

Proceedings of the
Estonian Institute
of Historical Memory

Eesti Mälu Instituudi
toimetised

1 • 2018



**Sovietisation
and Violence:
The Case
of Estonia**

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DOI: 10.48261/INRR210316

THE FACES OF ESTONIAN SOVIETISATION: A LOOK BACK

Notes on the publication: *Sovietisation and violence: the case of Estonia*. 2018. Tartu: University of Tartu Press, ed. Meelis Saueauk, Toomas Hiio. *Proceedings of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory*. *Eesti Mälu Instituudi toimetised* 1 (2018). 335 pp. ISBN 9789949778249. ISSN 2613–5981.

Abstract

This article critically discusses the publication entitled *Sovietisation and violence: the case of Estonia*, edited by Meelis Saueauk and Toomas Hiio, published in 2018 by the University of Tartu Press as the first volume of the *Proceedings of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory* series. The author of this article refers in detail to several of the studies and articles published in the volume, most of which were written by researchers associated with its publisher, the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory. In terms of content, as the reviewer notes, the publication's aim is to introduce the international academic reader to the topic of the forced Sovietisation of Estonia in the 20th century. The author will attempt to assess to what extent the discussed volume lives up to the hopes placed in it. Overall, he

concludes that despite all the errors and omissions noted, the publication's desired aim was achieved, while also showing the above-named institution's potential as a scholarly research unit with ambitions reaching beyond the local academic market.

Keywords: Sovietisation, Sovietisation and violence, Communism, Estonia, Estonian history 1917–1990, forced resettlement, Estonian political emigration, active measures, Communist repression apparatus, security apparatus, CPSU, Communist Party of the Soviet Union, Estonian Communist Party, Soviet occupation, Baltic countries, south Scandinavia

The publication in question is actually a collection of English translations of several studies and articles previously published (sometimes in other versions) in Estonian, and in two cases also in English and German. All these texts (except for the final essay by Toomas Hiio) take the form of academic articles, and are supplemented appropriately (footnotes, tables, diagrams, graphs, and so on). The volume leads off with a short, rather symbolic introduction by the well-known American historian Norman M. Naimark of Stanford University, who specialises in questions of 20th-century genocide, including Soviet crimes (particularly the Stalinist era).

The aim of this publisher, as may be assumed, is to inform the international academic reader of Estonia's Sovietisation during the 20th century. Most of the studies it has published focus on presenting various aspects of Soviet policy towards Estonia in the 1940s and 1950s. Some, however, cover later years, sometimes even beyond the final years of "perestroika", which makes their relationship with the title subject of "Sovietisation" strongly disputable, referring at most to its effects. It should be noted that the vast majority of the studies presented in the volume have been written by researchers associated with its publisher, the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory (*Eesti Mälu Instituut*). It is therefore, in a sense, the publisher's international showcase, and at the same time an attempt to present both the institute's research priorities and also the individual research interests of its members: in total, then, it also presents the institute's potential as a scholarly research unit, with ambitions to reach beyond the local academic market.

The volume opens with an introductory theoretical study by Olaf Mertelsmann, a German historian who has been working and living in Estonia since 1994; he is a professor at the University of Tartu specialising in the post-war history of the Soviet Union. Due to this work's substantive importance, and as in a way it is the leading title in the volume under discussion, I shall devote the most space in my remarks to it. The author tries therein to deconstruct and redefine the very notion of "Sovietisation". At the same time, he calls for a wider use of the comparative perspective, accusing the previous studies published on this subject in various countries of having a narrowly local perspective and failing to consider the broader context of the phenomenon, such as the fact that (after 1945) it was an aspect of the Cold War. He also rightly points out that Sovietisation was a very complicated process which took place in many fields (state, economic, cultural, social, and so on), and which had both planned and unplanned consequences. This leads to a basic question—which the author does not actually answer—namely whether one can speak of "Sovietisation" as a completed, completed project at all; and if so, when, and to what extent (see below).

Mertelsmann rightly notes that the very root of the concept under discussion, in the form of the words "council" (*совет*), "Soviet" (*советский*) and "Soviet Union", makes it a misnomer in its essence. In his view, the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates which emerged on the revolutionary tide, popularly known as "soviets" (*советы*)—and which were otherwise distant from the Western understanding of representative democracy—quickly lost any importance where the Bolsheviks ruled. Thus, the emphasis on these bodies in the official name of the state established in the place of the Russian empire was primarily a political and propaganda move. Thus, all the concepts derived from these councils ("soviets") contain a falsehood at their core. However, he does not propose any alternative terminological solutions, such as imposing the terms "Bolshevism" or "Bolshevisation". This is probably due to a desire to avoid associations with the analogous slogans used by Nazi propaganda, in which primitive anti-Communism merges with an even more vulgar anti-Semitism, serving only to recall the Nazi propaganda pamphlet *Bolschewisierung: was heißt das in Wirklichkeit?* [Bolshevisation. What does it actually mean?] (*Bolschewisierung* 1943).



Sovietisation and Violence: The Case of Estonia

Mertelsmann further remarks that the term “Sovietisation” appears relatively early in wider circulation, around 1920, including Lenin’s statements about Lithuania at that time. Originally, this concept simply referred to the use of Bolshevik methods of government and organisation in a given country or region. Only a little later was its significance extended to other areas of social life in a given area, such as culture, media, economy, customs, language, everyday life, for example. He aptly notes here that the Bolsheviks in fact used various “Sovietisation” tactics, adapted to local conditions, in different regions which then became part of their country. Sometimes they referred more to local national traditions (under the slogan of “*коренизация*”, or “drawing upon the roots”), and sometimes to a combination (advertised as “progressive”) of Russification with the promise of modernising a given community and improving its living conditions. The author tends to believe that even at this stage a certain kind of pragmatism was more important here than Communist ideology.

Mertelsmann further notes that until the 1950s, when the term was adopted by Western scientists and journalists and given an anti-Communist spin, it was also used in the Soviet Union itself to describe the planned future imposition of its own political and economic system on other regions and countries. He recalls an interesting textbook (recently published in English) by Vladimir K. Triandafillov, a Soviet military theorist of Greek origin, in which outright compulsory “Sovietisation” appears as a method for quickly settling the situation in areas occupied by the Red Army as a result of its large-scale military operations. Triandafillov assumed in advance that it must be borne “on bayonets”, because one cannot count on decisive support from local “revolutionary” forces, as they will be too weak and, by nature, subject to preventive repression by the security authorities of a given country. Thus, “Sovietisation” became an integral part of the Red Army’s modern operational doctrine, which was next implemented during World War II—another task to be performed by the Soviet power structures (Triandafillov 1994).

This thread is undoubtedly worth noting, also from the Polish point of view, especially as according to Mertelsmann, it was the Eastern Territories of the Republic of Poland after September 17, 1939 that served as the first, and in a way the

key testing ground for similar activities in Central and Eastern Europe, perceived as a kind of “export” of the Soviet model. At the same time, he rightly considers the works of Jan Tomasz Gross (*Revolution from abroad: The Soviet conquest of Poland’s Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia*) and Timothy Snyder (*Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*) as important and still valid voices on this matter, allowing us to consider the whole issue of the “first” Sovietisation in 1939–41 more broadly than from the naturally narrower Estonian or Baltic perspectives (Gross 1988; Snyder 2010). It is as part of a larger whole which, next to the occupied territories of the Second Polish Republic and the Baltic States themselves, also includes the Romanian lands of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. Less convincing is the fact that the author included such debatable cases as the annexation of southern Finland (including the city of Viipuri/Vyborg), the northern part of East Prussia (including Königsberg/Kaliningrad), and the Japanese Kuril Islands in the first stage of “Sovietisation”. Apart from other issues, including chronological questions, mass transfers of people had been made in all these places; in the long run, therefore, there was no-one in those places to be “Sovietised”.

Moving on to more general matters, it is appropriate to recall Jan Kucharczyński’s thesis on the historical continuity between the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, as contained in the title of his multi-volume work and justified on its pages (*The origins of modern Russia*, whose original Polish title translates as “From white tsarism to the red one”), and thus to demand the introduction of the *par excellence* “imperial” or “Great Russian” semantic element to the very definition of “Sovietisation”, which Mertelsmann actually omits in his reasoning (Kucharczyński 1923–1937, Kucharczyński 1948). I would like to add here that both in the European diplomacy of the mid-twentieth century (such as in the reports of Pietro Quaroni, the Italian ambassador to Moscow in 1945), and among contemporaneous researchers of Soviet policy towards neighbouring countries, such as Albina Noskova, there seems to be a view that in the Stalinist era there was “a primacy of national-state matters over ideological matters in Moscow’s foreign policy”; or in other words, the latter fell back into the former’s imperial ruts, treating Communism mainly as a superficial decoration (compare *Archivio storico, Istituto*

Luigi Sturzo [the Historical Archives of the Luigi Sturza Institute in Rome], *Archivio Giulio Andreotti* [the Giulio Andreotti Archives], busta (file) 680, Ambassador Pietro Quaroni to Alcide de Gasperi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Italy, Moscow, July 16, 1945; *Ogetto: Vaticano e URSS* [Subject: Vatican and USSR]; compare also Noskova 2005, p. 31; Bulhak 2019, p. 248). Mertelsmann's insufficient emphasis on this "imperial" thread is unsurprising, as he apparently derives his understanding of the phenomenon of "Sovietisation" primarily from the achievements of post-war German research, although of course he knows and refers to the publications of the Anglo-Saxons, the French and the Estonians themselves. From his point of view, the German public debate around the situation in the SBZ (German *Sowjetische Besatzungszone*, the Soviet Occupation Zone; later the GDR) is particularly important. His thinking is thus rather dominated by the "second" already Cold-War wave of Sovietisation (see below). He considers the publication *Die Sowjetisierung Ost-Mitteleuropas* by Ernst Birke and Rudolf Neumann, to have performed breakthrough work in this regard; the very definition of the concept he is interested in derives from another German colleague, Michael Lemke (Birke and Neumann 1959; Lemke 1999). At the same time, he considers (although he does not say so directly) the element of adaptability to Moscow's wishes to be the key distinguishing feature of what is somehow "proper" Sovietisation; thus again not an ideological aspect, but a strictly political or even geopolitical one. In his opinion, even the cases of countries such as the People's Republic of China, Korea, Cuba, Vietnam and Angola do not in the end fit this scheme. In his opinion, "Sovietisation" should also be distinguished from the "influence of the Soviet model" which was present for example in certain Arab countries or India.

In Mertelsmann's vision, this second phase of "Sovietisation" refers to the occupied parts of Germany (the future East Germany), as well as other Central and Eastern European countries controlled by the Red Army: both Hitler's former allies such as Hungary or Romania, and the victims of the Third Reich, that is Poland and Czechoslovakia (which is not mentioned here explicitly, because it does not quite fit the scheme of the new system being imposed by force,

from the outside, directly by Moscow). He notices various differences in the situation of individual countries, such as the position of the Church in Poland, or the separate case of recognising the neutral status of Austria.

Nevertheless, Mertelsmann is of course right when he writes that usually after a transition period of several years, one or another “national road to socialism” gave way to an increasingly model version of Sovietisation, including the centralisation of all real power in Moscow. This, in a way, contradicts his thesis that there was no “detailed master plan” to follow. Thus he forgets here, for example, the findings of Tõnu Tannberg (discussed in this volume), who directly writes about the uniformity of the Sovietisation carried out in 1944–5 in the zone covering the territories seized by the Soviet Union in 1939–40. The author himself should add that in the case of other countries in Moscow’s zone of influence as well—even if the tactics applied initially were different and took local conditions into consideration (as happened with the creation of the Soviet Union on the foundations of imperial Russia)—that during the final stage of the second phase of “Sovietisation”, that is the period of consolidating the states of the Soviet bloc in 1948–53, Moscow undoubtedly undertook the considered and methodical imposition of its own matrix, wherein an important role was played by the system of parallel management of key areas of life in individual countries, through the agency of so-called “advisers” (*советники*) and Soviet diplomats playing the role of viceroys (it suffices to recall the behaviour of ambassador Georgi Popov in Warsaw). The way in which similar mechanisms functioned is particularly apparent when we consider how the centralised Communist apparatus of repression implemented Stalin’s theses about the “intensification of the class struggle” in the common cases of László Rajk, Traicho Kostov, Rudolf Slánský and Władysław Gomułka (Petrov 2011, Pucci 2020).

Further on, Mertelsmann correctly emphasises that in the case of virtually all of the countries mentioned, their Sovietisation required the use of various forms of force or pressure at some stage. This automatically assumes that the process encountered resistance, both passive and active. In this way, it touches on another of the essential themes highlighted in the title of the book in question: that is, the

concept of politically motivated violence. Sometimes we are even dealing here with a spiral of violence, the source of which is precisely the process of Sovietisation; such is the case with the honoured “forest brothers”, known in the Polish historical narrative as “the cursed soldiers” (*żołnierze wyklęci*).

Less accurate in this context is his reference as examples to the Hungarian revolution in autumn 1956 and the “Prague spring” of 1968. In this writer’s opinion, these fit better into a separate discussion of the various models and stages of “de-Sovietisation” (see below), together with the examples of Yugoslavia (1948), Poland (1956, 1980), Romania (1965), and last but not least, the collapse of the entire Soviet system in 1989–1991. Although the author touches on this issue, it is only in the final part of his considerations containing a list of various working “hypotheses”, some of which are again debatable, such as the issues of collaboration and adaptation to the system, as well as the gaps and exceptions existing in it; and finally, from a different agenda, some of its positive aspects, such as the expansion of education, the broadening of social mobility and the opening up of new paths for promotion. Moreover, he highlights only the progressive “autonomisation” of the local elites in the spirit of their “nationalisation”, which allegedly facilitated the later transition to democracy.

Thus, I believe (although, of course, this is open to discussion) that the author should have introduced the concept of “de-Sovietisation” directly into his considerations, analogous to the long-popular concept of “decolonisation”. This would have greatly facilitated various comparative approaches, as well as the use of some of the research tools used in describing the collapses of the colonial empires in the 20th century. It would also have been interesting to introduce (even in a very general outline) a counterpoint from a different agenda, namely a comparison of “Sovietisation” with the “Americanisation” of Western European societies (and others). Both of these interpretative ideas are signalled here in the titles of the works cited in the footnotes, and would have merited at least a few sentences of development.

In conclusion, despite all my polemical comments, Mertelsmann’s text should be considered an important and thought-provoking voice, and not only from the Estonian perspective.

In the next text Tõnu Tannberg, another professor at Tartu University, deals with the use of force in the re-Sovietisation of the Baltic states in 1944–5, in a way following the model proposed at the time by Triandafillov, the Soviet military theorist already mentioned above (Triandafillov 1994). Unfortunately, it should be pointed out immediately that the title of the study discussed here not only does correspond to its content, but it is unfortunately misleading to the reader, especially one who speaks English or German. And this is true in many respects. The very concept of the “Baltic question” (*die baltische Frage*) has quite a specific meaning in historiography and international relations, concerning not only the Cold War era, as for example in the work entitled *The Baltic question during the Cold War* (Hiden, Made and Smith 2009). It should not be used arbitrarily, and certainly should not be reduced to nothing more than a response to the imaginary question posed by the Kremlin of “How should one combat the armed underground in the Baltic states?” Moreover Tannberg writes, if at all, not so much about the imaginary “Kremlin”, but rather about the “Lubyanka”. In any case, very little attention has been paid to the ways in which the Soviet leadership under Stalin came to the appropriate decisions and solutions. Above all, it is the activities of the NKVD and the NKGB which are being discussed here. In essence, the title of the study in question should more or less read as follows: “The problem of combating the armed underground in the Baltic states from the perspective of the Soviet apparatus of repression in 1944–5”. Fortunately, at least in a chronological sense, the author offers more than he promises in the title, which should, of course, be a plus—even if the title itself is again imprecise in another aspect.

Before I finally move on to praise the work (as I do consider the text itself to be valuable, especially in terms of its general conclusions), I must first point out some of its shortcomings, caused in part by the author and in part perhaps by the translator (as it is difficult for me to refer to the Estonian original). These remarks are largely linguistic and terminological in nature. Firstly, I wish to discuss the term “invasion” and its derivatives which the author uses to refer to the Red Army’s displacement of German troops from the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, an area covering the

pre-war territory of the Baltic states and Belarus (a period which, as the author rightly writes, only ended in May 1945). The use of this concept may evoke in the Western reader (who is usually strongly anti-Nazi) associations which do not necessarily coincide with the aims of the publication discussed. Moreover, it could provide ammunition to Russian “politics of history”, which is always inclined to recall the Latvian and Estonian *Waffen-SS* troops in this context. The author is not consistent in this matter, and writes further (without comment) about armed resistance to the Soviet invasion of “western Belarus” and “western Ukraine”, while not even mentioning that these terms were Soviet nomenclature for the eastern provinces of the Second Polish Republic—which the USSR had occupied during the “first” Sovietisation (without additionally entering into the complicated case of Ukrainian irredentism); nor does it explain who actually put up the resistance. With regard to the events described, it would have been more precise and less politically marked to use the neutral terms “re-capture”, “re-Sovietisation” or ultimately “re-invasion”, a term the author uses once but no further in the remainder of the text. Perhaps it would also be appropriate to explain directly whether the author understands the above-mentioned political and geographical notions (“western Ukraine” and “western Belarus”) as contemporary or historical.

The second terminological or linguistic problem is the use of strongly negative names and terms taken in general from the language of the sources, starting with the notions of “gangs”, “bands” and “banditry”, as best seen in the example of the Department for Anti-Bandit Combat, (*Отдел по борьбе с бандитизмом, ОББ*). Similarly, the mentions of the so-called “Destruction battalions” (*истребительные батальоны*) of the NKVD require a few words of explanation. These troops, who have strongly negative associations in the Baltic states and Ukraine as a kind of “death squad” (like their infamous Latin American or Francoist Spanish analogues), enjoy a more ambivalent, and perhaps even positive opinion in Poland. Basically, in both the post-Communist and the extreme-right narratives, they are justified by the participation of Polish fighters in their ranks in combating the Ukrainian nationalist partisans of the OUN-UPA. Meanwhile, the

Western reader will simply be unfamiliar with all of these groups, so he may not understand what the author means when he refers to these units.

The third, and in fact most serious problem of terminology is related to the author's attempt to reconstruct and classify the people, cells and units responsible for fighting the anti-Soviet underground in the Baltic countries and Belarus (an area which, as it is easy to notice, coincides with the territory of the German *Ostland*, probably for pragmatic reasons). The author should have adopted a certain set of translations of the names of the units and cells at successive levels of the organisational structure, and then stuck to it consistently. It would have been ideal to further explain their structures in the form of appropriate graphic diagrams. Meanwhile, he refers to a large part of these units, including those remaining in vertically dependent service, (at least in the English translation) by the same term *department*, which is obviously very confusing. But as a matter of fact, considering the matter structurally, within the extended Soviet special services, the Directorate or Main Directorate (*управление, главное управление*), was the superior of the departments (*отделы*), which for their part were further divided into divisions/branches (*отделения*). In this way they made up the classic organisational pyramid, which was also related to the above-mentioned Department, and then (from December 1, 1944) to the Main Directorate for Anti-Bandit Combat (*Главное управление по борьбе с бандитизмом, ГУББ, GUBB*) (Vladimirtsev and Kukurin 2008).

Two smaller inaccuracies have also crept into this reconstruction. The first relates to the scope of the competences of Divisions 2 and 3 in the structure of the 2nd Department of the GUBB. In the light of the relevant Soviet norm, the former was intended to deal with “the fight against the anti-Soviet underground and armed gangs organised and left behind by the German intelligence bodies in the Baltic countries”, whereas the latter was to deal with “the fight against banditry in Belarus and the Baltic States”; the author renders this, trying this time to avoid the language of his sources, as bearing responsibility for the “underground organisations” in the Baltic countries in the sense of fighting against them (division 2) and the synonymous “quashing of resistance in Belarus and in Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania”

(division 3). As a result, the reader (especially if they cannot refer to Russian-language sources) may have some difficulties with assessing what actually differentiated their competences. Perhaps the author himself does not know this completely, because it is difficult to infer from the ideologised names of these departments themselves, and one would have to go deeper into the details of their activities. In any event, the matter requires an additional descriptive explanation which is missing. Besides, Aleksandr Leontiev, head of the OBB and then the GUBB in the structure of the NKVD of the USSR, was not the direct successor to Sergei Klepov in this position. This function was still performed (in 1942–3) by Mikhail Zavgorodniy and Viktor Drozdov. But it did not really matter much from the point of view of the author's considerations; the Baltic states were then under German rule. The author should then have used another formulation, or even completely omitted any references to Klepov (Mozokhin; Vladimirtsev and Kukurin 2008, p. 431).

In conclusion, it should be noted that Tannberg's study provides readers with a number of valuable insights into the methodology of the Soviet security apparatus's work in its fight against the political and armed underground in the Baltic countries, which is also very interesting from the Polish perspective (and not only in comparative terms). Above all, I am referring to his approach of focusing on the efforts by the Soviet security apparatus (that is, the NKVD and NKGB in coordination), with the use of reserves and reinforcements drawn from other regions of the USSR, on one specific operational area (for example, Lithuania), with the aim of making a decisive breakthrough in fighting the local underground, and then focusing on the next area using the experience gained.

The text by Peeter Kaasik, a researcher employed at the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, presents the local dimension of the outrageous practice of using psychiatric therapy practices as a tool to punish or torment people imprisoned for political or religious reasons in the Soviet Union. This matter is extremely important and still worth recalling, all the more so as similar systemic abuses, combined with the violation of the principles of the medical art and the Hippocratic Oath, were in fact unprecedented on a global

scale, and constituted a kind of betrayal of Soviet psychiatry, especially the infamous Moscow institute which was named after Vladimir Serbski (who personally was entirely innocent in the eyes of the Lord). The author has no hesitation in naming the people (psychiatrists and representatives of the Soviet apparatus of repression) who were involved in the whole procedure he describes, including Estonians who were in the service of the regime.

Regardless of Kaasik's proposal, to consider similar actions as a characteristic manifestation of totalitarianism, may in any case be regarded as inaccurate. It is enough to recall the findings and theses of Robert van Voren, the well-known Dutch researcher on this subject who has also been active in Georgian and Lithuanian academia. He has written that apart from the Soviet Union itself, as well as the Romania of Ceausescu's era and the People's Republic of China, other similar cases arose only incidentally, and they were not really systemic in most of the "people's democracies", even in Communist Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and East Germany (Voren 2010). As we know, various abuses of psychiatry, of a different nature, took place in both undemocratic countries (the Third Reich) and those which would definitely not be considered as such (the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden). However, the author does not pursue these paths, although a comparative approach here could have yielded some interesting results.

Kaasik has divided his study into two parts. The first is a general, inevitably secondary, introduction to the topic and is definitely too long (18 pages). The text in question, which is supposed to be a typical case study, would have gained in clarity and meaning if the author had omitted this introduction, or shortened it to a few pages containing general information, primarily that which might be necessary for Western readers. Kaasik begins the second, essential part of his study with the tragic fate of Konstantin Päts, the pre-war president of independent Estonia, after his country was occupied by the Soviets in the summer of 1940. Initially, he and his family were exiled to Ufa in Bashkiria; he was then arrested, interrogated, and finally, by the decision of the Soviet authorities, deemed mentally ill and detained as such in various places, mainly in the psychiatric wards of

prison hospitals. After Stalin's death, his fate improved to the degree that he was transferred to an "ordinary" psychiatric hospital, first in his native Estonia, and later in Burashevo, in the Kalinin (Tver) region, where he died. Kaasik sees all of this, quite rightly, as a form of political repression against this eminent yet controversial Estonian politician. He also proves, on the basis of Päts's letters—dictated in the hospital to two Lithuanians who shared his misery, and then (almost a quarter of a century later) smuggled out of the Soviet Union—that the former leader remained relatively healthy in mind until the end of his days, although of course the stress his persecutors subjected him to for so many years, together with the onset of old age, clearly had some effect on his mental state.

The subsequent cases Kaasik describes—individuals identified only by their initials (HK, SK, LK), and finally an extremely unlucky escapee from the USSR, Juhan Lapman—share one distinctive feature, namely the banality of their alleged offences, and the completely disproportionate dimension of the penalties they incurred in the form of compulsory long-term psychiatric "treatment", which in fact was a form of severe repression. In most cases, their "guilt" came down to having expressed, in one way or another, critical opinions about the political system in the USSR, or simply a desire to live elsewhere on earth.

Kaasik also added to his narrative (artificially, in my opinion) the distinctly separate case of a person identified as MK, an Estonian conscripted into the Soviet Interior Ministry Military Formations during the collapse of the USSR. This soldier, in an emotional state, used a weapon against his platoon commander with a fatal outcome; this was the result of the phenomenon here called "дедовщина" (the rotational abuse of newly appointed army recruits by their older colleagues). Kaasik did not manage to establish the further fate of this person (which might be a bit surprising), except for the fact, quite obvious and completely understandable in similar circumstances, that he was subjected to psychiatric examination. This leads the author to make the surprising assertion that this case also "shows that the same measures were used until the complete disintegration of the Soviet Union". Overall, these case studies, from the fate of President Päts to the case of LK, constitute a cognitively important

fragment of Kaasik's study and the entire volume. They also bear a large moral and political load; this is what makes them worthwhile. However, the good impression is spoiled by the lengthy introduction and the case of MK that seriously distorts the logic of the argument.

The text by Eli Pilve, another researcher at the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, deals with the issue of the Communist regime's persecution of the family members of people considered for various reasons to be hostile or unorthodox, a matter which is important and universal for all the countries that fell within Moscow's sphere of influence. This is also reflected in the overly emotional title, one which is not very suitable for a work with scientific ambitions (it translates literally as Family Members of "Exploiters" and "Enemies of the People" in the Fetters of the Soviet Regime. There is no doubt that the application of the principle of collective responsibility is another (after the abuse of psychiatry) exceptionally compromising aspect of the functioning of the Communist system, including beyond the Soviet Union. Of course, it is worth reminding the Western reader in particular of this, by means of an in-depth study of various aspects of the matter. Unfortunately, the author has not proved able to precisely define, or rather limit, her research field (perhaps to Estonia alone, within a certain period and scope); to clearly order the relevant concepts and legal conditions; or finally to impose a chronology, assigning appropriate examples and case studies to them. However, in her relatively short article she does make an undoubtedly ambitious attempt to cover the entirety of the above-mentioned issue in Russia/the Soviet Union, starting from the beginnings of the Bolshevik movement. Unfortunately, this attempt has ended in failure. As a result, the reader receives an inherently incomplete picture, chaotic and incoherent, which is additionally obscured by the author's completely unconvincing efforts to deal with the ideological dimension of the whole matter. At the same time, she highlights the restrictions the social groups she discusses had in their access to education (which, *nota bene*, is the subject of her own in-depth research); although obviously the mass deportations of families of "enemies of the people" was a much more painful form of collective responsibility, as can clearly be seen in the

fate of the relatives of the victims of the Katyn massacre (to recall the most famous case in Poland).

In addition, the content of her findings, and also those of the other authors of this volume, has also been distorted by a translator who renders the key word “deportation” (Polish *zesłanie*) in the sense of forced resettlement within the Soviet Union (or rather a range of its categories and varieties shown later in the text by Aivar Niglas) into English as “exile”, which basically means something else, namely the forced banishment or deportation **outside** the borders of a given country, and sometimes also outside a given community (tribe). Meanwhile, the persecuted family members of the “enemies of the people” could only have dreamed of this form of punishment, and even that only secretly. We should note that the English word “banishment”, further proposed by the above-mentioned Niglas, has similar semantic connotations. In my opinion, better proposals would be “internal deportation” or “forced resettlement/displacement/migration”; the latter is used in the title of a text from this volume by Aigi Rahi-Tamm, which will be discussed below.

The text by Ivo Juurvee, an employee of the prestigious International Centre for Defence and Security think-tank in Tallinn, concerning the Estonian aspects of the KGB’s activities in the field of disinformation—described in the nomenclature of the Soviet services (and also in global intelligence research today) as “active measures” (*активные мероприятия*)—is completely different in character. Following the lead of another outstanding researcher into similar arcana, Douglas Selvage from the Humboldt University in Berlin, I would like to remind the reader that this term is understood as secret operations whose purpose is to “influence the opinion and perception of governments or public opinion” in various countries, their essential features including “disinformation and forgery” as well as “media manipulation” (Selvage 2014, p. 119).

Specifically Juurvee here presents a very interesting introduction to the broader subject of the Estonian KGB’s behind-the-scenes support for various “whistleblowing” publications, ranging from various “white books”, through works of “popular science”, and ending with genre fiction. To this end, he has analysed in detail 44 items that met at least two of the three conditions (the publication in line with the

“operative” interests of the Soviet secret services, the use of declassified KGB material, and finally the participation in the publication of a secret collaborator or officer of the KGB).

It should be emphasised that Juurvee has constructed his text in an almost exemplary manner. Firstly he briefly cites, both comparatively and in context, two classic examples relating to the use of similar “projects” by the “central” KGB in Moscow, as well as the relevant internal regulations of the Soviet services. He describes in detail the boundaries of his field of analysis (for example, his exclusion of cinema films and TV programmes), as well as the methodological assumptions and research questions he has adopted. In accordance with the current trends in intelligence studies, Juurvee uses statistical analysis to research the data collected, and does not hesitate to use detailed tables and charts depicting the various phenomena he has observed in quantitative terms. In line with the postulate of interdisciplinarity, he has also used tools characteristic of media studies in similar research, examining *inter alia* the adjustment of the appropriate “products” to the desired target groups (including the Estonian diaspora), and describing the dynamics of the increase (or decrease) in the number of the publications described during different periods of the Soviet Union’s history from 1960 to 1990. All this has led him deliberately to a subsection in which, on the basis of his findings, he outlines the area for future research of a qualitative nature, or work conducted according to a more traditional historical methodology. Finally, it can only be said that the results the author has achieved should be considered excellent; this work allows us to hope for a future comprehensive monograph on the topic.

In his chapter of this volume Aivar Niglas, a researcher at the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, touches upon various aspects of the legal dimension of Soviet repression (which is not fully reflected in the title of the text). He does so in a concise and logical manner, first entering boldly and deeply into questions of philosophy and theory of law, including the distinction he makes between the Western and the Soviet understandings of this concept. I note with approval that similar considerations, by their nature intellectually challenging, have been undertaken very convincingly by this researcher, who is relatively young, and moreover whose full-time specialisation

lies in a completely different field, namely military history. The second part of the text is devoted to the issue of legal settlements with the Communist past and the rehabilitation of victims of political repression. Here, however, the author does not settle for banalities and generalities; on the contrary, he sees and shows a whole range of problems inherent in the proverbial “details”. Unfortunately, he resorts to a “parallel narrative” in the footnotes; I would advise him in future to eliminate this habit, which is very annoying to the reader. In the third part of his study, no less boldly and again very convincingly, Niglas finally makes good on the promise made in the title, in the form of an attempt to systematise the legal aspect of the Soviet system of repression, dividing it into “legal” (“normative”) and “extra-legal” (“non-normative”), “individual” and “group”, and finally “political” and “non-political” measures. He first presents his general description in the form of a chart (which inevitably constitutes a concise shortcut); he then explains it in greater detail, while at the same time trying to reproduce the various shades and halftones of the phenomena described. Interestingly, the focal point in his original description of the entire system shifts to other aspects and dimensions of the Soviet repression system rather than the actual security apparatus, which here only plays an executive role. Therefore, we are dealing here with an attempt to formulate a different paradigm than that adopted in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, along the lines of Germany’s BStU and Poland’s Institute of National Remembrance, a conclusion that is at least worth considering. Niglas’s text is undoubtedly another strong point in this volume.

After this comes a similarly interesting text by Meelis Saueauk, one of the volume’s editors and another researcher at the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory. It is devoted to the issue of the *nomenklatura* (in the sense of the list of positions whose nomination required approval by the Communist party) in relation to the security apparatus in the ESRR (the Estonian Socialist Soviet Republic) during the deep (Stalinist) phase of the country’s Sovietisation in 1940–1953. Saueauk’s text is very detailed and well rooted in the literature on the subject and the archival sources. The key issues of interest for him are the question of whether the leadership of the Estonian Communist Party during the period he considers had a real influence on

the management of the local security apparatus through the *nomenklatura* system, including an informal dimension in the creation of client-patron relationships. In addition to this main question, the author also poses a number of partial or auxiliary questions, including the following: What part of the security apparatus was subject to the *nomenklatura* system? And what was the ethnicity of those appointed to similar positions during the various periods of Estonian Stalinism? What were the consequences for the management of the entire system of the double (parallel) affiliation of the leadership of the security apparatus in Sovietised Estonia to the republican and central nomenclature of the CPSU(b)? And finally, what was the security organs' role in implementing the *nomenklatura* system in relation to all the positions it covered in the ESSR? In aiming to answer these questions, the author first discusses (in context) the genesis and role of the nomenclature system in the Soviet Union, then its multi-stage and very complex implementation in the ESSR after 1940, and then again after 1944. Naturally, he focuses on various kinds of power structures, including the security apparatus itself (which was undergoing a whole series of reorganisations and changes during the period of the author's focus). At the same time, he industriously recreates the changing lists of positions subject to the party *nomenklatura* (both "central" and "republican") through the years, presented not only descriptively but also in the form of an appropriate table (appended at the end of the text). At the same time, he refers in turn to the fragmented questions posed above, in order to finally answer the text's main question. In the end, Saueauk comes to the conclusion that in the Stalinist era, the *nomenklatura* system by no means gave the leadership of the Estonian Communist Party a tool of power over the local "siloviki". In practice, it only papered over *post factum* the personal decisions made in Moscow relating to them. According to the author, in this way Stalin consciously avoided the formation of clientelist relations between the local party apparatus and the security apparatus. Moreover, similar structures, largely staffed by persons who were not ethnic Estonians, were not only independent of the republican party authorities, but had a significant influence on staffing the remaining positions in the local and field nomenclature. Thus, the entire system was in fact an instrument of the omnipotence of Moscow, or, if one prefers, of Stalin.

Another important study published in this volume is a text by Indrek Paavle, also a member of the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory's team, on the role of the forced supply system during the introduction of collective agriculture to the ESRR. Needless to say, this undoubtedly constituted an essential, and in a way final element in the processes of Sovietising the Baltic states and other territories incorporated into the Soviet Union, or Moscow's sphere of influence, after World War II (these were still mostly agricultural lands and countries). This included the suppression of passive and active resistance from the societies concerned. Hence, this study is very important for the entire volume in question, and it is somewhat surprising that it was not emphasised more by its editors (for example by placing it higher in the table of contents, for example after the text by Tannberg), the more so as Paavle's text impresses with both its narrative efficiency and erudition. It is also difficult to accuse him of any lacunae from a methodological point of view. The author draws (very widely) upon literature in many languages on the subject, as well as archival sources, including those from Russian collections. He also understands the broader context of the processes described. At the same time, he should be praised for his accessible argumentation, which—as already mentioned—is well-documented in the sources, something not at all to be taken for granted when considering topics from the borders of history, political science and economic sciences.

Hiljar Tammela, also associated with the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory, looks at the Sovietisation of Estonia from a very interesting cognitive perspective, namely the history of mentality. He deals with the rumours which circulated in the country after the war about Soviet plans for successive mass deportations of the local population, according to the pattern familiar from the years of the "first Soviet" (in the Estonian case, primarily the June 1941 deportations). The expected next phase of the tragic deportations finally took place in March 1949. Similar rumours, however, circulated both earlier and later, contributing to the general public fear of an Estonian "third deportation". Tammela examines the entire range of sources, including Party documentation, from the angle of interest to him, as well as published and unpublished journals and diaries, and finally correspondence and the so-called primary

sources. The author rightly warns that in similar research, when analysing the available materials one should be able to “read between the lines” and take into account the “climate of political oppression” of the time, which affected the way people spoke, especially in writing, creating a widespread problem of self-censorship. In the case of sources produced in independent Estonia, another question arises, namely the credibility of traumatised human memory, especially after many years. Needless to say, this study is also very interesting from the perspective of the Polish research on various aspects of the Soviet wave of deportations from occupied Poland in 1940–41.

The consideration of the problem of forced migrations by Prof. Aigi Rahi-Tamm from the University of Tartu, is different because it is comparative in nature. She not only includes her reflections on the general humanitarian crisis in Europe that occurred in the second half of the 1940s, but also compares the fate of Estonian exiles and emigrants. This reminds us of the tragic dilemmas of the Estonians of those times, whose options were either bad (losing everything and escaping to the West, such as together with the defeated Nazis to their lair in Germany, or to the North across the dangerous sea to Sweden) or possibly even worse (falling under Soviet power), with all its consequences, including forced deportation to the East). The author recalls these two mutually complementary contexts of the literally “sundered” nation in detail, basing upon them a thesis (in the footsteps of specialists’ assumptions) wherein the results of the repressive Soviet and German policies are still visible in Estonian demography today.

Unfortunately, the reconstruction of the broader context of the described population shifts in Europe in the second half of the 1940s as proposed by the author is not always convincing. Here, for example, she ignores the role played by the Western powers in taking the relevant decisions (the decisions taken at Casablanca, Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam). Nor is the attempt to use the category of “ethnic cleansing” to describe these activities by reference to the otherwise valuable collective work *People on the Move. Forced Population Movement in Europe in the Second World War and its Aftermath* (Ahonen, Corni, Kochanowski, Schultze, Stark and Stelzl-Marx 2008) entirely successful. Meanwhile, according to the authors cited, “ethnic cleansing” itself is a subcategory of the wider phenomenon

of “forced population transfers” (which is written *expressis verbis* in the book the author quotes, in the first sentence on the first page of the introduction). As examples, the cases of the tragedy of Poles in Volhynia in 1943, and of the Germans and Hungarians in Vojvodina in 1944 are mentioned here, precisely on the pages cited by Rahi-Tamm.

In addition to the general literature on the subject and the knowledge resulting from the author’s previous research, the text discussed is based mainly on sources that fit into the ego-document scheme, primarily the complex accounts (partly after the fall of Communism and the collapse of the Soviet Union) given by witnesses to history. These are gathered around three leading themes: firstly, the “broken families”, with the added element of the fateful final “decisions” determining the fate of individuals; secondly, the “journey into the unknown” which is usually an inseparable chapter of the human stories told here; and finally, the “acceptance” of the refugees, and also the exiles, in the places of their forced settlement or emigration respectively. This fits, as Rahi-Tamm notes interestingly, into a certain pattern of fate for all “displaced persons”, with such keywords as “departure and farewell”, “luggage”, “journey”, “arrival”, “adaptation to the new situation”, “relations” with those who stayed at home, and last but not least “strong emotions”, resulting from such concepts and events related to displacement as “death”, “pain” and “loss”. These observations truly repay deeper consideration, also as methodological guidelines or tips for use in historical research. They could be especially valuable for researchers into the similar fates of Poles or other nations living in Central and Southern Europe, especially for those who are looking for a new, fresh approach to the subject, or who want to structure the materials they have collected in a different, more interesting and modern way.

However, they should remain cautious and critical. The author of the text in question seems to succumb to the “strong emotions” to which her characters were subjected. Here and there these emotions penetrate into her narrative, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage of the text under discussion. This makes her story more interesting and addictive, but at the same time, in some part, sets her up (raising the question of how consciously) as an advocate for the victims and a moralist at the same time, going beyond the neutral status of a historian,

who should seek the truth *sine ira et studio*. For the academic reader (who, after all, is the target of the book in question), this may raise doubts as to her objectivity, for example in the selection of the sources used or their interpretation. And this flower is precious not only for the Estonian garden, as we recall the clashes in Poland around the most recent publications by the Polish Centre for Holocaust Research in the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences and their no less involved reviewers.

The volume's main content is completed by a very interesting document edited by Meelis Saueauk and Tõnu Tannberg. These are the personal notes of the then First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party, Nikolai Karotamm, which he drew up right after the briefing to which Stalin summoned him on the night of January 18, 1949, along with his Lithuanian (Antanas Sniečkus) and Latvian (Jānis Kalbērziņš) counterparts. The main topic of the meeting, attended by key members of the Soviet party leadership at the time, was the “liquidation of the kulaks as a class” in all the Baltic countries by means of their forced expropriation to collective farms and deportation outside their homelands (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia); as we know, this took place in March 1949 as part of the *Прубой* operation, into which various other categories of imaginary “enemies of the people” also fell. Karotamm's published notes provide a glimpse into the decision-making process on this matter. At the same time, Saueauk and Tannberg point out that this was part of the ongoing struggles within the Kremlin coterie. They also note—somewhat anecdotally, as if on the margins of the great drama of the Balts—that a little-known Soviet writer living in Estonia, one Hans Leberecht, whose book was casually praised by the Soviet dictator during that briefing, overnight became both a famous writer and a member of the Estonian Communist establishment.

In addition, one of the editors of the volume, Toomas Hiio, has decided to add his comments and reflections on the history of his country during the “age of Communism” (that is in the last century) in the form of a more journalistic essay. He is looking here for an ambitiously universal message about the research produced for the Western academic world from the dramatic Estonian road running through the “Red Sea”, while engaging in polemics with his own ideas about the relevant

narratives which predominate in the West. Unfortunately, he has not quite managed to break away from the black-and-white schemes and mental shortcuts typical of *ad usum delphini* approaches, or even typically political narratives, in the sense of the currently fashionable “politics of history”. Thus, the academic reader will learn from him, albeit indirectly, what the current vision of the recent history of Estonia looks like in the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory’s version; however, he will not find anything surprising or meriting deeper reflection from reading this essay—apart perhaps from the impression that there was some truth in the theses about the peripheral or provincial character of Central and Eastern Europe. The very reduction of his vision, from the last century to the scale of the “age of Communism”, clearly shows that it is the local-Estonian perspective, and not the universal-global one, that for him is the key to the reality being described. This is quite understandable; and, let us add self-critically, it also applies to Poland and our own debates about history and its teaching. However, it does not necessarily speak to the British, Americans or Germans, not to mention the Japanese or the Argentinians.

Conclusions

Finally, of the smaller but nonetheless important matters, it should be mentioned that unfortunately the editors and publishers have neglected both to list the literature and archives used, as is standard in similar publications (and which should appear after each text separately), and the index of surnames and keywords (which would have made it easier to find the relevant content on the Internet). Some texts, meanwhile, have been provided with very extensive bibliographic footnotes in quite random places. This form is impractical and difficult for the reader, and hinders the perception and evaluation of the contents contained in the volume.

However, in my opinion, this does not mean that the publication’s desired goal has not been achieved. On the contrary, we are dealing here with a significant academic polyphony, one which perhaps sounds a little uneven, but which all in all is strong and convincing, and sometimes even virtuoso. The Estonian Institute of Historical Memory presents

itself here as a serious research institution with considerable potential, in no way inferior to its foreign counterparts such as those in Germany and Poland (which was not easy to achieve, taking into account the differences in the scale of the academic community and the budget available for such research). There is nothing wrong with the fact that the work is implementing Estonian “politics of history” to the full extent of its possibilities; nor it is doing anything different from what the Polish Institute of National Remembrance and a number of other similar institutions from Central and Southern Europe have been doing. Maybe we in all of these countries could simply bear in mind the universal warning given by Józef Szujski, that “bad history is the mistress of bad policy”.

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