

## The Progress Report of Latvia's History Commission: Crimes against Humanity Committed in the Territory of Latvia from 1940 to 1956 during the Occupations of the Soviet Union and National Socialist Germany

### Preamble

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, it has become possible in Eastern Europe to address the crimes against humanity committed by both the German and Soviet occupying powers during and following World War II and to do so in an open, unbiased and differentiated manner. These crimes cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of citizens, indeed, oftentimes, the national elite of the occupied countries. In the past decade, local historians have made great efforts to document and clarify these crimes in all the states of East Central and South Eastern Europe.

In the course of these investigations, one of the central problems has been the difference in public perceptions and awareness in these countries and outside, especially in the West, concerning the severity of Nazi and Soviet crimes. In the West, where the Nazis had been the enemy in World War II, the Nazi-instigated Holocaust has been and is still at the center of public interest and attention as an extremely brutal and unprecedented crime against humanity. On the other hand, Soviet crimes against humanity — mass deportations, persecutions, imprisonment, executions, death by deprivation in the GULAG or in forced resettlement — were neither a part of direct experience in the West, nor were widely known while they happened and thus did not become imprinted into the public consciousness. In East European countries, however, many of which were either occupied or under Soviet domination until the late 1980s or early 1990s, the awareness of Soviet crimes, which in their extreme form continued into the 1950s, dominates in public consciousness as something directly experienced and more immediate. These differences in perceptions and awareness sometimes lead to unfortunate downgrading of either the crimes of the Nazis in the East or the crimes of the Soviet regimes in the West. Therefore it is incumbent upon the historians in Eastern Europe and in the West to make full use of recently available sources and the freedom to investigate them so that the entire picture of recent history can be revealed and understood. Eastern Europe needs to come to grips with the Nazi-instigated Holocaust as it affected their countries, including questions of forced or voluntary collaboration of the indigenous populations, such as the recent accusations of complicity in Poland and Rumania. On the other hand, the West needs to confront and process the crimes against humanity committed by the Soviet regime and other Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.

Like all the countries concerned, Latvia sees herself confronted with this problem of different perceptions. Latvia, like the two other Baltic States, Estonia and Lithuania, were occupied *three* times within a short period of five years: by the Soviet Union in 1940, the National Socialist Germany 1941 and again by the Soviet Union in 1944–45. The forcible transformation of Latvia into a Soviet republic and the illegal annexation by the USSR in 1940 led, among other things, to a mass deportation of the political, economic, social and cultural elites (in 1941), farmers and members of national resistance (in 1949). It also led to an exodus of large numbers of the population in advance of the second Soviet occupation in 1944–45. The German occupation in the summer of 1941, which, after the terrible experience of the first Soviet occupation, had initially given rise to certain hopes of "normalization", quickly developed a scarcely less ruthless policy of suppression and exploitation. Nearly all of the Jews in Latvia were systematically murdered in the first six months of Nazi occupation.

Latvia's sudden loss of her hard-won independence, accompanied by two succeeding regimes of terror, presented the country's population with extraordinary and complex problems of ethical orientation. These were exacerbated by deliberate manipulation of public opinion and national sentiments, especially in terms of allegiances and enmities. It must be remembered that both occupying powers had conspired to rob Latvia's independence (the Hitler–Stalin Pact of 23 August 1939) and both worked toward total subjugation of the population as their long-term goal.

The analysis and evaluation of these problems and manipulations place the highest demands on present-day historians. The accurate description and classification of events is rendered more difficult by the persistence of historical legends that can be partly ascribed to the occupiers. Thus, Nazi authorities tried to justify their crimes by referring to the crimes by the preceding Soviet occupying power, while, after 1944–45, the Communist rulers used the same approach to justify their terror. Thus false connections and stereotypes were constructed, which in part still inform public opinion. For example, German propaganda claimed that members of Soviet secret police engaged in political persecution and deportations were mainly Jews, an assertion that some Latvians still use to excuse the participation of some of their compatriots in the persecution and execution of Latvian Jews in the second half of 1941. Conversely, the Soviet authorities and some Western writers frequently insinuated that almost all Latvians had played a role in the murder of the Jews, an insinuation which still has repercussions today. Therefore, thorough knowledge of the objectives and methods of the occupying regimes is required in order to appraise in a sensitive and discerning manner the sufferings of individuals, of social and ethnic groups and the nation as a whole — the political persecutions, the Holocaust, the concentration camps, the deportations and the GULAG — as well as the long-term consequences for the survivors and the nation.

In order to promote research into these complex problems and to make the results known to both the populace of Latvia and the international public, the President of the Republic of Latvia, Guntis Ulmanis, convened an International Commission of Historians on 13 November 1998, patterned on the model of such commissions in other Central and East European countries. The present President of the Republic of Latvia, Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, is continuing the policy of her predecessor and has extended the Commission's mandate. The Commission is charged with and committed to setting forth unequivocally and clearly the crimes against humanity during the rule of the occupation regimes. The Commission pursues its mission through international conferences and publications, the promotion of historical research and the development of appropriate historical curricula in schools and universities.

The international conferences, mainly in cooperation with the Latvian Institute of History, define the framework for research and inform the general public about the historians' findings. Up to now, three such conferences have taken place: "Latvia in the Second World War" (1999), "Problems of Research into the Holocaust in Latvia" (2000) and "The Deportation of 14 June 1941" (2001). The papers of the first two conferences have been published in the series "Symposium of the Commission of Historians of Latvia"; the third conference proceedings are in preparation.

The conferences have been useful for determining areas of agreement and disagreement with international scholars and need for comparative studies. Thus, on several occasions, extremely controversial discussions have taken place, especially concerning the Latvian participation in the Nazi-initiated Holocaust and the applicability of the term "genocide" to Soviet occupation policy, especially the deportations. These controversies indicate that Latvian historians have to be concerned not only with presenting and reviewing the facts but also with the status of current international research and the application of internationally accepted terminology.

International comparisons are also indispensable to evaluate several aspects of Latvian history and to place them into context. Such is the existence of an authoritarian regime in Latvia since 1934, whose political structures facilitated the Communist seizure of power in 1940 and whose emphasis on national and authoritarian education offered certain starting points for Nazi German propaganda after 1941. Such is the collaboration by Latvians with both the Soviet and the German side. These aspects are not in themselves exceptional and can be better understood if viewed in the context of other East Central and South Eastern European countries.

The Commission has paid special attention to the dissemination of appropriate historical knowledge and teaching methodology in the schools. For this purpose it has cooperated closely and successfully with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Latvian Association of History Teachers, the Museum Jews in Latvia, The Museum of the Occupation of Latvia (1940–1991) and other educational and cultural organizations. "The Teaching of Controversial Issues of World War II" was the title of a seminar for teachers in April 2000,

followed by "Holocaust Education" in the autumn. A further seminar for history teachers in November 2001 dealt with "The Holocaust in Latvia".

The Commission has formed four sub-commissions to promote research: 1. Crimes against Humanity Committed in the Territory of Latvia 1940–41, headed by Professor Dr. Valdis Bērziņš; 2. Holocaust in the Territory of Latvia 1944–44, headed by Professor Dr. Aivars Stranga; 3. Crimes against Humanity Committed in the Territory of Latvia during the German Occupation 1941–45, headed by Professor Dr. Inesis Feldmanis; 4. Crimes against Humanity Committed in the Territory of Latvia during the Second Soviet Occupation 1944–56, headed by Professor Dr. Heinrihs Strods. More than 30 Latvian historians are currently examining the most important aspects of crimes against humanity in Latvia. The aim is to compile a research record sufficiently complete and well documented to assure an accurate and undeniable portrayal of these crimes and their perpetrators.

The Holocaust and, in particular, the involvement of ethnic Latvians in the massacre actions in the summer and late fall of 1941, is the initial focus of research. The first findings indicate that there is no connection whatsoever between the events of the first Soviet occupation of 1940–41 and the participation of Latvian groups in the murder of the Jews. The motives for the participation are to be sought elsewhere (Rudīte Vīksne). It is also possible to name specific persons who were involved in the Jewish massacres in small towns (Dzintars Ērglis), thus contradicting the cliché that *the Latvians* collectively were engaged in the atrocities.

The research concerning crimes against humanity is only the beginning. Much work needs to be done analyzing the historical background, the respective oppression mechanisms, as well as the economic, demographic, cultural and ethnic impact and consequences of the entire occupation period 1940–1991. The sensitive questions of collaboration need to be addressed in much more detail. Comprehensive databases of murdered and persecuted persons must be created. All that takes time, especially since many sources have only recently become available. The work is further complicated by the fact that Latvian scholars a great deal of difficulty accessing many relevant archives in Russia. It is, however, well worth mentioning that many younger historians are engaged in this research. They are obtaining valuable experience and opportunities for academic advancement, thus assuring that Latvian historiography will have a new generation of scholars who will carry on the work.

The following reports by the chairmen of the four sub-commissions provide information about the objectives, the current state, the problems and the early results of research in their areas as of summer 2001.

### **First Sub-Commission: Crimes against Humanity in the Territory of Latvia during the Soviet Occupation 1940–41**

Western societies that have never had directly experienced crimes against humanity committed by the Communist totalitarian regime are not well informed, sometimes misinformed and even disinformed about them. Information coming from the Soviet Union was strictly controlled. Soviet propaganda agencies and secret services portrayed the Soviet Union as the main, even only, bulwark of anti-Fascism in World War II, denied its own atrocities by ascribing them to others and attempted to vilify those exposing Soviet crimes as traitors or Nazi collaborators. Although it is now possible to find conclusive evidence of Soviet crimes against humanity, attempts are still made to cover up or gloss over the crimes of the Communist regime by using Soviet partnership in the anti-Nazi coalition as a pretext. Thus in case of Latvia, the Russian Federation is trying to use this pretext to justify and excuse actions of individuals accused of murder of civilians and carrying out mass deportations and to save them from prosecution.

## Background

Before World War II, Latvia, along with the two other Baltic States, Estonia and Lithuania, was an independent and neutral country, a member of the League of Nations. It threatened no neighbouring country. True, on 15 May 1934 its parliamentary democracy was replaced by the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis, but it was much milder than the totalitarian regimes of Nazi Germany and Communistic Soviet Union with their concentration and GULAG camps. The Ulmanis regime adhered to the prohibition of death penalty passed in 1929. Latvia, traditionally known for its tolerant attitudes toward minorities, was one of the few European countries giving refuge to persecuted Jews from Germany. Having attained a relatively high living standard for the day and age, as well as a high level of education and culture, Latvia was very much interested in preserving peace.

On 23 August 1939, the aggressively inclined Nazi Germany and Soviet Union concluded a non-aggression treaty, which led to German attack on Poland and to World War II. A secret amendment appended to the original treaty and to a subsequent treaty of 28 September 1939 decided the further fate of the Baltic States—a criminal act carried out behind their backs. Although more than 60 years have passed since that time, and although the successor states, the Federal Republic of Germany and the Russian Federation have acknowledged the existence of the secret amendments that led to multiple crimes against humanity in the Baltic, neither of these states have found it necessary to issue apologies to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

After the two aggressors had occupied and divided the territory of Poland between them, the Soviet Union proceeded to extend its influence over its "sphere of influence" as specified in the secret amendments. By claiming security reasons, it forced the Baltic States to accept "cooperation treaties" in late September and early October 1939. These provided for the stationing of major contingents of the Red Army in these countries. In June 1941, when the world's attention was focused on the German invasion of France, the Soviet Union, occupied Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. The countries were powerless to resist the overwhelming military force. This occupation was carried out with utter disregard of international law and mutual non-aggression treaties.

Because of the brutal inhumanity experienced during this year (17 June 1940–7 July 1941), this first occupation became popularly known in Latvia as the "horrible year." Latvia ceased to exist as an independent and sovereign state in its own territory, although its annexation was not recognized by a large number of Western countries, including the U.S.A. and Great Britain. The incorporation into the Soviet Union was organized and carried out by local Communists and other collaborators under conditions of military occupation. The Communists, fewer than 400, had been in the pay of the Communist International and had exerted little influence in public affairs before the takeover. As the governing structures of the independent state were broken up, the incumbents—statesmen, diplomats, civil servants, military officers—were dismissed and persecuted. Repressions were directed against members of the cultural and intellectual elites who did not accept the ideology of Marxism–Leninism and any persons expressing dissent or exhibiting resistance. In the name of Communist pseudo-democracy, social structures were drastically changed, the freedom of the press was revoked, censorship—invoked. Private property was either liquidated or severely restricted. Latvia was, in effect, economically plundered.

The Soviet occupation culminated on 14 June 1941 when a mass deportation of civilians from Latvia to distant areas of the Soviet Union took place. A total of 15,424 persons, according to latest figures, were arrested and sent away in boxcars unsuited for human transportation. Among those deported were minor children and babies, most of whom died on the way or from cold or malnutrition in their settlement areas in Siberia. Many civilians were brutally executed in Rīga and many other places after the beginning of the war between Germany and Soviet Union, 22 June 1941, as the Red Army retreated in disarray.

## Aims of the Sub-Commission

The major aim of the Sub-Commission is to investigate objectively and, as far as possible—concretely, crimes against humanity committed by the Soviet regime in the territory of Latvia during the time period 17 June 1940–7 July 1941. These crimes against citizens of independent Latvia included arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, execution, deportation to the so-called Gulag camps or banishment for life in distant areas of the Soviet Union. These actions were carried out without a proper court procedure, oftentimes without a proper arrest warrant. Most of the charges were based on Soviet laws and applied retroactively—for alleged transgressions while serving in institutions of the independent Latvian state. They completely ignored international conventions and laws. The investigations include determining the role of collaborators in carrying out these repressions, i.e. participation of local Communists and the so-called Soviet activists in the repressions against the inhabitants of occupied Latvia. It is also important to find out whether, where and to what extent the retreating members of the Red Army participated in the murder of civilians in the territory of Latvia during the last weeks of June and first week of July of 1941.

## Previous Research

The crimes against humanity carried out by the Soviet regime could not be investigated in Latvia before the renewal of independence and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Only Western scholars, especially of Baltic origin, could address these questions and publish their findings, although they lacked access to sources in the Soviet Union and in occupied Latvia.<sup>1</sup> In Latvia, a certain amount of work dealing with the first Soviet occupation had taken place, before the Commission started its activities—since and even before regaining independence in 1991. Document collections concerning the occupation of Latvia (1939–40), the politics of the occupying powers (1939–91) and political processes (1940–86) have been published.<sup>2</sup> Published material also includes lists of repressed persons,<sup>3</sup> testimonies of the victims<sup>4</sup> and publications about other types of repression.<sup>5</sup> These research activities were carried out on the initiative of enthusiastic scholars without a general plan and in many cases without financial support.

## Work of the Sub-Commission

Systematic work began after the appointment of the Commission in late 1998. The Commission enlisted both experienced and younger scholars interested in pursuing topics in the Commission's purview. Research was stimulated by financial support supplied by the state.

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<sup>1</sup> Although many of the early Western publications on the topic had a clearly political intent, especially on the background of the Cold War—denunciation of Soviet crimes and calls for liberation of the Baltic States—not all can be dismissed as lacking a documentary and serious scholarly dimension. Among the publications can be mentioned: *These Names Accuse: Nominal List of Latvians Deported to Soviet Russia in 1940–41* (Stockholm: Latvian National Foundation, 1952); *Report of the Select Committee to Investigate Communist Aggression and the Forced Incorporation of the Baltic States into the U.S.S.R.: Third Interim Report* (Washington: US Printing Office, 1954), 537 pages (known as the Kersten Committee Report); Ādolfs Šilde, *Pa deportēto pēdām* (Tracking the Deportees) ([New York]: Grāmatu Draugs, 1956) 304 pages (Šilde interviewed returning German POW's to obtain the information). An interesting and because of its publication date oftentimes overlooked source is Alfreds Ceichners, *Latvijas bolševizācija* (The Bolshevisation of Latvia) (Rīga: A Ceichnera apgāds, 1944, repr. 1986) 595 pages. The work of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies, which was founded in 1969, deserves special mention for its serious unpoliticized scholarly approach. Articles appearing in the *Journal of Baltic Studies* and other publications are listed in: Laurence Kitching, *Baltic Studies Indexes 1970–1997* (Hackettstown, NJ: AABS, 1998) 136 pages. Also see: Romuald J. Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940–1980* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1983) 333 pages.

<sup>2</sup> I[ga] Grava-Kreituse, I[nesis] Feldmanis, A[ivars] Stranga, eds., *Latvijas okupācija un aneksija 1939–1940: Dokumenti un materiāli* (The Occupation and Annexation of Latvia 1939–40: Documents and Materials) (Rīga: Preses nams, 1995) 603 pages; Elmārs Pelkaus, ed., *Policy of Occupation Powers in Latvia 1939–1991: A Collection of Documents* (Rīga: State Archives of Latvia/Nordik, 1999) 624 pages (also in Latvian and Russian); Rudīte Vīksne and Kārlis Kangeris, eds., *Politiskās prāvas Latvijā 1940–1986: Noziegumos pret padomju valsti apsūdzēto Latvijas iedzīvotāju rādītājs* (Political Processes in Latvia 1940–86: A Register of Inhabitants of Latvia Charged with Crimes against the Soviet State) (Rīga: Latvijas Vēstures institūta apgāds, 1999) 978 pages.

<sup>3</sup> *Represēto saraksts 1941* (List of Repressed Persons 1941), *Latvijas Arhīvi* 1–2, Pielikums (Rīga: Latvijas Republikas valsts arhīvu ģenerāldirekcija, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> Anda Līce, compiler. and ed., *Via Dolorosa: Staļinisma upuru liecības* (Via Dolorosa: Testimonies of Victims of Stalinism), vols. 1–2 (Rīga: Liesma, 1990, 1993) 604, 622 pages; vols. 3–4 (Rīga: Preses nams, 1994, 1995) 312, 320 pages. An English edition: Astrid Sics, ed. and transl., *We Sang Through Tears: Stories of Survival in Siberia* (Rīga: Jānis Roze Publishers, 1999) 372 pages.

<sup>5</sup> J[ānis] Riekstiņš, "Kulaki' Latvijā (1940.–1953. gads): Kā varasvīri Latvijā 'kulakus' taisīja un kādas sekas tas radīja ("Kulaks" in Latvia 1940–1953: How the Rulers Created the "Kulaks" and with What Results), *Dokumenti un fakti* (Rīga: Ievanda, 1996) p 129. A[inārs] Bambals, "Staļinisma genocīds pret Latvijas armijas karavīriem Baigajā gadā" (The Stalinist Genocide against Members of the Latvian Army during the "Horrible Year"), *Komunistiskā totalitārisma un genocīda prakse Latvijā: Zinātniskās konferences materiāli* (Rīga: Zinātne, 1992) pp. 74–86.

The international conference organized by the Commission on 14–15 June 1999 gave impetus to research on repressions carried out by the Soviet regime against the inhabitants of Latvia, including both mass and smaller scale deportations, arrests, torture and executions by the secret police.

In 2001, on the 60th anniversary of the 14 June 1941 mass deportation, a major international conference was organized under the aegis of the Sub-Commission. The Commission also helped subvention a major new list of the 15,424 deportees, *Aizvestie*.<sup>6</sup> The conference presentations provided a comparative evaluation of the deportation from the perspectives and experiences of various nations. The majority of the participants, including all participants from Latvia, regarded the 14 June 1941 deportation in Latvia as a form of genocide based on several criteria named in Article 2 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (9 December 1948).<sup>7</sup> They rejected the attempts of conference participants from the Russian Federation to contest such an interpretation. The conference resolution, however, called for a more detailed evaluation and more thorough argumentation of this form of genocide.

The conference materials are being prepared for publication in 2002. Several research papers by Latvian historians not presented at the conference will be included as well. Dr. hist. Irēne Šneidere has prepared a report concerning Soviet retributions against civilians in Latgale (Eastern Latvia) June–early July 1941. Dr. hist. Ēriks Jēkabsons deals with Soviet repressions against ethnic minorities. He has also produced a co-authored report with Ainārs Bambāls concerning Soviet repressions against officers of the Latvian army. Ainārs Lerhis deals with the fates of Latvian diplomats.

Work in progress, to be completed by the end of 2001, includes several studies, including a study concerning collaboration during the first Soviet occupation. These studies are receiving financial support from the Commission. The results put forth underscore the fact that historical research concerning the crimes of the Soviet regime has significantly increased during the Commission's tenure.

### Future Research

The following aspects need to be further studied and elaborated: the extent of Soviet repressions in occupied Latvia; the causes and reasons for collaboration; the social background of collaborators. It is also important to investigate the role of Latvia and the other Baltic States in the overall short and long-range plans of the Kremlin. Further research also must include studies concerning Soviet economic and nationalities policies, including Russification, cultural Sovietization and other aspects.

Further financial support is needed to carry out this research. Potential hurdles are posed by the relative inaccessibility of Russian archives. These are the main concerns about the future work of the Sub-Commission dealing with the first Soviet occupation 1940–41.

### Second Sub-Commission: Holocaust in the Territory of Latvia during Nazi Occupation 1941-1945

The total annihilation of Jews, known as the Holocaust, in Nazi-occupied Latvia was the worst crime committed in Latvian territory in the twentieth century. It stands out because of the indescribable sadism with which it was committed and the huge number of victims.

### Historical Background and Summary

The decision to annihilate the Jews was made by German occupation authorities. Latvia was not a sovereign state, and there were no Latvian institutions in existence that could have

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<sup>6</sup> Elmārs Pelkaus et al., eds., *Aizvestie: 1941. gada 14. jūnijs* (The Deported: 14 June 1941) (Rīga: Latvijas Valsts arhīvs, 2001) 808 pages.

<sup>7</sup> See Article 2 of the Convention: "In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group." Cited from: Günter Hoog and Angela Steinmetz, eds., *International Conventions on Protection of Humanity and Environment*, (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1993) p. 32.

influenced the decision of the occupation authorities one way or another. Latvian civil society had been inflicted severe wounds by the brutal terror of the preceding Soviet occupation (17 June 1940–end of June 1941); it encountered German occupation physically and morally weakened.

The number of Holocaust victims comprises the largest single group of people who lost their lives because of occupation regimes from June 1940, the destruction of independence, to May 1945, the end of the war. More than 70,000 Latvian Jews and more than 20,000 Jews brought to Latvia from 1941 to 1944 from other occupied countries of Europe (Austria, the annexed parts of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Lithuania) and Germany proper were killed.

The total annihilation of the Jews and the killing of Jews from Latvia outside the territory of Latvia continued until the defeat of Germany in May of 1945. Shortly before the Soviet Army entered Riga on 13 October 1944, Nazi authorities transferred some 1500 Jews from the concentration camp "Lenta" and other camps to Liepāja. By March 1945, most of the prisoners had been transferred from Liepāja to Hamburg in Germany. Only a small number of the "Lenta" prisoners remained in Liepāja until the capitulation of Germany. Some 50 Jews who had escaped from the concentration camp in Dundaga hid out in the forests of Kurzeme; by the end of the war about half had survived. For those still living, the end of the Holocaust came on 9 May 1945. The same is true for those Jewish prisoners who had been transferred from the concentration camp "Kaiserwald–Riga" to the Stutthof concentration camp in Germany.

The Holocaust in the territory of Latvia is characterized by the fact that there were two periods of annihilation. During the first period, at the beginning of German occupation (July and August 1941), the annihilation was not always directed and administered centrally by the Nazi occupiers. The German Security Police (SD) was engaged primarily in general oversight and urged Latvian collaborators to carry out the murders. Local collaborators, especially in the provincial areas and towns, played an important role in the Holocaust. In the second period, from the fall of 1941 to May 1945, the annihilation was carried out by Nazi German occupation authorities as part of a planned, centralized and systematic policy.

One of the characteristics of Holocaust research in Latvia, especially concerning the first period in the summer of 1941, is the necessity to rely on sources whose evaluation requires particular caution and a critical approach: the investigation carried out by the Soviet Security Committee (KGB) during the second Soviet occupation in 1944–45, documents of Soviet court cases, the daily reports (*Ereignismeldungen*) and the semi-annual activity reports of the Nazi Operative Group A (*Einsatzgruppe A*) of the Security Service and SD. Another significant source, though of lesser importance, is Latvian provincial press from the Nazi occupation period.

### Aims of the Sub-Commission

Holocaust research and education in Latvia has two very important aims:

1. To inform and educate the inhabitants of Latvia, especially the youth, about the Jewish tragedy and to keep alive the memory of the innocent victims.
2. To inform the international audience about the Holocaust in the territory of Latvia and to correct misinformation and erroneous stereotypes about it. To mention only three of the most widespread errors: (a) The stereotype that in independent Latvia there existed, before June 1940, a deep-seated anti-Semitism that was directly responsible for the annihilation of Latvia's Jews. Thus David J. Goldhagen in his bestseller *Hitler's Willing Executioners* asserts that radical anti-Semitism had informed Latvian culture in general.<sup>8</sup> (b) The failure to note the fact that Latvia as an independent sovereign state ceased to exist in Latvian territory on 17 June 1940, as a result of Soviet military aggression. Thus the erroneous assumption is made that the Holocaust took place in the Latvian state with the acquiescence of independent Latvian institutions. (c) The assumption that in German-occupied Latvia widespread participation of the local population in the Holocaust took place. This opinion is

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<sup>8</sup> David Johan Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (London: Abacus, 1996) p. 409.

openly stated in the works of the Holocaust classic author Raul Hilberg, including his latest monograph on the topic.<sup>9</sup>

### Previous Research

During the Soviet occupation, from 1944–45 on, Holocaust history was not a research object. A negative attitude toward research concerning the annihilation of Jews became even more pronounced in the 1960s and 1970s when the USSR actively promoted the "battle against Zionism" and supported the anti-Semitic resolution of the UN, which equated Zionism and racism. Research about the Holocaust in the territory of Latvia has been the topic of more than 25 books published outside Latvia, beginning with the second half of the 1940s: in the USA, Israel, Germany, Great Britain and other countries. Most of these books are memoirs. Scholarly studies have been published by Gertrud Schneider (USA.), Dov Levin (Israel), Hans–Heinrich Wilhelm and Helmut Krausnick (Germany), Mārgers Vestermanis (Latvia). The most significant work with lasting historiographic value is the monograph by Wilhelm and Krausnick about the role of the SD operative groups—the *Einsatzgruppen*—in the annihilation of Jews in Latvia.<sup>10</sup> The most significant work completely devoted to the Holocaust in the territory of Latvia is the monograph by Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia*.<sup>11</sup> This is the first work that presents the overall picture. The Latvian edition is especially significant because it contains a new chapter detailing the annihilation of Jews in a provincial district of Latvia, Ilūkste. This chapter is co-authored with Rudīte Vīksne, a researcher at the Institute of Latvian History of the University of Latvia. The most significant part of Ezergailis's work is the detailed description of the role of Latvian units in the Holocaust, especially the so-called Arājs Commando. Many scholarly works point out the indisputable criminal role of leading Nazi figures in the annihilation of Latvian Jews. These were the commanders of the security agencies of the occupying forces: Walter Stahlecker, Hans Adolf Prützmann, Friedrich Jeckeln, Heinz Jost, Rudolf Lange, as well as Latvian criminals: Viktors Arājs, Voldemārs Veiss, Roberts Štiglics, Mārtiņš Vagulāns. The role of Veiss, Roberts Osis, Kārlis Lobe and others in the first phase of the annihilation in the summer of 1941 needs to be investigated further. It must be noted that there had been little research concerning the Holocaust in the provinces.

Owing to years of dedicated work by historian Mārgers Vestermanis the Documentation Centre and Museum Jews in Latvia was established long before the Commission came into existence. Here, significant research and educational activities were carried on. The most extensive collection of testimonies by Holocaust survivors was collected here, and Museum staff members were the first to analyze KGB data concerning the murderers of the Jews. Already since 1989 Vestermanis has regularly published his findings in German academic publications. A part of the Museum's exposition was shown in Germany.

### Work of the Sub-Commission

The formation of the Commission and the financial support by the state made possible a multi-faceted and broad investigation of the Holocaust in the territory of Latvia, involving several foreign scholars as well. During the present term of the Commission, two international conferences were organized: on 1–2 April 2000 in Līgatne, which included papers on teaching the Holocaust in the course on Latvian history in high schools, and on 16–17 October 2000 in Rīga, on Holocaust research problems. The materials of the Rīga conference have already been published. Several research papers are in English and all papers have been summarized in English so that the materials are available to a wide readership.<sup>12</sup> Mārgers Vestermanis, a member of the Commission, presented an analytic paper at the Rīga conference concerning the entire historiography on the Holocaust in Latvia, including works written in Yiddish and in Hebrew that had been mainly overlooked up to then.

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<sup>9</sup> Raul Hilberg, *Täter, Opfer, Zuschauer* (Frankfurt a.M., 1992) pp. 313–16.

<sup>10</sup> Helmut Krausnick and Hans–Heinrich Wilhelm, *Die Truppe des Weltanschauungskrieges* (Stuttgart, 1981) 688 pages.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia* (Rīga: Vēstures institūta apgāds, 1996) 465 pages; the expanded Latvian edition: Andrievs Ezergailis, *Holokausta okupētajā Latvijā* (Rīga: Vēstures institūta apgāds, 1999) 591 pages.

<sup>12</sup> Andris Caune, Aivars Stranga and Mārgers Vestermanis, eds., *Holokausta izpētes problēmas Latvijā / The Issues of the Holocaust Research in Latvia, Latvijas vēsturnieku komisijas raksti 2* (Rīga: Latvijas vēstures institūta apgāds, 2001) 408 pages.



During the present term, the following research work has been completed and published. (1) Dzintars Ērglis, "Several Holocaust Episodes in Krustpils: Beila Bella Veide." This work represents the newest Holocaust research direction in Latvia: investigation of the annihilation of Jews in small provincial towns. (2) Aivars Stranga, "Jewish Refugees in Latvia 1933–1940." (3) Rudīte Vīksne, "The Typical Member of the 'Arājs Commando' According to Soviet Court Records: Social Status, Education, Reasons for Enlistment, Court Sentence." (4) Marģers Vestermanis, "An Overview of the Saviours of Jews in Latvia." Vestermanis has determined that a total of 450 Jews were kept in hiding; of those 400 were saved and survived. Leo Dribins has completed a monograph *History of Anti-Semitism in Latvia*, which will be published in 2002.

During the Commission's tenure, the teaching of the history of the Holocaust in Latvian schools has considerably improved. The Commission cooperates in its educational efforts with the Latvian History Teachers' Association. Teacher exchanges between Israel and Latvia have been arranged.

The museum Jews in Latvia has obtained new, considerably larger exhibition space and has opened a new, improved and enlarged section dealing with Holocaust history. The Museum's staff members have produced three video films, a trilogy *Glābēji un izglābtie* (The Saviors and the Saved).

The Holocaust topic has also been taken up by provincial museums and their researchers. The work of Aigars Urtāns, Head of the History Section of the Bauska Regional History and Art Museum, deserves special mention. Regional history research has begun in Valdemārpils (Ēriks Propokovičs), in the Saldus area (Aldis Belsons) and in Pāvilosta. Maijers Mellers has begun collecting materials about the annihilation of Jews in the small towns of Latgale (Eastern Latvia).

The attitude of the general public toward Holocaust research has considerably improved since the beginning of the Commission's work. At this time, Holocaust research is taking place at all of the academic history research centers in Latvia: in the History Institute, the Faculty of History and Philosophy and the Jewish Studies Center (Project: "Oral History of Latvian Jews") of the University of Latvia; in the Museum Jews in Latvia; in the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia (1940–1991); in Daugavpils Pedagogical University (Dmitrijs Oļehnovičs). It is important to note that this research involves several promising young scholars (Svetlana Bogojavlenskaja, Dzintars Ērglis, Dmitrijs Oļehnovičs, Aigars Urtāns and others).

## Future Plans

1. Rudīte Vīksne will continue research on the topic "The Holocaust in Latvian Provincial Towns and Districts." This topic will also be addressed and materials collected by Maijers Mellers, Aigars Urtāns and Dr. Grigorijs Smirins.
2. Marģers Vestermanis will continue his three research topics: (a) "Resistance of the Inhabitants of Latvia against the Holocaust"; (b) "Jewish Resistance against the Holocaust"; (c) "The History of the Concentration Camps Kaiserwald and Jungfernhof."
3. A Latvia-wide project will be started to ascertain and list the names of all Jews murdered in Latvian territory. This has already been done for Liepāja by the US scholar Edward Anders and Latvian scholar Juris Dubrovskis.<sup>13</sup> Professor Ruvins Ferber of the Centre of Jewish Studies of the University of Latvia has led preparation of a research project to survey of all Jews murdered in Latvia.
4. Co-operation with the History Teachers' Association will continue with the following aims: (a) preparation of a collection of methodological teaching materials (author: Ieva Gundare, consultant: Marģers Vestermanis); (b) preparation of an audio-cassette *The Songs and Poetry of Ghettos and Concentration Camps in Latvia* as an aid for teaching the Holocaust in the schools (authors: Marģers Vestermanis and Vladens Šūlmans).

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<sup>13</sup> Edward Anders and Juris Dubrovskis, *Jews in Liepāja 1941–1945: A Memorial Book* (Burlingame, CA: Anders Press, 2001) 199 pages.

Further research topics include: (a) reactions of the inhabitants of Latvia to the mass annihilation of Latvian Jews under Nazi occupation; (b) evaluation of the attitudes toward Jews perceivable in Latvian press during Nazi occupation, especially articles condemning the "sympathisers of Jews"; (c) an encompassing research project concerning the attitudes of Latvian churches (Roman Catholic, Evangelical Lutheran, Orthodox and Baptist) toward the annihilation of the Jews.

### Third Sub-Commission: Crimes against Humanity in the Territory of Latvia during Nazi Occupation 1941-1945

The so-called "German period" of the occupation is a most convoluted and contradictory time in Latvian history. The key to understanding this period is the objective evaluation of the context in which the events took place and a balanced perception of the past.

#### Historical Background and Summary

Nazi occupation replaced a Soviet occupation, which had been, for thousands of inhabitants of Latvia, a most tragic and wrenching experience. The hopes for renewed independence of Latvia turned out to have no foundation in reality. Nazi plans did not include a sovereign Latvia, but rather its subjugation and turning it into a Germanised province. As a "General District" (*Generalbezirk*) Latvia became part of the *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, which encompassed the territories of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and parts of Belarus. The so-called self-government that was formed in March 1942 had very limited authority. German sovereign power in the General District was exercised by a *Generalkommissar*, who was directly responsible to the *Reichskommissar*.

The Nazi occupation regime in Latvia ignored international law. It was fully responsible for the serious crimes against the civilian population that were carried out in the territory of Latvia. Nazi terror had a pronounced political and racist nature. Besides the Jewish Holocaust, the annihilation of the Roma and the mentally deficient was carried out. German repressions turned also against Communists and Soviet activists, as well as participants in various national resistance groups. Local inhabitants were caught up in the repressive system created by the occupiers. They were mobilized for military duty or sent as forced laborers to Germany. Nazi economic policy was aimed at the complete pilfering of Latvia.

#### Previous Research

The criminal nature of the Nazi occupation regime's policies has been dealt with in many historical treatises. Until the 1990s these questions could be seriously researched only in the West. In Latvia, all historical literature about Nazi occupation policies was to a great extent politicized and subjected to Communist ideological interpretation. It was basically the view of the Soviet occupiers about the "German period" in Latvia and as such—fragmentary, incomplete and one-sided.

Significant advances were made in the early 1990s, involving historians from Latvia and exile Latvian historians. Several document collections were published, thus expanding the available sources for research. Several monographs were published as well, such as by Haralds Biezais, *Latvija kāškrusta varā* (Latvia in the Grip of the Swastika),<sup>14</sup> by Heinrihs Strods, *Zem melnbrūnā zobena* (Under the Black-and-Brown Sword)<sup>15</sup> and Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia*,<sup>16</sup> which analyzed the most characteristic applications of Nazi policies in Latvian territory. Tens of articles appeared in scholarly periodicals, among

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<sup>14</sup> Haralds Biezais, *Latvija kāškrusta varā: Sveši kungi — pašu ļaudis* (Latvia in the Grip of the Swastika: Foreign Masters—Own Servants) ([Lansing, MI]: Gauja, 1992) 535 pages.

<sup>15</sup> Heinrihs Strods, *Zem melnbrūnā zobena: Vācijas politika Latvijā* (Under the Black-and-Brown Sword: German Policies in Latvia), Rīga, 1994.

<sup>16</sup> Andrew Ezergailis, *The Holocaust in Latvia 1941–1944: The Missing Center* (Rīga: The Historical Institute of Latvia, 1996) 465 pages. The expanded Latvian version was published in 1999.

which those of Kārlis Kangeris stand out with their professional approach and meticulous documentation.<sup>17</sup>

Latvian historians must continue this work by devoting special attention to Nazi crimes against humanity. An encompassing scholarly overview of the "Nazi period" of Latvia is a prime necessity.

### Current and Future Research

The Commission has succeeded in activating new research activities. In the area of the Sub-Commission's charge these include:

1. *The determination of exact numbers of victims of Nazi persecution.* The numbers named in historical literature are oftentimes exaggerated and thus untrustworthy. The historians Uldis Neiburgs and Kaspars Zellis have now begun to inventory those repressed or killed during the Nazi occupation. A database is being developed with the following parameters: surname, first name, birth data, residence, occupation, charge, place of detention, the end result, etc. This database will provide scholars with empirical evidence and help identify groups of the prosecuted and repressed.
2. *The Nazi repressive system in Latvia.* Much new research is needed here. Attention must be given to the structure of Nazi prisons and concentration camps, as well as their functioning mechanisms. The formation of the police apparatus also deserves serious study, especially concerning the formation and the functions of the Latvian police battalions. Historical literature is still unable to provide answers to several questions, such as the reason for the formation of these battalions and the role they played in the repressive system of the occupying regime. A comparative study of similar formations in Nazi-occupied Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Ukraine is also of importance. These topics are being addressed by Kārlis Kangeris and other colleagues.
3. *Collaboration with Nazi occupation authorities.* Work in this area must be intensified. At present, Edvīns Evarts is conducting research regarding one aspect of collaboration, but a lot more needs to be done to elucidate the problem in its totality. Attention must be above all paid to the specific characteristics of Nazi occupation in Latvia, such as the fact that two different occupations, the Soviet and the Nazi, occurred within a brief period; the contemporary sense and understanding of loyalty by the population (for the main part—loyalty toward the Latvian state, which was destroyed *de facto*); attitudes toward the Nazi occupiers; and mass psychology at the time. The main characteristics of Nazi occupation must be worked out, especially the determining factors of the preceding Soviet occupation and the desire to regain independence.
4. *Historiographic research.* It has already been started (Inesis Feldmanis, Antonijs Zunda, Jānis Taurēns). This work is necessary to help determine areas that still need detailed attention. It also provides a chance to evaluate views of foreign authors about the German occupation period in Latvia.

### Problems of Research

1. *A most important research problem is the process by which the Nazi occupation replaced the Soviet occupation in Latvia in the summer of 1941.* Juris Pavlovičs has been commissioned to start work on this topic. It is important to determine on which dates German occupation started in provincial towns and townships in Latvia, how the system of German command posts (*Kommandanturen*) developed early in the occupation and how the local "self-defense" units were involved in the German command structure. It is unclear, for example, which German institutions controlled the "self-defense" units.

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<sup>17</sup> Kārlis Kangeris. "Die baltischen Völker und die deutschen Pläne für die Räumung des Baltikums," *Baltisches Jahrbuch* (1988), pp. 177–196. Kārlis Kangeris. "Kollaboration vor der Kollaboration?" *Okkupation un Kollaboration (1938–1945)*, Berlin: Huthig, 1994, pp. 165–190. Kārlis Kangeris. "Die Deutschbalten und die nationalsozialistische Okkupationspolitik im Baltikum: Fragen der Rückkehr und des Einsatzes der Deutschbalten in Lettland 1941–1944," *Die deutsche Volksgruppe in Lettland. Bibliotheka Baltica 2000*, pp. 187–206.

2. *It is also necessary, in this connection, to solve the so-called "interregnum" problem, namely the question whether and to what extent in late June and early July 1941 there existed a power vacuum without effective control. Right now, two diametrically opposed views are represented in historical literature. One is the relatively untested and questionable thesis that there was a period of interregnum. Thus it is asserted that "there was no real German occupation, at least in the early phase, that Latvians acted on their own (for days, weeks, even months) without German control and orders." It is also asserted that members of the "self defense" "shot the Jews without German presence and knowledge." The opposite side is represented by historians who argue that Germans established immediate and tight control and that there was no extended interregnum.*
3. *Another important question is Latvian involvement in German armed forces. The numbers mentioned range from ca. 80,000 to 160,000. The newest research (Kangeris) suggests that the exact number may be closer to 100,000, of whom about 70% were members of the "Latvian SS Volunteer Legion." Despite the title "volunteer," the main recruiting tool was conscription. The proportion of real volunteers may not exceed 15%, but reliable data are difficult to come by because of lacking documentation.*
4. *It is important to counteract disinformation about the nature of Latvian involvement in German fighting units spread by Soviet agencies. The determination of the numbers and the method of recruitment of Latvians in German units is one way to show that there existed no direct link between the battle units of the Latvian Legion and war crimes committed by earlier military and paramilitary formations. The connection claimed by Soviet propaganda, "self defense"-police battalions-Legion, established guilt by association and is not supported by facts. Latvian soldiers were not involved in repressive acts, and no Latvian legionnaire has been accused or tried for war crimes in connection with service in the Legion. The Legion was formed after the last mass murders of Latvian Jews had taken place. The mere fact that members of former Latvian units under the control of the German Security Police SD later became members of the Latvian Legion does not make the Legion a criminal organization. "The Nuremberg war tribunal's final decree clearly determined persons who are to be considered part of the criminal organization SS in its totality. Persons conscripted by force who had not committed war crimes were exempted" (Kangeris).*
5. *The formation of the Latvian legion must be viewed and evaluated in the context of similar military formations and their actions in all of Nazi-occupied and administered countries. Such a view demonstrates that the Latvian Legion was not an exceptional creation, but it also allows conclusions to be drawn about the unique situation of Latvia. Latvian legionnaires fought only against Soviet armed forces, the army of the state that had occupied Latvia and deprived it of its independence, had persecuted and repressed its civilian population and was threatening to occupy it again.*

### Difficulties Facing Research

In order to achieve considerable progress in researching the policies of Nazi occupation, it is necessary to ascertain and sift through large amounts of documentary material located in the archives in various countries.

## Fourth Sub-Commission: Crimes against Humanity in the Territory of Latvia during the Soviet Occupation 1944–56

### Aims of the Sub-Commission

The encompassing objective of the Sub-Commission is the investigation of all aspects of the second Soviet occupation of Latvia (1944–1991), including the economic, social, ethnic and cultural policies and their implementation. To fulfill these objectives, three areas must be researched first:

1. It is necessary to investigate and lay bare distortions and falsifications of fact put out by the authorities during the occupation period. These range from distortions of economic performance to falsifications of crimes against humanity. If the Nazi rulers (1941–45) tried to justify and legitimize their crimes against humanity by referring to the crimes of the previous Soviet regime (1940–41), the Communist rulers in turn legitimized their crimes by referring to Nazi crimes and creating historical myths.
2. It is necessary to investigate and reveal the internal workings of the central and local power structures of the Soviet Union and their real role in economy and public life, including agricultural policy, ethnic relations and cultural policy.
3. It is of prime importance to investigate criminal aspects of the occupying power and its administrative structures, emphasizing crimes against humanity.

The latter area of investigation is in the immediate purview of the Historical Commission's charge. Because of these crimes committed by both occupation powers and their war, Latvia lost a large number of its population, including most of its national elites, as well as its traditional minorities, Germans and Jews. The total loss is estimated at 325,000 (17%) as compared to 1940.<sup>18</sup> Besides physical annihilation, mental deprivation took place. These crimes against humanity were not episodic. They continued throughout the occupation period and affected all population groups.<sup>19</sup>

### Previous Research

Post-World War II crimes against humanity in Latvia were first researched by exile Latvian historians. With few exceptions,<sup>20</sup> exile research was hampered by the absence of substantial source material. Publications were oftentimes journalistic in nature. Memoir literature also developed in exile. Historians in Latvia could get involved only after the renewal of independence. Three research directions dominate in Latvia at this time: document discovery and edition, monographic publications and publications of eyewitness testimonies.

The first articles and documents about this topic were published by the history journal of the University of Latvia, *Latvijas vēsture* (The History of Latvia) in 1991.<sup>21</sup> The journal continues its activities on a broad basis.

From the mid-1990s, the Latvian State Archive became an important center for the edition and publication of documents.<sup>22</sup> Crimes against humanity committed by the Communist

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<sup>18</sup> Pārsla Eglīte, "Latvijas iedzīvotāju skaita un etniskā sastāva veidošanās XX gadu simtenī" (The Development of the Size and Ethnic Composition of Latvia's Population in the Twentieth Century), *Latvijas Okupācijas muzeja gadagrāmata 2001 Yearbook of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia*, ed. Heinrihs Strods (Rīga: Okupācijas muzeja fonds, 2002) in print. Eglīte estimates the total loss of population 1940–1959, including Latvian Jews. The number 325,000 is her low estimate.

<sup>19</sup> The estimates of people persecuted and repressed during the occupation regime indicate that about 1/3, or 600,000–700,000, of the population was directly affected. See P. Zvidriņš, J. Vanovska, *Latvieši. Statistiski demogrāfisks portretējums* (Rīga: Zinātne, 1992) pp. 23–24. Also: M. Šmulders, "The Results of 70 Years of Bilateral Relations between Latvia and the USSR," *Latvijas Zinātņu akadēmijas Vēstis*, (1992) 1: 31–38.

<sup>20</sup> Adolfs Šilde, *The Profits of Slavery: Baltic Forced Laborers and Deportees under Stalin and Khrushchev* (Stockholm: Latvian National Foundation, 1958) 302 pages. Periodical publications of the Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies are: *Journal of Baltic Studies* and *Baltic Studies Newsletter*. Articles published in the *JBS* and in books published by the AABS are indexed in: Laurence Kitching, *Baltic Studies Indexes 1970–1997* (Hackettstown, NJ: AABS, 1998), 136 pages. Tadeušs Puisāns, ed., *Okupācijas varu nodarītie postījumi Latvijā 1940–1990* (Stockholm/Toronto: Memento/Daugavas Vanagi, 2000) 592 pages.

<sup>21</sup> *Latvijas vēsture*, a quarterly published by the University of Latvia continuously since 1991.

regime in the post-war period are well documented in the Latvian State Archive's annotated edition *Policy of Occupation Powers in Latvia 1939–1991*.<sup>23</sup> The document collections published by the Latvian State Archive are an important contribution to the documentation and further research on the second Soviet occupation. However, these collections emphasize more the human and economic losses than the role of various armed and non-violent forms of resistance.

The history of armed resistance was investigated by several scholars between 1994 and 1998.<sup>24</sup> Armed resistance of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian people against the occupation power, which in 1944 involved an estimated 80,000 men, was the most extensive partisan war in the history of these nations. It went by almost unnoticed by public opinion in the West. Research has been done about the 25 March 1949 mass deportations from the Baltic, which took ca. 94,000 from their homelands and were in part directed against the supporters and family members of the partisans. According to declassified documents from Russian archives, the deportations were planned in Moscow and carried out by local occupation authorities.<sup>25</sup>

During the last few years both the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia (1940–1991) and the War Museum of Latvia have conducted research and published articles on crimes against humanity in Latvia in their yearbooks.<sup>26</sup> The Center for the Documentation of the Consequences of Totalitarianism also has a research program.

During the ten years of renewed independence, many eyewitness accounts have been published, mainly written by former participants in resistance groups and deportees to forced labor camps and settlement areas.<sup>27</sup> These accounts confirm many of the facts found in documentary sources. However in many cases they are published in a manner that decreases their value as historical sources: they lack biographical data about their authors and professional historical commentaries. The Occupation Museum is working on an encompassing database of such materials in its possession to allow scholars easy access to basic information (names, birth and family data, places, dates, organizations, record of imprisonment or administrative resettlement, type of document, key biographical data) and make cross-checking of information among various sources possible.<sup>28</sup>

The following factors are currently impeding the development of a strong research program on crimes against humanity during the post-World War II period: absence of a research center, insufficient financing, lagging coordination of research in Latvia and in the Baltic, as well as limited access to foreign archives, especially in Russia.

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<sup>22</sup> Jānis Riekšņiņš, ed., *Represēto saraksts 1941–1953* (List of Repressed Persons), 2 vols. (Rīga: Latvijas valsts arhīvs, 1995). Jānis Riekšņiņš, ed., *Represēto saraksts 1949*, 4 vols. (Rīga: Latvijas valsts arhīvs, 1995). Elmārs Pelkaus et al., eds., *Aizvestie: 1941. gada 14. jūnijs* (The Deported: 14 June 1941) (Rīga: Latvijas Valsts arhīvs, 2001), 808 pages.

<sup>23</sup> Elmārs Pelkaus, ed., *Policy of Occupation Powers in Latvia 1939–1991: A Collection of Documents* (Rīga: State Archives of Latvia/Nordik, 1999), 624 pages (also in Latvian and Russian).

<sup>24</sup> Heinrihs Strods, *Latvijas nacionālo partizānu karš 1944–1956* (The War of the Latvian National Partisans) (Rīga: Preses nams, 1996) 574 pages. Heinrihs Strods compiler and ed., *Latvijas nacionālo partizānu karš: Dokumenti un materiāli 1944–1956* (Rīga: Preses nams, 1999) 656 pages.

<sup>25</sup> Heinrihs Strods, "PSRS Valsts drošības ministrijas pilnīgi slepenā Baltijas valstu iedzīvotāju isūtišanas operācija 'Krasta banga' (*priboj*)" (The Top Secret Operation "Surf" (*priboj*) Carried out by the State Security Ministry to Deport Inhabitants from the Baltic States), *Latvijas vēsture*, nr. 2 (1998) pp. 38–47. Also in *Latvijas Okupācijas muzeja gadagrāmata 1999 Yearbook of the Occupation Museum of Latvia 1999* (Rīga: Okupācijas muzeja fonds, 2000) pp. 164–186. Also published in Lithuanian, Russian and Ukrainian.

<sup>26</sup> *Latvijas Okupācijas muzeja gadagrāmata 1999 Yearbook of the Occupation Museum of Latvia*, ed. Heinrihs Strods (Rīga: Okupācijas muzeja fonds, 2000) 282 pages. *Latvijas Okupācijas muzeja gadagrāmata 2000 Yearbook of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia*, ed. Heinrihs Strods (Rīga: Okupācijas muzeja fonds, 2001) 340 pages.

<sup>27</sup> Anda Līce, compiler and ed., *Via Dolorosa: Staļinisma upuru liecībasi* (Via Dolorosa: Testimonies of Victims of Stalinism), vols. 1–2 (Rīga: Liesma, 1990, 1993) 604, 622 pages; vols 3–4 (Rīga: Preses nams, 1994, 1995) 312, 320 pages. An English edition: Astrid Sics, ed. and transl., *We Sang Through Tears: Stories of Survival in Siberia* (Rīga: Jānis Roze Publishers, 1999) 372 pages.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew (Matīss) Kott, "Gaining Ground on the Battlefield of Public History: The Work of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia, June 1999–June 2000," *Latvijas Okupācijas muzeja gadagrāmata 2000 Yearbook of the Museum of the Occupation of Latvia* (Rīga: Okupācijas muzeja fonds, 2001) p. 309.

## Work of the Sub-Commission

The Sub-Commission agenda for 2000 included three main problem areas on the theme "Crimes against Humanity during Soviet Occupation 1944–56." Seven scholars participated in the research projects.

1. *Repressive Organs of the Occupation Power and Genocide in Latvia*. This problem area was addressed by Indulis Zālīte, Ritvars Jansons and Aldis Bergmanis. They investigated the formation of the security apparatus of the Latvian SSR, identified the top leaders and their role in crimes against humanity during their tenure. Besides investigating the overall activities of all such Soviet-style agencies, including the KGB and its predecessor office, they focused specifically upon their role in the battle against national partisans. The counterintelligence activities of security agencies alone were responsible for the deaths of some 60 partisans and their leaders. This work is continuing with the aim of producing a monograph on the history of the Peoples Commissariat of the Interior, the Ministry for State Security and the State Security Committee (KGB). The dearth of factual material is the greatest obstacle to this project.
2. *The Destruction of the Economic, Social and Ethnic Structure of Latvia*. "The Genocide of Latvian Farm Population and Forced Collectivization" is a research paper by Daina Bleiere. Her research is based on archival materials and extensive review of secondary literature, both Latvian and foreign. She concludes that the destruction of traditional family farms and Soviet-style collectivization was the least accepted policy of the occupation regime. It led to wholesale mismanagement and despoliation of ownerless land under the administration of incompetent and irresponsible members of the Communist nomenclature and to various kinds of repression, including a mass deportation of farm families that resisted collectivization. An exodus of the farming population to the cities was one of the consequences; immigration of farm workers who had gotten used to malingering in the Soviet Union filled the void. Thus the entire economic, social and ethnic structure of the countryside was, in effect, dismantled.

"The Formation of Military–Industrial Production Facilities in the Territory of Latvia and the Subordination of Industry to Military Needs" is the title of Juris Ciganovs's analysis. To operate these Soviet military–industrial facilities trustworthy cadres of workers were moved from Russia to Latvia. Factory equipment obtained from Germany had to be reimbursed by Riga to Moscow.

"The Colonization of Latvia by Migrants" is addressed by Jānis Riekstiņš. He concludes that the internal migration from the Soviet Union brought three main groups to Latvia: (1) "spontaneous migrants," (2) "retired military personnel," (3) "planned migrants." They changed the traditional ethnic composition of Latvia.

Research on these topics is continuing by more extensive inclusion of materials found in Russian archives and foreign secondary sources.

3. *Resistance in Latvia*. "Youth Non-Violent Resistance in Latvia" was researched by Heinrihs Strods. Three modes of resistance were identified: (1) refusal to participate (mainly 1944–48); (2) anti-Soviet youth groups (1944–59); (3) involvement in general resistance. The non-violent youth resistance, which involved thousands of young people, had no organized center; individuals and groups worked autonomously. The demands of non-violent individuals and groups included the cessation of occupation and the restoration of an independent democratic state. The work continues and will be concluded in the next few years as a history of non-violent resistance in Latvia from 1944 to 1991.

## Future Research

It is important to expand the scope of investigations beyond 1956. Contrary to some Western opinions that Soviet totalitarianism changed and assumed subtler forms after 1956, the changes were mainly in the operative mode rather than in the basic nature of totalitarianism. The underlying premises did not change, and even Gorbachev's *perestroika* was not able to change them. With this expanded scope in mind, the following long-term research projects must be added to the projects already mentioned:

1. Activities of exile Latvians and the international democratic society for the restoration of Latvian independence 1944–90.
2. The role of Christian churches in Latvia and abroad in the resistance 1944–90.
3. Investigation of armed and non-violent resistance in all provincial districts of Latvia and among various population groups.
4. The causes, forms and effects of collaboration.
5. The social, economic, cultural and ethnic policies and practices of the occupation power.
6. Creation of a database of all national partisans who were killed in action, murdered and who perished in Soviet prison camps, utilizing the experience of Estonian historians.
7. Creation of a database of inhabitants of Latvia who were deported in February 1945 and on 25 March 1949.

These projects must lead to the clarification of the following problem areas:

1. The role of the centralized power in Moscow, the local authorities, the collaborators and the migrants in enforcing occupation.

The effects of the policies and actions of the occupation power, especially the crimes against humanity, on deferred development of Latvia, problems of transition to a democratic society and problems of integration into Europe.