

Estonia Today

25 MARCH 1949

Following the illegal occupation of Estonia in June 1940, the Soviet Union launched a Soviet Nationalisation programme and carried out purges that resulted in up to 60,000 Estonians being killed or deported in the 1940s.

As a result of summary arrests and mass deportations almost all of the Estonian government's leadership was detained. President Konstantin Päts and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces Johan Laidoner were arrested and deported to Russia in July 1940. In total, 10 of 11 ministers and 68 of the 120 members of parliament were arrested and deported.

25 March 1949

The first major deportation took place on 14 June 1941, when 9,264 people were deported to Russia of which 606 men and 12 women were executed. The second took place on 25 March 1949. In the early morning of 25 March families were given a few hours to pack, were then taken to the train stations and separated without warning. 7,500 families including about 21,000 people representing over 2.5% of the Estonian population were arrested and deported in two days.

The deportees were mostly women and children. Half of the deported were women; there were over 6,000 children under the age of 16 and over 4,300 men deported from their homes during late March 1949.

Of the 30, 000 people sentenced for deportation in March, over 8,000 managed to escape.

25 March 2005

- 12.00 The church bells will chime in churches over Estonia in memory of the deportees
- 16.00 A memorial ceremony will be held at the Linda Statue in Tallinn organised by Memento. The Estonian Male Choirs Association will perform. Speeches will be given by President Arnold Rüütel, Prime Minister Juhan Parts and the representative of Memento Tallinn Society
- 18.00 Memorial service at Nõmme Rahu Church commemorating the victims of deportation.





Deportees injured in the Vorkuta mine in front of the Vorkuta hospital in Siberia 1956



Children deported together with their mother and whose father was imprisoned, 1952



Typical Siberian village where deported Estonians lived. The 1950s



A boy, deported as an infant in 1949, 10 years later with his father in the Novosibirsk region of Siberia (1958)



Typical clay hut giving shelter to Estonians deported to Siberia, the Novosibirsk region 1950



Deported Estonian women doing forestry work in Siberia, the Kirov region in the 1950s



Funeral of an Estonian deportee in Siberia, Krasnoyarski krai 1955