

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

Vilnius, 18 November 1998

STATEMENT

On 17 November 1998, the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania (hereinafter referred to as the Commission) convened for its first meeting held in Vilnius.

The meeting was attended by:

Emanuelis ZINGERIS (Chairman of the Commission), Lithuania
Liudas TRUSKA (Executive Chairman of the Commission), Lithuania

Members of the Commission:

Jurij AFANASJEV, the Russian Federation
Andrew BAKER, the USA
Toma BIRMONTIENĖ, Lithuania
Dalia KUODYTĖ, Lithuania
Nicholas LANE, the USA
Vytautas RADŽVILAS, Lithuania
Julius ŠMULKŠTYS, Lithuania

The meeting was chaired by Emanuelis Zingeris.

The meeting was inaugurated by H.E. Valdas Adamkus, the President of the Republic of Lithuania, and welcome was extended by Mr. Vytautas Landsbergis, the Chairman of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, Mr. Vytautas Dudėnas, the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Seimas, and Mr. Kornelijus Platelis, the Minister of Education.

The guests of the meeting, including Dr. Heinrich Neisser, the Chairman of the Austrian Commission for the Eliminations of the Consequences of World War Two, Vice-president of the Austrian Parliament, and Dr. Helmut Wahnout, the Secretary of the said Commission, outlined the objectives and work of their commission. The guests supported the proposal of the Commission members to hold discussions of the representatives of the respective commissions in Vilnius in autumn 1999.

The meeting of the Commission was shortly visited by the official delegation of eight members of the US Senate, headed by Mr. William Roth, the Chairman of the North Atlantic Assembly, who greeted the Commission of multi-national composition, which concertedly investigate the most complicated issues of the crimes committed by the occupational dictatorial regimes.

The meeting was also attended by the representatives of the Open Society Fund (Lithuania), the Lithuanian Jewish Community and the Lithuanian Peoples' Information Forum (INFORUM).

The Commission discussed the crimes committed by the Nazi and Soviet regimes and the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact between two totalitarian states, namely Hitler's

Germany and Stalin's Soviet Union. Their consequences included the loss of Lithuania's statehood, three occupations and the tragic fate of Lithuanian citizens of all nationalities, particularly Jews. The fate of the Jews manifested itself in the severest form – the Holocaust. The spiritual heritage of these innocent lost lives should become an inseparable part of Lithuania's culture.

The President of the Republic of Lithuania has set up the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania to investigate the circumstances and the scope of extermination. Since the Nazi Holocaust and Soviet crimes were carried out for different purposes and employed individual methods, the members of this Commission split into two sub-commissions which in their own turn would coordinate and supervise two working groups of experts which investigate crimes executed during the Holocaust and the Soviet occupation.

The Commission is scheduled to convene twice a year and will be responsible for making public the conclusions of these working groups. It will also be able to provide recommendations to different ministries and public authorities of the Republic of Lithuania on the basis on these conclusions.

Noting the significance and the enormous scope of the activity of the Commission, the Commission members apply to the Government of the Republic of Lithuanian for financing the Commission's work.