

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

FORCED MOBILIZATION

The forced use of Lithuania's inhabitants in the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union at the end of World War II from August 1944 to May 1945

CONCLUSIONS

(Approved on 19/06/2002)

1. Legal aspect of the forced mobilization

Forced mobilization to the Soviet occupational army in August 1944 to May 1945 became a constituent part of the terror of Lithuania's inhabitants. By starting the military draft of Lithuanian men to the Red Army in 1944 the Soviet Union violated provisions of the international law contained in the Hague Convention IV 1907 on the Laws and Customs of War on Land which forbade drafting people of the occupied territory to the occupational army or otherwise use inhabitants of the occupied country for military needs. The said Convention's Annex III Article 4 contains provision stating that it is binding on the states that have ratified the Convention as well as the states that have not ratified it. Article 45 states that "the Occupying Power may not compel the inhabitants of occupied territory to swear allegiance to the hostile Power".

After World War II the military draft to the Soviet Army of Lithuania's men still remained illegal from the point of view of international law. When World War II ended and the amnesty for the persons hiding from conscription was announced people still were forcibly taken to the military service. The Soviet Union violated the provisions of Article 51 of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War where it is stated that "Occupying Power may not compel protected persons to serve in its armed or auxiliary forces". After the suppression of the armed anti-Soviet resistance, people were compelled to choose between military service and imprisonment for escaping from military service.

2. Executors and managers of the forced mobilization

The forced mobilization was carried out mostly by the USSR's 4th Rifle Division of NKVD Internal Troops and Border Troops. The main organisers of the military operations were the leaders of the Communist Party and the repressive structures. Later military commissariats were tasked with actual mobilization.

3. Attitude of Lithuania's inhabitants towards the mobilization

Lithuania's population treated the Soviet Union as an occupant state; therefore, conscripts avoided military service in the Red Army. Lithuanian inhabitants' point of view regarding the military draft, i.e. escape, defiance and hiding from the mobilization resulted from the society's negative attitude towards being enlisted in the alien army. The attitude appeared during the Nazi occupation. The population was aware of the main statements of the Atlantic Charter and cherished expectations to restore Lithuania's sovereignty.

As of 1 January 1945 the number of persons hiding from the mobilization estimated 58 620 men. The boycott of the mobilization became one of the forms of resistance to the Soviet occupation. The men who failed to appear at the mobilization depots and were found hiding very often were likened to partisans or other participants of the underground movement. Therefore, very often they were treated as the fighters of the armed resistance movement and threatened with imprisonment or

murder and they were detained (“held up”), tortured or even shot. According to archival documents about 5000 of peaceful population perished during military punitive operations in 1944-1945.

The Sub-Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Soviet Occupation recommends that the investigation is continued while the above data is being revised (archival sources are kept in Moscow’s archives).

Massive escaping from the mobilization resulted in a more rigorous repressive policy by Lithuania’s occupational power. The Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (the CC LCP(B)) on 12 December 1944 adopted the Resolution regarding measures for struggle with deserters and persons avoiding mobilization to the Red Army. Order No 064 issued by the People’s Commissariat of Defence, which provided for the search of each homestead with the aim to detain all men escaping mobilization and their immediate delivery to recruitment depots was put into effect. This and other measures of compulsion were vigorously carried out. As of 21 March 1945 the measures resulted in 338 887 men (age 18-50 years) reporting at the mobilization depots.

4. Legalisation as one of the methods aiming at reduction of resistance to mobilization

On 9 February 1945 the amnesty announced by the Soviet authority was a failure as only 8 896 persons were registered and issued documents. When the war between the USSR and Germany was over, the Soviet authorities announced the second amnesty. In the period from July 1944 to 1 December 1945 the number of people who appeared at the Soviet repressive institutions and were issued temporary documents reached 36 144, including 27 361 of those who were escaping military service (according to other sources the number was 34 589 persons) and 2 423 of deserters (according to other sources the number may have reached 2 522 persons), and 6 259 partisans. By 1957 the overall number of registered persons totalled 38 838, including 8 350 partisans and 30 488 of those escaping military service, deserters, etc. All registered persons were subjected to different repressions or moral compulsion. More than half of them were compelled to hide or leave Lithuania. About 10 per cent of the registered persons who were escaping military mobilization were imprisoned.

5. Status of the mobilized persons

By December of 1944 Lithuanians were sent to the so-called Lithuanian divisions. The mobilized persons were not sent to other troops of the Red Army. Pursuant to the Directive of the Mobilization Administration of the Red Army of 18 October 1944 all Lithuanian ordinary soldiers and sergeants from fighting troops had to be transferred to the 50th Division by 15 of November (approximately 25 thousand soldiers). The 16th Lithuanian Division was replenished likewise.

The exact number of Lithuanians who were mobilized to the Soviet Army and perished in the war activities is not known. By 25 November 1946 after the demobilisation 42 898 soldiers, including 30 thousand Lithuanians, returned to Lithuania.

As the Soviet military authority considered the persons who emigrated or were taken away to Germany by force as the citizens of the USSR and ordered to capture them and to send to the front forcibly dressed in military uniform, the precise data is not available.

6. Consequences of the forced mobilization

In 1944 there were 63 thousand men mobilized, including 24 100 persons brought by force to military commissariats. By 1 June 1945 another 45 thousand persons were mobilized, including 20 462 men brought by force. The total number of men brought to the military commissariats was 44 562 (according to other data 41 010 persons).

The forced mobilization was stopped after the war between the USSR and Germany. According to the official data 108 378 persons, including 82 thousand Lithuanians were mobilized to the Red Army during the whole period of military draft. From 15 July 1944 until 1 December 1945 the number of persons sentenced for escaping military service was 1774 and for deserting was 196.

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