

# **THE POLITBURO OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THE SOVIET UNION (BOLSHEVIKS) AND SOVIETIZATION OF THE TERRITORIES ANNEXED IN 1939-1941**

N.S. Lebedeva

Opening of the former Central Archives of the Communist Party provided the first possibility for researchers to use for scientific purposes the historical sources of utmost importance – the minutes of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) (CPSU) and the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Soviet republics. In my presentation I will focus on general and specific features of Sovietization carried out by the Stalinist leadership on the territories annexed to the Soviet Union in 1939-1941.

On 7 September 1939, Stalin pronounced to the Secretary General of the Comintern, Georgy Dimitrov, that two groups of capitalist countries were fighting for a dominant role in the world. He said, “We have nothing against even a more fierce battle between them, as it would weaken their power. It would be good to impair the position of the most affluent capitalist countries, particularly Great Britain, by means of Germany. Without being aware and unintentionally, Hitler weakens and undermines the capitalist system.” Having characterised Poland as a fascist state, Stalin pointed out: “Eradication of this state under current circumstances means having one bourgeois fascist state less! There is nothing wrong, if destruction of Poland helped us advance the socialist system to new territories and populations.”

Thus, the task of Sovietization of the future territories of the USSR was formulated prior to the invasion of the Polish territory by the Soviet Army.

The invasion had to start with “cleansing” of the targeted territories. On 8 September, Lavrenty P. Beria ordered Serov and Tsanave, People’s Commissars of the Soviet Ukraine and Soviet Belarussia, to assign *chekists* to 9 operational groups acting in each army. Together with the army, those groups had to enter new territories and overtake all buildings of communications, banks, treasury, publishing houses,

editorial offices of newspapers, state archives and prisons; to set up provisional public administration institutions and suppress “counterrevolution”; to arrest high ranking officials, leaders of political parties and organisations of the White emigration and agents of secret services; to confiscate not only weapons, but also radio sets from the population.

Immediately after invading the Polish territory together with the units of the regular Red Army on 17 September 1939, joint operational and *Cheka* groups started mass arrests. By 28 September, only one group out of nine arrested 1,923 people. The *chekists* were responsible for liquidating public administration institution of the “former Polish State” and setting up provisional city administrations, farmers’ committees and workers’ guards. “The workers’ guards executed the majority of detained officers, policemen, landowners and civil servants right on the spot of arrest”, told the secretary of a regional committee at the Congress of the Ukrainian Communist Party. The party leadership justified plundering and killings as manifestation of the class struggle.

From 17 September to 1 October 1939, the armies of the Ukrainian and Belorussian fronts seized the territory of 190 thousand kilometres with the population of around 13 million people. The number of arrested persons amounted to over 240 thousand, including militaries of the Polish Army, policemen, border guards and civil servants were captured.

On 1 October 1939, the Politburo of the CPSU’s Central Committee approved a wide scale Sovietization programme of the seized territories. The programme included inter alia elections to the People’s Assembly of the Ukraine and Belorussia scheduled on 22 October, as the two republics had to proclaim the Soviet power, pass the decision on joining the USSR, approve the transfer of landowners’ land to farmers’ committees and nationalization of banks and industrial, trading and utility companies. The right to nominate candidates to the People’s Assembly was granted to farmers’ committees, assemblies of workers’ guards, provisional city administrations and workers’ bodies of enterprises. After nomination, the persons “authorised” by the candidates had to “agree” at a district meeting on one candidate for each district. Thus, elections meant

“electing” one candidate from the “list of candidates” which included only one person. Such was the general practise throughout the Soviet Union.

The Politburo instructed to start setting up forthwith the primary organisations of the party and mobilised for that purpose 1,800 communist from the Red Army and 3,500 party members from the Ukrainian and Belorussian Soviet Republics. The Central Committees of the Communist Parties of the Ukraine and Belorussia assigned to each *vojevodstvo* (administrative district in Poland) their authorised persons, whose task was to co-ordinate all measures of Sovietization of the seized regions, to establish the key structure of vertically integrated public authorities, with the party committee and its apparatus at the top. They were also made responsible for setting up committees at factories and enterprises, which were supposed to act as trade union organisations.

During the period before the elections, all functions of regional executive committees of people’s deputies had to be performed by provisional regional administrations. They had to assign commissars to each bank, in addition to whom the State Bank of the USSR sent its authorised persons to Lvov and Bialystock. All bank accounts were frozen. According to the plan, Soviet currency had to be introduced at the rate of ruble being equal to zloty, although the purchasing power of the Polish currency was considerably higher. All operations with foreign banks were terminated. Residents were allowed to withdraw from their bank accounts no more than 300 zloty per month, having obtained in advance the permission of the commissar of the bank. Prices for salt, matches, kerosene and tobacco were fixed by the Politburo.

In the course of the next few months, the decision of 1 October was supplemented with new measures. It also served as the basis for Sovietization of the territories seized from Finland and Romania (Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina) and the three Baltic republics.

On 4 October 1939, the Politburo approved the authorised persons assigned by the Central Committees of the Ukraine and Belorussian Communist Parties to the former Polish *vojevodstvo*, the majority of whom eventually became first secretaries of regional committees of the Party. On 7 October, it was decided to establish the primary organisations of the All-Union Leninist Communist League. On 11 October,

the Politburo sent the officials of the Central Trade Unions to set up trade union organisations. Thus, not only did the Bolsheviks establish their power, but they also formed the basis for the future totalitarian regimentation of society.

After “elections” to the People’s Assembly, which were held on 22 October, and the declaration of the Soviet Power, which was followed by the application to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR to admit the former Polish *vojevodstvo* into the Soviet Union, the Fifth Session of the highest legislative body of the Soviet Union complied with the request and on 1-2 November “reunited” Western Ukraine with the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and Western Belorussia with the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. Vyacheslav Molotov addressed the Session with a speech, which represented the apotheosis of the Soviet-German co-operation resulting in the fourth division of Poland.

After the so called “voluntary” accession of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia to the Soviet Union, the Stalinist leadership was primarily concerned with approximation of administration, economy, finance, social sector and ideology of the new territories to the system of the Soviet Union.

In November the Politburo approved the decree of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on granting the Soviet citizenship to the residents of the annexed territories and in December – the decision on introduction of passport system.

The essential elements of approximation included introduction of Soviet territorial administrative division and final establishment of the party and administrative bodies of all levels. On 4 December, the Politburo adopted the decision on the establishment of 5 administrative regions in Western Belorussia and 6 – in Western Ukraine, and on the composition of bureaux of the regional committees of the party and regional executive committees. Besides, heads of the regional head-offices of the Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) were included into the bureaux of the regional committees of the party and regional executive committees.

The scale of reprisals on the new territories was much wider compared with the rest of the country. Fight against “antagonistic classes” and “national counter-revolution”

and “liquidation of *kulaks*”, which lasted for two decades in the Soviet Union, was completed there within several months. Mass arrests and deportation had to ensure a smooth process of Sovietization in Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia. At the same time they were used as a method for annihilating their socio-political identity and depolonizing the seized territories.

As a rule, reprisals were directly approved by a decision of the Politburo of the CPSU’s Central Committee. In September and October 1939, it ordered the detention of 15,000 officers and policemen and 25,000 soldiers and lower rank officers in the camps of war prisoners. On 3 October, the Politburo authorised the military councils of the Ukrainian and Belorussian fronts to approve death sentences which military tribunals passed in civil and military cases. On 3 December, it ordered the arrest of all Polish officers registered with authorities, which resulted in the arrest of around a thousand of persons.

On 4 December, the Politburo approved the decision to deport 21 thousand families of Polish settlers. It also issued other documents establishing the procedure for deportation and disposal of the property of persons subject to deportation. According to the said documents, on 10 February NKVD carried out the first deportation of almost 140,000 Polish nationals to the region of the Far North. People had to live in conditions, which hardly differed from those in *gulags* (prison camps).

On 2 March 1940, the Politburo passed the decision on the deportation of all members of the families and relatives of the arrested officers and policemen. They were deported to Kazakhstan for ten years. On the next day Beria, having received the prior agreement of Stalin, proposed to the Politburo to execute 14,7 thousand Polish officers and policemen who were imprisoned in Kozelsky, Starobelsky and Ostashkhovsky prison camps and 11 thousand prisoners in regional prisons of the Ukraine and Belorussia. According to the Politburo’s decision of 5 March, 21,857 Poles were executed in the forest of Khatyn and in the cities of Kharkov, Kalinin, Minsk and Kiev in April and May. In April, the families of the executed Poles, all in all 66 thousand women, elderly persons and children, were deported to the steppes of Kazakhstan, where water supply was next to nothing.

On 29 June, 76,382 refugees from the central parts of Poland were moved to northern regions. Alongside with the tasks of depolonization and intimidation of the population of the new territories, those inhuman actions undertaken by the authorities were aimed at establishing material conditions for the future collective and state farms. Thus the farms were given land, livestock, equipment, dwelling and administrative buildings and other property of the deportees. Houses and flats of urban dwellers, who were moved away, were given to soviet officials, the command of the regular Red Army, posted experts, etc.

Implementation of the programme of economic approximation of the western parts of Ukraine and Belorussia started with nationalization of oil and coal industries. On 3 December, the Politburo approved the decrees of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR concerning nationalization of all enterprises located on the territory of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia. Subject to nationalization were not only large and medium sized enterprises, but also the publishing industry, utility services, educational and medical establishments, theatres, museums, libraries, shops, restaurants, etc.

According to the decision of 8 December 1939 of the Politburo, enterprises and natural persons had to make all payments only in Soviet currency. It was allowed to withdraw from bank accounts the remaining amounts denominated in Polish currency, but no more than 300 rubles.

Later, at the end of January 1940, other measures were undertaken: economic development plans of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia were approved, wholesale and retail prices, consumers' co-operatives, the systems of wages and salaries and state social insurance, which were applied in the Soviet Union, were introduced.

On 17 March 1940, the Politburo approved the enforcement of the laws on taxes and charges on the said territories. Farmers were exempted from outstanding tax arrears that were due to the Polish State. At the same time, they and other citizens of the former Polish State were "relieved" of all contributions they had made in the past into social insurance funds. Thus, the Soviet Union nationalized all those funds. The

taxation system was used as an instrument for liquidating private businesses and encouraging the operation of state and collective farms for which taxes were reduced by 25 per cent.

The Politburo passed a number of decisions concerning the establishment of state and collective farms and machine-tractor stations. In an attempt to win the favour of the poorest farmers, the Politburo ordered the purchase of 23,4 thousands of cattle heads in order to supply the farms in Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia.

In the summer of 1940, some changes took place in the cultural policy of the central authorities, resulting in the appearance of Polish schools and newspapers and magazines in the Polish language.

All those measures, however, did not bring about the desired breakthrough. In fact all – the Polish and also the Ukrainian and Belorussian communities - were dissatisfied with the new authorities. This dissatisfaction gave rise to national movements, which in their own turn triggered more violent reprisals on behalf of authorities.

On 14 May 1941, Stalin signed the decision on the arrest and deportation for a term of 20 years of the family members of participants of counter-revolutionary and nationalist organisations, instructing at the same time to consider launching of a similar operation in Western Belorussia.

The operation of expelling the families of repressed and illegally residing persons from western regions was carried out on 22 May in Ukraine and on the night of 20 June in Belorussia. The number of deported reached 11,5 thousand persons in Western Ukraine and around 21-24 thousand people in Belorussia. According to the data provided by Vyshinsky, 388 thousands of Poles were expelled from western parts of the Ukraine and Belorussia during 1940-1941.

On 30 November 1939, units of the regular Red Army crossed the border with Finland. Stalin ordered the formation of the People's Government, which was duly set up in the Finnish town of Terrioki on 1 December. On the next day its leader Kuusinen signed with the Soviet Union the agreement on mutual assistance and friendship. On

the territory occupied by the Red Army, where in individual places the native Karelian population was not evacuated, the People's Government established local committees. However, the Red Army's assumption of defence made the presence of the People's Government in Teriiki rather questionable, as, according to the agreement of 2 December, that part of the Karelian Isthmus was given to the Soviet Union. At the end of January and the beginning of February, the Finnish population was deported from the regions near to the front lines to more remote parts of Karelia. Over 2,000 people were accommodated in barracks, which were poorly adapted to living, and were forced to work in logging areas.

The territory, which, according to the peace treaty signed on 12 March 1940, was handed over to the Soviet Union, was prevalingly inhabited by Finns. Over 400,000 Finns moved to the regions further west, behind the new border, leaving the new areas underpopulated. Such situation determined some specific features of Sovietization of the said territories. The CP forces were mobilised to set up the primary organisations of the party. The CP members were demobilised from the Army and regional committees of the Leningrad region and the Karelian Autonomic Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) sent their officials. Finns were searched for throughout the entire Soviet Union and sent to the new territories. All those measures enabled to set up the structures of the party, which were subordinate to the regional committees of the Leningrad region and the Karelian ASSR.

On 31 March, the Karelian ASSR was reorganised into the Karelian-Finnish Soviet Republic. Along with the Russian and the Karelian languages, Finnish became the official language. On 3 July, the Politburo approved the candidature of Kuusinen to the post of the chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Karelian-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic and Prokkonen – to the post of the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the republic. On 6 July, it approved the draft Constitution of the new Soviet republic and the composition of the Central Committee of the Karelian-Finnish Communist Party.

On the new territories the Politburo resorted to the measures tested in the western parts of Ukraine and Belorussia. The highest party body approved the decision of 28 May 1940 of the Council of People's Commissars and the CPSU's Central Committee

concerning the measures of economic recovery for the new regions of the Karelian-Finnish SSR and the Leningrad region. According to the decision, all industrial enterprises were transferred to the sphere of management of the Council of People's Commissars of the Karelian-Finnish SSR, the regional executive committee of Leningrad and sector specific People's Commissariats of the Soviet Union. A particular attention was paid to increasing the output in peat and logging industry. The People's Commissariat of Fishery was instructed to establish state fishery farms after moving the families of fishermen from other parts of the Soviet Union to Lake Ladoga and the Bays of Vyborg and Finland. 40,000 families of farmers were moved into those territories to start agricultural production. The People's Commissariat of Farming had to allot land to the newly established collective farms, to organise machine-tractor stations and mobile repair workshops. The People's Commissariat of State Farms was obligated to set up 10 state farms in the Karelian-Finnish SSR and 2 – in the Leningrad region. The funds of up to RUB30 million were allocated to the reconstruction of houses, hospitals, schools, etc. In order to implement the above-mentioned decision, the Politburo adopted additional number of implementing regulations.

Thus, scarce population was the main factor, which impeded the process of Sovietization of the new territories. At the same time, the Kremlin was considering annexation of the whole of Finland, which Molotov discussed with Hitler and Ribbentrop during negotiations in Berlin.

At the end of May 1940, having taken the advantage of the difficult military situation of Great Britain and France, the Stalinist leadership advanced with its plans concerning annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which did not exclude the use of the armed forces. At the beginning of June, NKVD, for example, was instructed to get ready a wide network of prison camps for receiving over 60 thousands of war prisoners from the three adjoining Baltic states.

On 15-17 June, following the ultimatum to the governments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the Soviet troops invaded the territory of the Baltic countries. The Kremlin sent its authorised special representatives: Dekanozov to Lithuania, Vyshinsky to Latvia and Zhdanov to Estonia. Under their surveillance and guidance the new

“governments” were formed in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, conservative and paramilitary organisations were prohibited, cleansing of the public authorities was carried out and the command of the armed forces was changed. According to the decision of the Politburo, a number of officials closely related to NKVD were sent to the three countries. On 27 June, Bochkarev, former adviser to the authorised representative and a member of NKVD, replaced the authorised representative of the Soviet Union in Estonia, Nikitin. In July mass arrests were started among the intellectuals, which were followed by their deportation.

On 10 July 1940, the Politburo formed the Baltic military district and approved Colonel General Loktionov, who was Deputy People’s Commissar for Defence as its commander. On 14 August, the command of the Baltic military district passed a secret decision on the reorganisation of the armies of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. According to the decision, three territorial army units with a post of the military commissar were organised on the basis of the national armies. Even after this post was abolished in the Soviet armed forces and replaced by a deputy commander for political affairs, it was preserved in the said army units under the Politburo’s decision of 27 August. In December Generals Kliavinsh, Ioganson and Vitkauskas of the former armies of Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia and commanders of the 24<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> territorial infantry units were granted the rank of Lieutenant General and 17 other generals – the rank of Major General. It was the only case in the Soviet Union when the armies of the annexed states were preserved, although under the control of their Soviet superiors.

Although up to May 1941 mass reprisals were not undertaken against the militaries of the armies of the Baltic countries, in July – September 1940, NKVD hastened to arrest the interned Poles in Lithuania and Latvia and sent 5,5 thousand people to the Kozelsk and Yuchnovsky prison camps.

At the beginning of July 1940, the parliaments of the Baltic republics were dissolved and new “elections” were announced. They took place on 14-15 July under the conditions of a wide scale pressure on voters and by applying Soviet “technology” of nominating only one candidate, who represented the Communist and non-Party bloc. It was only natural that the results of such “elections” were very similar to those in the

Soviet Union. On 21-22 July, the newly elected parliaments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia declared the Soviet power and applied to the Soviet Union with a request to admit the republics into the Soviet Union. On 3-6 August 1940, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR satisfied their “applications”.

Without completing the formal admission procedure, on 24 July the Politburo adopted the decision on the nationalization of banks and large industrial enterprises in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The Commissars of the Government were responsible for the control of banks and credit institutions. In Estonia for example, residents were allowed to withdraw from bank accounts no more than 100 kroone per month and only upon receiving in advance the permission of the commissar in charge of the bank. All precious metals, both in ingots and jewellery, precious stones and jewellery with them in jewellery shops had to be confiscated. All industrial enterprises with over 20 and no less than 10 workers that used engines in the process of manufacturing or that were considered to be of particular importance had to be expropriated. Commissars were assigned to all nationalised enterprises. The staff and administration of such enterprises were ordered to continue to work. At the same time it was recommended to use former owners of enterprises as their managers, so that commissars could master the managerial work under their guidance and overtake the managerial functions later.

On 14 August, the highest party body approved the framework decision of the CPSU’s Central Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of the USSR on the organisation of public administration and development of economy of Soviet Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, i.e. on Sovietization of the Baltic republics. The governments of the three republics were proposed to convene on 20-25 August an extraordinary session of their parliaments for considering the drafts of the new constitution and forming the highest bodies of the Soviet power. Besides, the parliaments had to be renamed into the Supreme Soviets and elect the Presidiums of the Supreme Soviets, their chairmen and deputy chairmen. They also had to form the Councils of People’s Commissars, having received beforehand the approval of their members from the Politburo of the CPSU’s Central Committee. Temporary circulation of two currencies was permitted. In order to ensure the convergence of the currencies, it was planned to inflate kroone, lat and litas. Sanction was given to carry

out nationalization of large dwelling houses and shipping companies with a possibility of repurchasing of no more than one-fourth of the latter. Instructions were issued to compile the lists of enterprises, which could operate at full capacity. The task was set to optimise industrial manufacturing and increase the number of workers in the cities. It was proposed to retain large land estates and turn them into model state farms. Peasants, who either had no land or possessed only small land plots, had to form associations for joint land cultivation.

The Politburo decided it expedient to preserve the former administrative territorial division of the republics into counties, districts, etc. The borders of the Baltic republics with Belorussia and Russia remained temporarily unchanged. The citizens of the Baltic republics could neither leave nor enter their countries without a special permit of the militia. Later the Politburo adopted a number of implementing regulations supplementing the decision of 14 August, including the one on nationalization of first freight motor vehicles and later automobiles.

On 22 August, the highest body of the party approved the candidates to the posts of the chairman and deputy chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the post of the chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. It also introduced changes into the agenda of the parliaments of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The executive bodies of the three republics had to deal with the issue of land and prevent inclusion of owners of larger land plots into the lists of landlords. The latter could possess up to 30 hectares of land, their size being much larger than that allowed on the other annexed territories. On the same day the Politburo approved draft constitutions of Soviet Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, submitted by Zhdanov, Vyshinsky and Dekanozov.

In September the Politburo approved the lists of the members of the Bureaux of the CP Central Committees, People's Commissars of Internal Affairs, and members of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian delegations which were included into the Soviet-German commissions for the exchange of residents.

On 8 October, the Politburo passed the decision on the affiliation of the Communist Parties of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to the All-Union Communist Party

(Bolsheviks). The term of membership in the party was calculated as of the date of accession to the “fraternal communist party.” It was proposed to issue the necessary party documents to the CP members and candidates before 15 November, but the decision in each individual case had to be made first by the regional party committee and later approved by the Republican Central Committee. As a result, the party structures of the three Baltic republics were preoccupied for several months with issuing new documents to the members of the party. It meant in fact a repeated admission procedure, with the help of which those who did not belong to the proletariat and the like were ousted from the party.

Abolition of the former system of public administration and establishment of the structure of the Soviets of Workers’ Deputies in their place were the other tasks faced by the CP Central Committees (CPCC) of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The Bureau of the CPCC of Lithuania, for example, dealt with this issue on 17 October and assigned the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Lithuania to set up provisional executive committees in the cities, counties and districts of the country before municipal elections. At the same time, the posts of the city mayor and the county governor and that of the district head had to be abolished.

On 10-19 November, the Politburo adopted the decision concerning the establishment of the system of local authorities in the counties, cities and districts before municipal elections. Executive committees of large cities and counties were set up according to the decree of the Supreme Soviet of the republic and in districts, urban and rural settlements and towns – under the decision of the county executive committee. Besides, candidates to the post of the chairman of the county executive committee had to be approved by the CPSU’s Central Committee. The county executive committees had to choose members of executive committees of districts, towns and urban and rural settlements, and submit their candidatures to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the republic for approval. Thus was established a multi-tier system of nomenclature which was under absolute control of the Party and its Politburo.

On 6 September, the highest party body approved the draft decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on Soviet citizenship and in February 1941 it introduced passport system.

On 22 November 1940, after repeated postponements, the Politburo finally took a decision to introduce in the Baltic republics the Soviet system salaries and wages, taxes and charges, and retail prices. The Council of People's Commissars of Soviet Lithuania was recommended to impose higher taxes on private trading companies and industrial enterprises as well as craft industry, which hired labour force; to lower non-taxable minimum income level for private salesmen and owners of businesses; to make final settlement of accounts for 1939-1940 taxes with former owners of nationalised enterprises. The Council of People's Commissars was "allowed" to introduce before 25 November 1940 the price-list of industrial goods applied in the Soviet Union. At the same time the prices of agricultural machinery, equipment, mineral fertilizers and some other goods remained unchanged. On the same day the Politburo approved similar documents of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the CPSU's Central Committee concerning Latvia and Estonia, as well as the decision on the measures concerning introduction of Soviet currency in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Considerably lower prices of a number of goods in the new three republics incited the Kremlin to prohibit money transfers to the Baltic republics from other regions and sending of parcels from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and to limit the salary of the militaries to RUB500 per month. Customs still operated at the former border with the Soviet Union.

On 28 December, the Politburo approved the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR and the CPSU's Central Committee on taxes and charges levied on farms in Soviet Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Farmers were relieved from paying instalments under hire purchase agreements and workers' outstanding tax arrears were written off. At the same time the land tax was increased by 100-200 per cent for those who had over 30 hectares of land and by 50-100 per cent for the former owners of 10-30 hectares of land.

In January the national plans of economic development were approved for all the three republics. Industrialization was the main task set for Soviet Lithuania. It had to

build new enterprises, to reorganise and expand the operating and earlier closed factories, to use all types of raw materials and fuels (peat), to develop building materials industry and production of consumer goods. “A large scale development of socialist industry in Latvia” was the main task set for Latvia. Likewise, objectives were set for the “socialist planned development” of Estonia’s economy.

If socialist transformation of industry was undertaken and carried out with a particular vigour, changes in agriculture were introduced with greater caution and without haste. By the end of 1940, after confiscating the land of landowners, 70 thousand farm workers and poor peasants were given land. They were granted credits in the amount of RUB20 million for the acquisition of necessary equipment and buildings. On 19 February 1941, the Politburo approved the decision which proclaimed a number of primary goals, such as supply of farms with livestock, granting of credits for the purchase of seed, organisation of machine and horses’ rental centres, establishment of associations for joint land cultivation and allocation of buildings and equipment to them.

The decision of 31 March 1941 of the Politburo introduced for the first time obligatory deliveries of agricultural products to the State. The volume of deliveries increased according to geometrical progression depending on the size of the farm. Although new state farms were progressively established, a large-scale collectivization, differently from the other territories annexed by the Soviet Union in 1939-1940, was not undertaken in the Baltic Republics.

In an attempt to ensure administrative, economic and even ideological approximation of the three Baltic republics, on 15 August 1940, the Politburo passed a special decision on the measures concerning mass media of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, which was based on the proposals made by Vyshinsky. According to the decision, all reporters, who were based abroad, had to be recalled. NKVD sent its representatives of the press department to the three republics to organise the work of the media, whereas the TASS news agency was made responsible for servicing the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines. On 23 November, the Politburo proposed to introduce stringent control over all foreign publications received in the Baltic republics. The People’s Commissariat of Communications was obligated to send them

to Moscow for censorship; subscription to foreign publications was possible only through the All-Union Association “International Book”.

In the spring of 1941, the Politburo toughened its punitive policy in the Baltic republics. On 16 May, the People’s Commissar of State Security, Merkulov, proposed to the CPSU’s Central Committee to approve the following measures:

- 1) to give sanction to the People’s Commissariat of State Security of the USSR and NKVD of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to arrest, confiscate the property of and send to prison camps for a term of 5-8 years with the subsequent resettlement for a term of 20 years in remote parts of the Soviet Union the following categories of persons:
  - a) active members of counter-revolutionary parties and members of the anti-Soviet nationalist White organisations;
  - b) former guards, gendarmes and executives of the police and prisons, as well as lower rank policemen and prison staff members, on whom the above institutions had discrediting material;
  - c) former owners of large estates, industrial enterprises and higher level officials of the public institutions of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia;
  - d) officers of the former armed forces of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and the White Army, on whom the above institutions had discrediting material;
  - e) offenders who were known to be engaged in criminal activities;
  
- 2) to give sanction to the People’s Commissariat of State Security of the USSR and NKVD of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia to arrest, confiscate the property of and deport for a term of 20 years to remote parts of the Soviet Union the following categories of persons:
  - a) family members of persons identified in indents a, b, c and d of paragraph 1 and other persons, who, prior to the date of arrest, were living with or were dependent on the above mentioned family members;

- b) family members of those, who took part in counter-revolutionary nationalistic organisations, the leaders of which were in hiding from public authorities;
- c) family members of those, who took part in counter-revolutionary nationalist organisations, the leaders of which were sentenced to death;
- d) persons who repatriated from Germany or had applied for repatriation to Germany, but refused to leave, if the authorities were in possession of discrediting material concerning their anti-Soviet activity or suspicious contacts with foreign intelligence services.

All cases of arrested and deported persons had to be investigated by the Extraordinary Conference of NKVD of the Soviet Union after their deportation to prison camps or places of exile. The CP Central Committees of Soviet Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia together with the People's Commissariat of State Security and NKVD of the USSR were jointly responsible for conducting the operation which, according to the plan, had to be finished in three days. Merkulov, his deputy Serov and Beria's deputy Abakumov, as well as 200 cadets of the NKVD higher school were to arrive to Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The minutes of the Politburo do not include this decision. However, there is no doubt that such operation was possible only upon the approval of Stalin. He did approve it no later than on 19 May, when the People's Commissariat of State Security of the USSR instructed NKVD in the three Baltic republics to prepare and "clean" the territories concerned of anti-Soviet, socially dangerous and criminal "elements".

On 17 July, Merkulov submitted the report on the operation conducted in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia on 14 July, to the CPSU's Central Committee. The report listed the details of the operation, according to which the number of arrested and deported persons were respectively 5,625 and 10,187 in Lithuania, 5,625 and 9,546 in Latvia and 3,178 and 5,978 in Estonia. The total number of arrested and deported persons in all the three republics was respectively 14,467 and 25,711, including 643 officers who retired from the armed forces of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and enlisted with the forces of the Soviet Union; 933 officers serving in territorial military units; 1,603 policemen and gendarmes. The prisoners were first sent to the Yuchnovsky and Putvilsky camps for the prisoners of war and later, after Germany invaded the Soviet Union, to prison camps. The deported persons were sent to the prescribed places of

exile, although they were re-addressed on their way to forced labour camps. Thus, over 40 thousands of Balts were actually doomed to die of starvation and exhausting labour along with hundreds of thousands of criminals in various parts of the Soviet Union.

Sovietization of the Baltic republics, which included liquidation of private property, be it land or means of production, abolition of all bourgeoisie freedoms, prohibition of political parties and other organisations independent of the Central Communist Party (Bolsheviks), deportation of the elite to remote parts of the Soviet Union, establishment of the Party and Soviet apparatus, economic approximation of the new territories to the Soviet Union proper could not but reach the ultimate goal of forcing the population to reconcile to the incorporation into the Soviet Union and accept the “socialist” values.

After the Baltic countries, next came the turn of Bessarabia. On 26 June, the Soviet government sent ultimatum to Romania, demanding the return of Bessarabia and handing it over to Northern Bukovina, which was inhabited by Ukrainians and which, however, had never been part of Russia. On 28 June, units of the Red Army entered the mentioned territories and by 1 July approached the new Soviet-Romanian border.

On the next day, after seizing the territories, the Politburo obligated the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party to set up its county and district committees on the new territories. This work was accompanied by cleansing of the new territory, where by 3 July operational groups arrested over 900 persons and border troops - 244 persons. The *chekists* detained and interrogated even the elderly, for example, Duke Dolgorukov, who was 83 years old and who, being not able to stand the sneering, committed suicide.

On 9 July, the Politburo granted the military tribunals the right to investigate the cases of counter-revolutionary activity and banditry under respective articles of the Criminal Code of the Soviet Ukraine. Arrests and deportation particularly intensified after introduction of passport system and obligatory registration of the place of residence in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina in September. Both passport system

and registration of the residence place had to be launched on 1 September 1940 and completed by 15 January 1941.

Next came immediate control over the banking system and industry. On 2 July, the Politburo passed the decision concerning introduction of Soviet currency and banks, to which commissars were sent. It was allowed to withdraw from bank accounts no more than RUB200 per month. All valuables stored in banks were confiscated. However, the banks continued to recover outstanding debts of natural and legal persons.

On 9 July, the highest party body approved the decision of the Council of People's Commissars of Soviet Moldavia on joining the Soviet Union. On 2 August, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR adopted at its the VII Session a respective resolution. The major part of Bessarabia was included into the Moldavian SSR, with its southern parts being handed over to the Ukrainian SSR. Moldavia retained on the new territory the former administrative division into counties, but in addition had to establish 52 districts with district committees of the party and district executive committees. On 14 August, the Moldavian regional organisation of the Ukrainian Communist Party was reorganised into the Communist Party of Moldavia, with Borodin as the first secretary of the Politburo of the Central Committee and Konstantinova as the head of the government of the Moldavian SSR.

In August 1940, there was established a joined Soviet-German Commission for the exchange of residents. If in the autumn and winter of 1939, the authorities of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia treated Germans with pity, since the summer of 1940 they had been looked upon as potential spies of Hitler's Germany both in the above mentioned regions and in Moldavia. On 7 October 1940, the Politburo adopted the decision aimed to accelerate the process of repatriation of Germans from the new territories to Germany.

On 14 August, the Politburo approved draft decrees of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on nationalization of land, banks, industrial enterprises and commercial companies, railway and road transport and communications. On 15 August, it also approved the decision on the introduction of taxes and charges levied on the residents

and farmers' farms in Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina. Just like in the Baltic states, the residents were excused from paying the outstanding tax arrears and income tax as well as charges for collecting the funds necessary for the construction of dwelling houses and cultural establishments and agricultural tax were introduced. On the same day the Politburo ordered to introduce the Soviet system of wages and salaries and social insurance. On 17 August, it introduced the obligatory deliveries of grain and other agricultural products to the State; on 19 August it approved the decision approving the plan of autumn sowing and prescribing to establish one machine-tractor station at each former land estate and monastery in all districts. A particular attention was paid to the development of food and tinned foods industries, wine production, mining of salt and coal and oil refining. On 13 September, the Politburo fixed the maximum size of farming land plots, which was over 20 hectares in Izmailsky, Akkermansky and Benderovsky districts and up to 7 hectares in Chotinsky district.

The winter of 1940-1941 witnessed an energetic effort to establish state and collective farms and new machine-tractor stations, which was undertaken following a number of decisions adopted by the Politburo.

Being afraid of the stab in the back by anti-Soviet forces on the eve of the war, the Politburo decided to start arrests of socially dangerous and counter-revolutionary "elements" along with deportation of their family members in the manner that was used in the Baltic republics, the Ukraine and Belorussia. On 31 May, Merkulov sent a message to the CPSU's Central Committee concerning preparation for the arrest of up to 5,000 of people, who opposed the Soviet regime, and deportation of 14,469 members of their families. After receiving approval of the Central Committee, the operation, which resulted in the arrest of 4,550 and deportation of 13,980 people, was carried out on 13 June.

Thus Sovietization of the annexed territories was implemented in line with decisions of the Politburo of the CPSU's Central Committee. At the same time, the Politburo set a number of tasks, such as destruction of the former state system, economic, national and cultural establishments and traditions and introduction of the "socialist system". On all annexed territories former public institution were liquidated and replaced by newly created party committees and different level executive committees; land, banks

and industrial, trading and utility companies were nationalized, Soviet system of taxation, social insurance and wages and salaries was introduced. As a rule, state farms were established on the former land estates. In western parts of the Soviet Ukraine and Belorussia, Soviet authorities organised collective farms. Establishment of collective farms in the Baltic republics met with such a strong resistance that the Politburo considered it more expedient to limit collectivization to setting up of associations for joint land cultivation. The national problem was also approached differently in different territories. In Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia the prime attention was given to depolonization; in the regions seized from Finland, the authorities carried out the programme of resettlement of fishermen, farmers and experts from other parts of the Soviet Union; in Bessarabia they evacuated German residents to Germany and pushed out the Romanian language from public life. But most cautiously the authorities dealt with the Baltic republics, where they preserved the old administrative territorial division and longer than elsewhere allowed maintaining the former system of local authorities. Nationalization was carried out in stages. Residents still possessed a considerable amount of property. Mass arrests of the military personnel was undertaken only before the outbreak of the war and the former armies were preserved in the form of territorial units of the Red Army. However, it was the population of all the three republics, who, having lived in a sovereign state, considered Sovietization as the form of national humiliation and evil, which had to be resisted. In general, the Soviet-German agreement resulted in tragic consequences for both the nations who were occupied by Hitler's Germany and those who were "Sovietized" by Stalin's Soviet Union.