

## **An Individual against Political Pressure – Re-educating Society in Soviet Estonia 1940-1960-(1991)**

My earlier research area was mainly concerned with investigating mass repressions (deportations, arrests) in the Stalinist period. Death of Stalin delimited mass repressions but did not relieve consequences of violence – the cumulative effect of continuous mental pressure and fear in society was still prevailing. It could be admitted that in definite cases the homecoming of repressed persons even increased tensions among the people. By the years 1954-60 (this was the period of homecomings of the repressed persons from imprisonment and exile), as to mentality and patterns of behaviour, Estonian society had definitely changed and split up into numerous groups, trust had vanished in society. What caused the lack of trust – fear, feeling of guilt, betrayals, propaganda or something else?

The aim of this project is to analyze sculpting of the society after Stalinist mass terror through an individual's perspective. What kind of measures and mechanisms were used to achieve "normalization" of society? Analyzing the courses of life of various categories of individuals (national intelligentsia, school youth etc.), it is possible to observe various strategies of behaviour, manipulations, giving up attitudes, resistance, adaptations to "new normality", in sum, it could all be worded as the formation of a new kind of regulated consciousness through experience. Based on individual examples, it is revealed what kind of control practices and measures were used in society; how information was gathered about anti-Soviet manifestations at different phases; how information was processed and used; how the obligatory confessions were obtained, varying from physical force to indirect means of influence, such as bringing in the interrogated person's family members, close friends, neighbours, colleagues as well as paid informants.

My research draws on party and state security organs' materials, in addition to autobiographies and memoirs, all these sources are analyzed in a comparative framework. Proceeding from sources, multiple memory-political topics of discussion emerge in this connection – like where the boundary lines between remembering and forgetting are; whether the more recent "softer" memories overshadow the earlier "harsher" ones; and whether the plurality of historical representations pushes the hardest and psychologically most complicated episodes into oblivion. Several generations were in contact with the Soviet period and their treatments of the past depend on a number of factors.