

Suppression of Anti-Soviet Armed Resistance in 1944-1953: use of illegal suppressive measures and its aftermath

by Mindaugas Pocius,
Assistant of the Modern History Department
of the Lithuanian History Institute

I. Conclusions

Introduction. In 1944, when the Soviet Union re-occupied Lithuania, the Lithuanian people started a nation-wide resistance to the new occupant and introduction of the totalitarian regime. It was offered in both non-violent and armed manner. The resistance retained its broad scope throughout 1944-1945. Later, up until the middle of 1953, the prevalent type of resistance was organised and centralised armed struggle.

Soviet repressive bodies¹ employed a variety of unlawful inhumane measures and methods to put down the resistance. Most of them were criminal according to the international law, the USSR Constitution and Soviet laws. Party or state security control bodies rarely investigated offences against “revolutionary justice”, “Stalin’s constitution”, and “Soviet laws”. Yet more uncommon were the instances when offenders were punished. This has been corroborated by history researchers, publications of documents, memories of participants of and eyewitnesses to the resistance (cf. I. Historiography and Bibliography), as well as the above-listed documents².

Because of its limited scope, the present work does not deal with unlawful measures applied for the suppression of armed resistance by war-crimes tribunals, the Special Meeting of the MGB USSR³, “Smersh”, courts, prosecutor’s office, local (county) party, executive or legislative Soviet authorities. The work briefly discusses, and draws relevant conclusions from, only the following unlawful means of suppression and consequences of their use:

- 1) deportations of families of persons engaged in the resistance movement,
- 2) torturing of the participants of the armed resistance and desecration of their corpses,
- 3) activities of special storm agent groups.

¹ People’s Commissariat of the Interior of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (henceforth: NKVD USSR), War-Crimes Tribunal of the Armed Forces of the NKVD USSR, People’s Commissariat of State Security of the USSR (henceforth: NKGB USSR), Counterintelligence Divisions “Smersh” (the name originates in the abbreviation of Russian words “smert shpiyonam” [death to spies]) of the Army Units of the People’s Commissariat of Defence (henceforth: “Smersh”), War-Crimes Tribunal, Prosecutor’s Office and Courts of the Baltic Military Region.

² Cf. Annex, Document No. 16: Note of 8 August 1953 issued by S.Grimovich, Justice Colonel of the military Prosecutor of the Lithuanian border region, to A.Sniečkus, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, concerning permissions to torture interrogated persons, LVOA, doc.f. 1771, inv. 133, file 50, pp. 185-191.

³ State Security Ministry of the USSR.

The main part of documentary material testifying to the use of unlawful suppressive measures against partisan movement are stored in the Lithuanian Central State Archive (LCVA), Lithuanian Special Archive (LYA), Lithuanian Archive of Organisations (LVOA), and Russian Federal Archive (RFA). Some of them are kept in the Funds of the Deportation and Resistance Museum and Genocide Victims Museum.

Deportations of families of persons engaged in the resistance movement.

In the period between summer 1945 and 1953, deportations of family members of the resistance movement participants were executed without any investigation or court judgement. The Criminal Code of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic (henceforth RSFSR) (in the years of Stalinist regime, Lithuanian citizens were punished according to this Code) did not provide for such a practice of punishing people. Decisions concerning deportation of freedom fighters (partisans) were made by the USSR People's Commissariat of the Interior⁴ and the leadership of the USSR Council of Ministers, however, in 1945-1947, the repressive actions were initiated by the Lithuanian Bureau of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (henceforth CC AUCP (B)). Its superiors were Mikhail Suslov, Chairman of the Lithuanian Bureau of the CC AUCP (B), Antanas Sniečkus, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (henceforth CC LCP (B)), Ivan Tkachenko, Representative of the NKVD-NKGB of the USSR to the Lithuanian SSR, and Mečislovas Gedvilas, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (henceforth LSSR).

The deportations of members of partisan families were at their height in summer 1945, February 1946, and from November 1947 till early May 1948 (ca 15 thousand were exiled then). On 22-23 May 1948 ca 40 thousand members of the families of the participants of the resistance movement and rich farmers were deported. These deportations made the armed underground activities much more difficult. In essence, the deportations employed terrorist hostage-taking tactics. The Order issued by the LSSR People's Commissar of Internal Affairs J.Bartašiūnas on 15 February 1946 manifestly threatened to annihilate the families of partisans, if the latter refused to demobilise, i.e. to return to legal status.⁵ In later years, deportations were mainly targeted at real and ostensible partisan supporters and their families, i.e. well off farmers, educated, patriotic, opposition-minded people, and families of fresh members of the ranks of freedom fighters.

⁴ Before 15 March 1946, the fight against resistance was monitored by the USSR People's Commissariat of the Interior. On 15 March 1946, the USSR People's Commissariat of the Interior (NKVD) was renamed as the Ministry of the Interior (MVD), and the USSR People's Commissariat of State Security (NKGB) was named the State Security Ministry (MGB). Similarly, the NKVD of the Lithuanian SSR became the MVD of the Lithuanian SSR, and the NKGB of the Lithuanian SSR was turned into the MGB of the Lithuanian SSR. The Department for the Fight against Banditry under the NKVD of the LSSR was reorganised into the Board for the Fight against Banditry under the MVD of the LSSR. In February 1947, the Board for the Fight against Banditry under the MVD of the LSSR, the Internal and Border Army of the MVD were transferred into the jurisdiction of the MGB of the LSSR. Thus, at the beginning of 1947, the fight against the armed resistance was given over to the hands of the MGFILE

⁵ Cf. Annex, Document No. 4, Order of 15 February 2000 by Commissar Bartašiūnas of the NKVD LSSR concerning demobilisation (the return to legal status) of partisans.

Deportations could be termed stratocide, i.e. elimination, isolation of certain social strata from other groups of the society, or their total extermination. Decisions on who specifically had to be exiled were taken by local party and repressive authorities. This way of putting down armed resistance was acknowledged unlawful already by N.Khrushchev.

Unable to quell the units of freedom fighters, the repressive institutions tried to undermine the social fundament of the partisans (people who supported, assisted them). Leaders of the USSR and LSSR made every possible effort to break down, as soon as possible, the opposition to the sovietisation of Lithuania and its integration into the USSR, and to enforce the Bolshevik system and totalitarian regime. Absolutely innocent members of families of the participants of the resistance movement had their entire property seized and were doomed to live under severe conditions in Northern Russia and Far East. Many of the deportees ruined their health, lost their lives, or suffered serious mental traumas.

Torturing of the participants of armed resistance and desecration of their corpses.

In the period from 1944 till 1953, chekists, officers of the NKVD USSR army, exterminators, and militiamen practised cruel physical and psychological torture rather extensively. Usually, partisans, their reserve, people involved in liaison work, and supporters were subjected to torture during interrogation. Torturers burnt feet soles and chest, pricked needles under nails, crushed fingers in the door, tore off nails, sprained and fractured joints, stripped the skin, smashed the skull in special devices, flowed electricity current through the body. People were battered with rubber hose and iron sticks, their genitals were wounded, they were kept awake several days, tortured with famine and cold.⁶ In one instance, commander of a partisan group Žemaitis was nailed up on the wall⁷. In Tauras district, a half-dead partisan Perkūnas was “sawn up into three pieces”. Fighter Eumas who refused to betray his colleagues had his tongue cut and mouth mutilated, while the wounds on the body of company commander Girininkas were stuffed with horse ordure⁸. These are only a few of the known methods of torture. This way, chekists tried to reveal needed information on the armed underground forces, or satisfied their sadistic instincts. The cases of torture of partisans in the MVD-MGB interrogation departments or straight on the site of their detention were not exceptional, rather than that, they were an integral part of the overall machinery of combating the resistance. Chekists themselves referred to this as “the application of measures of physical influence” or “active interrogation”. These terms concealed the perverted torture employed by state security officials. Documents of repressive authorities mention “sanctioned” or “non-sanctioned” torture practised

⁶ Cf. 1) Annex, Document No. 10: Intelligence news prepared by the head of the Intelligence Department of Maironis District Headquarters of Kęstutis Region, 5 September 1948.

2) Annex, Document No. 19: 15 October 1956 Act on the injuries of prisoner A.Ramanauskas issued by the Chief of Surgery Department Lagoiskaya, surgeon consultant Vorobiov, and Head of the Sanitary Division of Prison No.1 of the MVD LSSR.

⁷ Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, *Daugel krito sūmū... (Partizan, gretose) [Many a son have fell... (In the ranks of partisans)]*, Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, Auksė Ramanauskaitė-Skokauskienė, įžanginis straipsnis ir asmenvardžių rodyklės sudarymas Algio Kašėtos, 1999, p. 570

⁸ Juozas Daumantas, *Partizanai [Partisans]*, trečias patais. ir papild. fotografuotinis leidimas, Vilnius: Vaga, 1990, p.308

by the Minister or Vice-minister of State Security of the LSSR⁹. The “non-sanctioned” torture usually resulted in the death of the detainee. Sometimes the public learn about that. Leaders of the MGB used to account for such instances in order to secure potential information suppliers who would assist in the fight against partisans. “Sanctions” did not mean that the security officers had to receive permission from their leadership to use an ordinary torture (for example, beating, forbidding sleeping or sitting several days). The chief of the MGB usually “sanctioned” torturing when there was a need to perform the interrogation in a particularly cruel way, however, not to death. Rather often, prisoners, unable to endure the torture, went mad, committed a suicide or came down with serious mental diseases. The physical torture often resulted in life-long disabilities or severe health problems of the victims.

Frequently, members of repressive bodies intentionally refused to extend the first medical aid to the injured and imprisoned partisans. This implied that the injured were condemned to intense anguish and death.

To intimidate the participants of the resistance, to deter people from support to the underground movement or engagement in the partisan movement, the officers of repressive structures barbarously desecrated the corpses of the killed freedom fighters. In the first years of the resistance (1944 to 1945), parents were still allowed to secretly bury killed partisans, while starting with early 1946, chekists never let the families of the perished to get the corpses. Naked or half-naked bodies of the fallen partisans with separate parts cut off, eyes put out were often left sprawling in public town squares or by the headquarters of the Cheka, the exterminators, for at least three days (often even a week). This was a way to establish the identity of the murdered. If the parents of a partisan recognised their son and gave that away, state security officers deported them to Siberia later. Chekists, exterminators, party and Soviet activists used to kick the corpses, spit, throw stones on them. Sometimes, the corpses were chopped and thrown into outhouses or fed to working dogs¹⁰. The remains of partisans were never given to their families, they were buried in secret so that nobody could find the burial sites.

Starting with ca 1950 the corpses of the freedom fighters were no longer desecrated in public places. From that time on, they used to stay lying in stables or in closed yards of MGB headquarters. This change was probably due to the fact that in 1948, representatives of the Lithuanian underground movement J.Lukša and K.Pyplys managed to reach Western states and present the pictures of the desecration of corpses to the press. They were published in newspapers. The Soviet authorities were seriously annoyed by this event. Publicity was the most formidable enemy of the dictatorship. The facts of desecration of corpses and torture of partisans are recorded in the memoirs of the resistance leaders A. Ramanauskas and J. Lukša as well as in the memories of numerous eyewitnesses. The Lithuanian Special Archive, the

⁹ Cf. Annex, Document No. 16: Note of 8 August 1953 by Colonel Grimovich of the Military Prosecutor’s Jurisdiction of Lithuanian border region Grimovich to Secretary of the CC LCP A.Sniečkus concerning permissions to torture the interrogated, LVOA, doc.f. 1771, inv. 133, file 50, p.p. 185-191.

¹⁰ Cf. Annex, Document No. 20: Article “Desecrated corpses on the street - the Bolshevik triumph” in Dainava region newspaper “*Laisvės Varpas*” of (20 11 1947, No. 2), LYA, doc.f. K-1, inv. 58, file 44618/3, t. 11, pp. 48-49.

Museum of Genocide Victims save a large collection of pictures proving the desecration of partisan corpses¹¹.

Chekists used to produce bogus documents stating the collaboration of a partisan with the MGB, and send them, through their own agents, to his brothers-in-arms. Deceived by such a provocation, partisans used to shoot an absolutely innocent person. MGB documents record quite a few cases like this.

Actions of special storm agent groups.

Provocative special storm agent groups¹² were first established and used by the USSR repressive structures in the republics of Central Asia in 1928-1929. They dealt with local people (basmachi) refusing to recognise the Bolshevik power there. In 1944, storm agent groups started their actions in Western Ukraine. They savagely annihilated Ukrainian partisans and their supporters.

In Lithuania, the NKVD USSR authorities employed these special units in summer 1945 for the first time. There were three operational units, 70 to 120 men each, of the Extraordinary Regiment of Board No. 4 of the NKGB USSR¹³. Each of them were depicted in the Chekist-composed legends as anti-Soviet formations attempting, hand-in-hand with Lithuanian partisans, to oppose the occupants. Chekists pictured them as Vermacht soldiers, Vlasov Army officers, Red Army deserters, or saboteurs trained in German intelligence schools. These special units insidiously exterminated several tens of partisans (including 8 sadistically murdered), killed lots of their peaceful supporters, set their farms ablaze. Nevertheless, it was only in early 1946 that the special groups became an indivisible part of the repressive system developed in Lithuania. At about the same time, the first of such units were created in Latvia.

In March 1946, the leadership of the NKVD USSR and LSSR began consistently working on the measures to break down the armed underground forces, i.e. they started employing special storm agent groups and internal agents¹⁴, which had already been tried out and paid off in Western Ukraine. The main initiators of the deployment

¹¹ Cf. Annex, Document No. 21, Two pictures of desecrated corpses of partisans and their supporters from civilian population, LYA, doc.f. K-1, inv. 3, file 22/6, p. 56. Photo No. 1: In Grendavė village, Onuškis district, Trakai county, 2 September 1946, the special group insidiously murdered and threw out for defiling the following person (from right to left): commander of a partisan platoon Jonas Dambrauskas, Stasys Legetavičius, Jonas Dulus, Vaclovas Budrevičius, and the family of a partisan supporter (defenceless civilians): Petras Blažonis, his wife Blažonienė, eighteen-year-old son Kazimieras Blažonis, seventeen-year-old daughter Monika Blažonytė; Photo No. 2: In Rietavas district, Rietavas county, on 26 November 1947, the special group insidiously murdered the following partisans (from left to right): Bronius Petrauskas, Kostas Vaitnora, Genė Dargaitė, Juozas Stonys, Stepas Ružas, and Bronius Venckus.

¹² Chekists called the special groups by different names, depending on a period: deceitful gangs, special platoons, terrorist groups, agent-military, agent-operational groups, storm agent groups or simply agent groups. The groups consisted of up to 25 storm agents.

¹³ During World War II, the agents of this regiment carried out sabotage operations in the rear of the enemy.

¹⁴ An internal agent means a professional secret collaborator of the MGB who has won a total confidence of chekists and is entrusted complex tasks. Internal agents used to be infiltrated into partisan forces. They gathered information on the participants of the resistance and gave it over to security services. At any favourable moment, they used to shoot a group of partisans or inform chekists of their whereabouts.

of provocative units in Lithuania were the USSR Minister of the Interior Sergei Kruglov and his Deputy Lieutenant-General Vasili Riasnoy. They sent to Lithuania an expert of storm agent groups Major Aleksei Sokolov, who had arranged the special group actions in Western Ukraine. The ranks of storm agents were joined by demobilised partisans recruited by Chekists after they had given correct testimony that enabled the MGB to successfully accomplish its operations, moreover, it helped the Chekists to discredit the agent in the eyes of other underground activists. They also recruited secretly detained partisans who had given testimony, which served as a basis for certain operations and provided facts discrediting the agent.

Pretending to be a group of partisans (putting on Lithuanian army uniforms worn by true partisans), the storm agents used to meet the real freedom fighters and, at a favourable moment, either shoot them all, or arrest from an ambush. Usually, partisans detained under such circumstances were immediately tortured in order to disclose information about other insurgents or their hideouts. Another popular unlawful method of storm action was called “agent-operational combination”. In most cases it went like this. Failing to force the detainee speak out, the chekists drove him to another support point. The convoy was then attacked by “partisans”, i.e. the special group, the soldiers were killed, and the detainee was taken to a forest, threatened with shooting and made to prove his/her contribution to the freedom fight. Consequently, the disoriented person used to put down on paper everything he/she knew about the underground. Then, while the special group was taking the detained through the forest, they were once again “attacked” by soldiers and the testimony written by the detainee went over to the chekists.

To stifle the resistance movement, the leadership of the MVD-MGB USSR assigned the following difficult tasks to the special groups:

- to identify partisan supporters, reserve and people engaged in liaison work;
- to collect intelligence information about regiments, headquarters, their connections;
- to destroy links among partisan organisation units;
- to penetrate into underground command and headquarters;
- to arrest or physically annihilate chiefs of the headquarters of partisan structures and commanders of regiments;
- to destroy individual partisan units, small groups and individual fighters;
- to drive partisan units into ambush prepared by the MVD-MGB internal army.

Throughout their entire existence, the special groups enjoyed extraordinary financial and organisational support and attention of the MVD-MGB leadership. Storm agents were commanded by the most professional security officials, heads of the MVD-MGB restrained by no moral rules. The existence of special groups was kept most secret, therefore, ordinary chekist officers had no idea about their actions.

Starting with ca 1949, the MGB tried to focus its attacks on partisan headquarters and commanders. Attempts were made to destroy the intellectual part of the underground that would result in its disorganisation. Chekists succeeded in reaching this target. From 1950 to 1953, the special groups eliminated the last structures organising partisan movement: region, county and district headquarters. Usually, the storm groups shot the staff of the headquarters from an ambush, in spite of the possibility to

arrest and sentence them. This was the execution of the capital punishment without any court judgement, or a straightforward committing of a criminal offence. Legendary (i.e. non-existing, bogus) county headquarters helped the repressive agencies to finally break down the organised resistance movement. In the said period, the special groups were instrumental for the MGB in detaining or killing from 10 to 70 per cent of the total number of the detained or murdered partisans, therefore, they inflicted a considerable damage on the armed resistance movement.

The summary of the investigated material leads to a conclusion that in the period between 1945 and 1953, the special groups killed from ambush ca 500 and imprisoned ca 220 partisans. Storm agents, applying unlawful deceitful methods and threatening with shooting, interrogated ca 700 people involved in the resistance. According to the documentary information, the number of persons engaged in partisan liaison, supporters and civilians murdered by the special groups amounted to 60. These are the ascertained facts, in reality, the number of fallen defenceless people should have been several times higher. The MGB used to count most of these victims as killed “bandits”¹⁵. The actions of the storm-agent groups could be specified as:

1. tortures (physical, mental) of the participants of the armed resistance and people not engaged in the resistance: women, old people, children;
2. murders of peaceful population, partisan reserve, liaison workers, supporters;
3. plundering of the property of civil population and participants of the resistance.

The USSR system of law contained no provisions concerning punishment or legal prosecution of storm-agents and their commanders for their criminal deeds. The responsibility for the eradication and torture of the participants of the resistance movement carried out by the special groups lies with the supreme authorities of the MVD-MGB of the USSR and LSSR who initiated the creation of the special groups and exercised control over them. The activities of the special groups, torturing of partisans, the desecration of their corpses were known to the Lithuanian Bureau of the CC AUCP (B) and leadership of the CC LCP. Therefore, these occupant governmental authorities, in fact, supported the employment of unlawful measures in the struggle against freedom fighters and took part in the criminal actions.

According to the Statute of the Nuremberg International War-Crimes Tribunal and the Universal International Treaty - The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted by the United Nations Diplomatic Conference in Rome on 17 July 1998, the torture of participants of armed resistance, desecration of their corpses, deportation of their families, and activities of special groups violate the international law. These deeds fall under chapter (b) ‘**crimes against humanity**’ and (c) ‘**war crimes**’ of Article 5 of the Rome Statute. These deeds are also covered by the Statute of the International Tribunal to prosecute persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law in the territory of the former Yugoslavia established by the United Nations Security Council, which in principle addresses the deeds defined in the following paragraphs of Article 2 of the 12 August 1949 Geneva Convention dealing with war crimes:

¹⁵ The occupants and their collaborators used the term “bandits” to refer to partisans, participants of resistance, and other patriotically minded people.

- b) torture and inhuman treatment, including biological experiments,
- c) intentional infliction of intense suffering or serious bodily or health injuries,
- d) large-scope destruction or expropriation of property which cannot be justified by military necessity and is performed unlawfully and intentionally,
- f) intentional deprivation of war prisoners or civilian population of the right to fair and just court,
- g) illegal deportation or displacement of civil population or unlawful deprivation of their freedom,
- h) taking of civil population hostage.

These deeds are also discussed in Article 5 defining crimes against humanity, specifically, in its paragraphs a) murder, b) extermination, c) enslavement, d) deportation, e) imprisonment, and g) prosecution on political grounds.

Torturing of participants of the armed resistance, desecration of their corpses, deportation of partisan families, and actions of special groups may be recognised as international criminal offences or international crimes committed by a state.

II. Summary

Repressive institutions of the Soviet Union employed a variety of unlawful inhumane measures and methods for the suppression of armed resistance. Most of them were criminal according to international law, the USSR Constitution and Soviet laws. Offences against “revolutionary justice”, “Stalin’s Constitution” and “Soviet laws” were rarely investigated by party and state security controlling bodies. Yet more uncommon were punishments of the offenders.

Deportations of members of the families of the people engaged in the resistance movement were executed without court judgements from summer 1945 till 1953. The Criminal Code of the Russian SFSR did not provide for a practice of punishing individuals in such a way. Decisions to exile freedom fighters were made by the NKVD USSR and heads of the USSR Council of Ministers, however, the initiators of the 1945-1947 repression were leaders of the Lithuanian Bureau of the CC AUCP (B).

The highest numbers of partisan family members were deported in summer 1945, in February 1946, and from November 1947 to early May 1948 (ca 15 thousand). On 22-23 May 1948, ca 40 thousand families of the participants of the resistance and well off farmers were exiled. These deportations made the armed underground activities much more difficult. In essence, that was terrorist hostage-taking tactics. In later years, deportations were mainly targeted at real and ostensible partisan supporters and their families, i.e. well-off farmers, educated, patriotic, opposition-minded people and families of newly joined freedom fighters.

Deportation could be termed stratocide, i.e. elimination, isolation from other groups of the society, or total eradication of certain social strata. Decisions on who specifically had to be deported were taken by local party and repressive structures on their own discretion. This way of stifling armed resistance was recognised unlawful already back by N. Khrushchev.

Unable to break down the formations of freedom fighters, repressive institutions tried to undermine the social fundament of partisans (people who supported, assisted them). The leadership of the USSR and LSSR employed every possible measure to suppress the resistance to the sovietisation and integration of Lithuania into the USSR as soon as possible, and to enforce the Bolshevik system and totalitarian regime. The entire property of absolutely innocent members of families of the participants of the partisan movement was confiscated, and the people were doomed to live under severe conditions in the North and Far East. Most of the deportees ruined their health, lost their lives, or suffered serious mental traumas.

Chekists, military officials of the NKVD USSR, exterminators, militiamen rather often practised brutal physical and psychological torture in the fight against partisans. Torture was usually employed for the interrogation of partisans, their reserve, liaison people and supporters. The torturers burnt their feet soles and chest, pricked needles under their nails, crushed fingers in the door, tore off nails, sprained and fractured joints, stripped the skin, smashed the skull in special devices, let the electricity current flow through the body. People were battered with rubber hose and iron sticks, their genitals were wounded, they were not allowed to fall asleep several days, tortured with famine and cold. These were only a few of the known methods of torture. Tortures in the MVD-MGB interrogation departments or on the site of the detention of partisans were not exceptional, rather than that, they were an integral part of the overall machinery to combat resistance. Chekists themselves referred to this as “application of measures of physical influence” or “active interrogation”. These terms concealed the perverted torture employed by state security officials. Documents of repressive authorities mention “sanctioned” or “non-sanctioned” torture practised by the LSSR Minister or Vice-minister of State Security. The “non-sanctioned” torture frequently resulted in the death of the detainee. The MGB authorities usually analysed such cases in order to secure potential information suppliers who could assist in the fight against partisans. The MGB leadership used to issue “sanctions” to torture when there was a need of extremely cruel interrogation, however, not to death. Prisoners, failing to endure the violence, used to go mad, commit suicides or come down with serious mental diseases. Physical torture often resulted in life-long disabilities or serious health problems of the victim.

Frequently, members of repressive bodies intentionally refused to extend the first medical aid to the injured and imprisoned partisans. This implied that the injured were condemned to intense anguish and death.

To intimidate the participants of the resistance, to deter people from support to the underground movement or engagement in the partisan movement, the officers of repressive structures desecrated corpses of the fallen freedom fighters in barbarous ways. In the first years of the resistance (1944 to 1945), parents were allowed to secretly bury killed partisans, while from early 1946 chekists never let families to get the corpses. Naked or half-naked bodies of the murdered partisans with separate parts cut off, eyes put out were often left in public squares or by the headquarters of the Cheka, the exterminators, for at least three days (often even a week). Chekists, exterminators, party and Soviet activists used to kick the corpses, spit, throw stones on them. Sometimes, the corpses were chopped and thrown into outhouses or fed to working dogs.

Starting with ca 1950 the corpses of the freedom fighters were no longer desecrated in public places. From that time on, they used to stay lying in stables or in closed yards of MGB headquarters. This change was probably due to the fact that in 1948, representatives of the Lithuanian underground movement J.Lukša and K.Pyplys managed to reach Western states and present the pictures of the desecration of corpses to the press. They were published in newspapers. The Soviet authorities were seriously annoyed by this event. Publicity was the most formidable enemy of the dictatorship.

Chekists produced false documents stating the collaboration of a partisan with the MGB, and send them, through their own agents, to his/her brothers-in-arms. Deceived by such a provocation, partisans shot an absolutely innocent person. MGB documents record quite a few cases like this.

Provocative special agent storm groups were first established and used by the USSR repressive structures in the republics of Central Asia in 1928-1929. They dealt with local population refusing to recognise Bolshevik power there. In 1944, storm agent groups started their actions in Western Ukraine. They savagely annihilated Ukrainian partisans and their supporters.

In Lithuania, the special units of the NKVD USSR were first employed in summer 1945. These special units insidiously exterminated several tens of partisans (including 8 murdered sadistically), killed lots of their peaceful supporters, burnt their farms. Nevertheless, only in early 1946 the special groups became an integral part of the repressive system in Lithuania. At about the same time, such units were first established in Latvia.

In March 1946, leadership of the NKVD of the USSR and LSSR began a consistent work on the measures to put down the armed underground movement, i.e. special storm agent groups and internal agents, which have already been tried out and paid off in Western Ukraine, were launched in Lithuania. The main initiators of the deployment of provocative units in Lithuania were the USSR Minister of the Interior Sergei Kruglov and his Deputy Lieutenant-General Vasili Riasnoy. The special storm agent groups included secretly detained partisans recruited by Chekists after they had given testimony, which served as a basis for certain operations and provided facts that facilitated the discrediting of the agent.

Pretending to be a group of partisans, the storm agents used to meet the real freedom fighters and, at a favourable moment, either shoot them all or arrest from an ambush. Usually, partisans arrested in such a way were immediately tortured in order to reveal information about other insurgents or their hideouts. Another popular unlawful method of storm action was called “agent-operational combination”; it was applied to extract the testimony insidiously or by threatening with shooting.

Starting with ca 1949, the MGB tried to focus its attacks on partisan headquarters and commanders. Attempts were made to destroy the intellectual part of the underground movement which would result in its complete disorganisation. Chekists succeeded in reaching this target. From 1950 to 1953, the special groups eliminated the last partisan structures organising the movement: region, county and district headquarters. Usually, the storm groups shot the staff of the headquarters from an ambush, in spite of the

possibility to arrest and sentence them. This was the execution of the capital punishment without a court sentence, or a straightforward criminal offence. Legendary (i.e. non-existing, sham) county headquarters helped the repressive agencies to finally break down the organised resistance movement. In the said period, the special groups were instrumental for the MGB in arresting or killing from 10 to 70 per cent of all the arrested or murdered partisans, therefore, this was a considerable damage to the armed resistance movement.

The summary of the investigated material leads to a conclusion that in the period between 1945 and 1953, the special groups killed from ambush ca 500 and imprisoned ca 220 partisans. Storm agents, applying unlawful deceitful methods and threatening with shooting, interrogated ca 700 participants of the resistance. According to the documentary information, the number of persons providing liaison services to the partisans, their supporters and civilians killed by the special groups totalled to 60. These are the ascertained facts, while in reality, the number of murdered defenceless people should have been several times higher. The MGB used to count most of these victims as killed “bandits”.

The actions of the storm-agent groups could be specified as:

- 1) tortures (physical, mental) of the participants of the armed resistance, people not involved in the resistance: women, old people, children;
- 2) murdering of peaceful population, partisan reserve, liaison people, supporters;
- 3) plundering of the property of civil population and participants of the resistance.

The USSR system of law contained no provisions concerning punishment or legal prosecution of storm-agents and their commanders for their criminal deeds. The responsibility for the eradication and torture of the participants of partisan movement carried out by the special groups lies with the supreme authorities of the MVG-MGB of the USSR and LSSR who initiated the creation of the special groups and exercised control over them. The activities of the special groups, torturing of the participants of the resistance, desecration of their corpses were known to the Lithuanian Bureau of the CC AUCP (B) and leaders of the CC LCP. Therefore, the authorities of the occupational state, in fact, supported the employment of unlawful measures in the struggle against freedom-fighters and took part in the criminal actions.

According to the Statute of the Nuremberg International War-Crimes Tribunal and the Universal International Treaty – the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, adopted by the United Nations Diplomatic Conference in Rome on 17 July 1998, the torture of participants of armed resistance, desecration of their corpses, deportation of families and activities of special groups infringe the international law. These deeds fall under chapter (b) ‘**crimes against humanity**’ and (c) ‘**war crimes**’ of Article 5 of the Rome Statute. These deeds are also covered by the Statute of the International Tribunal to prosecute persons responsible for serious violations of international humanitarian law in the territory of the former Yugoslavia established by the United Nations Security Council, which in principle addresses the deeds defined in the following paragraphs of Article 2 of the 12 August 1949 Geneva Convention dealing with war crimes:

- b) torture and inhuman treatment, including biological experiments,

- c) intentional infliction of intense suffering or serious bodily or health injuries,
- d) large-scope destruction or expropriation of property which cannot be justified by military necessity and is performed unlawfully and intentionally,
- f) intentional deprivation of war prisoners or civilian population of the right to fair and just court,
- g) illegal deportation or displacement of civil population or unlawful deprivation of freedom,
- h) taking of civil population hostage.

These deeds are also discussed in the paragraphs a) murder, b) extermination, c) enslavement, d) deportation, e) imprisonment, and g) persecution on political grounds of Article 5 concerning crimes against humanity.

Torturing of participants of armed resistance, desecration of their corpses, deportation of partisan families, and actions of special groups may be recognised as international criminal offences or international crimes committed by a state.