

Lithuanian intl commission for evaluation of Nazi, Soviet crimes to hold meeting in fall

VILNIUS, Aug 29, BNS — Lithuania hopes to hold the first meeting of the resumed International Commission for the Evaluation of Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in the upcoming fall, the commission chairman Emanuelis Zingeris says.

"I think the commission will hold its meeting in the upcoming three months, in late fall," Zingeris, chairman of the Seimas Committee on Foreign Affairs, said.

20 Lithuanian and foreign historians are scheduled to work in the commission. It is expected to evaluate consequences of the Nazi and Soviet occupations on the people of Lithuania.

"This round table should strengthen confidence between the nations, states and mutual respect," Zingeris said.

In his words, despite the progress done over the two decades of independence in evaluating Nazi and Soviet crimes, a lot of information on provincial crimes committed by the Nazis and their collaborators, the situation in occupied Lithuania in 1942-1944 as well as Soviet crimes in 1956-1990 still needs to be collected.

Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė on Tuesday signed a decree stating that the commission's activities are being resumed taking into account "the Holocaust's exceptional and unprecedented character and scale" as well as "the Soviet regime's painful consequences on the people of Lithuania."

"Time has come to renew the composition and it has been done," Daiva Ulbinaite, the president's spokesman, told BNS on Tuesday. She said there would be no further comments on the issue.

The commission will be subdivided into two subcommissions: the Subcommittee on the Evaluation of Crimes of the Nazi Occupation Regime and the Holocaust and the Subcommittee on the Evaluation of Crimes of the Soviet Occupation Regime. The two subcommissions will have ten members each.

Two representatives of the Israel-based Yad Vashem organization Dina Porat and Arkadiy Zeltser, Andrew Baker of the American Jewish Committee, Saulius Suziedelis of Millersville University and Kestutis Grinius of Vilnius University will work in the first subcommission.

Meanwhile Soviet crimes will be evaluated by Alexander Daniel of international public organization Memorial in Russia, Nicolas Lane of the American Jewish Committee, Timothy Snyder from Yale University, Francoise Thomas from Sorbonne University, Hungarian historian Janos M. Rainer, Arvydas Anusauskas and chairman of the Seimas Committee on National Security and Defense.

The previous commission was set up in 1998 and worked until 2007

when Lithuania's Prosecutor General's Office charged its member historian Yitzhak Arad of having served in the Soviet NKVD and been involved in executions of Lithuanian civilians and members of the anti-Soviet resistance movement in 1943-1944. The investigation was dropped in 2008 due to lack of evidence.

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