

Review of Dr. Arvydas Anušauskas article “Arrests and other forms of violence (1940–1941m.)”

The problem of Stalin’s repression in Lithuania is still relevant. Not only due to the fact that the memory of the ones who experienced repression, were murdered or died in prisons, in exile or camps is still alive in the hearts of their descendants and relatives. It is very important to establish the scope of repression, its forms and the number of victims. It was impossible to do that during the Soviet period neither in Lithuania, nor in immigration where the tendency to increase the scope of repression and the number of victims was dominating. This tendency is understandable as all the relevant documents and lists were inaccessible to the researchers.

Although after the 1990 the archives became accessible, many publications, mainly the media ones, deliberately exaggerated the number of Stalin repression victims on the considerations of conjuncture. Also, the tragic past was speculated on for political aims. Some terms are used inadequately in the study, for example “genocide”. Dr. A. Anušauskas notes at the beginning of the article that even in immigration: “... any form of the Soviet terror was considered a genocide crime”. It should be mentioned that the term genocide became too “popular” in Lithuania nowadays. The acts of repression of the first years of the Soviet regime (1940 - 1941) were analysed more till 1990. However, even those studies contain various imprecise facts and myths. In this way sometimes it was attempted to prove that Stalin’s government wanted to exile all or almost all inhabitants of Lithuania, firstly, of course, Lithuanians. This is an absurd version about Stalin’s aims: to annex three independent states, to declare them the republics of the Union and to exile their inhabitants to Siberia or Kazakhstan! This version was also not confirmed by the post-war deportations in the Baltic countries and in the western part of Ukraine.

Dr. A. Anušauskas is the author of many works on Stalin’s repression in Lithuania. His work “Arrests and other forms of violence (1940–1941)” analyses the repression of the first years of the Soviet regime till the deportations of June 1941”. The study refers to the documents of Lithuanian and Russian archives and to a smaller extent to the works already published. The later events – the destiny of the prisoners exiled to the depth of Russia are also being considered. It can be stated that A. Anušauskas carried out an exhaustive and objective research of the chosen topic, as well as touched upon the issues painful to Lithuania and other ethnic minorities of our country. The author established the number of the repressed to the maximum; however, it is understandable that the absolute precision here is impossible.

The article is quite compact and that is an advantage of a scientific work. A great number of memoirs on repression in immigration and Lithuania in 1940-1941 is omitted, however, they would have changed the character of the article itself. Therefore, the fact that the author did not refer to the memories is quite logical. There are seven charts attached to the article, which are compiled in a very accurate manner. They illustrate the scope of repression, the dynamics of detention, national and social constitution of the repressed, etc. The charts illustrate the fact that all the communities of Lithuania experienced more or less the same level of repression. The percentage of the detained Jews is slightly bigger than their part among all the inhabitants, whereas the percentage of the detained Polish people is much bigger.

While highly evaluating the article of Dr. A. Anušauskas, some nonessential remarks should be mentioned. Some editing mistakes occur in the text of the article

as well as in the charts, also one or another doubtful statement. It should be clarified whether the detained members of parties and organisations of the Independent Lithuania - 320 thousand people – were intended not only to be secretly registered but also listed as the detained (page 8). Also, the statement: “Despite the reason of detention all the prisoners were examined in a very cruel manner” (page 12). However, not all of the detained were examined in a cruel manner, some of them were not examined at all till 22 June 1941. The remark does not question the facts of cruel examination or those of murder in prisons, however, the word ‘all’ is probably not appropriate here.

The remarks mentioned are not essential; the drawbacks could be easily corrected before submitting the final copy for publishing. The article is written with regard to the primary sources only, the study is successfully structured, and it contains informative appendixes. Also, the investigation is valuable from the scientific point of view and interesting for those who are interested in the contemporary history of Lithuania.

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