

Comment

by Liudas Truska, Professor of the Department of the History of Lithuania
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on the Study *Persecution of Non-Jewish Citizens of Lithuania, Murder of Civilian
Population (1941-1944)* by Dr Rimantas Zizas

I fully agree with the statement by Dr Zizas that the historiography of the murder and persecution of the population of Lithuania during the Nazi occupation is ideologised and politicised, affected by myths and stereotypes. A typical feature of all research, be it conducted by the Special State Commission that worked in 1944-1945, by the authors of the Soviet period or of the Lithuanian émigré community, or by contemporary researchers, is exaggeration of demographic losses and their artificial inflation to a rather high degree.

Dr Zizas relies on literary and new archival sources and makes a high-quality detailed analysis of the losses of all categories of non-Jewish persons killed or persecuted in 1941-1944. On the basis of factual material, the author of the study proves that demographic losses inflicted by the Nazi occupation were to a great extent lighter than estimated earlier (except for the losses of Jews). I believe that Dr Zizas draws a justified conclusion that murdered communists, members of the Young Communist League, Soviet officials and activists (about 1.5-2 thousand people in total) made up the largest category of the Lithuanian population killed during the Nazi occupation (p.70). I support his statement that "*The anti-Communist terror was determined by the complicated historical situation and the events of the 1940-1941 Soviet occupation; however, its violence was unjustified, brutal, ruthless, inadequate in terms of the "crimes" committed by the victims, and unlawful*" (p.33). Nonetheless, one could hardly agree with the statement by Dr Zizas that the end of June and the first half of July 1941, when murder was conducted on the largest scale, was the "interregnum" period "*when one occupation (Soviet) was replaced by the other (Nazi): the Soviets no longer had the power but the Nazi military administration had not yet taken control of the situation (in the periphery in particular)*" (p.24). The author ignores the local Lithuanian administration that was created as early as in the first days of the war and

the anti-Soviet rebellion in rural districts, counties and cities. How long it was effective and whether it was legitimate are different issues.

The number of victims in other categories amounted to, or even exceeded, 1 000, as estimated by Dr. Zizas. Dr Zizas puts the total number of killed non-Jewish citizens of Lithuania at "*several thousand people*" (p.71). As the type of the Commission calls for more specificity, I would suggest that Dr Zizas make a conclusion that the demographic losses totalled to approximately 3 000 persons (as a reference figure). In my view, the material presented by Dr Zizas leads to this generalising conclusion, and it would more or less reflect the true situation. Certainly, the statistics of the losses are only approximate, while absolute precision is not only impossible, but also unnecessary.

I cannot, however, understand why the Conclusions mention only about 60 intellectuals exiled to Stuthoff (p.71). Data at page 48 lead to a conclusion that at least 1 000 Lithuanian people had been confined at that camp at a different time. The category of persons deported for forced labour to Germany is not covered in the conclusions, either.

Dr Rimantas Zizas defines in a reasoned way the causes of the relatively small scale of repressions during the Nazi occupation and comparatively low number of non-Jewish victims in Lithuania. I cannot, however, support his opinion that the colonisation-targeted plans of Nazis in Lithuania in case of victory in the war were Soviet propaganda only (p.43). The argument offered by the author (an article in the *Ostland* magazine No.5 (1942)) is not sound. Certainly, Dr Zizas knows about "Ost" and other plans, according to which, in case of victory in the war, Nazis intended to resettle ca 80 -90 per cent of local residents from Lithuania.

In general, the study by Dr Zizas provides a sufficient ground for the Commission to draw conclusions on the murder and persecution of non-Jewish residents of Lithuania during the Hitlerite occupation.