

General information

Deportations in 1941 and 1949

Relation to the course / learning topic

Contemporary History I – Estonia and the World in the First Half of the 20th Century, topic IV: WWII (Estonia in WWII – occupations, options open to Estonians); Contemporary History III – essential features of developments in the 20th century: Estonia and the World III, topic: Crimes against humanity

Key words

concentration camp, labor-prison camp, GULAG, deportation, communist crimes in Estonia

Study results

The pupil

- is familiar with the ways in which crimes were committed against humanity and their consequences;
- comprehends the nature of crimes against humanity and how necessary it is to condemn and prevent them;
- works with different sources.

Description of the lesson

At the beginning of the lesson, the pupils read an excerpt from a source and the teacher asks them to find three references from it to the topic that is about to be considered. Thereafter a brainstorming session takes place where every pupil suggests key words associated with deportation, which are then written on the blackboard. Groups of four are formed in the comprehension of meaning phase, where every pupil is given sources on different topics for individual work. Individual work is followed by group work where pupils introduce their sources to the other members of their group and they complete the fact pyramid together. The lesson ends with a discussion led by the teacher on the topic of crimes against humanity.



Lesson plan

Deportations in 1941 and 1949

Evocation (4 minutes)

The teacher distributes sources to each individual pupil or to pairs of pupils, Appendix 1. The teacher can choose whether to use the text or a picture from the text since in this case the typescript is sufficiently clear and brief. The aim of the assignment is not so much to see who comes up with the right answer first but rather to find examples from the text according to which the decision was made. The answers are checked orally.

Comprehension of meaning (18 + 15 minutes)

Stage I. Individual work with a source

The teacher divides pupils up into groups of four and gives the groups worksheets 1–4. Pupils divide up the excerpts from sources among themselves, read the excerpt that they are given and answer the questions in the worksheets. Where necessary, the teacher should assist pupils with certain concepts that may be unfamiliar to them, such as echelon (trainload of people).

Stage II. Pupils introduce their topic to others, completion of the worksheet

The members of the group introduce the recollections they have read to one another relying on their answers to the questions. Together they complete Worksheet 5, using the worksheets that have been completed individually.

* The teacher should direct the attention of the pupils to the general information on deportation preceding the texts as well as to the source information provided beneath the texts. For instance, in the event that the pupils do not know the date on which the June deportation took place, it can be found in Source B.

* One option is to distribute the worksheets to the pupils as well along with the source texts and every pupil makes an individual drawing in their notebook through discussion with the members of his group. In this case, each pupil will retain the information obtained in the lesson. In the first case, the teacher will have the opportunity to evaluate the result of group work.

Reflection (8 minutes)

The teacher poses the following questions to the class for oral discussion:

- 1) What crimes against humanity can you name in addition to deportation?
- 2) Should statutes of limitations apply to crimes against humanity or should such statutes of limitations not be applicable? Give reasons why.



3) Why is it important to talk about crimes against humanity that were committed over half a century ago?

If the pupils are unable to come up with sufficient examples when answering the first question, the teacher should name examples himself. At least 2–3 pupils should have the opportunity to express their opinions after each question. The aim of the discussion is to arrive at the study result – pupils comprehend the nature of crimes against humanity and how necessary it is to condemn and prevent them. Thus, the role of the teacher is to lead the discussion and to avoid an attitude of letting things take their own course: people never learn / people are like that / it isn't possible for the individual to change anything, and other such positions.



Appendix 1

Deportations in 1941 and 1949

Assignment

Read the following excerpt. What is the event described? Give three examples from the text that your decision is based on.

Source A

"It was Thursday, 24 March 1949.

Snow still gleamed in the woods. Melt water trickled here and there. Automobile tires ploughed deep furrows into the soft mud on the highway. And the sun smiled so benignly in the cloudless sky over all of this.

Could I have guessed during that beautiful spring day what the night would bring, what the subsequent days would turn out to be like? No, then I didn't yet know how cruel fate could be.

Yet even before dusk settled on the meadows of home, we received notice, awful notice...It was notice that what happened in June of 1941, what Estonians can never forget, was coming again...

We already knew that if this kind of fate were to strike Estonians again, we would be among the first to go. Yet now when we heard that it was so imminent, I still didn't believe it. I couldn't get used to the idea that something so dreadful could come again.

No, it could not be true...

It was hard for father and mother to believe it as well. Yet father nevertheless decided to go into hiding at night. Mother had to stay home with the children."

Source: Kati [=Lembi Saksakulm]: Kannatuste päevil (During Days of Suffering) (1949–1953) pg. 1.

Oli neljapäev, 24. märts 1949. a.

Metsades valendas veel lumi. Siin-seal nirisid veeojad. Meenteel aga kündsid autorattad sügavaid vagusid pehmesse porri. Ja kõige selle üle naeratas päike nii heatehtlikult kõrges pilvitus taevas.

Kas võisin ma aimata keset seda ilusat kevadpäeva, milline saabub õõ, millised tulevad järgmised päevad? Ei, siis ei teadnud ma veel, kui karm võib olla saatus.

Kuid veel enne, kui hämarus laskus kodunurmedele, saabus teade, õudne teade... See oli teade sellest, et jälle tuleb see, mis 1941. a. juunis, see, mida eestlased ei suuda iialgi unustada -

Juba varem teadsime, et kui eestlasi tabab tesa selline saatus, oleme meie esimeste minejate hulgas. Kuid nüüd kuuldus, et see on nii lähedal, ma siiski ei uskunud, ei suutnud harjude mõttega, et midagi nii kohutavat võib taas tulla.

Ei, see ei või tõi olla...

Raske oli seda uskuda ka isal ja emal. Kuid siiski otsustas isa end õõsel verjata, ema pidi lastega koju jääma.



Worksheet 1

Deportations in 1941 and 1949

Deportations Carried Out in Estonia by the Soviet Union NSV

Deportation is the banishment of residents from their home neighborhood and forced resettlement. Deportation is considered to be a crime against humanity. In the case of Estonia, resettlement and banishment can be spoken of conditionally because many people, first and foremost people deported in 1941, were placed in **labor-prison camps**, in other words they were imprisoned, not resettled. In 1941, deportees were divided up into two categories: people subject to arrest (heads of families) and people subject to banishment (family members sent into exile). The aim of the **June deportation** was to safeguard Soviet power in the annexed territories by removing "hostile" categories of people. In the **deportation of March 1949**, the two primary aims were to remove those farmers (kulaks) from society who were thought to pose danger to collectivization and to eliminate the supporters of independence-oriented persons, in other words so called nationalists and forest brothers ("bandits"). In total, about 10 000 persons from all strata of society were deported in the June deportation. Over 20 000 were deported in the March deportation.

Assignment

Read the source and write down your answers to the questions based on the source and your previous knowledge.

- 1) Did people know to expect deportation? Give reasons for your point of view.
- 2) What could be the reason why husbands were separated from their families?
- 3) How did people behave in this situation? Give different examples from the text.

Source B. The First Deportation

"Ants Kongas was immediately ordered to go into the dining room and stand in the corner beside the sideboard with his hands up. A soldier was left there to guard him. The soldier nevertheless held his rifle in his right hand peacefully at his side. One of the soldiers came into the family's bedroom where the family's child was sleeping. The soldier started shouting in Russian: Get dressed, get dressed! He nevertheless was not aiming his rifle ready to fire. Marta Kongas was in her nightgown and wanted to get dressed. She wanted to ask the soldier to turn and look away but she did not know how to say that in Russian. Then she motioned to show the soldier to turn his back. The Russian only laughed at that. And then Marta started getting dressed with a vengeance in view of the soldier and the soldier smirked while she was dressing. Marta wept the whole time and the child was awakened by its mother's piteous weeping, upon which the child started crying as well.



The Estonian deporters said that they had 15 minutes but they were nevertheless given considerably more time to get ready. They were ordered to take winter clothes along. Ants then asked where they were going. He was given the answer that you'll see when you get there. Marta was so anxious, and furthermore pregnant, that she really did not know what to do. She started looking for this and that in the closet. She should have taken along baby clothes left over from their first child but it did not dawn on her. Her pregnancy did not come to mind at all at that moment. They did not know as they packed that the men would be separated from their families. Marta packed her husband's winter coat but since her husband was separated from her in Jõgeva, her husband was left alone wearing only his summer suit.

By the time they arrived at the railway station, lots of people had already gathered there. People were flustered and now in retrospect, it's hard to say where those railcars stood at the Jõgeva railway station. Everyone wept and worried. When vehicles arrived from Põltsamaa, Ants and other younger men were immediately taken away from their families and escorted further away by armed guards. Nobody was quite sure where the men were taken.

*Families were hastily driven into separate railcars. They were cattle cars with bars on the windows. The soldiers put 52 (?) (*the question mark is in the recollection – author's note) people in each railcar. Bunks were built into the cattle cars. Both lengthwise sides of the railcars were filled with triple-decker bunks and there were bunks in the middle of the railcar as well but that was still not enough bunks. /-/ The WC was in the middle of the railcar – it consisted of a pipe where one had to do one's business. But fortunately, the women were intelligent and hung a sheet around it so that people could use the toilet under more decent conditions. They were given food by Estonians while they were still in Estonia. Apparently, the people knew that these kinds of trains were passing through and still wanted to help those unfortunate people in the trains. Thus, there was a station outside of Tartu that the people referred to as Orava station. The train stopped and Estonian women were at the station with pails filled with boiled potatoes. The deportees were allowed to come out of the cattle cars and each person was given a handful of warm potatoes. /-/ Marta recalled that those women were dressed somewhat differently, perhaps they were women from Setumaa. The state provided millet porridge much later somewhere in the heart of Russia. That porridge had no taste to it.*

The trip to Siberia lasted a month. /-/ When the train stopped at a station, the children were allowed out to drink water. The adults were not trusted lest they escape. Cold water was brought into the train. There was enough to go around for drinking but nobody could wash themselves."

Kull, Helle: 14. juuni 1941. a küüditamisest Põltsamaa kihelkonnas. Mälestusi inimestelt nende karmist elust Siberis (On the Deportation of 14 June 1941 in Põltsamaa Parish. People's Memories of their Harsh Life in Siberia). pp. 3, 6, 10 and 12–14.



Worksheet 2

Deportations in 1941 and 1949

Deportations Carried Out in Estonia by the Soviet Union NSV

Deportation is the banishment of residents from their home neighborhood and forced resettlement. Deportation is considered to be a crime against humanity. In the case of Estonia, resettlement and banishment can be spoken of conditionally because many people, first and foremost people deported in 1941, were placed in **labor-prison camps**, in other words they were imprisoned, not resettled. In 1941, deportees were divided up into two categories: people subject to arrest (heads of families) and people subject to banishment (family members sent into exile). The aim of the **June deportation** was to safeguard Soviet power in the annexed territories by removing "hostile" categories of people. In the **deportation of March 1949**, the two primary aims were to remove those farmers (kulaks) from society who were thought to pose danger to collectivization and to eliminate the supporters of independence-oriented persons, in other words so called nationalists and forest brothers ("bandits"). In total, about 10 000 persons from all strata of society were deported in the June deportation. Over 20 000 were deported in the March deportation.

Assignment

Read the source and write down your answers to the questions based on the source and your previous knowledge.

- 1) What problems did deportees encounter upon their return to their homeland? Give examples from the text.
- 2) What could have been the reason for restricting the movement of former deportees? Was this reason justified in your opinion?
- 3) In your opinion, did people who had been in exile return to their homeland or did they merely exchange one place of residence for another? Explain.

Source C. Return to the Estonian Homeland

"When Stalin was dead and Beria had been overthrown, Marta Kongas started submitting petitions to return to Estonia. She received a negative reply every time by way of the commandant's office. But then in early 1958, she sent a letter to the chief prosecutor stating that her husband Ants Kongas, who had been a lawyer, had been dead since 2 January 1942 already and asked how long his family has to continue to live in Siberia because of him. And this time the answer was positive. /-/ Both women got off in Tartu. Marta continued onward by bus to Põltsamaa. The bus was so crowded that she couldn't get a seat. It was strange to hear Russian women in the bus keep referring to Tallinn as



"our Tallinn". We live this way and that. Thus in 1958, Russians were already used to seeing Tallinn as their city, and Marta had until then thought that Tallinn was still a city of what was once her homeland. /-/ Since her son Ago arrived back in the Estonian homeland before her, he lived at his aunt's place in Põltsamaa in the summer and with relatives in Kamari on weekends. At that time, he was working at the vehicle depot as a transportation worker earning money. He was learning Estonian so that he could take his entrance exams for Tartu State University the following year."

Kull, Helle: 14. juuni 1941. a küüditamisest Põltsamaa kihelkonnas. Mälestusi inimestelt nende karmist elust Siberis (On the Deportation of 14 June 1941 in Põltsamaa Parish. People's Memories of their Harsh Life in Siberia). pp. 39 and 41.

*"I returned to the homeland in the summer of 1950. My daughter was already in school by then. I was happy but I had to start worrying about how to find a job. There were job openings available but when employers heard that I had been in prison camp (*she had been hired as a typist by the German authorities), I was asked to come back the next day because they said they had other candidates for the job as well. When I returned the next day to hear their answer, I was politely turned down. That's how it was everywhere. Then I finally took a job as a night watchman at the Construction Administration where in addition to keeping watch, 18 boilers had to be stoked using oil shale. By morning I was as black as a Negro. I worked there for about 2 years. That work had a negative effect on my lungs. Luckily, I chanced upon a courageous man who gave me a job. He was the manager of the Teema crafts artel and was of Russian nationality. He said: "Don't be afraid and come to work here, all of Russia has been to prison."*

Makarova, Eva: [Ühe naise elulugu. 31. XII 1915–1973 (A Woman's Life Story. 31 December 1915 – 1973)] pg. 7.

"I was deported from Tallinn in 1949 and I'm not allowed to live in Tallinn anymore. In 1970, the Ministry of Construction offered me a job in Tallinn – as the chief economist at the Trust for Organizing Construction. In order to start working at that job, I had to move to Tallinn. I had to write a petition to Tallinn's Executive Committee for permission to live in Tallinn because officially, the executive committee is the Soviet organ of power that decides if a particular person is or is not fit to live in the territory under its jurisdiction. The executive committee didn't give me a permit. /-/ Whereas Uno Jürisoo, the Minister of Construction at that time who was an extraordinarily intelligent and pleasant man for a Soviet minister, had sent a letter to the executive committee in support of my petition in which he asked them to resolve the matter concerning my residence permit favorably because he needs me in Tallinn.

Scores with deportees were not settled with their official release from exile and evidently, they never will be settled once and for all. A separate register is kept of them all and



special restrictions apply to them. Those restrictions are for the most part not felt in everyday life but they manifest themselves when something out of the ordinary is at hand. For instance, nobody from our family has been issued a permit to visit our brother, who lives in America even though such permits were issued rather liberally in the '60's and early '70's."

Susi, Arno: Reis kaugele (Journey to a Place Far Away) [Mälestused 1949. a küüditamisest ja elust Siberis 1944–1961 (Memories of the Deportation of 1949 and Life in Siberia)] pp. 147–148. This memoir was written in 1986.



Worksheet 3

Deportations in 1941 and 1949

Deportations Carried Out in Estonia by the Soviet Union NSV

Deportation is the banishment of residents from their home neighborhood and forced resettlement. Deportation is considered to be a crime against humanity. In the case of Estonia, resettlement and banishment can be spoken of conditionally because many people, first and foremost people deported in 1941, were placed in **labor-prison camps**, in other words they were imprisoned, not resettled. In 1941, deportees were divided up into two categories: people subject to arrest (heads of families) and people subject to banishment (family members sent into exile). The aim of the **June deportation** was to safeguard Soviet power in the annexed territories by removing "hostile" categories of people. In the **deportation of March 1949**, the two primary aims were to remove those farmers (kulaks) from society who were thought to pose danger to collectivization and to eliminate the supporters of independence-oriented persons, in other words so called nationalists and forest brothers ("bandits"). In total, about 10 000 persons from all strata of society were deported in the June deportation. Over 20 000 were deported in the March deportation.

Assignment

Read the source and write down your answers to the questions based on the source and your previous knowledge.

- 1) What reasons were given to justify the deportation of people?
- 2) How many people were there in your opinion who could feel secure when going to sleep on the night of 24 March? Explain your position in a couple of sentences.
- 3) How do you assess conditions in the cattle cars? Give two examples from the text.

Source D. On the Night before 25 March

"Rumors began circulating during the day on 24 March already that a deportation was about to begin at night and that enormous numbers of vehicles had been requisitioned for this purpose. /-/ It appeared to be certain that something bad was imminent. People nevertheless said with conviction that the deportation would be carried out in the countryside only. At that time, an intense campaign of exposing kulaks accompanied the formation of kolkhozes and it was logical to think that now the kulaks would be attacked. Anxiety, however, crept into people's souls everywhere. This anxiety and moral preparation were so intense that I woke up at night even before the banging began at our door.

My mother asked them to leave my grandmother behind since she was then 78 years old.



*They refused – she was entered on the list and that’s that. /-/ That drive (*to the station) was one of the most hideous experiences for me over all those nine years. Moonlight lit the night and the dawn was just beginning. There was light cloud cover in the sky and the light was somehow eerie. The streets were deserted, only lorries stood here and there at the side of the street with people loading suitcases and bags onto them.*

We found ourselves in a large, four-axle freight car, a so-called Pullman. Double bunks as long as one person had been built at both ends of the car through the width of the car. The bunks at each end of the car could accommodate around 10–12 people. There was also an iron stove at each end of the car with a chimney through the roof. The windows were shut with iron hatches. If I remember correctly, there was a total of 52 people in our car. There were about 60 railcars in our echelon and about 2400 passengers. There were people from very different social strata in our car. /-/ Then there was an old Setu woman named Burilina with her pregnant daughter who was due to give birth any day soon. Seems that the old woman’s son had served in the German Army and was now in prison camp because of that, but her daughter was pregnant by a Red Army soldier doing his compulsory military service. Then there were the Kärps – an elderly retiree married couple, both of them very ill, their son imprisoned for serving in the German Army. Then there was Auntie Kuuskor, a lifelong sauna attendant whose son had been in the German Army and I think had already died in prison camp. /-/ Then there were three sisters – 14-year-old twins and their little 6-year-old sister without their mother. The father of those children was in prison camp. Their mother, however, wasn’t home when the deportation was carried out and the children were taken away without her. When their mother arrived home, she turned herself in to the authorities and caught up with us beyond the Urals. Then there was a big family in our cattle car. A mother with seven children aged 5–15. Their mother suffered from heart disease and suffered several heart attacks over the course of the journey. I think her husband had died in prison, also for serving in the German Army. They had practically nothing with them, were poorly dressed and as it later turned out, were infested with lice. /-/ There was another woman with two sons aged 10–12. That woman was deported because of her ex-husband, with whom she hadn’t lived together for quite some time already. She had already been married to someone else. Her brothers, however, were zealous communists and they themselves had been out that night deporting others when their own sister was taken away.”

Susi, Arno: Reis kaugele (Journey to a Place Far Away) [Mälestused 1949. a küüditamisest ja elust Siberis 1944–1961 (Memories of the Deportation of 1949 and Life in Siberia)] pp. 8–11.



Worksheet 4

Deportations in 1941 and 1949

Deportations Carried Out in Estonia by the Soviet Union NSV

Deportation is the banishment of residents from their home neighborhood and forced resettlement. Deportation is considered to be a crime against humanity. In the case of Estonia, resettlement and banishment can be spoken of conditionally because many people, first and foremost people deported in 1941, were placed in **labor-prison camps**, in other words they were imprisoned, not resettled. In 1941, deportees were divided up into two categories: people subject to arrest (heads of families) and people subject to banishment (family members sent into exile). The aim of the **June deportation** was to safeguard Soviet power in the annexed territories by removing "hostile" categories of people. In the **deportation of March 1949**, the two primary aims were to remove those farmers (kulaks) from society who were thought to pose danger to collectivization and to eliminate the supporters of independence-oriented persons, in other words so called nationalists and forest brothers ("bandits"). In total, about 10 000 persons from all strata of society were deported in the June deportation. Over 20 000 were deported in the March deportation.

Assignment

Read the source and write down your answers to the questions based on the source and your previous knowledge.

- 1) What problems did deportees encounter on their journey? Can you name examples that the source has not described?
- 2) Was the journey similar for all deportees? What did this ensue from?
- 3) What in your opinion could have been the reason why the guards refused to open the doors even at times when the parask (receptacle for excrement) was being used?

Source E. Living Conditions on the "Trip"

"The situation wasn't so bad as far as eating was concerned. Everyone had brought something to eat with them and nobody had much of an appetite. A couple of sandwiches did the trick for the whole day. The situation concerning drinking water and the parask was far more serious. Our cattle car didn't completely run out of drinking water. /-/- In some cattle cars that didn't get their turn to fetch water in Aruküla, however, a very horrible situation developed. Even years later, one mother recounted with horror how her little daughter had monotonously moaned: water, water, water..."

The situation concerning the parasks was dreadful as well. There were not many pails in the cattle car and the last pail for drinking water couldn't be contaminated either. But



there were over 50 people in the cattle car. It wasn't long before all the parasks were full and their contents slopped onto the car floor as the train rode onward, stinking as it ran over the floor under the baggage of those people who had had to settle in on the floor in the middle of the car. The train stopped very many times in stations. Then we banged from inside on the car door. In most cases one of the guards appeared at the door then and asked what was wrong. In response to our demands that the doors be opened, water be provided and the parasks emptied out, they curtly answered that the doors would be opened when the time comes. We finally threatened to cut a hole in the cattle car floor for emptying out the parasks. In response they said we could go ahead and try but they have a machine gun on the roof for stopping us. We nevertheless had no choice but to cut a hole in the floor because we couldn't drown in s...t. Somebody had packed an axe in their baggage. All saws and axes that had been noticed when we were loaded into the cars had been confiscated. Then we cut a hole in the floor near the cattle car door, trying to time each blow of the axe with the clank of the cattle car wheels at the joints in the rails. Thus, the first problem of everyday life was solved in the society of people being forcibly transported into exile."

Susi, Arno: Reis kaugele (Journey to a Place Far Away) [Mälestused 1949. a. küüditamisest ja elust Siberis 1944–1961 (Memories of the Deportation of 1949 and Life in Siberia)] pg. 13.



Worksheet 5**Deportations in 1941 and 1949****Assignment**

Present a brief summary of your source to the fellow members of your group. Thereafter fill in the fact pyramid on deportation together.

Deportation

What is it? (definition)

When did it happen?

What was the reason for it?

What were its characteristic traits?

What were its consequences?

