

REGULATION AND CONTROL OF THE BORDER REGIMEN IN THE ESTONIAN SSR

Indrek Paavle

One of the main traits common to all communist regimes was sealing off the state borders. This meant restricting not only entry but even more so departure from the country. Governments sealed their citizens off in quarantine, attempting thus to isolate them from foreign influences in the belief that it would be otherwise difficult to secure and maintain their positions of power.¹ While citizens ordinarily need a passport for travelling abroad, the passport became a universally compulsory document in the Soviet Union that was also required for travel within the borders of the Soviet Union. While visas are generally given to foreigners visiting a particular country, in the Soviet Union, a visa was also required to leave the country.

The mechanism for shutting citizens into the country was refined to perfection in the Soviet Union during the initial years of the Cold War when the confrontation with the Western countries led to the regime's wish to extremely restrict the contacts of its citizens with the world abroad. Opportunities for citizens to go abroad were reduced to nearly zero and the regime's paranoia culminated with the law enacted in 1948 banning marriage with citizens of foreign countries. This ban was repealed after Stalin's death but other means of control devised and implemented in the Stalinist era remained in effect until the end of the Soviet era, perhaps abating somewhat temporarily or in terms of certain details. Methods for sealing off the borders were no exception here.

Historical literature has paid little attention to the state regulation of this subject area. The aim of this article is to identify how the border regimen in effect in the Soviet Union was organised using the Estonian SSR as an example. Several pieces of legislation that applied throughout the Soviet Union and some ten pieces of legislation particular to the Estonian Soviet republic formed the basis for this regimen. This legislation was continually being supplemented and the regimen was implemented through a large number of secret or restricted access directives and instructions. I will attempt to analyse the changes that took place in the system, the reasons for those changes and their effect on the population by examining the chronology of the legislation that regulated the border regimen. I will also consider the implementation of general legislation, in other words the border regimen permit policy, methods of control, and penal policy to the extent that available sources permit.

Legislation and restricted access regulations, and correspondence between the Party and state institutions in the ESSR concerning the border regimen form the source base for this research. MVD (the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs), KGB (the Soviet Committee for State Security), and Militia Administration² reports were consulted. The main obstruction to the thorough research of this topic is the scarcity of KGB and border guard forces documents in Estonian archives. ESSR KGB 2nd Department reports from 1954–58 have indeed survived but only a few isolated KGB instructions

¹ Robert Service. *Seltsimehed : maailma kommunismi ajalugu (Comrades! : A History of World Communism)*. Varrak, Tallinn, 2010, pp. 422–436.

² Miliciya or militia (Russian: милиция) is used as an official name of the civilian police in several former communist states. The Main Administration of the Militia was formed in 1932 as a new union-wide central institution at the same time as the passport system was established. This was justified by the need to directly supervise the work of the militia administrations in the union republics in implementing the passport system. The ESSR Militia Administration was established in the autumn of 1940.

and some related correspondence from later periods remain in Estonian archives. As the KGB's counterintelligence department, the 2nd Department operated actively in the border zone as well with the aim of preventing "anti-Soviet elements from leaving the territory of the ESSR with impunity".³ Documents generated through the action of the border guard forces, however, are practically nonexistent in Estonian archives. People's recollections have been used to try to fill in the gaps. To this date, one collection of memories, an overview in the context of popular current affairs and a brief treatment on the topic of the border zone have been published about the border regimen in Estonia.⁴

Creation of the Border Regimen and its Initial Implementation in the Estonian SSR in 1940

Universal restrictions on movement were not set for citizens during the first years of Bolshevik rule. This was also declared by a special decree on 24 January 1922 that granted all citizens of the Russian SFSR the right to move about freely throughout the territory of the country. The first restrictions were nevertheless established the following year already when legislation was enacted permitting entry to border checkpoints only for occupational business trips with the permission of the provincial executive committee.⁵ The regulations for the defence of the state border enacted in 1927 started more seriously restricting residence and movement in the near vicinity of the border and the concept of the "border belt" (*пограничная полоса*) was adopted "for the purpose of defending the state border".⁶ When the establishment of a uniform passport system began in the Soviet Union in 1933, a 100 km wide belt along the western border of the Soviet Union was designated first of all, within which all residents were required to have passports. This meant that it was forbidden to live there or to enter it without a passport.⁷ The passport regulations of 1940 extended this requirement to cover the entire state border. Since most Soviet citizens did not have passports until the early 1980's, entering the border belt had become the privilege of the few. The regulation of 1935 entitled *Concerning entry to and residence within the border belt* amended the corresponding clause in the regulations of 1927: restrictions were reformulated with the aim of establishing "stricter control" and violations of restrictions were designated as crimes.⁸ These acts of legislation from 1927 and 1935 remained the fundamental documents on which the border regimen was founded until 1960 and the border regimen was established in areas annexed by the Soviet Union on the basis of these same documents, including Estonia.

³ Report on the work of the State Security Committee 2nd Counterintelligence Department for the period of 1 April 1954 – 1 April 1955 to the ESSR Council of Ministers. Rahvusarhiiv (Estonian National Archives), Tallinn, 1997, p. 99.

⁴ *Nõukogude piir ja lukus elu : meie mälestused* (The Soviet Border and Life Locked-up: Our Memories). Compiled by Enno Tammer. Tammerraamat, Tallinn, 2008; Virkko Lepassalu. *Riigipiir* (The State Border). Pegasus, Tallinn, 2010; Restricted Access Border Zones of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. – Kalev Sepp (ed). The Estonian Green Belt. The Estonian University of Life Sciences, Tallinn, 2011, pp. 12–16.

⁵ Decree issued by the Russia-wide Central Executive Committee, 28 March 1923. – <http://www.dekrets.ru/doc.php?docid=03733> [viewed on 23 February 2012].

⁶ Regulation issued by the USSR Council of People's Commissars (hereinafter referred to as CPC) and the Central Executive Committee, 15 June 1927. – Справочник по законодательству для судебно-прокурорских работников (Legislation guide for court and prosecutor's office employees), Part I. Moscow, 1949, pp. 278–282.

⁷ Indrek Paavle. Ebaühtlane ühtne süsteem : sovetliku passisüsteemi kujunemine, regulatsioon ja rakendamine Eesti NSV-s (A Non-uniform Uniform System: the Evolution, Regulation and Application of the Soviet Internal Passport System in the Estonian SSR). – Tuna, 2010, nr 4, pp. 37–53. Also available on the internet: I. Paavle. The Evolution, Regulation and Implementation of the Soviet Internal Passport System in the Estonian SSR. – <http://www.mnemosyne.ee/publikatsioonidpublications/lang/en-us>.

⁸ Regulations governing entry to and temporary stays in border areas and prohibited regions in the USSR, ERA.R-34.1.9b, pages not numbered.

The prevention of citizens from leaving the country began in Estonia immediately after the occupation of Estonia. First of all, all travel passports of the Republic of Estonia were declared invalid in July of 1940 and immediately thereafter, Estonian diplomatic passports were also invalidated.⁹ At the same time, NKVD border guard forces established control over the Estonian coast and the liquidation of the Estonian border guard began.¹⁰ In August already, Soviet border guards caught people trying to escape from Estonia by boat and by October at the latest, the border guards started blocking fishermen from access to the sea.

The establishment of the border regimen according to the Union-wide regulation of 1935 began in September. The first local act of legislation that referred to the border regimen was the regulation issued on 26 September 1940 by the ESSR NKVD Militia Administration that prohibited entry to “restricted and border areas” without a permit.¹¹

Since the Militia Administration did not have the right to issue universally applicable legal acts and the circumstances and consequences related to the issuing of the above mentioned regulation are unclear, it is more correct to consider the official birthday of the border zone to be the ESSR CPC decision formulated on 29 November and implemented on 12 December, which was drawn up at Border Guard Forces headquarters in coordination with the Baltic Fleet. This decision concerned the “border security regimen” along the coast of the Gulf of Finland, navigation and fishing in the territorial waters of the ESSR, and listed areas to which entry was restricted. All of Estonia’s islands were designated as “prohibited zones”, along with certain coastal areas west of Tallinn that were directly at the disposal of the Soviet Navy or within its sphere of interest. Citizens needed a permit from the militia to enter the zone and after entry, visitors had to register within 24 hours. Additionally, there was a more secret zone within the prohibited zone that included the larger islands in the Gulf of Finland and was completely sealed off to civilians.¹²

Evolution of the Border Regimen during the First Post-war Years, 1944–47

The *de facto* restoration of the border regimen began immediately after the reoccupation of Estonia in the autumn of 1944 at the initiative of the Soviet Army, which dug trenches along the northern and western coasts of Estonia, set up machine gun emplacements and designated the entire strip of land along the coast as a border zone. In November, however, a plan was implemented for clearing a 2 km wide coastal belt of its permanent population throughout the extent of the entire coast. The operation began with an army directive and culminated with an ESSR CPC regulation that required the authorities in the counties along the coast to resettle residents by

⁹ Regulation issued by the Minister of Internal Affairs, 21 July 1940. – Riigi Teataja (RT, National Gazette in English), 1940, 79, 757; Regulation issued by the Minister of Internal Affairs, 29 July 1940. – RT, 1940, 87, 841; Announcement from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 30 July 1940. – RT, 1940, 87, 843.

¹⁰ Olavi Punga. *NSVLi julgeolekuväed Eestis aastail 1940–1941* (USSR Security Forces in Estonia in 1940–1941). – ENDC (Estonian National Defence College) Proceedings no. 11. TÜ Kirjastus (University of Tartu Publishing House), Tartu, 2008, p. 186. See: Tiit Noormets. *Fate of the estonian border guard in 1940–1941*. – Estonia 1940–1945 : reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity. Tallinn, 2006, pp. 257–271.

¹¹ ESSR Workers’ and Peasants’ Militia Administration regulation, 26 September 1940, ERA.R-34.1.5, pp. 1–3. The wording of the document was taken from an extremely poor translation of the regulation of 1935 containing requirements that were impossible to implement in Estonia due to particular local conditions.

¹² ESSR CPC Decision no. 34, 29 November 1940, ERA.R-1.5.10, pp. 244–247; Saarte Hääl (Voice of the Islands), 23 December 1940. Most of the content of this decision was also published in local newspapers. Of the 13 clauses of the decision, 2 were secret and their existence was hidden when the regulation was disclosed by changing the numbering of the clauses.

1 January 1945 (people were ordinarily not offered replacement lodgings and people driven out of their homes had to find a new place to live on their own).¹³ It was, of course, impossible to do all that so quickly – by mid-February of 1945, 227 of the 538 families required had been resettled on the mainland. The order had been carried out to the extent of 30–50% in Hiiumaa, and in Saaremaa, it was completely carried out only on the Sõrve Peninsula, which was deserted anyway because the Germans had already evacuated the local population there during the battles of 1944.¹⁴ This ambitious plan was nevertheless abandoned when the war in Europe came to an end and for the most part, the people that had been driven out could start going back home, even though the army had in many localities destroyed, removed or laid waste to their houses in the meantime.¹⁵

New framework documents were drawn up for the border regimen in the autumn of 1946. There had previously not been any need for this since the ESSR CPC decision of 1940 remained in effect and no changes had been made in the meantime to Union-wide regulations. Furthermore, martial law remained in effect in Estonia until 4 July 1946 and this in itself restricted freedom of movement.

The USSR Council of Ministers issued a new framework regulation for the border regimen on 29 June 1946, however, that was to be implemented at the Union republic level. An Estonian Communist Party Central Committee (hereinafter referred to as ECP CC) and ESSR Council of Ministers joint regulation was first issued on 28 September 1946 to establish the new situation, establishing a passport system in the prohibited areas along the coastal border.¹⁶ Passports had been issued to about 60 000 people in those areas by the beginning of 1947. Individuals who were forbidden to live in the border zone (first and foremost persons with criminal records, including persons penalised for so called political crimes) according to the passport regulations also had to be identified and expelled from the border belt in the course of this campaign.¹⁷

The ESSR Council of Ministers regulation *Concerning the Estonian SSR's closed off coastal border belt and its regimen* was formulated on 26 October 1946, replacing the former framework document from 1940. The primary change was that henceforth, the border belt was defined according to administrative units, including the territories of northern and north-western Estonian seaside village soviets and all “islands in the Baltic Sea belonging to the Soviet Union”.¹⁸ Since the regulation was secret but certain clauses of it had to be disclosed to the population, the regulation was summarised partially in universally compulsory decisions issued by county executive committees published in the press. This was accompanied by supplementary bans and obligations of a local nature, for instance a ban on building campfires on the coast at night or the obligation to black out the windows facing the sea of houses on the seashore.¹⁹

¹³ ESSR CPC Regulation no. 029, 21 December 1944, ERA.R-1.5.90, p. 106. See also: Kaljo-Olev Veskimägi. *Kuidas valitseti Eesti NSV-d* (How the Estonian SSR was Governed). Varrak, Tallinn, 2005, pp. 124–125.

¹⁴ Letter from the 8th Army War Council to the chairman of the ESSR CPC, 14 February 1945, ERAF.1.3.500, pp. 4–5.

¹⁵ Endel Saar. *Hiiumaa – kiviajast tänapäevani* (Hiiumaa – From the Stone Age to the Present). E. Saar, Kärdla, 2004, pp. 132–138.

¹⁶ Regulation issued by the ESSR Council of Ministers and the ECP CC, 28 September 1946, ERAF.1.4.322, pp. 206–207.

¹⁷ I. Paavle. *Ebaühtlane ühtne süsteem* (Non-uniform Uniform System). Part II, p. 48.

¹⁸ ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 058 *Concerning the ESSR's closed off coastal border zone and its regimen*, 26 October 1946, ERA.R-1.5.118, pp. 233–239.

¹⁹ Saaremaa Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet Executive Committee universally compulsory decision no. 5 *Concerning the rules for the behaviour of residents in the closed off region adjacent to the border*. – Saarte Hääl, 20 May 1947.

The shaping of the border regimen culminated in the spring of 1947 with the thorough decision prepared in the ECP CC *apparat* to make the border regimen “stricter”. The aim of this decision was the more effective control of what was happening in the border belt. Making life in those areas better was supposed to help achieve this goal. Among other things, the entire border belt was to be provided with the best possible personnel at the expense of other areas. All personnel were to be scrutinised and unsuitable persons were to be replaced. The MVD and MGB were given their assignment: to remove the “anti-Soviet element” from the border belt. New movie theatres, community centres and libraries were to be built in the border belt and all “hostile literature” was to be removed from the libraries. Communications received a great deal of attention: roads and bridges were to be repaired, all village soviets were to be provided with telephones, bus service was to be improved, ferry service was to be provided to the islands, and much more.²⁰ The reorganisation of farmland, establishment of *sovkhoses* (state collective farms) and development of hamlets were priorities in the border belt. This indicates that the set objective was to eliminate low density settlement, which was difficult to control, and to concentrate the population in settlements.

If all those tasks had been completed, life in the border belt would indeed have become better than elsewhere but that, of course, is not how things turned out. Personnel was actively purged: by the beginning of July, about 70 school teachers had either been sacked or transferred inland, Party organisers and other officials in rural municipalities were dismissed and destruction battalions were purged.²¹ The accomplishment of the more major tasks was a great deal more toilsome: not much had been done yet by the end of the year to comply with the regulation and only in terms of the repair of roads and bridges was the situation considered satisfactory. The designation of the island of Hiiumaa, which until then had been part of Lääne County, as a separate county in 1946 was also a direct consequence of this regulation. The public was assured that this was the “wish of the working class” as justification for the move, yet the justification given in restricted access documents was the need to increase the control exercised by the central authorities over what took place on the island.²²

Even though the “political and economic strengthening” of the border zone did not proceed at the pace desired, 1946-1947 could be considered the decisive period in the development of the border regimen. The construction of border guard stations and communications networks, and regular patrolling in the border belt began in 1946. The guarding of the border was left completely to the border guard forces since prior to that time, regular army units guarded part of it. The regulation issued in December of 1946 by the ESSR Council of Ministers established the placement of a large number of facilities at the disposal of the Border Guard. One list placed 45 buildings in Tallinn, Harjumaa and on the Western Estonian islands at the disposal of the Border Guard Forces Administration. Another list “rented long term free of charge” a total of 395 buildings to them in Tallinn, Pärnu and seaside counties. A third list registered 109 residential buildings and apartments in Tallinn, Pärnu, Rakvere, Kuressaare, Kärdla and Haapsalu as housing stock for the Border Guard

²⁰ Shorthand records of the ECP CC session on 19 March 1947, ERAF.1.4.480, 201–204; ESSR Council of Ministers and ECP CC Regulation no. 020, 28 March 1947, ERAF.1.4.419, pp. 12–28.

²¹ Letter from the ECP Harju County Committee, 30 May 1947, ERAF.1.5.24, pp. 3–4; Kaljo-Olev Veskimägi. *Nõukogude unelaadne elu : tsensuur Eesti NSV-s ja tema peremehed* (Dream-like Soviet Life: Censorship in the Estonian SSR and its Masters). K.-O. Veskimägi, Tallinn, 1996, p. 143. Destruction battalions were formally volunteer armed organisations that helped the security units in the western regions of the Soviet Union to suppress the resistance movement in the 1940's. See: http://www.estonica.org/en/Destruction_battalions/.

²² Minutes of the ECP CC Bureau, 3 July 1946, ERAF.1.4.308, pp. 20–21.

Forces Administration.²³ The development of technical capabilities and of the border guard system made escape from Estonia by sea significantly more difficult than it was before. The principles written into the framework regulations during those years, however, remained in effect until the end of the 1980's even though new legislation continued to be enacted one after another. It is these that we will consider below.

Chronology of Fundamental Documents Related to the Border Regimen

In 1946-1987, 14 framework regulations and a number of their amendments and supplements were formulated at the level of the government of the ESSR for regulating the border regimen (see Table 1). The reasons for drawing up new framework documents can be divided up into three categories that were often combined. First of all, the establishment of new Union-wide legislation that the local regulation had to formally be brought into line with. Secondly, changes in administrative division and the structure of official positions because administrative units in the border zone had to be enumerated in the regulation, as did the officials allowed into the border zone without a permit. Substantive need can be pointed out as the third reason, when the KGB or Border Guard Forces Headquarters had arrived at the recognition that control has to be made more effective.

The framework regulation issued in 1955 by the ESSR Council of Ministers was conditioned by a new Union-wide legal act from 2 years earlier. This also provided the opportunity to describe the extent of the border belt once again, taking into account the consequences of the administrative reform of 1950 in which rajons²⁴ were formed in place of counties and rural municipalities. The regulations of 1957 and 1959 contained few changes compared to previous regulations. These amendments primarily updated the lists of officials allowed into the border belt without a passport and of administrative units in the border belt.

A new Union-wide border guard statute went into effect in 1960, replacing the border guard regulations of 1927 and the border belt regulation of 1935. It was implemented together with the regulation issued on 5 August 1960 by the USSR Council of Ministers.²⁵ On this basis, a regulation *Concerning the border zone regimen within the borders of the ESSR* was issued in 1961. Compared to earlier legal acts, this was a completely new text with many changes. The term "border zone" (*пограничная зона*) was adopted as a new concept. It was demarcated in the territory of the in all rajons, cities, villages or hamlets adjoining the entire state border of the USSR. Until then, the term "border belt" (*пограничная полоса*) had been in use in the same meaning, but now it was given a new meaning. The border belt was now designated as a narrower area within the border zone. Its width was not permitted to exceed 2 km and additional restrictions were prescribed in this area compared to the border zone regimen. For instance, while as a rule a permit issued by the militia

²³ ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 069, 18 December 1946, ERA.R-1.5.118, pp. 290–307. A secondary objective of this regulation was to recover buildings occupied by the Border Guard without authorisation, prescribing that facilities not entered on the list "must be vacated immediately and incontrovertibly" and are to be placed at the disposal of local institutions of state authority.

²⁴ Rajon (also raion or rayon) is an administrative unit in the Soviet Union. It is the next administrative level after the oblast, that is to say oblasts were divided up into rajons. The rajon was the first local administrative level in Soviet republics that were not divided up into oblasts.

²⁵ Statute concerning defence of the border of the Soviet Union. – ENSV Ülemnõukogu Teataja (ESSR Supreme Soviet Gazette), 1960, 29, pp. 603–611.

was required for entry to the border zone, entry to the border belt and residence there was allowed only with a permit from the border guard forces.²⁶

Table 1. Chronology of ESSR Border Regimen Fundamental Documents 1940–1987²⁷

	Fundamental document	Date	Union-wide guiding document	Changes to the fundamental document
1	ESSR CPC decision 34	29 November 1940	USSR Central Executive Committee and CPC 17 July 1935	r 172 (6 October 1944); r 188 (13 October 1944)
2	ESSR Council of Ministers r 058	26 October 1946	USSR Council of Ministers r 1435-63cc, 29 June 1946	r 019 (11 April 1949); r 032 (8 May 1950)
3	ESSR Council of Ministers r 07	14 February 1955	USSR Council of Ministers r 2666-1124c, 21 October 1953	o 05 (1 April 1955); o 196-кс (20 February 1957)
4	ESSR Council of Ministers r 385-22c	30 November 1957	""	–
5	ESSR Council of Ministers r 160-14c	30 April 1959	""	o 1249-pcc (5 September 1960)
6	ESSR Council of Ministers r 91-10	1 March 1961	USSR Council of Ministers r 847-349, 5 August 1960	r 302-23 (12 June 1963); r 384-23 (17 August 1964)
7	ESSR Council of Ministers r 255-12	1 June 1966	""	–
8	ESSR Council of Ministers r 216-13	24 May 1967	""	r 361-30 (4 August 1970); r 169-18 (17 April 1972)
9	ESSR Council of Ministers r 223*	29 May 1967	Union-wide directive	r 7 (10 January 1968)
10	ESSR Council of Ministers r 236*	21 May 1969	Union-wide directive	r 294 (16 June 1970)
11	ESSR Council of Ministers r 296-14	21 June 1973	USSR Council of Ministers r 847-349, 5 August 1960	r 389-28 (25 July 1977)
12	ESSR Council of Ministers r 297*	21 June 1973	Union-wide directive	–
13	ESSR Council of Ministers r 348*	29 July 1976	Union-wide directive	r 578 (28 November 1977); r 201 (18 April 1979); r 202 (18 April 1984)
14	ESSR Council of Ministers r 453-33	28 July 1983	USSR Council of Ministers r 163-88, 17 February 1983	
15	ESSR Council of Ministers r 654**	25 December 1987	–	

The 1966 regulation once again changed mainly the list of officials allowed in the zone without permits since a couple of Union-wide directives on this topic had been sent out in the meantime. A proposal submitted by the border guards to start drawing up two separate regulations for regulating the border regimen led to the implementation of the subsequent regulation in 1967 less than a year after the previous regulation. One of those two regulations – *Concerning the border zone regimen within the borders of the ESSR* – was secret as usual but the other – *Concerning the procedure for entering the border zone within the borders of the ESSR* – was subject to restricted

²⁶ ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 91-10 *Concerning the border zone regimen within the borders of the Estonian SSR*, 1 March 1961, ERA.R-1.5.557, pp. 27–39.

²⁷ Abbreviations and notations: r – regulation, o – order; legal acts to which access was restricted are indicated with an asterisk (*), all other remaining documents were either secret or top secret except for the very last one, the regulation of 1987 that was already available to the public. – ERA.R-1.5.10, pp. 244–247; 90, pp. 26–28; 90, p. 19; 100, p. 124; 118, pp. 233–239; 185, pp. 113–114; 213, p. 222; 358, pp. 20–26; 360, pp. 6–7; 431, p. 104; 429, pp. 119–127; 492, pp. 42–51; 528, p. 31; 557, pp. 27–39; 617, pp. 87–91; 647, pp. 140–141; 706, pp. 26–53; 735, pp. 52–70; 802, p. 87; 850, p. 47; 872, pp. 42–55; 974, pp. 63–69; ERA.R-1.3.2213, pp. 43–64; 2328, pp. 253–255; 2554, pp. 126–149; 3721, pp. 141–144; ERAF.17SM.14.102, pp. 1–4, 16–19; 94, pp. 103–111; ENSV Teataja (ESSR State Gazette), 1988, 2, 38.

access. The latter was considered necessary to produce a document that would provide guidance at ticket counters, bus depots, airports, local executive committees, factories and elsewhere. Henceforth a list of railway stations, airports and ports located within the border zone (but not an enumeration of administrative units belonging to the border zone) was included in the unclassified regulation, along with the organisation of civilian transportation, the list of officials allowed into the zone without permits, a list of resorts, and instructions for business travellers, sanatoriums, children's summer camps, and other such information that affected a large proportion of the population.²⁸ The restricted access regulation was implemented on 29 May 1967 and its subsequent drafts in 1969, 1973 and 1976.

The secret regulation *Concerning the border zone and its regimen in the territory of the ESSR* issued in 1973 originated from Border Guard Forces Headquarters, from where it was sent to the Party Central Committee, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the KGB for approval. According to the border guards, a new framework document was needed since the amount of watercrafts at the disposal of citizens had grown quickly in recent years and there were too few moorings that were guarded according to requirements, especially "along the unguarded seacoast". This was seen as the primary reason for why many escape attempts from the Soviet Union had been made in recent years using privately owned or stolen vessels. The border guards demanded stricter control to prevent further escape attempts and the regulation established some new restrictions.²⁹

The act governing the state border of the Soviet Union went into effect on 1 March 1983, annulling the Union-wide border guard statute from 1960. The USSR Council of Ministers issued its own regulation on 17 February 1983 to implement that act and on that basis, a new ESSR Council of Ministers regulation was drawn up on 28 July 1983 as the new local framework document. There were few changes compared to the former procedures and the new legal act is characterised more by greater precision and detail than before. The concepts of the border zone and the border belt remained but the former 2-kilometre maximum limit for the border belt was done away with. The rules for entry also remained the same but the rights of the border guard forces to control the border regimen increased.³⁰ It can be said that this regulation made the border regimen even stricter.

Regulation of the Border Regimen

The rules for living in border areas and for entry into those areas changed little over time. For instance, if we compare the border belt regulation of 1935 to the instructions from 1983, they are almost identical in regard to matters concerning entry into border areas or living in those areas. The text had simply become more detailed over the course of nearly half a century.

The basic procedure was very simple – a passport containing address registration for some location situated within the border zone or border belt was required to live in areas along the border and the passport had to contain the requisite stamp. Local residents had to always have their passports

²⁸ Statement, March 1967, ERA.R-1.5.735, pp. 61–63.

²⁹ Letter from the commander of the 106th Border Guard Squad to the chairman of the ESSR Council of Ministers, March 1973, ERA.R-1.5.889, pp. 31–31p; ERA.R-1.5.872, pp. 53–55.

³⁰ USSR act concerning the state border of the Soviet Union. Official text as of 1 March 1983. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1987. To implement this act, the following regulations were issued: USSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 163-68, 17 February 1983, ERAF.17SM.14.102, pp. 20–22; ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 453-33 "О пограничном режиме в пограничной зоне на территории Эстонской ССР" (Concerning the border regimen and border zone in the territory of the Estonian SSR), 28 July 1983, ERAF.17SM.14.102, pp. 16–19.

with them when moving about in the zone. People who lived elsewhere had to apply for a permit from their local militia station and to supply documentation to prove the necessity of their trip in order to enter the border zone. Institutions located within the border belt or in the border zone were not permitted to hire people who did not have the required permit. Similarly, local residents were not permitted to take people without the required permit in as boarders.

New qualifying clauses were constantly being added when new regulations were drawn up. The list of activities that were forbidden in the zone or that required a permit grew ever longer. Strict restrictions were set for everything concerning maritime marine navigation, while hunting, holding sporting events, and so on, were reglemented. In 1955, it was considered necessary to add a separate clause prohibiting topo-geodetic work, photographing and filming in the zone without a permit. Among other things, keeping pigeons was also prohibited. A clause was added in 1959 concerning pupils and students registered as residents in the border belt who attended school elsewhere somewhat simplifying the procedure for their return trips home. It granted them the right to pass through the checkpoint with their student card and the corresponding certificate from their local village soviet.

Some notable changes were made in 1961. The regulation added that citizens with passports containing the border zone stamp ("ЗП") were permitted to travel in the border zone within the Estonian SSR since previously the permit was apparently valid throughout the Soviet Union. Recognition that a permit valid throughout the USSR somewhat simplifies escape from that state was most likely behind this change.³¹ At the same time, a clause was added to the framework regulation that had been missing from it since 1946 that required registration within 24 hours after entry into the border zone. This does not mean that the above-mentioned requirement did not apply in the meantime. Namely, the passport regulations of 1940 established a universal requirement for registration within 24 hours of arrival in any location whatsoever. This clause was eased somewhat later on, extending the deadline for address registration but the border belt regulation of 1961 meant that the 24 hour requirement remained in effect in the border zone and applied more or less until the end of the Soviet era.

The application procedure for permits was elaborated on in the 1970's and the cases that were prerequisites for obtaining permits were described in detail. As a rule, one-time permits were issued singly to individuals for a specific settlement. Permits valid for several locations or for an entire rajon altogether were issued in exceptional cases, for instance to persons engaged in certain occupations who had to travel about a great deal due to the nature of their occupation. Permits that could be used repeatedly for up to one year could be issued for visiting relatives living in the border zone. Citizens who resided temporarily in the border zone could be issued with a permit for up to 45 days, later for up to three months and then for up to six months.

The MVD, KGB and other institutions issued an immense number of directives and instructions for the implementation of these regulations but unfortunately, most of them are not accessible, because the archives of these institutions were removed from Estonia when the Soviet Union collapsed and access to them is not available in Russian archives. Instructions from 1983 are preserved in the archives. They provide more detailed information concerning the procedures in

³¹ Elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the permit was valid as of 1961 within the territory of autonomous SSR's (ASSR), oblasts and krajs respectively. This restriction had not been included in regulations previously. It is possible that the situation was elaborated on in instructions that have not been located to this date, but most likely this meant that the permit was valid in the border belt throughout the USSR. People who have escaped to Finland over the border of Karelia have also claimed that this was the case, and that they used this circumstance to aid their escape.

effect at that time as well as matters such as the issuing of permits and the preceding procedure for special checks, factors hindering the acquisition of permits, and other such items.³² The procedure that was previously in effect was also most likely about the same. This allows us to assume the equivalence of legal acts from different periods in terms of other details.

As a rule, border zone permits were not to be issued to citizens of foreign countries and stateless persons. The state security units and those for internal affairs had the right to prohibit entry to the border zone for persons whose presence there was undesirable due to “operational considerations”. There were special rules for persons with criminal records. The local unit for internal affairs was responsible for issuing all manner of residence permits to persons released from penal institutions within its territorial jurisdiction, including the right to enter the border zone. The unit for internal affairs was responsible for checking the right of the incarcerated person to enter the border zone, that is to say, whether the person being released had lived there previously or if his immediate relatives had formerly lived there. The unit for internal affairs at the destination was responsible for providing its evaluation and had the power to ban the released person from taking up residence in the border zone.

Certain sentences brought with them restrictions on address registration that made settling in the border zone significantly more difficult until the end of the Soviet era. In the context of Soviet repressive policy, this restriction actually meant that many people were prohibited from returning to their homes. The system that was in effect since 1940 enumerated counterrevolutionary and criminal acts, hooliganism (until 1952) and not engaging in socially useful work as the basis for restrictions. From 1974 onward, address registration restrictions applied to particularly dangerous repeat offenders and persons who had been sentenced to imprisonment or exile for particularly dangerous crimes against the state (10 sections were in turn categorised as such crimes, including anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, betrayal of the homeland, and others). The list included a number of serious criminal assaults and economic crimes, but also “dissemination of fabrications that are known to be false denigrating the system of government or the social system”. It was nevertheless possible to make exceptions in this regard and exceptions were indeed applied.

Not only persons with criminal records but also more or less everyone who applied for a border zone permit was subjected to special control. Citizens had to submit a written petition and documents substantiating the aim of the trip (documentation concerning the residence of relatives in the zone, job offer from an institution, or other such documentation) 10 days before their planned trip at the latest in order to obtain a permit. This was followed by special control, the thoroughness of which depended on where the applicant lived: stricter control was required in the case of people living in the administrative centre of a union republic (ASSR, oblast, kraj). Address bureaus and the 10th department of the corresponding security unit carried out the check.³³ The security unit was required to provide its answer within 2–3 days if the purpose of the trip was not a funeral or to visit someone who was seriously ill – in such cases, the instructions required that the

³² USSR MVD Directive no. 0285, 13 October 1983, ERAF.17SM.14.109, pages not numbered.

³³ The ESSR KGB 10th Department was subordinate to the USSR KGB 10th Department Main Administration and also issued permits to foreigners for entry into the ESSR and to Soviet citizens for travel abroad. It also drew up the foreign travel files of people travelling abroad. The procedure for both special checks was also quite similar. The address bureaus managed enormous card files containing data concerning the movement of people, that is the transfer of address registration from one place to another.

check be carried out “immediately”. The organs were not required to disclose their motives in cases where permission was denied.³⁴

Extent of the Border Belt and Border Zone. In 1940, all islands in Estonia’s coastal waters and certain areas of Estonia’s northern coast were included in the “prohibited zone”. As of 1946, “all islands in the Baltic Sea belonging to the Soviet Union” and 36 village soviets along Estonia’s northern and north-western coast were defined as belonging to the border belt. In subsequent years, changes were made in the description of the restricted area, most of which were due to reorganisation of administrative units. The number of village soviets, for instance, decreased by more than a factor of three over the course of 40 years.³⁵ The regulation issued in 1955 took into account the consequences of the major administrative reform of 1950, in the course of which rajons were formed in place of counties and rural municipalities. Henceforth a total of 24 village soviets in seven rajons stretching from Narva-Jõesuu to Matsalu Bay on the Estonian mainland were part of the border belt. By 1983, their number gradually decreased to 19. This, of course, did not mean a narrowing of the border zone but rather the opposite, because the amalgamation of small village soviets increased the size of the area covered by those village soviets. At the same time, all these changes were formal, adhering to the principle that every administrative unit adjacent to the sea is part of the border zone. The situation was exactly the same elsewhere in the Soviet Union as well: for instance, in Latvia, 13 village soviets and some hamlets in its three rajons located on the western coast were part of the border zone in 1983, and in Lithuania, 9 village soviets and the Nida Peninsula in its four seaside rajons were in the border zone.

The expansion of the border zone was indeed not large but it nevertheless painfully affected people with criminal records who were subject to restrictions affecting where they were allowed to live. As the border zone expanded, they had to move repeatedly. This affected areas in the near vicinity of Tallinn in particular, where many people who were banned from living in the city had settled.³⁶

It must, however, be noted that it was chiefly moving to village soviets located in the border belt or border zone, meaning address registration, that was restricted. This did not always necessarily mean denial of permission to enter the territory of a particular village soviet or strict control at the border of the village soviet. The necessary checkpoint with its gate was set up within the zone wherever necessary or where it was easiest to set up and that depended to a great extent on the local border guards.

Cities as a rule were not part of the border belt or border zone but there were always exceptions to this rule and there were two such exceptions in Estonia. First of all, Paldiski, which was essentially sealed off to the civilian population for the entire Soviet era. In 1964, the city and the entire Pakri Peninsula were given special status because “Object 346” belonging to the USSR Ministry of Defence was located there. The area was declared a restricted zone (*закрытая зона*), where not only the border regimen was in effect but also its own special regimen in addition.³⁷ The other

³⁴ USSR MVD Directive no. 0285, 13 October 1983, ERAF.17SM.14.109, pages not numbered.

³⁵ For further detail, see: Liivi Uuet. Eesti haldusjaotus 20. sajandil : teatmik (Estonia’s Administrative Division: a Reference Book). Eesti Riigiarhiiv, Tallinn, 2002.

³⁶ For instance, Ageeda Paavel was released from prison camp in 1955 but was not allowed to return to live in her former place of residence in Tallinn. She succeeded in obtaining address registration about 25 km outside of the city in the village of Valingu. Her address registration of 1955 was nullified since the border regimen caught up with her, so to speak, due to changes in the boundaries of administrative units. – Interview with Ageeda Paavel, 1 March 2012.

³⁷ ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 384-23, 17 August 1964, ERA.R-1.5.647, pp. 140–141. The 93rd Naval Training Centre (the so called training centre for nuclear submarine crews) was located in Paldiski. It was established in 1964

exception was Sillamäe, located in the border belt along the northern coast. Sillamäe officially gained town status in 1957 and in subsequent framework regulations, it had to therefore be singled out separately as a town that was part of the border zone, unlike other towns.³⁸

The administrative centres of union republics (like those of ASSR's, oblasts and krajs as well) were not part of the border belt or border zone but in 1946, the leadership of the ESSR concocted a plan to include Tallinn in the border belt as well, hoping in this way to ensure better order in the city and to obtain additional means for combating the hordes of illegal immigrants coming from Russia. Baltic Fleet Headquarters also supported the proposal. In its opinion, Tallinn merited a stricter regimen as a border city on the coast and the location of the main base of the fleet, similarly to other naval bases (like Sevastopol or Vladivostok). A draft regulation was prepared by the ECP Central Committee that prescribed Tallinn's inclusion in the border belt and the expulsion of people caught without residence permits.³⁹ Then, however, the plan was shelved since it most probably went against the fact that making exceptions in a unified system was simply out of the question and the implementation of the border regimen was not prescribed for the capitals of union republics. At the same time, special rules deriving from the passport regimen were in effect in capitals that similarly to the border regimen were meant to control migration and the composition of the population.

Exceptions. The framework regulation of the border regimen was always accompanied by a list of settlements and areas that were exceptions – they were located within the border zone but entry into them was not restricted. Often the reason for the addition or removal of a particular settlement from the list was simply a change in administrative jurisdiction or in the status of the settlement. Beyond that, an official list of summer holiday resorts existed, drawn up by the local executive committee in cooperation with the Border Guard. Citizens of the ESSR – meaning people with a permanently registered address in Estonia – could visit those places during the “summer holiday season”, in other words from 1 May (later from 1 April) until 1 October. At the same time, visitors always had to bear in mind that they could remain at the seashore only in daylight, in other words from 07:00 until 22:00. This last requirement also applied outside of the border zone as well, for instance at Tallinn's public beaches. Sanatoriums, children's summer camps (“pioneer” camps) and other holiday or health institutions formed a separate category of exceptions to which people had access on the basis of corresponding holiday packages or referrals. Finally, there were also exceptions that were valid under certain conditions or for local residents so that people could go to the market, visit the hospital, go to their summer cottage, or other such activities.

The maritime islands as a rule were part of the border zone throughout the Soviet era and visiting them without a permit was utterly impossible for ordinary citizens living elsewhere until 1961. This applies particularly to the islands in the Gulf of Finland from which their permanent population was forcibly resettled to the mainland by the beginning of the 1950's (except for Prangli Island). The first exception in a long time emerged in the system in 1961 since Aegna Island, located near Tallinn, was declared an area for summer holidaying.⁴⁰ While initially all ESSR citizens theoretically had the

and placed in operation four years later, see: Jüri Pärn, Margus Hergauk, Mati Õun. *Punalaevastik Eestis 20. sajandi lõpukümneil* (The Red Fleet in Estonia in the Latter Decades of the 20th Century). Sentinel, Tallinn, 2006, p. 37.

³⁸ The main reason for Sillamäe's special status was the secret object located there, the uranium enrichment factory Combined Plant no. 7, the construction of which began in 1946.

³⁹ Letter from Karotamm, Tributs and Jefremov to Zhdanov, undated document [filed in the archives on 21 January 1947], ERAF.1.5a.34, pp. 1–2.

⁴⁰ A ferry line between Tallinn and Aegna was opened for the summer season in 1961. There were about 20 holiday resorts on that island in 1960–90. Aegna Island was within Tallinn's administrative boundaries since 1975.

opportunity to visit that island on their own in the summer, only people whose address was permanently registered in the Tallinn and Harju rajon retained that right in 1973–83 – that was one of the proposals made by the border guard forces for making control of the border regimen more effective. Foreigners were allowed onto the island only via a holiday package to a holiday resort or as part of a tour group.

One further significant change was made in 1966 when Kihnu Island, located in the Gulf of Riga, was counted out of the border zone.⁴¹ In practice, people were not prevented from visiting the islets in the Väinameri Straits between the Estonian mainland and the Western Estonian archipelago, where a number of organisations and enterprises had their holiday resorts.

In addition to exceptions, temporary anomalies arose. For instance, in 1953 after Stalin's death, Lavrenti Beria initiated the liberalisation of the system, as a part of which a certain relaxation of the passport system was also planned and an amnesty was declared.⁴² A number of restrictions on place of residence were done away with, including within the area extending to 100 km along the border of the Soviet Union. According to Beria, this kind of system that was not in use anywhere else in the world was useless from the standpoint of guarding the border and hindered economic development.⁴³ The brakes were pulled on Beria's attempt at liberalisation, however, immediately after he was removed from power and in that same autumn already, a new passport regulation was approved that restored all the former restrictions. The effect of Beria's liberalisation attempt and amnesty, however, is expressed in Estonia in the statistics of entry permits issued for the border belt because the number of permits increased many times over for a short period of time (see Table 2).

We find another interesting deviation in 1956, when the Party leader in the ESSR Ivan Käbin and the leader of the government Aleksei Müürisepp submitted a proposal to the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs to exclude the village soviets in the near vicinity of Tallinn from the border belt. The wish to offer city residents opportunities for summer vacationing was put forward as justification for the proposal. A USSR-wide campaign for improving the living conditions of the population in general supported the plan. Within the framework of this campaign, a USSR Council of Ministers regulation prescribed the construction of 300 summer cottages and their sale to Tallinners. Furthermore, children's summer camps (pioneer camps) and vacation resorts were located in those village soviets.⁴⁴ The matter culminated in February of 1957 with an order from the ESSR Council of Ministers that excluded 4 village soviets in the near vicinity of the city from the border belt. This joy was nevertheless short-lived for city residents because the new border regimen framework regulation issued that very same autumn returned them to the border belt.⁴⁵ It is possible that the ESSR leadership had acted without approval from Moscow and with undue haste but it is more likely that the border guard forces or the KGB realised that the narrowing of the border zone had gone too far. In that case the escape of Eugen Adrik to Sweden by sailboat that took place in August of 1957 that is considered further below could have had decisive impact.

⁴¹ ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 255-12, 1 June 1966, ERA.R-1.5.706, pp. 26–53.

⁴² See: Tõnu Tannberg. 1953. aasta amnestia: kas ainult varaste ja sulide vabastamine (The Amnesty of 1953: Was it the Release of Only Thieves and Crooks?). – Tuna, 2004, no. 3, pp. 37–51.

⁴³ Лаврентий Берия. 1953. Документы. Moscow, 1999, pp. 45–48.

⁴⁴ Käbin and Müürisepp to the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs, 21 September 1956, ERAF.1.5.405, pp. 42–43.

⁴⁵ ESSR CPC Order no. 196-ks, 23 February 1957, ERA.R-1.5.431, 104; ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 385-22c, ERA.R-1.5.429, pp. 119–127.

Privileges of the *Nomenklatura*.⁴⁶ A list of positions that made it possible to enter the border zone without a permit formed one group of exceptions. The inclusion of such lists with framework regulations began in 1946 already. These lists were based on USSR-wide lists that were usually established as a joint directive issued by the heads of several institutions, one of which was always the Minister of Internal Affairs or the chairman of the KGB.⁴⁷ These lists, which for the most part coincided with the enumeration of *nomenklatura* positions, were divided up into several levels, similarly to the *nomenklatura*. Positions that ensured “unlimited” entry⁴⁸ throughout the entire extent of the Soviet Union’s state border formed the first level – the lists of this level were so secret that they were not included with the ESSR regulations. Instead this document only referred to some USSR-wide document. The next level consisted of persons who did not require a permit issued by the militia; their identity document was sufficient to allow entry.⁴⁹ The third level consisted of persons who required a business trip certificate in addition to their passport. The fourth level consisted of persons to whom the militia issued long-term permits (that is for six months or a year). Ordinary citizens could also apply for this kind of long-term permit under certain conditions. The positions of the lower-level lists were in turn divided into lists where the right of entry was valid throughout the Soviet Union, only in their own Union republic (ASSR, oblast or kraj), or only within the boundaries of their own rajon respectively.

In summary, the system was so complex that lists that were often updated ultimately consisted of dozens of pages and hundreds of official titles. This, of course, is not because the border regimen had become more lenient but rather because the list of official *nomenklatura* positions became ever longer.

There were also special rules for **organising transportation** in the border zone. The framework regulation established the list of highways and railways passing through the border zone along with the railway stations, harbours and airports located in the zone. These kinds of railway stations could be passed through but people were not allowed to disembark. When purchasing a ticket to any of these listed stations, the purchaser had to produce a permit indicating the station of destination. A similar system applied to bus lines. Driving on highways passing through the border zone was open to all automobile drivers but road users without border zone permits were not permitted to get out of their automobile or to stop anywhere within the zone for any reason other than a traffic accident.

The rules for marine navigation as a very important domain from the viewpoint of the border regimen became stricter and ever more detailed over time. It was stipulated in 1940 already that all fishing, sporting and pleasure boats sailing in the Gulf of Finland had to be registered with local governmental organisations regardless of the size, capacity and power of the watercraft. The number and certificate obtained from the local governmental organisation had to in turn be

⁴⁶ General term denoting the key positions and employees in the Soviet Union, see: <http://www.estonica.org/en/Nomenklatura/>.

⁴⁷ For instance: Перечень должностных лиц. Приложение № 6 к приказу КГБ СССР, МВД СССР, МПС, Минморфлот, МГА, Минрыбхоз № 158/ДСП/225/43/ЦЭ/248/220/ДСП/548, 30 November 1983, ERAF, f. 17SM, n. 14, s. 109, not paginated. The four last institutions are the Ministries of Roads, the Naval Fleet, Civilian Aviation and the Fishing Industry.

⁴⁸ It is not entirely clear exactly how “unlimited” entry (“въезжают свободно” in rules) was implemented in practice because KGB or other directives or instructions where these kinds of details could be described have not yet been found. Members of this group apparently did not have to show any documents and drove through checkpoints without stopping.

⁴⁹ The only identification document that civilians had was the Soviet citizens’ passport, where until 1974 the bearer’s place of work was also entered. After 1974, an employment certificate was also required at checkpoints.

immediately registered with the local border guard detachment corresponding to the owner's place of residence. Watercraft could only be kept in places determined by the border guard. Landing and loading were prohibited anywhere else. All watercraft moored at ports had to be locked and guarded. All watercraft were permitted to sail at any time within 12 nautical miles of the coastline for the purpose of fishing, economic activity or scientific work but pleasure boats and sporting craft were permitted to sail only during the daytime and only within 3 nautical miles of the coast. Putting out to sea and landing was permitted only in the presence of border guards. From 1946 onward, all watercraft had to be registered at a specific fixed port or landing place. Boats had to be locked and oars, oarlocks and sails had to be stored separately. This requirement was extended to include outboard motors in 1967.

Fishing permits started being issued for one season at a time in 1946 and amateur fishermen were forbidden to catch fish at night. The life of professional fishermen was made a little easier in 1955 when they were permitted to land at all corresponding landing places to unload their catch regardless of where their craft was registered. As an exception, fishermen were not allowed to unload their catch in Paldiski Bay, where fishing boats and other civilian craft had no business being in the first place. The same restriction was placed on the port of Mõntu in Saaremaa in 1973.

The focus was aimed at yachtsmen in 1957. The reason was the escape by Eugen Adrik and his two companions on a sporting association yacht to Sweden upon having received permission to sail from Tallinn to Klaipeda in Lithuania. The case was sensitive due to the circumstance that the yacht's captain Adrik, a USSR champion sportsman in yachting, was a Red Army Estonian Rifle Corps veteran and also a former agent of the security units.⁵⁰ The ESSR Supreme Court sentenced the fugitives by default to 10 years imprisonment. The case reached the ECP Central Committee and the head of the ESSR KGB 4th Department Leonid Burdin was reprimanded while his first deputy Gavriil Starinov was given a warning, after which measures quickly began to be taken. Yachts were henceforth prohibited from sailing beyond territorial waters and special control was established over yachtsmen and sailing on the open seas at night.⁵¹

The 1960's brought new provisions that primarily affected fishing boats that the border guard justified by previous escapes abroad of boats or members of boat crews. First of all, a narrow entry gate was established and designated in the Irben Straits in 1960 for ships departing from and arriving at Riga. The following year, seagoing vessels were forbidden to go fishing alone – at least two seagoing vessels had to be together in order to be allowed to put out to sea (larger ships were relieved of this restriction in 1966 under the condition that they are in radio contact with the shore). Minimum requirements were also set for the number of crew members – trawlers had to have at least five and boats had to have at least two people in order to put out to sea. Four hours before departure at the latest, the border guard had to be informed where the craft was going and when it would be returning. The maximum permissible distance from the coast was reduced to 2 miles for amateur fishermen.

The next significant change came in 1967 when the entire set of rules affecting watercraft and fishing was extended to those areas of the Gulf of Riga and the Väinameri (the body of water between continental Estonia and Estonia's western islands) that the Border Guard did not keep

⁵⁰ ERAF.131SM.1.375, pp. 102–104; J. Pihlau. Lehekülgi Eesti lähiajaloo. Merepõgenemised okupeeritud Eestist (Pages from Recent Estonian History. Escapes by Sea from Occupied Estonia), p. 74.

⁵¹ Report concerning agent and operative work of the State Security Committee 2nd Department under the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers in 1957. Report concerning agent and operative work of the State Security Committee 4th Department under the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers in 1957. Rahvusarhiiv, Tallinn, 2002, pp. 152–154.

under surveillance. Essentially, this established some rules of the border regimen in areas that were not even in the border zone. The specific term “coastline without surveillance” was also adopted, concerning which new restrictions were implemented thereafter (primarily according to proposals made by the border guard forces). A new rule that applied throughout the entire coastline was established in 1967, requiring that the power of boat motors in private possession may not exceed 20 horsepower.

The Issuing of Permits

While the border guards shouldered the greater burden in controlling the border regimen and the role of the militia was smaller, the militia units did most of the work in issuing permits for entry into border areas. Restricted access militia statistics from 1945 and 1952-1987 concerning issuing of permits have been preserved (see Table 2). The ESSR NKVD Militia Administration issued over 39 000 such permits in 1945.⁵² The number of permits steadily increased later. This was partially due to a certain expansion of the border zone and an increase in the population, but more generally we can also see the attitudes of the regime here which became somewhat more conciliatory over time in terms of allowing people to the seashore.

Table 2. Issuing of Border Zone Permits by ESSR Militia Units 1952–1987 (thousands)⁵³

1952	17	1958	39	1964	43	1970	82	1976	95	1982	92
1953	16	1959	33	1965	44	1971	90	1977	88	1983	118
1954	80	1960	31	1966	47	1972	99	1978	88	1984	134
1955	25	1961	36	1967	51	1973	103	1979	90	1985	148
1956	31	1962	42	1968	61	1974	110	1980	100	1986	167
1957	37	1963	38	1969	74	1975	110	1981	118	1987	94*

The year 1954 was exceptional with over 80 000 permits, reflecting the relaxation of restrictions on place of residence due to the so called Beria amnesty. The effect of the 22nd Olympic Games Tallinn Sailing Regatta can be assumed in the case of the decrease that took place in 1976-1980, prior to and during which restrictions on movement and place of residence were made stricter, “unsuitable elements” were expelled from Tallinn, and other such actions. The sharp increase that took place in 1984 is explained by the new MVD border regimen regulations that simplified application for border zone permits. Some reports make it possible to estimate that the number of permits issued to people living permanently in the border zone formed about a fifth of the total number of permits.⁵⁴

⁵² Отчет об итогах работы наркомата внутренних дел Эстонской ССР за 1945-й год (Report concerning the work of the ESSR People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs in 1945), 8 March 1946. ERAF.17SM.4.40, p. 18.

⁵³ The data presented is rounded off. Data for the first half of the year is indicated with an asterisk. ERAF.18SM.1.58, p. 66; 111, p. 22; 159, p. 20; 228, pp. 8, 13, 20; 267, pp. 3, 4, 22; 291, pp. 2–4; 312, p. 33; 341, pp. 48–49; 358, p. 187; 363, p. 157; 391, p. 130; 405, pp. 175–176; 416, p. 167; 429, pp. 88, 213; 445, pp. 96, 186; ERAF.17SM.4.388, pp. 84, 163; 388, pp. 84, 163; 424, pp. 118, 341; 444, pp. 24, 284; 490, pp. 115, 288; 568, p. 369; 568, p. 369; 622, p. 30; 623, p. 147; 677, p. 292; 678, p. 165; 748, p. 128; 810, p. 255; 870, p. 244; 941, p. 159; 1020, pp. 75, 116; 1076, pp. 12, 121; 1126, pp. 20, 127; 1321, pp. 211–212.

⁵⁴ Доклад по паспортно-регистрационной работе (Report concerning work associated with passports and registration), 5 February 1954, ERAF.18SM.1.111, p. 52. For instance, according to the 1953 report, temporary permits issued for business trips and for personal reasons accounted for about 80% of all permits in equal proportions. The remainder was thus meant for permanent residents of the border belt. The proportion of permits issued to people who

Border Regimen Control: Institutions and Methods

Control of the border regimen – the key element of the entire system – was the responsibility of the border guard forces and the militia units according to the border defence regulations. In the case of some tasks, a more or less fixed division of labour was in effect, others however were fulfilled jointly. The militia units were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (but under the jurisdiction of the NKVD until 1946), and they issued border zone permits, processed the cases of violators of the border regimen and supervised the passport regimen. In other words, they made sure that all border zone residents or persons in the border zone had a passport and the proper address registration that justified their presence within the zone. Routine checks included private individuals and places of residence as well as organisations and administrative agencies. MVD statistics from the early 1950's preserved in the archives give an idea of the scales of these checks. Over 141 000 citizens were checked in the border belt in 1951, over 163 000 in 1952, and over 140 000 in 1953.⁵⁵ The militia checked 19 institutions and businesses, 12 sovkhoses and kolkhozes (collective farms), and 20 village soviets along with all settlements in four rajons in the border belt in 1952. Additionally, the militia also dealt with the "removal" of people from the border zone, in other words the expulsion of people who were not permitted to live there. In 1954, 47 people were removed from the border zone and another 19 people were removed in each of the subsequent two years.⁵⁶

Border guards also had the right to check passports and registration. The Border Guard Forces were also part of the NKVD/MVD until 1949, after which they were part of the MGB in 1949-1953, then once again in the MVD and as of 1957, they were part of the KGB.⁵⁷ They were responsible for actually guarding the border, that is they kept watch over border crossings in both directions over an approximately 1700 km long section of the approximately 3000 km long maritime border of the ESSR. They had the right to erect checkpoints and gates on roads within both the border zone and the border belt. They also had the right to apprehend people who violated border regimen regulations, after which the detained persons had to be handed over to the militia units for prosecution. Their rights were more extensive in cases of violation of the border – in addition to arrests, they were also permitted to conduct investigation procedures (searches, interrogations and

lived permanently in the border zone was about the same in 1984-1986 (for which precise data exists), in other words 16–21% of all permits.

⁵⁵ Such astronomical numbers make this researcher cautious and raise the question of whether so many people really were actually checked or if these numbers were simply made up. This sort of massive checking is not impossible in and of itself considering the fact that most checking consisted of leafing through passports. It is, of course, impossible to check statistics after the fact and perhaps this is not that important. These numbers indicate the objectives and attitude of the regime and the comprehensive and constant checking of the population was definitely a separate objective.

⁵⁶ Доклад по паспортной работе (Report on work related to passports), 24 June 1953, ERAF.18SM.1.58, p. 46; Доклад по паспортно-регистрационной работе (Report on work related to passports and registration), 5 February 1954, ERAF.18SM.1.111, p. 49.

⁵⁷ Three border guard squads that were part of the Baltic Border Guard District located in the Baltic states were responsible for guarding the Estonian SSR border: initially the 99th and as of 1954 the 6th Border Guard Detachment in the eastern part of Viru and Harju counties; the 106th Border Guard Squad operated from eastern Harju County to Noarootsi, and the 11th Border Guard Squad operated on the Western Estonian islands. The squads were divided up territorially into areas under the command of commandants, which were in turn divided up into border guard stations responsible for guarding particular sections of the coast. Additionally, an air force squadron and a fleet that consisted of 23 ships and 25 launches in 1991 were at the disposal of border guard forces located in the ESSR. – See: J. Pärn, M. Hergauk, M. Õun. *Võõrväed Eestis 20. sajandi lõpukümnendil* (Foreign Forces in Estonia in the Final Decades of the 20th Century). Sentinel, Tallinn, 2006, pp. 44–47.

other such procedures).⁵⁸ The border guard regulations of 1983 expanded the rights of border guards. Thereafter they could detain persons for up to 72 hours, and with the approval of the prosecutor for up to 10 days.⁵⁹

While the work of the border guard forces and the militia was at least partially visible and known to everyone, the KGB operated more under cover and the content of its work was to prevent border violations. Counterintelligence in the border zone also included the identification and checking of people “suspected of betraying the homeland”.⁶⁰ The KGB also kept an eye on the preparedness of the border guards themselves. Among other things, a report from 1957 claimed that an abnormal situation had evolved where the border was practically not guarded at all for 2 months out of every year because when conscripts were demobilised and new conscripts arrived for their training, the border guard stations were staffed with 6–7 people “who defend only themselves”. There were insufficient reserves at the disposal of the.⁶¹

The chapters in the KGB Counterintelligence Department reports concerning the work done in the border belt are similar in content, which is a convincing indication that the undertakings were routine and probably continued in the same vein later on as well during the period for which documents are not at our disposal. Joint KGB, border guard and militia “plans of measures” were drawn up from year to year “to block betrayal attempts” and joint manoeuvres were held from time to time. For instance, the manoeuvres “The pursuit and apprehension of border violators brought to land from the sea” and “The pursuit and apprehension of border violators who attempted to escape abroad” were held.⁶²

An important field of work was the recruitment of a network of agents in the border zone and the processing of information acquired from agents. The aim was to recruit the network of agents from among people who were very familiar with local conditions, had rapport with the people in the surroundings and had the capacity to provide timely information. Agents came from among forest wardens, foresters, communications workers, roads supervisors, doctors, medical assistants and others. As of 1 January 1958, the KGB had 669 agents, 36 residents, 54 proprietors of safe houses, 5 trap flats and 165 informers in the border belt. They operated in cooperation with 665 agents from other departments in guarding the border.⁶³ Border guard officers and the militia both had their own networks of agents.

Establishing files on persons who were believed to be hatching plans to escape and the surveillance of such persons with the aid of agents was routine work. Primarily people in correspondence with people abroad or who had relatives there as well as people who had in the past been active in

⁵⁸ Statute concerning guarding the Soviet Union’s border. Approved by USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium enactment on 5 August 1960. – ENSV Ülemnõukogu Teataja, 1960, nr 29, pp. 603–611.

⁵⁹ USSR act concerning the state border of the Soviet Union. Official text as of 1 March 1983. Eesti Raamat, Tallinn, 1987, pp. 24–29.

⁶⁰ Indrek Jürjo. Foreword. – Report on the work of the State Security Committee 2nd Counterintelligence Department under the ESSR Council of Ministers from 1 April 1954 to 1 April 1955. Umara, Tallinn, 1997, p. 10; Report on the work of the State Security Committee 2nd Counterintelligence Department in 1955. Umara, Tallinn, 1998, pp. 61–63; Report concerning the agent and operative work of the KGB 2nd Department under the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers in 1956. Umara, Tallinn, 2000, pp. 34–37; Report concerning the agent and operative work of the KGB 2nd Department under the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers in 1957. Eesti Rahvusarhiiv, Tallinn, 2002, pp. 44–52; Report concerning the results of the agent and operative work of the State Security Committee 2nd Department under the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers in 1958. Rahvusarhiiv, Tallinn, 2005, pp. 62–69.

⁶¹ Report [...] 1957, p. 45.

⁶² Report [...] 1958, p. 67.

⁶³ Report [...] 1957, p. 51.

illegally transporting people across the sea or in smuggling were registered and placed under surveillance. When the circumstances had been ascertained, the suspect was arrested, followed by either a prophylactic conversation or prosecution, for which the arrested person was handed over to the militia. If someone disregarded the law by building a boat, it was confiscated from him. Sometimes illegal escapes were used for transporting their own agents abroad and if someone tried to escape across a land border in some other part of the Soviet Union, the escape route was kept under surveillance for a longer period of time in order to catch as many accomplices as possible.

In 1956, agent and operative measures identified 96 residents of the ESSR who “planned betrayal”. By the end of the year, 30 of them had already been arrested by the border guard or the KGB while attempting to escape or by the militia under accusation of committing crimes. Over the course of 1956, more than 40 alerts concerning escape plans or persons without permits staying in the zone were received from the network of agents and informers, and 59 such alerts were received in 1958. As of 1 January 1958, 65 violators of the border and “persons planning betrayal” were registered. Another 46 former smugglers, 11 persons who formerly provided transport across the sea, 1238 repatriated persons, nearly 3000 persons who had returned from penal institutions and over 5000 people who maintained correspondence with people abroad were also registered.⁶⁴

People who had the right to put out to sea were constantly at the centre of attention. The crews of fishing trawlers were under close scrutiny after two Estonian fishing ships fled to Sweden in 1947-1948.⁶⁵ The state security units started recruiting fishermen and creating “crossing stations” under their control in order to trap escapees. The control exercised by the security units and the border guard was made significantly stricter in 1948. It was established that both an Estonian captain and an Estonian motorist were not permitted serve simultaneously on any fishing boat. The proportion of non-Estonians in the crews was increased and all persons with even the most slightly suspicious past were removed from the crews.⁶⁶ The Central Committee of the Party also intervened, declaring the political work done in Estonian maritime shipping unsatisfactory. The fact that 159 seagoing seamen were deprived of visas for travelling abroad over the course of one year was pointed out as an indicator of this deficient political work.⁶⁷

Control became ever stricter in the following years. Together with the local *apparat* and the Border Guard, employees sent from KGB headquarters checked jetties, the supervision of watercraft, the personnel of fishing brigades and ship crews, and transferred seamen from one crew to another. The members of one family or close relatives were not allowed to put out to sea together. The authorities also tried to identify fishermen who “show signs of political uncertainty, moral decadence and degeneration in living habits”. In 1958 for instance, 9 fishermen were deprived of permission to put out to sea and permission was denied to 14 persons. In addition to fishermen, yachtsmen were placed under close scrutiny in 1957 as a consequence of the escape of Eugen Adrik’s crew that has already been described in this article. Five new agents had been recruited from among yachtsmen by the end of that year already. A special section (the 3rd Section) was formed as part of the KGB 4th Department to increase the effectiveness of Chekist work among young people and athletes. The operative staff of this section consisted of 7 employees. “Special control” files concerning yachtsmen were created. They and their relatives were kept under

⁶⁴ Report [...] 1955, p. 62; Report [...] 1956, p. 36; Report [...] 1957, p. 52; Report [...] 1958, p. 65.

⁶⁵ See further: J. Pihlau. Lehekülgi Eesti lähiajaloo. Merepõgenemised okupeeritud Eestist (Pages from Recent Estonian History: Escapes by Sea from Occupied Estonia). – Tuna, 2001, nr 2, pp. 68–81.

⁶⁶ J. Pihlau, Merepõgenemised (Escapes by Sea), pp. 69–70.

⁶⁷ ECP CC decision *About Party political work on Estonian Maritime Shipping seagoing vessels*, 2 February 1949, ERAF.1.4.702, p. 102.

surveillance through both the agent network and card files. Over the course of 1958, 22 “suspicious persons” were identified. There were not permitted to put out to sea because compromising material concerning them was in the hands of the authorities.⁶⁸

All the work described above proceeded along the unguarded coastline as well and even though practically no materials concerning this work have been preserved from later years, it undoubtedly carried on until the end of the Soviet era. For instance, a map of islands of Saaremaa and Muhu from 1978 is known on which the locations of dozens of agents and informers are marked even though we do not, of course, know how many of them actually collaborated and how many were registered merely to “fulfil the plan”.⁶⁹

The authorities tried to coax ever more new people to cooperate with the border guard forces. In 1953, Party rajon committees along the border were assigned to deal more seriously with informing the population in order to improve vigilance. Additionally, civilian units drawn from the population had to start being formed by fiat in the border zone to assist the border guards. These units existed until the end of the 1980’s.⁷⁰ Young people and children had to be included in guarding the border. A draft decision concerning the inclusion of the Komsomol in guarding the border was drawn up in 1954 in the Baltic Border Guard Forces District Political Department and was sent to the Central Committee of the ELKNÜ (Estonian Chapter of the Young Communist League) for deliberation and ratification. Communist youth had to be mobilised to assist border guards and they had to start monitoring the population of the border belt.⁷¹ The “Statute of the Group of Young Friends of the Border Guards” was drawn up in 1979. It was approved by the ELKNÜ CC, the ESSR Minister of Education and the commander of the Baltic Border Guard Forces District. Children aged 10 and up had to join the squads that were to be formed in schools within the rajons along the border. Constant vigilance was among the duties of squad members and it was recommended that manoeuvres be held once every three months where the “search for and arrest of a border violator” was organised. The practical activity of the squads in assisting the Border Guard was supposed to consist of patrolling and setting up observation posts. It was expected that the children would immediately inform the border guards of strangers who appeared in the border zone as well.⁷² Exciting ways of spending free time were offered to squad members as incentive but I do not venture to hazard a guess concerning what effect these children had on border regimen surveillance or whether they had any effect at all.

Punishment of Violators of the Regimen

Violation of the rules of the border regimen was criminalised in the Soviet Union in 1935 when the penalty for living in the border belt or entering it without a permit was set at up to 3 years in prison camp subject to the decision of the NKVD Special Board. The procedure was changed in 1937 and these cases were placed under the jurisdiction of people’s courts (first instance courts).

⁶⁸ Report concerning the agent and operative work of the KGB 4th Department under the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers in 1957. *Rahvusarhiiv*, Tallinn, 2002, pp. 152–154; Report concerning the results of the agent and operative work of the State Security Committee 4th Department under the Estonian SSR Council of Ministers in 1958, p. 130.

⁶⁹ Estonian Internal Security Service Yearbook 2002. Estonian Internal Security Service, Tallinn, 2003 (a copy of this map is published as an appendix of this book).

⁷⁰ ECP CC decision, 2 December 1953, ERAF.1.5.50, pp. 456–458.

⁷¹ ELKNÜ Central Committee draft decisions, ERAF, 22 January 1954.31.5.10, pp. 1–3.

⁷² Statute of the group of young friends of the border guards. Tallinn, 1980, ERAF.31.133.97, in print.

The 1946 border regimen framework regulation stipulated criminal liability, or administrative liability in cases where violation was not “malicious”, according to the 1937 regulation. This practice continued unchanged until 1957 when for some reason, the option of applying administrative penalties was left out of the new framework regulation. The KGB noticed this immediately and demanded that this stipulation be restored.⁷³ As a result, a new and very generally worded clause appeared in the regulation of 1959 that stated that violators of the border regimen would be “prosecuted”. The border regimen framework regulation of 1961 described only administrative liability (fines of up to 10 roubles) and only the subsequent framework regulation of 1966 stated that violators of the border regimen would be subject to criminal liability and administrative liability “according to current legislation”.

At the same time, however, the ESSR Criminal Code that went into effect in April of 1961 did not contain a section concerning violation of the border regimen. According to Section 81 of the Code, 1–3 years imprisonment could be imposed only for illegally crossing the state border. This section was amended in 1984, stipulating 2–5 years imprisonment for a repeat offence.⁷⁴ It was not until 1986 that the special Section 189⁴, in other words “Violation of the rules for entering or living in or address registration in the border zone or border belt if an administrative penalty had been applied during the period of one year to the offender for the same kind of violation”, was added to the Criminal Code, permitting penalties of imprisonment or corrective labour for up to 2 years.⁷⁵ This essentially meant a return to the practice of the 1930’s to 1950’s, though in different wording, in other words to criminalisation of “malicious violation”. Now the very real threat of two years in a prison cell hung over every person who went mushrooming in the woods by the sea.

Table 3. Proceedings Conducted Concerning Violations of the Border Regimen (year / number of proceedings conducted)⁷⁶

1951	342	1958	719	1964	1227	1969	1242	1974	1531	1979	438
1952	414	1965	1038	1970	1362	1975	1613	1980	447
1953	434	1961	809	1966	1298	1971	501	1976	1486	1981	601
...	...	1962	815	1967	1120	1972	675	1977	913	1982	1321
1957	143	1963	939	1968	1295	1973	1279	1978	644	1983	1695

The number of people penalised for violating the border regimen and how is not known. People’s courts imposed criminal penalties while the imposition of administrative penalties was initially also under the jurisdiction of people’s courts. As of 1961, the administrative commissions of local executive committees could also impose administrative penalties, and this was also extended to the militia in 1982 (this last change is also clearly reflected in the relevant statistics – see Table 3). The penal statistics of the first, second or third institution mentioned above have not been compiled and this is also impossible, partially due to the lack of sources. We nevertheless can get a certain idea from the restricted access statistics of the ESSR MVD Militia Administration which also contain

⁷³ Report [...] 1958, p. 68.

⁷⁴ Estonian SSR Criminal Code: official text with changes and amendments as of 1 June 1990. Tallinn, 1990, p. 83.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 166.

⁷⁶ ERAF.18SM.1.267, p. 2; 228, p. 20; 267, pp. 4, 22; 268, pp. 4, 15; 292, p. 7; 341, pp. 48–49; 358, p. 186; 363, p. 157; 391, p. 130; 405, pp. 175–176; 416, pp. 166–167; 429, p. 244; 445, pp. 94–96, 174–176; ERAF.17.4.388, pp. 82–83, 161–162; 424, pp. 116–117, 339–340; 444, pp. 22–23, 282–283; 490, pp. 112–115, 286–287; 525, pp. 50–52, 227–229; 568, pp. 175–177, 365–367; 622, pp. 34–36; 623, pp. 152–154; 677, pp. 296–299; 678, pp. 168–171; 748, pp. 131, 246, 255; 810, pp. 123, 236, 242; 870, pp. 114, 240, 244; 941, pp. 9, 153, 159; 1020, pp. 75, 116, 136; 1076, pp. 12, 121; 1126, pp. 20, 127.

data concerning court proceedings of border regimen violation cases. These statistics should presumably include all cases of this nature.

Data concerning proceedings that ordinarily are not included in MVD statistics is even more deficient. Isolated scraps of information can be found in only a few annual reports. For instance, 36 persons were criminally prosecuted for violating the border regimen in 1951 based on the regulation of 1935/1937, and 22 persons were prosecuted in 1952. The USSR MVD Main Administration also criticised the small amount of criminal cases and considered that kind of “liberal attitude” a weakness of the ESSR Militia.⁷⁷ Later, however, the proportion of criminal cases was apparently even smaller and as a rule, disciplinary action was limited to fines or warnings. For instance, Rein Sillar, the last head of the ESSR KGB, had claimed that criminal cases were brought against 78 people in the period 1970–1989 for illegally crossing the border or attempts to illegally cross the border.⁷⁸ The ascertainment of more precise data – if it is at all possible – would require a great deal of work in the archives.

Finally, there is no doubt that the actual number of “offenders” caught in the border zone was definitely many times greater but for the most part, the matter was not pursued further. Border guards did not bother to do so. Instead, they cursed the offenders out and sent them back the way they came. A great deal also depended on how people personally got along with the border guards, acquaintances, bribes and other such factors.

Relations between Border Guards and the Local Population

Contact between local residents and border guards was unavoidable in coastal villages but there was also a great deal of contact at public beaches. Many Tallinners recall encounters with patrols consisting of two men and a dog that emerged from their border guard station every evening at nine o'clock and went out to comb the coastal strip. According to the rules, people were not allowed at the beach after ten o'clock in the evening and depending on what mood the border guards were in, late evening swimmers were also chased away.

Inhabitants of the border zone, especially coastal dwellers and islanders had to learn to live with the constant presence of the Border Guard and to reckon with the fact that they could be checked any time at random. As one man from Noarootsi has said, “Even when you crossed the yard to the outhouse, you had to have your passport with you”.⁷⁹ At the same time, contacts with the border guard are often recalled in a positive light and the attitude towards the entire border regimen was often favourable. Especially the inhabitants of the Western Estonian islands have found some useful points in the presence of the border guards and were well disposed towards them. People sentimentally recall how border guards carried water from the well for old people and split firewood, helped to keep the peace and to make hay, or if needed, they helped to obtain fuel or

⁷⁷ Доклад по паспортной работе (Report on work related to passports), 24 January 1953, ERAF.18SM.1.58, p. 46; Доклад по паспортно-регистрационной работе (Report on work related to passports and registration), 5 February 1954, ERAF.18SM.1.111; Letter from the USSR MVD Militia Main Administration to the ESSR Militia Administration, 21 March 1953, ERAF.18SM.1.88, p. 40.

⁷⁸ The KGB does not decide how Estonia will become independent, assures Rein Sillar. – Päevaleht, 2 August 1990.

⁷⁹ K.-O. Veskimägi. Kuidas valitseti Eesti NSV-d (How the Estonian SSR was Governed), p. 170.

wire. They drank liquor together and got along well. A familiar border guard station commander could also sometimes leave going out to sea that was not according to the rules unnoticed.⁸⁰

People who in those times had to spend an anxious night in some border guard station are surely of a different opinion. Hundreds of people who lived on the coast or the islands or happened to be in those areas can recall incidents where they were chased away from the seashore or the woods near the shore, cursed with obscenities, hauled to the border guard station and interrogated. Flippers were confiscated from someone at the seashore and others were forced to peel potatoes at the border guard station.⁸¹ Unfortunately, encounters with border guards did not always end with only a scare. The other side of the coin was that contacts and the isolation of the border zone from the rest of the world sometimes led to tragic consequences where the victims were local people. Fortunately, there were not many such incidents because conscripts were more carefully selected for the border guard forces and discipline in border guard units was better than in many branches of the Soviet armed forces.

Three incidents that ended with fatalities are known of and in all cases, alcohol and the interest of border guards in women played a key role. The most widely known incident with the largest number of victims was the tragedy of 8 August 1976 at Letipea on the northern coast of Estonia, where a conflict arose between holidaying workers of the Estonian gas purchasing network and a border guard. A drunken border guard named Bagizhev shot 8 people dead. The death toll includes a fellow serviceman who tried to stop him and Bagizhev himself. Another 14 people were wounded. This story attracted a great deal of publicity, spread by word of mouth and was also reported by the Voice of America.⁸²

The authorities had succeeded in more effectively covering up previous tragedies. This was made possible by the smaller number of victims and witnesses. On 9 March 1968, a border guard station deputy commander named Dobrodeyev killed 2 local people on Vilsandi Island.⁸³ More is known about the following tragedy that took place in Saaremaa because the issue was recorded in documents of the ECP CC Bureau. Private G. Stolyarov left his post on the night before 23 June 1972 and went to a nearby farm where he killed a 16 year old girl with his Kalashnikov assault rifle and seriously wounded her sister and mother. He wounded another border guard and attempted suicide while he was being captured. The Tallinn Garrison Military Prosecutor's Office brought a criminal case concerning this felony and Border Guard criminal investigators carried out the investigation. It was established that Stolyarov suffered from mental disorders and he was placed in a military hospital in Riga. The leadership of his unit was accused of weak political work, which led to dismissals and military service discipline. Local people who were shocked by the killing, however, were later accused of trying to use the tragedy to incite anti-Soviet moods. Corresponding measures were implemented, the outcry was suppressed and speaking publicly about this incident was forbidden as an attempt to weaken Soviet defence capability.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ See: Tormis Jakovlev. Nõukogude armee Lääne-Saaremaal ja selle suhted kohaliku elanikkonnaga (The Soviet Army in Western Saaremaa and its Relations with the Local Population). – http://www.saaremaa.ee/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=136&Itemid=164 [viewed on 1 March 2012].

⁸¹ See Nõukogude piir ja lukus elu (The Soviet Border and Life Locked-up), pp. 12–32.

⁸² Statement on the tragic accident at Letipea in Rakvere rajon, 9 August 1976, ERAF.2620.73.16, pp. 7–10.

⁸³ V. Lepassalu. Riigipiir (State Border), pp. 63–67.

⁸⁴ Decision of the ECP CC Bureau, 17 August 1972, ERAF.1.5.122, pp. 1–2; Statement from the ECP CC Department of Administrative Units, 7 August 1972, ERAF.1.5.122, pp. 3–7.

There are probably more tragic stories but the authorities succeeded in concealing them from the public and if local people knew about them, they have by now been forgotten. It is possible that similar incidents were handled each time at the highest level of the ECP but locating the relevant archival materials is for the most part a question of time and luck. An earlier incident referred to in the investigation materials of the Stolyarov case where a private named Lobatch had wounded a worker at a local kolkhoz in Hiiumaa on 31 July [the year is not indicated] is indicative that there were more such incidents.

Liquidation of the Border Zone

An entirely new situation emerged in 1987. As a prelude, the ESSR Minister of Internal Affairs had proposed to the government the easing of the procedure for entry to the border zone, allowing citizens of the ESSR to enter the border zone of mainland Estonia at any given time in daylight without permits. Secondly, it was proposed to open a special bureau in the City of Tallinn Department of Internal Affairs exclusively for issuing permits to the border zone since 50% of all permits were for people from the capital. The Minister of Internal Affairs justified the proposal by referring to the militia's heavy workload (over 160 000 permits had to be issued annually already).⁸⁵

The leadership of the ESSR went further in implementing changes: on 27 October 1987, the ECP CC Bureau issued a decision to do away with border zone permits, ordered the government to prepare the necessary regulation and approved it on 23 December. The ESSR Council of Ministers formulated the regulation *Concerning procedures for entry into the border zone in the territory of the Estonian SSR* on 25 December.⁸⁶ For the first time, the relevant regulation was not based on any Union-wide legislation and in the case of this document, we can speak of an entirely new concept in principle and the beginning of the end of the border regimen. It did not yet do away with the border zone. Both the Border Guard and supervision of the border regimen remained in place but it did ease the procedure for entry to the zone. As of 1 January 1988, all persons registered at addresses in the ESSR could enter the border zone within the borders of the Union republic (citizens who lived outside the ESSR had to apply for permits as before). Restrictions that applied during the summer season remained for the Western Estonian islands and they were justified by the need to "preserve the ecological environment of the Western Estonian islands", to maintain necessary order and to improve the organisation of services for visitors. The regulation of entry to the islands was now placed in the hands of local authorities, in other words under the jurisdiction of the executive committees of the rajons, which approved common rules for entry at the beginning of 1988. During the period of restricted entry, that is in the summer, a visitor's card, business trip certification, a vacation or health treatment package certificate, an invitation to a funeral, or other such document had to be presented along with one's passport in order to gain entry to the islands. At other times of the year, a passport was sufficient for entry for people coming from elsewhere in Estonia.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Letter from the Minister of Internal Affairs to the chairman of the Council of Ministers, 8 September 1987, ERAF.17SM.4.1321, pp. 211–212.

⁸⁶ ECP CC Bureau decisions, 27 October 1987 and 23 December 1987, ERAF.1.4.6955, pp. 20–21; 6962, p. 37; ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation no. 654 *Concerning procedure for entry to the border zone in the territory of the Estonian SSR*, 25 December 1987. – ENSV ÜN ja Valitsuse Teataja (ESSR Supreme Soviet and Government Gazette), 1988, 2, 38.

⁸⁷ Rules for entry to Vormsi Island in Haapsalu rajon, Hiiumaa and Kingissepa rajon. – Kommunistiehitaja (Builder of Communism), 20 February 1988.

The permanent residents of the islands did not like the new procedure and protested loudly. Under the conditions of budding freedom of speech, the press was full of expressions of opinion on this topic and the most varied interest groups rallied to man the “battle trench for the common cause”. All the locals demanded year round entry restrictions and a return to stricter conditions.⁸⁸ The locals mainly feared an increase in crime but opposition to the sudden change in the accustomed situation can surely be viewed more broadly. Apparently it took time to get used to the new conditions. When a local newspaper asked inhabitants of Saaremaa in January of 1991, “Is the border zone necessary?”, everyone questioned in the survey was convinced that it was indeed necessary and they all justified their position with the increase in crime after the border zone was done away with. The newspaper expressed the hope that the government regulation concerning the border regimen that was being drawn up at the time would take the opinion of the people into account.⁸⁹

The government regulation referred to here has not to this date been found and it is possible that it was not drawn up at all. Minister of Internal Affairs Olev Laanjärv issued a directive instead on 23 January 1991 to end the arguments, declaring for everyone’s information that “all border zones are liquidated in the territory of the Republic of Estonia”. Orders were given to stop using stamps with the old border zone markings when registering the addresses of citizens and to immediately procure address registration stamps for general use.⁹⁰ The legal liquidation of the regimen was left to the period after the restoration of Estonia’s independence: in 1992, Section 189⁴ of the Criminal Code concerning violation of the border regimen was done away with and in 1994, a regulation issued by the Government of the Republic declared Soviet era border regimen legislation null and void.⁹¹ At about the same time, document checking ceased once and for all at the island ports. (Soviet border guards had departed from there around the turn of the year in 1990–1991 already.) Permanent checking by police continued at the port of Kuivastu, for instance for another year or two, gradually becoming more intermittent and it ended once and for all around the turn of the century.

Summary

The border zone together with the special rules that applied in it existed in Estonia for almost the entire Soviet period. After having been partially established in the autumn of 1940 and in full force in the course of a few post-war years, the border regimen system remained in effect thereafter in almost unchanged form until 1988. There were no fundamental changes in that system – the rules for entering the border zone and for living and functioning in it were indistinguishably similar in the legislation of 1935 and 1983. Its main purpose lay in a simple method for allowing as few people as possible in the vicinity of the state border and to carefully check those few people. At the same time, the system was constantly supplemented and improved upon. Legislation and instructions describing elements of the regimen became successively more detailed and the system became ever stricter. Ever more restrictions were set, especially for marine navigation, to the point where

⁸⁸ Ants Tammelaht’s speech at the session of the ESSR Supreme Soviet on 8 April 1988. – *Kommunismiehitaja*, 21 April 1988.

⁸⁹ *Meie Maa*, 4 January 1991.

⁹⁰ Directive no. 02, 23 January 1991, ERAF.17SM.14.6, pages not numbered. One motive for this directive was the USSR Council of Ministers regulation concerning making changes to the framework regulation of the border regimen from 1983, the invalidity of which in the territory of Estonia had to be declared.

⁹¹ Regulation no. 53 of the Government of the Republic *Amendment and repeal of governmental decisions*, 15 February 1994. – RT I, 1994, 20, 370.

border regimen rules were put in effect in 1967 in areas of the coast where there was no border zone. Penalties continued to be made stricter even in the mid-1980's.

At the same time, the opposite tendencies emerged – entry to the border zone became somewhat easier. The number of settlements within the border zone that could be entered freely and the number of public beaches or recreational areas gradually increased and the procedure for entry to these areas became more lenient. Ever more border zone permits were issued from year to year: their number increased nearly sevenfold in the post-Stalinist era. By the end of the 1950's, the rules governing permission to put out to sea had become sufficiently strict, the control of sea-going craft and ships' crews had become sufficiently thorough and the sea itself had been placed under such close surveillance that secretly crossing the sea had become practically impossible. Only two successful cases of escape by sea are known of after 1957 – one in 1978 and the other in 1984. Since nobody could get away by sea, the regime could be a little more accommodating regarding allowing people access to the seashore.

Together with the passport regimen, the border regimen formed a uniform whole that applied in the same way throughout the Soviet Union. Its aim in most general terms was the total control of the population. Compared to the passport regimen, the border regimen functioned better and generally speaking, it succeeded in fulfilling its main objective, in other words in the vocabulary of the KGB "the prevention of the departure of anti-Soviet elements with impunity from the territory of the ESSR". The number of people who escaped abroad from the ESSR in various ways has been estimated at about fifty but a very small portion of those escapes took place by sea across the border of the ESSR.

To end on a positive note – the Soviet border regimen left something positive behind as well: conservationists rejoice because restrictions that lasted for decades have preserved diverse and undisturbed nature in many areas along Estonia's coast.