

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

## **Criminal Occupation Policy System. The Role of Occupation, Political, Military, Public and Legal Institutions and Collaboration with Them**

### **1. Liquidation of the Lithuanian Army in 1940-1941**

#### **CONCLUSIONS**

*(Approved on 22 March 2001)*

1. With the occupation of Lithuania on 15 June 1940 Moscow achieved its objective of precluding any armed opposition. The Lithuanian Government took no steps to get ready for armed opposition in spite of the fact that it had received information on the pending invasion. No orders to offer armed resistance were issued to the troops. On accepting the ultimatum of the USSR, the Lithuanian Government fulfilled the key part of the Kremlin's plan of annexing Lithuania to the USSR. Though the Constitution of Lithuania was still in force, the Lithuanian army generals also did not organise resistance, simply following the instructions of the new puppet government established by the Soviet Union.
2. Following the occupation of Lithuania, the Soviet Union military institutions were mainly involved in neutralising and liquidating the Lithuanian army afterwards.
3. The liquidation of the Lithuanian army proceeded in two stages:
  - a) From the beginning of the occupation to the end of August 1940, the neutralisation of the Lithuanian army was in progress;
  - b) From August to the end of December 1940 the Lithuanian army was liquidated by incorporating it into the Red Army and by reforming into the 29<sup>th</sup> rifle territorial corps of the Red Army. Following the resolution of 14 August 1940 of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on the restructuring of the armies of the occupied Baltic States, the Lithuanian army was reorganised into the 29<sup>th</sup> rifle territorial corps, which existed before war broke out in 1941.
4. The purpose behind the army reforms carried out from 15 June to 30 August 1940 was to neutralise the army thereby preventing a spontaneous outburst of armed resistance. In the context of the neutralisation of the army, the following factors were crucial to it:
  - a) Increasing pressures on officers, primarily generals through demoralisation with the aim of making them follow the illegal orders of new political and Red Army authorities;
  - b) Mass dismissals and concomitant replacements of top-ranking and senior officers; subsequently, the process was extended to lower ranks as well;
  - c) Introduction of political control into the army by establishing an institution of political leaders;
  - d) Arrests of officers and soldiers.
5. Intimidation and violence played an exceptionally significant role. In violation of an oath of allegiance to the State of Lithuania, individuals were pressed into making political

commitments to the puppet government set up by the Soviet Union. After the certification procedure of officers, re-engaged non-commissioned officers and civil servants was announced, they all had to sign a statement thereby pledging allegiance to the goals of the new people's government. On 23 February 1941 the former Lithuanian army officers and soldiers remaining in service swore a military oath to the flag of the Red Army of the Soviet Union.

6. For the purpose of control and cleaning of former Lithuanian servicemen, the following political-repressive authorities were set up: the special corps and division NKVD units, military prosecution departments and courts, political boards and units with their representatives – political leaders. In addition to the above arrangements, a military commissioner institution was introduced to exercise control over commanders, with relevant Red Army officers being appointed as deputy commanders. Control consisted in the communist ideology instruction to the troops. At the beginning of 1941, nearly 3 thousand soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers were included in the lists of unreliable persons drawn up by the NKVD and political units.
7. In May 1941, preparations for the liquidation of the 29<sup>th</sup> territorial corps were put into operation. During the mass deportation on 14-18 June 1941, the servicemen on the lists of the NKVD and political units were arrested and sent to camps in Russia.
8. When the war broke out in 1941, the corps was ordered to retreat to Russia. Lithuanian soldiers, seeking to stay in Lithuania, rose in rebellion. The number of soldiers that retreated to Russia amounted to barely 1,5 thousand, and the Red Army Command had to disband it. The remaining corps soldiers subject to the Red Army were dispersed among smaller units; afterwards they were sent to the 16<sup>th</sup> Lithuanian rifle division under the Red Army. At least 120 Lithuanian soldiers were killed in the separation action of the corps from the Red Army.
9. The major part of the corps that remained in Lithuania merged into the large formation in Vilnius. At the end of July, following the German orders, it was split up into a few Lithuanian self-defence battalions, and the remaining troops were dismissed.
10. The Lithuanian army organised along the same lines of Western counterparts was materially and morally ruined and exterminated by forcefully incorporating it into the Soviet army operating on totalitarian principles.

The aftermath of the first Soviet occupation with respect to the Lithuanian army is as follows:

By 1 June 1940, the Lithuanian army with a total of 28 005 servicemen, including 1728 officers, was liquidated. Approximately 12 thousand soldiers and officers were left for service in the 29<sup>th</sup> territorial corps the authority of the Red Army. The total number of officers sent to camps or imprisoned was 414 (excluding the officers in retirement before the loss of the independence of Lithuania), of which 195 were killed. Including the officers who died or were killed at the outbreak of the USSR-German War (24 officers), the total number of officers killed should be at least 220.

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