

Soviet 'Occupation' Caused \$210 Bln Damage to Latvian Economy - Report

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An elderly man walks past a memorial wall with names of fallen Latvian Waffen SS legion soldiers in Lestene, 80 kilometers west from capital Riga, Latvia.

The damage inflicted on Latvia's economy by what the country considers a Soviet occupation from 1940 to 1990 has been estimated at 185 billion euros (\$209 billion) by a Latvian research committee, Latvian news website DELFI reported on Monday.

Committee spokesperson Ruta Pazdere said that the damage done to the country's demography and its environment during the same period had been estimated in the tens of billions.

Pazdere announced the figures at the launch of a number of new books on the history of the Soviet occupation of the Baltics, the Latvian Leta news agency reported.

Speaking at the launch, Latvian MEP Inese Vaidere stressed the need to work on a joint understanding of history.

“Without research into the past, there is a risk that we will repeat the same mistakes,” she said to DELFI.

The lawmaker also noted “identically criminal” similarities between Nazi and Soviet regimes, according to DELFI.

The special committee, created eleven years ago, focuses on 40 areas of research, including the damage incurred under Soviet occupation. As well as focusing on Latvia’s economy, they consider human loss — by calculating the number of people who were deported to Russia or fled to the West — and the occupation’s influence on Latvian culture, religion and countryside.

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