

Amnesty of 1953 and the first experiments in the revision of social control practices in the USSR

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When we are studying the “Soviet project” and the phenomenon of the Soviet life in general we should take in account that the most arguable subjects are the formation, evolution and functioning of the Soviet society, which was formed under the influence of historical and cultural traditions and current challenges of the its epoch. At the same time, we can considered the Soviet Union as a project, which reflects the results of political and social constructions. A social control was a tool for implementing this Soviet project. First of all, there was a concept of the division of society into “friends” and “aliens”, “necessary persons”, “freeloaders” and “dangerous persons”. There were people which had mark “criminals”, these people stood in the category of “outsiders”, they committed crimes (real or imaginary) and were temporarily isolated from society. The fight against crime, primarily criminal, was a form of social control and a way to maintain order¹.

There were after 1953 new trends in the state policy of combating crime and delinquency: the regime was softened, an intensive process of a lawmaking began, the policy of isolating the marginals was replaced by steps to incorporate them into society, and a significant number of the functions of maintaining public order were transferred to the area of a public rule. However, the liberalization of the policy in the sphere of a struggle with criminals had intermittent and often reversible character, we explain this as results of an inertia of a previous tradition of repressions and isolation. In addition, reformers posed with a criminal challenge as mass riots and an increase of hooliganism.

The revision of the norms and practices of social control took place in the context of changes in the country and was a reaction on the problem of crime and the state of the repressive system primarily its prison-camp segment (the situation of convicts and prisoners). The revision developed in stages, although this did not have a clearly defined dynamics and had peculiar character in the field of lawmaking, ideological support and policy to persons which committed criminal and other offenses.

The Stalinist repressive system, which was created and considered as a mechanism for ensuring political stability, grew and became a threat to the social order, because of this its transformation was inevitable, this began during the life of Stalin, but this process had reached a qualitatively different level after his death. The Minister of

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¹ Gilinskij YA.I. Social'nyj kontrol' nad prestupnost'yu: ponyatie, rossijskaya real'nost', perspektivy [Social control over crime: the concept, Russian reality, prospects] // *Rossiiskij ezhegodnik ugovnogo prava* [Russian Yearbook of Criminal Law]. 2013. №. 7. Pp. 42–58.

Internal Affairs of the USSR L. P. Beria sent a note to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU on March 26 1953, which stated: "At present, there are 2 526 402 prisoners in penal labor camps, prisons and colonies, of which: 590 000 prisoners sentenced to a term of up to 5 years, 1 216 000 from 5 to 10 years, 573 000 from 10 to 20 years, and 188 000 over 20 years... The detention of a large number of prisoners in camps, prisons and colonies, among whom there is a significant part of convicted persons for crimes which do not have a serious danger for society, including women, adolescents, the elderly and sick people, is not caused by state necessity²».

A significant part of the camp contingent consisted of people convicted for minor, from the point of view of the Minister, offenses: unauthorized leave working place, official and economic crimes, petty theft, hooliganism, petty profiteering. The GULAG was significantly expanded after the adoption of the decrees of 1947, which toughened criminal liability for theft of state and public property, theft of personal property of citizens. There were 1 January 1953 out of the total number of prisoners 1 241 919 persons stood in the camps according to sentences for these crimes. 300 000 people including the chairmen and foremen of collective farms, engineers, heads of enterprises were convicted to the term of 5 to 10 years for official, economic and military crimes. A significant share of the contingent were women 438 788 persons including 6 286 pregnant women and 35 505 mothers of children, which were not elder as 2 years. Many children under the age of 10 were in orphanages or in the families of relatives. 238 000 imprisoned men and women were over the age of 50 years. There were 31 181 prisoners under the age of 18, the vast majority of whom were sentenced for petty theft and hooliganism. About 198 000 people suffered from severe and incurable diseases, being completely unable to work³.

Criminologists and psychologists (foreign, and once domestic) insisted that long-term imprisonment not only does not solve the problem of reducing crime and does not perform a "correctional and educational" function, but leads to further criminalization of society, as well as to the desocialization of an individual⁴. Beria, who was hardly familiar with the research of scientists, actually agreed with their point of view: "It is known that imprisonment in a camp, associated with separation for a long time from the family, from the usual living conditions and activities, puts convicts, their relatives and close people in a very difficult situation, often destroys a family, extremely negatively affects their entire subsequent life." Based on this, and with reference to the fact that "most of these prisoners behave well in the camps, are conscientious about work and can return to an normal working life," the minister proposed a big amnesty, reducing the population of the GULAG by almost half⁵.

Another initiative of Beria contained more decisive steps towards the liberalization of the penal system. Previously, more than 1.5 million people were convicted annually, including up to 650 000 for various terms of imprisonment, and a significant

² Lavrentij Beriia. 1953 g. Stenogramma iyul'skogo plenuma CK KPSS i drugie dokumenty / Pod red. A.N. YAKovleva; sost. V. Naumov, YU. Sigachyov. [Lavrentij Beria. 1953. Transcript of the July plenum of the CPSU Central Committee and other documents / Edited by A. N. Yakovlev; comp. V. Naumov, Yu. Sigachev]. Moscow, 1999. P. 19.

³ Lavrentij Beriia. 1953 g. Stenogramma iyul'skogo plenuma CK KPSS i drugie dokumenty. P. 19—21.

⁴ Gilinskij YA.I. Deviantologiya: sociologiya prestupnosti, narkotizma, prostitucii, samoubijstv i drugih «otklonenij» [Deviantology: sociology of crime, drug addiction, prostitution, suicide and other "deviations"] St. Petersburg, 2004. Pp. 425—426

⁵ Lavrentij Beriia. 1953 g. Stenogramma iyul'skogo plenuma CK KPSS i drugie dokumenty P.20.

number were convicted for crimes that did not wear a big danger to society and the state. Now the task was to review the legislation: "If this will be not done, the total number of prisoners again reach again 2.5—3 million people in 1—2 years⁶».

The Minister hardly took in account a humanism, when he expressed ideas of the reform. He acted like a pragmatist being well informed. According to his instructions, work on the preparation of two draft decrees began, which had got names: "On the release from punishment of certain categories of convicts" and "On certain changes in criminal legislation". Already on March 18, both documents were introduced to Beria by the Ministries of Justice K. P. Gorshenin and Internal Affairs S. N. Kruglov and the General Prosecutor's Office of the USSR headed by G. N. Safonov⁷. The first was embodied in the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On Amnesty" and adopted on March 27, the second one remained "on paper", because probably, his ideas then seemed too radical.

Among the proposals put forward in the draft were a reduction in the number of criminal convictions and a reduction in sentences, primarily by limiting the use of criminal liability in the form of imprisonment and incarceration in the ITL and as a result "a significant reduction in the camp contingent". It was planned to bring to criminal responsibility 520 000 people less or 33% compared to the level of 1952. To achieve this, it was supposed to abolish the penalties of workers and employees for absenteeism (by 150 000), collective farmers - for not working out the minimum workday (140 000), women for an abortion (65 000), as well as for making moonshine without the purpose of selling (25 000) and for "arbitrariness" (50 000). Criminal liability for "minor hooligan actions" and some official offenses was replaced by administrative one. So, in the case of hooligan actions committed for the first time and "not of a malicious nature", the guilty person was punished with a fine of 300 RUB. As a result, it was planned that the criminal record for these two categories should be reduced by 30 000 and 60 000 people, respectively. The result of these changes in the criminal legislation was seen as an annual reduction in the number of convicts and prisoners in the camps by 300–350 thousand people (or up to 50%), including by 250—300 000 due to the replacement of imprisonment in the camp for a period of less than 3 years with other penalties⁸.

Despite the secret nature of the projects, the issues of liberalizing the system of punishments became the subject of acute disputes among lawyers, officials, and journalists, which lasted until the adoption of the "Fundamentals of Criminal Legislation of the USSR and the Union Republics" in 1958. The accepted decree of amnesty encouraged this discussion about the reform: "To recognize the need to review the criminal legislation of the USSR and the Union republics, meaning to replace criminal liability for certain official, economic, domestic and other less dangerous crimes with administrative and disciplinary measures, as well as to mitigate criminal liability for certain crimes⁹».

The amnesty was the first remarkable act of the new political regime in USSR, a signal that the country was returning to "normal" life. The evidenced of this reflected in the rhetoric of the decree: "As a result of the consolidation of the Soviet social and state system, the improvement of the welfare and cultural level of the population, the

⁶ Lavrentij Beriia. 1953 g. Stenogramma iyul'skogo plenuma CK KPSS i drugie dokumenty. P. 21.

⁷ GARF, f. R-8131, op. 32, d. 2231, l. 69—70.

⁸ GARF, f. R-8131, op. 32, d. 2231, l. 70—73.

⁹ Pravda. 1953. March 28.

growth of consciousness of citizens, their good attitude to the performance of their public duty, an order and the socialist rule of law were strengthened, and crime in the country went significantly down. The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR considers that it is not necessary to continue the imprisonment of persons which have committed crimes which do not wear a big danger to the state¹⁰.” It became clear soon that the statement about the decrease of crimes is somewhat more optimistic than the real state of this sphere, there was a fact that the amnesty led to a sharp worsening the situation. However, thanks to this act, hundreds thousands of people which had nothing to do with the criminal world left the camps.

In total, the amnesty affected more than 1 million people. Citizens convicted for a term of up to 5 years inclusive were released from places of imprisonment and from other penalties. Regardless of the term of punishment, persons convicted of a number of official, economic and military crimes, women, which were mothers of children under the age of 10, and pregnant women, minors under the age of 18, men over 55 and women over 50, as well as persons suffering from severe incurable ailments, were released. Number of persons which were sentenced to more than 5 years of imprisonment reduced by half. The amnesty did not touch persons convicted for more than 5 years for counter-revolutionary crimes, large-scale embezzlement, banditry and premeditated murder.

The announcement of the amnesty on March 28 caused a contradictory reaction in the society. On the same day, two anonymous letters appeared, these letters were addressed to K. E. Voroshilov. “Among the people,” he was considered the main “father” of the amnesty, since the decree was signed by him as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The author of the first letter wrote: “The morning of 28-III-1953 in Stalinabad is cloudy and rainy. Sometimes it snows. But the streets are full of people. There are smiles on their faces, joy in their eyes. Strong handshakes, cheers of congratulations. And it seems that there is no rain, snow and gray pall in the sky, but the sun shines on the blue firmament and its rays are reflected on the faces. What’s the matter? Why such a celebration? Here are some exclamations and excerpts of conversations: “Ay da Klim!”— “Wide scope!”— “Klim cuts from the shoulder...” — “ As at Tsaritsyn...” — “Who could have expected it, eh” “ — “ Let’s drink for Klim!— “He won’t cut like that yet!”— “Don’t we have enough ridiculous laws?”— “Will review!”— “Our Klim!”— “Our Klim!”. And wherever you go, wherever you turn, you hear: “Klim, Klim, Klim...” What kind of familiarity? Why not officially — “comrade Voroshilov”? Or with respect: “Kliment Yefremovich”? But it is only necessary to hear with what warmth and affection this short, meaningful name is pronounced, as instantly this question gets stuck in the throat and unbidden moisture comes to the eyes. And these eyes... multi-million pairs of eyes with indescribable gratitude turn to the portrait and look at the stern face with thin lips and soulful eyes, bordered with gray hair. “Let’s prove that you are right, our Klim... After all, there is almost not a single Soviet family, from which someone is not in prison for... what? A pack of cigarettes, a box of matches, a kilo of meat... Five years, seven, ten!... Enemy of the people, deprivation of citizenship, loss of rights!... Klim! You know everything, our Klim!”¹¹”

The opposite feelings had the author of the other letter: “After the announcement of the amnesty, most respect people are very unhappy, you can ask why-first,

¹⁰ Pravda. 1953. March 28.

¹¹GA RF, f. R-7523, op. 58, d. 130, l. 24.

because you published it almost immediately after the death of our genius Stalin. Was it really a great need to do this now, when the tears of the Soviet people did not dry up from such a loss, the people have the impression that our dear Stalin, for whom people went to deadly fight without hesitation, was cruel and too much with people which committed a crime. All criminals are enemies, and you have to be hard with them. Yes, there are people who were caught for a minor crime and are in prison. So you need to pay more attention to the forensic investigations and not draw everyone in a pattern. It is necessary to pay special attention to the work of the militia, which does not fight crime, but only creates an visibility of action... Every Soviet person would be pleased if we did not have prisons and camps in our state, but this is not possible yet, and such an amnesty, as published today, can bring a lot of damage and victims to both the state and private citizens... With the new development of the criminal code it is necessary to mercilessly punish murderers and bandits, large embezzlers, such is the desire of all honest citizens of the Soviet Union. There is no reason yet to give them any mercy, to expect them to be conscious¹²»

This letter deserves attention for several reasons. It certainly reflected the opinion of a big part of the population, which is confirmed a subsequent mass negative reaction to the amnesty. The author's concerns are somewhat predictive, since the liberation from the camps has not yet begun. The appeal to the name of Stalin shows that the act was condemned not only from a moral point of view — as an insult to the memory of the recently gone leader — but also as a break with the past experience of the treatment of convicts. It is obvious that the intention of the new leadership of the country through an act of amnesty to return to normal life excluded from society people including those with a criminal past contradicted the mood of the society or at least a significant number of its members. This conflict of interests, which soon manifested itself not only in the format of the “society-power” relationship, but also at different levels of the power vertical became one of the main obstacles to changing the norms and practices of social control, especially with regard to one of the foundations of identification — the division into “friends” and “aliens”. For many citizens of the USSR, “the criminal is the enemy”, which must be mercilessly punished and isolated from society. At the same time, the very category of “criminal” behavior remained very vague. Its main criterion was not the content of what was done, but the fact of punishment as the popular opinion was “we do not put the innocent in jail”, “there is no smoke without fire” and etc. The system of stigmatization was cultivated for decades labeling “our people and enemies” and had a strong inertia, which was not completely overcome.

At the same time, this was only one reason for the unwillingness of citizens and officials to reconsider their attitude to outsiders, as well as to social deviations and people which do not follow norms of law and morality. Result of the amnesty did not at all contribute to the formation of a public tolerance. It would be not an exaggeration to say that the criminals which left camps made a rampant crime in the country. The riots began already within and about trains, which transported former prisoners. From the places there were alarm signals: “The Amur regional Committee reported that the amnestied persons following the echelon No. 701 robbed buffets and platform shops at six railway stations. The task forces that accompanied the echelons, being intimidated, in many cases do not act. At the Mikhailo-Chesnokovskaya station on May 20, a large group of amnestied people dispersed the police and held the station in their

¹² GA RF, f. R-7523, op. 58, d. 129, l. 107.

hands for two and a half hours¹³". However, ordinary citizens were more concerned about the rampant criminals, the citizens complained to the Central Committee of the CPSU, the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and personally to the Soviet leaders.

There were so many letters that the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR had to organize their verification and investigate the mentioned cases of outrages. Minister Kruglov reported the results to Voroshilov a few months later. Most of the facts were confirmed. So, in an anonymous letter from Ulyanovsk, it was reported that criminals seized the district party committee and robbed its employees. "This robbery really took place. On May 19, 1953 Prokudin, who was released under the amnesty, being drunk entered the building of the district committee of the CPSU and in one of the rooms took away from four employees of the district committee, including the secretary of the district committee, a wristwatch, broke the telephone wire and disappeared. After 1.5 hours, the criminal was detained by police officers and on June 20 1954 he was sentenced to 15 years in prison in the ITL¹⁴".

The criminal situation was particularly difficult in remote areas, where there were a large number of camps. The released prisoners often a country, unwilling or unable to leave a camps suburbs. This situation was recorded, for example, in the Vostochno-Sakhalinsky district of the Sakhalin Region, where the crime rate increased sharply in the first months after the amnesty. In Norilsk during October–November 1953 294 criminal offenses were registered, and in the first decade of December — 61, including 3 murders, 19 robberies and 27 thefts. In Dudinka, only from December 2 to December 8, 5 murders were committed. In the village and port of Pevek in the Krasnoyarsk Territory in the second and third quarters of 1953 — 201 crimes, including 26 cases of banditry and robbery, 23 murders and 6 rapes. According to the law enforcement and party bodies, "the criminal element terrorized the population, the murders have a nature of torture, no one wants to identify the killed citizens for fear of revenge, almost no one witnesses the cases, except for the military, and this has led to the fact that the murders are got only if the criminal is detained on the spot¹⁵".

According to the Prosecutor's Office of the USSR, since the second quarter of 1953, the increase in crime (murders, robberies, theft and hooliganism, fraud) was observed "almost everywhere", and in September "the trend to reduce them is still not outlined". "It has been established that a large number of particularly dangerous crimes are committed by persons released from prison under amnesty. They involve unstable elements in their criminal activities, especially among young people¹⁶". During the year 320 835 crimes were registered for all types of criminal offenses (without data from the transport police authorities), while in 1952 246 850, and in 1954 265 082¹⁷. Because of the complication of the criminal situation, the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU on July 2 approved the draft decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR "On the non-application of amnesty to persons convicted for robbery, to thieves, which practiced recidivism, and malicious hooligans". Persons released on the basis of the decree of March 27, if they did not

¹³ RGANI, f. 5, op. 15, d. 402, l. 89.

¹⁴ GA RF, f. R-7523, op. 85s, d. 250, l. 44.

¹⁵ Na «krayu» sovetskogo obshchestva. Social'nye marginaly kak ob"ekt gosudarstvennoj politiki. 1945–1960-e gg. Dokumenty [On the" edge " of Soviet society. Social marginals as an object of state policy. 1945-1960-ies. Documents] / E. Yu. Zubkova, T. Yu. Zhukova (eds.). Moscow, 2010. P. 150.

¹⁶ Na «krayu» sovetskogo obshchestva. Pp. 144–145, 148.

¹⁷ GA RF, f. R-9415, op. 3, d. 273, l. 194–210.

work anywhere, were sent back to the camps for the period remaining at the time of their release under the amnesty¹⁸.

The negative consequences of the amnesty had paradoxically a positive effect. Being largely “ unexpected “ at least on such a scale they showed that neither the government structures nor the law enforcement agencies have sufficient control over the situation to react quickly on it, much less predict it. This forced Soviet officials seriously to address to a problem of criminals. Before that, there was not even a good, unified system of accounting for criminal offenses. As had recognized by the Deputy Prosecutor General of the USSR, G. N. Novikov, many of them remained unregistered at all. No less actual was the question of the state of the system responsible for controlling crime as the police, the prosecutor’s office, the judiciary; it was obvious that there was a needed of reform of the whole system. Finally, in order to solve the problem of crime, it was necessary to study this as it was done during the 1920s. It was 1953 when task of reviving domestic criminology and deviantology did not seem actual yet, but this went to life soon after administrative and political-ideological methods applying to improvement of the situation had exhausted. Amnesty’s criminal trail has drawn attention to the phenomenon of professional, organized crime; previously this did not stand out from the general crimes, and the concept of organized criminals was not used. Even in the professional police lexicon specialists preferred to talk about “recidivist criminals”, “recidivist thieves”, but not organized criminals¹⁹.

The first experience of this kind was the creation of a Special Bureau within the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR in 1955, which was soon transformed into a Research Department (abolished in 1959). Appointed in 1956 the Minister of Internal Affairs N. P. Dudorov instructed the department’s employees to resume research on criminal crime and directly “on the scene” of camps. There was an aim to collect a documentary base and sociological material, including interviews with prisoners. This task was performed by young lawyers Yu.B. Utevsky and A.M. Yakovlev, they came to the department. It was 1957, when A.M. Yakovlev conducted a large study in the East Ural ITL (Vosturallag), 800 recidivists were included in the sociological database, which was created by him. Later this material was used as a basis for a doctoral dissertation²⁰, the first one on this subject in 30 years²¹.

The criminal community, which was united by a principle of forced co-existence, disintegrated after being released and placed out camps. Some of released prisoners sought to integrate into society and fellow norms of this, while others continued to live according to the “laws of thieves “, in their own “world” with their own rules and regulation. They brought with them a subculture which became attractive, contagious “for a part of society, especially young people²², which were attracted by a wrongness in the Soviet conditions of a total control. As the musician A. S. Kozlov recalled

¹⁸ Reabilitaciya: kak eto bylo. Dokumenty Prezidiuma CK KPSS i drugie materialy. T. 1. Mart 1953 — fevral’ 1956. M., 2000. [Rehabilitation: as it was. Documents of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU and other materials. Vol. 1. March 1953 — February 1956] / A.N. Artizov, YU.V. Sigachev., V.G. Khlopov, I.N. Shevchyuk (eds.). Moscow, 2000. P. 382.

¹⁹ Elie M. Banditen und Juristen im Tauwetter GULAG-Reform, kriminelle Gegenkultur und kriminologische Expertise // Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas. 2009. H. 4. S. 492—512.

²⁰ Yakovlev A.M. Bor’ba s recidivnoy prestupnost’yu [The fight against recidivism]. Moscow, 1964.

²¹ Elie M. Banditen und Juristen. S. 497—499.

²² On the impact of the criminal subculture on society, see: Dobson M. Holodnoe leto Hrushchyova. Vozvrashchency iz GULAGA, prestupnost’ i trudnaya sud’ba reform posle Stalina. [Cold Summer of Khrushchev. Returnees from the Gulag, crime and the difficult fate of reforms after Stalin]. Moscow, 2014. Pp. 123—149.

“the image of “urka” (“urka” is professional criminal on Russian slang) provoked not only fear, but also a special sense of respect. A kind of symbiosis of the “urka” and a slightly criminal sailor was considered fashionable in the outdoors among the middle-aged boys²³.” Flared trousers, a vest, a cap with a cropped visor, a tattoo and an imitation of a metal fix were paraphernalia of independent man as boys believed. Thug songs were also popular, these songs contained a kind of hybrid of prison folklore and urban romance: “Slowly and gradually they seeped from the Far East and from the Far North, they broke out in the station buffets of the junction stations. The amnesty decree hummed them through his teeth. Like the pickets of an advancing army, individual songs swung around small towns, their beat tapped by suburban trains, and finally, on the shoulders of the rehabilitated persons which suffered under Article 58 before these songs appeared in culture of the Soviet city. The Soviet intelligentsia sang these tunes²⁴”.

On August 27 1953 the USSR Council of Ministers adopted secret Resolution No. 2283-930c “On measures to strengthen the protection of public order and the fight against criminals”. It noted that the bodies of the Ministry of Internal Affairs “do not take effective measures to protect public order and do little work to combat crime”, some of the recidivist criminals resumed their activities after being released. A set of measures was planned to improve the work of the police to prevent and solve crimes, first of all, especially serious ones, to strengthen the fight against “anti-social elements”, in accordance with the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of July 23 1951. The Councils of Ministers of the Soviet Union and Autonomous Republics had to provide employment for all those released prisoners under the amnesty by September 10. Disabled people with disabilities and elderly citizens who had no relatives were sent to nursing homes for the elderly and disabled. The heads of enterprises and trade unions were obliged to organize the training of former prisoners and then to employ as skilled workers. The heads of the enterprises received the right to pay a stipend of 400 RUB to the amnestied persons, which passed professional training within three months²⁵.

In order to supervise the execution of this decree, the Prosecutor General of the USSR issued Order No. 225c on August 31 obliging the prosecutors of the republics, territories, regions and districts to carry out a number of measures, including “within a week to deal with the state of crime, to develop and carry out the necessary measures aimed at strengthening the fight against criminals, while paying special attention to the activation and improvement of the effectiveness of the fight against such crimes as murder, robbery, theft and hooliganism.” However, this task was initially impossible. It soon became clear that the measures aimed at improving the quality of law enforcement agencies could be implemented only imperfectly: the police and prosecutor’s office, which was in charge of operational development, inquest and investigation, was simply not ready for such a volume of work primarily due to its small number, insufficient qualifications, as well as interdepartmental conflicts²⁶.

The surge of criminal activity is not the only problem associated with the amnesty. Another problem and much more important affecting the bulk of the released

²³ Kozlov A. «Kozyol na sakse» — i tak vsyu zhizn’... [“The goat on the Saxon” — and so all my life ...]. Moscow, 1998. P. 56.

²⁴ Daniel’ YU. Govorit Moskva [Daniel Yu. Says]. Moscow, 1991. P. 100.

²⁵ GA RF, f. R-9401, op. 12, d. 231/2, l. 104—105.

²⁶ Na «krayu» sovetskogo obshchestva. P. 150.

was adaptation including opportunities and conditions for returning to normal life, employment, housing and not least the attitude to them of society i.e. the willingness of society to accept, “include former outsiders”. Difficulties with finding a job, when a person was “out of business” and without an allowance for residence, of course were also a risk factor for criminal recidivism²⁷.

It was June 1953 and two months after the amnesty, when from 25 to 40%²⁸ of the amnestied persons remained unemployed in different cities and regions. As of September 10, according to the regional police departments, the percentage of employed people rose to 88, only in some regions this lagged behind: in the Georgian SSR, Krasnodar arear — 60%, in the Latvian and Moldavian SSR, Velikiye Luki region — 70%²⁹. Local authorities and directors of enterprises were answer for employment. Former prisoners were accepted willingly in a number of localities, especially where there was population deficit. So, the Tomsk regional Committee of the CPSU expressed its readiness to accept 5 000 families in collective farms and 1 100 families in the enterprises of local industry. The Ministry of Agriculture and Procurement of the USSR supported the request of the regional committee and offered to provide benefits for resettled persons including free travel, transportation of property up to two tons per family and transportation of livestock; a one-time allowance of 800 RUB for a head of a family and 300 RUB for each family member; write-off of arrears of agricultural tax and mandatory supplies of agricultural products in localities which families leave and exemption from tax and mandatory supplies (except for milk) for a period of two years within localities where they move in; a loan for housing construction of 10 000 RUB and 1 500 RUB for the purchase of a cow. These proposals were in line with the one adopted on April 7 1953 the Order of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, which granted a number of ministries the right to pay a one-time irrevocable allowance in the amount of 150 and 300 RUB in case of employment contracts with amnestied persons to work at enterprises and in construction, officials had to pay 150 RUB in case of one-year contract and 300 RUB in case of two-years contract. In addition, it was allowed to issue loans for individual housing construction in the amount of 10 000 RUB and for a small farm 2000—3000 RUB³⁰.

However, despite the decisions and recommendations made at the highest official level, local authorities acted delaying in fulfillment these measures especially in the first months. This was primarily due to the persistently suspicious attitude towards all people with experience of imprisonment. The consciousness could not accept the idea that “outcasts” were able to become “normal” citizens³¹. Transcoding “aliens” into “our comrades” was very difficult. Even less ready for this kind of turn, or rather work, was the very “right” citizens. Of course, the habit of thinking in the paradigm formed in the Stalinist years also affected here: a person who was imprisoned, re-

²⁷ Adler N. *The Gulag survivor: beyond the Soviet System*. Routledge, 2017; Elie M. Policies concerning amnestied and rehabilitated former Gulag prisoners in the Novosibirsk oblast, 1953—1960 // *Cahiers du Monde Russe*. 2006. № 1. P. 327—347; Elie M. Rehabilitation in the Soviet Union, 1953—1964: a policy unachieved // *De-Stalinising Eastern Europe: The Rehabilitation of Stalin’s Victims after 1953* / K. McDermott, M. Stibbe (eds.). New York., 2015. P. 25—45; Sprau M. *Kolyma nach dem GULAG: Entstalinisierung im Magadaner Gebiet 1953—1960*. Berlin; Boston, 2018.

²⁸ RGANI, f. 5, op. 15, d. 402, l. 46—47.

²⁹ GA RF, f. R-9415, op. 3, d. 233, l. 225.

³⁰ GA RF, f. R-5446, op. 87, d. 1511, l. 67—69.

³¹ Alexopoulos gets on the same problems, but about the pre-war period. She also input terminology as the division of Soviet society into “Stalinist outcasts” and “right citizens» in Alexopoulos G. *Stalin’s outcasts: Aliens, Citizens, and the Soviet State, 1926—1936*. Ithaca; L., 2003.

ardless of the nature of the crime committed by him, was perceived as a potential criminal. The criminal robbery organized by a number of the amnestied provoked popularity of this stereotype.

It is interesting that there were in letters about results of the amnesty very rarely sympathetic statements with an exception of an attitude towards former political prisoners, but in 1953 there were relatively small number of such people in ranks of released prisoners. Alarmist sentiments mostly prevailed with a large proportion of collective complaints. Collective farmers from the Rostov region wrote: "Since the arrival of the former prisoners after the amnesty, we do not know calm and normal life and work. Nothing like this has happened during the 30-year existence of our collective farm, recently postal clerks, collective farmers carrying food to the market have been attacked and robbed, shops have been robbed, and a watchman and one of collective farmers who worked in the collective farm for more than 25 years has been brutally killed... All this caused a great panic among the collective farmers, who because of fear do not go out to night work on animal husbandry, to protect warehouses, stopped visiting cultural institutions and two families gather in one room for the night from 7 o'clock in the evening, because robbery and murder are not carried out by individuals but in whole by groups of 8—10 people armed with firearms." Workers of the assembly department No. 5 of the Neftezavodmotazh trust in the Kuibyshev region expressed a same opinion: "We work 10—16 hours very hard on a building of a large oil refinery, but we do not have rest in a line of the Stalin's Constitution. There are people among us which try to live as parasites during a whole life. Evenings we do not have opportunity to go outdoors, to go to the cinema or other cultural institutions because of surged robbery and violence in our young city Novokuibyshevsk. Left youth joined the amnestied persons. Individual houses in our city are beginning to look like prisons because of bars on windows. What's the matter? Why can't we work, have normal rest, and study freely in our country of forming up communism?"

Often the letters resembled "horror stories" and were based mainly on rumors. At the same time, the Interior Ministry's inspections showed that "a significant number of facts reported in the workers' letters correspond to reality." Citizens saw one of the main shortcomings in the system of punishing criminals and demanded "harsh measures" overthinking the reasons of the rampant crime. For the sake of persuasiveness, they referred not only to the consequences of the amnesty but also to the desire to politicize criminal crimes to requalify them as terrorism. It was not only about robberies and murders, even hooliganism was named "political banditry". There were also claims about the influence of foreign agents. "The presence of cases of murders and hooliganism without apparent reasons and without robberies carried out by organized gangs makes us think about the sabotage nature of these murders, as result of a participation of enemies from abroad", this was the opinion of scientists from Leningrad. An engineer from Krasnoyarsk agreed with them: "I see no difference between a saboteur who blew up a theater or burned down a library, and a bandit, a robber who by killing and robbing good workers does not allow them to visit these institutions in the evening to use them. I do not understand why we do not call such people enemies of people and why we do not judge them and do not deal with them as enemies of the the nation? It is possible that the gangs of these robbers are specially formed by the enemies of the people for political reasons, in order to intimidate good people, paralyze the work of evening cultural and educational institutions and cause discontent among the people." The teacher of the Novosibirsk Institute of Railway Transport Engineers also

believed that the purpose of the actions of foreign agents to activate crime is to create a sense of discontent among the population and undermine the defense capability of the state. Therefore, “it is time to fulfill the instructions of the Great Lenin, who said that there is no difference for the Soviet government between hooligans, bandits and capitalists³²».

All these claims, of course, were an unambiguous appeal to the rhetoric and practices of the 1930s. It is obvious, that the politicization of crime took place during 1930s, which began to be considered in the context of the class struggle. The head of the NKVD G. G. Yagoda insisted in 1935 that a hooligan, bandit, robber is “a real counter-revolutionary³³”. This logic required the appropriate punishment of guilty persons, therefore citizens were in favor of tougher responsibility up to the death penalty³⁴. Exotic proposals were also expressed, for example, to exile criminals “to the islands”, where they would live in complete isolation. This strange idea, which reflected not so much a solution to the problem as the absence of one, found an unexpected continuation in science fiction. I. A. Efremov invented the Island of Oblivion in the novel “The Andromeda Nebula”, which became “a refuge for those who were not carried away by the already intense activities of the Big World, who did not want to work on an equal basis with everyone”, so, for the outcasts of the “right” society³⁵.

In general, citizens were not yet ready to accept the ideas of liberalizing and humanizing criminal legislation, reintegrating people which had committed crimes but had already served their sentences for it. The letters were mostly about the crimes of highest level, but there was in the minds of people often no line between a robber and a hooligan, between a criminal recidivist and a person who had broken the law for the first time. Meanwhile, those who spoke out in favor of “harsh” laws are the same “public” that was soon called upon to fight crime and maintain social order but with completely different methods. These methods began to be discussed during the development of new criminal legislation and the reform of the social control system in general. It was found in the course of the discussions that the society was much more conservative than the professional circles and the state’s leadership.

³² Na «krayu» sovetskogo obshchestva. P. 162—163.

³³ Shearer D. Stalinskij voennyj socializm. Repressii i obshchestvennyj porjadok v Sovetskom Soyuze, 1924—1953 gg. [Stalinist military socialism. Repressions and public order in the Soviet Union, 1924—1953] Moscow, 2014. P. 34—40.

³⁴ Na «krayu» sovetskogo obshchestva. P. 163—164.

³⁵ Efremov I.A. Tumannost’ Andromedy [The Andromeda Nebula]. Moscow, 1958.