

Nazi, Soviet crimes are unique; time, environment put them alongside — Lithuanian PM

VILNIUS, Jan 26, BNS – Both Nazi and Soviet crimes are unique, and the historic time and the Central and Eastern European territory which included Lithuania and was marked by "bloody stains" in the middle of the XX century, put them alongside, Lithuanian Prime Minister Andrius Kubilius said in an interview for the Ziniu Radijas (News Radio) on Thursday, commenting on recent discussions on the evaluation of Nazi and Soviet crimes.

"Nazi crimes, the Holocaust is a unique crime, a horrendous crime. Unfortunately, on this occasion we are forced to recollect that in Lithuania we couldn't avoid the fact that some Lithuanians also have blood on their hands," the premier said.

"We also have to say that with their brutality, with their inhumanness, Soviet, Stalinist crimes are something that nobody can forget. So every crime is unique, and the pain suffered is immeasurable," Kubilius said.

"The very history puts them alongside. They both took place in the middle of the XX century. Stalinism crimes perhaps started a bit earlier, before Hitler came to power in Germany. (...) In this regard, the historic time puts them alongside," the head of the Lithuanian government said.

During the interview Kubilius reminded of British historian Timothy Snyder's book *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, which analyzes Nazi and Soviet crimes in the Baltic states, Poland, Ukraine and Belarus.

"They are put alongside also by what famous British historian Snyder called in his recently published book "bloodlands" or "bloody lands", a territory covering Lithuania, Poland, a big part of Belarus, Ukraine, where brutal crimes by one or the other tyrant lead, based on Snyder's calculations, to the annihilation of over 14 million people, including a lot of Jews but also many people of other nationalities," Kubilius said.

Margarita Butkiene, spokeswoman for Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Audronius Azubalis, has recently criticized a decision by a group of social democrats, members of the Lithuanian and European Parliaments, to sign a declaration stating that there are alleged attempts to "diminish" the Holocaust by deeming it to be "equal, similar or equivalent to Communism."

"In essence the social democratic rhetoric mimics the Kremlin's position that Stalin was "good" and Hitler was "bad". The only difference one could find between Hitler and Stalin is their moustache (Hitler's were shorter). Followers of both regimes – communists and Nazis – were united by their hatred of democracy. The legal qualification of crimes they committed is absolutely the same: these are war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity," Butkiene said.

During the first Soviet occupation in 1940-1941, around 23,000 Lithuanian residents were jailed, killed or deported, and the Soviet terror reached the peak just before the war with Nazi Germany, therefore, part of local residents were happy with the arrival of Germans.

But a new wave of violence was brought in with the Nazi occupation. During the following three years, the Nazis, sometimes helped by local collaborators, killed more than 90 percent of Lithuania's pre-war Jewish community of about 200,000.

After the Soviets returned in 1944, during the next decade 186,000 people were detained and jailed, 118,000 were deported and over 20,000 anti-Soviet partisans and their supporters were killed.

Lithuanian officials have said many times that Western Europe has not yet properly evaluated Soviet crimes.