

Adam Bosiacki*

University of Warsaw

Attempts to punish communist crimes throughout history: Failures and successes

1. Introduction

When the communist system was in place in Russia and the USSR and the countries dependent on them, crimes committed by communists were punished many times. In the public perception, however, these issues are unknown, or are most often considered as non-existent from the point of view of the effects of such actions, considering that there were many crimes committed by communist state officials on behalf of the entire system of power, or by communist officials individually, in order to achieve their particular goals. This text will precisely compare public attempts to expose communist crimes, and often also attempts to punish communist crimes after the creation of the first state in history with such a system, i.e. Soviet Russia from October 1917.

The main thesis of this article is the claim that for over a hundred years communist crimes have rarely been effectively punished, and the settlement procedures adopted at various times were ineffective, late, or often symbolic. Paradoxically, however, there were many more attempts at punishment than the public is aware of: the punishment of some communist crimes was initially carried out by political opponents after the, usually short-lived, liberation of certain territories from the communist rule (the years of the Russian Civil War and the Polish-Soviet War of 1918–1920), as a result of internal political struggle between the communists themselves (purges within communist parties, starting from 1936–1939 in the USSR), when many communists were brought to

* ORCID: 0000-0001-6455-0632; e-mail: abosiacki@uw.edu.pl

justice before communist courts, including several persons responsible for leading the communist apparatus of repression (Genrikh Yagoda in 1938, Lavrentiy Beria in 1953, László Rajk in 1949, Koçi Xoxe in 1949). Finally, the punishment of some communist crimes took place, or rather was undertaken, after the collapse of the USSR and the Soviet Bloc countries as a result of the so-called lustration and decommunization, which encountered significant resistance from the post-communist authorities and opinion leaders. In each case, communist crimes were punished very selectively: communists who punished them engaged in political struggles with other communists. After the fall of communism, the vast majority of criminals avoided not only any punishment, but even prosecution and trial.

This article primarily uses a historical-legal approach, and to some extent a comparative-legal approach. The work is based on a review of specific cases of attempts to prosecute communist crimes in various countries and historical periods – from the Russian Civil War to decommunization in Central and Eastern Europe and Cambodia. Regardless of future legal solutions for punishing communist crimes, the previous experience of punishing communist crimes will certainly be used *de lege ferenda*. It should not be forgotten that the communist system, even in its most extreme repressive forms, still exists in some countries today.

2. Attempts to punish communist crimes in chronological order: the Bolshevik Revolution

Chronologically, attempts to punish communist crimes can be divided into those occurring before and after the fall of the USSR (formally in December 1991). However, paradoxically, attempts to punish communist crimes were made much earlier.

The first attempts to prosecute communist crimes took place during the Russian Civil War, shortly after the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia. On 31 December 1918, by order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of South Russia, General Denikin, a Special Investigative Commission was established to investigate Bolshevik atrocities (Russian: *Особая следственная комиссия по расследованию злодеяний большевиков*). It operated in southern Russia during the Civil War, carrying out judicial tasks related to investigating the activities of the Bolsheviks, including scientific and administrative tasks consisting in investigating and revealing the essence of Bolshevism. At the initial stage, it investigated such crimes as the mass murder of hostages in Pyatigorsk in the autumn of 1918. The Commission operated in accordance with the Statute of Criminal Procedure of the Russian Empire of 1914,¹ recognized as binding. It had the right to summon and interview victims and witnesses, conduct inspections, searches, seizures, examinations and other investigative activities.

¹ Russian: Ustav Ugolovnogo Sudoproizvodstva Rossijskoj Imperii ot 1914 g.

In the course of its activities, the commission focused mainly on investigating the actions of the penal authorities of the Soviet government, establishing the circumstances of executions and shootings of Russian citizens, carried out by the Cheka and Red Army units during the implementation of the Red Terror campaign. Medical examination and identification, with the participation of relatives and friends, of people buried in mass graves and mine tunnels, and of the remains of executed citizens were carried out. Witnesses were questioned in connection with explaining the circumstances of death or disappearance of people. Based on these materials, over 40 studies were published and about 150 cases were referred to courts.² However, due to the progress of the Bolshevik offensive, none of the cases were tried, and none of the perpetrators were held criminally responsible.

However, in contemporary Russia it is believed that the experience of the Commission's investigations remains significant, because in post-Soviet Russia to this day there have been no official political or moral assessments of either the coups of February and October 1917, or the deliberate actions of the Bolsheviks aimed at inciting a civil war, or such an unprecedented phenomenon as the Red Terror during the Civil War. It is also believed that the Red Terror paved the way and became the basis for all subsequent repressive campaigns of the Soviet regime, including the artificial famine and Stalin's Great Terror. Familiarity with the work of the Special Investigative Commission shows the criminal, inhuman nature of the Soviet regime, which later became the name a state – the USSR. It is largely thanks to the Special Investigative Commission for the Investigation of Bolshevik Crimes that the number of 1.7 million victims of the Red Terror was publicly disclosed in the early 1920s.³

The work of the Commission, supplemented by his own arguments, was also the basis for the fundamental work *The Red Terror in Russia*,⁴ first published in Berlin in 1923, by the Russian émigré historian Sergei Melgunov (1880–1956). In the second edition of the book, from 1924, the findings of the Special Investigative Commission were included in the second part, but, as in the case of the Commission's findings, based on these materials, no one was even charged with committing a crime. Nevertheless, Melgunov noted that the Red Terror, contrary to Bolshevik propaganda, did not have any "class

² *Krasnyy terror v gody Grazhdanskoy voyny: Po materyalam Osoboy sledstvennoy komissiyi po rassledovaniyu zloidyeyanii bol'shevikov* [Eng. *The Red Terror during the Civil War: Based on the materials of the Special Investigative Commission for the Investigation of Bolshevik Crimes*], eds. Y.G. Felshtinsky, G.I. Chernyavsky, Russian edition: Terra – Knizhnyj Klub, Moscow 2006.

³ V. Chicheriukin-Meingardt, *Osobaya sledstvennaya komissiya po rassledovaniyu zloidyeyanii bol'shevikov. Beloye delo. 2-j syezd predstavitel'ey pechatnykh y elektronnykh izdaniy. Rezolyutsya i materialy nauchnoy konferentsii. Beloye delo v Grazhdanskoy vojne v Rossii. 1917–1922 gg.* [Eng. *Special Investigative Commission for the Investigation of Bolshevik Crimes. White cause. 2nd Committee of Representatives of Printed and Electronic Councils. Resolutions and materials of scientific conferences. White cause in the Russian Civil War. 1917–1922*], Posev, Moscow 2005.

⁴ Polish edition: S.P. Mielgunow, *Czerwony terror w Rosji 1918–1923*, trans. T. Zawadzki, Magna Polonia, Warszawa 2024.

character” and was not used by workers (in Bolshevik terminology, “the working class”, or “the proletariat”), nor by Russians⁵ (these claims are to some extent debatable).

Despite the lack of punishment for Bolshevik crimes, the years of the Russian Civil War also brought considerable casualties among Bolsheviks, who were shot most often after being taken prisoners by anti-Bolshevik units (not only by monarchists, the so-called Whites). In such a case, however, it is difficult to speak of the punishment of communist crimes once the conditions of court proceedings have been met. Moreover, similar executions (by shooting) of communists were carried out after proceedings had been conducted before summary military courts when communist revolutions were suppressed in Hungary (the so-called Hungarian Soviet Republic), in Bavaria (the Bavarian Soviet Republic) and in Slovakia (the Slovak Soviet Republic).

3. The crimes during communist revolutions before World War II

After the fall of the Bavarian Soviet Republic, which existed for the shortest period (19 April–3 May 1919), approximately 5,000 trials were held against communists. They were often conducted by summary military courts, which were not fair in nature. Death sentences were often passed and were usually carried out. Anarchists and anarcho-communists were sentenced to death in similar trials, including the leader of the entire revolt, Eugen Leviné (1893–1919), and Gustav Landauer (1870–1919), an anarchist philosopher and pacifist. Although later historiography, sympathetic to the victims, attributed and continues to attribute high treason charges to the victims executed after they were sentenced to death, these charges were also criminal in nature. As a result of the revolution or attempts to carry out “social transformations” on the Soviet model, several hundred (600–700) people died in street riots, and the revolutionary authorities also shot 29 hostages.

In total, about 2,200 communist rioters were sentenced to death and many of them were executed. Some of the leaders of the riots were sentenced to death, others to prison terms (e.g., 15 years), while others were acquitted. The Freikorps units liquidating the Bavarian Soviet Republic, from which the Nazi party later developed, also carried out lynchings of participants of the revolt, including workers. The wounded Landauer was kicked to death in prison. On 3 May, the war commissioner Rudolf Egelhofer was also murdered without trial.⁶ Several sympathizers, or perhaps participants of the

⁵ J.N. Emelianov, *Sergey Petrovich Mel'gunov – istorik revolyutsii* [Eng. *Sergei Petrovich Melgunov – the historian of the revolution*] [in:] S.P. Melgunov, *Kak bolsheviki zakhvatili vlast', «Zolotoy nemeckiy klyuch» k bol'shevitskoy revolyutsii, predisloviye Y.N. Emel'yanova* [Eng. *How the Bolsheviks took the power. “The golden German key” to the Russian Revolution*], foreword by Y.N. Emelyanov, Airis Press, Moscow 2007, pp. 11–12.

⁶ G. Gerstenberg, *Räte in München: Anmerkungen zum Umsturz und zu den Räterepublikten 1918/19* [Eng. *Councils in Munich: Notes on the revolution and the Soviet Republics of 1918/19*], Verlag Edition AV, Bad Salzdetfurth 2019.

revolution, who were soldiers of his former regiment, were betrayed by the thirty-year-old soldier Adolf Hitler.⁷ Revolutions similar to the Bavarian Soviet Republic took place in Hungary⁸ and Slovakia in 1919, although with much less intensity. As a result, there were incomparably fewer trials. However, there some communists and participants in both revolutions were lynched.

Chronologically, the next punishment of communist crimes took place as a result of the Spanish Civil War, as the rebel forces advanced against the communists and social democrats, associated in the so-called Popular Front, formally elected in February 1936. Even before the election, in the years 1930–1936, the country experienced “Red Terror” modelled on the Soviet one, resulting in the murders of thousands of priests, nuns and monks, industrialists, landowners and politicians. The number of “republican” fatalities is estimated at over 70 thousand.⁹

The 1936–1939 Spanish Civil War was very bloody, although its criminality was undoubtedly characteristic of the communists, who were supervised by the Soviet repressive authorities (the NKVD and the GRU), who purged communists or leftists considered to be disloyal to Stalin, especially Trotskyists. The so-called International Brigades, subordinated to the Soviet special services, including the Polish Brigade named after Jarosław Dąbrowski,¹⁰ were formally established by the Comintern (Russian: *Kommunisticheskij Internatsional*). From November 1936, the USSR also sent many soldiers and officers of the repressive authorities to the so-called Republican Spain under the guise of volunteers (the most famous one was the Soviet GRU officer Karol Świerczewski, operating as “General Walter”), alongside many thousands of genuine volunteers from all over Europe, who wanted to fight Hitler’s fascism in the Spanish war. The USSR carried out bloody murders of Trotskyists in Spain, including those associated with the Workers’ Party of Marxist Unification (Spanish: POUM)¹¹. Trotsky and his few supporters were not only fascinated by the possibility of creating an authentic Marxist state in Spain, but also by turning it into an oppositional entity to the “bureaucracy” of Stalin’s state.¹²

⁷ M. Appel, *Die letzte Nacht der Monarchie: wie Revolution und Räterepublik in München Adolf Hitler hervorbrachten* [Eng. *The last night of the monarchy: How revolution and the Soviet Republic in Munich brought the life of Adolf Hitler*], dtv Verlagsgesellschaft, Munich 2018.

⁸ S. Courtois, J.L. Panné, *Komintern w akcji* [Eng. *Comintern in action*] [in:] S. Courtois, N. Werth, J.-L. Panné, A. Paczkowski, K. Bartošek, J.-L. Margolin, *Czarna księga komunizmu. Zbrodnie, terror, prześladowania* [Eng. *The black book of communism. Crimes, terror, persecution*], trans. K. Wakar et al., Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 1999, p. 258; *Hungary in revolution, 1918–19: Nine essays*, ed. I. Völgyes, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1971, p. 219.

⁹ J. De la Cueva, *Religious persecution, anticlerical tradition and revolution: On atrocities against the clergy during the Spanish Civil War*, “Journal of Contemporary History” 1998, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 355–369.

¹⁰ The Polish Government deprived members of the International Brigades of Polish citizenship, as they served in a foreign army. Act of 31 March 1938 on the deprivation of citizenship (Journal of Laws 1938 No. 22 item 191).

¹¹ See e.g. W. Krivitsky, *I was a Stalin’s agent* (lan Faulkner Publishing), 1st ed., Hamish Hamilton, London 1939, reprint: ed. M. Almond, Sutton Publishing Ltd, London 1994.

¹² L. Trotsky, *Ispanskaya revolyutsiya*, 24 January 1931, “Byulletin Oppozitsii”, March 1931, no. 19, pp. 2–5.

For both the USSR and Adolf Hitler's German Reich, which helped the Francoists, the Spanish Civil War was a training ground for World War II, an opportunity to gain financial and political benefits. After 1945, many Soviet soldiers and volunteers from the International Brigades became high-ranking officials of the communist authorities of repression in the newly established states in Central Europe.

Although according to the latest estimates, communist, anarchist and leftist terror in Spain in the years 1930–1939 claimed no more than 75 thousand victims, and Francoist terror even 200 thousand,¹³ in the fight against communism Francoists committed murders in the years 1936–1975, that is until the end of the Spanish dictator's life. Anti-communism required fewer trials. On the other hand, the number of communist victims at the end of Francoism was no less than 5,000 people, murdered treacherously, for example by dropping in the open sea.

4. Communist crimes during World War II

The Spanish Civil War also became the first battlefield of communism against Nazism, which period was quickly ended by the formal pacts between Hitler and Stalin, concluded in August and September 1939. Later, after the German Reich attacked the USSR, the Nazis attempted to show communist crimes by exposing two mass communist crimes committed in the USSR during the Great Purge (1937–1938) and two war crimes committed before Nazi Germany began its attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941, i.e. the Vinnytsia Massacre¹⁴ and the Katyn Massacre,¹⁵ respectively. In both cases, the Germans established an international commission to investigate the circumstances of the crimes. The credibility of the investigation was compromised by artificially inserted anti-Jewish fragments, in accordance with the political line of the German Reich. Attempts to find the perpetrators of the crimes came to nothing and as a result of the investigation, no one was indicted. The materials collected by the Nazis on the Katyn crime were the basis for initiating an investigation into this crime, undertaken by

¹³ See e.g. S.G. Payne, *A history of Spain and Portugal*, vol. 2, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wis. 1973, p. 650.

¹⁴ *Amtliches Material zum Massenmord von Winniza: Im Auftrag des Reichsministers für die besetzten Ostgebiete auf Grund urkundlichen Beweismaterials zusammengestellt, bearbeitet und herausgegeben* [Eng. *Official material on the mass murder of Vinnytsia: compiled, edited and published on behalf of the Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories on the basis of documentary evidence*], Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf., Berlin 1944.

¹⁵ *Amtliches Material zum Massenmord von Katyn: Im Auftrage des Auswärtigen Amtes auf Grund urkundlichen Beweismaterials, zsgest., bearb. und hrsg. von der Deutschen Informationsstelle* [Eng. *Official material on the Katyn mass murder: commissioned by the Federal Foreign Office based on documentary evidence. Compiled, edited and published by the German Information Centre*], Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf., Berlin 1943. Polish edition: *Niemiecki urzędowy materiał w sprawie masowego mordu w Katyniu* [Eng. *German official material on the mass murder in Katyn*], ed. A. Bosiacki, trans. P. Bentkowski, Wydawnictwo IPN, Warszawa 2020.

a United States Congressional Commission (Madden Commission) in 1951–1952. Despite the wide scale of the work, the perpetrators of the crime were not found, hence no criminal liability could be attributed. Similarly futile was the work of the Commission for the Investigation of Anti-American Activities at the same time (1950–1954), despite the fact that the Commission is to this day considered a symbol of violating “human rights” among left-leaning intellectuals in the West, an example being that it accused Charlie Chaplin of crypto-communist activities.

Communist crimes were punished in many legal systems of the interwar period. In Poland, for example, they were classified as ordinary crimes under the military part of the 1932 Penal Code and the “ordinary” provisions of that code. Treason, espionage, and service in foreign armed forces were punished since Poland’s war with the Soviet Russia in 1919–1921.

5. Perpetrators against perpetrators: communist crime investigations during the purges in the communist states

Another example of punishing communist crimes are the little-known political trials against communists, undertaken by other communists as part of power struggles or in cases where the crimes were, even partially, revealed to the public. Such cases took place in the USSR, when at the so-called Trial of the Twenty-One (Third Moscow Trial) in March 1938, the former head of the NKVD, Genrikh Yagoda, stood in the dock, accused, among other things, of the murder of the secretary of the Central Committee, Sergei Kirov, on 1 December 1934, and the poisoning of several important leaders of the communist party or Maxim Gorky. Other secret trials of communist criminals were conducted in the USSR after the end of the Great Purge of 1937–1938 and after Stalin’s death in 1953, when the next head of the NKVD, Lavrentiy Beria, was accused at the trial. To some extent similar “communists versus communists” procedures were always used: in February 1985, in Toruń, Poland, four communist Security Service officers were on trial, accused of the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko (1947–1984).

6. The failure to punish communist crimes after the fall of the communist system in Europe. Conclusions

The breakthrough in punishing communist crimes was brought about by the fall of communism as a political system in Central and Eastern Europe and the USSR in 1989–1991. Attempts to punish such crimes, however, must be considered really weak, despite the efforts of some people and social groups. In Russia, after the collapse of the USSR in December 1991, President Boris Yeltsin initiated the disclosure of some

criminal documents of the Soviet authorities, including in particular the Katyn Massacre.¹⁶ However, no person was punished on their basis. Attempts to delegatize the communist party, which still exists in Russia today, also failed, even though, on the basis of the documents disclosed at that time, including the Katyn case, proceedings were conducted to delegatize the communist party before the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation.

In Poland, the nearly two decades of attempts to punish the leaders of the communist party,¹⁷ including the communist generals Jaruzelski and Kiszczak, all members of the so-called Military Council of National Salvation, which introduced martial law in the Polish People's Republic on 13 December 1981 and which was included in the indictment as a criminal organization, ended in general disappointment. Nevertheless, communist general Czesław Kiszczak, Minister of Internal Affairs in the 1980s, was sentenced to symbolic suspended prison sentences for tolerating the pacification of the Wujek hard coal mine protests on 16 December 1981, where members of a Special Unit (*Pluton Specjalny*) of the Citizens' Militia, who carried out this massacre, killed nine miners by machine gunfire. However, communist dictator, general Jaruzelski and the former deputy prime minister of the Polish People's Republic, Stanisław Kociołek, were not punished for the massacre of workers on the Polish coast in December 1970 (the trial took place between 1995 and 2015!). Meanwhile, a former communist torturer from the Stalinist era, Adam Humer (1917–2001), was sentenced to 9 years in prison, although on appeal the sentence was reduced to 7 years in prison.

The imposition of penalties was possible due to the adoption in the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of Poland of a provision on interrupting the limitation period for crimes committed by state officials (now public officials) who were not prosecuted for political reasons until these reasons ceased to exist (Article 44) and the introduction in 1998 of the concept of a communist crime.¹⁸ An institutional framework was also created in the form of separate bodies tasked with punishing communist crimes, including those committed by the highest officials of communist states. In post-communist states, these were often called institutes of national remembrance, similar to the Polish body established only in 2007 and tasked with prosecuting all crimes committed against the

¹⁶ Polish edition: *Katyń. Dokumenty ludobójstwa* [Eng. *Katyń. Documents of genocide*], ed. W. Materski, trans. W. Materski, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1992.

¹⁷ In 1980, Polish communists attempted to investigate corruption at the highest levels of the communist government, led by the dismissed First Secretary of the Polish United Workers' Party Central Committee, Edward Gierek, considered a symbol of corruption. Despite internal party proceedings, the case was never brought to court, as was the case regarding the massive smuggling of valuables by the communist secret services of the Polish People's Republic in the 1960s (the "Iron Affair"). See, e.g. *Protokoły tzw. Komisji Grabskiego. Tajne dokumenty PZPR* [Eng. *Protocols of the so-called Grabski Commission. Secret documents of the Polish United Workers' Party*], ed. G. Pomian, *Introduction*: G. Pomian, Instytut Literacki, Paryż 1986.

¹⁸ Ustawa z dnia 18 grudnia 1998 r. o Instytucji Pamięci Narodowej – Komisji Ścigania Zbrodni przeciwko Narodowi Polskiemu (Act of 18 December 1998 on the Institute of National Remembrance – Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation, consolidated text, Journal of Laws of 2023, item 102).

Polish nation and citizens. In 2006, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also adopted a resolution in this matter.¹⁹ But despite the broad justification of the criminality of the communist system, it contained a bizarre statement that the resolution recognized the contribution made by some European communist parties to the development of the democratic process (*sic!*).

Interestingly, after 2007 and 2018, a legal institution of decommunization was developed in Poland, requiring people running for public offices, including candidates for members of parliament, members of the government, the judiciary and lawyers, or candidates for certain positions in higher education, to submit lustration declarations. Decommunization in Poland also included – only in 2018 – changing the names of streets and squares. However, like in some countries of the former Soviet bloc (Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Germany), there were no long-term prison sentences for leaders of communist parties. As exceptions among them, Nicolae Ceaușescu (1918–1989) was convicted to death penalty in an unfair trial, while several other persons in the indicated countries were sentenced to long-term prison sentences. Outside Europe, such a situation occurred in Cambodia, where several communist leaders of the Khmer Rouge, who ruled genocidally in the years 1975–1979, did not escape punishment. There, too, the effectiveness of punishments can hardly be considered satisfactory. Communist crimes have not been punished effectively, although, as indicated, there have been many more attempts to punish them than is commonly believed. The future will show whether there will be any qualitative change in the punishment of crimes in the future in countries which were once under the rule of the communist system, although the political and legal experience to date instigates pessimism in this matter.

References

- Amtliches Material zum Massenmord von Katyn: Im Auftrage des Auswärtigen Amtes auf Grund urkundlichen Beweismaterials*, zsgest., bearb. und hrsg. von der Deutschen Informationsstelle, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf., Berlin 1943.
- Amtliches Material zum Massenmord von Winniza: Im Auftrag des Reichsministers für die besetzten Ostgebiete auf Grund urkundlichen Beweismaterials zusammengestellt, bearbeitet und herausgegeben*, Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf., Berlin 1944.
- Appel M., *Die letzte Nacht der Monarchie: wie Revolution und Räterepublik in München Adolf Hitler hervorbrachten*, dtv Verlagsgesellschaft, Munich 2018.
- Bosiacki A. (ed.), *Niemiecki urzędowy materiał w sprawie masowego mordu w Katyniu*, trans. P. Bentkowski, Wydawnictwo IPN, Warszawa 2020.
- Chicheriukin-Meingardt V., *Osobaya sledstvennaya komissiya po rassledovaniyu zloidyeyanii bol'shevikov. Belaye delo. 2-j syezd predstaviteley pechatnykh y elektronnykh izdaniy. Rezolyutsiya i materialy nauchnoy konferentsii. Belaye delo v Grazhdanskoj vojne v Rossii. 1917–1922 gg.*, Posev, Moscow 2005.

¹⁹ Resolution 1481 of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on the need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes of 25 January 2006.

- Courtois S., Panné J.L., *Komintern w akcji* [in:] S. Courtois, N. Werth, J.-L. Panné, A. Paczkowski, K. Bartošek, J.-L. Margolin, *Czarna księga komunizmu. Zbrodnie, terror, prześladowania*, trans. K. Wakar et al., Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 1999, pp. 257–313.
- De la Cueva J., *Religious persecution, anticlerical tradition and revolution: On atrocities against the clergy during the Spanish Civil War*, "Journal of Contemporary History" 1998, vol. 33, no. 3, pp. 355–369.
- Emelianov J.N., *Sergey Petrovich Mel'gunov – istorik revolutsii* [in:] S.P. Melgunov, *Kak bolsheviki zakhvatili vlast', «Zolotoy nemeckiy klyuch» k bol'shevitskoy revolyutsii, predisloviye Y.N. Emel'yanova*, foreword by Y.N. Emelyanov, Airis Press, Moscow 2007, pp. 5–45.
- Felshtinsky Y.G., Chernyavsky G.I. (eds.), *Krasnyy terror v gody Grazhdanskoj vojny: Po materialam Osoboy sledstvennoy komissiyi po rassledovaniyu zloidyeyanii bol'shevikov*, Russian edition: Terra – Knizhnyj Klub, Moscow 2006.
- Gerstenberg G., *Räte in München: Anmerkungen zum Umsturz und zu den Räterepublikten 1918/19*, Verlag Edition AV, Bad Salzdetfurth 2019.
- Krivitsky W., *I was a Stalin's agent (Ian Faulkner Publishing)*, 1st ed., Hamish Hamilton, London 1939, reprint: ed. M. Almond, Sutton Publishing Ltd, London 1994.
- Materski W. (ed.), *Katyń. Dokumenty ludobójstwa*, trans. W. Materski, Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, Warszawa 1992.
- Mielgunow S.P., *Czerwony terror w Rosji 1918–1923*, trans. T. Zawadzki, Magna Polonia, Warszawa 2024.
- Payne S.G., *A history of Spain and Portugal*, vol. 2, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wis. 1973.
- Pomian G. (ed.), *Protokoły tzw. Komisji Grabskiego. Tajne dokumenty PZPR, Introduction: G. Pomian*, Instytut Literacki, Paryż 1986.
- Trotsky L., *Ispanskaya revolyutsiya*, 24 January 1931, "Byulletin Oppozitsii", March 1931, no. 19, pp. 2–5.
- Völgyes I. (ed.), *Hungary in revolution, 1918–19: Nine essays*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln 1971.

Abstract

Adam Bosiacki

Attempts to punish communist crimes throughout history: Failures and successes

The article contains a retrospective presentation of attempts to punish communist crimes committed by functionaries of the communist state apparatus since the civil war in Russia. Although there were many such attempts, they remain unknown to the general public. This applies to a lesser extent to people punished after the fall of the communist system in the countries of the Soviet Bloc and outside it (in Cambodia). Obviously, however, the extent and effectiveness of punishing communist crimes can hardly be considered satisfactory and will never be so.

Keywords: communist crime, Russia, USSR, Soviet Bloc, fall of communism, decommunization