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THE RESISTANCE AGAINST STALIN REPRESSIONS  
FROM UPRAVLENIE NARODNOGO KOMISSARIATA  
VNUITRENNYKH DEL AT 1930s IN THE SOVIET FAR EAST

The subject about Stalin repressions is very popular not only among Russian scholars, but also in the international scientific community. A large number of scientific papers have been written on various aspects of these processes. Many of them were associated with events in the Far East, both in Russian (1) and in other languages (2). Many research works on this topic have been translated from Russian into English (3).

In the course of research conducted by both Russian and foreign authors, a number of important aspects of repressions were examined – from collectivization, purging in the army and party to national deportations. Also, studies on these processes were conducted in the NKVD – the main mechanism of repressive measures during Stalin ruling period. But at the same time, the processes that took place in Moscow and the central cities of the country were mainly affected.

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(1) *Белая книга о депортации корейского населения в 30-40-х гг* [The white book about deportation of Korean population at 30-40s.], edited by U. H. Lee - E. U. Kim, Moscow, Moskovskaya konfederatsiya korejskikh assotsiatsij, 1997; V. DANILOV - R. MANNING - L. VIOLA, *Трагедия советской деревни. Коллективизация и раскулачивание. 1927-1939* [Tragedy of the Soviet village. Collectivization and dispossession. 1927-1939], Documents and materials in 5 voll., Moscow, Rossijskaya politicheskaya entsiklopediija, 1999-2006; L. I. PROSKURINA, *Октябрьская революция и ее влияние на деревню российского Дальнего Востока: коллективизация и ее последствия* [October Revolution and its influence to the village of the Russian Far East: collectivization and consequences], in «Rossiia i ATR», 2008, 3, pp. 22-30; A. S. SUTURIN, *Дело краевого масштаба* [Case of a regional scale], Khabarovsk, Khabarovskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo, 1991; E. N. CHERNOLUTSKAYA, *Принудительные миграции на советском Дальнем Востоке в сталинский период* [Forced migrations in the Soviet Far East in the Stalin period], in «Vestnik DVO RAN», 1995, 6, pp. 71-79.

(2) H. KUROMIYA, *The Voices of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s*, New Haven (CT), Yale UP, 2007; M. GELB, *An Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation*, in «Russian Review», 1995, 3, pp. 389-412; T. MARTIN, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell UP, 2001; *Koreans in the Soviet Union*, edited by D. S. Suh, Honolulu (HI), U. of Hawaii P., 1987; P. POLIAN, *Against Their Will: The History and Geography of Forced Migrations in the USSR*, Budapest, Central European UP, 2004.

(3) A. NEKRICH, *The Punished Peoples*, New York, Norton, 1981; *The War against the Soviet Peasantry*, edited by L. Viola et alii, vol. I, New Haven (CT), Yale UP, 2005.

The specifics of the repressions in the regions were usually linked to the events in the central office of the NKVD and were limited to mentioning the processes or the names of the participants. Therefore, consideration of these processes was often limited to a causal relationship with events in the center and seemed like echoes of more high-profile processes.

On the other hand, repressive processes in the Far Eastern NKVD were on the research periphery. The monograph of A. S. Suturin, the Soviet journalist of the 1980s, stands apart. He collected archival materials from the State Archive of the Khabarovsk region, which were declassified at that time, and published his «Delo kraevogo mashtaba» (4) on its basis. But at the same time, he did not set the analysis of these processes as his task, as well as their connection with the resistance of the population. We can see the same thing in the few works of other historians that consider repressions inside the regional NKVD (5).

Therefore, we believe that this work can make an important contribution to the study of the power structures of the USSR in the Stalin period and the specifics of their resistance to demands coming from the center.

But, meanwhile, we suppose that the NKVD in the Far East was largely isolated from the processes of the repressive nature that took place in other regions of the country.

In particular, it should be noted that T. D. Deribas, its head, took up his position in 1929 – that is, even when the OGPU (6) existed. Moreover, the NKVD department did not feel any pressure in terms of reprisals against its employees, which cannot be said about other regions of the USSR. In 1934, on the basis of the OGPU, the NKVD was created, headed by G. G. Yagoda (7), who carried

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(4) But Suturin was died before publication of his work.

(5) E. N. CHERNOLUTSKAYA, *Политические репрессии на Дальнем Востоке СССР в 1920-1950-е гг* [The political repressions in the Soviet Far East at 1920-1950s.], Vladivostok, DVGU, 1997; E. N. CHERNOLUTSKAYA, *Приказ НКВД номер 0047... «по репрессированию... антисоветских элементов». Дальний Восток, 1937-1938* [The order of NKVD number 00447 «On the repression... anti-Soviet elements». Far East, 1937-1938], in «Rossia i ATR», 2005, 3, pp. 55-65.

(6) OGPU – Joint State Political Directorate under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Years of existence – 1923-1934. It replaced the VChK and the GPU. In addition to political work, this organization had controlling and punitive functions. It was the OGPU that launched mass repressions in the country. Until 1926, the head of the OGPU was F. Z. Dzerzhinskij, and after him, until 1934, V. R. Menzhinsky. G. G. Yagoda played an important role in the OGPU, which, apparently, predetermined his subsequent appointment as head of the NKVD. In 1934, the OGPU was reorganized into the NKVD.

(7) Genrih Grigorievich Yagoda (another name - Enoch Gershonovich Yagoda) (1891-1938) – first Commissar of Internal Affairs of the USSR (1934-1936). Author of the part of the main repressions in the Soviet Union. Some Russian scholars believe that he established GULAG, yet in period of OGPU. Yagoda was executed in 1938.

out massacres of the Chekists, but the Far Eastern region again remained aloof. Probably, we can attribute this to the merits of Deribas, as well as the remoteness of the region from the center. The rout of the Far Eastern NKVD representatives took place only in 1937, when the NKVD was ruled by N. I. Ezhov<sup>(8)</sup> who came to the place of G. G. Yagoda. Therefore, we are inclined to consider the processes in the regional NKVD separately from the events that took place in Moscow and the western part of the Soviet Union.

Early 1930s in the Far East was marked by a sharp change in the course of the Soviet government towards Soviet citizens – collectivization came to the region followed by numerous repressions. These processes were accompanied by severe suppression of the economic and political activity of the population, as well as the expropriation of property from the agricultural population called *raskulachivanie* (dispossession).

As a result, the state was able to suppress the resistance of the rural population in a short time in the Far East. But almost immediately, a struggle against representatives of the local administration and the regional NKVD began, which in the end turned out to be much more complicated.

This was largely due to the fact that party structures and representatives of the NKVD in the Territory knew each other relatively well, to a great extent they had already «become accustomed» to joint work. And if their goals coincided (for various reasons), then this created difficulties for state regulation.

At that time, Moscow was already strengthening the repressive rink in the country. Many convicts were forcibly transferred to the north, to the Gulag and the development of the northern territories<sup>(9)</sup>. The NKVD department in the Far East generally followed the instructions from the capital in this regard, but opposed the central government in the matter of expanding repressive actions. This became the basis for the conflict between representatives of one structure.

One of the important political measures of the Moscow NKVD was the business trip to the Far East of personnel who were considered reliable and proven. Moreover, the number of these commissions grew over time. Most of its members took an active part in the repressions in other regions, had proletarian or close to that origin and did their best to prove that they were worthy of the trust of Soviet top-level leaders. Therefore, they made every effort to carry out their assigned tasks and orders from above despite their absurdity and obvious

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(8) Nikolaj Ivanovich Ezhov (1895-1940) – Head of NKVD in 1937-1938. He was author of most famous repressive acts in the USSR. He was shot in 1940.

(9) P. R. JOSEPHSON, *The Conquest of the Russian Arctic*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014.



harm to the population and regions. Many such appointees placed their careers above anything else. For example, I. A. Grach, A. A. Arnoldov<sup>(10)</sup>, G. S. Lyushkov and others. They were transferred from the western part of the USSR, where they achieved great success in the field of struggle against their own people, for conducting large-scale repressions in the Far East.

But in Far Eastern region they had a hard time. The struggle between the security forces of one department was quite stubborn. Both sides had their advantages. The power of the central apparatus of the NKVD and extensive experience in conducting repressions and interrogations stood for the representatives of the western regions. Local security officers did not have such support and experience, but they knew the region well and were more friendly than intruders. Far Eastern NKVD officers had a strong position in the region – during the suppression of peasant uprisings against collectivization and dispossession in the region, a large number of soldiers of the former OGPU were gathered – in the 1930s. there were more than 7000 people<sup>(11)</sup>. In addition, they also had weight in the army leadership of the region, as it was usual case in the Soviet border regions.

The peak of the conflict between the parties occurred in January 1937. At the Seventh Congress of the Regional Committee of the AUCP (b), the first secretary Lavrent`ev was relieved of his previous duties (later he was shot), and Vareikis<sup>(12)</sup> replaced him. Iosif Mikhailovich Vareikis, the new first secretary of the AUCP (b) Dalkraikom, sought to follow Moscow's orders to search for anti-Soviet elements in the Far Eastern region, and began to increase repressive pressure on party members<sup>(13)</sup> by requiring of T. D. Deribas<sup>(14)</sup>, the State Security Commissar of the 1<sup>st</sup> rank and the head of the NKVD department (the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs Department) of Far Eastern region, more effective deployment of repression.

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(10) E. N. CHERNOLUTSKAYA, *Приказ НКВД номер 0047... «по репрессированию... антисоветских элементов»*. Дальний Восток, 1937-1938, quoted, p. 56.

(11) L. I. PROSKURINA, *Октябрьская революция и ее влияние на деревню российского Дальнего Востока: коллективизация и ее последствия*, quoted, p. 26.

(12) A. S. SUTURIN, *Дело краевого масштаба*, quoted, p. 12.

(13) Herein, pp. 13-14.

(14) The rank of the State Security Commissar of the 1<sup>st</sup> rank corresponded to the army ranks of the commander (army commander) of the 1<sup>st</sup> rank and the army general. Only the title of General Commissioner of State Security was higher (in the army hierarchy it corresponded to the Marshal of the Soviet Union). In total, during the existence of this title, there were 9 first-rate state security commissars – Y. S. Agranov, V. A. Balitsky, T. D. Deribas, L. M. Zakovsky, G. E. Prokofiev, S. F. Redens, G. I. Blagonravov, L. P. Beria and V. N. Merkulov. And four of them (Balitsky, Deribas, Zakovsky and Beria) were directly related to the repressions in the Far East. This indicates once again the intensity of the struggle within law enforcement agencies in the territory of the Far Eastern region.

But Deribas had his own opinion. He was an old Bolshevik with pre-revolutionary experience, had several state awards and a high rank in the NKVD. In addition, most of the commanders of the local NKVD were loyal to him personally, supported his position against the Moscow commissions and were in no hurry to fulfill all the requirements of Vareikis and his people. Basically, these were relatively young people under 40 who had already achieved considerable success in their careers, but at the same time they still had great ambitions. Apparently, they associated their professional growth with T. D. Deribas. Basically, they already received high command posts and titles in the 1930s, which was most likely due to direct support from the head of the NKVD department. Like many Chekists (15) in different regions of the Soviet Union, the Far Eastern NKVD officers were a close-knit team that tried to support each other in many ways.

This was facilitated not only by the fact that they lived in the same region, but they also carried out repressions together, built an agent network abroad and within the country (at that time the NKVD was supposed to provide not only counterintelligence, but also intelligence outside the country. Far East had two dangerous neighbors – China and Japan, which forced local Chekists to work together more). Therefore, they opposed the team of I. M. Vareikis on many issues, primarily on the requirements for the expansion of repression. This led to a series of complaints from the new party leadership of the Far Eastern Territory to Moscow. For this reason, in April 1937, a group of operatives headed by L. G. Mironov, head of the 3<sup>rd</sup> (counterintelligence) department of the GUGB (Main Directorate of State Security) of the USSR NKVD, arrived to Khabarovsk from Moscow (16). The very fact of sending such a high-ranking counterintelligence officer to the region suggests that Moscow took the complaints of the regional party leadership quite seriously and transferred an experienced and distinguished center representative to the Far East.

Muscovites were aggressive, and their moods towards their Far Eastern colleagues can be judged by the first meeting - they immediately created a conflict with S. I. Zapadnyj, the Deputy of Deribas, who went to meet them. In particular, A. A. Arnoldov told Zapadnyj the following: «There is information in Moscow that Deribas and you do not believe in the affairs [which are initiated by Moscow], therefore the brigade has been sent to show you what's happening in the region

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(15) Chekists – colloquial expression, it mean staff of VChK. At 1930s. VChK did not exist, it changed by OGPU and later – by NKVD. However, this colloquial expression for indication of the officers of the secret services remained in the Soviet Union and until modern time too. Therefore we are using this word in our work. Moreover, main part of officers in the Far Eastern NKVD served in VChK too in the past.

(16) Е. Н. ЧЕРНОЛУТСКАЯ, *Приказ НКВД номер 0047... «по репрессированию... антисоветских элементов».* Дальний Восток, 1937-1938, quoted, p. 56.

and how freely the Trotskyists operate» (17). As we see, this Moscow commission immediately made it clear to the Far Eastern leadership of the NKVD that it was not in tune for standing on ceremony with local Chekists who did not want to carry out more massive repressions.

For another thing, the actions of Muscovites in this episode show that the capital was already aware of the opposition of the local NKVD to orders from the center. Even the accusations of the Far Eastern NKVD officers of disbelief in the plans of the NKVD top leadership were already very dangerous. But no action has yet been taken against this. Arnoldov himself called the Far Eastern Chekists «taiga dwellers» who did not know how to work with new methods (that is, falsification of interrogation protocols, torture, etc.). Of course, all this could not but lead to an escalation of the conflict between the sides.

In fact, the basis for the conflict between the sides was two points: 1) the issue of forced deportation of Koreans, 2) the comparative independence of the Far Eastern NKVD. T. D. Deribas (18), the head of the NKVD in the Far Eastern Territory, who had been in this position since 1929, had made every effort to interdict Muscovites from conducting mass purges of the population, preparing ethnic repressions and restricting the power of local Chekists. T. D. Deribas was supported in this matter by D. V. Zapadnyj, his deputy, so the Moscow Commission of the NKVD wrote dilations about them to the capital in a very active way (19).

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(17) A. S. SUTURIN, *Дело краевого масштаба*, quoted, p. 22; V. S. МИЛВАН, *Особая Краснознаменная Дальневосточная армия (Краснознаменный Дальневосточный фронт). Политические репрессии командно-начальствующего состава, 1937-1938 гг* [Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army (Red Banner Far Eastern Front). Political repressions of the command staff, 1937-1938], Sankt-Petersburg, SPbGU, 2007, pp. 119-120.

(18) Deribas Terentij Dmitrievich (1883-1938) – famous participant of the Russian Revolution 1917, old Bolshevik, officer of VChK, OGPU and NKVD. He was participant of Russian revolution 1905-1907. In 1920s., he worked in the Secret department of OGPU USSR. In 1931, Deribas became member of collegiums OGPU – NKVD. From October 1933 he supervised the construction of the Baikal-Amur Railway by prisoners. His successful work in this object was positively estimated by Moscow and in July 10<sup>th</sup> 1934 Deribas received two new posts – Head of local NKVD in the Far East and Head of Special Department in the Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army. In July 31<sup>st</sup> 1937 he was removed from all posts and August 12<sup>th</sup> arrested and blamed «in espionage, sympathy for Trotskyism and the organization of a number of conspiracies in the NKVD and the Red Army». Later he was deported in Moscow for intensive interrogations. In July 28<sup>th</sup> 1938 Deribas sentenced by the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR to death. He was shot in the same day in polygon “Kommunarka” near Moscow (it was place of the death of some dozen thousand repressed people). In 1957, case of Deribas was reconsidered and in December 31<sup>st</sup> he was posthumously rehabilitated and reinstated in the KPSS. Case of Deribas is rare in itself, because almost all participants of Stalin repressions in 1930s, who had high-level positions, usually are not subjects to rehabilitation.

(19) S. НИКОЛАЕВ, *Выстрелы в спину*.

However, the head of the NKVD department shouldn't be idealized – Deribas himself participated in repressive measures actively. He was appointed as a head of the NKVD department in the region in 1929 – on the eve of the upcoming collectivization and kulaks' dispossession. On his account there were a number of different repressive events including collectivization in the Far Eastern Territory. But at the same time, he did not seek to mass repressions and did not have a tendency to persecution on a national basis. This was facilitated by his personal position – by the mid-1930s. Deribas had reached great heights in his commissariat, and he had no need to force a round of repressions for his career growth. In addition, he understood that excessive repressive actions could harm not only the region but also other regions of the Soviet Union.

In addition, Deribas took into account the growing power of Japanese troops in East Asia and sought, first of all, to prepare for meeting them in case of aggression. This is evidenced by the growth of the Soviet foreign intelligence network in China and Korea, increased supply of the Red Army, an increase of the role of political work in military contingents and etc. Therefore, he did not need mass repressions in the Far Eastern Territory. In fact, this predetermined his fate. Many suspects of political crimes in the Far Eastern region, despite the arrests, were acquitted and released, but after 1937 and the removal of T. D. Deribas, most of the acquitted people were again imprisoned. Many of them were shot soon.

The Moscow commissions, due to their complaints to the center and negative reports about the activities of the local head of the NKVD department, nevertheless managed to achieve their goal. In May 1937, Deribas was recalled to Moscow, and his place was taken by V. A. Balitsky (20), the former People's Commissar of Internal Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR, who arrived at the Far Eastern region to «strengthen the security service» (21). As a matter of fact, after Deribas, Mironov was recalled to Moscow. The next day, the new head of the Far Eastern NKVD department sanctioned a new round of repressions. Many heads of enterprises and party cells and employees of the NKVD were hit – apparently, the new head of the NKVD was cleaning the apparatus from the adherents of T. D. Deribas. On June 3, M. D. Vitkovsky, the head of the NKVD transport department, was

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(20) Vsevolod Apollonovich Balitsky (1892-1937) – activist of VChK, OGPU and NKVD. Commissar of State Security of first rank of NKVD from 1935. Member of Central Committee of VKP(b). In 1932-1933 he provided tough measures against peasants in Ukraine in the process of collectivization. Moscow estimated positively his work in the Ukraine and he received new appointment in the Far East. As result of internal struggle in NKVD Balitsky was removed from all posts and shot. His case reconsidered in 1950s, but finally he was found not to be rehabilitated.

(21) Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (RGASPI), fond 17, opis' 3, delo 987, list 34.

arrested and sent to Moscow. Following him, one of the best counterintelligence officers D. F. Shilov, A. K. Miheev from the NKVD personnel department and others were arrested (22). Almost all of them later in the 1950s were rehabilitated for lack of *corpus delicti* or their sentences were declared unlawful.

The question of the further work of Deribas in the Soviet law enforcement agencies was to be decided in Moscow upon his arrival in the capital (23). At that time, this usually meant the subsequent arrest of the arrivals with all the ensuing consequences. A large number of documents from the Moscow commissions were accumulated against him in the capital, which cited the facts of his sabotage of directives from the center. But soon Deribas managed to regain his position – in June 1937 Balitsky, in turn, was recalled to Moscow, arrested and executed (just like Mironov, he was accused of Trotskyism), and Deribas returned to his leading post in the Far Eastern Territory, however, this time not for long time. Of course, the return of the former head of the NKVD to the Far East did not stop the arrival of more and more Moscow operative groups in the Far East, who came to give greater scope to the work of the repressive apparatus, but it is evident that T. D. Deribas and his associates still tried to disturb them.

In particular, in the case of G. M. Krutov, Chairman of the Far Eastern Regional Executive Committee, A.A. Arnoldov wanted to arrest more than 30 people, but came across Deribas resistance. The latter openly declared to the Muscovite: «You want to defeat the entire party organization and leave the Far Eastern Territory without workers [...]. This is not Krutov giving evidence. This is evidence of Arnoldov». Afterwards, Deribas began to demand confirmation of Krutov's evidence by other people. Otherwise, he refused to send interrogation protocols to Moscow and authorize the arrests. But it cannot be said that it was only about Arnoldov. Deribas demanded clear grounds for the arrest and conviction of all his employees – in the opposite case, he often slowed down mass affairs, stating: «The case was decided poorly. But you decide the fate of a living person» (24)! When another mass arrests were demanded of him, he replied: «Who would we work with then» (25)? It goes without saying that repressions continued and were carried out both by local and coming NKVD officers – that was their work indeed, but the scope of punitive measures was relatively small.

The rivalry between the employees of the Far Eastern NKVD and the Moscow commissions was connected not only with hostility towards strangers. The

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(22) A. S. SUTURIN, *Дело краевого масштаба*, quoted, pp. 22-23.

(23) *Ibidem*.

(24) Herein, p. 257.

(25) *Ibidem*.

team of Deribas (let's call them Deribasovs by the name of the head of their group) was well aware that the work of Muscovites threatened not only to destroy the economy of the region, but also exposed the local Chekists in an unsightly light in front of the whole country. As a result, it turned out that the newly arrived operatives caught a lot of «traitors to the Motherland» (which they were really not), and the Deribasovs did nothing, that is, did not fulfill their direct duties of catching traitors and spies. This threatened with dismissal from organs on unsightly articles in the ideal case. In addition, the repressive work of the Moscow commissions threatened local NKVD officers personally – since Moscow security officers wrote complaints about them, sought to substitute them, etc. As a result, many Deribasovs ended up in prison or were shot before the removal of Deribas.

In response to this, the Far Eastern NKVD officers used the same methods that their opponents used – they looked for misses and mistakes of the “guests”, made frauds and forgeries to dump them at any cost, etc. Unexpected reprisals of the state machine against members and heads of the Moscow commissions of the NKVD in the Far Eastern Territory (people whose decisions Moscow had recently believed without any coupons) – V. A. Balitsky, L. G. Mironov, A. A. Arnoldov-Kesselman and others – for the great part, were clearly provoked by a tip from local Chekists. This greatly slowed the activities of the Moscow NKVD officers in conducting reprisals against the local population, they spent a lot of time fighting their Far Eastern colleagues, and often became victims of their intrigues.

For example, Mironov was eventually accused of Trotskyism, moreover, of having connections with people ... whom he had brought to death himself. But at the same time, the Far Eastern Chekists did not stoop to frankly criminal cases – there is no information about the “accidental” deaths of sent NKVD officers, death on household grounds, murders as a result of criminal cases, etc.

As we see, their struggle was very different from the defensive methods of the NKVD officers in other regions of the country, who tried primarily to solve their personal affairs (26).

We believe that the short-lived leadership of V. A. Balitsky, the head of NKVD department, made it clear what awaits local Chekists in the event of the final removal of Deribas – in the best case, a quick trial under any pretext and a long prison sentence. Far Eastern NKVD officers, of course, did not have the same experience in conducting repressions as their Western colleagues, but they were

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(26) L. VIOLA, *Tater, perpetrator, «исполнители», «палачи», «каратели»* [Tater, perpetrator, «performers», «executioners», «punishers»], in *Chekisty na skam'e podsudimyh*, Moscow, Probel, 2000. pp. 193-198.



well aware of the precariousness of their situation if full control of the Moscow commissions in the region was established. Therefore, they could only hope for the support of Deribas. This explains their cohesion, and their head himself also adhered to similar positions which we will present below.

Over time, Moscow began to realize that the problem was not only that the Far Eastern Chekists were fighting the “enemies of the people” not actively, but also that without repressing the resistance of the local NKVD officers mass repressions in the region became impossible.

Therefore, by the end of July 1937, Stalin decided to send a new NKVD working group to Khabarovsk, headed by G. S. Lyushkov, who was to replace T. D. Deribas. By that time, Lyushkov had already achieved great success in his repressive activities in Rostov-on-Don, he was highly appreciated by N. I. Ezhov, the People’s Commissar of the NKVD, and even J. V. Stalin honored him with a personal audience before being sent to the Far East. Lyushkov arrived not alone, but brought a large team of personally loyal people from Rostov-on-Don. The new appointment was a big promotion for him, and he was determined to do everything so as not to overshoot before the country’s top leadership.

By that time, the local NKVD department was severely battered in the struggle against the Moscow commissions – for the reason that it had to deal with groups of NKVD employees who had extensive experience of repressive activities in the western part of the country, and besides, they had more authority and power than their local colleagues. Many regional Chekists had already come under the repression of previous Moscow commissions; the general positions of the NKVD department were weakened. All this greatly helped G. S. Lyushkov in his work. Therefore, we cannot say that the defeat of the regional NKVD and the army was a purely “merit” of Lyushkov. The latter worked actively in close contact with Moscow, reporting all contacts with the Far Eastern NKVD officers, and he found fault with all the little things, trying with all his might to endanger the reputation of the local leadership in front of Moscow.

So, in particular, G. S. Lyushkov vexed reported to the center about the first meeting with Deribas:

All the behavior of Deribas is suspicious. On my arrival, despite an agreement over the phone about a personal appointment, he had previously sent ZAPADNYJ to the station for reconnaissance, did not appear for a long time in the office and, as it was established, looked out at the adjacent stairwell, which is done in the room of ZAPADNYJ, where I performed the operation. In conversation with me [Deribas] he was bewildered and annoyed about his withdrawal and showed excessive curiosity about the nature of the evidence against ZAPADNYJ, BARMINSKY. Deribas showed me the Harbin

newspaper, which says about his arrest. Knowing that ZAPADNYJ is being interrogated [by me] in his office, Deribas appeared there, explaining that he was looking for me. We suspect that he decided to show ZAPADNYJ that he was not arrested. Noteworthy is the delay by Deribas of departure to the Far Eastern Territory, despite your instructions for his trip to Vladivostok for his family (27).

In the first page of document Stalin wrote: «For Molotov, Voroshilov. Deribas will have to be arrested. Stalin». «Agree. V. Molotov, K. Voroshilov». This led to the arrest and further execution of Deribas.

This telegram says a lot. It is unlikely that this report was the only reason for the arrest of Deribas – in all appearances, this was one of the latest evidence of organized resistance by local Chekists to Moscow directives. Apparently, T. D. Deribas had a well-trained agent network in Northeast China, and therefore he had the opportunity to read Harbin newspapers in a relatively timely and regular manner. Despite the critical situation (the arrival of the next Moscow commission, dismissal, etc.), T. D. Deribas showed thought for his subordinates, tried to support them, despite the weakness of his own situation. This shows once again the unity of the Far Eastern security officers, which did not escape the attention of G. S. Lyushkov. Apparently, this was one of the reasons why Muscovites soon carried out an almost complete cleaning of the NKVD department apparatus – it was clear that a close-knit group of Far Eastern NKVD officers would interfere Lyushkov's group, even if it was severely battered by repressions. In the end, it happened.

The resolution of J.V. Stalin «Deribas will have to be arrested» on the document is also interesting. The wording «have to» was infrequent for Stalin's resolutions of this kind. It is also important that Stalin wanted support from Molotov and Voroshilov in this matter, apparently in order to share some responsibility with them for making this decision. Stalin usually showed himself as a firm and decisive leader who did not need additional support, even if it was formal. Apparently, the question of Deribas was discussed in the highest circles, he had his friends and strong influence in the country's leadership – his very unusual return from Moscow to the place of Balitsky says a lot. And after his arrest in 1937, he was in prison for a year. Probably, the question of his fate had long been uncertain. Of course, it is possible that the authorities highly appreciated his merits, but at that time the more honored figures of the Soviet government were liquidated as soon as possible.

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(27) Archive of the President of the Russian Federation (AP RF), fond 3, opis' 24, delo 317, listy 113-114.



Therefore, we believe that, conceivably, T. D. Deribas had a good position in Moscow. At the same time, he was not an officially significant figure in the central leadership of the NKVD – in particular, Deribas was not one of the deputy commissars of the Internal Affairs of the USSR or the chiefs of the Secretariat of the Special Meeting at the people's commissar, etc. Therefore, the conclusion suggests itself that the question of the personality of Deribas, his place in the structure of the NKVD is the subject of another study, which we cannot conduct in the framework of this research. But the fact that his position was special among the leaders of the NKVD of that time is obvious. Apparently, this was due to the stubborn resistance of the NKVD region department to the Moscow commissions.

Consequently, G. S. Lyushkov began to carry out large-scale repressions against the local NKVD, as well as party workers. Moreover, he was able to prepare his repressive measures quite carefully and conducted them in a short time. Vareikis helped him actively in this action. We can assume that some of these activities were thought out in advance – most likely, back in time they were Moscow. At the end of July 1937, T. D. Deribas, the head of the Far Eastern NKVD, was removed from office (28) and in August of the same year mass cleaning of the governing bodies in the Far Eastern Territory, including in the State security organs, began (29). On charges of “Trotskyism” and “espionage for Japan” were arrested Deribas, S.O. Zapadnyj (30), Head of special Department of Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army S. A. Barminsky (31), Head of NKVD in Vladivostok Ya. S. Vizel (32), Head of NKVD in Amur region G.

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(28) Later Deribas was arrested in August 12<sup>th</sup> 1937 and was shot in July 1938.

(29) S. NIKOLAEV, *Выстрелы в спину*.

(30) Zapadnyj (Kesselman) Semen Izrailevich (1899-1938) – participant of First World and Russian Civil Wars, since 1919 in VChK, commissar of State Security of 3<sup>rd</sup> rank, member of Bolshevik Party from 1918. Until 1928 he served in Ukraine, from 1928 – in the Soviet Far East. Zapadnyj was arrested in August 1937 and February 1938 was shot. By Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Court of the USSR from April 28<sup>th</sup> 1980 he was rehabilitated posthumously due to lack of corpus delicti.

(31) Barminsky Sergej Arsentievich (1900-1938) – senior major of State Security (1936), commissar of State Security of 3<sup>rd</sup> rank. One from founders of the football club Dinamo (Kiev) – most famous and titled football team in the Soviet Union. Participant of the October Revolution and Russian Civil War. Served in Moscow, Ukraine, on Romanian border. Last work place – Head of 5<sup>th</sup> Department of NKVD of the Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army. Barminskij was arrested in August 9<sup>th</sup> 1937 and shot in February 10<sup>th</sup> 1938.

(32) Vizel Yakov Savelevich (1900-1937) – Participant of the Russian Civil War. Captain of State Security (1935). Member of the Bolshevik Party from 1920. Served in VChK in Vologda province, Mongolia and Moscow region. From 1931 – staff of OGPU in the Soviet Far East. He was arrested in the August 1937 and in same month committed suicide in the prison (he used pre-hidden poison).

A. Davydov (33), Head of NKVD in Ussuriysk region A. A. Pryahin (34), Head of the political department of the border military contingent N. G. Bogdanov (35) and many other (36). Almost all the former leadership of the NKVD department was arrested and subsequently destroyed (37). Moreover, Deribas was charged with preparing the Soviet Koreans ... for an uprising against the Soviet regime (38).

But some were lucky – in particular, Dontsov, the head of the regional special department was arrested for his «lack of determination» and his refusal to apply the «third degree of inquiry» to the suspects. But in 1940 he was released (39). Also, such officers of the NKVD as Kaverzin, Kharitonov, Shmurak, who refused to torture prisoners, were arrested on Sakhalin. Some Chekists, as well as N. S. Vlasov, were simply expelled from the ranks of the party and the NKVD (40).

The laid out footnotes show that for the most part the leaders of the local NKVD were arrested by Muscovites for several days, after that the flywheel of forced deportations and the cleaning of the regional security forces were launched.

Concurrently, repressions fell on the Far Eastern prosecutor's office. M. Y. Chernin, the head of this department, more than once slowed down the work of repressive bodies, both of the Far Eastern Chekists and of the Moscow commissions. Moreover, M. Y. Chernin opposed Vyshinsky himself on the issue of repression (41). The cleaning of the Far Eastern prosecutor's office was carried out by representatives of the NKVD and the country's Prosecutor General's Office. Most of the regional, district and city prosecutors, as well as leading employees of the Far Eastern Territory prosecutor's office, including Chernin, were arrested

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(33) Davydov (Katyuchij) Grigorij Alexandrovich (1901(1899?)-1938) – participant of the Russian Civil War, major of State Security (1935). After Russian Civil War he served only in the Soviet Far East. Davydov was arrested in the August 1937, later was shot. He was rehabilitated posthumously.

(34) Pryahin Alexander Andreevich (1899-1938) - participant of Russian Civil War. Senior major of State Security (1936). Member of Bolshevik Party from 1919. Served in Volga military region, from 1925 in the Soviet Far East. He was arrested in the August 1937, was shot by special order. Pryahin was not rehabilitated.

(35) Bogdanov Nikolai Georgievich (1899-1938) – brigade commissar, member of the Bolshevik Party from 1918. Last work place, Head of the political department of the border military contingent. Arrested in the September 1937 and was shot in February 1938. He was rehabilitated posthumously.

(36) A. S. SUTURIN, *Дело краевого масштаба*, quoted, pp. 47-48.

(37) AP RF, фонд 3, opis` 24, delo 317, listy 112-114.

(38) A. S. SUTURIN, *Дело краевого масштаба*, quoted, p. 188.

(39) Herein, p. 137.

(40) Herein, p. 209.

(41) Herein, pp. 76-78.

and executed <sup>(42)</sup>. Vareikis supported this operation by Moscow commission.

But soon this did not stop Lyushkov from repressing Vareikis himself and his associates. In particular, Vareikis was accused of having relations with Lavrent`ev, his predecessor as chairman of the Far Eastern Regional Executive Committee (he was arrested on a number of false evidences. Moreover, Vareikis himself had previously accused Lavrent`ev in the Trotskyism, sabotage and espionage for Japan) <sup>(43)</sup>.

Lyushkov himself reported that

shortly before his arrest, being expelled from the party, VOLSKY (one of Vareikis' closest associates – from authors) on September 6 came to the MOD demonstration tribune with regional leaders. I must say that shortly before the arrest of VOLSKY, I received from VAREIKIS the indication of the regional troika for eviction for signature, which was not only agreed but signed by VOLSKY. I made amendments and told VAREIKIS that I did not intend to put my signature together with VOLSKY, only then this signature was withdrawn. Then (at the same time you were informed by telegrams No. 7900 and 7905), he raised a question at an open meeting of the bureau of the regional committee of the AUCP (b) on the sabotage of resettlement and the unsatisfactory management of this important operation by VAREIKIS. At my insistence, the secretary of the Posyet district committee of the AUCP (b) was expelled from the party for sabotage, a severe reprimand for inaction and disruption of loading was announced to the secretary of the Primorye regional committee of the AUCP (b) and to the chairman of the regional executive committee and the reprimand was announced to DRUSKIS. VAREIKIS opposed these events for a long time, but was forced to agree. I consider it necessary to dwell on these circumstances in my information to you, since, in general, it is not felt that the regional committee of the AUCP (b) engage itself and mobilize party organizations in an active way to expose enemies or pick up arrests by the NKVD department to identify all ties. In all of this, the working style of VAREIKIS itself is of great importance, it does not correspond to the Far Eastern region environment very much – there is too much concern for himself and his rest [...] <sup>(44)</sup>.

We believe that the claims of the new head of the NKVD department to Vareikis were mostly related not to him personally, but to his subordinates – the district administrations, which slowed down the deportation process.

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<sup>(42)</sup> He was rehabilitated posthumously.

<sup>(43)</sup> A. S. SUTURIN, *Дело краевого масшутаба*, quoted, pp. 26, 47-48.

<sup>(44)</sup> AP RF, fond 3, opis` 58, delo 254, listy 213-215.

In this situation, it is possible to understand Vareikis – he could not immediately carry out massive punishment of his subordinates, who were suspected of sabotage by the Moscow commissions, otherwise he would have no one to work with. All these personnel were already verified, trained, experienced administrators, and besides, they knew the situation in the region. Their replacement by inexperienced and ignorant specialists threatened regional problems with big problems. Moreover, all these acts of persecution of their own officials undermined his personal authority in the party apparatus of the Far Eastern region, created problems and tension in his own management team and, as a result, reduced the effectiveness of all administrative work in the region. As it is known, Stalin did not like such situations, and the perpetrator (in this case, Vareikis himself) could be under the repression wheel.

But, on the other hand, Vareikis was afraid of Lyushkov (he was not only an influential protege of Moscow, he had already shown his toughness in cracking down local NKVD officers), moreover, he was simply obliged to obey the Moscow henchman. In addition, many party workers who were on good terms with him, but who came under the pressure of repressions, wrote letters to him asking for help, which, of course, did not improve his situation. In all appearances, he understood the injustice of Lyushkov's actions, but did not want to oppose the head of the Moscow NKVD commission, as he was afraid of him. The duality of this position led to the fact that Vareikis began to strive by all means to avoid the presence at all repressive processes directed against his subordinates. Therefore, he began to seek out reasons to as rarely as possible encounter NKVD officers. This led to dissatisfaction and attacks on him from Lyushkov, who did not know (or did not want to know) the specifics of the position of the first secretary of the Dalkraikom of the AUCP (b) but regarded his behavior as laziness and unwillingness to work.

As we can see from the above document, Lyushkov turned to full initiative and uncontrollably arrested and interrogated everyone he could – even those who supported him. In particular, he repressed I. S. Rybachenko, the head of “Amurzoloto”, on charges of work disruption, although this structure increased the output of precious metal every year <sup>(45)</sup>. The mass cleaning initiated by his team also affected the army.

The Russian researcher V. S. Milbah, dealing with Stalin's repressions in the army, counted the victims of Lyushkov's actions, and it turned out that for every headquarters of the Far Eastern Division, corps, group of forces, as well as OKDVA headquarters there were an average of 4 Japanese spies, and the total

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<sup>(45)</sup> Herein, p. 44.

number of identified foreign intelligence agents suggests that the enemy agents “entrenched” in each regiment (and a separate battalion) of OKDVA (46). As a result of all these indiscriminate slaughters in the army, the leadership of the Soviet troops in the Far East was bled. And this was done with the full connivance of Marshal Blyukher, who did not intercede for his people. In future, Blucher himself did not escape arrest and death at the hands of visiting NKVD officers. The bulk of the repressed commanders went through the NKVD affairs as “Japanese spies”, which subsequently did not prevent Lyushkov from fleeing to Manzhou-go, to the Japanese (47). In general, G. S. Lyushkov had a predilection in his fabricated trials and cases for accusing almost all of the suspects of espionage in favor of Japan. Lyushkov himself after fleeing to Japan admitted that he had arrested 9,000 party workers and military personnel in the Far East (48). Many of them were shot, but those who ended up in camps and prisons, not all survived (49). All OKDVA army commanders that were repressed at that time were subsequently rehabilitated. A number of military commanders and NKVD officers committed suicide for the reason that they did not want to be arrested or in protest against repression (50).

We believe that mass destruction of people in the local NKVD and army had one aim – Lyushkov planned mass repressions in many directions, including the social and national aspects. New Head of Far Eastern NKVD liquidated all possible groups of dissatisfied because he considered threat of discontent with such processes in the army, regional NKVD and party organization. During interrogations the team of Lyushkov actively used various torture, if some persons did not stubbornly did not “admit” to treason, chekists from Moscow commission arrested their relatives (usually members of family) and used torture against them. Therefore almost all repressed people «admitted to treason». As result, resistance against Stalin repressions in the Soviet Far East was destroyed but cost for this was very high – repressive acts by Lyushkov became weak defense capability of the entire region and destroyed many branches of economic of Far East. But Lyushkov did not think about because he has another goal. Moreover

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(46) V. S. МИЛВАН, *Особая Краснознаменная Дальневосточная армия (Краснознаменный Дальневосточный фронт). Политические репрессии командно-начальствующего состава, 1937-1938 гг.*, quoted, pp. 128-129.

(47) We would like to consider this subject in detail in another our work – Lushkov against NKVD: history of one treason.

(48) A. S. СУТУРИН, *Дело краевого масштаба*, quoted, p. 188.

(49) A. V. ТЕРЕHOVИЧ, *Мои воспоминания. О политических репрессиях 1930-х гг.* [My memories. About political repressions of the 1930s.], in *Politicheskie repressii na Da'lnem Vostoke 1920-1950e gg.*, Vladivostok, DVGU, 1997, pp. 300-307.

(50) A. S. СУТУРИН, *Дело краевого масштаба*, quoted, pp. 35, 53, 57.

we can consider another situation – Lyushkov can scare discontent by Stalin – as is known, Stalin rarely spared those who did not fulfill his instructions – those who «did not justify the trust placed in them». Probably, it can explain mass scale of the repressions by new Head of regional NKVD.

In his indictment trials, Lyushkov tried to link all the groups of the repressed (who were innocent, but «confessed» everything under torture and blackmail) into one system, and even the connections in these processes were clearly far-fetched. Here is one example – a message from Lyushkov to Ezhov:

Being in a responsible leadership post in the region, VOLSKY by all means helped to settle the Primorye region with Koreans and complete the economic seizure of Primorye, select the appropriate staff of nationalist-minded Koreans for responsible posts. VOLSKY mentions Afanasy KIM, with whom Lavrent'ev was connected, as a large Japanese resident in the Korean regions. KIM is a secretary of the District Committee of the AUCP (b) [in] Posyet. In his Nos. 7900 and 07905 [reports] dated 10 / IX he reported on DERIBAS' evidence that according to Lavrent'ev's task to save Afanasy KIM in connection with the arrest. During the audit, I found that at the end of 1935 the c.-r., so-called Shanghai group, in which 18 people were arrested including Afanasy KIM and other large Korean workers were arrested, was liquidated. During the investigation Afanasy KIM, LYU-KYU-SEN and others began to show that they discussed the issue of the allocation of Korean districts to the autonomous region. LYU-KYU-SEN stated that Lavrent'ev had one meeting in his apartment, and there they were distributing ministerial posts, etc. However, on the instructions of BARMINSKY, everything was turned into a joke, the matter was turned off, sent to the Special Conference, and they all escaped having got exile and camp <sup>(51)</sup>.

These reports of Lyushkov show his complete incompetence and warped judgment in many matters. His own ignorance in the history of the region resulted in accusations against Volsky that he «by all means contributed to the settlement of Primorye by Koreans and the complete economic seizure of Primorye» Although Koreans massively moved to the territory of the modern south of the modern Far East as far back as the 19th century (that is, long before the birth of Volsky and Lyushkov himself), and gardening was their traditional occupation. In order to destroy everyone who, in his opinion, might disagree with his point of view, Lyushkov falsified the facts – in particular, he came up with the anti-Soviet organization Shanghai Group, etc. Now it's hard to imagine what Lyushkov meant

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(51) AP RF, fond 3, opis' 58, delo 254, listy 207-208.



by «nationalist-minded» elements, but, taking into consideration his behavior at that time, it was difficult to expect any objective and adequate assessment from him. But, in fact, in this regard, he acted like many other assistants of Yagoda and Ezhov - not to think, but to fulfill what they were ordered to. Moreover, the search and illegality of any of their actions in the course of the repressive policy were not punishable. We believe that he completely did not understand what his actions threaten to the region. But as a result of all these processes, Moscow Chekists were able to conduct a series of deportations on national and social grounds in the territory of the region. Due to all these punitive actions of the Moscow NKVD commissions, the region received big problems in a number of aspects, which were subsequently resolved for decades, and not always successfully. In addition to undermined agriculture and large losses in the region's population, the Lyushkov team <sup>(52)</sup> inflicted great damage on the army and the local NKVD structure.

It should also be noted that the repressions carried out by Lyushkov completely changed the working methods of the local NKVD towards total lawlessness – torture, blackmail, deceit, forgeries of protocols, etc. began to be massively used. In particular, the NKVD investigator V. F. Semenov admitted that «with the arrival of Lyushkov, the entire investigative apparatus of the department including me applied physical influence to the arrested, beatings» <sup>(53)</sup>. Astahov, a former investigator of the NKVD police department, testified: «The use of physical measures against arrestees in the Primorye Regional Office of the NKVD began in mid-1937, with the arrival of the brigade from Moscow» <sup>(54)</sup>. Likhodzhevsky, who was the head of the Third Division of the Primorye Regional Office of the NKVD, admitted:

I interrogated Zhuk, the Chinese prostitute and drug addict, during anesthesia, gave her opium interrogation... As a result, the protocols on the presence of the conspiratorial organization “The Fifth Column” in Vladivostok were signed by her. The materials obtained by this method became the basis for the arrests and executions of some workers and Chinese peasants <sup>(55)</sup>.

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<sup>(52)</sup> By the way, after escape of Lyushkov from USSR all members of his team were arrested and almost all of them were shot. They did not receive rehabilitation.

<sup>(53)</sup> A. S. SUTURIN, *Дело краевого масштаба*, quoted, p. 83.

<sup>(54)</sup> A. P. DEREVYANKO, *Политические репрессии на Дальнем Востоке в 1930-е гг* [The political repressions in the Far East at 1930s.], 1997, in *Politicheskie repressii na Da`lnem Vostoke 1920-1950e gg.*, quoted, p. 55.

<sup>(55)</sup> V. G. МАКАРЕНКО, *Применение незаконных методов ведения следствия органами НКВД в Приморской области в 1930-е гг.* [The using illegal methods of the interrogation

Therefore, we can assume that the defeat of the regional NKVD by Moscow not only completely changed the methods of conducting the work of law enforcement agencies, but also influenced the development of Soviet power structures in future (56).

As a result, we see that the struggle of the local NKVD department against the Moscow directives and commissions was quite fierce and was able to delay mass repression in the region, and Deribas and his team played a big role in this. Despite the defeat of the NKVD department by Moscow, this confrontation was an important milestone in the resistance of the Far Eastern security forces against the rampant Stalinist apparatus.

Thus, we can conclude that resistance to Stalinist repressions in the Far East encompassed wide sections of the population. But they were not united in this activity, their forms of struggle and goals were different, therefore they had no unity in actions. It should be noted that the Far Eastern law enforcement agencies and their representatives were very strong – Chernin could be a good example for the reason that he opposed Vyshinsky and Deribas and got in the way of the Moscow commissions. But they were not united in their actions. However, even without this, the resistance to repression by the population and the local administration was so strong that its suppression greatly undermined the defense and economy of the entire region.

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by structures of the NKVD in Primorye region at 1930s.], in *Politicheskie repressii na Da'lnem Vostoke 1920-1950e gg.*, quoted, pp. 87-88.

(56) We shall consider this question in detail in the work «Specifics of the operative work of power structures in USSR».



*Period of 1930s. in the Russian history is one from most discussed in the Soviet history up to the present. Therefore Russian and foreign specialists conduct a large number of studies on this topic, process archive data in order to search for new information. Their attitude towards repression is not unambiguous. Despite the large number of publications on this topic, there are still some blank pages that are little affected by the researchers.*

*The one of them is question on specifics of the resistance against repressions from punitive structure and party organization in the Far East of USSR. For a number of reasons, this issue was out of the scope of domestic and foreign scientists.*

*The aim of this work is consideration of specifics of the resistance against repressions in the structures, which must support state policy – local administration of NKVD. The authors of this work analyzed several aspects of this process on the base of archival materials, publications by Russian and foreign scholars and materials of the oral history. The article also presents the author's position on the most controversial problems of research.*

#### KEYWORDS

*Stalin repressions  
Resistance  
Far East*