

Review

Scientific study and conclusions by Dr. Vytautas Tininis

“Role of the political structures of the Soviet Union, their local subdivisions and collaborators in perpetrating crimes of 1944-1953”

For several decades, the topic of communism crimes has been of interest to the society of civilized world and has been one of the dominant issues in Western historiography. After the collapse of communism in East European countries, including Lithuania, there were soon written different scientific works covering this topic. However, communism crimes have not yet been legally evaluated; therefore reasoned and facts-based materials are exceptionally important in naming and exposing those crimes.

Before starting the analysis of communism crimes, in the introductory part of his work V. Tininis included historical and politological generalization where he demonstrated that the Soviet regime in Lithuania accompanied by terror and repressions was determined by the criminal totalitarian nature of the communist state. All the policy of the USSR in respect to Lithuania was extortionate and criminal in its goals and tasks, content and nature, implementation methods and means. In order to maintain Lithuania by force within the Soviet Union, from the very first days of second occupation, the occupational regime would pursue terror, repressions and genocide against the Lithuanian nation, and perpetrate war crimes. Even though they were trying to support this by theories of “increasing class fights” among Bolsheviks, and “dictatorship over proletariat”, nonetheless they had a clear anti-Lithuanian nature. People were actually punished for they were Lithuanians and their wish to have an independent state. Force became the everyday companion of Soviet regime, and it was over only in 1991 after the collapse of communist system in the Soviet Union.

Scientific study and conclusions by Dr. V. Tininis are supported by rich archival materials (228 documents, most from the Special Lithuanian Archives), scientific literature, also by published sources of documents, memoiristic essays. A large number of archives have been taken from Communist Party and State security funds of highest secrecy level (LKP (Lithuanian Communist Party) Central Committee, Special File – fund 1771, description No. 190, fund of operational files K-1, schedules No. 3 and 10).

The work begins with an introduction describing three political structures (of Bolsheviks) of Soviet Union which were active in Lithuania in 1944-1953: 1. VKP(b) (All-Union Communist (Bolshevik) Party) territorial organization – Lithuanian Communist party (Bolsheviks); 2. VKP(b) CC Lithuanian bureau; and 3. LLKJS (Lithuanian Communist Youth Union of Lenin, Comsomol). Other administrative state structures – LSSR Supreme Soviet (fictional Parliament), “Government”, local deputy boards did not form any policy; they only implemented orders given by the Communist party.

The author states that all most important political decisions regarding the extermination and repressions of Lithuanian people have been made by the Communist party authorities in Moscow. In Lithuania, they were supported by all state structures of occupational administration; they would be responsible for respective decisions. The authorities of Lithuanian Communist Party (LKP(b) Central Committee, LKP(b) committees of districts, towns, and communities, secretaries and partorgs (party organizers) of party committees) gave inspiration to all criminal activities. The party was the main perpetrator and organizer of crimes, and also made pressure on party members, Comsomol youth, other functionaries and the activists of Soviet apparatus. It gave ideological reason, excuse and even promoted the extermination of some part of Lithuanians, and also included it into all LSSR state structure. The whole work of Communist Party was based on the Stalinist theory of the increasing class fights. The ideological communist events would discriminate one social group of people against another. They were also simulating to incite discord among people, arguing that the poorest people represented the most advanced layer.

The historiographic part of the introduction lists the names of those authors who made most analysis of Communism crimes and used the latest archival materials. Consequently, they threw light on the Soviet historiography which had considered the communist regime a progressive historical phenomenon, and treated the crimes perpetrated as an “objective necessity”, even though the very crimes (mass massacres of people, deportations, imprisonments etc.) had been concealed from the society.

The study includes two parts which are comprised of 12 chapters. The first part presents conclusions on the three above named political structures of the USSR. Here, most emphasis is placed on the Lithuanian party organization, party nomenclature, personnel management, LKP(b) relations with Moscow, Lithuanian repressive organs, and other relevant matters. The author has arrived at a conclusion that the most important task for the party structures was the everyday search for “national or class enemies” and issue of their repressions. Set there had

been four categories of people or social groups which became the victims of repressions by the Communist Party: 1. the partisans and members of underground organizations, their supporters (“bourgeois nationalists”); 2. the farmers (“kulaks”); 3. the employees of the Soviet institutions, teachers, intellectuals and others, former politicians, officials, soldiers, other officers of independent Lithuania (“politically and socially unreliable elements”); 4. the Catholic clergymen (“reactionary Catholic clergy”). All those people were being arrested, imprisoned, deported or even massacred. This was the broadest and the most significant sphere of the LKP(b) criminal activities. Other spheres (for instance, like forced elections, Russification, spiritual oppression, military atheism (the persecution of believers and the Church), tendentious execution of “justice”, anti-Semitism, economic terror and other) of the LKP(b) activities had the features of political people’s discrimination, were all criminal in their nature.

The author also paid a lot of attention to the party nomenclature, due to which in a very short time the Communist Party spread its control over all state, economic, cultural and other institutions. The growth of nomenclature was followed by rough violations of human rights. VKP(b) CC and LKP(b) CC organized mass campaigns during which mostly Lithuanian employees were victimized from the job for political motives. These people were wrongfully dismissed from their positions, purposefully troubled to be employed elsewhere, arrested, interrogated and also as often as not imprisoned. According to the data of repressive structures, 6,267 employees were dismissed from their jobs during all the postwar period (1944-1953).

The author presented a conclusion regarding the well-known LKP(b) First Secretary, Antanas Sniečkus, the figure much mythologized, and only positively pictured during the Soviet period. Having fully relied on communistic ideals, and being brought up by the Bolshevik Party, he remained stalwart to traditions of Marxist dogmatism, humility, and to contrary opinion of intolerance. In 1944-1953, his name was associated with forceful Sovietization and Russification of Lithuania, planning and pursuing fights against the national underground, mass deportations of innocent people, imprisonments, the persecution of otherwise-minded and the Church, and the disruption of national culture. The evidence is his reports in party councils and personal signatures, sanctioning the realization of repressive policy. For being obedient and consistently performing the political course of VKP(b) CC in the postwar period, he was honored with six medals.

The author took a completely new look at the relations between the LKP(b) and the repressive structures. This is one of the new points of this work, and also the issue hardly analyzed in the historical literature. One of the most important backbones supporting the Communist regime in the USSR was the repressive structures (NKVD-MVD, NKGB-MGB, *prokuratura* (Prosecutor's office), special trials). During the postwar period in Lithuania, executing the mission of VKP(b) CC and of the central repressive departments of USSR, these structures developed a significant weight since it was their activities, i.e. everyday fight with the resistance of Lithuanian nation, that determined the existence of Soviet regime and the Communist Party specifically in Lithuania. Like in the entire Stalinist USSR, the repressive structures were formally subordinate to VKP(b), however LKP(b) in Lithuania did not have any actual administrative authority over these institutions. LKP(b) CC did not have political power to bring under control all the repressive apparatus, though it was aiming to during the entire postwar period. All those structures directly depended on the central departments of USSR in Moscow. There were almost no Lithuanians employed in within those structures since they were not trusted. LKP(b) authorities made efforts to spread their influence and make those institutions more Lithuanian, to form Lithuanian military-repressive units, however Moscow strived to solve the issue of military resistance just by its own military-repressive power, leaving the resigned Lithuanians only with the function of formal establishment of communist regime. The nature of the LKP(b) leadership was that more party-ideological oriented.

Decisions of LKP(b) CC office and CC plenums would lay repressive structures under obligation to pursue the general policy on establishing the Soviet regime and state terror. However, links of different LKP(b) levels did not have opportunities to control activities of those structures. In all postwar years, LKP(b) and the security police had a dispute on means and methods to use in order to perform Sovietization of Lithuania and neutralize opposition. Both the institutions would constantly exchange criticizing notes where party and security police members would accuse each other with various "violations", indulgence to "people's enemies", robberies, massacres and the like. The heads of repressive structures would often publicly ignore party committees, not always would share with communists the operational information on underground or possible repressive actions, and in general would demonstrate impudent behavior. The security police considered the idea that one of the reasons for the drawn-out fight against the underground was that LKP(b) authorities were rather tolerant in regard to "nationalists", moreover, that some Lithuanian communists were nationalist minded

themselves. But then, the LKP(b) leaders would blame the repressive structures for all failures in neutralizing opposition, would also accuse them of rough violations on “socialist justice” (arrests, massacre, robberies, alcoholism of innocent people) and standoff regarding active fight against partisans. It was mostly resented that the security police did not show any obedience to the party.

The Communist regime was unmoral also in this respect that it was secretly spying upon not only private citizens, but also on their own high authorities: well-known communists, collaborators. As a new input in scientific circulation, V. Tininis included documents not published anywhere else before that gave new evidence on how the security police would collect discreditable materials and would also falsify files. For instance, in 1950, LSSR MGB “disclosed” 32 politically unreliable officials, mostly communists from the authorities of LSSR. Later, other well-known Lithuanian communists fell under the suspicion of security police, nonetheless they managed to escape repressions. Thus, the communist regime in Lithuania went through all stages characteristic to Stalinist era – beginning with extermination of real political opponents, massacre, deportations, and imprisonment of innocent people and ending with political persecution of fellow communists, and high government officials.

The author also described the term “collaborator”. During the period investigated, the Lithuanian communist authorities were against independent Lithuania, and for the united Soviet Union. A. Sniečkus, M. Gedvilas, J. Paleckis, A. Guzevičius, V. Niunka, K. Preikšas and many other famous communists became the most influential persons implementing political and ideological directives of Moscow, and organizing repressions. Since they were defending not the interests of Lithuania, but those of the USSR, i.e. of the occupant, then their activities may be considered as criminal cooperation, assistance or collaboration.

V. Tininis briefly described criminal activities of the Lithuanian bureau of VKP(b) CC, also stressing that this political structure was responsible for organizing political-ideological repressions, initiating the first deportations during the postwar period, personnel “cleaning”, Russification, public trials of partisans etc. Highly valued is the material on the Lithuanian bureau of VKP(b) CC collected in Moscow by a historian H. Šadžius and widely applied by the author. Unfortunately, V. Tininis did not manage to acquire authentic copies of those documents.

In this chapter on the Lithuanian Comsomol, the author provided original archival materials about falsified numbers of this organization members (100 thousand members in 1953) often using forceful means. The author also presented documents showing that LKP(b) CC forced

those young people to fight against partisans in *stribai* (local destroyer units collaborating with NKVD) squads, this way aiming to make mischief among Lithuanian youth.

In the second part of the book, the author analyzes the role of political structures of the Soviet Union in establishing the communist regime and perpetrating crimes in Lithuania. The author pointed out nine spheres of Communist Party's and Comsomol's activities involving almost most crimes made (antihuman means in fights against partisans, deportations, forcible elections, Russification, anti-Semitism, repressive legal system and results of its work, drastic means taken against the Catholic Church).

Quite a lot of material had been published on the topic of suppression of the armed resistance and deportation, still the author was forced to recall those topics since this was the field when most crimes had been organized and perpetrated by the Communist Party. The author used the chronological order to list all most important decisions made by LKP(b) CC by 1953 regarding anti-partisan actions that included many inhumane provisions and demands expressed to the lower party structures. For the first time, the society will have a chance to learn about the lists of organizers of the deportations of 1948 – LKP(b) CC and LSSR MC (Ministers' Soviet) agents. These include not only well-known communist party activists, functionaries of different level, but also heads of ministries – Minister of Health B. Penkauskas (Penkovskis), Minister of Justice J. Blieka, Minister of Finances A. Drobnys, Minister of Fishing Industry V. Mickevičius and others.

Appealing to the documents, the author made a conclusion that all elections organized in the Soviet Union by the Communist Party to councils of all levels in Lithuania were forcible, non-democratic, fictitious, discriminating, and of criminal nature.

LKP(b) became the core of Russification in Lithuania. Lithuanians comprised minority in this party. Russification became the constituent of “socialist cultural revolution”, although it had not been ratified by any documents. Russification was carried out according to the plan and in several directions: through the policy of personnel, using educational, science, and cultural institutions, also the Soviet army. The most important role in Russification was that of LKP(b) CC apparatus (especially the departments of agitation and propaganda), official censorship organ Glavlit (Main Administration for Literary and Publishing Affairs), repressive structures, Military Commissariat of the republic, departments, enterprises, and organizations lying within subordination of the Union. The results were evident in less than ten years. The majority of young and middle-aged people could write and speak fluent or almost fluent Russian. Russian language was also applied in most state institutions subject to the Republic

(in Vilnius and in Klaipėda, almost in all institutions). In towns and some other areas, most informational and advertising notes were written only in Russian, central streets of most towns were renamed under the names of Russian activists, memorials were produced to honor them. It was strictly forbidden to criticize Russification. If not keeping to this ban, people would be accused of “bourgeois nationalism”, also threatening with different punishments; it could also become an additional accusation.

Having presented yet unpublished documents about the condition of Jews in the postwar period, V. Tininis arrived at a conclusion that inspired by Moscow, the anti-Semitism policy was executed by LKP(b) CC and LSSR MGB. The leaders of LKP were asserting that some Jews were deliberately sabotaging “establishment of Socialism”. During the Central Committee plenums or other party meetings, the party apparatus was preparing ground for political anti-Semitism, however they did not initiate political repressions to a large extent. To make this problem very live was in the interests of LSSR MGB. In order to exaggerate anti-Semitism, the security police would inform the LKP(b) authorities about the “Soviet people” being disaffected towards the “damaging” activities of Jews. Mostly it was excerpts from letters suppressed by MGB, anti-Semitic talks among people traced by agents. Security police started looking with distrust and persecute even communist Jews, the devoted supporters of the Soviet government, and also ideological communists. Applying these means, MGB aimed to show that Jews were political unreliable, therefore to prevent this, LKP(b) should take actions which would support the necessity for political repressions of Jews.

The legal system of the Soviet Union was always standing for the interests of the communist state, but not for those of citizen. Any criticism on the Communist Party and the Soviet government (communist regime) was forbidden. The party had full control over the courts and prokuraturas. All judges and prosecutors were subordinate to the party nomenclature; their work would be debated and decided at the party committee sittings. The legal system in the postwar Lithuania performed two main functions: it helped to suppress resistance to the Soviet occupation and established the communist regime (totalitarian state).

With the help of its governing apparatus, especially of party structures, the Soviet Union had control over the culture and spiritual life of Lithuanian society; it also used drastic methods in persecuting dissentients. Lithuanian people were pressed upon with strange to them communist Marxist-Leninist ideology and obligatory materialistic world-view. Lithuanian intelligentsia was forced to follow the communist ideology, and argue in favor of the advantages of Soviet system, the exclusiveness of Russian nation, its peculiar mission in the

world and in Lithuania. The communist ideology was advocating the imperial policy of USSR, and considered national culture as a phenomenon uncongenial to the interests of Socialism. It was proclaimed that the culture must be “nationalist in its form, and socialist in its content”, i.e. pro-communist and pro-Russian, and it had to strengthen the communist regime. The reformation of intelligentsia organized by LKP(b) took place at the same time as did the repressions executed by LSSR NKVD-MGB. In 1944-1953, 1,651 representatives of cultural and academic intelligentsia were arrested the majority of them later being deported or imprisoned; there were also the ones killed or punished in other way. There were 91 litterateurs repressed alone (1944-1953). In most cases, LKP(b) CC sustained the imprisonment of intelligentsia. Some efforts to defend part of intellectuals, aspects of Lithuanian history or the manifestations of national culture, usage of the Lithuanian language were made by J. Paleckis.

In summer 1945, Lithuania boycotted the campaign organized by LKP(b) CC to sign the thank-you letter addressed to Josif Stalin from the Lithuanian nation. With the assistance of *stribai* (local destroyer units), Comsomol youth, party activists, the Communist Party took forcible measures to make at least the majority people sign this document. Nonetheless, people avoided signing it. Watching the political failure of Lithuanian communists, on 11 July 1945, the USSR NKVD-NKGB representative in Lithuania, General I. Tkachenka gave orders to his subordinates to arrest all who would interfere with this matter. However, it is not known how many people have suffered because of this.

In the postwar years, the Catholic Church suffered much bigger suppression from the Lithuanian communists than it had been required by Moscow. Due to the exaggerated application of LKP(b) later their work was named as “leftist deviancy”. A. Sniečkus and other communists received a lot of criticism regarding this in Moscow, still they never admitted their crimes (then called as “mistakes”).

At the end of his work, V. Tininis draw a conclusion that VKP(b) of 1944-1953 and its territorial division – Lithuanian Communist (Bolshevik) Party – was actually political criminals’ organization, which was secretly making plans and perpetrating crimes against humanity, Lithuanian nation and the statehood. The communist terror and political repressions affected around half a million of Lithuanian people. However, LKP did not evaluate its past in public and did not admit the crimes perpetrated.

In principle, “Conclusions” meet the requirements, and enables the understanding of crimes perpetrated by the political structures of the Soviet Union in Lithuania in 1944-1953.

After positive evaluation of this work, few remarks may be added. There is no name of Lithuania in the title of conclusions (study). Even though in the introduction, the author indicated that due to large amount of documents, some of them are presented only as excerpts, nonetheless it reduces the value of publication. There is a suggestion that each document could have a short comment like what this document is peculiar in, since it might be too boring to read all of it. Maybe it is worth underlying more interesting places.

When writing on collaboration it should be highlighted, the non-integrity and corruptibility of some former Lithuanian citizens, also noting that debacle of Lithuania was also in some extent due to that it was a weak civil society. If all those working in the party and administrative apparatus were collaborators, then maybe it would be worth calculating how many of such people there were. Were directors of big enterprises, factories, schools, and kolkhoz also collaborators?

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Docent Bronius Puzinavičius