

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

The First Soviet Occupation (1940-1941). Crimes of the Soviet Regime.

The Occupation/Annexation and Sovietization of Lithuania

CONCLUSIONS

(Approved on December 17, 2003)

1. **The foreign policy of the USSR in preparation for Lithuania's occupation.** In 1939, a real threat to the statehood of Lithuania was posed by the neighbouring aggressive states of Germany and the Soviet Union. The latter country began setting international preconditions for aggression in 1939. The conclusion of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the treaty on the transfer of Vilnius and Vilnius district to the Republic of Lithuania, as well as the Lithuanian-Soviet mutual aid treaty which Lithuania signed on 10 October 1939, restricted the Republic's independent foreign policy; Lithuania lost the status of a neutral country. Having taken advantage of the favourable international circumstances and by implementing a foreign policy directed against the Lithuania's independent statehood, the Soviet Union created conditions for the occupation of Lithuania.
2. **The military plan of Lithuania's occupation.** The diplomatic preparations for occupying Lithuania were conducted whilst preparing the military measures. Regarding the military aspect, Lithuania's situation deteriorated from the autumn of 1939; the Red Army bases were set up across the country. The implementation of the military plan of Lithuania's occupation began in the spring of 1940. The final discussion on the plans for Lithuania's military occupation took place on 11 June 1940. After Lithuania had accepted the ultimatum issued by the Soviet Union, the military operation was replaced with the largely unopposed entrance of the Red Army into the country.
3. **Lithuania's internal political situation on the eve of occupation.** The country's internal political development was very much affected by the ultimatums, which Poland and Germany delivered to Lithuania in 1938-1939, the outbreak of World War Two and the treaty of 10 October with the Soviet Union. The return to Lithuania of Vilnius district and the deployment of the Soviet troops raised tensions among the public. The Soviet Union started interfering into the internal affairs of Lithuania. The State Defence

Council of Lithuania discussed the rising threat in February 1940 and it was decided in early May that any Soviet aggression would be opposed with arms. Totally disillusioned by the failure to consolidate all the political forces in the face of the threat, members of the opposition parties sought a government crisis in order to form a pro-Soviet government.

4. The President of Lithuania, who was the commander-in-chief of the armed forces in charge of organizing the defence of the country, took no counteraction. After the ultimatum was received, it was clear that a military occupation of the country would begin in any case. The President proposed to debate only one item in the ultimatum, the issue of the formation of a new Government, to reject the ultimatum and offer resistance. The absence of democratic traditions encouraged a situation in which the opposition were more concerned by possibilities which the ultimatum offered for eliminating Smetona's regime rather than the fate of the country. The aggression was not condemned and a proposed statement of protest was excluded from the text which accepted the ultimatum. The Soviet Union took advantage of the complicated political situation in the country, heightened the tension, divided the political elite of Lithuania and initiated the occupation of the country.
5. **The occupation of Lithuania.** On 15-16 June 1940 the Red Army occupied Lithuania. The Soviet troops also occupied parts of southwest Lithuania, which had been ceded to Germany by the Soviet-German treaty of 28 September 1939. On 10 January 1941 the Soviet Union was granted this territory in return for 7.5 million gold dollars.
6. The realisation of the military occupation and annexation of Lithuania was co-ordinated by an authorised agent of the Soviet government, Vladimir Dekanozov. A special group of the Soviet legation was formed which included NKVD officials who had come to Lithuania, the leadership of the Red Army garrisons and members of the Lithuanian Communist Party Central Committee, all of whom were engaged in solving the issues of a new government's formation and activity. The annexation plan was based on the goal of completing Lithuania's annexation by the USSR while formally following the Constitution and laws of Lithuania. After this failed due to the departure of Smetona, it was decided to violate the Constitution and utilize a new person, Justas Paleckis, who played into the hands of the Soviet authorities and formed a new government.
7. On 17 June, a new Government, dubbed the People's Government, was formed and approved by Acting President Antanas Merkys. The aim of this Government was to

serve the goals of the Soviet Union, mask the military occupation, and appease the people of the country. Gradually, the Communists appointed to the Government occupied the major ministries. Beginning on 5 July, non-Communist ministers played virtually no role in governing the country.

8. To stage the appearance of following constitutional norms, Justas Paleckis took the post of the President of the Republic and swore to uphold the state's Constitution. Thereby, the President of Lithuania was ostensibly to lead an independent and sovereign state of Lithuania, and do so alone, without any influence from outside. The destruction of the political and public structures of the Lithuanian state was initiated, while, at the same time, the rights of the people were limited. Anti-state Communist organizations controlled by Moscow were legalised, and all former political, public, cultural and religious organizations and student corporations were banned. Disbanding the Seimas as of 1 July completed the political reorganization. Thus, the way was being paved for Lithuania's annexation. Promulgating the new Law on Elections in July 1940 set the immediate preconditions for Lithuania's annexation.
9. **Elections to the so-called People's Seimas [Diet] as a means of preparing Lithuania's annexation.** The new Law on Elections to the so-called People's Seimas was not in conformity with Lithuanian legislation, according to which there had to be an interval of two months between the announcement of elections and the vote. The law on elections was not democratic. It stipulated that everybody was required to vote (§ 24), stamps would be placed in voters' passports (§ 35), and candidates would be nominated in meetings of "working people" only. Furthermore, there were no registration lists of voters. In order to cover up the fact that the Lithuanian Communist Party would seize power, a fictitious Lithuanian Working People's Union was founded and was the only one allowed to officially participate in the elections.
10. "The Working People's Union Election Platform" promised tax and debt liquidation for farmers, better pay and working conditions for workers, free social services, development of health care and education, etc. The platform said nothing about the change of the political system or Lithuania's incorporation into the USSR. Before the elections, arrests and repressions were carried out.
11. The previous authoritarian regime had failed to create a civic society in Lithuania. As a result, a considerable portion of the Lithuanian population participated in these rigged elections. The most recent research suggests that 85.2 percent of the total electorate

participated in the elections. The election commission “improved” the results by 10 approximately percent. 55 percent of the voters cast their ballots for candidates. Each candidate was voted for separately and only those who received over 50 percent of the votes could be elected. The absolute majority of the candidates were not elected in accordance to the provisions of the Law on Elections, but were announced as such nonetheless. The results of the election were clearly rigged.

12. **The role of the People’s Seimas in Lithuania’s annexation.** The main drama of the country’s annexation began after the elections to the People’s Seimas. With Soviet representatives drawing up the plans and leading the activity, the Lithuanian Communists carried out the organizational work of the annexation. The work of the Seimas was organized by violating the rules and at the same time, ensuring that no one would be able to resist the annexation plan. A voting system was created whereby no one counted the actual votes. Commissions would not discuss draft laws, which could only be adopted during a third hearing. The Seimas was not authorised to change the state’s political system and abolish the sovereignty of the country. Under the Constitution of 1938, it was explicitly stated that “the Seimas shall not be responsible for sovereignty... [And] shall not have the legal power to decide on the fate of the State”.

13. The issues of the political system and Lithuania’s incorporation into the USSR were debated on 21 July. The decisions of the People’s Seimas were inspired by the Soviet Union. Directing the procedures of the Seimas and violating the Constitution of Lithuania accomplished this. The People’s Seimas liquidated Lithuania’s independent statehood. A rapid transformation of the political and economic life of Lithuania began. The Sovietization of Lithuania was under way even before the country become part of the Soviet Union. The Lithuanian Communist Party played its role as the chief executor of the Soviet plans.

14. The final annexation was formalised on 3 August 1940, when the session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, then underway in Moscow, decided to incorporate Lithuania into the USSR.

Chairman

Emanuelis Zingeris

Executive Director

Ronaldas Račinskas