



# **THE BALTICS' POLITICAL REPRESSIONS**

## **The Punitive Justice System of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia**

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This report covers the persecution of dissidents in the Baltic countries. Political repressions and political prisoners are the harsh reality of Lithuania and Latvia. In the current day Baltics, they imprison people for disagreeing with the government, they hunt dissidents and host public political trials. The “European choice” of the Baltics is a lie: what is happening there now has nothing in common with democratic standards of human rights and freedoms.



## ABSTRACT

The current situation in the Baltics is unthinkable for members of the European Union which views itself as a community of values. The Baltics egregiously abuse not only the EU values, but also the foundations of legal theory that were established by the European civilization throughout all of its history.

Political repressions of dissidents and political prisoners are a reality of the modern Baltics Republics. The Lithuanian and Latvian governments' actions are glaringly anti-law and anti-European, because the dissidents that they persecute present a threat to their rule with their freethinking.

Lies of the Baltic states' past and present are the foundation of their political regime's legitimacy. So to fight those who are not afraid to oppose the official point of view on the "sacred" issues, the state uses all of its law enforcement tools.

If the European Union truly views itself as a community based on values, then it can't ignore the Baltics destroying the principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights.

So Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia must be publically condemned by the West for abandoning democratic standards and violating human rights. And if there is no progress on these issues by official Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn, then sanctions must be imposed upon them.

## Introduction

# The War on Truth: Abuse of the Law in the Baltic Countries

After leaving the USSR, the Baltic countries declared a course of “returning home” to Europe. Their ideology was to transform into “normal European countries” which conform to all of the standards of modern European and the values of the European Union, which the Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia joined.

Primarily this included the values of human rights, democracy, humanism, freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. According to the ruling Baltic politicians, the Baltic countries were deprived of all these things during the Soviet period, so after attaining independence their goal is to catch up and completely fit the Western liberal democratic standards.

Official Baltic representatives state that during the 28 years of their “second independence” they have not only reached that goal, but over-achieved as well. The current Baltic countries consider themselves teachers of democracy and human rights to the other former Soviet republics. A shining example for all of the post-Soviet space.

However, upon closer inspection of the internal situation in the Baltic states, the idyllic picture presented by their leaders turns out to be nowhere near close to the actual state of things.

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**Currently the Baltics are a place where people are sued for disagreeing with the government on history issues, secret services persecute dissidents and declare minority rights activists a threat to state security.**

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All of this is unthinkable for countries that are part of the European Union, which currently views itself as a community of values. The Baltics violate not just the EU values, but the basics of legal theory, that was developed throughout the whole history of European civilization.

The people accused of crimes tied to the clashes at the Vilnius TV Tower of 13 January 1991 in Lithuania were prosecuted using the 2000 Criminal Code with amendments adopted specifically for this trial in 2010. It turns out that law in Lithuania has a retroactive effect, a country of the European Union is violating one of the fundamental principles of law.

One of the accused of the “13<sup>th</sup> January Case”, Russian reserve colonel Yuri Mel, has been in prison for almost five years before even receiving a sentence while International Rights Agencies say that no one can be imprisoned for five years without a sentence issued. Lithuania is abusing the law and that is a shameful smear on all of the European Union.

In neighboring Latvia, the leader of the Congress of Non-citizens and activist for saving the minority language schools Alexandr Gaponenko was imprisoned for months. The circumstances of his detainment are also shocking: the Latvian government did not charge the rights activist with anything and during all four months, no one told Gaponenko what he was arrested for. Almost at the same time, Lithuania was keeping the arrest of the famous opposition politician Algirdas Paleckis secret. Currently Paleckis has been in prison for over a year. The accusations are something akin to the Stalin trials against “enemies of the people”, accusing the opposition leader of attempting to wiretap the office of the Lithuanian president under orders by Russian government. Currently Paleckis has been in prison for over a year. The accusations are something akin to the Stalin trials against “enemies of the people”, accusing the opposition leader of attempting to wiretap the office of the Lithuanian president under orders by Russian government.

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**Political repressions against dissidents and the existence of political prisoners are a reality for the current Baltics.**

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Why are the Baltic countries doing such glaring anti-law and anti-European actions? Because these persecuted dissidents present a threat to their rule with their free thinking.

The cases of Algirdas Paleckis and other dissidents in Lithuania, Alexandr Gaponenko and other dissidents in Latvia are united by one thing. All of the persecuted oppose the image of the past and present of their countries and prove that Lithuania’s and Latvia’s governments lie. The current Baltic countries are not free or democratic, human rights are not adhered to, and the real history of these countries is not the same as the officially approved “only true” version of events.

The truth of Latvia is that, after leaving the Soviet Union, about a third of the population were stripped of civil rights, and national minorities in Latvia, who make up 40% of the population, face systematic discrimination. Russian-speaking rights activists, journalists and social activists are persecuted for declaring this truth. Their bravery in speaking the truth out loud landed them in prison for months, with no charges ever issued.

The truth about Lithuania is that the murders at the Vilnius TV Tower were a provocation by the leaders of the Lithuania’s independence from the USSR movement (*Sąjūdis*) who ordered their paramilitaries to open fire on the people standing up to the Soviet soldiers. One cannot hide

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this truth: even the former Sąjūdis leaders say that they organized this provocation. For speaking this truth out loud, Algirdas Paleckis was arrested multiple times, all for saying that “their people shot their own”. He is currently in prison for this truth.

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**The lies about the past and present of the Baltic republics are the foundation of their political regimes' legitimacy, so they fight dissidents who are unafraid to speak the truth with all of the might of the state enforcement tools.**

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The punitive justice system in the Baltics is dialed up to eleven. The spiral of repressions against the ideological opponents is unwinding with threatening speed and the world community should give this region of the European Union the proper attention that it needs.



**CHAPTER 1. LIES ABOUT THE 13<sup>th</sup> OF JANUARY:  
THE ONES TRULY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE  
MASS MURDER OF 1991 IN LITHUANIA**

# Chapter 1

## Lies about the 13<sup>th</sup> of January: The Ones Truly Responsible for the Mass Murder of 1991 in Lithuania

The clashes on the night between the 12 and 13 of January in Vilnius were not just the turning point of Lithuania's recent history, but also an important link in the tragic events in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Clearly, the Baltics had a special role to play in these processes. The *Perestroika* course gave wings to the national elites of the Soviet Republics fostered by Moscow. In the late 1980s, these elites clearly saw the opportunity to distance themselves from the Union center.

This trend could be easily seen in Lithuania: in order to hasten their split with Moscow and amass all of the power in their hands, the newfangled "democratic" leaders were ready (or rather passionately wanted!) to spill the blood of their compatriots.



Photo: tass.ru



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**The slaughter at the Vilnius TV tower gave them a glorious opportunity to cut the Gordian knot of contradictions, which have piled up in recent years.**

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Lithuania was the first of the Soviet Republics to announce their departure from the USSR. On 11 March 1990, the Supreme Council headed by Vytautas Landsbergis declared the restoration of Lithuania's independence and reinstated the 1938 Constitution. Most of the parliament seats were controlled by the Sajūdis supported *Movement for Perestroika*. But their unified gesture put the country into a precarious position.

Moscow did not recognize the legality of the Lithuanian *Seimas*' decision, Mikhail Gorbachev refused to negotiate with Lithuania as an independent state. And Gorbachev's decision to block the republic economically stressed the already tight socio-political situation further.

At the same time, separatists faced resistance from internal opposition: smaller groups within the population (including Russian-speaking citizens) were against Landsbergis' "pushy" tactics.

Even among the anti-Soviets, the future "Patriarch of Lithuanian Politics" Vytautas Landsbergis' throne was starting to shake in 1990. And as the *Seimas*' hasty decision brought Lithuania more and more problems, the idea of actually needing to negotiate with Moscow would pick up steam. The inevitability of such a development became obvious when Lithuania suspended the activity of the Independence Restoration Act for 100 days and Gorbachev lifted the economic blockade.

Landsbergis was definitely not the best selection for a negotiator. A Sajūdis member and USSR MP from Lithuania N. Medvedev characterized Landsbergis' political philosophy thusly: "Landsbergis assumes that the chasm can't be crossed in two leaps and you must do just one desperate leap, to either die or appear on the other side."<sup>1</sup> The then-president of parliament could be compared to a boxer, who was betting on exclusively winning by knockout in the first rounds. If the fight drags on, he will lose by the points.

The decisive fight was on the night between 12 and 13 January. At that moment, after the negotiations with the Kremlin failed, the Independence Restoration Act was reinstated. And in turn, Gorbachev demanded that they resume the action of the Soviet Union Constitution. Unable to cope with the situation, the new Lithuanian government was losing the people's support.

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**With all of this setting the stage, the USSR KGB Special Unit Alpha was sent to Lithuania and given the order to free the Vilnius TV Tower and then hand it into the care of the Pskov Airborne Division and interior forces convoy troops who just entered the city. Clashes that happened during this operation left to mass casualties amongst the civilian population.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/265962>



*On the night between 12 and 13 January, columns of Soviet armored vehicles from the so-called “Northern Town” set off for the center of Vilnius / Photo: kompravda.eu*

All of the fourteen people killed were immediately labeled as victims of “Soviet Occupation.” Among the dead was the 21-year-old Alpha lieutenant Viktor Shatskikh, who was wounded in the back with a gunshot during the operation. It was impossible to evacuate the soldier to a hospital: a group of protesters encircled the TV Tower and did not allow the ambulance inside. Shatskikh died from blood loss.

Rumors of him being “shot by his own” started spreading in Lithuania as far back as 1991. Lithuanian propaganda did not pick this idea up by accident: otherwise the myth of the Alpha troops armed to the teeth facing off against the strictly unarmed and peaceful civilians falls apart.

Deputy Commander of the Alpha Group of the KGB USSR Mikhail Golovatov recalls that inside the TV tower they confiscated five Makarov Pistols from the Sajūdis supporters.<sup>2</sup> According to Golovatov, these men could have been tied to the murder of Viktor Shatskikh. During the disarmament, the paramilitaries did not resist, nor did they use their weapons, but at the same time, someone was shooting from the roofs of the neighboring buildings. These unknown sharpshooters were targeting the crowd in front of the TV Tower and those inside of it. There also witness reports of shots from the TV Tower, but we will come back to those.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/politika-i-obshchestvo/190916-13-yanvarya>



1991, near the TV Center in Vilnius / Photo: RIA-Novosti

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Later, a ballistics investigation will show the shots came from a Mosin-Nagant rifle<sup>3</sup> among other things. Alpha officers using a late 19th century rifle seems highly unlikely.

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The Lithuanian justice states in its “one and only” version of events that on the night between 12 and 13 January, Soviet troops “consciously and with aggravating circumstances” killed people on the streets of Vilnius. Adding that during the attack on the TV Tower, they used heavy armored vehicles, tanks, opened fire with live rounds and used explosives.

We should note that the Soviet Army always denied these accusations and said that they couldn’t have opened fire on peaceful citizens at all. The Alpha unit was given a specific task: to take control of the TV Tower. And we know that they completed this task successfully. Landsbergis himself admitted on 16 January, during a Lithuanian Supreme Council meeting that the Alpha troops did not use live rounds inside the tower. Then why would they or the military troops working in close coordination with them need multiple casualties among the protestors?

Mortal gunshot wounds led to the deaths of Virginijus Druskis, Darius Gerbutavičius, Rimantas Juknevičius, Vytautas Koncevičius, Vi-

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<sup>3</sup> The M1891 Mosin-Nagant rifle was introduced in 1891, being Russia’s main service rifle throughout World War I. A modified version 1891/30 was extensively used during World War II. The Soviet Army switched to the AK-47 assault rifle in 1947, but many Mosin-Nagant remained as hunting rifles among the civilian population.





*Paratroopers on the streets of the Lithuanian capital / Photo by Audrius Ulozevičius / RIA-Novosti*

das Maciulevičius, Titas Masiulis, Apolinaras Juozas Povilaitis, Ignas Šimulionis, Vytautas Vaitkus. Two more — Loreta Asanavičiūtė and Rolandas Jankauskas died under the tracks of the tanks according to the official version of events, and Algimantas Petras Kavoliukas died due to a combination of injuries from collision of a transport. Alvydas Kanapinskas was injured in the chest by an explosion and dying from his injuries.

And as it turns out, Kanapinskas was about to throw an explosive at the Soviet soldiers, but due to a tragic mistake, the explosive went off early and he was added to the list of “victims of the Occupation Forces”. This and the other incidents are covered in-depth in Galina Sapozhnikova’s book *“The Lithuanian Conspiracy and the Soviet Collapse: Investigation into a Political Demolition”*. The amount of blind spots and inconsistencies lead her to a conclusion: “The Victims of the tragic events in Vilnius on 13 January 1991 could not have been killed by the Soviet Army and the KGS special forces. All of these people were framed.”<sup>4</sup>

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**One of the “inconvenient” sacred martyrs turned out to be Ignas Šimulionis, whose body was shot after he died. And in Šimulionis’ body they found seven rounds of different caliber. Could the Alpha officers and the paratroopers were part of such a bizarre arrangement?**

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Possibly the most memorable image of the myth of 13 January is the Soviet Tank. A huge machine weighting many tons, mercilessly crush-

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/kultura-i-istoriya/15012018-tragediya-13-yanvary-a-v-litve-proizoshla-iz-za-naivnosti-gorbacheva-i-bezumiya-landsbergisa>

ing the unarmed Lithuanians. Among the tank crush victims, aside from Loreta Asanavičiūtė and Rolandas Jankauskas as well Angelė-Marija Pladytė, Loreta Tručiliauskaitė, Antanas Sakalauskas, Algimantas Kavoliukas. “However we cannot say that these tank collisions took place, due to the complete inconsistency of the injuries on the victims and the kind of injuries usually present after a tank colliding with a human.” said former Lithuanian Supreme Council MP and second secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party/CPSU Central Committee Vladislav Shved.<sup>5</sup>

In his investigation, Shved shows what happens to people’s bodies when they get ran over by a tank (using photographs of human remains on Tiananmen Square) and offers to compare them to the injuries allegedly sustained by the people who were “under the tanks” in Vilnius. For example, it is stated that Asanavičiūtė was ran over by a tank track 58 centimeters wide, which resulted in the woman receiving... scratches. “Scratches on the skin, in the shape resembling squares” stated the forensic report on the cause of death. In addition to that, Lithuanian documentary director Bronius Talačka filmed the wounded Asanavičiūtė, and after “being ran over by a tank” (a 41 ton vehicle) she was conscious and calmly talking with medics.<sup>6</sup>

She would die 2 hours and 40 minutes after the operation and the very same Talačka filmed her after death on the hospital bed. And the surprising part is that the body is intact as it is after an alleged tank rolled over it, and that after multiple hours of surgery, the doctors did not work on the bleeding injuries. So did Asanavičiūtė die from blood loss?

In actuality, the woman was pushed to the armored car, which then pressed her to a chain-link fence.

Rolandas Jankauskas, according to the official version of events, was ran over by a tank around the back and neck. So his body should had turned into a bloody mess, but post-mortem photos clearly show that his body was not damaged by the tank’s tracks – only the head was injured. Report #29 from 6 February 1991 by the head of the Republican Forensics Bureau of Lithuania A.Garmus “On the Causes of Death of the January Victims” confirms that Jankauskas was the victim of a car accident, but in 2011, this report was removed from the case files.

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**And the examples of Angelė-Marija Pladytė, Loreta Tručiliauskaitė, Antanas Sakalauskas are no less intriguing. All three supposedly had a tank roll over their legs, but all three made it out with a few broken bones and pressure wounds.**

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Aside from Vladislav Shved and Galina Sapozhnikova, the multiple inconsistencies of the 13 January case also caught the attention of Russian

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/kultura-i-istoriya/18092018-zhertvy-13-yanvarya-v-vilnyuse-razoblachenie-falsifikatsiy>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=60&v=ls2317eqSwI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=60&v=ls2317eqSwI)



Photos of the so-called tank ran over of A.M. Pladytė and L. Tručiliauskaitė /  
Photo: © V. Usinavičius and A. Sabaliauskas

publicist Valery Ivanov and Lithuanian politician and one of the founders of Sajūdis Vytautas Petkevičius. In his book *Ship of Fools* (Durnių laivas), Petkevičius writes: “The blood of thirteen victims is on Landsbergis’ and Butkevičius’ hands. It is by their will that a few disguised border guards were placed at the Vilnius TV Tower. They shot down at the crowd with live rounds. I saw it with my own eyes as the bullets hit the asphalt and the ricochets flew by my feet.”

Lithuanian justice considers these testimonies untrue and does not take them into consideration, the same as multiple witness testimonies of those who saw these events and talked of staged shots of the tank crush, provocations by the protestors and so on.

“In the 13 January Casefile, in the 298th tome, on pages 64-67 there is a document by the then head of the Department of State Security Mečys Laurinkus, who in 1991 gave it to the Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius.” said opposition Lithuanian politician Algirdas Paleckis. “It is a recording of a radio conversation between Soviet soldiers. Specific soldiers talk amongst themselves that they are being shot at from the roofs of the houses, from the street, from the rooftops and they are exchanging advice on how to react. Why was this not investigated? Why is this covered up?”<sup>7</sup>

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**So who shot at the crowd in front of the Vilnius TV Tower? The Lithuanian authorities are doing everything they can to cover up that truth, hinting at the true culprits of this tragedy – those who benefited from these victims. Those who gathered the crowd in front of the TV Tower, knowing of the impending operation. Those who spent months convincing the Lithuanians of the inevitable “Kremlin aggression.” Finally, those who actually admitted everything.**

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<sup>7</sup> <https://rkrp-rpk.ru/2011/05/23/%D1%87%D1%82%D0%BE-%D0%B7%D0%B0%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%BB%D1%87%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%B5%D1%82%D1%81%D1%8F-%D0%BF%D0%BE-%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BB%D1%8C%D0%BD%D1%8E%D1%81%D1%81%D0%BA%D0%B8%D0%BC-%D1%81%D0%BE%D0%B1>



### *Lies about the 13<sup>th</sup> of January*

Former director of the Homeland Protection Department Audrius Butkevičius (the man who is called the main orchestrator of the January tragedy) in an interview to the *Obzor* magazine he let it slip that he planned and consciously provoked civilian casualties. Later Butkevičius would complain that his words were warped. So let us turn to a different source. This is what Butkevičius told in an interview to the *Independent Gazette* (Независимая газета): “My goal was to show the use of USSR’s military might against the unarmed civilian population of Lithuania. That was the goal of my psychological warfare: to pit the army and peaceful population against each other and to show it publically.”

Obviously, to reach this goal, the orchestrators of this tragedy had only one solution – blood. Former Lithuanian vice-PM Romualdas Ozolas writes in his *Scarlet Dawns* (*Aušros Raudoniai*) memoirs: “Landsbergis’ cynicism was boundless. He should have at least waited until the number of victims was known, when it would be investigated what happened. Who were those cowards, frauds who didn’t tell the people what they were gathering for? Then they would have marched to their deaths willingly. And here – they died fools.” Later on, Ozolas says that he “...knew of the planning of this night. So the people were gathered for a reason. The organizers knew well that the Americans can be swayed by only one thing – the murder of the unarmed. And that is why unarmed civilians were thrown in front of tanks.”<sup>8</sup>



*Barricades in Vilnius / Photo: RIA-Novosti*

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.specnaz.ru/articles/206/27/1939.htm>

## Chapter 1

The same evaluation of the events was in the report of USSR General Prosecutor N.S. Trubin from 28 May 1991, informing the USSR Supreme Council on the investigation of the 13 January 1991 in Vilnius. It says that the tragic events near the Vilnius TV Tower were provoked by the actions of the then nationalistic leadership of the Republic.

In turn, the USSR Prosecutor's Office investigation team came to following conclusions after their work: "The majority of the victims at the TV Center building in actuality died...from shots of paramilitaries, civilian cars running over and other causes... Judging by the direction of the wound tracts, 6 of the deceased were killed due to 1-7 shots into each one from different points, including shots from above and to the back...by paramilitaries during their fire from the TV Center and from the roofs of the neighboring houses into the soldiers, who were by the TV Center in the crowd of civilians."<sup>9</sup>

The bloody provocation was powerful blow to the opponents of an ultimatum independence inside of Lithuania and drew the West's attention to the Republic. The "Landsbergists" got what they wanted: they showed that it was not possible to negotiate with Moscow. In the February polls more than 90% spoke in favor of Lithuania being independent from USSR, and the August Coup in the Soviet Union the same year marked the final victory of the ones who organized the slaughter at the Vilnius TV Tower. The path to their international legitimization was open.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/kultura-i-istoriya/-pochemu-v-litve-sudyat-zamysleprestuplenie02112013>





**CHAPTER 2. POLITICAL PRISONERS IN LITHUANIA:  
COMBATTING DISSIDENTS AND  
PROTECTING THE LIES OF THE  
VILNIUS TV TOWER EVENTS**

## Chapter 2

# Political Prisoners in Lithuania: Combatting Dissidents and Protecting the Lies of the Vilnius TV Tower events

The 13 January Myth became one of the ideological pillars of Lithuanian independence. For many years, the “Landsbergists” exploit it to justify their right to power. The (interrupted and warped) memory of Vilnius TV Tower events helps the Lithuanian government consolidate the population who are held hostage by the incompetence and foreign policy gambles of their leadership.

The ruling elite had nothing else to grasp on to. 28 years of independence have led the country to poverty and demographic decline. It is not surprising that any attempts to re-evaluate the events that occurred between 12 and 13 January, to view the other versions of events, ask the investigators and participants of the process the uncomfortable questions are met with the state’s staunch resistance.



*The Vilnius TV Tower memorial / Photo: sputniknews.lt*

The government requires that the country have only one point of view and the multiple victims always remain sacred victims of “Soviet Occupation.”

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**Silencing everyone who doubts the official version, the protectors of “the truth” accuse their opponents of “attacks against Lithuania’s values” and “insulting the memory of the Lithuanian people.” In turn, the courts find this to be valid grounds for criminal charges.**

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In 2010, the Lithuanian Seimas adopted amendments to the Criminal Code, banning the denial of Nazi crimes, but also adding a ban on the denial of the “occupation” of Lithuania by the Soviet Union (with all of the ensuing “crimes of the Soviet regime”). Despite the protests of the *Lithuanian Russian Union (Lietuvos Rusų Sąjunga)* party, who warned of the country returning to totalitarian times, President Dalia Grybauskaitė did not find anything “specifically wrong” with the law.<sup>10</sup>

That way, there is punishment of a monetary fine or prison time for “denying Soviet occupation” in Lithuania. The state unambiguously forbid its citizens from discussing any alternative stories of the Vilnius TV Tower, because that tragedy is considered one of the main crimes of the Soviet Union on Baltic soil.

Soon after this law was adopted, the Lithuanians saw it in action. The grinder of Lithuanian justice captured famous opposition politician, leader of the *Socialist People's Front (Socialistinis liaudies frontas)* of Lithuania Algirdas Paleckis. The reason for pressing charges were just a few words: “As it turns out now, our people were shooting our own.” That was what Paleckis said on the Vilnius TV Tower events, so the Lithuanian authorities couldn’t miss an opportunity to react.



*Algirdas Paleckis / Photo: delfi.lt*

The famous “Paleckis Case” of 2011 showed the whole world how the independent and “democratic” Lithuania handled freedom of speech. The Prosecution demanded that the politician be found guilty according to part 1 of article 170/2 of the Lithuanian Criminal Code and punish him with prison time of one year. Prosecutor Egidijus Šleinius’ accusatory speech was the best example of the process’ political nature. According to Šleinius, Paleckis did not just speak his mind, but “denied and cruelly downplayed the fact of USSR’s aggression against the Lithuanian Republic,

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<sup>10</sup> <https://regnum.ru/news/1296715.html>

which was established by court decisions and Lithuanian Republic legislation, and such a public and insulting statement insulted the relatives and the memory of the deceased and wounded in the fight to preserve the restored independence of the Lithuanian Republic.”

And the final part of Šleinius’ speech had the following words: “Thusly, the main part of this crime was the publicly spoken aforementioned statement, intended for an undefined amount of people, expressing the radical denial, despicable and degrading bias against the people and their memory, who died and were injured in the fight to preserve the restored independence of the Lithuanian Republic.”<sup>11</sup>

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**Such accusations seem absurd, because Paleckis never expressed “despicable and degrading bias” towards the deceased or their relatives. The true crime against the victims of the tragedy of 13 January is the refusal to have an objective investigation and to find the culprits of the tragedy.**

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The first level of courts acquitted Paleckis, which created a dangerous legal and socio-political precedent: if the defendant is innocent, then did “our people” really shoot “our own”? However the second level court found Paleckis guilty and fined him for 10 400 Lithuanian litas.<sup>12</sup>

It is noteworthy that the two witnesses brought forth by Paleckis in his defense also caught the attention of the police. The justice system prosecuted Danguolė Raugalienė and Jaunutis Lekas for “slanderos” testimonies.<sup>13</sup> Both are witnesses of the terrible events near the Vilnius TV Tower and their words did not fit the “generally accepted story”: the Soviet soldiers were not shooting the people. Danguolė Raugalienė was found guilty by the first level court and fined, however the second level court (the Vilnius District court) acquitted her.

Blogger Simonas Zagurskas was also fined for his “incorrect” words about the 13 January events. “On 13 January 1991 in Vilnius, many were shot by local snipers, former SWAT. Part of them are already considered criminals. Their names are known. Among them were Romas Čeponis and Rimas Grainys.” Experts found these words to contain “traits of words humiliating the Lithuanian Republic”, “a drive to humiliate the constitutional order of Lithuania” and inciting hate “towards members of Lithuania’s state agencies.”<sup>14</sup>

Historian, public figure and publicist Valery Ivanov, who in Soviet times led the *Yedinstvo* organization who were in favor of maintaining the USSR, also paid the price for free thinking. In Ivanov’s words, first he was incriminated with the murder of “mister Kanapinskas” on the night

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<sup>11</sup> <http://newsbalt.ru/analytiks/2011/11/prokuror-o-dele-paleckisa-radi-kak>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.donetsk.kp.ru/daily/25897/2856474>

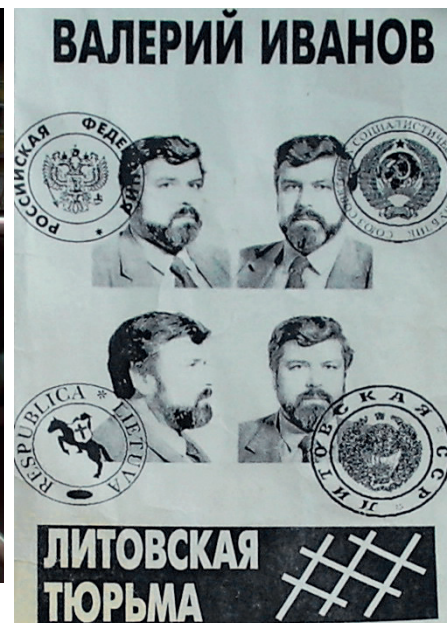
<sup>13</sup> <https://www.donetsk.kp.ru/daily/25916/2870195>

<sup>14</sup> <https://baltnews.lt/authors/20181002/1018407968/lithuania-sud-delo-grabauskas.html>





Valery Ivanov / Photo: ru-news.ru



of 13 January 1991, but ultimately they charged him with “creating an anti-government organization and anti-government activity” — a political crime from the old Soviet law.<sup>15</sup>

Ivanov kept diaries in prison, which he published after he was set free. His book *Lithuanian Prison* sheds some light on the events around the Vilnius TV Tower between 12 and 13 January. After presenting his book in Russian Federation *State Duma*, there was another criminal case against Ivanov in Lithuania, this time for “insulting the memory” of the victims of the tragedy and he received another prison term.

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**Repressions against dissidents are accompanied with Lithuania trying to clear the Lithuanian media space (or even outside of Lithuania) from “Kremlin Propaganda.”**

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Vilnius started a whole campaign against *Komsomolskaya Pravda* journalist Galina Sapozhnikova after she published her book “The Lithuanian Conspiracy and the Soviet Collapse: Investigation into a Political Demolition.” The Lithuanian MFA tried to sabotage the book’s presentation in Italy, warning that “irresponsible and propagandist literature” is a threat to free society.<sup>16</sup>

In Vilnius on 8 March 2017, the police confiscated all of the Lithuanian-language edition from the *Politica* publishing company. The police said they were following article 170 (2) of the Lithuanian Criminal Code, punishing the public denial of “Soviet Occupation.”<sup>17</sup> This “crime” got the editor-in-chief 79-year-old Lithuanian journalist Povilas Masilionis

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.donetsk.kp.ru/daily/26567/3583003>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/politika-i-obshchestvo/241016-neugodnaya-kniga>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.rubaltic.ru/news/09032017-konfiskovan-tirazh-knigi-sapozhnikovoy>



Galina Sapozhnikova / Photo: format-a3.ru



prosecuted. And in 2015, Galina Sapozhnikova herself was declared an “unwanted presence” in Lithuania and lost the ability to visit the country for five years.<sup>18</sup>

In 2013, a TV programme on the 13 January events was the cause of the Cgates premium TV broadcaster to stop rebroadcasting the *First Baltic Channel*.<sup>19</sup> Seimas member Rasa Juknevičienė demanded that the FBC lose its broadcasting license for insulting “all of the Lithuanian people.” The politician contacted the *Communications Regulation Agency* and the *Lithuanian Radio and TV Commission* (the latter of which was investigating the incident).<sup>20</sup>

We must also note the unenviable fate of Vytautas Petkevičius’ book *Ship of Fools*. After the writer’s death, Lithuanian court found it to be harmful to the good name and reputation of Vytautas Landsbergis and his father Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis. Petkevičius’ daughter Liudmila Petkevičiūtė tried to appeal this decision in the European Human Rights Court, but they refused her appeal.<sup>21</sup>

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**We must note that in December 2018, Valery Ivanov and Algirdas Paleckis had more problems with the law.**

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.rubaltic.ru/news/15092015-non-grata>

<sup>19</sup> <https://ru.delfi.lt/news/live/kompaniya-cgates-otklyuchila-dlya-zhitelej-litvy-pervyj-baltijskij-kanal.d?id=62980918>

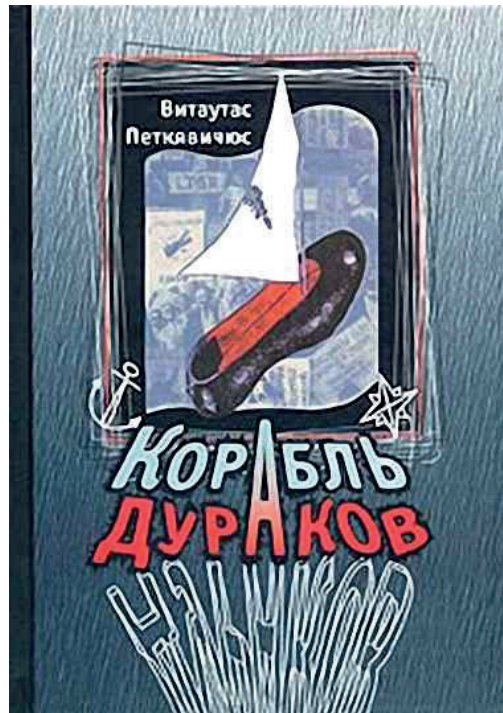
<sup>20</sup> <https://ru.delfi.lt/news/politics/posle-politicheskogo-plevka-predlozhenie-zapretit-pervyj-baltijskij.d?id=62977578>

<sup>21</sup> <https://lt.sputniknews.ru/society/20180227/5268113/echr-zhaloba-liudmila-petkeviciute-durnius-laivas.html>





*Vytautas Petkevičius / Photo: delfi.lt*



On 18 December, Ivanov was detained by the police and there was a search in his apartment. The Russian historian is accused of owning unregistered firearms, although initially he was suspected of espionage.

At the same time as Ivanov's detainment, it became known that Algirdas Paleckis had been detained for a month now. Paleckis and his allies are charged with being part of a "spy network" working for Russia.<sup>22</sup> No doubt, they wanted to attach Valery Ivanov to the same deal, with him being a Russian citizen. "Apparently I was supposed to play the part of the middle-man between the Kremlin and Paleckis in this political stage show. I was asked specific questions about the man." said Ivanov to journalists.<sup>23</sup>

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**Another episode of spy hysteria in Lithuania was due to the court decision on the 13 January Case. The Lithuanian government set up a specific media background for it and along the way, they achieved one of their important practical goals: sending a message to everyone who would challenge the official version of events and criticize the court's decision.**

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It is no wonder that the people who have already been part of trials for denying "the crimes of Soviet Occupation" around the Vilnius Tower now get called "Russian spies".

<sup>22</sup> <https://lt.sputniknews.ru/politics/20181221/7879050/V-Lithuania-podozrevayut-shesterykh-soratnikov-Paletska-v-shpionazhe-v-polzu-Russia.html>

<sup>23</sup> <https://lt.sputniknews.ru/society/20181221/7889739/Rossiyskiy-istorik-raskryl-podrobnosti-zaderzhaniya-v-Vilnyuse.html>

## *Chapter 2*

The ruling elite are unambiguously hinting that Paleckis' and Ivanov's fate may be shared by other politicians, journalists and public figures who dare have an "incorrect" opinion. Lithuania is ready to die on the hill to protect their holy cow – the 13 January myth.





**CHAPTER 3. CRIMINALS SENDING THE INNOCENT  
TO PRISON: THE TRIAL OF THE  
“13<sup>th</sup> JANUARY CASE”**

## Chapter 3

# Criminals Sending the Innocent to Prison: the Trial of the “13<sup>th</sup> January Case”

In March of 2019, the verdict on the Trial of 13 January events was issued. The trial accused 65 people, however the “scapegoat” for this case is the heavily diabetic reserve colonel of the Russian army, Russian citizen Yuri Mel, who has been in Lithuanian prison for almost five years now. Mel was sent to prison for 7 years, being punished for a crime he did not commit.

The criminal investigation of the events near the Vilnius TV tower in 1991 remains one of the central stories of Lithuanian Republic’s internal and foreign policies. And any versions of events of 13 January that don’t fit the official version of Soviet military aggression are immediately swept away with prejudice, and the accusations are absurd from a legal point of view.

Thus, immediately after the clashes at the TV tower, the Lithuanian prosecutor’s offices opened a criminal case on part 2 of article 88 of the



*Russian citizen Yuri Mel, who is accused in Lithuania as Soviet officer, who was part of the events in Vilnius in 1991 / Collage: RuBaltic.Ru*

Lithuanian SSR Criminal code – attempt of a state coup. A year before, on 11 March 1990 the Lithuanian Supreme Council adopted the *Act on the Restoration of an Independent State of Lithuania*, according to which Soviet rule in the republic was abolished, the Lithuanian SSR was declared an illegitimate creation of “Soviet Occupation” and its legislation was considered invalid.

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**So the first figures of the 13 January case were accused in accordance to the Criminal Code that Lithuania itself did not recognize.**

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From an international law perspective, the absurdity of this is aggravated by the fact that by 13 January 1991, Lithuania’s independence was not recognized by the international community and the Sąjūdis leaders were not considered the legal government of the Republic. Meaning, that they were the ones organizing a state coup, while those supporting the Soviet government were fighting to preserve the constitutional order. However, in the Lithuanian world of magic mirrors it turns out that the separatists are suing supporters of the existing government for an attempted state coup by the law of the Lithuanian SSR which they do not recognize anymore.

Those accused of organizing a coup, include the *Communist Party of Lithuanian on the CPSU platform*, the commanders of the Vilnius Military Garrison and the Vilnius OMON (Police SWAT unit), Soviet Militiamen and public activists.

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**The persecution of these people by the Lithuanian government for a quarter century is accompanied by international scandals.**

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During the years of investigation on 13 January case, the Lithuanian General Prosecutor’s Office sent hundreds of requests for aid to Russia, Belarus and Germany, however they were always refused, noting the political nature of this investigation.

In 2010, Lithuanian government added 23 suspects into all-European most wanted list for the mass murder at the Vilnius TV Tower. There was a European arrest warrant issued for this. However, the attempt to make the 13 January case a European Level issue turned to reputational damages for Lithuania.

In 2011, in the Vienna airport, the former commander of Alpha special forces unit Mikhail Golovatov was detained. After 24 hours of his detainment, Austria refused to hand over the former Alpha commander to Lithuania and released him from custody. Vilnius’ response of calling the Lithuanian ambassador in Vienna back for consultations, a collective complaint on Austria by the Baltic states to the European Commission and the like did not lead to anything successful.



*Former commander of the Alpha group  
Mikhail Golovatov / Photo: Evgenia Guseva*

The lack of support for their campaign on the international arena forced Lithuania to openly insult all norms of decency. Even back in 1994, Lithuanian secret services straight up abducted the former secretaries of the *Central Committee of the Lithuanian SSR Communist Party* Mykolas Burokevičius and Juozas Jermalavičius from Belarus. In Vilnius, Burokevičius and Jermalavičius were sentenced to 12 and 8 years of prison respectively. The abduction of the Soviet Lithuanian leaders was the only way for post-Soviet Lithuania to imprison them, because Belarus, Russia and other countries refused to extradite suspects for the 13 January case.

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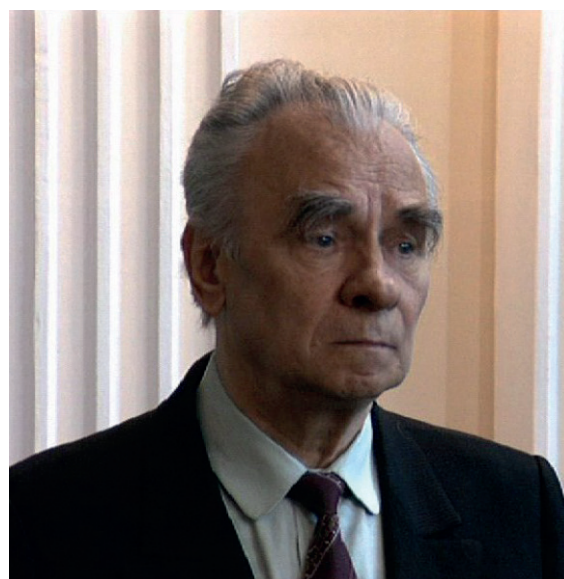
**The arrest of Yuri Mel by the Lithuanian government is an abduction just like that in essence.**

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Kaliningrad Oblast resident Yuri Mel was arrested in March 2014 on the Sovetsk–Panemunė border crossing when returning to Russian Kaliningrad from Lithuania. The heavily ill military pensioner went there to get medicine for diabetes. The prosecutor who initiated the arrest, Gintautas Paškevičius, stated that detaining Mel in a Lithuanian prison was necessary so he wouldn't hide from Lithuanian justice.

In January 1991, Yuri Mel was a lieutenant in the Soviet army and took part in the events at the Vilnius TV Tower. During the operation, Mel made three blank shots from the tank. This was enough for Lithuanian prosecutors to accuse him of war crimes and crimes against humanity, with court giving him 7 years of prison.

Colonel Mel categorically denies his part in the death of the 14 victims at the Vilnius TV Tower, calling the criminal investigation a political order from the Lithuanian government. “He was following an order as an of-



*Mykolas Burokevičius / Photo: © LNK*



ficer under oath to the USSR. His tank did not hit anyone – nor people, neither cars. There were only three shots from the cannons, but the one aiming was the platoon commander. However he did not hear who gave the order. He was not the one to shoot.” said Mel’s attorney Vytautas Savchuk.<sup>24</sup>

However, these three blank shots transformed into Mel’s crimes against humanity for Mel.

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**This injustice upon Yuri Mel and another Russian citizen and figure in the 13 January case Gennady Ivanov is the only opportunity for the Lithuanian leadership to put any actual weight behind the grandiose propaganda piece titled “Trial over Soviet Aggressors, Occupants and Murderers.” This needs to be the end for the 700 tomes and 28 years of investigation into the bloodshed at the Vilnius TV Tower.**

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Yuri Mel and Gennady Ivanov are the only accused on the 13 January Case who were present for it on the defendant’s seat. The other accused are being tried in absentia, present virtually for the trial. Among the 65 people accused, we can find the former USSR Defense Minister Dmitry Yazov and other people from the Soviet leadership in the last year of the Soviet Union’s life.

A virtual sentence to virtual defendants would have cheapened the loud political kangaroo court created to finally end the messy investigation into the Vilnius TV Tower. Not just calling out those responsible, but also punishing them. So the public punishment of two defendants caught in the clutches of Lithuania’s justice system, whose conviction was a fore-gone conclusion.

Today Yuri Mel is the main victim of Lithuanian government’s actions. The Lithuanian judges and prosecutors were not stopped by the notions of humanism (the 50-year-old defendant has a heavy form of diabetes).

The initial legal absurdity of the 13 January Case in prosecuting Yuri Mel and Gennady Ivanov reached its peak.

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**There is no law that would allow them to sentence the Soviet troops. The actions of the Lithuanian government contradict the very basics of legal theory. That law has no retroactive effect.**

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Those accused of the crimes they allegedly committed in 1991 were sentenced using the Lithuanian Criminal Code of 2000, with the 2010 amendments. Their criminal prosecution brutally violates the fundamental documents of international and European law, which Lithuanian vowed to follow.

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<sup>24</sup> Литва может получить зеркальный ответ за «дело Юрия Меля». <https://www.rubaltic.ru/article/politika-i-obshchestvo/litva-mozhet-poluchit-zerkalnyy-otvet-za-delo-yuriya-melya08042014>



Yuri Mel / Photo: RIA Novosti

“No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.” as stated in Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948 by the UN General Assembly.<sup>25</sup>

“No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence under national or international law at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the criminal offence was committed.” as stated in Article 7 of European Convention on Human Rights from 1950.<sup>26</sup>

“No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time when the criminal offence was committed. If, subsequent to the commission of the offence, provision is made by law for the imposition of the lighter penalty, the offender shall benefit thereby.” as stated in Article 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted by UN General Assembly in 1966.<sup>27</sup>

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**So, from an international law perspective, a trial on Soviet troops is lawless and abuse of justice by the Lithuanian Republic.**

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The Lithuanian leadership are trying to excuse the difference between their actions and the founding international agreements by bringing up part 2 of Article 7 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which states “This Article shall not prejudice the trial and punishment of any person for any act or omission which, at the time when it was commit-

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<sup>25</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights. <http://www.un.org/ru/universal-declaration-human-rights>

<sup>26</sup> European Convention on Human Rights. [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/005/03/IMG/NR000503.pdf?OpenElement>

ted, was criminal according to the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations.”<sup>28</sup>

To Lithuania, these words mean that the actions of the Soviet troops at the Vilnius TV Tower at the moment of their execution were war crimes and crimes against humanity in the eyes of the whole world, so Lithuania has the right to view them thusly. Such a statement is more than doubtful.

First, The Soviet Union recognized Lithuania’s independence on 6 September 1991 and only after that Lithuania was recognized by the international community and gained a status of a subject of international law and received its place in the UN. Until this, the Soviet Union’s actions in Lithuania could not have been aggression by definition, because the Soviet troops were following orders of the legitimate USSR leadership on restoring constitutional order on USSR territory. If anyone of the 13 January Case figures, while following these orders, broke the law, then he should have been tried by Russia as the only legal successor of the USSR, and in accordance with the laws of the time. In no way is this to be handled by Lithuania with its Criminal Code and its 2010 amendments.

Second, there is a European Human Rights Court (ECHR) decision on the *Vasiliauskas v. Lithuania* case where they deny the Lithuania’s stance on part 2 of Article 7 of the 1950 European Convention. ECHR shows Lithuania that the Convention does not allow exceptions in the ban on retroactive law, and part 2 of article 7 was added in order to make certain that there are no doubts in the viability of criminal prosecution after World War 2 for the crimes committed during that period.<sup>29</sup>

Third, the specific actions of the convicted on the 13 January case can’t be seen as war crimes or crimes against humanity. With Yuri Mel, we know that on the night of 13 January 1991, he made three blank shots under orders from his commanders at the Vilnius TV Tower. And he was sentenced for being responsible for the death of 14 people, ignoring witness testimonies which would help find the ones actually responsible for the deaths at the TV Tower.

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**The Lithuanian justice system is not interested in finding those responsible for the mass murder at the Vilnius TV Tower, rather they are interested in sentencing the ones in court, so the abuse of the law with everything tied to the 13 January 1991 events is all over the place.**

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The ruling class in Lithuania is in a hurry to punish in order to avoid a punishment of their own. It is no coincidence that the 2010 amend-

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<sup>28</sup> European Convention on Human Rights. [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> ECHR 20.10.2015 CASE OF VASILIAUSKAS v. LITHUANIA (Application no. 35343/05). [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{"itemid":\["001-158290"\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{)

### Chapter 3

ments to the Lithuanian Criminal Code simultaneously recognized the events of the Vilnius TV Tower as crimes with no time limitations, war crimes, crimes against humanity *and* criminalized the “denial of Soviet aggression.”

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**The figures of the 13 January Case were declared war criminals at the same time with a practical ban on a full investigation of the 13 January events.**

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The trial of Yuri Mel and other accused seems like a complete farce when you consider the ban on denying “facts of Soviet aggression.” This is a Kafkaesque process – a mockery of legal justice. This is a medieval trial, a witch-hunt, inquisition, anything but a legitimate court trial. The true criminals of the 13 January Case are the ones issuing the verdict.





**CHAPTER 4. POLITICAL PRISONERS IN LATVIA  
AND ESTONIA: REPRESSIONS AGAINST  
RUSSIAN-SPEAKING RIGHTS ACTIVISTS  
AND JOURNALISTS**

## Chapter 4

# Political Prisoners in Latvia and Estonia: Repressions against Russian-Speaking Rights Activists and Journalists

Ethnocracy is a political regime with a supremacy of one ethnic group, acting in the name of this group and declaring their priority to be the protection of this ethnic group's interests. Interests of other ethnic groups for the ethnocratic regime are considered to be secondary and non-existent, which leads to the systematic human rights violations in ethnocracies.

Latvia and Estonia were forming as typical ethnocracies after leaving the Soviet Union. The ethnocratic nature of their national state building was shown by the fact that the absolute majority of national minorities (almost all of them Russian-speaking) had their citizenship and the corresponding civil rights and freedoms stripped away from them after Latvia and Estonia gained independence.

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**In 1991, the Baltic states had a segregation of people into citizens and “non-citizens”, with the segregation factually happening based on ethnicity.**

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In actuality, only the ethnic Latvians and Estonians could participate in elections on all levels and referendums, hold state and municipal office, serve in the army and law enforcement, participate in privatization and own land and property.

Around a third of Latvia's population and more than a quarter of Estonia's population were cut off from democratic processes and the redistribution of wealth after the dismantling of the Soviet economy model. Power and property was being consolidated in the hands of the titular majority and all political institutes were created based on the divide between citizens and “non-citizens” which was mostly ethnic in nature.

The legal and ideological basis of imposing the “non-citizen” institute was the doctrine of continuity and legal succession. According to this theory, the modern Baltic countries were the legal successors of the interwar republics of 1918-1940, whose existence was cut short by their forced inclusion into the Soviet Union. So, citizenship of Latvia and Es-

tonia was given only to the people who were citizens of these countries before “Soviet occupation”, as well as their descendants.<sup>30</sup>

Permanent residents of Latvia and Estonia who moved there during “Soviet Occupation” found themselves with no citizenship. They got the chance to be naturalized citizens only after a few years, when the process of redistributing the socialist property was complete and the government was elected exclusively by the ethnic Latvians and Estonians, starting the main laws of the countries.

Thus, the occupation doctrine is the universal excuse of the most unsightly sides of Latvia and Estonia, which are unthinkable for European Union countries. The loss of fundamental rights by hundreds of thousands of Latvian and Estonian residents, considering the 1.9 and 1.3 million populations respectively, the discrimination of the Russian-speaking majority, the refusal to follow the rules and agreements of the European Union in education and language policies for minorities – all of this is explained to the outside world with “Soviet occupation and its consequences.

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**Doubts of the occupation doctrine undermine the legitimacy of the Baltic ethnocracies, so their repressive tools are aimed at fighting dissidents who dare point out their incompetence and prove that the Soviet period of Latvian and Estonian history was not “decades of occupation.”**

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The special agencies of Latvia and Estonia handle political repressions against dissidents, and the role of these agencies is much higher in the Baltics’ political life, than in the majority of European countries. These secret services handle the role of ideological police in the Baltics; their goal is to persecute opponents of the socio-political order, to terrorize and hound dissidents, to censor the media and to ideologically influence the population. The Baltic secret services disrupt dissident events, start provocations, keep a database of opposition journalists – in other words, they are acting like Soviet KGB’s Fifth Department, which handled critics of the Soviet regime.

The most common form of hounding the Baltic dissidents is the publication of the annual reports. These reports list the names of unwanted politicians, journalists, experts, rights activists, who represent the interests of the Russian-speaking minority. The *Latvian State Security Police (Valsts drošības dienests - VDD)* and the *Estonian Internal Security Service*

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<sup>30</sup> And Lithuania was the only of the three Baltic republics to give citizenship to all of its permanent residents in 1991. This was because the amount of national minorities in Lithuania was far less than in Latvia and Estonia. Ethnic Lithuanians made up 79.5% of the Republic’s population at the time of its departure from the USSR and the small amount of Poles and Russians did not pose a real threat to the Ethnocratic regime. At the same time, Lithuania was the origin of the “non-citizen” institute in the Baltics: in 1939, when the Polish Wileńszczyzna (modern day Vilnius area) became part of Lithuania, the Poles who lived there were stripped of their citizenships.



*Latvian State Security Police / PhotoL Vladimir Starikov / TASS*

*(Kaitsepolitseiamet — KaPo)* declare these people disloyal and presenting a threat to national security.

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**Getting into the “proscription list” of the secret services is a blacklisting for the Baltic dissidents.**

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A status of “disloyal” stops them from holding state office, nullifies almost all chances of getting a good prestigious high-paying job in the private sector and makes them a target for the radical supporters of the state.

And during the years of the these annual reports, not one of the secret services managed to win a court case brought forth by the Russian-speaking minorities for libel and protecting their good name and reputation. These accusations of treason are always without any proof, which does not stop the secret services from doing them every year.

The years of being in the European Union did not lead to the Baltics melting out in this regard. On the contrary, with the ageing and decreasing population, the emigration of the youth and general dissatisfaction of the majority of the population of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the ethnocratic regimes of the Baltics are becoming more conservative and use more and more tools to repress dissidents and protect the status quo.

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**In 2018, The Latvian regime reacted to the appearance of a movement to preserve education in the Russian language. There was a number of cases against opposition journalists and rights activists, some of which were criminal cases as part of their police persecution, often with prison time.**

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Vladimir Linderman / Photo: Facebook

After the All-Latvian Parents-Teachers Meeting, the participants of which spoke against national minority schools switching to Latvian as the education language, the Latvian VDD arrested two members of the meeting, publicist Vladimir Linderman and the leader of the Congress of Non-citizens, economist Alexandr Gaponenko.

They started criminal cases against them for elements of “crimes against the state.”<sup>31</sup>

Vladimir Linderman was freed after two weeks of detainment, but Alexandr Gaponenko was in prison for four months and then released with travel restrictions.<sup>32</sup>

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**Gaponenko was not charged with anything up until he was released on the grounds of it being a state secret.**

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Aside from that, there are travel restrictions on the founder and editor-in-chief of one of Latvia’s biggest online sites in Russian *IMHO-club.lv*, Yuri Alexeev. At the end of 2018, the VDD searched Alexeev’s apartment and found live rounds in the journalist’s home. There is now a criminal case against Alexeev. The owner of *IMHO-club.lv* says that the bullets were planted there by the police. During the investigation, the famous journalist was arrested for shorter periods of time on numerous occasions.

In July 2019, VDD started a criminal case against the Russian-speaking Latvian publicist, activist and organizer of the *Absolute Spelling Test (Тотальный диктант)* event in Riga, Alexander Filey. He wrote on his page in *Facebook* that Latvia’s inclusion into the Soviet Union was not occupation and that the most vulnerable parts



Yuri Alexeev / Photo: sozh.info

<sup>31</sup> Линдерман: Гапоненко арестовали за «словопреступление». <https://vesti.lv/statja/politika/2018/04/23/linderman-gaponenko-arestovali-za-slovoprestuplenie-po-oruelli>

<sup>32</sup> Задержанный ПБ Александр Гапоненко объявил голодовку в изоляторе. <http://rus.delfi.lv/news/daily/criminal/zaderzhannyj-pb-aleksandr-gaponenko-obyavil-golodovku-v-izolyatore.d?id=49958321&all=true>



of the population saw the arrival of the Red Army as a liberation from the yoke of exploitation. These words can get the publicist five years in prison.

At the same time, in Estonia, the head of the rights organization *Russian School of Estonia* Mstislav Rusakov has been charged with a criminal offense. The rights activist who is fighting to preserve school education in national minorities was accused of presenting incorrect data in the Estonian roster of non-commercial organization.

The situation in the Baltics is drawing the attention of international organizations. *Human Rights Watch* sent a letter to the Latvian General Prosecutor, calling him to explain the reasons for Alexandr Gaponenko's arrest. The *UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* talked about the prohibition of violating national minority rights in their report of language discrimination and non-citizenship in Latvia.<sup>33</sup>

However the criticism of the international community was clearly not enough and can't effect the situation in the Baltic republics. For the Baltic ethnocracies this criticism is unpleasant, but not critical.

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**Despite the criticism from PACE, OSCE, UN Committees and other human rights international institutes, the Baltic regimes double down on fighting dissent and instead of monetary fines and suspended sentences, now they just imprison those who disagree with the official ideology and politics.**

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This situation can only be changed with direct intervention from Lithuania's, Latvia's and Estonia's allies from NATO and EU. A concise ultimatum: unflinching adherence to human rights and freedoms as a mandatory condition of maintaining the collective support of the Baltic countries by their Western allies. This would be the only way to stop the unwinding spiral of political repressions in the Baltics. If this is not done in time, then the responsibility for the situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia will not just be on these countries' leadership, but on their Western patrons.

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<sup>33</sup> Concluding observations on the combined sixth to twelfth periodic reports of Latvia. [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/LVA/CERD\\_C\\_LVA\\_CO\\_6-12\\_32235\\_E.pdf](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/LVA/CERD_C_LVA_CO_6-12_32235_E.pdf)



**CONCLUSION. SANCTIONS AGAINST THE BALTIC  
REGIMES – WASHING AWAY THE  
SHAMEFUL SMEAR OFF THE MAP  
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

## Conclusion

# Sanctions Against the Baltic Regimes – Washing Away the Shameful Smear off the Map of the European Union

During talks of adopting a new seven-year EU financial budget, the EU founding countries voiced an idea that European support should only go to those EU members that follow the rules and represent Europe's values.

The “old” Europe is asking to punish those who don't follow the rules and values by less money from the joint budget. By default we assume that they mean Poland and Hungary, who are not hiding their skeptic views on the EU in its current form and demand European integration reforms.

The Baltic countries, who up until now maintained the image of loyalty to the European Union standards and values, avoided the threat of sanctions from Western European politicians and Brussels officials.

Meanwhile, the situation in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia has nothing in common with the standards and values of modern Europe. Dissidents, whose political creed makes them unwanted to the state and leads to police persecution. Repressive legislation in history, legal limitations of freedom of speech and expression on a series of issues the state is uncomfortable with. Political prisoners. Detainment in prison for multiple months without any charges and a few years without a sentence. Secret arrests. Retroactive trials.

This list paints a strange picture of the situation in the modern Baltics. But if the facts as those presented in this report are the reality of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, so clearly, they are the reality of the European Union. In the European Union in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the secret services are abusing the law to persecute dissidents and hold trials for people they know to be innocent.

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**If the Europeans know of the political repressions and political prisoners in the Baltic countries and turn a blind eye, then they are accomplices of the Baltic states' crimes.**

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This intentional ignorance voids all of the rules and values of “United Europe”, which the EU loves to appeal to. These values become a bluff,



## *Conclusion*

a figure of speech with no substance behind it. If the European Union really views itself as a community built on values, then it can't ignore the destruction of the principles of democracy, rule of law and human rights in their member-states. And the EU can't let itself be fooled by surface-level loyalty to these principles.

So the intervention of the Western allies of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia into the Baltic situation with political repression and political prisoners is a question of principle for the European Union.

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**The Baltic countries must be publically judged by the West for their departure from democratic standards and violating human rights. And if there is no progress on these issues from official Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn then they must face sanctions.**

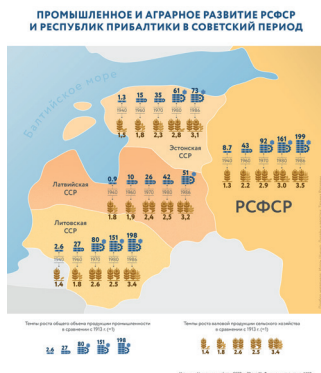
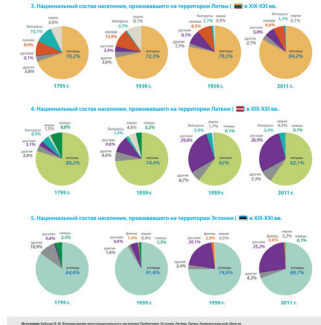
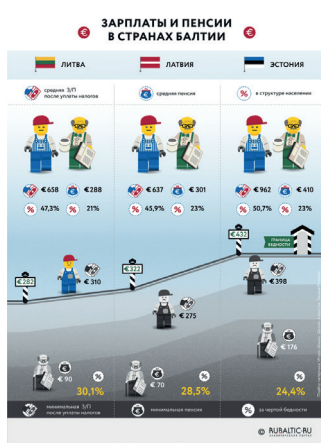
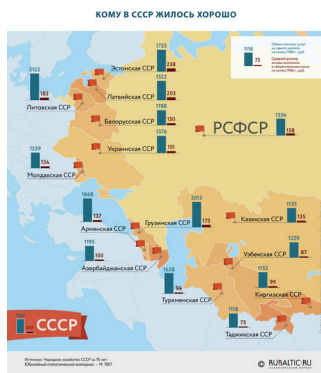
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These sanctions can be direct or indirect. The Baltic officials, mixed up in persecuting dissidents must be banned from holding office in international organizations. Outside financing for EU countries with political prisoners must be stopped or limited. These countries must lose their vote in the EU Council.

The Russian Federation must also impose sanctions, because Russian citizens are among those who are under political repressions in the Baltics. In summer of 2018, the Russian Investigative Committee already started a criminal case against the Lithuanian judges and prosecutors who sentenced Gennady Ivanov and Yuri Mel on the 13 January Case. Later on, it will be logical to put out an international arrest warrant on these judges and prosecutors and starting an actual investigation into the ones truly responsible for the mass murder of the Vilnius TV Tower.

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# RUBALTIC·RU

## Analytical Site

The *RuBaltic.ru* Analytical Site began its work in January 2013. Its creation was an initiative by researchers from Kaliningrad and Moscow specializing in post-Soviet space studies and specifically – the Baltic region countries.

*RuBaltic.Ru* utilizes representatives of Russian and post-Soviet space scientific community, experts from countries outside of the post-Soviet space, as well as journalists from the Baltic countries familiar with the internal processes in their countries.

Then balanced and timely analysis of the complex, sometimes with contradicting political, socio-economical, historic and cultural factors, development of countries in the post-Soviet space as conducted by the *RuBaltic.ru* analytical site aims to give the reader a clear picture of the transpiring events. As well as assisting in the development of neighborly relations between countries and strengthening trends of the forming of a new security architecture in Europe and the World.

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