

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

**Suppression of Armed Resistance from 1943 to 1953**

**CONCLUSIONS**

*(Approved on 19 June, 2002)*

1. International law recognizes as lawful resistance against an occupation regime. The resistance is considered lawful when it has centralized governing structures, a political program, and when the participants of the armed resistance are wearing recognizable insignia. The armed civil resistance was seeking to restore the independent state of Lithuania (according to the political program of the Armed Movement for the Freedom of Lithuania). As the reoccupation of Lithuania commenced in 1944, the institutions of repression enforced Soviet rule. The task of suppression was assigned by the Soviet security service (NKVD-MVD and MGB-KGB) and the organs of the Communist Party, while the main suppressor of armed resistance was the NKVD-MGB troops of various kinds (the so-called “Chekists”). The auxiliary armed forces were the para-military troops (“destruction battalions”). (These armed collaborators were mostly composed of local people).
2. The repressive institutions of the Soviet Union (NKVD/NKGB) employed a number of severe measures to suppress the underground. Most of these measures were applied in breach of international law (the Hague and Geneva Conventions), the Constitution of the USSR, and Soviet laws. These methods were: a) the exile of the families of the participants of armed resistance; b) torture of the participants of the resistance; c) psychological warfare – the public display of the bodies of fighters killed in battle; d) the use of resistance insignia and uniforms by the MGB-KGB *agents provocateurs*; e) the military’s punitive actions against the participants and supporters of the resistance.
  - a. **Deportations of the families of members of the armed resistance.** Deportations of the families of members of the armed resistance were carried out without interrogation or court decisions from the summer of 1945 until September 1953 (all property of these families was confiscated). Most of the deportees died from starvation and disease, lost their health, or experienced severe psychological problems.
  - b. **Torture.** From 1944 to 1954 the repressive institutions (NKVD-NKGB-MGB-KGB) of the USSR applied severe physical and psychological torture in the fight against partisans. Torture was a component part of the policy of fighting the resistance movement. Physical and psychological torture dramatically impaired the health of numerous members of the resistance, many of whom became disabled. Faced with torture, many prisoners committed suicide, while others suffered severe psychological harm.
  - c. **Psychological warfare.** From the beginning of 1945 until 1950, in order to frighten members of the resistance and to discourage people from supporting the underground, officials of the Soviet institutions of repression mutilated the bodies of partisans and exposed them in public places. Later, the bodies were secretly buried or destroyed.
  - d. **Use of *agents provocateurs*.** From 1945 to 1959 an integral part of the network of terror was provided by *agents provocateurs*, special units of Soviet NKGB-MGB-KGB shock troops. These units pretended to be members of the resistance movement by adopting their insignia and uniforms; they terrorized civilians and killed real members of the resistance and their supporters. This was an approach

used to destroy the morals of the armed resistance and of civilians. Responsibility for the torture and murder of members of the underground, and for the use of chemical substances for this purpose, rests with the leadership of the Lithuanian Communist Party Central Committee as well as with the leadership of the All-Union and Soviet Lithuanian state security institutions the MVD-MGB.

- e. **Military punitive actions.** The NKVD-MGB, by carrying out punitive operations, sought to destroy the major partisan units. Before the revocation of the state of war, regular units of the occupying army assisted the NKVD-MGB army. The NKVD-MGB troops carried out extremely brutal punitive actions in Lithuania, during which the homesteads of the supporters of the resistance were destroyed since they were treated as military objectives. Such brutality was encouraged by ongoing pressure from top officials of the Communist party, as well as the leaders of the Soviet institutions of repression, to break the resistance as quickly as possible, for which purpose they created a system of incentives. The military units which carried out the main task of destroying the armed resistance, also created the conditions for the formation of a stratum of people collaborating with the occupiers, both openly and in secret.
3. Both military and para-military units employed all the methods to suppress armed resistance, which, in fact, were prohibited by international conventions. The rules concerning the treatment of an occupied country's civilians and prisoners of war, as defined by international conventions, were also disregarded. According to the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal Statute and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as the 17 July 1998 international treaty adopted by the United Nations diplomatic conference in Rome, the International Criminal Court of the Rome Statute, the torture of members of an armed resistance movement, desecration of their corpses, the deportation of families, and actions by special agents are in breach of international law. These actions fall within the scope of Article 5 Section (b) crimes against humanity, and Section (c), war crimes, of the Rome Statute. These crimes also fall within the scope of the Statute of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, set up by the United Nations Security Council in 1993. The Statute essentially covers the activities already defined Sections (b), (c), (d), (f), (g), (h) of Article 2 of the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949\*. One should also consider the violation of the following sections of Article 5 defining crimes against humanity: (a) murder, (b) extermination, (c) enslavement, (d) deportation, (e) unlawful imprisonment, and (g) persecution on political grounds. The torture of the members of the armed resistance, the desecration of their corpses, the deportation of the families of resistance members, and the activities of the USSR special troops may be recognized as criminal acts and as criminal acts of state on an international scale.

Chairman

**Emanuelis Zingeris**

Executive Director

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\* (b) Torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments;  
(c) Wilfully causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or health;  
(d) Extensive destruction and appropriation of property, not justified by military necessity and carried out unlawfully and wantonly;  
(f) Wilfully depriving a prisoner of war or other protected person of the rights of fair and regular trial;  
(g) Unlawful deportation or transfer, or unlawful confinement of civilians;  
(h) Taking of hostages.