

SOVIET TERROR IN LITHUANIA DURING THE POST-WAR YEARS*

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When the Red Army marched into Lithuania in the summer of 1944, Lithuanians did not greet them as liberators with the traditional gifts of bread and salt, but rather with fear and trembling. The Lithuanians hoped that if not the Germans, then the British and the Americans would force the uninvited guests to leave as quickly as possible.

The Soviet annexation of Lithuania in 1940-1941 and the subsequent German occupation had created an almost impassable barrier between Lithuania and the communists. Lithuanians remembered well the unmitigated horrors of Stalinist terror, while the communists considered many Lithuanians to be either Nazi sympathizers or even collaborators. Even in the best of circumstances, great effort and tact would have been needed to eliminate the mutual mistrust and hostility. The Soviet regime would have had to attempt to ensure the population that the terror of 1940-1941 would not be repeated and that Lithuanian national interests would be given a fair hearing. However, Lithuania's communists had no such intentions. Confident of their victory over Germany and affected by Stalin's morbid suspiciousness, they returned to Lithuania determined to ruthlessly punish all so-called collaborators, replace all members of local government bodies, and mobilize as many men as possible into the Red Army.

The leaders of Lithuania's Communist Party treated Lithuania almost as if it were enemy territory. They realized well enough that they had few friends in the population at large. At the onset of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, the nation spontaneously rose against the retreating communists. Many Lithuanian soldiers in the Red Army deserted and the Germans were treated as liberators. Few Lithuanians joined the Soviet partisans who were never able to overcome the indifference and antipathy of the majority of the nation. The year of terror that culminated in the massive deportations of June 1941 was so deeply etched into the national consciousness that for many, the Communists—not the Germans—remained the principal enemy. The population's response to the formation of an armed unit under Lithuanian command, the *Vietinė Rinktinė*, clearly shows the prevailing attitude. In less than two weeks in February 1944, more Lithuanians enlisted in the *Vietinė Rinktinė* than those who joined the Soviet partisans during three years of German rule. Moreover, they enlisted when the war was clearly going against the Germans.

The background and character traits of Lithuania's communists had a role in determining policy. The majority was poorly educated, rigidly dogmatic and without experience of a broader world. They were committed to Stalin's simplistic formulations about historical necessity, the class struggle, and the belief that there was no fortress that the Bolsheviks could not storm. Many had been imprisoned in Lithuania during the years of independence and had fought against the Germans in partisan units or in the Red Army. They had seen many of their best friends die and had enthusiastically supported all of Stalin's purges. If the Party had the right to execute even former friends of Lenin and to send its most loyal supporters into battle, then clearly there was no need either to pity or to show mercy to those who opposed Soviet rule. Many lower Party functionaries believed that "their time to rule" had come and saw no reason to mollify the hated bourgeoisie or the so-called kulaks. Even Moscow was forced in 1946 to criticize the failure of the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP) to enlist the support of broader sections of the population.

Neither the leadership of the LCP, nor the local cadres had a major role in determining basic policy. Such decisions were made in Moscow, specifically by Stalin. Neither age, nor the defeat of Germany had mellowed the aging dictator. Victory made him feel even more secure, while old age exacerbated his already suspicious nature. During the war, he had ordered the deportation of the Crimean Tartars, Kalmyks, Chechens, Ingushi, Karachai, and Balkars. More than 1 million people were deported, and several hundred thousand probably died.¹

A similar, perhaps even a crueler, fate awaited Soviet soldiers who had been interned in German prisoner of war camps. Many of them were forced to surrender due to the incompetence of their senior officers. Conditions in the camps were

unbearable. Approximately 3 million died of starvation or were shot.² But Stalin had no sympathy for their plight. According to his reasoning, all who surrendered to the Germans were traitors, and those who survived imprisonment were German spies or collaborators. For how else can one explain their survival when so many others died? Many of the returning prisoners of war were not sent to the Crimea to recuperate, but were shipped off the Kolyma and other Soviet concentration camps. Many of those who had miraculously survived German imprisonment succumbed to Soviet bondage. Other prisoners were thrown out of the Party and lived under a cloud of suspicion, regardless of their past merits and unconditional devotion to communism. The Soviet authorities were similarly harsh in their treatment of hundreds of thousands who were forcibly sent to Germany to work in the factories and on the farms. What is more, all those who lived in territory occupied by the Germans were also suspect. Thus in Stalin's mind, almost all Lithuanians were actual or potential "enemies of the people" and he had enough practice in dealing with them.

An ever increasing number of people fell into disfavor and the Soviet security organs were constantly being directed to take action against new groups of individuals. In August 1946, Zhadanov severely criticised the work of the literary journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*. Meetings were called in the republics to discuss Zhadanov's report, and soon Lithuanian writers were being arrested. The campaign against intellectuals quickly broadened. Scientists were accused of "bourgeois nationalist" tendencies and of "kowtowing" to the West for citing non-Soviet authors in their works. In 1948, anti-Semitism reared its head with full government approval. In 1949-1950, a new purge of the Party hierarchy occurred. N. Voznesensky, a member of the Politburo, and A. Kuznetsov, a secretary of the central committee, were arrested and executed. The Leningrad party organization was a particular target of this purge. Stalin ordered mass arrests and purges in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Hungary. Some show trials were also staged. A year before his death, Stalin seemed to have commenced preparations for purges on a massive scale. The so-called "Doctor's Plot" was uncovered. According to Krushchev, Stalin ordered the interrogators "to beat, beat, and beat again" the arrested.³

Stalin and his subordinates in Lithuania considered the majority of the nation to be their enemies. From the very first day of their return to Lithuania, they intended to rule with an iron hand. In normal circumstances, a new regime usually adopts some form of a "carrot and stick" policy. For example, some sectors of the population are wooed, while others are more or less repressed. The communists in Lithuania employed only the "stick." Avoidance of punishment was considered reward enough. Some effort was made to win support of the poorer peasants, yet even these efforts were unsystematic and less than wholehearted. The regime was confident of its ability to forcibly suppress any resistance without making any concessions. Lithuanians were to accept Soviet rule on Soviet terms.

In this paper, I shall briefly discuss three aspects of Soviet terror in Lithuania during 1944-1952: (1) the mobilization into the Red Army, which served as an overture for government repression; (2) the arrests, and; (3) deportations of thousands of individuals who had only direct ties with the partisan movement. An understanding of the scope of Soviet terror is necessary for any analysis of the partisan movement. The collapse in 1949 of the resistance of the peasantry to the collectivization of agriculture and changes in intellectual life and communist cadre policy will be studied.

Mobilization: Soviet authors unanimously claim that Lithuanians enthusiastically greeted the return of the Red Army and enlisted in great numbers. There are many reasons for doubting this assertion, but it is quite clear that the Soviet army intended to mobilize as many Lithuanians as possible and to do so with great speed. Soviet troops entered Lithuania in July 1944. At the end of the month, the 39th Army issued a mobilization order to men living in the region of Švenčionys, Pabradė and Nemenčinė.⁴ The order was rescinded, and the new recruits were released.

August 1, 1944, the newly formed Republic War Commissariat issued its order Number 1 requiring that all men born between 1909 and 1926 report for military service. The order did not apply to all of Lithuania, for much of it was still in German hands. Nonetheless, the response of the population is claimed to have been overwhelmingly positive. Special mention is made of the mobilization in Kaunas, where allegedly 12,000 men reported when only 4,000 had been ordered to appear.⁵ It seems quite clear that the figures are exaggerated. More than 7,000 of those who reported were granted exemptions due to poor health or because they were specialists not liable to military service.

In fact, the number of enlistees was only slightly greater than planned, so it is probable that local officials were simply padding the reports concerning the turnout.

For some time, Soviet historians did not have a definite figure for the number of men mobilized into the Red Army. In 1948, General J. Macijauskas, the political commissar of the so-called 16th Lithuanian infantry division, was quoting a figure of 200,000. In recent years, a more modest calculation has gained universal acceptance: 108,378 men are now said to have joined the Red Army. Yet, there is solid ground for believing that even this figure is quite exaggerated.

First, according to Soviet sources, more than 40,000 men supposedly enlisted by September 16, 1944 and until December were being sent to the 16th infantry division. Division records show, however, that only 10,000 new recruits joined the ranks and probably not all of them were from Lithuania. Second, there is a similar inconsistency concerning the number of men mobilized and the actual figures for the number of recruits sent to different units. Soviet sources mention only 16,000 Lithuanians who were sent to units of 16 armies from November to the end of the war.⁶ Third, the first mobilization is unlikely to have been as successful as Soviet authors claim, for less than a month after its completion, a second mobilization was scheduled for November 15 to December 15. What is more, in issuing the mobilization order, the Council of Commissars ordered the Ministry of the Interior "to use the strictest means in the struggle against those seeking to avoid

mobilization and (those taking — KG) hostile action against the implementation of these means."⁷ After a successful mobilization, a second one should not have been necessary. Nor would there have been any need to prepare for the use of "the strictest means."

Inaccuracies and inconsistencies in Soviet accounts cast doubt on their claims about the enthusiastic response of the population. The war was nearing its end, and many young men, who had successfully avoided service in the German army, saw no reason why they should serve in the hated Red Army. The Lithuanian anti-Nazi resistance organizations had consistently urged their countrymen to refuse to serve in the German army, pointing out that international laws forbade an occupying country to draft men into military service.

For example, in its issue of February 21, 1943, the underground publication *Vieninga kova* wrote:

"The mobilization of the residents of an occupied country into the army or for work at the front is contrary to international law. Thus the Germans have no right to mobilize us."

Other underground publications frequently issued similar appeals. Lithuanians heeded these promptings, in part, because they coincided with their own preferences.

The Soviets had no illusions concerning Lithuanian reluctance to enlist. On scheduled registration days, armed units of NKVD troops would surround a designated area and search the farms and adjacent woods for men in hiding. Many villagers who tried to flee were killed when the NKVD troops opened fire without warning. While searching barns, Soviet troops would spray haystacks with machine gun fire. According to the Lithuanian partisan leader Juozas Lukša, several thousand Lithuanians may have been killed during the NKVD sweeps.⁸

The fate of those who were forced to enlist was not envied. Often they were sent to the front with only a minimum of training, at times less than two months after enrollment. Some were sent into battle unarmed and were expected to take the weapon of a fallen comrade. Not all Lithuanian soldiers marched west; others were quickly sent east to the Gulag. For example, January 21, 1945, a large unit of Lithuanian soldiers marched to the train station at Geležiuonai, not far from Kaunas. They were suddenly surrounded by NKVD troops, forced into wagons covered with barbed wire, and shipped off to Siberia.⁹

There is no exact information concerning how many Lithuanians may have suffered this fate, yet these Soviet actions may in part account for the aforementioned discrepancy between the number of men mobilized into the Red Army and the number known to have served in a specific unit.

As fears of a German counterattack receded, Soviet security organs became progressively more repressive and savage. In Southern Lithuania, they committed a number of atrocities, particularly in the district of Merkinė where the inhabitants had generally ignored the first mobilization order. In November 1944, several Red Army units arrived in Merkinė and commenced searching the neighboring villages and interrogating individuals. Villagers at first began disappearing, but soon people were being openly executed. At times whole families suffered. People were shot in the villages of Janonys, Češai, Pašilingė, Noruliai, Palankiai, Maksimai, Bingeliai, Puvočiai, and elsewhere. December 16, they crossed over to the right bank of the Merkys river, and the killings continued.

Approximately 100 individuals from 30 villages were shot. The wave of terror reached its climax on Christmas Eve. The original units were reinforced by a detachment of 50 soldiers who destroyed farms in eight villages. Klepočiai and Lizdai bore the brunt of the attack. At least 37 people were killed and 48 farms were burned that day. Probably more died, but their bodies could not be recovered from the ashes of their burned homes. The soldiers left shortly thereafter, taking with them more than 120 prisoners. January 13, 1945, the day of the new mobilization, almost no one from these villages came to Merkinė to report for duty.¹⁰

The indiscriminate killings, searches, and destruction of property that accompanied the mobilizations had a deep effect on the population at large. It convinced many of them that the Soviets had changed little since 1941 when the retreating communists had committed mass murders of Lithuanians in the forest of Rainiai and in Pravieniškės and had taken several hundred prisoners from the Kaunas jail, transported them to Byelorussia, and shot them together with thousands of other prisoners outside of Minsk.

Arrests: While NKVD units were scouring the countryside, individual operatives of the NKGB were also hard at work. They had to recruit new informers and spies, rebuild their system of surveillance, and most importantly, arrest real or imagined "enemies of the people." They did not lack diligence: 11,870 "counterrevolutionaries" were arrested by the end of 1945.¹¹

According to the standards then prevalent, individuals were judged to be enemies of the state not only because of their actual behavior, but also because of their profession, class background, religious affiliation, or family ties. In January 1941, the head of the NKVD in Biržai issued an instruction that listed more than 50 categories of individuals who were to be considered hostile to the state. Among the groups

so proscribed were members of Lithuania's political organizations, student fraternities, former policemen, officers, Trotskyites, clergy and nobility, merchants and industrialists, citizens of other countries, and employees of foreign firms. Even stamp collectors, members of the Esperanto society, individuals corresponding with someone living outside of Lithuania, as well as Red Cross workers were classified as anti-state elements.¹² Not all the individuals in these categories had been arrested in 1941, and some soon learned that Soviet security organs had a long memory. Quite a few Lithuanians, perhaps even 50,000, had some role in the national rising at the beginning of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union and even more openly expressed their dissatisfaction with Soviet rule during the years of German occupation. Still, others deserted the Red Army in 1941. Some served as policemen in local governing bodies or as members of self-defense units that fought against Soviet partisans. All of them, and even members of the anti-Nazi but non-communist resistance organizations, were slated for eventual arrest.

Although many were arrested, the number of people who were considered enemies of the state grew constantly. It was easy to transgress against the Soviet state, and sins were not forgiven. All those who avoided service in the Red Army were considered to be criminals. Although amnesty for Lithuanian partisans and those avoiding mobilization was first offered February 9, 1945 and repeated June 3, 1945, as well as several other occasions, many were reluctant to trust the authorities.

Their mistrust was not without foundation: In Stalin's Russia, there was no forgiveness without atonement, and atonement was impossible without imprisonment. January 15, 1946, the Interior Minister of the Lithuanian SSR repeated the offer of amnesty, yet the amnesty proclamation threatened, "The families of members of bandit and bourgeois nationalist organizations who do not surrender to the authorities will be arrested and deported."¹³ The threat was not idle. Three days later, thousands were, in fact, arrested and deported.

Partisans and their supporters were also arrested. Others were victims of the unfounded accusations of neighbors or enemies, perhaps even of basically decent individuals who feared that they would be arrested if they failed to prove their "class vigilance" by informing on someone. The Soviet Lithuanian author, Vytautas Petkevičius, wrote that the following principle was applicable in the immediate post-war years: "He who writes the first accusation is right."¹⁴

Imprisonment awaited farmers who failed to pay their taxes or supply the state with the required amount of farm products. A local government official could easily settle scores with some local farmer by having the latter's land reclassified in a higher category and increasing its acreage by a few hectares so that the farm would be classified as "kulak." And "kulaks" who could not pay the various and prohibitive tax supplements were dealt with quickly.

The satraps in Lithuania responded with alacrity to even the slightest tremor from Moscow. Several months after Zhdanov's attack on the journals *Zvezda* and *Leningrad*, the guardians of Lithuania's ideological purity organized a general meeting of the Lithuanian Writer's Union. The main address was given by K. Preikšas, the central committee secretary for ideological matters. Shortly, several of the writers whom Preikšas lambasted were arrested. After the central party organs in Moscow criticized the work of some intellectuals, the Lithuanian Academy of Science found similar culprits in its ranks.

The first arrests were almost contemporaneous with the return of the communists. Students at the University of Kaunas were soon summoned to police headquarters to answer charges that they were enemies of the state. It is not easy to disprove a vague accusation. Many sealed their own fate when they refused to become informers. From the very first days, the security organs began arresting former members of the government of the Republic of Lithuania and other leaders of Lithuanian political and social life.

One of the principal leaders of the Peasant Populist Party, Zigmantas Toliušis, was arrested in 1944, released, rearrested in 1946, and sent to the camps. Lithuanian ambassador to France Petras Klimas had been arrested by the Nazis in France and sent as a prisoner to Lithuania. The Soviet security police found him disguised as a gardener in the orchards of the biology professor T. Ivanauskas and shipped him east.

Former Minister of Agriculture Jonas Aleksa had been punished by the Nazis for his protest against their policies in Lithuania. His turn to be arrested came in 1948 when he was already 68 years old. Most leading members of the anti-Nazi resistance organizations were imprisoned by the spring of 1945. Scientists, writers, and other intellectuals survived the first waves of arrest only to learn that although the wheels of the KGB may grind slowly, they also grind exceedingly fine.

Not all categories of the so-called enemies of the people suffered equally. About 250 to 300 priests, or more than a quarter of the total number, were arrested. The bishops fared even worse; only one escaped imprisonment. The writers A. Miškinis, J. Graičiūnas, A. Vengris, J. Drazdauskas, K. Boruta, K. Inčiūra shared the fate of thousands of their countrymen. K. Jakubėnas was murdered by the KGB. The number does not seem very large, but in 1948, the Writer's Union had only 72 members. Thus, one out of ten was incarcerated.

It is extremely difficult to calculate the number of Lithuanians arrested. The majority of the victims of Stalinist terror were ordinary workers and farmers. Their biographies are not published, so one cannot notice those telltale gaps that are [the sure signs of residency in the camps. Every revolution is said to devour its children, but some more so than others. Many

party and government workers were purged or removed from their positions for actual or merely purported incompetence, ideological failings, or nationalist tendencies.

Having violated "the trust of the people," they became prime candidates to suffer its wrath.

The turnover in government employees, particularly at the local level, was extremely high. In 1945, about 4,000 were relieved of their duties. During nine months in 1946, there was a 56 percent turnover among workers of city and district (apskričių) executive committees and 39 percent among smaller rural (valsčių and apylinkių) districts.¹⁵

Not all were arrested immediately after dismissal, but all remained prime candidates for future punitive action. Finance Minister Juozas Vaišnora was also imprisoned, perhaps because his brother was a partisan. It may be noted that the sister of First Secretary of the LCP Antanas Sniečkus and her family were deported to Siberia and that even Molotov's wife was imprisoned while he served as foreign minister.

All attempts to estimate the number of individuals arrested can only be extremely provisional. The information available is quite limited and unsystematic in nature. Nonetheless, some light can be shed on the matter. In the district of Daugai in Southern Lithuania, at least 417 persons were imprisoned from 1944 to 1947, of whom 162 were eventually released. Reports sent to the West by Lithuanian partisans noted that 210 individuals were imprisoned in the Alytus district from 1944 to 1947.¹⁶

At the beginning of 1945, the jail in the city of Alytus was so full that in March, several hundred prisoners were sent to Marijampolė, where 70 to 100 prisoners jammed into each of the larger chambers and almost 1,000 were held in the former prison chapel.¹⁷

June 28, 1945, almost 2,000 prisoners from Marijampolė jail were herded into freight cars and sent out of Lithuania. Even if the number of persons in Marijampolė jail is exaggerated, it seems that at this time when the partisans were not yet fully organized, the Soviet security organs were particularly active. If the districts of Alytus and Daugai (100 persons were arrested in each by the end of 1945) are representative of the other 318 districts, then the number of persons arrested is almost 30,000.

Even if the NKGB were more restrained in other districts, there is still reason to believe that up to 20,000 Lithuanians were arrested by the end of 1945. Some were released relatively quickly and were not sent to camps outside of Lithuania, but even several months in jails was enough to acquaint most individuals with the new Soviet reality.

Soviet security forces were not averse to executing people on the spot. We have already mentioned the events in the Merkinė district. Reports from the staff of the partisan districts of Tauras and Dainava note that from the return of the communists to September 1946, 79 individuals were killed while trying to avoid or resist mobilization or arrest. One-hundred three individuals are said to have been killed in the district of Onušiai and 108 in the Merkinė district.¹⁸ The partisan reports could not have been complete.

One can try to estimate the number of individuals arrested by determining the size and frequency of prisoner convoys sent from the Lukiškiai prison in Vilnius. The absolute majority of those arrested and sentenced to longer terms, both partisans and non-partisans, passed through the Lukiškiai prison. Either they were sent there soon after being apprehended or after longer interrogation in some other prison.

After being sentenced by notorious "troikas," the prisoners were marched through Vilnius to the so-called "peresikla" where they were crowded into freight cars. Cars with prisoners from other Lithuanian cities were coupled to the train which then departed from Lithuania.

Kęstutis Jokubynas was sent east in a prisoner convoy in May 1948. His train contained 14 wagons, one for guards and another for food. The remaining wagons contained about 70 prisoners each with 800 prisoners altogether.¹⁹ Elena Juciūtė was sent to Siberia in September 1949 with about 2,000 other prisoners. She spent almost a year in Lukiškiai. Prisoner trains left Vilnius every two weeks.²⁰ If 800 prisoners were sent from Lukiškiai every two weeks, then about 20,000 were transported out of Lithuania each year. Because some prisoners were sent to the "peresikla" directly from other cities, it may well be the case that in the period 1944 to 1949, almost 100,000 were sent to prisoner camps in the Soviet Union. And the arrests did not cease in 1949. This estimate is quite high but not implausible. A similar sum would be attained if only 60 persons were arrested in each district every year through 1949. Yet the provisional nature of this estimate cannot be emphasized enough. If the trains carried only 700 people and left every three weeks, then the number of people sent to the camps annually would not be 20,000 but a more modest 12,000.

Deportations: If almost 100,000 Lithuanians were arrested and sent to the prison camps, even more were victims of the mass deportations that were more arbitrary than the arrests. People were arrested individually; each was "tried" or, more accurately, had his sentence read separately. But whole families — men, women, children and even feeble senior citizens — were deported if they were in the house when the authorities came. There seem to have been eight different occasions when substantial numbers were deported. The first wave of deportations occurred in September 1945, the last October 2, 1953 when Stalin was already dead. Both of these deportations were relatively modest in scale. Deportations took place

February 18, 1946, December 17, 1947, and March 1950. The most massive deportations occurred May 22, 1948, although the deportations of March 24 to 27, and June 27 to 28, 1949 were also large in scale.[21](#)

In several respects, all the deportations were similar. All were carefully organized. Several months or weeks before the planned deportation date, Soviet army and NKVD troops in Lithuania would be reinforced. In March 1948, a group of Soviet officers, numbering 10 to 20, was stationed in every district of Lithuania and for several months collected information necessary for the deportations. In March 1949, sizeable army units, stationed in Byelorussia near Grodno, suddenly crossed over into Southern Lithuania and played a major role in rounding up and guarding those to be deported.[22](#)

After several years of arrests and deportations, the inhabitants of the villages became wary and regularly fled their homes when they noticed larger than normal troop concentrations or when they heard rumors about forthcoming deportations. In 1948, authorities, realizing that many persons were hiding, began spreading rumors about impending deportations. After several such false alarms, the farmers became less vigilant and tens of thousands were caught in their homes in May. The authorities used similar tactics in March 1949.

Russians or other non-Lithuanians were usually in command of the "operative groups" that rounded up those scheduled for deportations. These groups were accompanied by a local party activist. During the massive deportations, even ordinary employees of government agencies, teachers, mailmen, and others were forced to participate. In 1948, all government employees were ordered to appear at the offices of the executive committee of the city of Vilkaviškis, where they were notified that they would assist in the deportation of the "kulaks." They were locked in for the night so that they could neither flee, nor warn the prospective victims.[23](#)

The same pattern was repeated in the town of Kretinga. Employees were summoned, divided into groups, armed, and sent out to arrest the farmers (under the supervision of the NKVD). During the deportations in March 1949, 1,300 individuals participated. Among them were 600 party and government activists, 110 enthusiasts from the port city of Klaipėda, and 590 members of local collective farms.[24](#) It should be noted that the partisans were not active in the Kretinga district so that the farmers could not be deported on the grounds of "aiding the bandits." Nonetheless, eight freight cars were loaded and sent to Vilnius. In the regions of Lithuania that contained large groups of partisans, the deportations were primarily carried out by regular army and NKVD troops.

The deportations usually began before sunrise. The operative group would surround a farm, summon the family together, and read a short statement to the effect that the farmer and his family were being resettled in another part of the Soviet Union. The deportees were told to pack food and clothing for the journey. Theoretically, they were allowed no more than 100 kilos, but frequently were driven from their homes empty-handed. Those who tried to escape were shot. A 15-year-old boy named Petraška from the village of Medinai in Dzūkija was shot through both legs when he attempted to flee. Asked why he fled, Petraška replied, "I ran so that you would shoot and that I would remain here in Lithuania."[25](#)

The deportations were accompanied by widespread looting. Several partisan reports noted that the so-called Defenders of the People, i.e., armed units of government supporters used in counter-guerrilla actions, anxiously awaited each deportation. It was an opportunity to put into practice Bukharin's dictum: Enrich yourselves. Even Soviet historians have noted that during the deportations, "revolutionary justice was violated blatantly," that at times everything, even small household goods, were confiscated or simply stolen.[26](#)

The social composition of the victims of each wave of deportations varied. In 1945, the brunt of the blow fell on those who had fallen into disfavor for their actions during the German occupation, Lithuanians of German descent from the Vilkaviškiai, Kybartai and Marijampolė districts, and those who had tried to flee to the West but had been cut off by the advance of the Red Army and forced to return to Lithuania.[27](#)

The deportations of March 1949 were exceptional in several respects. First, they were coordinated with similar deportations in Estonia and Latvia.[28](#) They were on a massive scale, yet still smaller than those of May 1948. Second, a relatively large number of urban residents suffered. Many were deported from Kaunas, including a substantial number of Jews and pro-Soviet citizens.[29](#)

There is reason to believe that a relatively comprehensive purge of Party primary organizations in the rural districts took place in 1948 and that some of the deported were its victims. Although neither Soviet, nor emigre historians have discussed this matter, Party documents show that January 1, 1948 there were 301 primary party organizations with 2,409 members in rural areas while January 1, 1949, there were only 160 primary party organizations with 1,292 members.[30](#)

It is difficult to determine the number of Lithuanians deported in 1945 to 1953. The first post-war census took place in 1959, and many of those who had been imprisoned or deported had returned to Lithuania at that time. Even if one could determine the decline in the population during 1944 to 1953, one could only hazard a rough guess concerning the number of deported. There were three principal causes for population decline: deaths primarily attributable to the partisan war, arrests, and deportations. At the present time, there are no firm figures for any of these factors so that even the availability of a composite figure would not allow one to make firm conclusions about the deportations.

The method used by Rein Taagepera to calculate the number of deportees, primarily by counting the drop in the number of homesteads, presupposes an accuracy of reporting and records that I do not believe existed at that time in either Estonia or Lithuania.³¹ However, it is possible to estimate the scope of the 1948 deportations. The partisans of the Dainava military district reported that 100,000 were deported. The figure is probably high because the scale of repression in southern Lithuania was significantly greater than in other parts of the republic.

There is, however, interesting information about the confiscation of land by the authorities. The Soviet land reform started in 1944 and by the beginning of 1948, was substantially completed. Many Poles had repatriated to Poland, and the lands of Lithuanians of German descent and of those who had fled to the West had long been confiscated. Between March and November 1948, the size of the government's land fund increased by 213,844 hectares.³² Most of this land was confiscated from those deported.

January 1, 1948, only 4.6 percent of all Lithuanian farms had more than 20 hectares. Farmers suspected of supporting the partisans and those accused of collaborating with the Germans had already had their holdings reduced to five hectares, and many of them were probably deported at this time. It is probably safe to assume that the average holding of those deported was about 10 hectares. Thus, it seems that as many as 20,000 families lost their farms in this period. If the average size of a household was four persons, it would seem that as many as 80,000 persons were deported in May 1948.

Not all the land that government took charge of belonged to the deported families. Some farmers, especially those who had been classified as kulaks, could not pay the exorbitant taxes and chose to abandon their farms in the hope that by leaving for the cities they would evade arrest. The lands of some suspected partisans or their supporters were reduced to five hectares, although they were not deported at this time. However, communist supporters and activists on occasions directly appropriated the land of those deported or simply handed it over to some friend. In this case, the land was not registered in the state's fund. Moreover, urban dwellers, teachers, and government employees were also sent to Siberia, and they had very little land. For example, 13 of 52 teachers in the district of Girkalniai were deported in 1948 and several more the following year.³³ Thus, 80,000 persons is not an implausible estimation.

Émigrés historians have suggested that the deportations were primarily a Soviet reaction to the ongoing partisan war: Had there been no armed resistance, there would have been no mass deportations. Such a claim seems unfounded for several reasons. First, the direction of causation is wrong. A stronger case can be made for the assertion that Soviet terror was more the cause than the effect of the partisan war. Second, during the forced collectivization of the Ukraine, Stalin acted with similar, if not greater brutality. But the Ukraine was then at peace. Third, agriculture in the Baltic republics would have been collectivized in all circumstances. Few farmers would have voluntarily joined the collective farms. So the government would have resorted to deportations even without armed resistance. Fourth, the deportation of a portion of the population was, in the opinion of the communists, "objectively necessary."

As in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, so in Lithuania in the 1950s, the farmers were slated to be exploited in order to accumulate the primary capital needed to build up industry. The same arguments that Preobrazhenskii advanced for the necessity of having peasants bear the brunt of the primary accumulation of capital were applicable to Lithuania, and such exploitation required collectivization. Finally, deportations were also necessary in another respect.

The very few farmers who voluntarily formed collective farms were quite poor. The first collective farms lacked adequate buildings, inventory, seed, animals, and even the most basic farm implements. They could not become more efficient without a substantial infusion of capital. The state was unwilling to use its resources for this purpose so that of the so-called kulaks was expropriated.

Collectivization was almost complete in 1949, and at that time 47.1 percent of all cattle, 46.4 percent of all hogs, 54.4 percent of sheep in the possession of the collective farms had been "confiscated from the kulaks."³⁴ What is more, in 1948-1951, 11,300 farms were evicted from the collective farms, their owners leaving behind all their property.³⁵ The partisan war may have increased slightly the number of those deported and changed their social composition but were by no means the primary cause of the deportations.

* This article is based on parts of Chapter 4 of my forthcoming book *Partizanų kovos Lietuvoje* (Chicago, 1986). The book contains more formal scholarly apparatus and has more complete footnotes.

1 Alexander Nekrich's *The Punished Peoples* (New York, 1978) and Robert Conquest's *The Nation Killers* (London, 1970) describe the deportations in great detail.

2 Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia 1941-1945* (New York, 1957), p. 64-66.

3 Adam Ulam, *Stalin* (New York, 1973), p. 705 ff., and Roy Medvedev, *Let History Judge* (New York, 1971), p. 475-497.

4 J. Dobrovolskis, *Lietuviai kariai didžiojo tėvynės karo frontuose* (Vilnius, 1967), p. 149.

5 *Lietuvos liaudis didžiajame tėvynės kare. Dokumentų ir medžiagos rinkinys* (Vilnius, 1982), p. 331.

6 Dobrovolskis, *op. cit.*, p. 156-157.

7 *Lietuvos liaudis*, p. 346. It should be noted that the second mobilization greatly increased the age group of those subject to military service. All men born between 1894 and 1926 were ordered to register.

8 Juozas Daumantas, *Partizanai už geležinės uždangos* (Chicago, 1962), p. 36.

9 Daumantas, *op. cit.*, p. 49-51.

- 10 There are two sources of information concerning the atrocities committed by Soviet troops in the Merkinė district. The Lithuanian partisan high command sent a report to the West in 1947. It was published in the journal *Santvarė*, Nr. 6, 1953, p. 7. See also "Bolševikų siautėjimas Merkinės apylinkėse" published in the samizdat journal *Aušra*, Nr. 31(71), 1982.
- 11 LKP CK PA, spec, fondas 1771, go ob. 89, d. 88.
- 12 A. Merkelis, "Maišiniai lietuvių tautos išvežimai į SSR," *Lietuvių archyvas. Bolševizmo metai* (Brooklyn, 1952), p. 29-31.
- 13 The text of the proclamation is reprinted in Simas Miglinas, *Pavergtoji Lietuva* (Memmingen, n.d.), p. 43-44.
- 14 Vytautas Petkevičius, *Šermukšnių lietus* (Vilnius, 1980), p. 223.
- 15 Z. Zalepūga, "Uetuvos KP veikla, ugdant tarybinių darbuotojų kadrus 1944-1951," *LKP Istorijos klausimai*, XV, 1974, p. 62.
- 16 The partisan reports formed the basis of an appeal to the United Nations by the chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania, Rev. M. Krupavičius. Excerpts from the appeal are printed in J. Prunskis (ed.), *Lietuva bolševikų okupacijoje* (Chicago, 1979), p. 9.
- 17 "Bolševikų siautėjimas Merkinės apylinkėse," *Aušra*, Nr. 31(71), 1982, p. 20.
- 18 J. Prunskis, op. cit., p. 9. Some of the partisan reports were published in *BDPS UD Biuletėnis*, Nr. 3, 1948.
- 19 Personal communication.
- 20 Elena Juciūtė, *Pėdos mirties zonoje* (Brooklyn, 1974), p. 80, 113.
- 21 The most complete information about the deportations, in particular that of 1948, is contained in two reports by the partisans of the Dainava military district. One of the reports, containing a detailed account of the 1948 deportations, was published in the Augsburg emigree newspaper *Žiburiai*, 20 August 1949.
- 22 *Žiburiai*, op. cit.
- 23 Elena Juciūtė, op. cit., p. 50.
- 24 A. Jefremenka, *Kolūkinės santvarkos pergalė Lietuvoje* (Vilnius, 1977) p. 63. Juozas Grišmanauskas was an unwilling participant in the deportations. See Juozas Grišmanauskas, *Tolimieji kvadratai* (Brooklyn, 1952), p. 55-57.
- 25 *Žiburiai*, op. cit.
- 26 S. Ivanauskaitė, "Vietinių tarybų valdžios organų veikla, likviduojant hitlerinės okupacijos padarinius ir ruošiant prielaidas socialistiniam tarybų Lietuvos žemės ūkio pertvarkymui" *Istorija*, VIII, 1966, p. 46.
- 27 K. Jurgaitis, "Pokarinės deportacijos pavergtoje Lietuvoje," *Į Laisvę*, Nr. 31(68), 1963, p. 25.
- 28 Rein Taagepera, "Soviet Collectivization of Estonian Agriculture: The Deportation Phase," *Soviet Studies*, 23-3, 1980, p. 382.
- 29 *Žiburiai*, op. cit.
- 30 *LKP skaičiai* (Vilnius, 1976), p. 211. Administrative reorganization and the increase in the number of collective farms were responsible for only a small percentage of the decrease in the number of primary party organizations in the rural districts.
- 31 R. Taagepera, op. cit.
- 32 The increase in the amount of land is calculated on the basis of charts published in M. Gregorauskas, *Tarybų Lietuvos žemės ūkis* (Vilnius, 1960), p. 114 and *Lietuvos TSR Istorija*, Vol. 4 (Vilnius, 1975), p. 188.
- 33 K. Jurgaitis, op. cit. p. 26.
- 34 Tarybų Lietuvos valstietija (Vilnius, 1979), p. 123.
- 35 M. Gregorauskas, op. cit., p. 183.