

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE CRIMES
OF THE NAZI AND SOVIET OCCUPATION REGIMES IN LITHUANIA

IV. The Second Occupation: First phase (1944-1953)

IV.1. Crimes

IV.1.5 Mass Arrests and Torture

Mass Arrests and Torture in 1944-1953

CONCLUSIONS

Approved on April 20 2005

The Commission discussed the report submitted by Arvydas Anušauskas “Mass Arrests and Torture in 1944-1953” and the conclusions of the study. The Commission also acquainted itself with the evaluation of this report by J. Starkauskas, and adopted the following Conclusions.

Period of Terror. The study covers the third period of unlawful arrests in Lithuania, which started at the beginning of the re-occupation on 13 July 1944 (when the Red Army entered the territory of Lithuania followed by the operational groups, formed by the repressive structures, and the units of internal army, front rear defense and border defense), and lasted until 1953 inclusive. Lithuanian population once again was subjected to the laws of the Soviet Union. Political repressions were applied to groups of people, first of all, based on social background, former status, and occupational or political activities during Lithuanian Independence as well as previous position, professional or even underground (non-Communist) activities during Nazi occupation.

The institutions of Soviet occupation government set ambiguous and not fully defined repression criteria that evolved in accordance with the ongoing war and internal politics. During the first period, i.e. July 1944 – October 1945, the arrests were directed against people (mostly Lithuanians, also Russians and Belarussians) accused of either the collaboration with the Germans, or the involvement in the resistance aiming at the restoration of the Independent states (Lithuanians and Polish). During the second period, i.e. October 1945 – April 1948, the arrests mainly targeted the participants of the Lithuanian resistance and politically incorrect persons (that used to be members of political or cultural organizations that existed during the Lithuanian Independence). During the third period, i.e. May 1948 – May 1953, the arrests for the most part were aimed at the participants of the Lithuanian resistance, as well as persons of certain social background and former status, and formerly engaged in certain professional or political activities. For the duration of this period, in terms of the scope, the arrests were exceeded by the deportations.

In 1944-1953, 186,000 persons were arrested and imprisoned, while 118,000 people were deported. About 80,000 of the arrested and

imprisoned people were political prisoners convicted pursuant to Article 58 and other articles of the Criminal Code applied to the political prisoners. The political prisoners were imprisoned breaching even the regulations of the Soviet Criminal Procedure Code as they were put in prison without placing any charges, renewing the arrest or interrogation terms. Meanwhile, the procedures of compiling criminal cases were faulty, partial and ideology-based. Furthermore, about 8,000 people were imprisoned for the collaboration with the Nazi occupation government. This figure included 256 persons that were executed for war crimes and 123 persons that were executed for the collaboration with the Nazi occupation government. However, the data of repressive institutions do not reveal the actual scope of collaboration, while ambiguous criteria applied to case compilation as well as the Soviet Criminal Code allowed adopting the same punishment for both persons charged with war crimes and those imprisoned for political reasons.

The Role of Soviet Institutions in the Terror Organisation. Brand new structures, which had the resemblance to the pre-war structures more in outer constitution, were set up for the execution of Soviet policy of terror. In 1944-1953, the Services of the Interior and Security of the Soviet Union formed a solid system of terror execution. They followed Extraordinary Laws that had been effective during war. All chain links of terror execution, including special courts and extrajudicial structures (extraordinary councils), were restored.

Other Forms of Violence (Torture). Political prisoners usually suffered the effect of the “necessary interrogation actions”, i.e. torture. Torture used to be sanctioned by the top officers of the NKVD, the MVD, and the MGB. Testimonies obtained or confirmed by torturing would become the principal incriminatory evidence.

Property Appropriation of the Arrested. As a rule, personal property of the arrested was confiscated. However, this method was mainly directed against the families of the political prisoners whose movable and immovable property (houses, land, livestock, etc.) was also appropriated. This method had especially wide application during the first period at the time of the Second World War.

Sentences and their Execution. During the period of 1944-1953, 142,579 people were taken to the Soviet GULAG camps. The interrogated people constituted the majority of the deported people only in 1944-1945. Later, people were deported after the adoption of the sentence. The sentences were usually passed by either the war tribunals of the internal army or the extraordinary council. Pursuant to the Decree of 21 February 1948 of the Supreme Council of the USSR, after serving the entire term the political prisoners had to settle in exile under the supervision of the MGB in certain Siberian and Northern territories. About 10-

12% of the imprisoned people lost lives in Soviet camps and prisons.

Constitution of Prisoners. There were people of all ethnic groups among 80,000 political prisoners imprisoned in Lithuania in 1944-1953, however, the Lithuanians (about 94%) prevailed (while the Polish constituted 5%, and the Jewish – 0.5% of the total)¹. There were people from all social and professional levels among the arrested and imprisoned people. The farmers, public servants (about 10%) and workers constituted the majority of the persons arrested and imprisoned in Lithuania.

Qualitative Changes in the Lithuanian Society. Unlawful arrests and deportations to camps that took place in 1944-1953 further aggravated the losses suffered by the Lithuanian society during the period of 1940-1944, that is:

- a) Accomplished the annihilation of trained professional officers (politicians, teachers, military officers, policemen, etc.) in Lithuania, while the surviving ones were ousted to the periphery of social and public life;
- b) Annihilated the majority of participants of armed and non-armed resistance and provided the conditions for the implementation and enhancement of Soviet farming and political reforms and campaigns;
- c) Created the atmosphere of suspicion and fear in the society that did not fade away even after the mass terror period was ended.

Chairman of the Commission

Emanuelis Zingeris

Executive Director

Ronaldas Račinskas

¹ This constituted about 3.5% of ethnic Lithuanians residing in Lithuania in 1945 (of 2.2 million), about 1% Polish (of 400,000) and about 2% of the Jewish (of 16,000).