the USSR      Top secret      (Special Folder)

### **DECISION NO. 390-138SS**

on the deportation of kulaks and their families, families of bandits and nationalists residing illegally, convicted or killed in armed conflicts, legalised bandits continuing resistance and their families, as well as helpers of the families of repressed bandits, from the territory of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

29 January 1949, Moscow, Kremlin

The Council of Ministers of the USSR DECIDES:

To accept the proposals of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR, Latvian SSR and the Estonian SSR and the Central Committees of the CPs of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to deport kulaks with their families, families of bandits and nationalists residing illegally or convicted or killed in armed conflicts, legalised bandits continuing resistance and their families, as well as families of the helpers of repressed bandits.

To deport a total of 29,000 families, consisting of 87,000 people, of which – 8500 families or 25,500 people from the Lithuanian SSR; 13,000 families or 39,000 people from the Latvian SSR, and 7500 families or 22,500 people from the Estonian SSR.

To deport the individuals belonging to the abovementioned categories permanently to the Yakutian ASSR, Karsnoyarsk and Habarovsk krays, and oblasts of Omsk, Tomsk, Novosibirsk and Irkutsk, applying to them the decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR from 26 November 1948: “On bringing criminal charges against individuals deported to the remoter regions of the Soviet Union during the Fatherland War and having escaped their locations of forced exile.”

To require the Ministry of State Security of the USSR (comrade Abakumov) to execute the deportation of individuals listed under Item 1 during the period of 20-25 March 1949.

The kulaks and their families are to be deported on the basis of lists approved by the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian SSR; families of bandits and nationalists residing illegally, convicted or killed in armed conflicts, legalised bandits continuing resistance, as well as families of the helpers of repressed bandits – in accordance with the decision of the Extraordinary Council of the Ministry of State Security of the USSR.

To require the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR (comrade Kruglov) to guarantee convoy of individuals deported from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia and delivery by rail or water transport to their locations of exile; careful guarding of the deportees under way, administrative surveillance of the deportees in the locations of exile and, and to create a suitable system of registration – to establish a regime that would not allow escapes; find employment for the deportees in agriculture (kolkhozes and sovkhozes, as well as forest farms and gold mining industry).

Special commandantures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs are to be organised at the exile locations.

To allow the deportees to bring valuables, belongings from home (clothes, dishes, agricultural tools, domestic utensils) and food, a supply up to 1500 kilograms for each family. The rest of the property and cattle of the deportees is to be confiscated.

The confiscated property of the deportees is to be used for the payment of state duties and debts, the property left over from payment of debts (houses and auxiliary buildings, enterprises, agricultural and working utensils, and cattle) are to be handed over to kolkhozes free of charge, adding it to the indivisible fund. The rest of the property is to be delivered to financial organisations for realisation. Food grains, fodder grains and artificial crops are to be handed over to the state.

To require the Ministry of Finance of the USSR (comrade Zverev) to allocate additional financial resources to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR in 1949 for financing the special commandantures, as well as resources for feeding the deportees and medical services under way, allocating 5 roubles and 60 kopecks per individual daily.

To require the Ministry of Communications (comrade Bestsev) to allocate, in accordance with the application of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR, the necessary amount of railway carriages for the transport of deportees, and to arrange so that the echelons of deportees would travel to their destinations with the privileges of military echelons.

The transport of deportees shall be reported according to the tariffs of the transport of prisoners.

To require the Ministry of Economy of the USSR (comrade Zhavoronkov) to arrange, through railway canteens, for the provision of hot meals for the echelons of deportees, and to remunerate those from the resources allocated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs under Item 6.

To require the Ministry of Healthcare of the USSR (comrade Smirnov) to allocate a doctor and a two nurses to each echelon of deportees, along with the necessary amount of medicines and wound dressings, to provide medical help to the deportees under way.

To require the Council of Ministers of the Yakutian ASSR and the Executive Committees of the Soviets of Working People's Delegates of the Krasnoyarsk and Habarovsk krays and the oblasts of Omsk, Novosibirsk, Tomsk and Irkutsk to render assistance to the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR in settling the deportees and arranging their household and living environment, as well as, if necessary, to establish homes for elderly and invalids, where single elderly individuals and invalids among the deportees could be placed; and to allocate financial resources for the establishment and sustenance of the abovementioned institutions.

Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR J. STALIN

Affairs Administrator of the Council of Ministers of the USSR J. TCHADAYEV

RFP. File of the decisions of the CM of the USSR from 1949.

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## ANNEX 2. LEADERS OF OPERATION „PRIBOI”

1. USSR MGB (special) representatives
  - 1) Lieutenant General Afanassi Sergeyeovich. Blinov
  - 2) Lieutenant General Pyotr Vassilyevich Burmak
  - 3) Major General Ivan Ilyich Yermolin
  - 4) Lieutenant General Sergei Ivanovich Ogoltsov
2. Operation headquarters at the ESSR MGB
  - 1) chief Lieut-Col Vladimir Ilyich Vedeyev
  - 2) deputy chief Major Zaporoshchuk
  - 3) Deputy of the USSR MGB special representative in Estonia in the field of troops Colonel Serikov
  - 4) Deputy of the USSR MGB special representative in Estonia in the field of railtransport Colonel Davydov
  - 5) signals chief Major Vassilyev
3. USSR MGB special representatives at the city and county departments of the MGB
  - 1) Tallinna City dept. Colonel Pavel Panteleimonovich Pastelnyak
  - 2) Valga County dept. Lieut-Col Ilya Abramovich. Ziterov
  - 3) Viljandi County dept. Lieut-Col Grigori Stepanovich. Danilov
  - 4) Viru County dept. Major Aleksander Alekseyevich Aleksejev
  - 5) Võru County dept. Lieut-Col Konstantin Platonovich Semchenko
  - 6) Lääne County dept. Major Aleksei Pavlovich. Matveyev
  - 7) Narva City dept. *No special representative*
  - 8) Pärnu City dept. Colonel Ilya Vassilyevich Kurov
  - 9) Saaremaa County dept. Lieut-Col Vladimir Nikolayevich Shevelkov
  - 10) Tartu County dept. Colonel Aleksander Aleksandrovich Mikhailov
  - 11) Harju County dept. Eduard Neelus, son of Karl
  - 12) Hiiumaa County dept. Lieut-Col Dmitri Georgiyevich Myzin
  - 13) Järva Ccounty dept. Major Lavrenti Vassilyevich Sokolovski

## ANNEX 3. USSR MVD DIRECTIVE FROM 12 MARCH 1949

*see Sabbo Vol II pp 845-850. Published in Estonian in the monthly Akadeemia, 1999, pp 629-...*

## ANNEX 4. OPERATIVE STAFF OF THE ESSR MVD UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF GENERAL RESEV (19TH 1949)<sup>8</sup>

Nikolai Sanchuk	Lieut-Col, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR
Aleksei Smirnov	Lieut-Col, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the ESSR
Ivan Krotov	Colonel, Head of the political dept. of the ESSR MVD in the field of camps
Hugo Virngof	Lieut-Col, Head of the militia administration of the ESSR MVD
Oskar Avik	Lieut-Col, Head of the mobilisation dept. of the ESSR MVD
Vassili Dobromyslov MVD	Lieut-Col, Head of the counter-intelligence dept. of the ESSR
Ivan Surovichkihh	Lieut-Col, Head of the POW and Interned dept. of the ESSR MVD
Gennadi Tchistjakov	Lieut-Col, deputy head of the staff dept. of the ESSR MVD
Ivan Leusski	Lieut-Col, secretary of the ECP Committee of the ESSR MVD
Vassili Vorobyov	Major, Head of the 1st special dept. of the ESSR MVD
Stepan Vekshin	Major, Head of the prisons dept. of the ESSR MVD
Peeter Voronin	Major, Head of economy dept. of the ESSR MVD
Pavel Patrushev	Captain, Head of Finance dept. of the ESSR MVD
Georgi Kosse	Captain, Head of the Firefighting administration of the ESSR MVD
Aaman	Lieut-Col

<sup>8</sup> Police archives 17/1-1-139, p. 74. Document has been published in *Kultuur ja Elu* as a copy. 1999, 2/3. p 26.

## ANNEX 5. ESSR MVD SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES IN THE COUNTIES<sup>9</sup>

Valga County	Major Ryzhov
Viljandi County	Major Shumarin
Saare County	Major Kuznetsov
Järva County	Major Yasterov
Tartu County	Major Selitrennikov
Pärnu County	Major Prädko
Viru County	Major Dobrovolski
Lääne County	Captain Kovalenko
Hiiu County	Captain Matonin
Harju County	Captain Sleskov
Võru County	Senior Lieutenant Novikov

## ANNEX 6. THE SCHEDULE FOR LOADING AND DISPATCHING ECHELONS<sup>10</sup>

Echelon	1.	2.	3.	Loading station	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	Border crossing station
97301	68	25th	4.35 a.m.	Rakvere	49	27th	11.25 p.m.	28th	5.00 a.m.	Narva
97302	68	25th	5 a.m.	Jõhvi	68	26th	3.15 p.m.	26th	5.55 p.m.	Narva
97303	64	25th	1.35 a.m.	Tapa	56	26th	12.32 p.m.	26th	4.45 p.m.	Narva
97304	57	25th	4 a.m.	Tapa and Kehra	49	27th	4.47 p.m.	27th	11.50 p.m.	Narva
97305	62	24th	23.14 p.m.	Ülemiste	68	28th	7.15 p.m.	29th	10.30 a.m.	Narva
97306	62	24th	11.50 p.m.	Ülemiste	54	26th	6.47 p.m.	27th	3.30 a.m.	Narva
97307	62	25th	4.05 a.m.	Keila	65	29th	3.50 a.m.	29th	7.50 p.m.	Narva
97308	67	25th	5.40 a.m.	Risti	51	27th	3.51 p.m.	28th	9:20 a.m.	Narva
97309	62	25th	3.55 a.m.	Haapsalu	62	26th	1.35 p.m.	27th	5.20 a.m.	Narva
97310	62	25th	1.35 a.m.	Haapsalu	70	29th	2.35 p.m.	30th	7:50 a.m.	Narva
97311	62	25th	3.14 a.m.	Jõgeva	50	27th	2.24 p.m.	27th	7.28 p.m.	Petseri
97312	62	25th	4.54 a.m.	Veriora	47	27th	3.40 p.m.	27th	4.30 p.m.	Petseri
97313	67	25th	5.43 a.m.	Jõgeva	48	27th	2.34 p.m.	27th	9.26 p.m.	Petseri
97314	62	24th	9.30 p.m.	Tartu	47	27th	4.57 p.m.	27th	9.10 p.m.	Petseri
97315	64	25th	4.10 a.m.	Elva	62	27th	2.38 p.m.	27th	19.15 p.m.	Petseri
97316	62	24th	11.05 p.m.	Keeni	59	26th	7.22 p.m.	26th	11.14 p.m.	Petseri
97317	62	25th	1.52 a.m.	Puka	51	26th	4.15 p.m.	26th	8.40 p.m.	Petseri
97318	32	24th	11.24 p.m.	Võru ja Puka	64	29th	9.10 p.m.	29th	11.30 p.m.	Petseri
97319	62	25th	3.22 a.m.	Võru	57	27th	00.15 a.m.	27th	1.10 a.m.	Petseri
Kokku	1169				1057					

<sup>9</sup> Police archives 17/1-1-139, p. 11. Document has been published in Kultuur ja Elu as a copy.. 1999, 2/3. p 25.

<sup>10</sup> Police archives 17/1-1-139, p. 105.

- 1) number of delivered carriages delivered to the loading station
- 2) date of arrival at the loading station (March 1949)
- 3) time of arrival at the loading station
- 4) number of loaded carriages
- 5) date of departure from the loading station (March 1949)
- 6) time of departure from the loading station
- 7) date of the echelon's arrival at the border crossing station (March 1949)
- 8) time of the echelon's arrival at the border crossing station

