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Author(s): Lynne Viola

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The Other Archipelago: Kulak Deportations to the North in 1930

Lynne Viola

In a letter of 23 April 1930, I. A. Serkin, secretary of the Severo-Dvinskii county (*okrug*) party committee, wrote to his superior, S. A. Bergavinov, secretary of the northern regional (*krai*) party committee, "In the beginning, when the issue of resettlement first arose, many of us did not think it through to the end and did not imagine all the complexities of the issue."[1] The issue to which Serkin referred was the deportation and forced resettlement of peasants—so-called kulaks—that accompanied the collectivization of agriculture in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. He went on to note that although the basic occupation of the *spetspereselentsy* or special settlers, as they were euphemistically called, would be agriculture, no one had conducted the necessary studies of land and soil conditions and some of the land tracts mapped out for the settlers were uninhabitable, completely inaccessible, and located on marsh land or in dense woods. Geographical surveys were urgently needed, but snow blanketed the terrain, hindering on-site work. In addition, the land required an enormous amount of work to prepare even elementary conditions for agriculture. Serkin warned Bergavinov that it would be unrealistic to expect any income from the special settlers' agricultural pursuits in the first year.[2]

Serkin continued his letter by noting that the county's economic administrative organs (*khozorgany*)—in this case, the forestry industry—were completely unprepared to build the special villages (*spetsposelki*) where the settlers and their families would live and from which a large part of the able-bodied population would commute to work seasonally in the forestry industry. The forestry industry instead complained, "we haven't received

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1. Vologodskii oblastnoi arkhiv noveishei politicheskoi istorii (VOANPI), f. 5 (Severo-Dvinskii okruzhkom VKP), op. 1, d. 275, l. 3.

2. Ibid. Until 1938, the special settlers worked in *neustavnye* agricultural artels, meaning collective farms without the charters and limited rights and privileges of regular collective farms. These artels received charters in 1938.The artels were intended to make the special settlers self-sufficient, while providing a work force for regions and industries suffering from a shortage of labor. In the Northern Region, the special settlers' collective farms never attained self-sufficiency. See, for example, the 8 October 1951 report prepared by the regional leadership for G. M. Malenkov, in Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv obshchestvenno-politicheskikh dvizhenii i formirovanii Arkhangel'skoi oblasti (GAOPDF AO), f. 296 (Arkhangel'skii obkom), op. 2, d. 1086, ll. 63–65.

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special funds," "there are no building materials," or "there are no directives" on how to proceed, all of which were true but needlessly formalistic from the point of view of a Serkin or a Bergavinov. Although the majority of able-bodied settlers were now at or near their final destinations, there were still no special villages: the forestry agencies had not begun construction. To make matters worse, there were not enough skilled carpenters, tools were in short supply, and, apart from lumber, building materials were almost completely nonexistent. Serkin warned Bergavinov that they might have to take the "extreme measure" of removing able-bodied settlers from forestry work until September in order to construct the special villages. Otherwise, he wrote, "this business with resettlement could lead, without exaggeration, to catastrophe."[3]

Catastrophe, in fact, was more than impending. It was present. Serkin told Bergavinov that food supplies were extremely low. The government would have to provide food for the settlers—at a minimum until November (an overly optimistic forecast). Goods were also scarce; the settlers lacked winter clothing, and some were quite literally shoeless. At the transit points where the settlers' families were temporarily housed, especially in Kotlas, Sol'vychegodsk, and Ustiug, illness and death were on the rise. In Sol'vychegodsk, Serkin wrote, "tens of children and adults are dying daily." Serkin feared the outbreak of epidemics that would lead not only to death among settlers and possibly among the local population, but, perhaps more ominously from his perspective, would interrupt the timber floating (*splav*).[4]

Serkin's letter was by no means unusual. The story he told was unfolding all over the Soviet Union, in the most remote and desolate places, as more than a half million peasants faced deportation in 1930.[5] Prompted by the political and economic imperatives of wholesale collectivization—a state vision of class war, the need to provide negative incentives (that is, the threat of dekulakization) to force the majority of peasants into collective farms, and the goal of using expropriated kulak properties to offset the costs of collective farm construction—special resettlement was to serve the combined and often contradictory needs of agricultural expansion, labor recruitment, and colonization, while isolating what the state perceived to be a deadly social enemy. It was the Stalinist state's first experiment in radical social engineering.

Barely noted in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's masterful opus,[6] this "other

3. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 275, ll. 3–7.

4. Ibid.

5. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 9414 (OGPU. Osobyi otdel), op. 1, d. 1943 (Itogovye materialy o provedennoi operatsii po vyseleniiu kulachestva v 1930 godu, tom 1), l. 101. A total of 112,828 families (550,558 people) were deported in 1930. For slightly larger figures (113,013 families with 551,330 people), see Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial'no-politicheskoi istorii (RGASPI), f. 17 (TsK VKP), op. 120, d. 52, l. 20 (Spravka o khode vyseleniia kulatskikh semei).

6. Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago,* trans. Thomas P. Whitney and Harry Willetts, 3 vols. (New York, 1973–78), 1: 24, 54–57, 538; 2: 305.

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archipelago" was a cornerstone of the evolving gulag (Glavnoe upravlenie ispravitel'no-trudovykh lagerei) order.[7] Scholars have paid relatively scant attention to the special settlements, which emerged first to isolate and exploit the labor of the dekulakized peasantry and within a short time would house a variety of other state-defined social and ethnic aliens through the course of the Stalin years.[8] Yet the story of the special settlements is fundamental to an understanding of the evolution, dynamics, and contours of Soviet state terror. The special villages developed within and were defined by the confines of a state administrative order that balanced precariously between hypercentralization and a veritable cult of self-perceived scientific planning, on one side, and expediency, improvisation, unpreparedness, excessive "tempos," inadequate local knowledge, and plain (if not criminal) incompetence and negligence, on the other. To make matters worse, the Stalinist state relied on an unwieldy, poorly demarcated, fractious, and underdeveloped bureaucracy, both central and regional, to implement its overly ambitious plans.[9] Unclear and contradictory social engineering "goals" further undermined the state's efforts, as the needs of colonization and agriculture expansion came into conflict with demands for workers in territories and industries without sufficient labor and as a philosophy of "rehabilitation" collided with the urge to punish, at the worst of times, and simple reality at all other times.[10] Under such condi-

7. With the creation of the Department of Special Settlements (Otdel po spetspereselentsam, or OSP) under gulag, the special settlements were formally placed under the jurisdiction of the OGPU beginning on 1 July 1931. The nomenclature also changed over time: from 1933 *spetspereselentsy* became *trudposelentsy,* or labor settlers, reverting back to *spetspereselentsy* in later years. See Lynne Viola, "The Role of the OGPU in Dekulakization, Mass Deportations, and Special Resettlement in 1930," *The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies,* 2000, no. 1406:2, 36.

8. On other social aliens, see Paul Hagenloh, "'Socially Harmful Elements' and the Great Terror," in Sheila Fitzpatrick, ed., *Stalinism: New Directions* (New York, 2000), 286–308. On ethnic deportations, see Terry Martin, "The Origins of Soviet Ethnic Cleansing," *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 4 (1998): 813–61; and Amir Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism," *American Historical Review* 104, no. 4 (October 1999): 1114–55.

9. David Nordlander has explored issues of central control in the construction of Magadan, concluding that Stalin's "sway" there was "overwhelming." I fear that Nordlander's analysis is somewhat too simple, shaped perhaps by his misguided and, I think, dated attack (not to mention faulty interpretation) on revisionist scholarship of the 1980s, as well as his tendency to mistake "administrative checkups" (801) and central interference for actual control. See his article, "Origins of a Gulag Capital: Magadan and Stalinist Control in the Early 1930s," *Slavic Review* 57, no. 4 (1998): 791–812.

10. Peter H. Solomon, Jr., has documented the transition in penal policy from what he views as a "progressive" policy in the 1920s to one based primarily on economic needs. See his pioneering article, "Soviet Penal Policy, 1917–1934: A Reinterpretation," *Slavic Review* 39, no. 2 (June 1980): 201, 207. James Harris has also discussed labor as the motivating factor in spurring on the policy of peasant deportations in the Urals in "The Growth of the Gulag: Forced Labor in the Urals Region, 1929–31," *Russian Review* 56, no. 2 (April 1997): 265–80. My own research suggests a blend of motivating factors that included labor (especially for the forestry industry, whose exports were seen to be an important source of foreign currency during the first Five-Year Plan), colonization, and the "confiscative-repressive" aspects of dekulakization in 1930 as well as a far from monolithic outlook on the matter among officials in both the center and the regions. For a discus-

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tions, Stalinist social engineering could not have proved anything but disastrous and, as G. M. Ivanova has argued for the gulag system as a whole, economically irrational, feeding into a steady crescendo of state violence as reality endlessly confounded the controlling ambitions of the totalizing state and the internal security police sought ever more bodies to expend in its labor intensive, but ultimately ineffectual, economic empire.[11]

In this article I explore the history of the other archipelago in the year 1930, its founding and perhaps most difficult year. The article focuses on the Northern Region (Sevkrai), an administrative-territorial unit created in 1929 with the consolidation of five counties (Arkhangel'skii, Vologodskii, Nenetskii, Niandomskii, and Severo-Dvinskii) and one autonomous region (Komi, or Zyrian) and encompassing a land mass of 1,122,600 square kilometers with a population of 2,376,700 people. Its northernmost territories lay just above the Arctic Circle and bordered the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean.[12] Against this icy backdrop the single largest contingent of dekulakized peasant families—over a quarter million men, women, and children—would build the special villages of the other archipelago from out of the wilderness.

Planning *na khodu*

At the November 1929 plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Iosif Stalin quipped, "Do you think that everything can be organized ahead of time?"[13] Although he was responding to a speech by S. I. Syrtsov on disorders in the rapidly expanding collective farm system, he could well have said the same in regard to the kulak question. The party had discussed the issue for years, only arriving at a Stalinist consensus not to admit kulaks into collective farms in late 1929.[14] The December Politburo commission on collectivization failed to go much further. Spurred on both by Stalin's 27 December 1929 speech at the Conference of Marxist Agronomists in which he enunciated the policy of the "elimination of the kulak as a class" for the first time and by a variety of local initiatives in dekulakization, the Politburo and OGPU (Ob"edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie, or internal security police) only turned their attention to a final resolution of the kulak question in

sion of the importance of the "confiscative-repressive" aspects of dekulakization, see V. P. Danilov and S. A. Krasil'nikov, eds., *Spetspereselentsy v Zapadnoi Sibiri, 1930–1945,* 4 vols. (Novosibirsk, 1992–96), 1:14. One of the best general discussions is S. A. Krasil'nikov, ed., "Rozhdenie GULAGa: Diskussii v verkhnikh eshelonakh vlasti," *Istoricheskii arkhiv,* 1997, no. 4:142–43.

11. Galina Mikhailovna Ivanova, *Labor Camp Socialism: The Gulag in the Soviet Totalitarian System,* trans. Carol Flath (Armonk, N.Y., 2000).

12. *Administrativno-territorial'noe delenie Arkhangel'skoi gubernii i oblasti v XVIII–XX vekakh. Spravochnik* (Arkhangel'sk, 1997), 113. The population figures are based on the 1926 census.

13. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 2, d. 441 (Stenograficheskii otchet zasedaniia Plenuma TsK VKP,10–17 noiabria 1929), vyp. 1, l. 70.

14. See Lynne Viola, "The Case of Krasnyi Meliorator *or* 'How the Kulak Grows into Socialism,'" *Soviet Studies* 38, no. 4 (1986): 508–29.

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January 1930.[15] From that time and well into 1931, the planning process would be a work in progress, undertaken in haste—almost as an afterthought to wholesale collectivization—and more often than not as a response to problems as they arose in the course of the repressive whirlwind of dekulakization. Bureaucratic confusion and administrative chaos characterized this most momentous policy, as the center drew up increasingly intricate plans that bore little relation to regional realities not to mention feasibility.

On 30 January 1930 a special Politburo commission, chaired by V. M. Molotov, submitted its decree, "On Measures for the Elimination of Kulak Farms in Districts [*raiony*] of Wholesale Collectivization," to the Politburo for approval. The decree adopted a differentiated approach to kulaks, dividing them into three categories, ranging from a supposed counterrevolutionary kulak group (estimated at 60,000 persons) facing execution or internment in labor camps and the deportation of their families, to the less dangerous second category of some 150,000 families subject to deportation, to a final category of kulaks who could be more or less safely left in place outside the new collective farms on inferior land. Deported kulaks were to go mainly to the Northern Region (70,000), Siberia (50,000), the Urals (20–25,000), and Kazakhstan (20–25,000).[16] (For precise figures, see table 1.)

In the meantime, OGPU had been at work through the month of January, counting kulaks based on estimates submitted by its regional subordinates and planning operational measures. OGPU initially planned to send 100,000 kulak families to the north, but Bergavinov took issue with these numbers in a 14 January telegram to L. M. Kaganovich, arguing that the Northern Region was able to take in no more than 50,000 to 70,000 families.[17] In a letter of 27 January to Molotov, Bergavinov again criticized the OGPU plan, pointing out that such an enormous plan meant that beginning in February, five to seven echelons of kulak families, each with 5,000 to 7,000 people—in all, approximately 300,000 people by his calculations—would arrive daily into a county (Arkhangel'skii) with a population of only 250,000 and a city (Arkhangel'sk) of 89,000. Even if they moved all the arrivals into every village—an impossibility, he noted, given the difficulties of moving women and children in the dead of winter—

15. For further information, see Viola, "The Role of the OGPU in Dekulakization, Mass Deportations, and Special Resettlement in 1930," 1–12.

16. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 8 (Protokoly zasedaniia Politbiuro TsK), ll. 64–69; *Istoricheskii arkhiv,* 1994, no. 4:148–49.

17. GAOPDF AO, f. 290 (Severnyi kraikom), op. 1, d. 386, l. 24 (undated). The date is given in N. A. Ivnitskii, *Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie (nachalo 30-kh godov)* (Moscow, 1994), 122. The figure of 70,000 families came from the Northern Regional OGPU representative's (*polnomochnyi predstavitel'*) plan submitted to OGPU for the exile of 70,000 families. See Viola, "The Role of the OGPU in Dekulakization, Mass Deportations, and Special Resettlement," and Tsentral'nyi arkhiv federativnoi sluzhby bezopasnosti (TsA FSB), f. 2, op. 8, d. 504, ll. 16–18. Documents from this archive come via the *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni* project (V. P. Danilov, R. T. Manning, L. Viola, eds., *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie. Dokumenty i materialy v 5 tomakh, 1927–1939* [Moscow, 1999–]) and will be preceded in citations by "*Tragediia.*"

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Table 1
Regions of Exile of Category 2 Kulaks (10 December 1930)

Region	From Other Regions		Within Region		Total	
	Familes	People	Families	People	Families	People
North	46,562	230,065	61	305	46,623	230,370
Urals	16,619	78,431	13,855	66,774	30,474	145,205
Siberia	11,612	49,801	16,025	82,922	27,637	132,723
Kazakhstan	159	197	1,265	7,393	1,424	7,590
Far East	3,796	19,374	447	2,235	4,243	21,609
Aldan	287	2,007	—	—	287	2,007
Leningrad	1,540	8,499	600	2,555	2,140	11,054
Total	80,575	388,374	32,253	162,184	112,828	550,558

Source: GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1943, l. 101. For slightly different figures, see RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 52, l. 20.

"there would still be congestion [*zator*]" (an interesting, but revealing, choice of vocabulary). Bergavinov also complained that Moscow was "silent" about the absolute necessity of building barracks, leaving the Northern Region on its own to deal with the practical realities of this monumental task.[18]

Stalin called Bergavinov to task on 16 February, criticizing the supposed decision to take only 30,000 families instead of the planned 70,000. Stalin ordered Bergavinov to take all necessary measures for the arrival of not less than 50,000 by mid-April, a reduction, nonetheless, of 20,000.[19] On 17 February, Bergavinov sent a telegram to Stalin and Molotov, pleading for financial and material aid from the Council of People's Commissars, the Supreme Council of the People's Economy (VSNKh), the People's Commissariat of Trade, and OGPU, noting that local resources were strained to the limit. At present, he continued, they had resources for only some 12,000 families. At the same time, he felt compelled to respond to Stalin's communiqué of 16 February, noting that Stalin's reference to 30,000 families had been "based on our serious alarm that central institutions had been and were continuing to relate surprisingly indifferently" to the material and financial needs of the Northern Region. To prevent the disruption of the operation, Bergavinov told Stalin and Molo-

18. GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 386, l. 6.

19. In Bergavinov's absence (he was in Moscow), the Northern Region's party committee and its special commission on resettlement met several times in late January to begin their planning process. On 29 January, the special commission concluded that the construction of some 800 barracks according to central plans was "unrealistic" given local budget realities. The issue of temporary housing spilled over into the next meeting of 31 January where some members suggested that the north should only take 30,000 families if temporary housing was not available—hence Stalin's reference to 30,000 families. Bergavinov sent a copy of the protocols of this meeting to Molotov, with another copy to G. G. Iagoda. GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 378, ll. 11–12, 15–17, 30–32. On Bergavinov's whereabouts, see Rudol'f Khantalin, *Nevol'niki i bonzy* (Arkhangel'sk, 1998), 54. Stalin's letter is in *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 8, d. 204, l. 468.

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tov that he had taken funds from the local budget for capital construction of factories, indicating that export plans might well be harmed as a consequence.[20]

Although Bergavinov fought vociferously to defend his region's interests, it is important to note at the outset that his motivations were purely utilitarian. A man of overriding ambitions, Bergavinov dreamed of creating what he called "a wooden Donbas" in the north, based on the forestry industry and timber exports. He viewed the special settlers as the solution to the forestry industry's most serious problem: scant labor resources. And, unlike the regional and republic leadership of Siberia and Kazakhstan, both of which balked at taking in such large numbers of families without the necessary preparation in 1930, Bergavinov was keen to see this region top the list in numbers of special settlers, given, as he liked to point out, the "all-union importance" of the timber export plan.[21]

In the end, the Northern Region would absorb just under 50,000 kulak families (approximately 250,000 people based on the standard Soviet calculation of five members to a family) by spring, a still far greater number than any other region in 1930.

The special settlers in the Northern Region came primarily from central and southern Russia (Central Black Earth Region and Lower and Middle Volga) and Ukraine. They entered into exile with their families; children made up a little less than 40 percent of all special settlers (see table 2). Seventeen thousand families were destined for resettlement in Arkhangel'skii county, with the remaining 27,000 families roughly evenly apportioned between Niandomskii, Severo-Dvinskii, and Vologodskii counties and Komi region.[22]

Through most of 1930, administrative responsibility for the special settlers—on paper and in practice—was confused and conflict-ridden. Centrally, the OGPU was the most important actor in planning and implementing dekulakization for first- and second-category kulaks.[23] In planning for the numerical size of the contingents of deportees, transport, temporary housing, and security measures, the OGPU worked through its regional plenipotentiary representative; in the north, this task fell to R. I. Austrin.[24] Central responsibility for coordinating actual settlement and managing the special settlers once they had moved to their new

20. GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 387, l. 8.

21. For more information on Bergavinov, see Lynne Viola, "A Tale of Two Men: Bergavinov, Tolmachev, and the Bergavinov Commission," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, no. 8 (2000): 1449–66. See also Bergavinov's May 1930 memorandum to his county and district party committee secretaries in which he discusses how special settlement "will resolve the colonization question and overcome the sharp deficit in labor power" in the north. GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 331, l. 45. Bergavinov's sentiment directly reflected the views of Iagoda who had long called for the use of forced labor to open up the vast natural resources of the north. See Krasil'nikov, ed., "Rozhdenie GULAGa," 143–46, for further discussion.

22. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1943, l. 41.

23. See Viola, "The Role of the OGPU in Dekulakization, Mass Deportations, and Special Resettlement in 1930."

24. Ibid.; *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 8, d. 504, ll. 16–18.

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Table 2
Regional Origins of Special Settlers in the North (20 May 1930)

From	Families	Men	Women	Children	Total
Ukraine	19,658	31,956	28,014	33,491	93,461
Central Black Earth	8,237	12,288	13,482	17,067	42,837
Lower Volga	7,931	11,417	12,192	16,392	40,001
Middle Volga	5,566	8,394	8,521	12,296	29,211
Belorussia	4,763	7,449	7,347	8,014	22,810
Crimea	407	531	562	652	1,745
Total	46,562	72,035	70,118	87,912	230,065

Source: GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1943, l. 54.

regions belonged to a special commission set up under the all-union Council of People's Commissars on 1 April 1930—four months into the operation—under the chairmanship of V. V. Shmidt. An additional coordinating commission for the Russian Republic, a special Russian Council of People's Commissars commission under V. N. Tolmachev, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs for the Russian Republic, functioned from 9 March to 13 August 1930, paralleling and duplicating the work of the Shmidt commission.[25] With the dissolution of the Tolmachev commission in mid-August 1930, responsibility for the special settlers in the Russian Republic devolved directly onto the relevant republic-level commissariats; and, although almost every commissariat and a variety of other republic-level agencies had some role in special settler affairs, the two primary roles belonged to the People's Commissariat of Agriculture for the Russian Republic (land and agricultural issues) and the Supreme Council of the People's Economy for the Russian Republic (industrial employment issues).[26] The OGPU, in the meantime, retained responsibility for supervision and "chekist servicing."[27] This structure remained in place until 1931 when, on 11 March, in response to the disastrous first year of special resettlement, the Politburo created the Andreev commission to oversee and coordinate special settler issues and, then, on 1 July, transferred all responsibility for special settlers from the regional soviets to the OGPU.[28]

Within the Northern Region (and elsewhere), the regional soviet assumed responsibility for special settler issues in 1930. A special troika led

25. GARF, f. 393 (NKVD RSFSR), op. 43a, d. 1796, l. 232; *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 9, d. 760, l. 6. Also see GARF, f. 393, op. 1a, d. 292, ll. 34, 82. For more information on Tolmachev's role at this time, see Viola, "A Tale of Two Men: Bergavinov, Tolmachev, and the Bergavinov Commission," 1449–66.

26. GARF, f. 393, op. 1a, d. 292, ll. 82, 450.

27. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944 (Itogovye materialy o provedennoi operatsii po vyseleniiu kulachestva v 1930 godu, tom, 2), l. 107.

28. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 9 (Protokoly zasedaniia Politbiuro TsK), ll. 138, 161; d. 10, ll. 51–54; GARF, f. 9479 (OGPU. Otdel po spetsperesele ntsam glavnogo upravleniia lagerei), op. 1, d. 2, ll. 10–16; d. 949, l. 77. Also see Danilov and Krasil'nikove, eds., *Spetspereselentsy v Zapadnoi Sibiri,* 2:5, 309*n*1; and N. A. Ivnitskii and V. G. Makurov, eds., *Iz istorii raskulachivaniia v Karelii, 1930–31* (Petrozavodsk, 1991), 142–43.

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by the regional soviet chair with representation from GPU and the regional land administration (*zemleupravlenie*) coordinated work on resettlement, provisions, land, and labor.[29] Responsibility for agriculture belonged to the regional administration of migration, which worked through county-level land organs (*okruzemlupravlenie*) and county colonization parties and answered to the Main Migration Administration under the Russian People's Commissariat of Agriculture as well as the regional soviet.[30] The forestry industry administrative organs—Severoles, Komiles, Volgokaspiiles, Sevvostles, and other organs employing special settler labor—were responsible for labor and the construction of the special villages; they, in turn, worked through their local agencies and answered jointly to the Russian Supreme Council of the People's Economy and the regional soviet.[31] The special villages were subordinated directly to the district soviet and led by a commandant appointed by the district soviet, confirmed by the county soviet and GPU, and assisted by one policeman per fifty families.[32]

Throughout 1930 and early 1931, administrative anarchy and poor coordination plagued special resettlement affairs, exacerbating what was intrinsically a disaster in the making.[33] On 18 October 1930, a Russian Council of People's Commissars decree entrusted E. G. Shirvindt with overall observation of special resettlement business, calling upon all Russian republic-level agencies to keep him regularly informed.[34] Within days, however, in a speech to the communist fraction of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK), A. S. Kiselev inveighed against the absence of coordination and responsibility in special resettlement, warning that "someone must answer for this."[35] Meanwhile, constant refrains of inadequate personnel, overstrained local resources, communication problems, and an absence of direction percolated up from the regions back to the center.

In the north, everyone and no one answered for the fate of the special settlers. In spite of—perhaps in some cases partially because of—a system of regular and minute reporting from any and all officials on work in special resettlement, the construction of elaborate plans, constant reminders of the all-union political significance of special resettlement in the Northern Region, and endless reprimands, planning and work on special resettlement occurred *na khodu,* or along the way, according to regional of-

29. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, ll. 100, 107; f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18.

30. Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Vologodskoi oblasti (GAVO), f. 399 (Vologodskoe okruzemupravlenie), op. 1, d. 192, l. 54; GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1797, l. 35.

31. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1797, ll. 35–36.

32. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 100; f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1797, ll. 39a, 44; f. 1235 (VTsIK), op. 144, d. 776, l. 2; *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 8, d. 204, l. 545.

33. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18; f. 1235, op. 141, d. 776, l. 66. Also see O. V. Artemova, "Spetspereselentsy v Vozhegodskom raione (1930-e gody)," *Vozhega: Kraevedcheskii al'manakh* (Vologda, 1995), 172–94.

34. GARF, f. 393, op. 1a, d. 292, l. 90. For more information on Shirvindt, an important official in the penal system, see Solomon, "Soviet Penal Policy, 1917–1934," 201, 207; and Solomon, *Soviet Criminal Justice under Stalin* (Cambridge, Eng., 1996), 60, 103, 149.

35. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 776, l. 6.

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ficials, because, as noted in a regional soviet report dated 9 April 1930, it was impossible to plan everything in advance.[36]

In Transit

The special settlers began to arrive in the north in mid-February 1930. Given the brief time period between the articulation of policy and its implementation, it was not surprising that the northern regional administration had failed to create the necessary infrastructure to house, feed, and respond to the health needs of the special settlers. To make matters worse, the echelons consisted of families with large numbers of dependents—nursing mothers, children, the elderly, and infirm—hardly constituting an ideal labor force and burdening the regions with large numbers of people who would not pay for themselves with their labor. From the moment they left their native regions the situation the settlers confronted was nothing short of disastrous.

Transport to the north occurred in numbered echelons, which left by train from regional collection points (generally at the county level). In the cities of exile regions, the settlers disembarked to await further transport to the special villages in the interior. The echelons began moving to the north on 20 February along two basic routes: Vologda-Arkhangel'sk or Viatka-Kotlas. Each echelon carried, on average, 1,760 people, with 40 people to a train car. Although every family was supposed to carry a two-month food supply (included in their 25–30 pud [a pud is approximately equivalent to 36 pounds] baggage allowance), people often went hungry en route. Even water—not to mention the boiling water that OGPU had promised to supply continuously—was not always available.[37] According to OGPU reports, local OGPU officials in charge of transport demonstrated "criminal negligence" in putting together the echelons, sending people dressed in summer clothing or barefoot, elderly people, young families without mothers, and people with neither money nor food.[38] Except for an appointed "elder" (*starosta*) and his assistant who could occasionally leave the train at stops to purchase food, people could not leave the train. Each train car had one bucket for waste. Illness and death were reported en route. At large train stations, doctors were supposed to remove sick people from the trains, but families often hid the sick to prevent separation.[39]

A 2 February OGPU instruction to commandants of echelons heading for Arkhangel'sk and Kotlas ordered them to compile lists of all able-bodied men and women over 18 years of age so that part of the able-bodied could be taken away and put to work earlier in the interior. To prevent panic, this plan was to be kept secret as long as possible. By

36. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18.

37. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2; f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, ll. 42–50; *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni: Kollektivizatsiia i raskulachivanie. Dokumenty i materialy* (Moscow, 2000), 2:168–69; *Neizvestnaia Rossiia: XX vek* (Moscow, 1992), 1:243.

38. *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni,* 2:270–71. Also see GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 139.

39. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2; f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, ll. 42–50, 51–60.

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10 March, OGPU had instructed its plenipotentiaries not to permit transport to the north of any families lacking able-bodied members. And on 10 April, a Russian Council of People's Commissars decree, taking into account the experience of the first echelons and the high percentage of illness among children and endeavoring to avoid accumulations en route and at collection points, ordered that only able-bodied kulaks should be transported, leaving behind temporarily all non-able-bodied and mothers with young children.[40]

In the meantime, on 27 February, Bergavinov sent Molotov a telegram, describing the arrivals of the first echelons and specifically noting the large numbers of children and the elderly, the food shortages among most arrivals, and the sympathy expressed by townsfolk. He criticized both the People's Commissariat of Trade and the People's Commissariat of Health for their failures to supply food and medicine and again mentioned the problem of funding the construction of barracks. He ended on what he may have viewed as an optimistic note, telling Molotov that the exiles were "pleasantly surprised" to learn upon disembarking from the trains that instead of being shot they were to be settled in special villages in the interior.[41] On 12 March, he wrote the Politburo that "in spite of devilish difficulties, we think that we can deal with this [exile operation] without any special excesses." Because "this year will be unconditionally very hard for us" and "we think that we cannot do this WITHOUT YOUR HELP," he requested material aid. He also noted that if an epidemic were to break out "not one foreign ship" would enter Arkhangel'sk's port. In conclusion he wrote: "We know that the Politburo cannot concern itself with all these details but we are forced to address the C[entral] C[ommittee] because the people's commissariats relate IN AN EVERYDAY MANNER to this greatest of tasks, and this is not an everyday matter."[42]

By 19 March, 134,131 people had arrived at transit centers in the north: Arkhangel'sk (67,000), Kotlas (24,455), Vologda (22,607), Niandoma (1,574), Luza (3,773), Mezhdudvor'e (3,862), Obozerskaia (1,669), Griazovets (1,707), Kholmogory (1,468), Konisha (1,931), Lepsha (1,980), and Semigorodnaia (2,105).[43] Another 29,042 were en route, and 70,827 still awaited transport. When an echelon arrived, the special settlers were unloaded haphazardly in 3 to 4 hours, with people going one way and baggage another. By 7 April, 204,927 people (41,595 families) had arrived, with another 10,673 on route and 26,500 awaiting transport.[44] According to data from 26 March based on 95 of 130 echelons totaling 169,901 people, only 45,613 were categorized as able-bodied and 63,487 were children.[45]

40. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, ll. 51–60, 148; f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 230–31.
41. GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 387, l. 9.
42. GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 425, ll. 5–6. Emphasis (capitalization) in the original.
43. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, l. 128; f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2; *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 8, d. 504, l. 308.
44. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 126–27.
45. *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni,* 2:345–51.

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The completion of the construction of the special villages was scheduled for 1 September 1930.[46] Only the able-bodied went immediately into the interior, to work in the forestry industry and prepare the special villages. The families and non-able-bodied remained temporarily at transit centers given the difficulties of relocating in winter, the absence of the special villages beyond a designation on a map, and what one report described as the "catastrophic" situation in transport: remote villages accessible only by foot or small boats and located on unprepared tracts of land covered in forest and marsh, and the absence of a sufficient quantity of carts and small boats to transport people and their baggage.[47] The Severo-Dvinskii county party committee estimated that it would require 37,380 carts to move just the families and their baggage distances of 60 to 220 kilometers.[48] The families would only begin to move into the special villages in the summer of 1930.[49]

In the meantime, the non-able-bodied—mothers with small children, the elderly, the infirm—were housed temporarily in a variety of makeshift settings in and near the main district centers of the north. Temporary barracks with earth floors were hastily constructed for some 60,000 people, at a cost of seven rubles per person.[50] Others lived in churches, monasteries, cabins (*shalashi*), and even local peasants' homes.[51]

On 19 March, a commission of People's Commissariats of Internal Affairs and Health inspectors filed a short descriptive report on the condition of temporary housing for settlers in the city of Vologda and the nearby Prilutskii monastery. The churches Pokrov and Peter and Paul received satisfactory grades for sanitary conditions and medical services, but were in the grip of an outbreak of measles and whooping cough among children, many with complications (pneumonia). Neither church had a laundry, and therefore outer clothes could not be disinfected. About 3,500 people, mostly women, children, and elderly, were housed in the former exile sector of the local jail. This residence was deemed "completely unsuitable" and "dangerous." The crowding was "colossal." The rooms were dark, damp, dirty, and cold. There was no place to prepare food, no special toilet facilities, and human excrement was everywhere.

The commission also visited the formerly unoccupied Prilutskii monastery, four kilometers outside Vologda. Within the tall walls of this relatively small monastery—in the churches, administration buildings, basements—lived 7,000 people, and crowding was again described as "colossal." Basement dwellings were completely dark, damp, and dirty. A general kitchen serviced the settlers, with a special kitchen for children, and the bread was deemed of "good quality." A clinic with 26 beds was set up on the monastery grounds and occupied mainly by children with complications from measles, again primarily pneumonia. Laundry and bath

46. GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 331, l. 45.
47. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18.
48. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 274, ll. 114–18.
49. E.g., VOANPI, f. 329 (Vozhegodskii raikom VKP), op. 1, d. 97, ll. 16–18.
50. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1943, ll. 35–37.
51. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18, 308.

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facilities were insufficient to provide for even minimal hygiene. In Prilutskii monastery and elsewhere, the lack of boiled water led to mass gastrointestinal illnesses.[52]

Throughout the north, temporary dwellings were described as dirty, damp, dark, overcrowded, and unfit for living. A People's Commissariat of Health inspection report from 20 March noted the absence of toilet facilities or their location far from barracks.[53] Mothers were said to be afraid to wash their children or change their babies' swaddling clothes for fear of the cold.[54] Clean or boiled water was seldom available and the settlers' food reserves—if any—were quickly depleted.[55]

Initially it was unclear who or what agency was responsible for feeding the families of able-bodied settlers. Able-bodied settlers working in the forestry industry, in theory, received salaries and rations, but little thought had been given to provisioning the families prior to their arrival. As it dawned on the OGPU that people needed to eat, it sent its plenipotentiaries in districts of wholesale collectivization a strongly worded directive on 5 March "categorically" ordering them to ensure that all settlers carry with them the requisite food supply.[56] This order naturally contradicted the reality of dekulakization and expropriation in most districts. On 7 March, OGPU told its plenipotentiary that the Politburo had ordered the all-union People's Commissariat of Trade to transport food stocks to the north, guaranteeing provisions for six months.[57] Yet a report from Northern Plenipotentiary Austrin of 28 March indicated that there were still no decisions on feeding families without laborers.[58] Bergavinov complained directly to the Politburo about food shortages in the north, and on 20 April the Politburo instructed A. I. Mikoian, People's Commissar of Trade, to immediately check Bergavinov's report and take measures to improve the food situation for children in the north.[59] There was confusion over whether the northern regional migration administration or the forestry industry should provision the families.[60] Ultimately, the regional soviet troika on special resettlement was responsible, but food provisioning remained mired in bureaucratic conflict, confusion, and neglect through 1930.

Epidemic illness also became a concern of government agencies before long. Given the food and living conditions in temporary housing, it

52. Ibid., l. 308.
53. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 306–7.
54. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2.
55. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 118; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 8, l. 139.
56. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 118.
57. Ibid., l. 119.
58. *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni,* 2:346–47.
59. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 8, l. 139. (Mikoian was People's Commissar of Trade until November 1930, at which time the Commissariat was renamed—and subdivided into two commissariats—and Mikoian became People's Commissar of Supply.) See *Gosudarstvennyi vlast' SSSR. Vysshie organy vlasti i upravleniia i ikh rukovoditeli. 1923–1991: Istoriko-biograficheskii spravochnik* (Moscow, 1999), 423.
60. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 131–34; GARF f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, l. 231.

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was only a matter of time before epidemics would break out. Almost from the beginning, contagious diseases like measles and scarlet fever plagued settler children. Typhus made an appearance, at least in Vologodskii and Severo-Dvinskii counties, as early as April.[61] The rate of illness among settlers was calculated at five times that of the rest of the population.[62] As early as 15 February (but still not early enough), OGPU had told its northern plenipotentiary to take all essential measures to localize epidemic illnesses at points of settler concentration. Local affiliates of the People's Commissariat of Health were instructed to be prepared for possible epidemics.[63] By 6 April, the Tolmachev commission was urging that the settlers be "unloaded" from Arkhangel'sk to prevent the spread of an epidemic to the local population. Bergavinov expressed alarm, telegramming the Politburo for urgent medical aid for settlers. The Politburo's response was to order Bergavinov "not to allow information about typhus cases to get into the press." Within a short time, however, a commission to fight epidemics, under Tolmachev, was set up and by 19 June Tolmachev had ordered OGPU to release 1,500,000 rubles to fight epidemics, apparently without full success. Throughout the spring and early summer, central directives urged the People's Commissariat of Health to mobilize medical personnel, disinfection units, and medicine for settler regions.[64]

A People's Commissariat of Health report described a "colossal" death rate among children.[65] A Russian Central Executive Committee commission on children sent inspector M. I. Morgunov to report on settler children in the north. He wrote that between 24 March and 1 August, 1,277 children—mostly less than 7 years of age—had died in temporary residence in Makarikha, which had a total settler population of 45,000, half of whom were under 16. In the town of Sol'vychegodsk between 19 March and 21 July, 418 children died among an exile population of 5,110 people of which 2,170 were children.[66] A self-described "coincidental witness" wrote in early May to the Russian Central Executive Committee children's commission that in Kotlas up to 30 children were dying each day.[67]

Official injunctions to create what were called "more normal conditions" for children were issued regularly.[68] A 20 April OGPU instruction to all OGPU plenipotentiaries noted reports of exiled kulaks' relatives requesting to be allowed to bring the children back home to live with them.

61. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 277, ll. 36–40; GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, l. 389.
62. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 184–90.
63. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 115.
64. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 115; f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 229, 231, 388, 408–9; f. 393, op. 1a, d. 292, l. 48; f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 8, l. 163.
65. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2.
66. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 277, ll. 62–67.
67. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, l. 23.
68. E.g., GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, l. 231; f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2; RGASPI, f. 17, op. 162, d. 8, l. 139. For more information on the fate of children in the special villages, see Lynne Viola, "'Tear the Evil From the Root': The Children of the *Spetspereselentsy* of the North," *Studia Slavica Finlandensia* (Helsinki, 2000), 17:34–72.

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Taking into account the "difficult conditions" for children, OGPU agreed that relatives could take children under 14 with the parents' consent.[69] By December 1930, 35,400 children had left the north to live with relatives.[70]

To say that settlers' "morale" was "low" under these conditions, as one report did, was to understate the obvious. In some barracks, people did not even bother to unpack, saying, "it is all the same, they will kill us."[71] By 1 June, 14,123 settlers had run away, mostly able-bodied men, many not running home to their villages, but to the temporary housing centers where their families lived and died. An OGPU conference of 5 July 1930 on settler escapes decided to prohibit the visits of friends and relatives, claiming that such visits facilitated escapes. The OGPU, in fact, turned back 2,225 relatives in the north, from whom it confiscated 376 false documents and 152 blank documents, presumably to provide new identities for relatives. (In the city of Vologda, itself, there was widespread speculation in false documents; the OGPU claimed to have uncovered two organizations preparing false documents in the city.) In addition, it was decided at this conference to allow settlers to send and receive only telegrams, postcards, and packages so as to ease the burden of the censor opening letters.[72]

In spite of these restrictions, the special settlers in the transit centers wrote hundreds of desperate letters to M. I. Kalinin (among others), pleading for help. One group of Ukrainian women wrote:

> We Ukrainian settlers are living in Vologda. Our life is very hard—we live separately from our husbands. Our husbands are cut off from us, located somewhere in forestry work, and we women, old people, and little children are languishing away in churches.
>
> There are as many as 2,000 people in each church, where bunks of up to three tiers were set up . . . We are all ill from bad air and drafts, and children under 14 are falling like flies and there is no medical help for such a large number of people.
>
> In 1 and ½ months they have buried up to 3,000 children at the Vologda cemetery and now they have moved us from the city of Vologda to barracks at Kharovskii northern railroad station . . .
>
> Mikhail Ivanovich! If you could see life in the barracks, you would be horrified. If we live in these barracks for two years, not one of us will remain alive. The barracks are constructed in the forest in damp places . . . [They] are roofed with hay so that the wind is always blowing through. Up to 150 people live in each barrack.
>
> Apart from three-fourths of a pound of bread, we receive no food, and there is no hot food. We brought food with us, but when they transported us they took it all to the local Vologda authorities . . . and they gave us nothing except boiling water.
>
> Mikhail Ivanovich, save us from such poverty and starvation . . . They sent us here to our ruin and what kind of kulaks are we? . . . We are poor

69. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 152. (The age was soon revised to children under 10 but would be changed again on several occasions in later years.)

70. *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 8, d. 504, ll. 494–96.

71. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2.

72. *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni,* 2:526–29.

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> peasants [*bedniaki*]. We were not harmful to the government, but worked and fed the people as we could and now they themselves are destroying us. . . .[73]

Perhaps the most eloquent letter addressed to Kalinin was signed simply "a settler" (*pereselenets*). The settler's description captured the full horror of the experience of the special settlers in transit.

> Living in exile, I have looked at the entire horror of this massive deportation of entire families and not having the possibility to help these suffering people in any other way, I decided to write . . . [and] ask you to address your attention to the exile camp near the city of Kotlas. Here is a picture of this camp. One hundred and two barracks, covered by straw and earth, stretched out not far from the railroad in the middle of a wretched pine forest. Tens of thousands of people of all ages are already settled into the camp and each day more and more new echelons arrive. In each barrack two hundred and more souls huddle together. The crush is horrible: in the day crowding in the space between the bunks, in the night people lie on the bunks right up against one another, like sardines in a tin. Many sit on the earth floor since there is no room for them on the bunks. The three iron stoves are not able to heat the barracks as they should, all the more since there is a shortage of fuel. . . . The only well cannot provide water for the entire camp, for this the brook is used, where the water is so polluted that tea boiled from it gives off foam . . . Each day at the cemetery, several people are buried. People are not used to the local climate, many are quite poorly dressed, and often have colds and illnesses. Already infectious diseases have begun—typhus and diphtheria, from the last of which there have already been cases of death . . . the mood is like this: each thinks and says that if in a week or two all the people do not disperse into the villages and are not given work and bread then with the ending of [food] reserves brought from home, all will starve to death. It is a pity to look at these people who lie about on the bunks with despair in their eyes or loaf among the barracks with nothing to do and only wishing to eat something . . . There is no firewood, many remain completely without cooked food. The children crowd around the stoves, trying to push nearer, shoving one another . . . All the barracks are filled with cries and the wailing of children. . . . To leave these people in this situation for a long time—this is brutality . . . A person cannot remain a person in such conditions.[74]

Unfortunately, there would be little improvement as these families left the temporary transit centers and made their way into the interior.

Building the Special Villages

From the beginning, the construction of the special villages was mired in bureaucratic conflict and confusion and the forestry industry's contradictory need for immediate labor and need to use that same labor to build

73. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1875, ll. 194–95. Published in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia,* 1: 221–22.

74. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1798, l. 18. Published in *Neizvestnaia Rossiia,* 1:209–11.

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villages that would house and, presumably, keep the labor force alive.[75] While the non-able-bodied languished in temporary housing in the transit centers, the able-bodied members of kulak families labored. On 18 March, OGPU instructed its plenipotentiaries in the Northern, Urals, and Siberian Regions to develop plans for the employment of settlers within five days.[76] In the north, settler families were divided among Severoles (34,500), Komiles (5,000), Volgokaspiiles (1,000), and several other economic administrative agencies.[77] The agencies employing settler labor were largely responsible for construction work in the special villages, while county-level colonization parties subordinate to the county soviet and the land and migration organs chose and (in theory) researched land tracts for the villages and received reports from the economic administrative agencies on the progress of construction.[78]

In the northern region, county-level colonization parties led settler work on the ground from February until May. The colonization parties were responsible for research and preparation of land tracts for the special villages.[79] The parties recruited their staff from the county land apparatus. In Vologodskii county, the staff consisted of twenty-five people (seventeen land surveyors, four hydraulic engineers, two road engineers, one land survey inspector, and the head of the party). On 18 April, the deputy chairman of the county land apparatus, Tret'iakov, submitted a report on the work of his party. His plans were based on the seemingly faulty calculation of the impending arrival of 15,000 families (instead of the roughly 6,000 planned).[80] The settlers were to go mainly to the northeastern and northwestern parts of the county. The colonization party needed to select 15 land tracts with a total of 149,805 hectares that could support agricultural pursuits. The party decided first to redistribute colonization funds prepared in earlier years. As for the rest, Tret'iakov wrote that reconnaissance work would be completed first given the urgency of the assignment and "corrections" would undoubtedly be introduced later. He projected 120 families per special village and a total of from 120 to 130 special villages for Vologodskii county.[81]

In Severo-Dvinskii county—Serkin's bailiwick—colonization work proceeded poorly. Here the colonization party chose to place settlers not in agriculturally suitable land but in areas closest to the center of forestry work and in unsettled districts as far as possible from population points. They "mapped out" land tracts on paper, without any work on the ground.

75. Severoles only signed a contract assuming responsibility for 25,000 settler families on 26 June. See GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 131–34. Only on 13 August, when the Tolmachev commission was dissolved, did the Russian Council of People's Commissars transfer formal responsibility for special settlers to the economic administrative agencies. See GARF, f. 393, op. 1a, d. 292, l. 82. See also Artemova, "Spetspereselentsy v Vozhegodskom raione," for an interesting depiction of bureaucratic chaos.

76. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 97.

77. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1943, l. 69.

78. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 15, 131–34.

79. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 163–64.

80. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1943, l. 41.

81. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, ll. 5–9.

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As a consequence, some of the tracts were completely inaccessible and marsh covered.[82] In early May, the regional party committee commission on kulaks censured Severo-Dvinskii county for its choice of tracts, telling it to substitute closer areas.[83] As of mid-July, the colonization party was still looking for land for half of the settler families.[84]

The reality was that it ordinarily took about four years to prepare lands for new settlers as opposed to the three to four months available in 1930.[85] What this meant, among other things, was that the settlers themselves would have to prepare the land tracts.[86] They would spend their first two years of exile simply clearing land—in addition to working in forestry—in the midst of dense woods.[87] The colonization parties received endless blame for this sorry state of affairs; they, in turn—along with everyone else—blamed the forestry industry for problems in special resettlement.

The forestry economic administrative agencies were to take charge of constructing the special villages. Problems began early when Severoles refused to release funding for construction, arguing that the special settlers were OGPU business.[88] Only at the end of June did the forestry agencies sign contracts with the migration agencies clarifying issues of construction and other matters.[89] Yet as late as September, Tolmachev complained to the Russian Council of People's Commissars that the economic agencies had done nothing, especially in housing construction, and asked the council to intervene.[90] In Severo-Dvinskii county, Serkin ordered the district party committees to take direct control of construction.[91] The region would not meet the 1 September deadline for completing the construction of the special villages.[92]

The enormity of the tasks of resettlement was beyond any one agency. Housing construction was only the most immediate and obvious goal of construction. The special villages had to be erected from scratch, on land where colonization parties may not have conducted proper surveys and

82. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 275, ll. 3–7; GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 163–64.

83. VOANPI, f. 1855 (Vologodskii okruzhkom VKP), op. 1, d. 10, ll. 11–13.

84. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 277, ll. 36–40.

85. An explanatory note on "special colonization" in Siberia written in April 1930 and addressed to the Migration Administration under the all-union People's Commissariat of Agriculture noted that it took about four years to prepare land for settlers as opposed to months (which the current situation dictated), thus leaving the land completely unprepared for the settlers. Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv ekonomiki (RGAE), f. 5675 (Glavnoe pereselencheskoe upravlenie pri NKZ SSSR), op. 1, d. 23 (Materialy o pereselenii v Sibir' i Severnyi krai), ll. 50–49.

86. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18.

87. See GAVO, f. 907 (Vozhegodskii RIK), op. 5, d. 10 (Akty obsledovanniia spetsposelkov Vozhegodskogo lespromkhoza v sviazi s peredachei ikh v vedenie OGPU) for information on the slow progress of land clearance.

88. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 275, ll. 1–2; also see Artemova, "Spetspereselentsy v Vozhegodskom raione."

89. Artemova, "Spetspereselentsy v Vozhegodskom raione," 196.

90. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, l. 450.

91. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 277, ll. 28–29.

92. On the 1 September deadline, see GAVO, f. 395 (Vologodskii okruzh. Rabkrin), op. 1, d. 40, ll. 166–70; VOANPI, f. 329, op. 1, d. 97, l. 3; f. 5, op. 1, d. 277, ll. 28–29.

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on land that might not be suitable for agriculture. Plans for villages of necessity included not only housing for settlers but also auxiliary buildings like storage facilities and barns, administration buildings, bathhouses, stores, and, in time, schools, clinics and hospitals, post offices, and registry offices. The region had to install telephone and telegraph lines and import security personnel (from OGPU and the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs), medical personnel, agronomists, veterinarians, skilled carpenters, and teachers. Apart from lumber, the forestry industry had to bring in all building materials and tools from the outside, while supplying (with the agricultural agencies) manufactured goods, food, horses, cows, and agricultural inventory during the first couple years. A rudimentary system of banking, credit, and tax collection would slowly emerge as well. All of these tasks took place in remote, virgin lands that were accessible only by boat, small cart, or on foot, and only for part of the year given weather conditions. Just to get the settlers to their villages, the regional authorities needed to "mobilize" tens of thousands of boats and carts belonging to the local population, and then food, supplies, and building materials still remained to be transported.[93] Road construction represented one of the most formidable tasks. In Vologodskii county, the resettlement operation necessitated the repair or construction of 455 kilometers of roads.[94] In Severo-Dvinskii county, it was estimated that up to 600 kilometers of roads were needed, requiring some 153,000 labor days.[95] Here road construction was described as the crux (*gvozd*) of the resettlement problem.[96] The costs were also phenomenal, estimated in the tens of millions of rubles.[97] All the planning for this massive operation was done na khodu (as one functionary put it) and security issues caused constant problems. As late as 6 September, the Russian People's Commissariat of Agriculture requested permission from the OGPU to declassify certain types of information in order to permit consultations with specialists on village construction.[98]

Complicating matters further, the center flooded the region with madly overdetailed plans, blueprints, and building specifications. For example, in Severo-Dvinskii county, 120 special villages with 1,457 housing units were planned, while in Vologodskii county, the plan was for 120 to 130 villages with 1,875 building units.[99] Each special village was to be home to 120 families (about 600 people) and approximately 15 housing

93. E.g., GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 776, l. 66; f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 4–2; f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 184–90; GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 15, 23; f. 399, op. 1, d. 218, ll. 26–27, 52; VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 274, ll. 63–64, 114–18.

94. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, ll. 80–83.

95. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 274, ll. 114–18. "Labor days," in this context, represented some combination of the number of workers and the number of days required.

96. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 277, ll. 36–38.

97. See GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18; GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, ll. 5–9.

98. OGPU gave its permission. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1798, l. 154.

99. VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 274, ll. 114–18; GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, ll. 5–9. In Vologodskii county, at least, these plans turned out to be wildly unrealistic. By December 1930, there were only 30 special villages in the county. See *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 8, d. 504, l. 497.

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units.[100] Designed according to central plans and blueprints (which often arrived late, if at all), each barrack was to house eight families, one room per family, four square meters per person to a maximum of 20 square meters per family, with two kitchens, two stoves, two windows, and two entrances. The dimensions of each barracks were to be 24.5 x 9.40 x 3.5 meters with a total area of 991.08 meters. The barracks were to be one-story log cabins, each to be situated not less than 30 meters from one another.[101] In Vologodskii county, plans specified one bathhouse for every fifteen homes (roughly 600 people). The bathhouses were to be 70 meters long, divided into two parts, one for dressing and one for washing. They were expected to accommodate up to 200 people per ten-hour day.[102] Expenses for housing on a per family basis were estimated at 35 rubles, 35 kopeks.[103] In addition, for every eight families, there was to be one barn and one storage facility.[104]

Despite, or possibly because of, such exact, centralized planning, reality veered off to the side. At the end of July, in Tot'ma, for example, the director of the local forestry agency asked the regional migration administration to send blueprints and plans for the projected construction. He did not know how to build the special villages or even where to locate them.[105] In April, the Vologodskii county soviet complained to the northern regional soviet about the absence of practical instructions for construction—blueprints, norms for materials and labor, and so on.[106] There was also a dearth of know-how on the job. The Ukrainian settlers were not used to building their homes with logs.[107] In general, the housing designs were complex structures far removed from the style with which most settlers were familiar. In May, the Vozhegodskii forestry agency proposed that all homes be one-story given the lack of skilled carpenters and the danger of two-story homes collapsing.[108] In June, a forestry agency construction engineer in the district wrote that without the help of hired carpenters, the walls would fail in the buildings built according to blueprint. He urged that simpler, two- to four- family homes be adopted but wrote that he did not want to be scapegoated for taking such an initiative on his own.[109] In Vologodskii county, the number of planned villages was soon lowered, due to the complexities of construction.[110]

100. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, ll. 5–9; GAVO, f. 395, op. 1, d. 12, ll. 1–8; GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18.

101. GAVO, f. 395, op. 1, d. 39, l. 22; f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 3–9, 18; GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18.

102. VOANPI, f. 1855, op. 1, d. 86, ll. 32–33.

103. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18.

104. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 3–9.

105. GAVO, f. 395, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 9–15, 16–20.

106. VOANPI, f. 1855, op. 1, d. 86, ll. 19–27.

107. Ibid. For this reason, there were plans to settle two to three families of (local) northern kulaks in each special village to familiarize their new neighbors with local conditions. See GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1943, l. 42. (Whether this plan was ever realized remains unclear.)

108. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 3–9.

109. GAVO, f. 395, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 163–64.

110. Ibid., ll. 174–77.

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The forestry agencies were not equal to the task of village construction. Everywhere, there were shortages of building materials and tools, their transport alone representing a monumental task. There were not enough carpenters either among the settlers or within the local population, leading to requests to transfer carpenters from one district to the next.[111] OGPU summarily rejected demands for construction materials issued by the Northern GPU plenipotentiary in March, with the reply that the demands for construction materials were "extremely exaggerated" and that the forestry agencies were responsible for construction in any case.[112] To make matters worse, the demands of construction, at least in the short term, were in direct contradiction to the demands of forestry production. Consequently, migration and soviet organs struggled continually with the forestry industry to force it to release labor from forestry work to special village construction. In April, the northern regional soviet reported that 60 percent of all able-bodied settlers would be needed for construction.[113] In June, Severoles ordered its subordinates to move labor out of forestry and into construction, limiting settlers to no more than *192 days per year* in forestry work. But local district soviets often refused to release settlers for construction, claiming labor shortages. In one district in Severo-Dvinskii county, a plenipotentiary on resettlement issues reported in May that only 5 percent of all able-bodied settlers worked in construction; the remainder were occupied in the timber floating. The Totemskii district party committee secretary claimed point blank on 8 July that the timber floating came first.[114] It was not uncommon, in fact, for local officials to view the special settlers as, to use a word commonly bandied around at the time, "a muscle force" and to interpret the "elimination of the kulak as a class" as physical extermination.[115] At the end of July, the northern regional migration administration ordered the forestry industry to use all settlers in construction, from 13- to14-year-olds to the elderly.[116] By October 1930, some 34,672 northern settlers were occupied in constructing 263 special villages, 131 of which were inhabited by that time.[117]

While the entire bureaucracy blamed the forestry industry for the problems in village construction, the forestry industry blamed the settlers themselves, accusing them of a lack of discipline and frequent insubordination.[118] In a special village in Vozhegodskii district, a hired foreman arrested a "saboteur," described additionally as a "problem element," for disorganizing work, but the mostly absentee commandant, who claimed

111. GAVO, f. 395, op. 1, d. 39, ll. 16–20; f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, ll. 127, 223; f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 51, 118; VOANPI, f. 329, op. 1, d. 97, l. 9; f. 5, op. 1, d. 277, l. 10; f. 5, op. 1, d. 278, ll. 12–14.

112. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 98.

113. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 2–18.

114. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 127, 131–34, 172; VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 278, l. 35; f. 1855, op. 1, d. 86, ll. 43–46.

115. *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 9, d. 45, ll. 120–34; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Arkhangel'skoi oblasti (GAAO), f. 621 (Severnyi kraiispolkom), op. 3, d. 204, ll. 1–21.

116. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 219, ll. 259–60.

117. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1798, l. 224.

118. GAVO, f. 395, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 155–59; f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, l. 127; VOANPI, f. 5, op. 1, d. 278, l. 12.

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the saboteur was needed at the work site, then rehired him. According to this report, the commandant's action reduced the foreman's authority in the kulaks' eyes; but this report also accused the foreman of an "extreme lack of tact"—threats, yelling, cursing at the settlers.[119] Here as elsewhere, because the commandant was not yet at the site full time, leadership generally devolved upon hired foremen.[120] In the meantime, the settlers were inadequately paid and fed. The administrative costs of the resettlement operation were to be partially covered by a deduction of 25 percent of the settlers' forestry wages.[121] In fact, the settlers rarely received their pay on time, if at all, and huge amounts of back pay accumulated.[122] While working in the special villages, it is probable that the settlers received nothing, especially since reports indicate that some settlers actually ran away from the villages to return to forestry work where conditions were better.[123] Food provisioning was extremely poor. Moreover, most workers had to share their rations with non-able-bodied family members.[124] One sympathetic foreman intervened, writing that his settler laborers had received no tea, sugar, or flour and that 920 settlers were "absolutely without bread" for three days in July.[125] In some places, the settlers refused to work because of hunger.[126]

The inevitable result of this nightmare was a failure to fulfill the special village construction deadlines. In a letter of 3 August 1930 to Syrtsov, Tolmachev wrote that only 112 of 6,131 eight-family homes had been completed as of 20 July.[127] In Vozhegodskii district in August, not one housing unit was completely finished.[128] As of 5 September in Vologodskii county, of the planned 1,535 homes and 475 auxiliary buildings, only 545 homes and 225 auxiliary buildings were complete.[129] According to a Russian Central Executive Committee report on twelve special villages that had been inspected in the north, by the end of 1930 of the 143 homes planned for 965 families, only 3 nine-family homes, 1 eight-family home, and 2 other homes had been built.[130] As a consequence, many special settler families would continue to live in the temporary transit points for another winter or in make-shift dwellings in the special villages.

Postmortem for 1930

For the special settlers of the north the year 1930 was a disaster. By the end of the year, of the roughly 46,000 families in the north, only 32,175 fami-

119. GAVO, f. 395, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 155–56.
120. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, l. 127.
121. GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1944, l. 100.
122. GARF, f. 374 (Rabkrin), op. 28, d. 4055, ll. 21–19; GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 192, l. 54.
123. *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni,* 2:602–3.
124. GAVO, f. 395, op. 1, d. 40, ll. 157–59.
125. Ibid., l. 180.
126. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, l. 53.
127. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1796, ll. 184–90.
128. VOANPI, f. 329, op. 1, d. 97, l. 9.
129. GAVO, f. 399, op. 1, d. 182, l. 477.
130. GARF, f. 393, op. 43a, d. 1798, l. 215.

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lies and people sent singly (a total of 103,970 individuals) were actually living in the special villages. Housing was complete for only 64,996 of the 103,970 people in the villages; the others lived in make-shift cabins or in the nearest "free" villages. Just under 24,000 able-bodied settlers were working to construct the special villages, while only 6,000 were employed in the forestry industry. By the end of 1930, 39,743 people—mostly males—had run away; of these (according to incomplete data) 15,458 remained at large, 21,645 had been captured within the region, and 2,540 had been captured beyond the northern region. OGPU feared that if that rate of flight continued—the highest of all exile regions—only women with children and non-able-bodied settlers would remain. In the meantime, OGPU had allowed 35,400 children to return home to relatives in their native villages, and 21,213 people, mainly children, had died.[131]

According to an OGPU report, the overwhelming majority of special settlers remained "antisoviet." According to this report, they compared their situation to prison and feared death from hunger. They continued to hope that they could go home. Many had dreamed of a May Day amnesty; after May passed uneventfully, most pinned their hopes for return on war. One barracks elder was overheard to say, "If we hadn't been such fools, we would never have suffered so, but would have organized" to resist, while another settler reportedly said, "I gave a promise to my dying daughter to slaughter 150 communists." Resistance was limited largely to flight, foot-dragging, and work absenteeism, acts likely motivated as much by hunger, exhaustion, and desperation as antipathy to the authorities.[132]

Life in the special villages was abysmal. Summary reports on four special villages in Vozhegodskii district from the spring and summer of 1931, in anticipation of the transfer of administrative responsibilities to OGPU, paint a picture of bleak devastation. The first special village contained 125 families with a total of 463 people (213 men, 199 women, and 51 children under age 16), of whom 233 were listed as able-bodied and 34 residents were currently missing (in flight). These people lived in seven houses (four two-family and three eight-family houses) and had managed to clear 7.5 hectares from the forest to plant potatoes, oats, barley, and some flax. The village had a total of fourteen horses and fifteen ploughs. There was a library with one hundred books and a nursery under construction. All the children were described as illiterate. Sanitary conditions were poor, with only one bathhouse for the village. The nearby river was both the source of drinking water and the place for laundering clothes. A commandant's assistant (who worked under the commandant of another special village in the district) administered the village and was described as drunken and anxious to quit. Cash reserves in the village totaled 232 rubles, 35 kopeks.[133]

131. *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 8, d. 504, ll. 454–60; *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni,* 2: 784–85. For national statistics on flight, see GARF, f. 9414, op. 1, d. 1943, l. 103.

132. GARF, f. 1235, op. 141, d. 786, ll. 15–12; *Tragediia,* TsA FSB, f. 2, op. 8, d. 504, ll. 498–507. There were a few instances of active resistance already in 1930. See, for example, the descriptions in *Tragediia Sovetskoi derevni,* 2:382–83.

133. GAVO, f. 907, op. 5, d. 10, ll. 15–18.

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In the second special village, there were 114 families with 338 people (106 men, 112 women, and 120 children under 16), of whom 221 were able-bodied and 57 were in flight. The settlers here lived in four eight-family houses that had been completed only in November 1930. The settlers had managed to clear 9 hectares of land and had planted oats and potatoes. The village had no library, but it did have a shop and a bathhouse. Cash reserves were estimated at 9 rubles, 15 kopeks.[134]

The third special village was home to 101 families with 262 people (94 men, 84 women, and 84 children under 16), of whom 126 were able-bodied and 76 were in flight. They lived in four eight-family houses, also completed in November 1930, and had succeeded in clearing only 4.5 hectares to plant oats and potatoes. The report described the homes and the children as "dirty." Although the village reported absolutely no cash reserves, the report lauded the commandant (one of the report's authors) for his good qualities.[135] Conditions in the fourth and final special village were roughly similar, except that this village had a *fel'dsher* (doctor's assistant) and a clinic, at which a grand total of 2,876 visits from the settlers of all four villages had been recorded in 1930.[136]

Later years would bring little if any improvement to the special villages of the north. The famine struck the special settlers with a deadly force, claiming over 14,000 lives in 1933 according to a regional health department report prepared for the People's Commissariat of Health.[137] By March 1933, it was reported that 25 percent of all special settler families lacked able-bodied members, thus increasing the numbers of mouths on central and regional government dole.[138] In the same year, regional authorities complained that harvests in the special villages were on average 68 percent lower than the regional norm.[139] The numbers of special villages would decline sharply over the course of the decade through mergers and closures as a result of declining populations and unsuitable locations.[140] The special villages of the north would never become the self-sufficient farming and labor colonies that the OGPU and Bergavinov had envisioned.

In 1931, the Northern Region ceased being the most common destination for kulak special settlers, ceding that status to the Urals. In 1931, less than 10,000 families made the forced journey to the north, while

134. Ibid., ll. 45–47.

135. Ibid., ll. 55–58.

136. Ibid., ll. 68–71. (That is, if all special settlers visited the clinic, that would mean two visits per settler.)

137. GAAO, f. 621, op. 3, d. 269, ll. 10–15. To put this statistic in perspective, an array of regional reports present the following *total* numbers of special settlers in the north: in February 1933, 126,176; in March 1933, 120,178; and in August 1933, 104,461. (The decline in figures is attributable to escapes and the return home of children and the elderly as well as deaths.) GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 1446, ll. 16, 105–6; GAAO, f. 621, op. 3, d. 31, ll. 26–27.

138. GAOPDF AO, f. 290, op. 1, d. 1446, ll. 105–6.

139. Ibid., f. 290, op. 1, d. 1446, ll. 6–7.

140. GAAO, f. 621, op. 3, d. 201, ll. 251–49, 256–52, 273–67, 283–77; f. 621, op. 3, d. 268, ll. 1–3; f. 621, op. 3, d. 269, l. 122.

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OGPU dispatched over 75,000 families to the Urals and approximately 60,000 families to eastern and western Siberia.[141] Everywhere, the special settlers lived and died in subhuman conditions. Yet even amidst this horror, the north stood alone in the year 1930 as a place where, as one settler put it, "a person [could] not remain a person in such conditions."

Conclusion

In his classic study of Smolensk under Soviet rule, Merle Fainsod concluded that, "it was the very inefficiency of the state machine which helped make it [Soviet power] tolerable."[142] In campaigns of mass repression, precisely the reverse of Fainsod's maxim was true. The "inefficiencies," the criminal neglect, the administrative weaknesses of the Soviet state spelled, to use the official euphemism, "excesses" (*peregiby*) of unimaginable dimensions, whether in collectivization and dekulakization, the "Great Purge" and the concentration camp system, or in the other archipelago of the "special villages" that dotted the vast, uninhabited hinter lands of the Soviet Union.

The construction of the special villages took place silently and secretly against the noisy backdrop of Stalin's first Five-Year Plan. That the Soviet state could have taken on such an enormous undertaking, requiring tens of millions of rubles, massive amounts of construction materials, labor, food, and supplies while at the same time carrying out a program of rapid industrialization appears to defy normal logic. Why did the state implement and continue what was clearly an economically irrational policy whose costs far outweighed its benefits? In the context of Stalinist development, where, to quote an oft-used aphorism of the time, "you cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs" and where the word *individualism* was almost certain to be modified by "rotten," state-constituted enemies were expendable, an insignificant part of a much greater cause that held no regard for the individual, the civilian equivalent of cannon fodder for barracks socialism. A vital, perhaps the most vital, part of the phenomenon of Stalinist social engineering was repression—the weeding out and isolation (extermination in some cases) of perceived enemies and aliens.[143] And while a superficial philosophy of rehabilitation hung in the air and seemingly pragmatic, utilitarian demands for labor resources echoed through the system, Soviet and Russian realities made it predictable that such campaigns would, in the end, be mainly punitive. Modern social engineering goals in conditions of "un-modernity" led almost in-

141. RGASPI, f. 17, op. 120, d. 52, ll. 20–21. By 1 August 1933, 31,548 settler families (104,461 people) remained in the north. GAAO, f. 621, op. 3, d. 31, ll. 26–27. In 1934, a series of what had by this time been renamed *trudposelki* were closed down or merged due to dwindling numbers of settlers in some of the villages. GAAO, f. 621, op. 3, d. 269, l. 122; f. 621, op. 3, d. 342, ll. 2, 8, 14, 19, 24. The famine took a devastating toll on the special settlers of the north. See GAAO, f. 621, op. 3, d. 201, 202, for illustration.

142. Merle Fainsod, *Smolensk under Soviet Rule* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), 450.

143. See Peter Holquist, "'Conduct Merciless Mass Terror': Decossackization on the Don, 1919," *Cahiers du Monde russe* 38, nos. 1–2 (1997): 127–62; and Weiner, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia."

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evitably to disaster and, moreover, fed into the escalation of state terror as investigations, accusations, and charges against officials and the special settlers themselves emerged as the only way the system could respond to the series of crises it had unleashed, reverberating all the way up to 1937.

Motivated by equivalent doses of paranoid hatred and dystopian social engineering, the creation of the other archipelago constituted a shadow world of monumental proportions that absorbed all the projected and mythical evils of Soviet society into a secret, internal colony of slave labor and dictatorial police rule. That the state failed, as Serkin put it, to "think through to the end" all of the myriad issues connected with creating this colony, planning and building it na khodu as another functionary said, defined as much as described the tragedy of special resettlement.

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