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Alain Blum
Translated by Madeleine Grieve

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Political decisions and bureaucratic articulation: the Lithuanian deportees of Operation "Spring" (1948)

Alain Blum
Translated by Madeleine Grieve

Stalinist repressive policy encompassed prisons, labour camps or colonies, deportations to "remote areas of the USSR", and executions[1]. It conflated three dichotomies: a legal and an administrative practice of repression; confinement and removal; and individual and collective punishment.

The system of prisons and camps has been covered by an abundance of studies[2], archive publications[3], and equally numerous eyewitness accounts, of which Shalamov and Solzhenitsyn are the most emblematic authors. By contrast, less is known about the policy of mass deportations rural, some of them existing inhabited villages, others built from scratch. This policy was systematised in 1930[4] and founded on mere administrative decisions within an

1. I would especially like to thank Marta Craveri, with whom I prepared an initial version of this paper, which was presented at the « Circulation et coercition » [« Circulation and Coercion »] conference organised at EHESS by Renaud Morieux and Jean-Paul Zúñiga on 15 and 16 September 2011. Marc Elie, Catherine Gousseff, Emilia Koustova and Amandine Regamey also made critical comments, which were extremely useful. Lastly, my two-year posting at the Centre d'études franco-russe in Moscow provided me with optimum conditions for finishing this article.

2. The best recent summary of the history of the Gulag is most certainly Oleg V. Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag: from Collectivization to the Great Terror*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2004.

3. Especially the seven volumes of documents published by Rosspen: *История сталинского Гулага: конец 1920-х-первая половина 1950-х годов: собрание документов в семи томах* [*The history of the Stalinist Gulag: from the late 1920s to the first half of the 1950s: a seven-volume collection of documents*], Moscow, Rosspen, 2004.

4. Pavel Polian, *Не по своей воле... История и география принудительных миграций в СССР,* Moscow, OGI: Memorial, 2001, English translation: Pavel Polian, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2004; Sergei Krasil'nikov, *Серп и молох: крестьянская ссылка в Западной Сибири в 1930-е годы* [*Moloch and the sickle: the exile of peasants to Western Siberia in the 1930s*], Moscow, Rosspen, 2009; Lynne Viola, *The Unknown Gulag: the Lost World of Stalin's Special Settlements*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007; Hélène Mondon, « Les premiers "déplacés spéciaux" de Staline et leur destinée dans le Nord européen de l'URSS (1930-1948) » [*Stalin's first "special settlers" and their fates in the European North of the USSR*], PhD thesis, Paris-Sorbonne University, 2011; Andrei B. Suslov, *Спецконтингент в Пермской области 1929-1953 гг.* [*The special contingent in the Perm Region, 1929-1953*], Moscow, Rosspen,

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essentially extrajudicial framework. It created a population halfway between citizens and prisoners, an "artificial people, born on paper by some administrative whim"[5]. Under this system, more than six million people were forcibly resettled within Soviet borders between 1929 and 1953. At the system's height, in early 1953, there were 2.8 million "special settlers", i.e. people restricted to "special settlements" after having been forcibly displaced, compared with 2.6 million people incarcerated in camps, labour colonies and prisons[6]. There were more than 15,000 "special settlements" located across the territory of the Soviet Union[7], which were administered by more than 3,000 kommandatury (special settlements regional headquarters) and overseen by 10,000 Ministry of the Interior personnel[8].

Lynne Viola has decribed the mechanisms of the first mass deportation of 1929-1931 as the expression of an "aesthetic of planning"[9]. Despite the "disjuncture between "scientific" planning and reality", manifested in numerous failures and the appalling conditions of implementation, she sees the planning of the mass arrest, transfer and resettlement of peasants in remote territories as an organisational mechanism characteristic of modernity. Elena Zubkova describes the similarly bureaucratic nature of the implementation process of the later deportations from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – in June 1941 and after the Second World War[10].

This article examines that bureaucratic articulation – the sequence of repetitive, mechanical operations involved in processing orders and files – which was subsequently combined on the ground with a quasi-military organisation

2010; Marc ELIE, « La vie en déportation (1943-1953) » [« Life in deportation (1943-1953) »] in Aurélie CAMPANA, Grégory DUFAUD, Sophie TOURNON (eds.), *Les déportations en héritage. Les peuples réprimés du Caucase et de Crimée hier et aujourd'hui* [*The legacy of the deportations. The repressed peoples of the Caucasus and the Crimea, then and now*], Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2010, p. 53-75.

5. H. MONDON, « Les premiers "déplacés spéciaux"… », *op. cit.*, p. 12.

6. A summary of the diverse patterns of deportation between 1930 and 1960 can be found in Alain BLUM, Emilia KOUSTOVA, « A Soviet story – Mass deportation, isolation, return », in Thomas BALKELIS, Violeta DAVOLIŪTĖ, *Maps of Memory: Trauma, Identity and Exile in Deportation Memoirs from the Baltic States*, forthcoming, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2015. See also Natal'ia ABLAZHEI, Alain BLUM (eds.), *Миграционные последствия Второй Мировой Войны: Депортации в СССР и странах Восточной Европы* [*The migrational consequences of the Second World War: Deportations in the USSR and Eastern Europe*], 3 vol., Novosibirsk, Nauka, 2012-2015.

7. National Archives of the Russian Federation (Государственный Архив Российской Федерации, hereafter GARF), R 9479/1/641/399 as well as a list of the localities compiled by the author of the present article, on the basis of GARF files R 9479/1/561, 598, 599 (list of localities compiled on 1 January 1951), plus information on the missing regions from files 557, 558 and 559 in the same collection, compiled on 1 January 1950.

8. Between 1941 and 1953, with the exception of two short years during the war, two ministries (called People's Commissariats until 1946) existed side by side: the Ministry of Public Security (which would become the KGB), and the Ministry of the Interior (the NKVD and later the MVD). The former dealt chiefly with espionage and counter-espionage, while the latter was in charge of the camps, the special settlements, and the police. However, at various times, responsibilities shifted between the two ministries. Before 1941, all of the departments of the two ministries were gathered under the NKVD.

9. L. VIOLA, « The Aesthetic of Stalinist Planning and the World of the Special Villages », *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 4-1, 2003, p. 101-128.

10. Elena ZUBKOVA, *Прибалтика и Кремль, 1940-1953* [*The Baltics and the Kremlin, 1940-1953*], Moscow, Rosspen, 2008.

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to implement the arrests and transport once the bureaucratic machine had organised everything on paper and enabled the mass scale of these repressive operations. These were executed by a coordinated chain of agents, organised and interlinked by orders, documents and forms. The chain was extended by tight surveillance of the groups created by these operations in their places of resettlement. These bureaucratic processes are examined here from the perspective of the mass operations they enabled and of the relationship between the individual and the collective[11].

The post-war deportations, which mainly concerned the Western territories – first annexed by the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1940 then again after the German withdrawal – can be seen as the culmination of the elaboration of bureaucratic practice articulated with political decisions. These deportations were not motivated primarily by a determination to break up the organisation of the countryside, like those of 1929-1930, or by a wish to collectively punish ethnic groups, like those of the Second World War. They were designed to crush the guerrilla war being waged against Soviet troops by well-organised insurgents who enjoyed strong support in rural areas of the annexed territories[12]. Many of these guerilla groups had formed during the Second World War, with some allied with the Nazis, while others fought against both the Nazis and the Soviets. Some of these groups constituted veritable armies, such as the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and the Lithuanian Freedom Army (LLA) in the two countries that offered the strongest resistance to the Soviet authorities after the war. These guerrilla movements swelled considerably after the war, especially with an influx of young men who did not want to be conscripted into the Red Army.

The bureaucratic articulation of the deportations nevertheless unified practices designed to coerce extremely diverse social behaviours within the same system of resettlement. This was not only manifested in the implementation of the deportation itself. It was also expressed in the subsequent pathways of these people, who were subjected to restrictions during their forced resettlement by virtue of their status as deportees under categories that continued to be determinant after their release, owing to the stigma associated with their former status.

The combination of a principle of corralling the population into collectives, political principles of distrust and attributing criteria of dangerousness or loyalty to those groups, and bureaucratic decisions of removal and confinement

11. However, this paper does not deal with the strictly individual dimensions, such as the personal, family and social ties that existed in villages and the personal conflicts that often played a crucial part in the mechanisms of selection.

12. Similar methods have been employed by other armies in colonial contexts, such as by the French army in Algeria: Michel ROCARD, *Rapport sur les camps de regroupement et autres textes sur la guerre d'Algérie* [*Report on the Internment Camps and Other Documents on the Algerian War*], Paris, Mille et une nuits, 2003; Michel CORNATON, *Les regroupements de la décolonisation en Algérie* [*Regrouping during Decolonisation in Algeria*], Paris, Éditions Économie et Humanisme: Les Éditions Ouvrières, 1967, vol. 1.

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produced a system that operated in parallel to the penal system. The collective nature of these measures, which grouped individuals into categories, each with a precise label, determined their fates not only because they were rounded up and deported, but because, in the years after their deportation, the administration perceived them in terms of the groups that were thus created.

This article therefore seeks to shed light on the singular world of the deportees, which was brought into being in the early 1930s and grew until 1953. It focuses on the deportees from the territories annexed by the Soviet Union after the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and after the Second World War. We shall examine the mechanisms that linked political decisions with the implementation of deportation and with life in resettlement, which was characterised by surveillance and by restrictions on freedom of movement and choice of work. We shall investigate the persistence of uncertainty and imprecision as to the status of these individuals, since the resettlement process resulted from mere administrative decisions, applied collectively. These vague decisions proliferated, implementing then regimenting, and ultimately releasing without erasing. Here we shall look at these specific bureaucratic mechanisms, but not examine the impact of these decisions and resettlement on the pathways of the deportees after deportation and on their re-integration into society[13].

From bureaucratic documents to survivors' own words

This article is based on different types of sources. It draws on a now abundant literature, dealing with the multiple decisions that led to the deportations, and on the profusion of reports, which can be used to trace the pathways of the deportees[14]. This article also makes use of the large quantity of archive documents preserved at the various central and local institutions in charge of the repression and surveillance of the victims of the deportations[15].

13. Emilia Koustova has shown that these denominations had numerous sub-denominations, highlighting various forms of malleability or temporary dissolution, in some contexts, of these groups, of their integration and of the diversity of their subsequent pathways: E. KOUSTOVA, « (Un)returned from the Gulag: Life trajectories and integration of postwar special settlers », *Kritika*: *Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 16-3, 2015, p. 589-620.

14. The most important are those of Zemskov, Polian, Bugai and Berdinskikh: Pavel POLIAN, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2004; Nikolai BUGAI, *Л. Берия – И. Сталину: « Согласно Вашему указанию»* [*L. Beria to J. Stalin: « In accordance with your instructions »*], Moscow, AIRO XX, 1995; Viktor ZEMSKOV, *Спецпоселенцы в СССР 1930-1960* [*Special settlers in the USSR, 1930-1960*], Moscow, Nauka, 2003; Viktor BERDINSKIKH, *Спецпоселенцы. Политическая ссылка народов Советской России* [*The special settlers. The political exile of the peoples of Soviet Russia*], Moscow, NLO, 2005.

15. Most of the archives on which this article is based come from the National Archives of the Russian Federation and the Lithuanian Special Archives (Lietuvos Ypatingasis Archyvas, hereafter LYA). Several publications of documents were also used, the most important of which are: Nikolai POBOL', Pavel POLIAN, *Сталинские депортации: 1928-1953* [*The Stalinist Deportations: 1928-1953*], Moscow, Mezhdunarodnyi fond « Demokratiia »: Materik, 2005; Генеральная прокуратура РФ, *Сборник законодательных и нормативных актов о репрессиях и реабилитации жертв политических репрессий* [*Collection of legal and normative acts on the repressions and the rehabilitation of the victims of*

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Lastly, a series of interviews with former deportees from Central and Eastern Europe who were resettled in the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1953 constitutes the third set of sources. The interviews come from a research project, Sound Archives – European Memories of the Gulag, conducted by an international team of 13 scholars in Central and Eastern Europe, Siberia and Kazakhstan. A total of almost 200 testimonies were collected in 17 countries from people deported from the territories that were located west of the Soviet border prior to August 1939[16]. During the course of the interviews, a large number of photographs and personal archives were also collected, offering a visual record of those experiences. Many of these audio and video recordings, archive documents and photographs have been published in the virtual museum of the European Memories of the Gulag Sound Archives[17] and in the collective volume *Déportés en URSS. Récits d'Européens au Goulag*[18].

The aim of this double work of perusing archives and collecting interviews was not, of course, to use excerpts from life stories to illustrate what the archives have to tell us about a long history of political violence. It was much more to discover, on the margins of the bureaucratic practices that determined a collective experience, an expression of the singularity of the life trajectories of those who suffered that fate. The archives may already offer us this possibility: despite their pre-determined format, individual files, which supply a person's biography within a framework restricted by an imposed terminology, still leave room for the expression of a diversity of experiences. This can be found, for example, in the large quantity of letters addressed to the authorities – requests, complaints and petitions – preserved in the files. These letters are a remarkable expression of the collision of two life stories: one bureaucratic and the other autobiographical[19]. They are nevertheless only brief accounts, addressed to official bodies whose terms they often reproduce. Moreover, they refer only to the period of exile and the past.

By contrast, the aim of our research project was to gather accounts of whole lifetimes. The people we went to see knew we were coming because of what

the political repressions], Kursk, GUIPP, 1999, vol. 2; *История сталинского Гулага* [*The History of the Stalinist Gulag*]…, *op. cit*.

16. This project was supported by the French National Research Agency (ANR), by several research institutions (INED, EHESS, etc.) and by Radio France Internationale (RFI).

17. *http://museum.gulagmemories.eu/en*; The website contains the recordings of some of the interviews cited in the present article. The team of researchers was coordinated by Alain Blum (CERCEC and INED), Marta Craveri (CERCEC and FMSH) and Valérie Nivelon (RFI), and its members were Mirel Banica, Juliette Denis, Marc Elie, Catherine Gousseff, Malte Griesse, Emilia Koustova, Anne-Marie Losonczy, Jurgita Mačiulitė, Françoise Mayer, Agnieszka Niewiedzal and Isabelle Ohayon. Three other researchers have since also contributed to the project: Irina Tcherneva, Lubomira Valcheva and Antonio Ferrara.

18. Alain BLUM, Marta CRAVERI, Valérie NIVELON (eds.), *Déportés en URSS. Récits d'Européens au goulag* [*Deported to the USSR. Stories of Europeans in the Gulag*], Paris, Autrement, 2012.

19. Note that this type of comparison has already been studied in the highly singular context of Communist autobiographies: e.g. in Claude PENNETIER, Bernard PUDAL (eds.), *Autobiographies, autocritiques, aveux dans le monde communiste* [*Autobiography, self-criticism and confession in the Communist world*], Paris, Belin, 2002, vol. 1. However, this is a long way from the clash of perspectives evoked here.

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they had endured, but we asked them to tell us their entire life stories, from as far back as they could remember until the present. The wealth and diversity of the accounts we obtained and of the life experiences recorded enabled us to separate singular pathways from collective experiences, especially as the vast mjority of the people we interviewed had been deported in childhood and therefore had their whole lives ahead of them at the time[20].

The interviews enabled us to start thinking about the relationship that develops between the normative bureaucratic framework that underpinned displacement and violence, and individual life pathways, which is what guides the research presented here.

Collective assignation and repressions

The multiple, shifting categories of action employed by Soviet power date back to the revolutionary period, and even incorporate aspects that pre-date the Revolution. Soon after October 1917, traditional social and community identities were discussed and reforged to fit the new forms of an ideology that asserted the superiority of workers and peasants over "former people" (бывшие), who were considered as having belonged to the pre-revolutionary dominant groups. Many people lost their civic rights simply because of their social backgrounds[21]. The extrajudicial specification of categories of citizens proliferated in a Soviet Union of multiple «regimes«, i.e. systems of rights, obligations, regulations, privileges or restrictions assigned to populations defined by status, place of residence, etc.[22]

Lengthy discussions involving academic and political circles sought to define economic and social criteria that could be used to divide the peasantry into social classes and thus designate each peasant according to his or her class[23]. These debates introduced a strange and chilling relationship between constructs created and discussed by academic elites and the – sometimes direct, sometimes subverted – political instrumentation of the same categories, which enabled the introduction of collective reponsibility, stigmatisation, etc. The

20. On that aspect of childhood: M. Craveri, Anne-Marie Losonczy, « Trajectoires d'enfances au goulag. Mémoires tardives de la déportation en URSS » [« Trajectories of childhoods in the Gulag. Late memoirs of deportation in the USSR »], *Revue d'histoire de l'enfance «irrégulière »*, 14, 2012, p. 193-222.

21. Golfo Alexopoulos, *Stalin's Outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926-1936*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003; Nathalie Moine, « Peut-on être pauvre sans être un prolétaire ? La privation de droits civiques dans un quartier de Moscou au tournant des années 1920-1930 » [« Can one be poor without being a proletarian? Deprivation of civil rights in a district of Moscow in the 1920s and 1930s »], *Le mouvement social*, 196, 2001, p. 89-114; Sheila Fitzpatrick, « Ascribing Class: The Construction of Social Identity in Soviet Russia », *The Journal of Modern History*, 65-4, 1993, p. 745-770.

22. Tamara Kondratieva (ed.), *Les Soviétiques : un pouvoir, des régimes* [*The Soviets: One Power, Several Regimes*], Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2011.

23. Moshe Lewin, *La paysannerie et le pouvoir soviétique, 1928-1930* [*The Peasantry and Soviet Power, 1928-1930*], La Haye, Mouton, 1966.

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national categories were one of the most thoroughly implemented examples[24]. Their use was crucial in the policies of mass deportations of populations based solely on ethnicity[25].

This logic assigned responsibility to whole populations, grouped under a collective designation, independently of any individual fault. The status of each member of that population was redefined accordingly, and their fate and condition were inextricably bound with forced displacement. The first deportations began in 1930, when Stalin declared war on the countryside. More than 2 million peasants were forcibly displaced, mostly from the European part of the Soviet Union to the inhospitable regions of Western Siberia and the Russian Far North. They were resettled in localities they were not permitted to leave: either rural villages that were already inhabited, or unpopulated areas, which meant they had to improvise everything, survive hunger and the Siberian winter, build baracks or huts to live in, etc.[26]

Here the primary logic of repressing and crushing the peasantry, as part of the forced collectivisation of agriculture, was combined with a secondary logic of colonising sparsely populated areas of the Soviet Union.

The primary logic, which would be repeated many times, made removal and displacement the instruments of submission, or at least of neutralisation of resistance, revolt and other forms of individual and collective opposition, whether actual, potential or imaginary. The determination to destroy existing statuses and ties of solidarity was pre-eminent in the policy of deportation to "remote areas of the USSSR". That expression strikingly captures the secondary logic, insofar as the Soviet Union was perceived as a concentric construct in which political and geographical proximity went together. It was directly inspired by the wording of the decree of 11 July 1929, "On the use of convict labour", which concerned the camps although not the special settlements. The decree stipulated that the new camps would be established "for the purpose of colonising those areas and exploiting their natural resources through the use of convict labour"[27]. The status of those first deported populations was at best sketchily defined ahead of time. Deportation policies were haphazard, resulting from decisions and contrary decisions. Stemming from this hesitancy,

24. Juliette CADIOT, *Le laboratoire impérial Russie-URSS, 1870-1940* [*The Russian-Soviet Imperial Laboratory, 1870-1940*], Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2007; Francine HIRSCH, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge & the Making of the Soviet Union*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2005; Terry MARTIN, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001; Alain BLUM, Catherine GOUSSEFF, « La statistique démographique et sociale, élément pour une analyse historique de l'État russe et soviétique » [« Demographic and social statistics, an element for the historical analysis of the Russian and Soviet State »], *Cahiers du monde russe*, 38-4, 1997, p. 441-456.

25. N. BUGAI, *Л. Берия – И. Сталину* [*L. Beria to J. Stalin*]…, *op. cit.*; P. POLIAN, *Against Their Will*…, *op. cit.*

26. S. KRASIL'NIKOV, *Серп и молох* [*Moloch and the sickle*]…, *op. cit.* ; A.B. SUSLOV, *Спецконтингент* [*The special contingent*]…, *op. cit.*; H. MONDON, « Les premiers "déplacés spéciaux"… », *op. cit.*

27. GARF, R 5446/1/48/210-212, published in *История сталинского Гулага* [*History of the Stalinist Gulag*]…, *op. cit.*, vol. 5, p. 58-59.

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the conditions and experiences of deportation varied considerably, which could also be attributed to the time and place of deportation, the person's age at the time of deportation, and various other factors.

The complex bureaucratic procedure initiated in 1930 was refined, developed and clarified over the next decade. By the second half of the 1940s, it was well oiled and chillingly efficient. It produced its own categories, which lacked a precise legal foundation. Deportation decisions were taken before normative texts stipulated the conditions that would be applied to the deportees. Peasants were exiled and prohibited from leaving the settlements they built for an unspecified length of time. The deported peasants were designated collectively even though their status was undefined: initially referred to as "dekulakised" peasants, in 1931 they became «special settlers«, but for a long time the OGPU continued to refer to them under various labels, reflecting the extra-legal character of their sentence[28]. The requirement to act despite the uncertainty and imprecision of the directives resulted in improvised statuses that lacked a formal definition. This can be seen in the successive adjustments made during those years: initially overseen by local administrative bodies, the special settlers subsequently came under the remit of the NKVD. In the early years, there were no clear regulations governing the special settlements to which peasants were deported.

After the peasants, other groups perceived as marginal were deported. Various peoples suspected of disloyalty towards the Soviet Union in a context of impending war were forcibly displaced. From then on, the collective deportations were guided by two rationales: a social rationale and an ethnic rationale. Social groups continued to be targeted but, as war loomed, ethnic groups perceived as potential fifth columnists were also subjected to forced displacement: large numbers of ethnic Poles and Germans deported from Ukraine in 1936, Kurds deported from areas bordering Iran and Koreans deported from areas neighbouring Asia in 1937 were resettled in Central Asia and other regions. Loyalty was thus perceived as the expression of a collective identity, based on ethnic identification. Through an extension of the idea of diasporas, all of these peoples, who had been living in the Russian empire for centuries, were linked to foreign states solely on the basis of a shared ethnicity[29]. They were deported together with vagrants and itinerant peasants who had fled the mass collectivisation of their land to seek refuge in the cities but had failed to earn a livelihood there[30].

28. Depending on the date and the population deported, they were referred to as « labour settlers », « special settlers », « exiles-displaced », etc.: H. MONDON, « Les premiers "déplacés spéciaux"… », *op. cit.*, p. 12.

29. See, for example, Oleg KHLEVNIUK, « The reasons for the "Great Terror": the foreign-political aspect », in Silvio Pons, Andrea Romano (eds.), *Russia in the Age of Wars, 1914-1945*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2000, p. 159-169.

30. Until 1940, ethnic Russians accounted for the majority of these prisoners and deportees, followed by Ukrainians, in both the special settlements and the camps, although Koreans formed a large contingent after the first collective deportation of an entire ethnic group, in 1937.

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After the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed in August 1939, the Soviet Union annexed the eastern territories of Poland (Western Ukraine and Western Byelorussia), the Romanian territories of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, as well as the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The political, economic and military elites living in those territories (whether of Polish, Jewish, German, Ukrainian, Russian, Lithuanian or another ethnicity) were arrested and sent to the camps in 1940 or in May and June 1941. In accordance with the idea of collective responsibility, reminiscent of measures taken during the Great Terror, relatives of those prisoners, principally their wives and children and sometimes their elderly parents, were deported to Siberian settlements.

The next wave of deportations, of groups who were later referred to as the "punished peoples", took place during the Second World War. This involved the deportation of entire peoples suspected of disloyalty and of actually or potentially assisting the enemy forces. Ethnic Germans were the first to be subjected to wholesale deportation during the war, with most resettled in Kazakhstan. They were followed by the Chechens, the Ingush and other peoples[31].

At the end of the war, mass arrests and deportations followed the withdrawal of the German forces and the Red Army's advance through the Western territories. These deportations obeyed three logics. The first logic was repressive and directed at individuals who had either collaborated with the German occupier or participated in the mass murder of Jews or held local positions of authority. Some of those arrests were based on serious investigations corroborated by witness statements, whereas others were based on mere denunciations or summary investigations. The second logic was a policy of forced collectivisation, a repetition of the practices deployed in Soviet territories in the early 1930s. The third logic had a mass character and sought to repress all those who resisted the Soviet army, perceived as an occupying army. In particular, the Baltic partisans, such as the Lithuanian Forest Brothers, and members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) operating in Western Ukraine, were sentenced to long sentences in the camps. To crush these movements (which persisted even after Stalin's death), the Soviets developed a strategy of reprisals and intimidation, which involved the repression of those suspected of hostile actions, and the mass deportation, mainly to Siberia, of villagers suspected of providing supplies to partisans hiding in the forests[32].

Added to these logics was a contagionist or associationist conception of responsibility. The family was the main unit where one member's guilt was

31. These included Kalmyks, Karachays, Balkars, Crimean Tatars, other peoples from Crimea (Bulgarians, Greeks, Armenians, etc.), and Meshkhetian Turks and other peoples from Georgia (Kurds, etc.). See, in particular, N. BUGAI, *Л. Берия – И. Сталину* [*L. Beria to J. Stalin*]…, *op. cit.*; V. ZEMSKOV, *Спецпоселенцы* [*Special settlers*]…, *op. cit.*; P. POLIAN, *Against Their Will…*, *op. cit.*

32. See in particular Alexander STATIEV, *The Soviet Counterinsurgency in the Western Borderlands*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010. On purges on Soviet territory, see Vanessa VOISIN, *L'URSS contre ses traîtres : l'épuration soviétique (1941-1955)* [*The USSR against its Traitors: Soviet Purges (1941-1955)*], Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015.

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believed to contaminate the others, but neighbours could similarly be suspected. This conception of shared responsibility was a frequent feature of the Stalinist repressions, and had already been applied during the deportations of 1941[33]. At other times tacit and simply casting doubt on the entire family of the arrested person, here the suspicion of complicity was expressed explicitly[34].

Public official discourse invoked efforts to combat bandits and underground nationalists. Although the major collective deportations were not framed as a strategy for dealing with the guerrilla war, this ground was cited explicitly for a number of other operations. In its title, the decree of the Ministry of the Interior of 20 October 1948 on Western Ukraine describes the deportations as a "response […] to diversionary terrorist acts"[35]. Similar phrasing is found in many reports from Lithuania: "In response to terrorist acts committed by armed bands in [various districts], an operation to expel the "families of kulak accomplices and of executed, active and convicted bandits and nationalists" has commenced"[36], or "in September 1950, with the approval of the Ministry of State Security of the USSR and of the CC of the (Bolshevik) Communist Party of Lithuania, as a response to terrorist acts committed by bandits […]"[37]. Other reports emphasise that the deportations were designed to weaken support for the partisans hiding in the forests:

"In 1949, the organs of the MGB (Ministry of State Security) dealt a serious blow to the remnants of underground nationalism and armed bands. Several command centres and dozens of groups of nationalists and bandits were wiped out.

Deportation played a huge role. It dealt a blow not only to the hostile elements but also to the reactionary Lithuanian émigrés and their protectors in the imperialist camp.[38]"

33. See above, p. 72.

34. On the guilt of neighbours, see, for example, Alain BLUM, Yuri SHAPOVAL, *Faux coupables : surveillance, aveux et procès en Ukraine soviétique, 1924-1934* [*False Culprits: Surveillance, Confessions and Trials in Soviet Ukraine, 1924-1934*], Paris, CNRS Éditions, 2012.

35. Archives of the SBU in Kiev (Galuzevii derzhavnii arkhiv, GDA), 9/10/01, « О выселении с территории западных областей Украинской ССР семей бандитов, националистов и бандпособников, в ответ на совершенные бандитами диверсионно-террористические акты » [« On the deportation from the Western regions of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Ukraine of the families of bandits, nationalists and accomplices of bandits, in reponse to terrorist diversionary acts perpetrated by bandits »], Order (приказ) 00386 of the Ministry of National Security of the USSR, 20 October 1948.

36. LYA K-1/10/82/37, « Спецсообщение зам. предс. СМ ЛССР Писареву » [« Special communication to the vice-president of the Council of Ministers of Lithuanian SSR, Pisarev »].

37. LYA K-1/10/136/170-171, « Справка о мотивах выселения в Хабаровский край семей кулаков и бандитов из Вильнюсской, Шяуляйской и Клайпедской областей Литовской ССР в сентябре 1950 года и причинах ненаправления на рассмотрение в Особое Совещание при МГБ СССР учетных дел на кулацкие семьи, высланные во время этой операции » [« Report on the reasons for the deportation to the Region of Khabarovsk of the families of bandits from the Regions of Vilnius, Šiauliai and Klaipėda of the Lithuanian SSR in September 1950 and the reasons that the files on the kulak families deported during the same operation were not submitted to the special council of the Ministry of State Security for approval »], 18 June 1952. The report is signed by the head of Department « A » of the Ministry of State Security of the Lithuanian SSR.

38. LYA 1771/190/7/39, « Совещание 1 июня 1949 г. ЦК КП(б) Лит ССР "О мерах по ликвидации остатков националистического подполья и банд в связи с колхозным строительством" », Приложение к пр. № 20 п. 30 от 6/6/1949 [« Meeting on 1 June 1949 of the CC of the CP(b) of the Lith. SSR "On the measures to eliminate the remainder of underground nationalists and bandits in connection with the construction of kolkhozes" », Appendix to transcript No.20, indent 30, 6 June 1949].

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The people who lived in these areas perceived these operations as retaliation for actual support for the partisans or arbitrary. Some survivors said they were deported because a family member had been in the forest or because he or she had helped the partisans in some way:

"My parents were in contact with the Forest Brothers. But I did not find that out until much later. My elder sister told me not long ago. At Easter they would arrive cleanly shaven, carrying nicely polished automatic pistols. They would sing Lithuanian songs and pray for Easter. There were large forests nearby, where we used to pick blueberries. But I didn't know that nearby there was a bunker on a small island in the middle of the marsh"[39].

Sometimes local residents where no more than bystanders, indifferent to the Forest Brothers and Soviet soldiers passing through, but they were automatically assumed to support the partisans:

"I remember it was a beautiful day. It was late June. The beginning of summer. My father told us he had been asked to the local administration to sign something. He said it wouldn't take long at all, so he took me with him. We walked through the forest. I remember the forest very well. I remember all the plants. He showed them to me and told me their names. I remember that to this day. We arrived at the administration, and he told me to sit on the step and wait. He went inside and I waited. It was lunchtime. I was hungry. I was tired and fell asleep on the step. Some people rode by on a cart, neighbours. They recognised me and asked me what I was doing there. I said I was waiting for my father. They told me not to wait! They said they would take me home to mother. They gave me a bun from the town. They told me my father wasn't coming back, that I shouldn't wait for him any more. I was the last person to see him alive. We walked through the forest. That was my last outing with my father.

He was held for a long time in Viljandi. Then, in about 1947, he came before a court. I've been to see the documents in the archives. The court consisted of an 18-year-old soldier with the NKVD, a lieutenant and someone else. They sentenced my father because they found a sandwich on him. My family suffered twice because of a sandwich. They said my father brought the sandwich to give to the Forest Brothers. There wasn't even a file on him. There was a file on the Forest Brothers, who really were in the forest, and they caught them. But he had nothing to do with them. I saw the question, «Why did the wives and mothers of the jailed men come to you for advice?« Then the file says that my father replied that they saw him as an authority figure. That was my father's only crime. There's no more information on him in Estonia. It was only mentioned that he was sent to Vorkuta to work in the coalmines. He was only sentenced to five years, plus five years in exile. He was a big, strong man, but no longer young. We received a letter from him in late 1949. I kept the reply I wrote to him, which my grandmother translated, which we didn't have time to send because we were deported ourselves. I kept that letter with me in Siberia and I still have it, the letter I wrote when I was ten. We found out from some people that he had been transferred to Steplag, near Karaganda, in 1948. And there he disappeared. We did not receive any more news or even a death notice after that"[40].

39. Interview with Maritė Kontramaitė, *European Memories of the Gulag Sound Archives* (hereafter *Sound Archives*) [Vilnius, 11 June 2011, E. Koustova and A. Blum, 01:10:00-01:12:30] (Hereafter the excerpts from the interviews are referenced with the place, date and names of the interviewers, followed by time codes for the beginning and end of the excerpt).

40. Interview with Marju Toom, *Sound Archives* [Riga, 22 January 2009, M. Craveri and J. Denis, 00:18:31-00:24:06].

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Another major wave of deportation, in 1949, chiefly targeted peasants. Here the justification was not repression of partisans (although that is a partial explanation for the operation), but collectivisation of land in the conquered territories through a repeat of the operations of 1929-1931. The Soviets and their local supporters used land and tax registers to identify the richest peasants; they also acted on a plethora of denunciations, true or false, to identify people who supported local resistance movements.

Depending on the wave of deportation, deportees could be exiled for life – even though the Soviet Criminal Code did not provide for life sentences (the maximum sentence in the Code of 1926 was 25 years) – for 10, 15 or 20 years, or for an unspecified duration.

Bureaucratic articulation

The distinction between political prisoners and common-law criminals dominates the memoir literature about the camps, oral testimonies and historical publications. Most political prisoners were sentenced for counter-revolutionary crimes under Article 58 of the RSFSR Criminal Code of 1926. The identification of each individual is determined by that article and its sub-articles, which set fairly precise sentences. The dichotomy of political prisoners versus common-law criminals enshrined in the criminal code is emphasised in camp literature, from Shalamov's Kolyma Tales to Solzhenytsin's Gulag Archipelago, in rehabilitations and in the work of historians. The latter have only questioned it in the past few years, by positing that certain criminal convictions that did not come under Article 58, such as lateness to work or absenteeism, or theft of Socialist property (which was far more severely punished than theft of personal property) blurred the boundaries between political prisoners and common-law criminals[41].

The collective deportations did not generate such a distinction. From the stages of their preparation and implementation, they created groups or collectives, which were the product of bureaucratic logics that articulated a series of mechanisms[42], a sequence of actions by various bodies, processing personal files rather than confronting individuals. Groups and their condition were determined not by legally defined statuses or by classes constructed on the basis of social or cultural criteria, but by bureaucratic instructions and practices executing a sequence of directives emanating from the NKVD, the Party and the government.

The operation conducted in Lithuania in 1948 reflects that bureaucratic articulation, which was the culmination of the experience that the repressive

41. Nicolas Werth, *La terreur et le désarroi : Staline et son système* [Terror and Confusion: Stalin and his System], Paris, Perrin, 2007.

42. On the bureaucratic dimension, see L. Viola, « The Aesthetic… », art. cit.

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institutions and local administrations had acquired since the early 1930s and especially during the deportations conducted during the Second World War. By 1948, the bureaucratic chain that linked the central institutions of the Soviet Union with local repressive, administrative and political apparatuses was well oiled[43].

On 21 February 1948, the Council of Ministers of the USSR issued a decree[44] whose purpose was to declare war on the guerrilla groups proliferating on Lithuanian territory, by striking at the heart of their supply networks. The Ministry of the Interior, which was directly responsible for enforcing the decree, code-named the operation "Spring" (Весна). An entire bureaucratic chain was then put in place to execute the decree.

This type of operation left enormous scope for interpretation and considerable latitude to local Ministry of the Interior staff, assisted by Party members, to decide whom to deport. It also explains the need for quotas, which led local administrators to compile files on the basis of numbers alone. Directive No. 118 of the Ministry of State Security dated 26 March 1948 stipulated that 12,000 families were to be deported. This set a target, which then served as a permanent reference for senior Ministry officials[45] and local administrators alike[46]. The quota of 12,000 was broken down by district by the bureaus of the Ministry of the Interior in Moscow[47].

The bureaucratic chain usually started with the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR, which charged several of its departments with implementing the operation. Most of the instructions were issued at the highest level, requiring approval of the minister or deputy minister. They were transmitted to Lithuania, where the interior minister of that Soviet republic appears to have acted as a mere executor. The local departments of the Ministry of State Security

43. « In terms of numbers, advance preparation, technical equipment and organisation of the phase of deportation, this operation significantly surpassed the deportation of 1941 », V. BERDINSKIKH, *Спецпоселенцы* [*Special settlers*]…, *op. cit.*, p. 526.

44. GARF, R9401/1/436/2, « Постановление о выселении из Литовской ССР членов семей бандитов, бандпособников из числа литовских кулаков » [« Decree on the deportation from the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic of the family members of bandits and accomplices of bandits among Lithuanian kulaks »], Decree No. 417-160ss, 21 February 1948.

45. For example, LYA, V-135/7/61/230a, « Докладная записка о результате операции в Литовской ССР » [« Report on the outcome of the operation in the Lithuanian SSR »], draft, May 1948, signed by the vice-minister and minister of State security of Lithuania for the minister of State security of the USSR, Abakumov. The policy of quotas, as guiding the repressions, emerged during the Great Terror in 1937 (see, for example, A. BLUM, N. WERTH (eds.), « La Grande Terreur en URSS » [« The Great Terror in the USSR »], *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, 107, 2010).

46. LYA, V-135/7/61/172-173, « Сводка о ходе операции по делу "Весна" » [« Progress report on Operation "Spring" »], 22 May1948 at 12:00, signed by the deputy director of the principal division of the MGB of the USSR, containing a column headed « target » (задание), a column headed « families collected » (поднято семей) and a column headed « delivered to the loading station » (сдано на станции погрузки).

47. GARF, R9479/1/427/16-17, « План перевозок спецконтингента » [« Transport plan for the special contingent »], 4 May 1948, signed by Arkadiev, head of the Transport Department of the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR on 30 April and confirmed by Riasnoi, vice-minister of the interior of the USSR on 4 May 1948.

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were in charge of compiling a registration file (учётное дело) for each family, which included a description of the family and the designation assigned to them. This type of registration further highlights the conception of the repression as targeting families rather than individuals. The local administrators compiled lists of families, with each designated according to a pre-determined label, such as "accomplices of bandits[48]" (the bureaucratic term for "label" was "coloration" [окраска]). Lithuanian historians and civil-society actors refer to them as "Forest Brothers" or "partisans"[49]. The administrators first used existing lists of names, to which they added more with the sole aim of meeting the quotas set by the authorities for each district. Some lists of families and recapitulative tables drawn up as the files were being prepared were even marked «reserve«. This was a "reserve" of names that could be marshalled if the quotas for Lithuania were not reached[50]. That practice of delving into files to fulfil an instruction for collective repression had already been widely employed during the Great Terror to meet the quotas assigned to every regional division of the NKVD[51].

All of that preparation, prior to deportation, was conducted via a thick bureaucratic filter. For example, a deportation order was issued by the head of Fourth Department of the Ministry of State Security of Lithuania for a certain Petrauskas[52] and his family because "he provided food supplies to the bandits, and accommodated and hid them on his farm. This is corroborated by the witnesses Valinskas, Paleckis and Vytautas"[53]. The order was confirmed by the Ministry of State Security and sanctioned by the Prosecutor of Lithuania. The procedure was not identical for every operation, reflecting the arbitrary character of these administrative deportations[54]. In the space of less than

48. For example, LYA, V-135/7/61/117-119, « Справка по оформленным материалам дела "Весна" » [«Report on the materials processed of Operation "Spring" »], signed by the deputy director of the principal division of the MGB of the USSR in May 1948. On the concept of bandit, see N. Werth, « Les rebelles primitifs », in Id., *La terreur et le désarroi…*, *op. cit*., p. 134-169 who contributes his concept as a counterpoint to that of Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels. Studies in Archaic Forms of Social movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1959.

49. Used in the Lithuanian (and Baltic more broadly) memorial discourse, the term « partisan » is also used in archive catalogues and by historians.

50. LYA, V-135/7/448/49, « Список оформленных учетных дел на бандитские и банд-пособнические семьи по куршенскому УО МГБ » [« List of the processed files on the families of bandits and families that assisted bandits for the Department of Registration of the MGB of Kuršėnai »], which contains three indications about each family: « not going », « registered according to the plan » or « in the reserve ».

51. A. Blum, N. Werth (eds.), « La Grande Terreur… », *op. cit*.

52. The documents from the Lithuanian archives have been anonymised. The archives have an exceptional policy of opening the collections to broad consultation. We nevertheless preferred to replace the surnames that appear in the documents with other names chosen randomly.

53. LYA V-135/7/448/5, Order – Deportation of the Petrauskas family, signed by the operations officer of the Fourth Department of the MGB of Lithuania, approved by the minister of State security of Lithuania and sanctioned by the prosecutor of Lithuania, 22 April 1948.

54. We shall not go into detail here. Suffice to say that sometimes the Special Council of the NKVD was the sanctionin institution, which corresponds to the power it had acquired to exile. But often, it was the institutions that signed the collective decision to deport who sanctioned it, or other ad hoc bodies, or none.

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two months, thousands of files like these circulated between the districts and Vilnius. That was only enough time to save a limited number of people from deportation: some Party members and their families and people with political connections from deportation.

Many of the former special settlers that we interviewed said they were never given a reason for their deportation, unlike former camp prisoners, almost all of whom could cite the article of the Criminal Code under which they had been sentenced. For example, Yaroslav Pogarskiy[55], who was deported to the Altai, reported:

"We didn't understand. I only realised later. I didn't understand why I could never pass the exam on the constitution [failure prevented him from obtaining a higher-education degree]. My father simply told me, "All the doors are closed to us". But he didn't go into details. He just said, "Study as far as you can". […]

There are many rumours about who was deported for what. I have a nephew who is a journalist […] who lived on the same floor as the KGB chief for the Omsk region. They became friendly. […] One day when they had been drinking, my nephew asked him: Do you know why we were deported? The chief answered, "Yes, I do, because that's my job, and also because you're my neighbour. When they sent you here to work, I picked up your file. But I'll never tell you what's written in it, because if you find out everything that's written about you, your family will hate mine to the seventh generation""[56].

By contrast, Andrei Ozerovski, who was sent to various labour camps, said:

"[The duty officer who accompanied him said:] Here is the order of arrest and the search order. You are charged under Articles 58.1a, 58.2, 58.10 and 58.11. What does that mean? The investigator will tell you. But now you know you are charged under those articles.

All right. The duty officer took me to the investigator […] He was courteous. So please explain… Well, we can consider that you come under 58.1a. Well, 58 is treason, 58.a is for a civilian and 58.b is for a soldier. At the time you were still a civilian because it was before you served in the army"[57].

Starting on 5 April 1948, every five days, a joint report was sent by the Ministry of State Security of Lithuania and the chief of the Second Department of the Ministry of State Security of the USSR (the counter-espionage department of the MGB) to the deputy minister for state security of the USSR, indicating the number of "completed files", the number of "files pending" at the Ministry of the Interior, and the number of files in progress in the various districts of Lithuania. The officers were focused only on the target they had to reach. Between 5 April and 25 April 1948, the number of completed files increased from 752 to 5,022, which was 20,627 people. The files were classified into: files of families of bandits and underground nationalists; files of

55. When we cite testimonies, we indicate the names of the eyewitnesses. These individuals all consented in writing to being cited by name. We meticulously applied the policy of France's data protection agency, the Commission nationale de l'informatique et des libertés (CNIL) in obtaining informed consent.

56. Interview with Iaroslav Pogarskii, *Sound Archives* [Pereiaslav-Khmelnitskii, 3 April 2009, A. Blum, 00:45:23-00:45:58; 01:05:03-01:05:33].

57. Interview with Andrei Ozerovskii, *Sound Archives* [Karaganda, 17 September 2009, I. Ohayon, A. Blum and E. Zimovina, 01:15:41-01:18:24].

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families of convicted bandits and nationalists; files of families of bandits killed in armed clashes; and accomplices of kulak-bandits[58], in order to create an illusion of adherence to the decree that had initiated the wave of deportation.

Simultaneously, the central Soviet organs continued to work on the planning of the operation using tables of figures[59] and work plans[60]. The organisation of the convoys was covered in a series of instructions to the Internal Troops of the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR, the Department of Special Deportations and the Department of Transport (перевозок), which were directly involved, but also to the Ministry of Health, which was in charge of assigning doctors to accompany the convoys. The families of deportees were nothing more than units of account used to calculate the number of trains that would be required, the number of vehicles to transport people from their homes to the railway stations, and the number of soldiers to deploy and transport to each railway station.

On 3 April 1948, an estimate of the number of convoys required was produced, on the basis of the target of 12,000 families to be deported (or 36,000 people, based on an estimated three people per family). Since each wagon could hold eight families, each convoy would consist of 58 wagons to transport people, two wagons to transport their belongings, one escort wagon and one prison wagon. A total of 1,604 wagons would be required, organised into 26 convoys. Each wagon would be "equipped for summer (no stove), with bunks consisting of two frames without bars, one ladder, with one sealable door and two trapdoors"[61].

From on high at the Ministry of the Interior, the deportation operation was seen as a homogeneous whole. On 4 May, the transport plan for the so-called "special contingent" provided more detailed information about the convoys, their destinations, and the numbers of families and individuals in each convoy. The number of people to be crammed into the wagons was indicated in normative language: "28-30 persons in two-axle wagons, and 50-60 persons in four-axle wagons"[62]. Here bureaucracy met military mobilisation. In the end, there were 30 convoys, each of which was numbered, with the destinations

58. LYA, V-135/7/61/1-9, « Сводка по делу "Весна" по состоянию на... » [« Report on Operation "Spring" dated... »] 5 April1948, 10 April 1948, etc.

59. See, for example, GARF, R9479/1/427/29-32, « План погрузки, формирования и назначения эшелонов со Спецконтингентам с Литовской ССР » [« Plan for the loading, formation and designation of the convoys of the special contingent to leave from the Lithuanian SSR »], 18 May 1948, confirmed by the vice-minister of State security of the USSR, Ogol'tsov.

60. LYA V-135/7/61/16-17, « Перечень мероприятий которые необходимо выполнить » [« List of tasks that must be accomplished »], undated, consisting of 17 tasks to be accomplished, with each accomplished task ticked off.

61. LYA V-135/7/61/96, « Расчет. Потребности подвижного состава для спецперевозок » [« Estimated need for rolling stock for special transport »], 3 April 1948, signed by the acting head of the department of the principal division of transport security of the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR and by the minister of State security of Lithuania, confirmed by the vice-minister of State security of the USSR.

62. GARF R9479/1/427/7, « Инцтрукция начальникам эшелона и конвоя по сопровождению спецпереселенцев » [« Instruction to the train and convoy heads accompanying the special settlers »],

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indicated by the railway station of arrival and, in some cases, an extension of the journey by river. The itineraries to Novosibirsk (there were two) were indicated and an estimated journey time of between 18 and 23 days. The Department of River Transport of the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR was also involved. All of this was presented in a detailed, itemised table. On 14 May, "the plan for the provision of special transport for Operation Spring" was presented, with the districts covered by each railway station[63]. A few days later, on 19 May 1948, the plan was almost final: the estimated numbers of deportees were more precise and the stations of departure indicated. A map of Lithuania produced by the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR indicated the location of each railway station, the numbers of military personnel and each convoy in a surprisingly graphic presentation, reminiscent of a war map illustrating the positions of enemy and allied troops[64].

The scale of the preparations and the involvement of the local authorities inevitably sparked rumours among the population. Some people attempted to hide, while others gave little credence the rumours, seeing no reason why they would be deported. Some managed to hide for a time:

"I was doomed to go. My parents were put on the lists in 1949, or 1948 rather, but they managed to hide, and avoided being deported for a year. That was good for me, because it meant I could grow another year. We were deported in 1949. I was two and a few months old. […]

People must have liked my parents because they were warned. In 1949 they moved to another town in the region. […] But unfortunately, they found us"[65].

Juozas Miliautskas reported:

"Well, we fled, we hid. […] Someone warned us, […] I don't know who. My father must have known, but he never told me. […] We hid at other people's homes, but not with relatives, that would have been too risky. We spent a day or two at someone else's place until the wave [of arrests] had come and gone, like mushrooms. That was all. But you can't hide people forever. Everyone knew that. In 1947, 1945, no, 1946, '47, '48, '49; in 1949 many people were deported"[66].

This awareness of the deportations is reflected in reports by the officials at the Ministry of the Interior, which show that the population were not fooled by the lies told to explain the arrival of large numbers of soldiers:

4 May 1948, signed by Kruglov, minister of State security of the USSR. Another instruction (GARF R9479/1/427/13) indicates the figures 28-30 and 58-60, further reinforcing the bureaucratic precision.

63. LYA V-135/7/ 61/132, To the vice-minister of State security of the USSR, 14 May 1948 « План обеспечения вагонам спец.перевозок по делу "Весна" » [« Plan for the supply of wagons for the transport of the special settlers under Operation "Spring" »].

64. Less accurate maps were produced first; they seem to have been used for the implementation of all of the post-war deportations (such as for the operation code-named Прибой [« Coastal Surf »] in Estonia: GARF R9479/1/475/179, « Схема пунктов погрузки эшелонов на Эстонской жел. дороге » [« Map of convoy loading points for the Estonian railways »], undated, but probably April 1949).

65. Interview with Maritė Kontramaitė, *Sound Archives* [Vilnius, 11 June 2011, A. Blum and E. Koustova, 00:00:30-00:02:40].

66. Interview with Juozas Miliautskas, *Sound Archives* [Bratsk, 26 August 2009, E. Koustova, L. Salakhova and A. Blum, 00 :20:35-00:21:45].

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"We explained to the population that the arrival of an officer corps was in preparation for military mobilisation or the construction of a proposed aerodrome. Some of the population in this and other counties surmised that the soldiers were preparing to deport kulaks in connection with collectivisation. In Rokiškis county, people were overheard saying that the families of bandits were also going to be deported"[67].

The highly bureaucratic nature of the process pervaded the local space, connecting those who were in the know and those who were not, through the persistence of networks of contacts bridging the gap between the Soviet central authorities and those who collaborated with them at the local and regional levels. The individuals targeted for deportation, however, were scattered and did not identify as a compact group destined to suffer the same fate. It was not until the preparation of the operation itself, in early May 1948, that the outlines of new groups and a new status began to emerge. The bureaucratic procedure gave way, momentarily, to an almost military operation. The bureaucracy processed the files, but the army handled the people. When the files were ready, the lists drawn up and the itineraries arranged, the second phase of the operation deployed troops from Ministry of the Interior, accompanied by local armed paramilitaries and Party members[68], who went to the homes of those identified for deportation, transported them to railway stations and "loaded" (that was the term used) them onto wagons linked together in long convoys. The use of this terminology, which has little to do with the conveyance of passengers, shows how the deportees were perceived as goods to be transported.

Operation "Spring" itself was carried out with chilling precision, even if the Ministry of State Security reported that several hundred people had gone into hiding. The operation began on 22 May at 4:00 a.m., in accordance with an old police tradition, and a telegram was sent every two hours thereafter to the deputy minister of the interior in Moscow to report on progress! For each county, a table showed the target in column 1, the number of "families collected" in column 2, and the number of "families delivered to the loading station" in column 3[69]. At 4:00 p.m. "3,387 families were loaded [погружено], consisting of 3,370 men, 4,743 women and 3,454 children, making a total of 11,567 persons"[70]. This obsessive attention to detail did not preclude violent incidents, reported to the hierarchy, which included shooting, escapes and killings of guards[71]. In total, 11,345 families were deported.

67. LYA, V-135/7/61/11-12, Report to the vice-minister of State security of the USSR, Ogol'tsov, signed by the deputy head of the second principal division of the MGB of the USSR (Edunov) and by the acting minister of State security of the Lithuanian SSR (Kaprapov), April 1948.

68. LYA, V-135/7/61/104, To the department of the MGB of Alytus county, the vice-minister of the MGB of the USSR and the minister of State security of Lithuania, May 1948.

69. LYA, V-135/7/61/172-173, Сдано на станции погрузки: «Сводка № 5 о ходе операции по делу "Весна"«, на 12 часов [« Progress report No. 5 on Operation "Spring" , written at the loading station at 12:00 »], 22 May 1948.

70. LYA, V-135/7/61/167, To the minister of State security of the USSR, 22 May 1948.

71. LYA, V-135/7/61/167-168, To the minister of State security of the USSR, Abakumov, signed by the vice-minister of State security of the USSR, Ogol'tsov, on 22 May 1948.

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Not all of the instructions were respected, however. For example, there is almost no record of doctors having attended the convoys, despite instructions stipulating that each convoy must be accompanied by doctors, who should not know the purpose of their assignment. Testimonies only mention doctors who were deportees themselves. For example, Maritė Kontramaitė recounts what her father told her about their journey to Siberia. She was only two years old and was lying unconscious in the wagon. A soldier from the escort told her father to throw the presumably dead baby out of the wagon. Her father demanded that a doctor certify that his daughter really was dead. The soldier relented and, at the next stop, found a doctor among the deportees in another wagon, who said the girl was alive, and thus saved her life.

The local representatives of the MVD sent reports throughout the journey, and on arrival the commander of the escort sent a detailed report, indicating numbers of deaths, escapes and attempted escapes. In these reports, we discover that the authorities often took advantage of the journey to identify those who would serve as informers upon arrival: "From the first days of the journey, steps were taken to plant secret informers in each wagon. Candidates were recruited during the morning and evening inspections of the special settlers"[72].

This same bureaucratic and military combination recurs, with few variations, in all of the survivors' accounts. The groups to be deported were decided in Moscow, far from the future victims. Orders were issued, passed on by the civil administration that mainly processed files, which would be implemented almost militarily by the administration of the Ministry of the Interior. The collective fate of individuals was thus sealed.

Status and condition

It was not until 1945 that a decree outlined a form of special deportee status, a definition formulated in exclusively negative terms[73]:

"The special settlers enjoy all the rights of citizens of the USSR, with the exception of the limitations set forth in the present decree:

Special settlers who are able to work must perform socially useful work. […]

In the event of a violation of work discipline, special settlers shall be prosecuted in accordance with existing laws.

72. GARF, R9479/1/427/112-115, « Докладная записка об агентурно-оперативной работе в эшелоне спецпоселенцев n° 97 901 » [« Report on intelligence work in the convoy of special settlers No. 97 901 »], sent to the head of the department of special deportations of the MVD of the USSR, Chian, signed by the head of convoy No. 97 901 (Fedorkov) and his deputy (Pimkin), on 10 June 1948 (City of Krasnoyarsk).

73. The status of the special settlers was defined by Decrees of the Council of People's Commissars No. 34-14s (GARF, R5446/47a/3205/25-28, « Положение о спецкомендатурах НКВД » [« Decree on the kommandatura of the NKVD »], 8 January 1945) and No. 35 (GARF, R5446/47a/3205/13-14, « О правовом положении спецпереселенцев » [« On the legal status of the special settlers »], 8 January 1945). They are published in N. Pobol', P. Polian, *Сталинские депортации* [*The Stalinist Deportations*]…, *op. cit.*, p. 561-563. See also P. Polian, [*Against Their Will*...], *op. cit.*, p. 260.

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Special settlers do not have the right to leave the confines of the district of resettlement, overseen by a kommandatura, without permission from the NKVD commandant. Leaving is tantamount to flight and will be prosecuted as a criminal offence.

Special settlers […] are required to comply with all of the instructions issuing from the NKVD kommandatura"[74].

Even if, in their places of resettlement, the different categories of deportees could on occasion mix, re-emerge and even disappear in the eyes of the local entreprises that employed them[75], these categories remained in force, at the very least for the police. The annual population figures maintained by the department of the Ministry of the Interior in charge of the deportees recorded flows into and out of this special world. Inflows included births, since the children of deportees were registered in the family records kept by the commandants, who supervised several settlements, and were no more entitled to move freely than their parents. From the age of 16, children had to report to the kommandatura. Outflows included deaths, which were frequent in the first year of deportation, as well as escapes and releases, although the latter were rare before 1953. The special settlers thus represented an entire population distinct from the rest of the country, with its own demographic trends. This population lived in the same places as other Soviet citizens, but were isolated by virtue of the files kept on them and the special regulations to which they were subject.

Every year, even in 1942 at the height of the war, the commandants and their deputies meticulously counted the number of deportees by «contingent«, i.e. by the category assigned to them when they were deported. These numbers were sent to Moscow, providing annual statistics for each region[76]. These statistical counts perpetuated the categories of deportation: "nationalist bandits", "families of kulaks", "manufacturers, factory owners, merchants, etc. deported from Lithuania in 1941", "accomplices of bandits", "Jehovah's Witnesses", etc. The settlers were thus classified under several dozen categories, regardless of individual behaviour in deportation or social pathways. These categories continued to influence their fate long after the Stalinist period.

74. GARF, R5446/47a/3205/13-14, reproduced in N. POBOL', P. POLIAN, *Сталинские депортации* [*The Stalinist Deportations*]…,, *op. cit*., p. 563.

75. On these issues of the integration of deportees, see E. KOUSTOVA, « (Un)returned… », art. cit.

76. For example, for the year 1950: GARF, R9479/1/641/360-399, « Сведения о работе среди спецпоселенцев в 1950 году » [« Report on the labour of special settlers in 1950 »], a report of the department of the localities of special deportation of the MGB of the USSR, August 1950; or for the year 1952: GARF, R9479/1/641/169-357, « Сведения о количестве ссыльно-поселенцев, ссыльных, высланных и спецпосленцев по контингентам, республикам, краям и областям по состоянию на 1 июля 1952 г. » [« Report on the number exiles-deportees, exiles, evictees and special settlers by contingent, republic, territory, county and region on 1 July 1952 »], a report of the Ninth Division of the MGB of the USSR. V. Berdinskikh, *Спецпоселенцы* [*Special Settlers*]…, *op. cit*., describes the formative impact of statistics in the chapter titled « The Stalinist school of "internationalism" (ideology and statistics) », in other words, he shows to what extent the creation of categories for statistical can be reified as categories of perception and action. We emphasised the importance of this dimension in A. BLUM, *Naître, vivre et mourir en URSS: 1917-1991* [*To Be Born, Live and Die in the Soviet Union: 1917-1991*], Paris, Plon, 1994, and in A. BLUM, Martine MESPOULET, *L'anarchie bureaucratique, pouvoir et statistique sous Staline*, [*Bureaucratic Anarchy, Power and Statistics under Stalin*], Paris, La Découverte, 2003.

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A draft report[77] written shortly after Stalin's death recapitulated the status of the special settlers and recommended measures of release, adjustments to the administrative restrictions, and other reforms, on the basis of those normative frameworks[78]. The table appended to the report (see document 1), like the statistics mentioned above, described the population of special settlers in terms of dates and acts that applied to specific groups. It adopted and thus endorsed all of the Stalinist categories invented by successive decrees. The authors of the report assessed the dangerousness of each group and accordingly recommended either release, with or without the right of return, or maintenance in deportation. Each group of special settlers was described in terms of their attitude to Soviet power, their behaviour in deportion and their loyalty. The Germans were considered loyal and not dangerous: "The vast majority [of the Germans deported from the Volga regions in 1941] are not involved in hostile activities in the settlements and are loyal to Soviet power". Conversely,

> "a high percentage of the special settlers from the North Caucasus, in particular the Chechens and the Ingush, demonstrate a hostile attitude towards the Soviet system and manifest hatred towards the Russian people, maintaining their backward habits and traditions in their settlements, while the most hostile among them organised gatherings, where they conduct anti-Soviet activities and express terrorist and insurrectionary intentions".

The Balts inspired distrust[79]. These categorisations determined the length of deportation. They were also determinant in the review of repressive decisions: the prospect of release after Stalin's death depended on them.

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In order to better understand the condition of special settlers, we would need to investigate in much more detail these releases, rehabilitations and amnesties, whether they occurred before or after the death of Stalin, or even as late as the early years of perestroika or 1989-1991[80]. The first measures easing the regime of special settlements were not passed until 1955. From that date onwards came a succession of governmental acts that collectively released groups of

77. GARF, R9479/1/725/67-83, Report submitted by Kruglov, minister of the interior, and Alidin, bureau chief of the same Ministry.

78. This report came shortly after the amnesty decree of 27 March 1953, passed by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on a proposal by Beria, which led to the release of more than a million inmates from prisons and camps, mostly common-law criminals.

79. GARF, R9479/1/725/119-124, Report submitted by Kruglov, minister of the interior, and Alidin, bureau chief of the same Ministry.

80. On the liberation of the camps, the amnesty and the return of prisoners after 1953, see in particular M. ELIE, « Les anciens détenus du Goulag : libérations massives, réinsertion et réhabilitation dans l'URSS poststalinienne, 1953-1964 » [« The Former Inmates of the Gulag: Mass Releases, Reintegration and Rehabilitation in the post-Stalinist USSR, 1953-1964 »], EHESS thesis, 2007; ID., « Les politiques à l'égard des libérés du Goulag » [« Policies on those released from the Gulag »], *Cahiers du monde russe. Russie – Empire russe – Union soviétique et États indépendants*, 47-1/2, 2006, p. 327-348; Miriam DOBSON, *Khrushchev's Cold Summer: Gulag Returnees, Crime, and the Fate of Reform after Stalin*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2009; Nanci ADLER, *The Gulag Survivor: Beyond the Soviet System*, New Brunswick, Transaction Publishers, 2002.

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DOCUMENT 1

Main categories of special settlers. Brief overview of special settlers

Category of special deportee	Number	Places of special settlement	Length of deportation	Legal basis for deportation
1. Former kulaks, deported from the regions of wholesale collectivisation (1931-1932)	24,686	Komi, Altai, region of Kemerovo, Murmansk, Tyumen	not specified	Decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of the People's Commissars of the USSR of 1 February 1931
2. Ethnic Poles, deported in 1936 from the border regions of Ukraine and Byelorussia	36,045	Kazakhstan	not specified	Decree No.103/1 127-267 of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of the People's Commissars of the USSR of 7 July 1937
[…]				
3. Former landowners, manufacturers, merchants, their families and family members of employees of the secret police of the bourgeois government of Poland, family members of participants in counter-revolutionary organisations, deported in 1940 from Western Ukraine and Byelorussia	5,592	Kazakhstan, territory of Krasnoyarsk, regions of Kemerovo, Omsk, Tomsk and Tyumen	10 years	Decree No.289-127 of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR of 2 March 1940
	Although the length of sentence to a special settlement had been exceeded, the contingents under point 4 were not released, because the directors of the former MGB of the USSR, considering the danger to society represented by these special contingents, asked the question in February 1953 of keeping them in special settlements for an indefinite period.			
[…]				
5. Former landowners, manufacturers, merchants, members of bourgeois governments and other anti-Soviet elements, deported in 1941 from the Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Moldavian SSRs	24,094	Kazakhstan, territories of Altai and Krasnoyarsk, Komi and Yakut ASSRs, regions de Kemerovo, Kirov, Novosibirsk, Omsk, Tomsk and Tyumen	20 years	Measures approved by the NKVD of the USSR on 14 June 1941
6. Ethnic German Soviet citizens a/ deported in 1941 from the former Volga German Autonomous Republic, from Moscow City and the Moscow Region, etc. (856,637) b/ […]	1,225,005	Kazakhstan, territories of Altai and Krasnoyarsk, Komi, Yakut and Bashkir ASSRs, regions of Kemerovo, Molotov […], Novosibirsk, Omsk, Sverdlovsk [Yekaterinburg], Tomsk, Tyumen, Chelyabinsk, Chkalov and others.	Indefinite	Decree of the presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 22 June 1941; 28 August 1941 and 26 November 1941 and order of the State Defence Committee of the 6, 21 and 22 September 1941…
[…]				

Appendix to the report presented by Kruglov, minister of the interior, and Alidin, bureau chief of the Ministry of the Interior (note 79), GARF, R9479/1/725/119-124

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deportees until 1965, when the Jehovah's Witnesses, the last group subjected to the regime of special settlements, were released. Even so, some former deportees were not granted the right to return to their original homelands until 1988, when all of these Stalinist decisions were finally revoked. Those many years attest to the persistence, after Stalin's death, of a perception conditioned by a multiplicity of statuses, and the difficulty of considering those processes as being part of a repressive whole. The process of releasing the special settlers mirrored surprisingly closely the bureaucratic collective logic implemented in the earlier period, by undoing it but without challenging its foundation, particularly in the case of the deportees from the Western territories of the Soviet Union, where the annexation remained insecure for many years. The decisions to release special settlers between 1953 and 1965 were formulated in strictly bureaucratic terms, namely "removing from the registers" [снять с учёта] particular groups of deportees. The deportees themselves assimilated that bureaucratic formula and continue to use it today:

"I spent ten years in all in Tomsk, living in workers' dormitory. First there was one dormitory and then the dormitory for young specialists. We lived in that dormitory and worked at the factory... Then... [more lighthearted] we were removed from the registers. I still have a certificate somewhere that says "to be removed from the special settlement registers". It says "to receive a passport without restrictive conditions". We did not have passports before that. No, I already had a passport, but my parents still didn't have one. They had some kind of certificate, and every two weeks they had to go and report that they hadn't gone anywhere. We also went to Tomsk every month to report in. It was not until 1953, after Stalin died, no, it was even in the second half of 1954, that we no longer had to go and report in"[81].

But the technical operation did not resolve anything. These people's identity, and others' opinion of them, remained profoundly connected to their pathways: the marks of the past were there, unsaid and evanescent but nonetheless there. No formal law removed them since they had never been officially enacted in the first place.

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81. Interview with E. Šlimovičius, *Sound Archives* [Kaunas, 25 June 2009, M. Craveri and J. Mačiulytė, 01:00:57-01:01:36].

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Abstract/*Résumé*

Alain Blum

Political decisions and bureaucratic articulation – Lithuanian displaced persons during the operation "Spring" (1948)

This article analyses the mechanisms of the Stalinist deportations from the Western regions of the Soviet Union, which were first annexed after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact was signed in August 1939, and again after the Second World War. In particular, it addresses the bureaucratic articulation, involving various repressive, political and administrative bodies, which helps us to understand both the scale and the character of the process. That bureaucratic articulation, based on processing of files and orders, and obeying a repetitive, mechanical logic, was combined with a quasi-military implementation of the forced displacement once everything had been planned on paper, which enabled the mass scale of these operations. These processes are discussed here because they led to mass action and also because they created specific relationships between the individual and the collective. They are studied through the case of a mass operation in Lithuania, code-named "Spring" by the Soviet authorities, for which preparations began in mid-February 1948 and which was completed over two days in mid-May of the same year. Some 12,000 families (about 40,000 people) were deported to Siberia. This article uses various sources: archival documents, at once extremely precise and rich, which aid our understanding of the mechanisms, are combined with oral sources, the testimonies of people who lived through these deportations. These testimonies were collected as part of a major collective project on all of the Stalinist deportations from Central and Eastern Europe and the Western territories of the Soviet Union between 1939 and 1953.

Keywords: deportations, Stalinism, Lithuania, agents of repression, oral sources and archives, political violence, bureaucracy ■

Alain Blum

Décision politique et articulation bureaucratique : les déportés lituaniens de l'opération « Printemps » (1948)

Cet article s'intéresse aux mécanismes à l'oeuvre lors des déportations staliniennes qui touchèrent les régions occidentales de l'URSS, annexées une première fois à l'issue du pacte germano-soviétique d'août 1939, puis à l'issue de la Seconde Guerre mondiale. Il porte tout particulièrement sur les enchaînements de nature bureaucratique, impliquant diverses administrations qu'elles soient répressives, politiques ou gestionnaires. Cette articulation bureaucratique, enchaînement d'opérations de traitements de dossiers, d'ordres divers, suivant une logique répétitive et mécanique, combinée avec une organisation ponctuelle de nature quasi-militaire pour mettre en oeuvre les déplacements, une fois que la machine bureaucratique a tout organisé sur le papier, produit le caractère massif d'opérations de répressions. Ces processus sont ici examinés en ce qu'ils permettent une action de masse mais aussi pour les conséquences qu'ils induisent en termes de mise en relation de l'individuel et du collectif. Ils sont étudiés à partir de l'exemple d'une des grandes opérations menées en Lituanie, dénommée « opération Printemps », qui commence à être préparée à partir de la mi-février 1948 pour être menée, en deux jours, à la mi-mai de la même année. 12 000 familles (environ 40 000 personnes) sont alors déportées en Sibérie. Les sources qui fondent cette étude sont diverses, sources d'archives, extrêmement précises et riches, qui permettent de comprendre l'ensemble des mécanismes, auxquelles sont combinées des sources orales, recueil de témoignages de personnes ayant vécu ces déportations, collectés dans le cadre d'un large projet collectif portant sur l'ensemble des déportations staliniennes effectuées en Europe centrale et orientale et dans les territoires occidentaux de l'URSS, entre 1939 et 1953.

Mots-clés : *déportations, stalinisme, Lituanie, acteurs répressifs, sources orales et archives, violence politique, bureaucratie* ■

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