

**International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and  
Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania**

**SLAUGHTER OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN POPULATION  
PERPETRATED BY THE SOVIETS**

**In June 22 – 28, 1941**

**CONCLUSIONS**

*(Approved by the Commission on December 17, 2003)*

1. **Legal status in 22-28 June 1941.** The Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR declared martial law in Lithuania. State security and defence functions were transferred to war councils of military districts, fronts and armies. All cases against political prisoners were sent over to military tribunals.
  
2. **Evacuation of prisoners and organisation of executions.** The evacuation of prisoners fell within the responsibility of the Prison Board of the NKVD USSR and its local divisions, which were assisted by units of the NKVD convoy forces. At first, prisoner evacuation was conducted in accordance with oral instructions of local NKVD-NKGB leadership. Political prisoners were to be either deported, or, in case deportation was impossible, shot without any court judgement. Special court procedure for deported political prisoners was set, that usually ended with a sentence to non-appeal able capital punishment “for counter-revolutionary crimes and crimes posing extreme threat to the USSR regime.” Judgements were passed without any account of the procedural rules under the Soviet legislation (people were not allowed to get acquainted with charges against them, no interpreters were provided to those who did not speak Russian during the proceedings, the state of health of the arrested was ignored).
  - a) **The murder of political prisoners from Kaunas prison in Cherven and Bigosov.** The murder in Cherven and Bigosov was the only one to fit into the scheme of “Category 1 Evacuation”, when political prisoners had to be shot as evacuation was impossible. Their destinies were determined by the leaders of the Prison Board of the NKVD USSR and the Prison Board of the NKVD of the Belarussian SSR. Ca 40 prisoners out of the total of ca 75 or 100 Kaunas

prisoners driven from Minsk prison managed to survive. Dozens of other well-known Lithuanian public figures and ordinary farmers, workers and civil servants were killed without a court judgement. Under similar circumstances, 15 prisoners (including signatory of the Independence Act K.Bizauskas) were executed in the region of Polock, Belarus, and by Bigosov station on 26 June 1941.

- b) **Slaughter of Telšiai Prison Inmates in Rainiai Forest.** This was probably the only slaughter in Lithuania that left no witnesses. Leaders of the NKVD county division, the 8th Army and the Executive Committee of Telšiai County, arranged the murder of 76 political prisoners. The NKGB agents and 8th Army soldiers carried out the execution.
- c) **Killing of Prisoners and Guards at the Pravieniškiai Camp.** The act committed at Pravieniškiai camp was different from other murders not only in its massive scope, but also in the fact, that it killed all prisoners, without a single exception, and even their superintendents together with their families (the latter being Lithuanians). This murder did not fit into “Category 1 Evacuation of Prisoners”, and no secret documents of the NKGB-NKVD mentioned the execution of ca 260 persons.
- d) **Other Killings of Civilian Population.** In other parts of Lithuania, small groups of prisoners were killed together with civilian population. Their execution was initiated and carried out by the NKVD and NKGB staff or Red Army soldiers, as well as Soviet and party activists. In every county of Lithuania, dozens of people were killed just upon suspicion that they supported partisans or upon information filed against them by communists (claiming that these persons were disloyal or hostile towards the Soviet authorities), or they fell victim to the militaries’ abuse of power. Before the invasion of the German army, ca 40 group murders including ca 700 people were registered.
- e) **Slaughter of the Militaries.** As the war began, the units of the 29<sup>th</sup> territorial rifleman corps were considered politically unreliable. The murder of Lithuanian soldiers was triggered both by the start of the rebellion, and by the refusal to execute orders of the Red Army officers. At the beginning of the war, more than 5,500 Lithuanian soldiers used arms to escape from Soviet guards and stayed in Lithuania. 120 Lithuanian soldiers perished or turned up

missing while escaping. 1,931 soldiers were later entered into the lists of the missing, though at the beginning of the war they fled the territory of Lithuania either voluntarily or were forced to leave. Ca 20 per cent of them were arrested and taken to camps. Others were killed while serving in the Red Army units, and only a small share of them returned to Lithuania in 1945.

### **3. Repercussions of the Murder of Civilian Population.**

- a) Alongside the outset of the war, extermination of people holding different views, primarily, members of former Lithuanian national organisations, was launched. It was not guided by any Soviet legislation, but rather by oral instructions and secret unlawful directives of the NKGB-NKVD leadership. Officials and soldiers of NKVD-NKGB killed ca 400 prisoners and 700 civilians on 22-28 June 1941.
  
- b) The news about the murder of civilians and militaries was spread among the public of Lithuania almost immediately. Exhumations as well as mass burial and re-burial of victims revealed the brutality of the Communist-Bolshevik terror. Under the German occupation, these facts were used for the promotion of National Socialism in the population by inciting ethnic intolerance and putting the responsibility for the murder of the representatives of the Jewish community.

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