

THE EVOLUTION, REGULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOVIET INTERNAL PASSPORT SYSTEM IN THE ESTONIAN SSR

PART I: MECHANISM OF THE INTERNAL PASSPORT SYSTEM*

INDREK PAAVLE

Introduction

Soviet ideology treated the Soviet Union as the most democratic country in the world. The Constitution of the Soviet Union from the year 1936 was supposed to contribute to the creation of this kind of impression with the enumeration of the constitutional rights and freedoms of Soviet citizens contained in the constitution. The constitution declared the right to work, vacation and education, to being materially provided for in old age and in the event of illness and disability, and freedom of conscience, speech, the press, assembly and freedom to join and form organisations.¹ This was mere window dressing. Citizens did not actually have most of those freedoms, and rights frequently tended to be more like duties.

Yet the constitution did not include all basic democratic rights either. First and foremost, not one of the constitutions of Soviet Russia or the Soviet Union contained the right to freedom of movement and to choose one's place of residence. The regime strictly controlled and regulated movement within the country and where a person lived. The primary means of control was the so-called unified passport system, which as Russian scholar Albert Bayburin has aptly stated was never "unified" because during its entire existence, it prescribed different identification rules for citizens of the state.²

This internal document – the Soviet citizen's internal passport – was an indispensable document that was required everywhere and the lack of which reduced a person to pariah status. Otto Tief, whose internal passport was stolen in a tram in Donetsk but who travelled to Moscow in spite of that, heard the following question from a bewildered militia officer: "You don't have your internal passport? How can the ground hold you up without your internal passport?"³ The internal passport had indeed become a document that was taken for granted, a characteristic part of everyday life. The internal passport itself, however, was but a speck in a system regulated by an immense amount of predominantly secret legislation and instructions. Few people fathomed the extent of the system and only paid officials knew its mechanisms and ways of application. The ordinary citizen did not and could not have any idea of how the system worked. Historical literature also frequently takes the internal pass-

* The article was published in Estonian in the journal *Tuna* no 4 (2010), pp 37–53.

¹ *Constitution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*, Chapter X (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1950), 25–28.

² Albert Bayburin, "К предыстории советского паспорта (1917–1932)", *Неприкосновенный запас*, no 2 (2009), http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2009/2/ba8.html#_ftn1 [25 August 2010].

³ Külle Arjakas, "Tuntud ja tundmatu Otto Tief", Andres Parmas (ed), *Otto Tief ja 1944. a vahevalitsus* ("Known and Unknown Otto Tief", Otto Tief and the Interim Government of 1944) (Tartu: Rotalia, 2006), 17.

Otto Tief (1889–1976) was a lawyer and politician, a member of two parliaments and two governments prior to 1940, and Prime Minister of the government that took office on 18 September 1944. After the Red Army conquered Tallinn on 22 September 1944, he unsuccessfully tried to evacuate to Sweden. The NKVD arrested him in October of 1944 and in 1945 he was sentenced to 10 years in prison, from which he was released in 1956. Since he was forbidden to live in Estonia, he lived in Ukraine in 1958–1965, and for the last years of his life in Latvia.

port system for granted. It is mentioned in other contexts but its background is for the most part not explained.

The objective of this article is to explain the mechanism and implementation of the internal passport system. It is a part of a study that is being conducted within the framework of an Estonian Institute of Historical Memory research programme that examines restrictions on movement and choice of work and place of residence in the Soviet system. The regulation and mechanism of the internal passport system and its temporal dynamics in terms of the Soviet Union as a whole are considered in the first part of the article. The first part introduces the second part, which examines the implementation of the internal passport system in the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (ESSR). The regional differences in the internal passport system are explained, and penal policy, the actions of the regime in controlling the internal passport system, and the possibilities for using archival sources associated with them are described and analysed.

Several historians from Russia as well as from Western countries have considered the Soviet internal passport system. In recent years, Vasiliy Popov, Kronid Lyubarskiy and Aleksandr Tarasov among other Russian researchers have dealt with this topic.⁴ Due to better opportunities open to these authors to gain access to sources, the value of their treatments lies primarily in their references to and description of legislation that regulated the internal passport system. Marc Garcelon, Gijs Kessler, Nathalie Moine and David Shearer are Western researchers who have researched the internal passport system and who analyse the reasons for creating the system and the methods of its implementation in a wider political and social historical context.⁵ The monograph by Mervin Matthews examines the internal passport from the Russian Empire through to the period that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, including a good, although relatively superficial overview of the Soviet internal passport system.⁶ One rather brief treatment of the ESSR internal passport system during the 1940's has been published thus far in Estonian historical literature.⁷ Aadu Must has research-

⁴ Vasiliy Popov, "Паспортная система в СССР (1932–1976 гг.)", *Социологические исследования*, no 8 (1995), 3–14; no 9 (1995), 3–13; Vasiliy Popov, "Паспортная система Советского крепостничества", *Новый Мир*, no 6 (1996), 185–203; Aleksandr Tarasov, "Паспортная система и паспортный режим в Советском государстве в 30-е гг.", <http://www.lib.ua-ru.net/diss/cont/102090.html> [25 August 2010]; Kronid Lyubarskiy, "Паспортная система и система прописки в России", <http://www.hrighs.ru/text/b2/Chapter5.htm> [25 August 2010].

⁵ David Shearer, "Elements Near and Alien: Passportisation, Policing, and Identity in the Stalinist State, 1932–1952", *The Journal of Modern History*, vol 76 (2004), 835–881; Gijs Kessler, "The Passport System and State Control over Population Flows in the Soviet Union, 1932–1940", *Cahiers du monde russe*, vol 42 (2001), 478–504; Nathalie Moine, "Passeportisation, statistique des migrations et contrôle de l'identité sociale", *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol 38 (1997), 587–600; N. Муан, "Внутрисоюзные границы гражданственности: территориальное выражение дискриминации в Советском Союзе через паспортную систему", *Режимные люди в СССР* (Moscow: РОССПЭН, 2009), 257–276; Marc Garcelon, "Colonising the Subject: The Genealogy and Legacy of the Soviet Internal Passport", J. Caplan & J. Torpey (eds), *Documenting Individual Identity. The Development of State Practices in the Modern World* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001), 83–100.

⁶ Mervin Matthews, *The Passport Society: Controlling Movement in Russia and the USSR* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993). This book also cursorily examines the situation in the Baltic countries after the restoration of their independence.

⁷ Indrek Paavle, "The Soviet Passport System in the Estonian SSR", *Estonia since 1944. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Against Humanity* (Tallinn: Inimsusevastaste Kuritegude Uurimise Eesti Sihtasutus, 2009), 79–82.

hed the procedure for issuing passports and the mechanisms of the passport system in Estonia in the 19th century.⁸

Provision of Documents to Citizens in the Soviet Union 1917–1932

Internal passports were adopted in Russia in the early 18th century. Prior to the Bolshevik coup of 1917, the system for providing Russian citizens with identification documentation was based on the passport regulations of 1903. The internal passport was compulsory only for people who wished to go farther than 50 versts⁹ from their place of residence and for longer than six months. When the Bolsheviks gained power, they set about dismantling the old order. Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks, criticised Russia's internal passport, called it an attribute of reaction and despotism, and already in 1903 had vowed to do away with it. According to Lenin, every peasant should have the right to go wherever he wants to, to settle wherever he wants to, to choose whichever village or city for himself without asking anyone for permission. One of the first decisions of Lenin's government was to do away with compulsory address registration.¹⁰ Regardless of this, the Stalinist regime partially adopted the Russian Empire's internal passport system as the basis for formulating its own internal passport system. Several important details were adopted, like the social categorisation of citizens and notification of one's criminal record in the internal passport, whereas under both regimes, the latter was cause for restrictions in the choice of place of residence. The internal passport was defined in the Russian Empire's judicial area as a means that made it possible to effect supervision of suspicious persons in the interests of state security,¹¹ which was very similar to the positions of the Soviet regime.

The provision of identification documents to the population relied on experimentation for the first 15 years in the Soviet state. The Constitution of 1918 declared general labour obligations, thus creating the prerequisites for the evolution of the employment record book into the main identification document for citizens. The regulation of 5 October 1918 was the first step in this direction, prescribing the issuing of employment record books to the "non-working element", in other words the employment record book started being treated as a document of personal identification.¹² Employment record books were made compulsory for everyone in 1919. A person's surname, forename and patronymic, date of birth, trade union name and address, and the category assigned to the worker by the trade union commission were entered into the employment record book. The objective was set to issue employment

⁸ Aadu Must, *Eestlaste perekonnaloo allikad* (Sources for Researching the Family History of Estonians) (Tartu: Kleio, 2000), 182–204; Aadu Must, "Valla passiregistrid demomeetrilises uurimistöös. Kabala valla passiregister" (Rural Municipal Internal Passport Registries in Demometric Research. The Kabala Rural Municipality Internal Passport Registry), *Kleio. Ajaloo ajakiri* (Historical Journal), no 10 (1994), 14–26.

⁹ 1 Russian verst = 1,07 km.

¹⁰ Vladimir Lenin, *Kehvtalurahvale : selgituskiri talupoegadele sellest, mida sotsiaaldemokraadid tahavad* (For the Poor Peasantry: Explanatory Letter to the Peasants about What the Social Democrats Want) (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1983), 37; Garcelon, 91.

¹¹ Must, *Eestlaste perekonnaloo allikad*, 183.

¹² Curiously, the first employment record books in Soviet Russia really were issued to people who did not work, in other words the so called nonworking element, who were forbidden to move about within the country, receive food ration cards, and other such benefits without employment record books.

record books to all workers and employees, which, however, was so resource-intensive that it was not achieved even in Moscow or Leningrad.¹³

This method was abandoned in the early 1920's and the new direction was to document the population by way of the internal passport. The NKVD Workers' and Peasants' Militia Administration regulation issued on 1 November 1920 concerning the issuing of passports and temporary identification was the first attempt to create a unified identification documentation system encompassing all citizens. The attempt failed because application for these internal passports was voluntary in the liberal spirit of the NEP era. The freedom of movement of citizens was also preserved at first: legislation passed on 24 January 1922 gave all citizens of the Russian SFSR the right to move about freely throughout the territory of the Russian SFSR. Yet the entries of notations in the internal passports categorising the population began with the adoption of the first internal passports. A notation was to be made in the internal passport to indicate which persons were deprived of voting rights.¹⁴

The identity card decree issued on 20 July 1923 annulled all previous personal identification documents, including the employment record books implemented in 1918–1919, even though in practice, the old documents continued in use. All citizens of the Russian SFSR aged 16 or older had the right to own the new identity card. It was issued for three years. The bearer's forename, patronymic and surname, date of birth, permanent place of residence, occupation, military service data, marital status and underage children were entered on the card. People could have their photograph glued to it if they wished. The new system went into effect on 1 January 1924 and implementation was planned throughout the country. Yet since the lack of an identity card did not lead to any legal consequences, the campaign essentially remained voluntary. The first article of the decree even stated that governmental organs were forbidden to demand the presentation of an internal passport or any other certificate of place of residence from citizens of the Russian SFSR.¹⁵

A so-called period of legitimation followed, which historical literature has termed one of a kind in Russian history. The passport was required only for travelling abroad. People were essentially relieved from the obligation to have a passport and were not tied to a particular place of residence. The system was liberalised even further by broadening of the definition of a personal identification document in 1927. All manner of documents became valid as personal identification documents, such as excerpts from church records of births, university student identification cards, library cards, and so on.¹⁶ The *propiska* institution, in other

¹³ RSFSR Central Executive Committee and Council of People's Commissars decree concerning the compulsory implementation of employment record books, 25 June 1919; Bayburin.

¹⁴ Citizens who were deprived of the right to vote and to be elected (so called *лишенцы*) was a category defined in the Constitution of 1918 (Article 65): persons who lived off of income not earned through work, private merchants, clergy, former employees and agents of the tsarist police, the mentally ill and wards of the state, and persons convicted of certain crimes. Relegation to this category actually meant much more extensive restriction of rights than merely the voting rights referred to in the constitution. For instance, they were not entitled to food ration cards that were introduced in 1928. The Criminal Code of 1926 expanded the concept and in practice, it began to be applied as an additional penalty in the event of several different kinds of crimes. Removal of voting rights as a means of criminal penalisation was done away with in 1959. – "Act amending removal of voting rights by decision of the courts", ENSV Teataja (ESSR Gazette), no 17 (1959), article 83.

¹⁵ Decree issued by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee and the RSFSR Council of People's Commissars "Об удостоверении личности", 20 July 1923, <http://www.dekrets.ru/doc.php?docid=04718> [25 August 2010]; Bayburin.

¹⁶ A. Malygin, "Развитие систему органов внутренних дел в предвоенные годы", *Полиция и милиция в России. Страницы истории* (Moscow: Наука, 1995), 144–145.

words the registration of the address of one's place of residence, which is unique in the world, was introduced by a regulation issued on 27 April 1925.¹⁷ This institution, which later became the primary means for imposing restrictions, initially also fit in with the generally liberal judicial area. Address registration could also be entered on practically any document, which turned the procedure into a formality and made it impossible to employ address registration to tie people to a particular place of residence.¹⁸ Characteristically, the Condensed Soviet Encyclopaedia published in 1930 defined the passport system as a phenomenon characteristic of a "police state" that encumbered working people in particular and which is not part of the Soviet justice system.¹⁹ Only two years later already, this phenomenon "characteristic of a police state" went into effect in the Soviet Union as well.

Reasons for Establishing the Internal Passport System and its Objectives

The industrialisation and collectivisation launched in the late 1920's turned the traditional ordering of the affairs of life upside down and led to urbanisation. Industry needed increased manpower and there were plenty of people in the countryside who fled from the collective farms into the cities. The industrialising country needed grain to pay off foreign loans and to feed the cities. The food crisis led to ever increasing grain production quotas for collective farms and brought famine, which in turn accelerated urbanisation. The number of people on the move extended into the millions by the beginning of 1932. The number of city residents grew by up to 50,000 people per week in 1928–1932.²⁰ Primarily those people who did not want to join the collective farms or who were not accepted by the collective farms urbanised.

This was thus a suspicious contingent *a priori* in the eyes of the regime, from among which large numbers of additional mouths that required feeding poured into the cities.

The regime mounted a counterattack at the end of 1932. The primary objective was to protect the main centres of power, the so-called Bolshevik bridgeheads, against undesirable people. The prelude was the Politburo decision issued on 15 November 1932 to purge Moscow, Leningrad and other large cities of suspicious elements.²¹ A means was needed for the purge. A commission that operated under the direction of the head of the Combined State Political Directorate (OGPU) worked out a plan, and a decree concerning the establishment of a "unified passport system" (*единая паспортная система*) was formulated on 27 December 1932. The need to improve the keeping of records of the population in cities, workers' settlements and newly constructed settlements, which would make it possible to purge them of useless and dangerous people, was used to justify this. Everyone who did not work in factories or institutions, did not study, or was not occupied in some other way with "socially useful work" (disabled persons and pensioners were exempted) was considered

¹⁷ Regulation issued by the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR "О прописке граждан в городских поселениях", 27 April 1925.

¹⁸ Ваурун.

¹⁹ *Малая Советская Энциклопедия*, vol 6 (Moscow, 1930), 342–343.

²⁰ Orlando Figes, *Sosistajad: eraelu Stalini Venemaal* (The Whisperers: Private Life in Stalin's Russia) (Tallinn: Varrak, 2010), 136, 156.

²¹ Kessler, 479–482.

useless. Kulaks who had wormed their way into the cities, criminals, and other “antisocial elements” were categorised as dangerous.²²

Historical literature has frequently considered the reason for establishing the internal passport system to be precisely the prevention of starving peasants from pouring into the cities by tying them to the land. The overwhelming majority of the rural population was indeed not meant to have passports, which essentially tied them to the land by prohibiting them from changing their place of residence similarly to how peasants during the era of serfdom could not move to a different location without the permission of their feudal landlord. People without passports did not legally have the means to depart from their place of residence for longer periods of time, to say nothing of moving to live elsewhere permanently. Historical literature has referred to this as “neo-serfdom or villeinage” and “living in reservations”.

More recent historiography disagrees with the so-called neo-serfdom argument. The reasons for and aims of establishing the passport system are seen more broadly. This line of reasoning concludes that the system was never aimed especially at the rural population. The rural population was tied to their places of residence not so much by the lack of passports as by labour legislation and restrictions on place of residence, which affected all strata of society. For this reason, the freedom of movement of city folk was not significantly greater than that of the rural population.

Historical literature has pointed out categorisation of the population, tying it to a particular geographical location and making it transparent to the organs of power and more easily controllable by those organs as the objectives of the passport system, along with the adoption of new methods of mass repressions and the struggle against crime. The passport system provided the regime with an instrument in the spatial and social reorganisation of the population. It made it possible to direct internal colonisation, integrate fringe areas and resettle entire ethnic groups. It functioned as a means of social purging because the establishment of the system in ever more regions led to their self-purging. People who thought that they would not be issued passports and that they would be declared socially malignant left the area on their own initiative to forestall such a turn of events. The more areas that were added to those where the passport system was introduced, the more the undesirable element converged on other regions (the Urals, for instance). A mosaic emerged of regions that had already been “purged” (socialist regions, so to speak) and regions where this had not been accomplished (non-socialist regions). The leaders of the regime believed that manipulation of geographic and social categories would guarantee the security of the regime.²³ The passport system was even seen as an opportunity to set about shaping a new identity for “Soviet man”.²⁴

The passport system changed the methodology of mass repressions. Methods became more professional and bureaucratic, and were made secret, replacing the hitherto public campaigns. The Great Terror was unleashed through the use of the passport system and the implementation of the passport system is considered an important step in preparing for the

²² Central Executive Committee and Council of People’s Commissars Regulation no 1917 “Об установлении единой паспортной системы по Союзу ССР и обязательной прописки паспортов”, 27 December 1932, *Собрание законов и распоряжений*, no 84 (1932), art 516.

²³ Kessler, 477–489; Shearer, “Elements”, 837–840.

²⁴ Garcelon, 85.

Great Terror.²⁵ The fight against crime was the primary public argument through the years in justifying the passport system. People's Commissar for Internal Affairs Genrikh Yagoda emphasised this in 1935 already, stating that the passport is a powerful measure for purging cities, workers' settlements, and industrial enterprises of not only criminal elements, but also of anti-Soviet and counterrevolutionary elements.²⁶ This justification remained prevalent especially in the post-Stalin Soviet Union.

Regulation of the Passport System

The source document of the passport system was the regulation concerning the establishment of the unified passport system issued on 27 December 1932 by the USSR Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars (CPC), by which both institutions jointly approved the first passport regulations.²⁷ The procedure for issuing passports was established by the instructions approved on 14 January and 28 April 1933 by the USSR CPC. Henceforth, the modification and specification of the system took place through several separate acts of legislation – decrees, government regulations, directives issued by ministers, and instructions issued by ministries. Changes implemented in the intervening years were summarised in the passport regulations of 1940, 1953 and 1974 and their intermediate versions. The regulations of 1932 were published and those of 1940 and 1974 were published in part.²⁸ Almost all individual acts of legislation were secret.

Types of Passports and Passport Data

For the most part, there were several types of passports. The passport regulations of 1932 established a passport with a three-year period of validity and a temporary identification card that could be issued for three months. The period of validity of the passport was extended to five years in July of 1935.²⁹ The passport regulations of 1940 prescribed a passport with unlimited validity, a five-year passport, and a temporary identification card valid for up to three months. Passports with unlimited validity were issued to recipients of medals and decorations of the Soviet Union, citizens over the age of 55, disabled soldiers and workers, and pensioners. Most passports were valid for five years and they were issued to all citizens between the ages of 16–55 who did not belong to the first category. Persons who had lost their passport and citizens departing from regions where the passport system had not been established yet were issued temporary identification cards.

²⁵ Robert Conquest, *The Great Terror: A Reassessment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 21; David Shearer, "Crime and Social Disorder in Stalin's Russia: A Reassessment of the Great Retreat and the Origins of Mass Repression", *Cahiers du Monde russe*, vol 39, no 1–2 (1998), 119–148; Lyubarskiy.

²⁶ Shearer, "Elements", 847–848, 850–854, 862; Garcelon, 89.

²⁷ Central Executive Committee and CPC Regulation no 1917 "Об установлении единой паспортной системы по Союзу ССР и обязательной прописки паспортов"; "Положение о паспортах", 27 December 1932, *Собрание законов и распоряжений*, no 84 (1932), art 516–517.

²⁸ "Положение о паспортах", 10 September 1940, *Справочник по законодательству для судебно-прокурорских работников*, vol 1 (Moscow, 1949), 314–317; "Положение о паспортах", 21 October 1953, *Сборник нормативных актов и справочник материалов для оперативных работников органов КГБ* (Moscow, 1968), 144–154; Statute of the passport system of the Soviet Union, 28 August 1974; Concerning certain rules for registration of citizens' addresses, 28 August 1974, Department of the Estonian State Archives (henceforth referred to as ERAF) 17SM.14.94, 38–47. Four of the ten articles of the address registration requirements were divulged to the public.

²⁹ Matthews, 29.

The regulations of 1953 added a passport with a 10-year period of validity. Passports with unlimited validity were now issued to citizens over the age of 40, 10 year passports were issued to citizens between the ages of 20–40, and 5-year passports were issued to citizens between the ages of 16–20. Temporary identification cards were renamed short-term passports and their maximum period of validity increased to 6 months. They were issued in place of lost passports and in the event that the recipient of the passport could not submit the documents required for issuing a passport, and also to persons from rural areas without passports who were sent on a contractual basis to temporary jobs beyond the boundaries of their home *oblast*. Shortage of manpower is considered to be one reason for the adoption of temporary identification cards because it made it possible to employ peasants in seasonal work. In 1933–1940, 14.3 million such identification cards were issued, 24.5 million in 1941–45, and 55.8 million in 1946–52.³⁰ The regulations of 1953 prescribed passports for the mentally ill as well. This category of persons had not previously been issued passports.

The different types of passports were done away with in 1974 and only the passports with unlimited validity remained. Upon reaching the age of 25 and 45, citizens had to glue a new photograph of themselves in the passport in order to maintain actuality.

The issuing of passports and identification cards, keeping records of them, and control of the passport regimen were under the jurisdiction of the passport department of the militia.³¹ Documents verifying a person's date and place of birth, employment status or whether the person is enrolled in an educational institution, permanent place of residence, and military service obligation or completion of military service, and as of 1937 photographs as well, had to be submitted in order to receive a passport. Beginning in 1974, only the applicant's birth certificate and photographs were required to be submitted. A state fee of three roubles had to be paid for a passport and the state fee for a temporary identification card or short-term passport was one rouble. The state fee was reduced to two roubles as of 1974.

The data contained in the passport was divided into permanent entries and notations. Permanent entries were data concerning documents that formed the basis for issuing the passport and the militia organ that issued the passport as well as primary personal data (fore-name, patronymic and surname, date and place of birth), to which nationality and social status were added.

The establishment of the passport system temporally coincided with the introduction of the new nationalities policy when the multinational nature of the Soviet Union began to be emphasised and nationality started being rendered important.³² This was accompanied by the addition of nationality to all forms, characterisations, statistics and other such information. It

³⁰ Роров, "Паспортная система в СССР", 10.

³¹ 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 and address registration. The Main Administration was a structural unit of the OGPU in 1932–1934, of the NKVD in 1934–1946, of the MVD in 1946–1949, of the MGB in 1949–1953, and as of 1953 under the MVD again. A reform that placed the local departments of the militia horizontally under the jurisdiction of the executive committees while maintaining vertical subordination in the MVD chain of command was completed in 1968. The registration of civil registration records was also the responsibility of the militia in 1934–1957. – See: *Полиция и милиция в России*.

³² See on this topic: Yuri Slezkine, "The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism", *Slavic Review*, vol 53 (1994), 414–452; Francine Hirsch, "The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category of Nationality in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses", *Slavic Review*, vol 56, no 2 (1997), 251–278.

was entered in passports from the beginning and during the first few years, nationality was entered according to the wishes of the bearer of the passport. Nationality had to start being entered in correspondence with documents according to the nationality of the parents of the bearer as stipulated by the circular issued by the NKVD on 2 April 1938.³³ Later passport regulations specified that in the event that the parents of the bearer are of different nationalities, the recipient of the passport had the right to decide which nationality is entered in the passport.

The Soviet regime adopted the categorisation of people according to social status from the judicial area of the Russian Empire, which categorised people according to class. The institutionalisation of classes by way of the passport was characteristic of both regimes.

Soviet “classes”, in other words social status was founded partially on people’s occupations and partially on their legal position.³⁴ Alongside categories founded on occupation (worker, employee, student, craftsman, artist, and other such categories) were intermediate categories that partially reflected a person’s occupation and partially the person’s legal situation (for instance collective farmer or individual farmer), and marginalising categories that defined the individual on a primarily legal basis or according to position in the eyes of the regime – for instance kulaks, “former persons”, “deprived persons”, parasites, and so on.

Permanent entries were made to the passport when it was issued. They could not be altered later on. If the need to change permanent entries arose, a new passport was issued. As of 1937, the obligation to glue a photograph of the bearer into the passport was added, and a second copy of the same photograph was filed in the militia card file. Aside from the addition of the photograph, the data entered in the passport remained the same until 1974. The new regulations issued in that year brought the omission of social status as an important change, which had also been considered in the early 1950’s.

Notations were entered in the passport by special stamps and data could be changed by adding new stamps. These were notations made by the militia concerning permanent place of residence, in other words the registration of changes of address, hiring and dismissal by employers, and military service obligation by the Military Commissariat.³⁵ The militia organs were also authorised to use a stamp concerning living in border zones. As of 1936, vital statistics organs started making entries in passports concerning marriage and divorce, which was part of the campaign to renew appreciation of the family.³⁶ Vital statistics organs also entered children under 16 years old of the bearer of the passport. As of 1967, the practice began of making notations in passports of failure to pay alimony, which created the oppor-

³³ Genadiy Kostyrchenko, *Тайная политика Сталина. Власть и антисемитизм* (Moscow: Международные отношения, 2003), 206–207.

³⁴ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Tear Off the Masks! Identity and Imposture in Twentieth-Century Russia* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 78–87.

³⁵ Military service data was entered into the passport upon its receipt until 1974, later the Military Commissariat entered the corresponding notation in the passport. Military personnel lived without passports according to all passport regulations and their identification document was the officer’s identification document or the rank and file military identification document issued by the leadership of the respective military unit or other military institution.

³⁶ Vigorous propagation of strong families with many children began in the latter half of the 1930’s in the Soviet Union to combat the large decrease in the birth rate. – See: David L. Hoffmann, “Stalinist Family Values”, David L. Hoffmann (ed), *Stalinist Values. The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity 1917–1941* (London: Cornell University Press, 2003), 99, 104–105.

tunity withhold debts from the offender's pay.³⁷ As of 1968, health care institutions entered the bearer's blood type and Rhesus factor in the passport subject to the consent of the bearer.³⁸ The passport system statute of 1974 discontinued entry of the bearer's place of employment in passports.

Propiska

An important part of the passport system was the compulsory registration of the bearer's place of residence, the principles of which changed very little from the 1930's until the end of the Soviet era. The bearer's permanent place of residence was registered in the militia card file and marked in the passport with the corresponding stamp (that was the so called address registration in the passport, in other words *propiska*). According to the passport regulations of 1932, this obligation applied to citizens from all areas where the passport system had been established and to persons arriving in those areas (military personnel housed in barracks were exempted).

The regulations of 1940 extended the obligation of address registration to everyone who came to live permanently or temporarily anywhere regardless of whether the place in question was located in an area where the passport system had been established or not. It was prohibited to live somewhere without registering as a resident, as was moving away from a permanent place of residence without registering the departure. It was also prohibited to register new arrivals if there was no entry in their passports indicating their registration as having departed from their former place of residence. In short, this meant that any legal change in place of residence whatsoever could take place only with the permission of the authorities and address registration was essentially a residence permit.

Address registration for both arrivals and departing persons was done through housing authorities, apartment building commandants or owners in accordance with registers of building occupants in cities and workers' settlements, and through village soviet representatives in accordance with registers of settlement residents in the countryside. This meant yet another redundant registration of data because all the more important personal data was also entered in the registers of building occupants. The state fee for address registration was one rouble and as of 1946, the fee increased to three roubles, except for official health resorts, where a higher, so called health resort tax had to be paid. According to the passport regulations of 1932 and 1940, arrivals had to present their passport for address registration in their new place of residence within 24 hours of their arrival. Rural residents who did not have passports and who thus were not permitted to go anywhere at all were nevertheless granted the opportunity to visit the city. They were permitted to stay in the city of their home *oblast* for up to five days and nights without address registration even though this also had to be registered in the village soviet corresponding to their place of residence.

³⁷ Directive of the USSR Minister of Defence of Public Order, 18 September 1967, ERAF.17SM.14.97. The decree issued on 21 July 1967 by the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium formed the basis for this and was an attempt to more effectively catch so called *alimenchiks* (*алименчики*), in other words "persons who criminally avoid paying alimony". The militia dealt with this contingent from the 1930's onward (it was also part of the same campaign mentioned in the previous reference) but during certain campaigns, greater attention was paid to "alimenchiks". Decisions to "intensify the struggle" bear witness to this and the corresponding indices were added periodically to reports and statistics concerning the militia's passport work.

³⁸ USSR Council of Ministers Regulation no 10, 3 January 1968, ERAF.17SM.14.97.

The passport regulations of 1953 changed deadlines and introduced some reforms. They stipulated in wording that was simpler than in previous regulations that everyone who changes their place of residence or receives a new passport is subject to registration of their change of address. The address registration obligation now applied to all citizens, extending to persons without passports (military personnel, juveniles under the age of 16, patients at medical institutions and rural residents), for whom address registration was entered in other documents. The concept of temporary address registration (up to 1.5 months) was added and applied to the bearers of short-term passports and persons who temporarily moved to new locations. People could stay in rural areas for up to 30 days without being subject to address registration and rural residents were now permitted to leave their homes for up to 30 days with the corresponding certificate from the village soviet.

The new restriction established “sanitary standards” in 1953, in other words minimum living space. If this minimum space was not available, additional residents were not permitted to be registered at such an address even temporarily.³⁹ In conditions with a deficit of living space, sanitary standards evolved into an effective means for regulating population settlement, which simplified refusal to register persons at new addresses and sending of excess population out of cities. Persons who were refused registration at a new address had to sign a document that obligated them to leave the city within three days.

Deadlines were relaxed somewhat further in 1974. Now people could live in a new place without registering themselves there for up to 1.5 months. The only requirement was the corresponding entry in the register of building residents, which could be obtained from the local executive committee. The deadline for submitting one’s passport for address registration increased from 24 hours to three days and in the event that address registration was refused, seven days were given for leaving instead of the former three days. Everything else remained the same and was in effect as such until the end of the Soviet era.

Use of Passport Data

Thus the passport together with address registration categorised an individual ethnically and geographically, and until 1974 both socially and occupationally as well. At the same time, the system placed more information at the disposal of the regime than was entered in the passport. This information was accumulated in militia card files, which contained a card for each passport number and data concerning address registration, both arriving and departing. The system was not centralised. The card files were compiled by the local militia organs and located there as well but that made it possible to make statewide inquiries. This could be time-consuming, but as technical means improved, a procedure was established that allowed officials to make inquiries by telephone, for which a special system of passwords was used.

This card file system was the most voluminous and detailed system for keeping track of the population, which made police-style searching for, wanted persons considerably easier. In its ideal form, the system contained detailed information about the entire population and its movements. Yet the negligence of citizens and their avoidance of submitting information

³⁹ Exceptions were the spouse of a registered person, elderly parents or parents who were incapacitated for work, underage children and children over the age of 18 if they had no children of their own, brothers and sisters under the age of 18 or dependant siblings, persons returning to their former place of residence from military service or imprisonment. Sanitary standards differed from city to city, generally remaining within the range of 9 to 12 m². Tallinn’s standard space, for instance, was 12 m² in 1962, in Tartu, Pärnu, Narva and Kohtla-Järve it was 9 m² in 1963. – ESSR Minister of Internal Affairs Directive no 240, 6 July 1962, ERAF.17SM.14.94, 12–13v.

concerning themselves as well as the carelessness of militia employees who could not be bothered to enter information in the card file hindered the achievement of the ideal, whereas mostly information about departures in address registration tended to be left out.⁴⁰

Address bureaus compiled, administered and used the card files. These bureaus were specially created in 1936 for that purpose in all cities with populations of over 20 000. There were 413 bureaus throughout the USSR by 1937. Each bureau also dealt with the surrounding regions and thus the territory of the entire country was covered by this tracking system. The creation of bureaus was publicly justified “by taking the movement of the population into account”.⁴¹ The tasks of the bureaus were defined in official instructions as keeping records of the population and processing statistical data concerning the movement of the population, and the “mechanical search” for criminals and “address-informational work”. The so-called address form was the primary tool in the work of these bureaus. It was filled out by every individual upon arrival or departure from any place in the country. The volume of the card files was immense. For instance, in the Estonian SSR, these card files grew in the order of magnitude of half a million cards per year in the 1950’s and 1960’s.⁴²

Regimen Regions and Restrictions on Place of Residence

Alongside keeping track of the movement of the population, the passport system created opportunities for guiding population movement. The establishment of the passport system began in the big cities. The instruction issued on 14 January 1933 started up the issue of passports in Moscow, Leningrad and Kharkov and included the surrounding areas of the cities as well – up to 100 km from the heart of the city in Moscow and Leningrad, and up to 50 km from the centre of Kharkov.⁴³

The secret portion of the instruction listed seven categories of the population to which passports were not issued. These included individuals who were not engaged in “work that is useful to society”, in other words persons who did not work or study (with the exemption of people who were incapable of work and pensioners); individuals who had moved to the city from the country after 1 January 1931 who had arrived without an official invitation from an employer, or if they did not have a permanent job, or if they changed jobs frequently, or if they had been penalised by being dismissed from work. All criminally convicted persons and persons deprived of the right to vote were not issued passports, in addition to individuals who arrived in the Soviet Union from abroad, with the exception of political immigrants. The latter category was seen as consisting primarily of members of the communist parties of other countries, who were issued with the corresponding certificates of the Central Committee of the International Organisation for Aiding Revolutionaries (MOPR). Additionally, this

⁴⁰ Shearer, “Elements”, 837, 845–848; Kessler, 496–497. The shortcomings of the system emerged for the first time in 1937 during the census when the enumerated population did not coincide with what was presumed on the basis of data from the registration of births, deaths and migration. Furthermore, the discrepancies did not follow a consistent model – while the entire urban population was smaller than was anticipated, the population of Moscow was larger by 200,000, for instance. The reason was at least partially the negligent work of the militia, yet the statisticians who carried out the census were shot instead.

⁴¹ Роров, “Паспортная система в СССР”, 11–12.

⁴² Доклад по паспортной работе, 24 January 1953, ERAF.18SM.1.58, 33–64; Справка о работе Республиканского Адресного Бюро УМ МВД ЭССР, 11 January 1962, ERAF.18SM.1.342, 1.

⁴³ Kharkov was the capital of the Ukrainian SSR until 1934, then Kiev became the capital, to which a territory with a radius of 50 kilometres similarly belonged.

restriction extended to the family members of individuals belonging to all the enumerated categories if they were part of the same household.⁴⁴ This meant the continuation of the categorisation of the population that began in the 1920's in a new and more systematic form.⁴⁵ Belonging to one or another category became an inseparable part of people's lives which determined their opportunities for acquiring an education, choosing their place of work and place of residence, receiving state aid, and so on.

Categorisation in the above-mentioned categories automatically brought restrictions regarding place of residence. The passport was recognised as the only personal identification document in regions where the passport system was established and it was prohibited to live in those regions without a passport and address registration. Persons who were not issued passports had to leave the area subject to the passport system within ten days. The colloquial concept "the 101st kilometre" (or 105th kilometre) was born due to the 100 kilometre passport region surrounding Moscow and Leningrad referring to the zones around large cities where people settled who did not have the right to live in those cities, in other words who were undesirable or detrimental in the eyes of the regime.⁴⁶

The passport regimen was expanded on 28 April 1933 across the country, establishing it for citizens who lived in cities, workers' settlements, regional centres, newly constructed settlements, settlements where machinery-tractor depots were located, and the 100-kilometre border zone along the western border of the Soviet Union. In other rural areas, only people who worked in industrial enterprises, transportation and state collective farms (*sovkhozes*) were issued passports. Thus the overwhelming majority of people who lived in the countryside were not issued passports and records concerning them had to be kept according to lists of residents in settlements in village soviets under the supervision of the militia.⁴⁷ The passport regulations of 1940 added the entire Moscow *oblast* and expanded the border zone to include the entire border of the USSR.

The first wave of issuing passports was carried out from the beginning of 1933 to the end of 1934. A total of 27 million people received passports, of which nearly 13 million lived in cities. By the end of the 1930's, 50 million people had received passports (the population of the Soviet Union was about 162 million).⁴⁸

The concept of the regimen city or regimen district⁴⁹ came into being. Initially, this simply meant cities where the issue of passports had been carried out. As the areas where the passport system had been established expanded, the regimen city or district came to refer to those places where address registration was particularly strictly regulated and where

⁴⁴ Попов, "Паспортная система в СССР", 7. The MOPR or International Organisation for Aiding Revolutionaries was a subunit of the Comintern that dealt with assisting labour movement figures and members of communist parties from other countries financially and in other ways.

⁴⁵ Kessler, 859.

⁴⁶ USSR CPC Regulation no 43 "Инструкция о выдаче гражданам Союза ССР паспортов в Москве, Ленинграде и Харькове, в 100-километровой полосе вокруг Москвы и Ленинграда и 50-километровой полосе вокруг Харькова", 14 January 1933, *Собрание законов и распоряжений*, no 3 (1933), art 22.

⁴⁷ USSR CPC Regulation no 861 "О выдаче гражданам Союза ССР паспортов на территории СССР", 28 April 1933, *Известия*, 29 April 1933. It is worth noting that while rural people were not issued passports, a passport system was established in 1934 for their livestock and for horses in 1935. – Matthews, 30.

⁴⁸ Shearer, "Elements", 846.

⁴⁹ It is difficult to find a good translation for this term. The concept "режимные местности" is mostly found in Russian-language documents. Its direct translation "regimen locations" does not sound particularly good in English.

restrictions on place of residence applied for undesirable elements. The regulation issued on 14 January 1933 started up the list of regimen cities, consisting of Moscow, Leningrad and Kharkov. An additional 25 cities across the Soviet Union were added to that list in April of 1933.

The list of regimen cities acquired particular importance in connection with the issue of passports to categories of persons that were initially not issued passports. The issue of passports to persons who had been criminally convicted began in April of 1935 and kulaks started receiving passports in 1936 (the USSR Central Executive Committee had already issued a restricting directive in 1935 concerning the latter category that prohibited deported kulaks whose civil rights had been restored from returning to their home neighbourhoods). Now it was necessary to preclude the settlement of criminally convicted persons in cities and to improve record keeping concerning them. While record keeping of criminally convicted persons took place in secret in the militia in 1933–1936, this record keeping was made public on 8 August 1936. The following formulaic sentence started being specially entered into passports as issued to such persons: “Issued in accordance with Article 11 of the USSR CPC 28 April 1933 Regulation No. 861.”⁵⁰ The latter stated that individuals to whom the state had refused to issue a passport or who had been refused address registration in any of the listed cities do not have the right to live in any of the listed cities at all.⁵¹ The list referred to was the list of so called regimen cities, in other words the enumeration of cities where persons with inappropriate past history were not permitted to live. The text of the formulaic sentence changed after the establishment of the passport regulations of 1940: “Issued in accordance with Article 38 of the passport regulations.” This article defined the ban on criminally convicted persons and persons not engaged in socially useful work from living in regimen districts.⁵²

New formulaic sentences were implemented from then on according to the adoption of changes in passport regulations: in the new wording of the passport regulations that went into effect on 3 May 1962, Article 40 corresponded to the former Article 38, and from the address registration rules of 1974, reference was made to the secret Article 5. These notations that were incomprehensible to ordinary people laid open the background of the bearer of the passport to militia employees, passport officials, the heads of personnel departments and others.

It is claimed in historical literature that a person’s criminal conviction was encoded in the serial number of his passport. This consisted of numbers and two letters and it was possible on the basis of the letter combination to identify the penalty and type of crime (political, economic, criminal, and so on). According to some sources, this kind of ciphering system was in use until 1972, other sources claim that it was used later as well.⁵³ Instructions or directions for applying this ciphering have not yet been found but this method was probably

⁵⁰ Original source: “Выдан на основании пункта 11 Постановления СНК СССР за № 861 от 28 апреля 1933 года.”

⁵¹ USSR CPC Regulation no 861 “О выдаче гражданам Союза ССР паспортов на территории СССР”, 28 April 1933, *Известия*, 29 April 1933.

⁵² Роров, “Паспортная система Советского крепостничества”, 199; Записка Л. П. Берии, 13 May 1953, *Лаврентий Берия. 1953. Стенограмма июльского пленума ЦК КПСС и другие документы* (Moscow: РОССПЭН 1999), 47.

⁵³ Lyubarskiy; Matthews, 48; Albert Baiburin, “Советский паспорт. Предварительный план книги”, <http://www.mod-langs.ox.ac.uk/russian/nationalism/baiburin.htm> [26 August 2010].

nevertheless not used after 1974. The secret instruction issued in 1975 concerning how passports were to be drawn up does not mention ciphering and the letter combinations denoted republics of the union instead. For instance, two letter combinations were set aside for the Estonian SSR: *ФЯ* and *ЛА*, the first of which was used in passports printed in 1938 that remained in use and the second of which was used in new passports adopted in 1974. It is not out of the question that this is a fabrication. This kind of suspicion emerges if people's passport numbers are compared. The author's grandfather Roland Jairus, who was sentenced in 1951 to 25 years imprisonment with deprivation of rights for 5 years according to Article 58-1a of the Criminal Code, was released in 1956. One month later, he was issued a passport with the serial number letter combination *ФЯ*. His wife received a passport with the same letter combination in 1957, as did his daughter in 1968.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the six-digit number of the coat of arms that was stamped into the passport did contain a code, the first three digits of which indicated the republic of the union (the "index" of the Estonian SSR, for instance, was 430) and the three last digits indicated the local MVD organ.⁵⁵

The so-called system of minuses, which similarly consisted of reference to the list of regimen cities and districts, was also in use for convicted persons in official documents. For instance, "minus 30" in 1933 or "minus 100" in 1945, which meant that people released according to this clause did not have the right to settle in the thirty or one hundred cities on the list respectively.⁵⁶

The regimen districts continually expanded in the 1930's and 1940's and ever more cities were added to the list of regimen cities. Local authorities often applied for regimen city status themselves at the initiative of their militia organs, for which this status simplified work in maintaining public order. A total of 42 settlements (including the capitals of all republics of the union), all *oblasts* adjacent to the border and the entire border zone were enumerated in the list in 1939.⁵⁷ The passport regulations of 1940 divided the regimen districts into the first and second categories. There were 175 regimen cities and 460 regimen regions in total, of which most belonged to the second category.⁵⁸ By 1953 already, 340 cities and smaller settlements were categorised as regimen cities and the border zone was 15–200 km wide, and 500 or more kilometres wide in the Far East. Naturally, the number of people affected by this was not small. A total of 3.9 million people were subject to restriction concerning place of residence for criminal conviction in the years 1943–1953, whereas 275 286 people were subject to restrictions in 1952 alone.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Register of building residents for registering citizens who live in building no 30, started on 10 February 1972, in possession by the author.

⁵⁵ USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs directions for application of the new passport system with supplements, 15 May 1975, ERAF.17SM.14.101, in print.

⁵⁶ Циркуляр ОГПУ № 96 о порядке применения мер внесудебной репрессии в отношении граждан, нарушающих закон о паспортизации населения, *История сталинского ГУЛАГа. Конец 1920-х – первая половина 1950-х годов*, vol 1 (Moscow, 2004), 157; Figes, 491. The number contained does not correspond precisely to the number of regimen cities, rather it refers to articles in the respective regulations where in addition to cities, the border zone, for instance, some health resort districts, and other such territories were defined.

⁵⁷ USSR People's Commissar for Internal Affairs Directive no 0143, 1 June 1939, *Сборник законодательных нормативных актов о репрессиях и реабилитации жертв политических репрессии*, vol 1 (Kursk, 1999), 347–367.

⁵⁸ Kessler, 495.

⁵⁹ Записка Л. П. Бери, 13 May 1953, 45–48.

While the Stalin-era leadership of the country believed that manipulation of geographical and social categories and the implementation of ever more restrictions ensures the security of the regime, and local authorities acted according to pragmatic considerations, industry leaders were opposed to restrictions since they led to a shortage of manpower. The latter forced the relaxation of restrictions from time to time. The passport regulations of 1940 already reduced restrictions somewhat by establishing a ban on living in second category regimen districts only for persons convicted of criminal and counterrevolutionary crimes. Persons convicted of hooliganism, persons who had arrived from abroad, and people not engaged in socially useful work (except for pensioners and people incapable of working) were not permitted to live in first category districts.⁶⁰ Restrictions on place of residence were removed from hooligans who had served their sentence and who had not been convicted as repeat offenders or with aggravating circumstances by the USSR Council of Ministers regulation issued in December of 1952. The change was justified by the circumstance that most of them were young people who had committed acts of hooliganism while drunk.⁶¹

The category of “persons not engaged in socially useful work” bore different names over time and contained different subcategories. There were “declassed persons”, “beggars”, “tramps”, “individuals without a particular job and definite place of residence”, in other words *bomzhis*⁶² according to their Russian-language short form, and so on. These were not simply colloquial expressions but rather categories, the apprehension of which, sending out of the cities, putting to work, application of prophylactic measures, and so on, were the subject of countless official Ministry of Internal Affairs and militia reports and statistics. This category was reformulated in 1951 when the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium decree of 23 July announced the struggle “against antisocial parasitic lifestyle”. “Loafers” or “freeloaders” (*тунеядцы*) occupied a special place among the undesirable element. In the second half of 1951 alone, nearly 108,000 “beggars” were caught in the regimen districts of the Soviet Union. Nearly 157,000 were caught in 1952, and 182,342 were caught in 1953.⁶³ Ever more new decisions were passed to “strengthen the struggle” in terms of this contingent over the subsequent years and campaigns were organised to send them out of the regimen districts.

Alongside general restrictions, numerous local or ethnically oriented restrictions were established through single decisions. In 1947 for instance, Finns and Ingrians were banned from living in Leningrad and Leningrad *oblast* and the Ministry of Internal Affairs was ordered to have them removed from those territories within two months “according to the procedures of the passport system”. Their passports were to be replaced by new ones containing a reference to Article 38 of the passport regulations, in other words the ban on living in first category regimen districts.⁶⁴

After Stalin’s death, Lavrentiy Beria initiated the reduction of restrictions and a reduction in regimen districts. Moscow, Leningrad, Vladivostok, Sevastopol, and Kronstadt, 24 regions

⁶⁰ Kessler, 495.

⁶¹ Muan, 268.

⁶² Бомж – Russian abbreviation of *без определенного места жительства* – without certain place of residence, Soviet term for vagabonds.

⁶³ Of these, 70% were disabled soldiers or workers and only 10% were so called “professional beggars”. – Доклад МВД СССР в Президиум ЦК КПСС о мерах по предупреждению и ликвидации нищеты, 20 February 1954, <http://www.alexanderyakovlev.org/almanah/inside/almanah-doc/1007415> [24 August 2010].

⁶⁴ USSR Council of Ministers Order no 5211rs, 7 May 1947, *Сборник законодательных и нормативных*, 232–233.

around Moscow and 5 regions around Leningrad remained as regimen areas. Counterrevolutionary activity, banditry, repeated hooliganism, premeditated murder, theft committed by groups or repeated theft, and robbery remained among the crimes that precluded life in regimen districts. "Parasites" had to be sent out of Moscow, the capitals of the union republics, and the centres of *oblasts*. This reform also meant relaxed conditions for persons who had been released in accordance with the amnesty of 1953, who were issued new passports without notations concerning restrictions on place of residence.⁶⁵

The removal of Beria from power quickly ended the relaxation of the system. The new passport regulations issued on 21 October 1953 defined cities, city-type settlements and regional centres, the territory of the Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian SSR's, Moscow and Kaliningrad *oblasts*, seven regions of Leningrad *oblast*, and Vasilyevka village and the border zone of the Crimean *oblast* as regimen districts. In addition, the new concept of the special restriction zone was created, established by special regulations of the USSR Council of Ministers. This meant a list of regimen cities in renewed form that included 21 cities in October of 1953 and grew to 37 by 1959.⁶⁶ In order to prevent confusion, it must be emphasised that alongside regimen cities, there were a number of cities in the Soviet Union concerning which restrictions were in effect on the basis of other considerations. A separate list of sealed off military sites existed as well as a list of cities that were off limits for foreigners at the same time as one of the objectives of the regimen cities system was namely through purging to turn them into model cities that could be shown to foreign tourists.⁶⁷

Many single decisions concerning the release of different categories of convicted persons from exile or detention centres accompanied de-stalinisation. We need not consider these decisions in greater detail at this point because this topic has been thoroughly examined recently by experts.⁶⁸ It is sufficient to summarise that a large number of criminally convicted individuals and almost all exiled persons were released, yet their freedom to choose their place of residence remained restricted compared to persons who had not been repressed. The passport system continued to set restrictions on persons released from detention centres, which, depending on their sentence, meant a ban on living in regimen districts. Generally speaking, persons released from exile were forbidden to settle in the place where they had lived immediately prior to being banished into exile, even though the government of the union republic or the executive committee of the *oblast* in question was permitted to issue permits to settle in those areas (the Council of Ministers of the Estonian SSR usually issued such permits). This essentially meant a ban on returning home. These restrictions did not apply to only those persons who had achieved rehabilitation, in other words the annulment of the decision to convict them or to banish them to exile.

⁶⁵ Записка Л. П. Берии, 13 May 1953, 45. Concerning the amnesty of 1953, see: Tõnu Tannberg, "1953. aasta amnestia: kas ainult varaste ja sulide vabastamine?" (The Amnesty of 1953: Was it the Release of Only Crooks and Thieves?), *Tuna*, no 3 (2004), 37–51.

⁶⁶ Muan, 266.

⁶⁷ For instance, the entire territory of the Estonian SSR was officially off limits for foreigners in the 1970's with the exception of Tallinn, Narva and Kohtla-Järve and a few transit railroads and highways. – USSR Minister of Internal Affairs Directive no 0175, 30 March 1978, ERAF.17SM.14.6, 1–3.

⁶⁸ See: Pavel Polyán, *Не по своей воле ... История и география принудительных миграций в СССР* (Moscow: Мемориал, 2001); Aivar Niglas, "Release ahead of time of Estonian citizens and residents repressed for political reasons by the Soviet authorities and their rehabilitation from 1953 to the 1960's", *Estonia since 1944*, 461–489.

The opportunity to not apply restrictions on address registration in the event of violations of law was created in 1959. Persons that were not made subject to restrictions were placed under so called social supervision. This was part of a more extensive reform that included reform of court procedure – the establishment of comradesly courts began with the objective of removing cases from the traditional court system – and the reorganisation of the work of the militia with the transfer of some functions to social institutions.⁶⁹

The passport regulations of 1974 introduced the general establishment of the passport system, stating that “all Soviet citizens who have turned 16 must have the passport of a citizen of the Soviet Union”. Now all people living in the countryside also were issued passports. The general issuing of passports was carried out from 1 January 1976 to 31 December 1981. In all, 50 million new passports were issued in six years.⁷⁰

Address registration restrictions, however, remained afterwards as well. The list of regimen districts included 70 cities and settlements across the country in 1974, including all the capitals of the union republics and all border regions of the Soviet Union. The list was of the same order of magnitude in 1988 as well.⁷¹ The list of crimes that led to restrictions had also grown. It included particularly dangerous repeat offenders and individuals who had served their sentence of either imprisonment or banishment into exile for particularly dangerous state crimes (article 10 was in turn categorised under this heading, including anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, betrayal of the homeland, and others). The list also included several serious offences against persons and financial crimes, as well as “disseminating fabrications that are known to be false that disparage the social order or the system of government”. In order to simplify the work of officials, a comparative table meant for use by officials containing the numbers and titles of the respective articles in the criminal codes of the union republics was drawn up in the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs. The table enumerated 29 articles of the Criminal Code that brought a ban on address registration in regimen districts prior to the expungement of criminal record.⁷² It is true that some exceptions applied – the restriction did not extend to persons released by way of amnesty or pardon, persons convicted under mitigating circumstances and persons who had entered military service after serving their sentence. Exceptions could also be made with permission from the ministries of

⁶⁹ The militia cooperation brigades that had been formed in 1932 were disbanded and in their place, the organisation of people’s *malevs* began according to institutions and enterprises to assist the militia. One of their tasks was to supervise the passport system. The term for these new units in Russian was *druzhina*, which was initially in use in Estonian language documents as well. Later, the terms people’s *malev* and member of the people’s *malev* gained widespread acceptance. This reform led to a general increase in crime because the militia could no longer choose its co-operators itself and the mobility of the new formations was poor. – CPSU CC and USSR Council of Ministers Regulation “Об участии трудящихся в охране общественного порядка в стране”, 2 March 1959; Muan, 268–269; V. Nekrasov & V. Polubinskiy, *МВД России. Энциклопедия* (Moscow: 2002), 177; M. Beda, “Органы внутренних дел в середине 50-х – начале 60-х годов”, *Полиция и милиция*, 266–267.

⁷⁰ Lyubarskiy.

⁷¹ Lyubarskiy; Matthews, 49.

⁷² Criminal record was expunged depending on the sentence after a certain period of time after the sentence was served if during that time new crimes had not been committed. For instance, in the event of imprisonment for 6–10 years, the waiting time was 8 years, in the event of sentences of over 10 years, the waiting period was also 8 years but in such cases, the court also had to decide if the convicted person had corrected himself and deserved to have his criminal record expunged. – *Estonian SSR Criminal Code*, Article 58 (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1961), 32.

internal affairs of the union republics and *oblasts*.⁷³ Certain changes were later implemented in the procedure that was in force, for instance in 1977, the ESSR Council of Ministers delegated the right to make exceptions to the executive committees of cities and regions but the consent of the KGB was a prerequisite and this right did not extend to the City of Tallinn.⁷⁴

Penal Policy

The passport system included penalties for violating its rules. Administrative penalties for many different kinds of first time violations were specified in all passport regulations and these penalties changed little through the years. According to the passport regulations of 1940, the maximum fine was 100 roubles and according to the passport regulations of 1953, the maximum fine was 10 roubles.⁷⁵ From 1953 onward, the administrative commissions of municipal and regional executive committees levied fines instead of the militia. These executive committees also had the right to issue warnings instead of levying fines, or to forward the matter to the comradesly courts or to the pertinent social organisation according to the passport bearer's place of work or residence.

The repeated violation of the rules of the passport system was criminalised from the very beginning. In 1933, violators of the passport system were unceremoniously sent to labour camps for up to three years. In 1934, the special Article 192-a was added to the Russian SFSR Criminal Code, which was referenced in the passport regulations of both 1940 and 1953. It prescribed up to two years imprisonment for officials who hire employees who do not have passports or whose permanent address is not registered, who unlawfully confiscate passports from their employees, who omit making notations in their employee's passport concerning the employee's place of employment, and for citizens who fail to fulfil their obligation to depart from regimen districts or for living without a passport, with an expired passport or without being registered at their permanent address. A series of other articles of the criminal code were associated with the passport system. For instance, Article 72 dealt with crimes associated with forging passports, Article 111 dealt with inactivity of the authorities and extended to violation of rules concerning hiring and address registration, and so on. In both cases, up to 3 years imprisonment was prescribed.⁷⁶

The number of persons convicted of violating the passport system was not small. According to Lavrentiy Beria, about 5.6 million violators of the passport regulations were caught in Soviet cities in 1948–1952, of which 127,000 were criminally convicted. Over 4.3 million people were penalised administratively with fines adding up to a total amount of nearly 218 million roubles.⁷⁷ Stalin's death did not change anything – in 1955, a total of 1,192,500 violators of the passport regulations were caught in the Soviet Union, with another 1,687,018 violators caught in 1956.⁷⁸

⁷³ ESSR Council of Ministers Regulation "Concerning some rules for address registration of citizens", 45–47; Перечень статей ..., 1 October 1974, ERAF.17SM.14.98, in print.

⁷⁴ Directive of the ESSR Minister of Internal Affairs, 31 August 1977, ERAF.17SM.14.94, 101–102.

⁷⁵ In the meantime, monetary reform was carried out in 1947, in the course of which old roubles were exchanged for new roubles according to the exchange rate of 10:1.

⁷⁶ *VNFSV Kriminaalkodeks* (Tallinn: ENSV Kohtu Rahvakomissariaat, 1941).

⁷⁷ Записка Л. П. Берии, 13 May 1953, 46.

⁷⁸ Garcelon, 97–98.

From the beginning, the establishment of the passport system was accompanied by campaigns to purge the cities of nondesirable elements by sending them out of the cities or according to official terminology, by their removal.⁷⁹ The OGPU began preparations in January of 1933 already for creating records of the harmful element in the course of implementing the passport system. By 20 April 1933, when 6.6 million passports had been issued in Soviet cities, 265,000 people had been refused passports. The group included 67,800 “escaped kulaks”, 21,900 “deprived persons” and 34,800 persons “not engaged in socially useful work”.⁸⁰ The organisation of purge campaigns became customary especially prior to state holidays, elections and other important events. The number of people who had been removed from cities climbed to half a million per year during the post-war years. The largest number of people (over 513,000) were sent away from regimen districts in 1947, in other words during the year of famine. For the sake of comparison, 1984 persons were sent away from the regimen district in the Estonian SSR in 1952, for instance.⁸¹

The enactment of the Estonian SSR Criminal Code in 1961 did not bring fundamental changes, even though the terms of punishment were altered somewhat. Article 189 of the Code (“Violation of Provisions of the Passport Regulations”) dealt with individuals living in localities where they were not permitted to live, and with persons living without a passport or without being registered at their permanent address. All these crimes were punishable by either imprisonment or corrective labour for up to one year or by a fine of up to 50 roubles. In addition, Article 201², which remained in effect until 1975, defined the “malevolent evasion of socially useful work by individuals with antisocial, parasitic lifestyles”, and Article 201³ defined “systematic vagabondism or mendicancy”. Both articles prescribed up to three years of imprisonment.⁸² The 1974 passport system statute did not bring changes in substance. The administrative fine of 10 roubles remained in effect, as did criminal responsibility for violating the passport system rules with malicious intent.

⁷⁹ The translation of Russian terminology again presents difficulties. Sending persons out of regimen districts (*удаление* in Russian) would be “removal” or “elimination” in direct translation, which does not appear to be correct in substance or linguistically. The kind of deportation considered here, however, must not be confused with deportation as a type of penalisation (*высылка, выселение*), and was defined as “the removal of the convicted person from a certain district without the obligation of living in a particular area”. – See: Niglas, 463.

⁸⁰ Приказ ОГПУ, 5 January 1933, *История сталинского ГУлага*, 149, 155; Роров, “Паспортная система в СССР”, 14.

⁸¹ Муан, 260; Доклад по паспортной работе, 24 January 1953, 50.

⁸² *Eesti NSV kriminaalkoodeks : ametlik tekst muudatuste ja täiendustega seisuga 1. jaanuar 1978* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1978), 133.