

# Release and Return of Repressed People in Lithuania in 1953–1957: Between Freedom and Constraints

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The topic of the article is the release and return of deportees and political prisoners to Lithuania. As the Soviet regime was modifying itself, it abandoned mass repressions as of 1953 and authorised a large part of the deportees to return home. According to the available information, in 1953–1958 over 40,000 people returned to Lithuania from exile and imprisonment. The specific period of deportation was not fixed, the Soviet perpetrators used the term '*na viečno*' (for eternity, forever). As a result, the communist authorities and repressive structures had to take various decisions to release the deportees: they had to adopt many orders and resolutions, and the fate of each family had to be decided by the commissions for the review of deportees' cases. Therefore, in light of these complex procedures, the article focuses more on the release of the deportees.

This paper examines the cooperation between the Lithuanian Communist Party and the repressive structures in their attempts to ensure a gradual return of deportees and political prisoners, as the return of the repressed was raising great concern for the Soviet authorities. Such concerns mainly resulted from the fact that some of the repressed were entitled to restitution of confiscated property (often no longer available), while there was a potential threat that a sudden or massive return of these people would incite the anti-Soviet sentiment in Lithuania. Research into the activities of the commissions for the review of deportees' cases was based on archival documents. Both statistical data and deliberations of the fate of individual families by the commissions are presented in this paper. At the same time, the returned deportees and political prisoners were 'under supervision' by strengthening the repressive apparatus of the LSSR's KGB, by preventing the returnees from registering, from getting a job, and by prohibiting them from returning to their hometowns. Therefore some of the returnees, unable to settle, went to Latvia, the Kaliningrad region, or even back to Siberia, where they had a guaranteed employment. In this way, the Lithuanian communist government tried to create a 'critical mass' of the Lithuanian population which it could lead towards a 'bright communist future'.

**Key words:** bureau of the LCP Central Committee, LSSR's Council of Ministers, Supreme Soviet of the LSSR, deportees, political prisoners, commission for the review of deportees' cases, release, return, constraints, and isolation of the formerly repressed population.

## Introduction

**Relevance and issues being addressed.** Many people in countries surviving totalitarianism have experienced or been involved in some form of repression. Hannah Arend wrote that:

<...> “Terror can only have absolute power over people who are isolated from each other. One of the primary concerns of all tyrannical powers is, therefore, to achieve such isolation. Isolation can be a prelude to terror; it is certainly the most fertile soil; isolation is always the effect of tyranny. Isolation is characterised by powerlessness, because power always is derived from the people acting together, in harmony, while isolated people are essentially powerless”<sup>1</sup>.

From its inception until 1953, the Soviet Union created an enormous gulag system consisting of 476 forced labour camps. Some 18 million innocent people were imprisoned in these camps<sup>2</sup>. During its occupation from 1940 to 1990, Lithuania felt the devastating power of totalitarian regimes in their full force. During the German occupation, the Nazis wiped out almost the entire Jewish community of Lithuania – around 200,000 people. During the repression of the first Soviet occupation in 1941, 18,500 people were deported from Lithuania, about 12,500 of whom were sent into exile, and the rest ended up in labour camps and prisons. It was from this wave of deportations that only a third of the deportees returned to Lithuania; about a quarter perished in places of exile and imprisonment<sup>3</sup>. Between 1944 and 1953, 118,000 people – 32,230 families – were deported from Lithuania, and 186,000 people were arrested and imprisoned in labour camps<sup>4</sup>. The Soviet authorities needed considerable organisational arrangements for carrying out deportations from Lithuania, as well as substantial human and technical resources for repressive actions. As a result, deportations were executed virtually every year between 1945 and 1952, with the time in-between two deportations used in preparation for the following wave of deportations. Women and children accounted for around 70% of the total number of deportees in 1945–1952, with 32,000 children being deported. All the above figures are, unfortunately, not final. The number of political prisoners and deportees was so great that the repressive authorities were unable to keep an accurate record of them. Due to the negligence of the Soviet NKVD and security services, and poor literacy (the primary aim was to deport first, then to make a record), some of the families or individuals deported in 1941, 1945 and 1946 have not been properly recorded, leaving no entries about them in the Lithuanian archives. The Soviet punitive forces may rightly be said to have deported a total of about 130,000 of the Lithuanian population<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarizmo ištakos [Origins or Totalitarianism]*, Vilnius: Tyto Alba, 2001, p. 447.

<sup>2</sup> Anne Applebaum, *Gulago istorija [The History of the Gulag]*, Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Online: [www.laptevieciai.lt](http://www.laptevieciai.lt)

<sup>4</sup> Data from the Genocide and Resistance Centre of Lithuania, online: [www.genocid.lt/centras/lt/147/c/](http://www.genocid.lt/centras/lt/147/c/)

<sup>5</sup> Eugenijus Grunskis, *Lietuvos gyventojų trėmimai 1940–1941, 1945–1953 metais [Deportations of the People of Lithuania in 1940–1941, 1945–1953]*, Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 1996, p. 141.

There are many research papers on the repression of the Lithuanian population during the Soviet occupations, but not all aspects of their return to Lithuania have been thoroughly addressed. Until 1953, deportees and political prisoners were released only in very exceptional cases. It was only in 1953 that the process of release from captivity gained momentum. The process of release is the topic of this paper. The uniqueness of the subject is that it deals with less studied aspects such as the quasi-judicial process of the commissions (how, who and on what grounds were (not) to be released), the cooperation between the Communist Party and the repressive structures in the management of the process of return of political prisoners and deportees, and the important changes in the regulation of the return of the deportees in 1957.

There is a connection between exile and return. Return is often more dramatic. Only 7% of the 1,500 repressed who were interviewed said they were welcome upon their return to Lithuania. All the others had to undergo through various hardships. Many had their property confiscated and were not entitled to restitution. Homes were taken away, usually by strangers. It was incredibly difficult to register, to get a job. A lot depended on the local government<sup>6</sup>. As a result of these and other prohibitions by the Soviet authorities, it was difficult for deportees and political prisoners to return and settle in Lithuania, some of them stayed in Russia, others settled as close to Lithuania as possible – in Latvia or in the Kaliningrad region. Some of them managed to return and settle in Lithuania despite the restrictions. The evolvement of all these processes has not been explored in-depth. Most of the repressed persons were released from exile and imprisonment without the restitution of the confiscated property. Some of the returnees asked the local authorities to reexamine the grounds for deportation in hope of rehabilitation and claiming back their property and, above all, their homes. Such requests were rarely granted. As a result, former deportees and political prisoners used to move from one region of Lithuania to another several times until they found decent living conditions. It is important to study these issues in a comprehensive way because totalitarian regimes are not a thing of the past but re-emerge in many forms in different centuries. The study of totalitarianism raises public awareness thus making societies more resistant to propaganda. This is particularly important in the context of the authoritarian regimes of Russia and Belarus in Lithuania's neighbourhood.

**The aim of the study** is to reveal and describe the specificities of the release and return of repressed persons in 1953–1957, the procedure applied by the commissions for the review of deportees' cases, the cooperation between the Communist Party and repressive structures in the regulation of the return of the repressed persons, and the impact of these factors on the dynamics of the release of repressed persons.

<sup>6</sup> Danutė Gailienė, *Ką jie mums padarė: Lietuvos gyvenimas traumų psichologijos atžvilgiu [What They Did to Us: Life in Lithuania from the Point of View of Trauma Psychology]*, Vilnius: Tyto alba, 2021, p. 94.

**The object of the research** is the process of release of repressed Lithuanian citizens from places of imprisonment and exile and their return to Lithuania.

**Objectives for exploring the topic:**

1. To study the decisions (resolutions, orders, directives) of the LSSR's authorities on the release and return of repressed persons, and to identify their substance.
2. To investigate and highlight the cooperation between the Communist Party and the repressive structures in controlling the return of political prisoners and deportees, as well as their efforts to isolate the returnees to the maximum extent possible.
3. To highlight the features of return of the repressed people between 1953 and 1956 and to show the changes in this process in 1957.

**The methodology of the subject** is analysis of historiography and sources, description and interpretation of the collected data, synthesis of conclusions.

## **Review of historiography and sources**

Dr Arvydas Anušauskas wrote about the return of the repressed while researching the crimes of the Soviet occupation. His monographs note the changes in the number of deportees between 1953 and 1959, the persecution of former political prisoners, the dynamics of the release of deportees, and the obstacles to their return back home. His research was based on documents from the state archives of the Russian Federation which are currently not available<sup>7</sup>. Dr Kristina Burinskaitė wrote about the control of former political prisoners and deportees. In her monograph on the activities of the KGB in the LSSR, she mentions that former convictions and deportation were major obstacles to seeking higher education and pursuing academic careers. The Soviet authorities, with the help of the KGB and other institutions, did their utmost to ensure that the academic community was out of reach for former deportees and political prisoners<sup>8</sup>. The Soviet authorities paid particular attention to the Lithuanian intelligentsia – the former political and cultural elite of the Republic of Lithuania. In the article on the control of the formerly repressed people, KGB documents contain references to 1956, during the process of de-Stalinization, former prisoners (described in KGB documents as “persons convicted for very serious state crimes”) and deportees began to return from prison in large numbers. The Lithuanian authorities tried to prevent the return of prominent figures of independent Lithuania and partisans, believing that their return would strengthen the resistance movement

<sup>7</sup> Arvydas Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940–1958 metais [Annihilation of the Lithuanian People by Soviets in 1940–1958]*, Vilnius: Mintis, 1996; *Teroras 1940–1958 m.*, Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Kristina Burinskaitė, *LSSR KGB ideologija, politika ir veikla 1954–1990 m. [Ideology, Policy and Activities of the LSSR's KGB in 1954–1990]*, Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2015, p. 63.

and the anti-Soviet sentiment amongst the population.<sup>9</sup> Under the ideology of the ‘class struggle’, the former elite layers of society were often treated as a “destructive anti-state element threatening the dictatorship of the proletariat”. Such ideology was used to mask the repression against innocent people, with the genocide of the people being perceived as societal ‘defence’ from undesirable elements. Individuals regarded by the KGB as potential enemies of the Soviet system were the so-called ‘socially dangerous elements’ belonging to a ‘negative environment’. The ‘negative environment’ included former figures of independent Lithuania, deportees, political prisoners, partisans, members of their families, suspected collaborators with the Nazis during the German occupation, former leaders, and members of anti-Soviet organisations.<sup>10</sup>

The experience of people who have suffered repression is unique because totalitarianism and the repression against this group of people has lasted, to a smaller or larger degree, for very long, sometimes through entire lifetimes. Therefore, the study of various experiences of groups of deportees and political prisoners is very relevant. The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania (LGRRC) in cooperation with a group of researchers from the Department of Clinical and Organisational Psychology at Vilnius University (headed by Prof. Danutė Gailienė, researchers Evaldas Kazlauskas and Vėjūnė Domanskaitė Gota) conducted a study on the psychological effects of political repression on the families of victims. The results of a statistically representative psychological study of people who experienced repression showed that almost one third of the repressed have developed one or other post-traumatic symptoms, with long-lasting consequences for both psychological and somatic health.<sup>11</sup> Overcoming these consequences was and is, to a large extent, dependent on the political and social recognition of what these people had to go through, their past and present social standing. Many former political prisoners said that they had been persecuted upon their return to Lithuania: they were unable to find employment or to register as permanent residents. Thus, the traumatising did not end after leaving labour camp and returning to Lithuania.<sup>12</sup>

The adaptation of returned political prisoners and deportees in Soviet Lithuania was examined by sociologist Dr Irena Štutienė. Her research demonstrated that many po-

<sup>9</sup> Kristina Burinskaitė, „Buvusių kalinių ir tremtinių kontrolė KGB dokumentuose“ [“Control of Former Prisoners and Deportees in KGB Documents”], in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2006, Nr. 1 (19), p. 123.

<sup>10</sup> Kristina Burinskaitė, Lina Okuličiūtė, *KGB slaptieji archyvai 1954–1991 m.* [Secret Archives of KGB in 1954–1991], Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2011, p. 305.

<sup>11</sup> Danutė Gailienė, Evaldas Kazlauskas, „Po penkiasdešimties metų: sovietinių represijų Lietuvoje psichologiniai padariniai ir įveikos būdai“ [“Fifty Years on: Psychological Consequences of Soviet repression in Lithuania and Coping Strategies”], in: *Sunkių traumų psichologija: politinių represijų padariniai*, compiled by D. Gailienė, Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2004, pp. 78–126.

<sup>12</sup> Evaldas Kazlauskas, „Buvusių politinių kalinių psichologinis tyrimas“ [“Psychological Study of Former Political Prisoners”], in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2002, Nr. 2 (12), p. 133.

litical prisoners and deportees found themselves in a lower social standing upon return, forced to take lower-skilled jobs and live in more difficult material circumstances. On the other hand, the cultural capital of the older generation of deportees encouraged the next generation of deportees' children to seek higher social standing.<sup>13</sup> Jurgita Kuprytė has written about the social mobility of deportees and political prisoners upon their return to Lithuania. She mentions that the label of 'enemies of the people' accompanied the deportees and political prisoners and their children even after their return to Lithuania. Opportunities to regain their social standing in independent Lithuania and to get a job in line with their educational background were often limited precisely because a person belonged to the category of 'deportees'.<sup>14</sup> Dr Monika Kareniauskaitė has written about the concept of deportee and deportations. She mentions that it was natural for deportees not to be integrated into society upon their return to Lithuania and feeling tarnished by exile. Because of the difficulties they had been going through, deportees were often forced to return to their places of exile and felt stigmatised.<sup>15</sup> Dr Vitalija Stravinskienė has written about the return and adaptation of repressed Poles from eastern and south-eastern Lithuania. These repressed members of Lithuanian population were an exception to the rule, as the Polish government resumed the repatriation of Poles from the USSR to Poland in 1955. Since 1956, the territory of Lithuania has been included in the repatriation area, and over the years many Polish deportees and political prisoners left for Poland.<sup>16</sup>

For almost three decades, LGGRTC specialists have been collecting data on victims of the Soviet regime, deportees and political prisoners. The collection of questionnaire and epistolary data of repressed Lithuanian citizens and participants in the freedom struggles is the most important source of statistics on the repressed today. The collection, which consists of questionnaires and memoirs of approximately 140,000 people, was the basis for the publication of the multi-volume continuous publication *The Genocide of the Lithuanian Population*<sup>17</sup> in 2023. It contains concise data on the return or fate of repressed persons, as well as their biographical information.

<sup>13</sup> Irena Šutinienė, „Grįžusių politinių kalinių ir tremtinių adaptacija sovietinėje Lietuvoje: patirtys, strategijos, ištekliai“ [“Adaptation of Returnees from Prisons and Exile in the Soviet Lithuania: Experience, Strategy and Resources”], in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, Vilnius, 2022, Nr. 1 (51), p. 51.

<sup>14</sup> Jurgita Kuprytė, „Galimybės tirti tremtinių ir politinių kalinių socialinį mobilumą“ [“Possibilities of Studying Social Mobility of Deportees and Political Prisoners”], in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, Vilnius, 1999, Nr. 2 (6), p. 87.

<sup>15</sup> Monika Kareniauskaitė, „Tremtinio sąvoka ir trėmimų samprata Lietuvos sovietinės okupacijos metais: teisiniai, ideologiniai, administraciniai ir socialiniai aspektai“ [“The Concept of Deportee and Deportations during the Years of Lithuania's Soviet Occupation: Legal, Ideological, Administrative and Social Aspects”], in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2018, Nr. 1(43), p. 38.

<sup>16</sup> Vitalija Stravinskienė, „Represuoti Rytų ir Pietryčių Lietuvos gyventojai lenkai: sugrįžimas ir adaptacija (1953–1964 m.“ [“Repressed Poles from Eastern and South-Eastern Lithuania: Their Return and Adaptation”], in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2014, Nr. 1 (35), p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas, [Genocide of the People of Lithuania] t. 1: (A–Ž), 1997, t. 2: (A–J), 1998, (K–S), 2002, (Š–Ž), 2005, t. 3: (A–M), 2007, ir (N–Ž), t. 4: t. 5 (A–M), 2019, t.5: (N–Ž), 2020, t. 6: (1954–1989, 1991), Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras.

A significant contribution to the historiography of this topic is the work of French historians Emilia Koustova and Alain Blum. They examined the requests and complaints of Lithuanian deportees, revealing that both the central and local authorities feared a mass return of people who would try to recover confiscated property, especially houses taken over by strangers. The authorities also feared clashes between those who passively observed the conflicts, active participants and returnees. Their investigation revealed that the authorities were delegated broad powers in the process, including the power to release some of the deported population. This situation gave room for hope and negotiation, but did not eliminate all the arbitrary, unfair elements of the application process.<sup>18</sup>

The works of the US historian Amir Weiner are also important for the historiography of this topic. This historian has studied the realities of the return of the repressed throughout the western part of the Soviet Union: in Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the Baltic states. His research examines how the 1956 unrest in Poland (workers' protests in Poznan) and the Hungarian uprising reflected anti-Soviet sentiment in the Soviet Union, and how the Soviet authorities responded to it. The author raised the questions: did the phasing-out of mass terror end the era of social engineering, and if so, what it was substituted with? What were the limits of reform?<sup>19</sup> The author concludes that the events of 1956 and their aftermath marked a difficult transition from opposition seeking to overthrow the Soviet government to dissent movement seeking to reform the system through non-violent means offered by the system itself.<sup>20</sup>

This article will be based mainly on archival material deposited in the divisions on the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP), KGB and Ministry of the Interior departments of the Lithuanian Special Archive (hereinafter – LYA), collection, systematisation and analysis of archival documents on the control of returnees from places of repression (resolutions of the LCP's Central Committee, decrees of the Presidium of the LSSR's Supreme Soviet, and directives of the LSSR's MVD (i.e. ministry of the interior), which established the control of settlement of the returnees from exile and imprisonment). One of the main sources is the documents of the LCP kept at the LYA. The Bureau of the Central Committee of LCP discussed strategies for the return of deportees, and the leaders of the LSSR's KGB reported to the Secretary of the LCP's Central Committee, A. Sniečkus, on the issues of the return of deportees and political prisoners. All these documents are very important for the study of the return of repressed persons. Another source of information is the reports of the LSSR's KGB city and district divisions in the LYA KGB funds, which also indicate the number of re-

<sup>18</sup> Alain Blum, Emilia Koustova, „Negotiating Lives, Redefining Repressive Policies Managing the Legacies of Stalinist Deportations”, in: *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, Vol. 19, No. 3, Summer 2018, pp. 537–571.

<sup>19</sup> Amir Weiner, “The Empires pay a Visit: Gulag Returnees, East European Rebellions, and Soviet Frontier Politics”, *The Journal of Modern History*, 78 (2), 2006, p. 334.

<sup>20</sup> A. Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

turned deportees and political prisoners and try to correlate this with the intensification of anti-Soviet activity. The largest number of documents related to the topic of the article are kept in the LYA Ministry of Interior (MoI) department, where all the files on deportees and documents related to the organisation and execution of the deportations, as well as documents related to the return of the deportees are kept. Officials of the LSSR's MVD provided services to the commissions of the LSSR's MVD and the Supreme Soviet that dealt with the return of the deportees and provided the commission members with the data collected on each family of the deportees, which explains why all the documents containing decisions of the commissions of the LSSR's MVD and the Supreme Soviet are also stored in the LSSR's MVD funds. Moreover, one of the most abundant sources on the subject is memoirs of deportees and political prisoners published in particularly large numbers during the first decade of Lithuania's independence.

### **Restrictions Imposed on Deportees and Political Prisoners, Typical Features of Release and Return to Lithuania 1953–1956**

The Lithuanian population had a slim chance of escape from the labour camps and exile after getting there. Resolution No. 35 of 8 January 1945 of the government of the Soviet Union on the Legal status of special deportees stated that deportees could not leave the places of exile and were obliged to report regularly to the special commandant's office. With the beginning of mass deportations of Lithuanians in 1948, the situation of deportees was subject to further restrictions and regulation by the USSR government's resolutions On exile, forced and special relocation and On forcibly resettled persons. Deportees were not allowed to leave the place of exile without the MVD's authorisation, they were deprived of their passports (reissued only in 1955), on which the militia made a note of the restriction to the place of exile (to the region of deportation), and at least once a month, adult deportees had to register at the special commandant's office.<sup>21</sup>

In 1941–1952, 28,000 of the 132,000 deportees of the Soviet regime died of disease, starvation, and unbearable labour. Another 50,000 were unable to return for a long time or did not return to Lithuania at all. The old and sickly deportees were unable to work and slowly died out. Large families could not feed all their children. People saved themselves as best they could, some fled back to Lithuania. Between 1945 and 1952 about 5,000 Lithuanian deportees fled<sup>22</sup>. Special squads were hunting down deportees attempting escape back to their homeland, and in Lithuania they were regularly persecuted by the MGB. Those who managed to escape and return to Lithuania, were caught, sentenced to three years

<sup>21</sup> Arvydas Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos...* [of the Lithuanian People], p. 383, 384.

<sup>22</sup> Arvydas Anušauskas [et.al.] *Lietuva 1940–1990: Okupuotos Lietuvos istorija* [Lithuania in 1940–1990: the History of Occupied Lithuania], 2 pataisytas ir papildytas leidimas, Vilnius: 2007, p. 309.



in a 'correctional labour' camp, and after serving their time in the camp they were sent back to exile. Only in the most favourable cases were the deportees immediately returned to their former places of exile without imprisonment.

Juozas Matas Truska (born in 1928) was deported with his parents to Krasnoyarsk region in May 1948. In the same year he escaped from exile and returned to Lithuania. In December 1948 he was arrested, imprisoned in Marijampolė prison awaiting trial, and in March 1949 was sentenced to 3 years. He served his sentence in the Gorky region labour camp, then was exiled again in March 1952.<sup>23</sup> Dalia Grinkevičiūtė, the author of the famous memoir *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros* (English: Lithuanians at the Laptev Sea), was exiled from Kaunas in 1941 with her mother Pranė Grinkevičienė and brother Juozas. In 1949 Dalia and her mother returned to Lithuania illegally. In 1950, her mother died, and Dalia was arrested and imprisoned in Kaunas and Vilnius. She was sentenced to three years by the USSR special soviet council, and was imprisoned in the Gorky region labour camp. In December 1953, she was deported to Yakutia, and returned to Lithuania only in 1957.<sup>24</sup> Even minors faced imprisonment for escaping from exile. Five-year-old Aušra Juškaitė was deported to Komi with her parents, brother, and sister in 1941. In 1947, she returned illegally to Lithuania and studied at the Šiluva Gymnasium. In the spring of 1949, she was arrested together with her cousin Laima Juškaitė, when Aušra was thirteen and Laima was fourteen. They were both imprisoned for two months in Raseiniai Prison, together with 15-year-old Marija Avižienytė, who had also illegally escaped from exile. The cousins Juškaitė were returned to their place of exile via Kaunas, Vilnius prisons, Leningrad Women's Prison and Vologda Transfer Prison.<sup>25</sup> It should also be noted that many political prisoners were tried under the formula: a prison sentence to be followed by another 5 years of exile, and after imprisonment they were sent to exile and released as deportees. A survey of 50 political prisoners showed that they could not return to Lithuania for an average of 10 years after the end of their imprisonment.<sup>26</sup>

From 1948 to the beginning of 1953, the complaints of deportees received directly or through other institutions by the LSSR's Council of Ministers (CM) were examined by the LSSR's CM commission for the examination of complaints and requests. There are no available statistics on the number of complaints of deportees examined by this Commission prior to 1953. No trace has been found of any decision by the LSSR's CM to release from 'administrative exile' earlier than 1951, when nine families, 14 persons in total, were

<sup>23</sup> LGGRTC archive, case of a victim (deporte) No. LA2T0007.

<sup>24</sup> *Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas [Genocide of the People of Lithuania]*, t. 1: 1939–1941 (A–Ž), Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 1997, p. 313.

<sup>25</sup> Aušra Juškaitė-Vilkienė „Prisiminimai“ [Memoirs], in: *Sibiro vaikai: Lietuvos vaikų tremtinių atsiminimai*, Kaunas, 2011, p. 19–35.

<sup>26</sup> Danutė Gailienė, Evaldas Kazlauskas, *Po penkiasdešimties metų... [Fifty Years on <...>]*, p. 80.

released at the LSSR MVD's motion. In 1952, four more families were released, a total of 14 persons deported in 1949 or 1951.<sup>27</sup>

The release of political prisoners accelerated when a wave of uprisings swept through the Gulag camps between 1953 and 1954, mainly involving Ukrainian and Lithuanian political prisoners. It is beyond the scope of this publication, but I think it is important to note the reasons why, according to the historian A. Weiner: "A power as suspicious and sophisticated as the Soviet regime deliberately let in a mass of unreformed enemies?"<sup>28</sup>. One of the main reasons for this was the uprisings in labour camps. This led to speeding up the release of political prisoners driven not by the goodwill of the Soviet authorities towards the repressed, but by the bloodshed in the camp uprisings. During the suppression of the Norilsk uprising from 26 May to 4 August 1953, some 250 political prisoners were killed in the Gorlag camp, which led to the liquidation of the Gorlag itself in 1954. On 1 August 1953, during the suppression of the Vorkuta uprising, 53–66 prisoners were killed and 123 wounded at Rechlag. On 26 June 1954, the Kengir uprising was brutally suppressed in the Steplag camp (Kazakhstan). 1,600 soldiers and 5 tanks were deployed to put down the uprising, the exact death toll is unknown, but approximately 200 political prisoners are believed to have been killed or died because of sustained injuries.<sup>29</sup> Although the uprising was suppressed, it precipitated the crisis and collapse of the Gulag labour camp system. Similarly, the release of deportees was accelerated, and a state system for the release of the repressed was set up, charged not with the task of whom to exile and imprison and when, but rather whom to release and when to do it.

Since the two mass deportations from Lithuania in 1949 and 1951 were carried out under the directives of the LSSR's CM, the first commission for reviewing the cases of the deportees was established in January 1953 under the same LSSR's CM. Its full title was the commission for the review of citizens' statements and requests to the relevant authorities for the revocation of administrative deportation of individual citizens expelled from the Lithuanian SSR (hereinafter – the Commission). The composition of the Commission was as follows: Kazys Preikšas (the Commission's chairman) who was also deputy chairman of the LSSR's CM), Kazimieras Liaudis (Chairman of the LSSR's KGB), Georgy Bacharov (deputy chief prosecutor of the LSSR), who had been sent from Russia's Tambov region and appointed chief prosecutor of the LSSR, Jonas Vildžiūnas (minister of internal affairs (MVD) of the LSSR), Karolis Didžiulis (until 1940 Karolis Grosmanas) (Chairman of the LSSR's supreme court), Stasys Naujalis (secretary of the presidium of the LSSR's supreme soviet).

<sup>27</sup> A. Blum, E. Koustova, *Negotiating Lives...*, p. 548.

<sup>28</sup> A. Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

<sup>29</sup> Uprising in Kengyr, online: [www.vle.lt/straipsnis/kengyro-sukilimas/](http://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/kengyro-sukilimas/)



**Fig. 1.** On board. Vida Elena Šliažaitė-Buchoveckienė and her children are travelling to Lithuania by ship. Zheday in Olyokminsky District of Yakutia in 1956

From the archives of the LGGRTC's "Exile and Places of Imprisonment" programme



**Fig. 2.** A group of political prisoners is standing at the railway station, ready to return to Lithuania. Vorkuta in Komi around 1954–1958

From the archives of the LGGRTC's "Exile and Places of Imprisonment" programme

The new Commission was clearly a response by the Lithuanian authorities to an unprecedented situation: almost immediately after Stalin's death, they faced a huge surge in applications. The number of complaints received peaked in 1956–1957. In the four years between 1954 and 1957, some 70,000 complaints were sent in respect of 35,000 exiled families, i.e. an average of two complaints per family.<sup>30</sup>

Initially, the Commission was provided with material by a task force made up of officials from the LSSR KGB's 4th board and 5th Division. On 18 June 1953, the Commission held its inaugural meeting, and on 2 July 1953, the first meeting of the Commission took place, at which Soviet officials began to 'rectify their mistakes' in the deportation of the Lithuanian population, when in fact all deportations were crimes against humanity. The first cases to be re-examined were those of the families of large farmers (*kulaks* in Russian) who had been deported. The farmers had been deported under Resolution No. 176–cc of the LSSR's CM of 19 March 1949 and Resolution No. 865–cc of 29 September 1951. At its first meeting, Commission attached to the LSSR's CM reviewed 7 applications for abolishment of exile from the LSSR's MVD. The members of the Commission decided that Petras Kinta had been deported unjustifiably as he was not a *kulak*. The Commission members also decided that Julija Katilienė and her daughter Julija Katiliūtė were deported unjustifiably and should be released from exile. The Commission found that the soviets had misidentified the persons, believing that Julija Katilienė's two sons were partisans. In fact, the sons of another Katilienė from the same village were partisans. It was also decided to release the family of Povilas Palenis from exile, as it was found that they were not rich but rather average farmers. It was also decided to release from exile Barbora Armolytė and Veronika Masiulytė, who were farmhands in the families of the deported farmers and not members of their household. It was also decided to release another family from exile, who had been exiled as a family of *kulaks*, but apparently had helped the Soviet partisans during the German occupation.<sup>31</sup>

At a follow-up similar meeting of the Commission, 3 requests put forward by the LSSR's MVD, 5 motions by the LSSR's chief prosecutor, and one personal request for release from exile were examined. The Commission decided to release from exile O. Žadeikienė because her two small children remained in Lithuania, and J. Kručienė because she was elderly and her children had not been deported. The Commission members also decided to release S. Butkaitė–Kulikauskienė, J. Ičas, A. Paukštis and K. Šarnas from exile, as they had been deported unjustifiably. The applications for the release of A. Meiliūnas, I. Pelcius and O. Žilinskienė were rejected. The Commission's decisions were finally approved by the LSSR's CM.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> A. Blum, E. Koustova, *op. cit.*, p. 550.

<sup>31</sup> LSSR MT Komisijos tremtinių bylų peržiūrėjimui protokolas [Minutes of the commission for the review of deportees' cases at LSSR's CM], 02-07-1953, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 370, l. 1, 2.

<sup>32</sup> LSSR MT Komisijos tremtinių bylų peržiūrėjimui protokolas [Minutes of the commission for the review of deportees' cases at LSSR's CM], 06-10-1953, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 370, l. 3, 4.

Between 1954 and 1955, the release of deportees was slow. In 1954, 735 persons were released (510 by the decision of the LSSR's CM), in 1955 – 1,779 (1,147 by the decision of the LSSR's CM), and in 1956 – 15,879 people of Lithuanian nationality.<sup>33</sup> In May 1954, the review of the deportees' cases and the submission of conclusions to the Commission were entrusted to the special unit I of the LSSR's MVD, which took over the work from the LSSR's KGB operational task-force. It is very likely that the LSSR's KGB simply got rid of this highly labour-intensive function about one year into the job. By 20 May 1954, 8,340 complaints and statements from deportees had been forwarded to the above-mentioned LSSR's ministry of state security (MGB) unit, about half of which were filed by families of partisans, their associates and supporters, and the other half from the families of rich farmers (*kułaks*). On 9 July 1954, the deputy head of the LSSR's MVD special unit I, Col. Nosov noted that there were 9,650 complaints and statements of deportees received to date. All these requests from deportees were collected from various institutions, because when deportees felt the opportunity to liberate themselves, they contacted a wide range of addressees – in fact, nobody knew which authority was the best to turn to. Thus, requests from almost all authorities were transferred to a specially created subdivision of the LSSR's MVD. Many deportees contacted the USSR's authorities. Lithuanian deportees sent 45 requests to the USSR's Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), 834 applications to the USSR Council of Ministers (hereinafter referred to as the USSR's CM), 3,568 applications to the Supreme Soviet (hereinafter referred to as the USSR's Supreme Soviet), 1,207 applications – to the ministry of the interior (hereinafter referred to as the USSR's MVD), 167 – to the prosecutor general's office, 2 requests to the ministry of foreign affairs, and 5 requests – to the ministry of defence. A little less than half of the deportees' requests reached the highest institutions of the Lithuanian SSR. The majority (4,200) of the deportees' requests reached the USSR's Supreme Soviet and the LSSR's CM. The Central Committee (CC) of the LSSR's Communist Party (CP) (hereinafter referred to as the LSSR CP's CC) received 20 requests from deportees, the LSSR's MVD received 560 requests, the LSSR's prosecutor general's office received 18 requests, and the LSSR's ministry of justice received 6 requests. In addition, 29 requests of Lithuanian deportees were forwarded to Lithuania from local MVD units and subdivisions in places of exile.<sup>34</sup> All these applications were forwarded to the LSSR's MVD during the following periods: for the whole of 1953 – 3,461 requests (the majority of them sent in August–December 1953). In 1954, the number of requests grew further, with 6,189 of them being forwarded between January and June of that year.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Arvydas Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos...* [of the Lithuanian People], p. 393.

<sup>34</sup> LSSR MVD I spec. skyriaus viršininko pavaduotojo Nosovo pažyma apie gaunamus tremtinių skundus ir pareiškimus [Note by Nosov, deputy chief of special unit I at LSSR's MVD, about complaints and statements received from deportees], 09-07-1954, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 421, l. 107–110.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 109.

During the whole period under study, 12 governmental acts on release from special exile were adopted in the USSR, but by 1958 only 4 such resolutions had been adopted, which meant that many deportees were still held in exile. On 5 June 1954 the decree of the USSR's SS provided for the release from exile of children up to the age of 16 who had been deported as part of a family (the decree affected 19,483 children from the 1945–1949 deportations and 5,186 children deported with their parents in 1951.<sup>36</sup> This was a conditional 'freedom' as the children continued to live with their parents in exile, but from then on neither children born in exile nor dying in exile were recorded). In his memoirs, Napalys Kitkauskas, a renowned architect and restoration artist, describes how a special commission of the supreme court of the Mordovian autonomous SSR visited the camp in early June 1954. The reason for their arrival was an order issued to release political prisoners who were minors at the time of their arrest and who had served one-third of their sentence. Kitkauskas, arrested in 1947 and sentenced to 10 years in the labour camp, was released on 8 July 1954, having already served two-thirds of his sentence. He noted that "I received money for all the time I worked in the Mordovia camps: it was as much as the price of a train ticket to Kaunas..."<sup>37</sup>

On 24 November 1955 the decree of the USSR's CM provided for the release from exile of the following people: veterans of the Great Patriotic War, persons decorated with USSR orders and medals, teachers and lecturers, and women married to non-deportees, but without restitution of confiscated property and without the right of return to their former places of residence. The decree of 13 December 1955 by the Presidium of the USSR's SS provided for the release from exile of Germans and members of their families without restitution of confiscated property and without the right of return to their former places of residence.<sup>38</sup>

The LSSR KGB's documents show that the review of deportees' cases was very problematic. According to the data of 10 July 1954, the special unit I of the LSSR's MVD had received 9,600 complaints and requests from deportees, which were broken down into 6,189 applications from the family members of exiled partisans and partisan supporters, and 3,460 from exiled large-scale farmers and their family members. Only 8 officers, seconded from various units of the LSSR's MVD, were handling such a huge number of requests. The documents of the LSSR's MVD mention that the work of dealing with the cases of deportees was extremely bad at that time because, instead of the expected 15 officers to be seconded, only 9–10 was seconded and working. This resulted in low responsibility of

<sup>36</sup> Arvydas Anušauskas, *Teroras: 1940–1958 m.* [Terror: 1940–1958], Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2012, p. 269.

<sup>37</sup> Napalys Kitkauskas, „Mes – politiniai“ [“We are Political Prisoners”], in: *Amžino įšalo žemėje*, Vilnius: Vyturys 1989, p. 185, 186.

<sup>38</sup> Vyriausybinių aktai dėl paleidimo iš tremties [Governmental decrees on release from exile], in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 549, l. 3–5.



**Fig. 3.** The Liatukai family is returning to Lithuania. Tayshet in Irkutsk Oblast in 1957. (They are waiting for a train to Moscow at the railway station)

From the archives of the LGGRTC's "Exile and Places of Imprisonment" programme



**Fig. 4.** The return of the Ibianskai family to Lithuania. Igarka in Krasnoyarsk Krai in 1957

From the archives of the LGGRTC's "Exile and Places of Imprisonment" programme

the staff and a lax attitude to work. Some of them were incompetent to handle deportees' requests (ordinary firemen – Mockevičius, Muchina, etc. were given this task).<sup>39</sup> Another report from Col. Dmitry Nosov showed that the officers concerned found it difficult to cope with such an immense workload of deportees' statements. The deputy minister of the LSSR's MVD, Col. Alexander Gotsev was informed that 4 officers could not cope with such a flow, and therefore at least 15 officers from other LSSR's MVD departments were requested to be seconded for this task. It was mentioned that then there were only 6 seconded officers, of whom only 4 handled the processing of requests directly, whilst the other 2 dealt with the registration of requests and clerical work, which had been taken over from the LSSR's KGB in an extremely neglected state. It was also mentioned that between 20 May and 20 July 1954, some 2,000 statements were reviewed, meanwhile as many as 2,300 new statements were received during the same period.<sup>40</sup>

When the first individual decisions to release unlawfully repressed persons were made, they had to be formalised under the Soviet law. By Resolution No. 446 of 26 May 1955, the LSSR's CM established the restoration of certain rights to political prisoners who had been found to have been repressed unjustifiably. This resolution stipulated that the time unlawfully spent in places of imprisonment was to be included in the length of service and obliged the executive committees of city and district councils of the councils of deputies of the working people (hereafter referred to as 'CDWP') to provide these citizens with housing on a priority basis. It was stipulated that this resolution had to apply retroactively to persons who had been fully rehabilitated prior to the adoption of this resolution.<sup>41</sup>

A resolution on people recognised as having been deported illegally was signed shortly afterwards. On 14 December 1953 the Chairman of the LSSR's CM, Mečislovas Gedvilas, signed a resolution On the restitution of confiscated property to persons whose administrative eviction has been abolished. The executive committees of cities and districts of the CDWP were obliged to process requests of these people and to take decisions in accordance with the established procedure. The procedure of property restitution was the following: if the property had not been sold, it was to be restored in kind; if the property had been sold, restitution of a similar property in kind was to be made, if possible, and if not, restitution in cash.<sup>42</sup> However, it is important to note that the number of persons recognised as having been unlawfully repressed was very small.

<sup>39</sup> LSSR MVD I spec. skyriaus viršininko pavaduotojo D. Nosovo raportas [Report from D. Nosov, deputy chief of special unit I of LSSR's MVD], 23-07-1954, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 421, l. 105.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103-106.

<sup>41</sup> LSSR MT nutarimas dėl neteisėtai represuotųjų teisių [Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR on illegally repressed rights], 26-05-1955, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 653, l. 40, 41 ap.

<sup>42</sup> LSSR MT nutarimas dėl konfiskuoto turto grąžinimo tvarkos piliečiams, kuriems atšauktas administracinis iškeldinimas [Resolution by LSSR's CM On the restitution of confiscated property to persons whose administrative eviction has been abolished], 14-12-1953, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 371, l. 2, 3.



In 1954, re-examination of files of political prisoners started. The first prisoners to be released were those who were incapacitated and whose sentences had expired, while others had their sentences shortened or replaced by exile. However, deportees who had been in captivity for many years rushed home in defiance of the prohibitions, longing for their homeland and their relatives. According to the LSSR authorities, by 15 October 1956, more than 2,000 families (about 8,000 people) had returned to Lithuania arbitrarily.<sup>43</sup> Political prisoners and deportees rushed to freedom as fast as they could, especially those who had gone through the hell of 1941. It is painful to read their pleas, both because of their tragic fates and because the Soviets have broken them down morally and made them beg for release.

P. A. (born in 1897) and his family were deported to Siberia in June 1941. In 1950, he wrote to Justas Paleckis, Chairman of the Presidium of the LSSR's SS:

Dear Leader of our people, I am appealing to you for the third time for your intercession. My wife and three of our children died in Siberia, and I was prosecuted on trumped-up charges in Kraslag on 9 November 1941, for the past 10 years this case has been under interrogation. Wherever I send my request, I always hit the wall, my requests are passed from one institution to another, like ping-pong, from Herod to Pilate, but it does not make it any easier for me, and my sufferings continue. I plead with you, the leader of the people, only that I be convicted if I am guilty, or that I be set free but not buried alive. In nine years I have not received a single reply from the USSR's Prosecutor General, although I have written to him at least ten times. I am not asking – I am rather begging you to take notice of an innocent victim and release me to my homeland as a freeman.<sup>44</sup>

It is important to note here that P. A. was in fact sentenced to 10 years of forced labour in a labour camp by the decision of the special consultation of the USSR's NKGB (i.e. people's commissariat for state security) on 7 February 1942, but it seems that at the time the Soviets had more important things on their hands during the war, and this decision was not communicated to the prisoner in Kraslag. After his imprisonment in Krasnoyarsk region in Reshoty, and from 1944 onwards in Yeniseilag in the same region in 1952, P.A. was exiled, and returned to Lithuania only in 1957.<sup>45</sup> The hearing of cases of the June 1941 deportees was very slow. Although the cases of 1954–1955 deportees were already being re-examined, only about 100 people who had been exiled to the Altai region or Yakutia were allowed to return from exile each year. Due to the social status of June 1941 deportation victims, the examination their cases were even more delayed than those of the post-war deportees<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> Eugenijus Grunskis, „Lietuvos gyventojų trėmimai“ [“Deportations of the People of Lithuania”], in: *Lietuvos gyventojų trėmimai, Lietuvos gyventojų trėmimai 1940–1941, 1944–1953 metais sovietinės okupacinės valdžios dokumentuose* [Deportations of the people of Lithuania, deportations of the people of Lithuania in 1940–1941, 1944–1953 in the documents of the Soviet authorities], Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 1995, p. 103.

<sup>44</sup> Prašymas iš baudžiamosios bylos [Request from a criminal case], in: *LVA*, f. K-1, ap. 58, b. 42880/3, t. 5, l. 58, 58 ap.

<sup>45</sup> *Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas* [Genocide of the People of Lithuania], vol. 1 (A–Ž), p.105, 106.

<sup>46</sup> *Didžiosios tremtys: Altajus ir Jakutija. 1941 m.* [The Largest Deportations: Altai and Yakutia], compiled by Benas Navauskas, Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, 2021, p. 70.

## Cooperation Between the Communist Party and Repressive Structures in Decision-Making Regarding Returning Political Prisoners and Deportees

The hope that the release of the deportees would be accelerated was given by Khrushchev's report On overcoming the personality cult and its consequences, which was presented at the 20th CPSU congress in February 1956. In organisations and collective farms, unwanted questions were put to activists, e.g. why did the political bureau of the CPSU's CC warrant the mass murder of people, was Stalin responsible for the scale of the deportations from Lithuania, were the repressions from Lithuania in 1945–1950 legitimate?<sup>47</sup>

On 30 June 1956, the CPSU's CC at its plenary adopted a resolution that opened the way to freedom for millions of prisoners and deportees from Stalin's gulags. However, the authorities in Soviet Lithuania did their utmost to make sure that the road home for the liberated Lithuanians was covered with thorns. From the outset, the CPSU's CC adopted a reserved standing regarding the Stalin's cult. For the left-wing leadership of the LCP, which matured before the Second World War, Stalin's political course was acceptable, as was the ideology of the class struggle, which had intensified under socialism, and the policy of forcibly breaking down the social fabric associated with repression.<sup>48</sup> The Lithuanian SSR leadership resisted the 'more lenient' tendencies for a long time, for example, by stopping the return of the repressed to Lithuania until 1957 (after the departure of people of other nationalities from the places of exile, the Lithuanians accounted for almost a third of the total number of deportees in the USSR; in contrast to Russia, the facts of repression, exile, and the victims of the repression in Lithuania did not find their way into either fiction or historical books.<sup>49</sup> For example, 1,173 Lithuanians were released from exile in the Altai region and Yakutia, and 892 in 1957.<sup>50</sup> When the mass release began, 618 Lithuanians in 1956 and 1,006 in 1957 were released from Buryatia. Release from exile often did not entail the authorisation to return to Lithuania. Many families did not have the means to travel and start a new life in Lithuania, thus remaining in Buryatia for several years. Therefore, out of 618 people released in 1956, only 223 returned to Lithuania, and in 1957 there were 664 returnees.<sup>51</sup>

As the return from imprisonment and exile was gaining momentum, the LCP authorities and its repressive structures were the first to express concern about this. Lithuania's

<sup>47</sup> Regina Laukaitytė, „Stalino asmens kulto adaptacija ir demontavimas Lietuvos SSR (1944–1961 m.)“ [“Adaptation and Dismantling of Stalin's Cult in the Lithuanian SSR”], in: *Stalininis režimas Lietuvoje 1944–1953 m.* [Stalin's Regime in Lithuania 1944–1953], compiled by R. Laukaitytė, Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2014, p. 168.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>49</sup> Vytautas Tininis, *Sniečkus: 33 metai valdžioje* [Sniečkus: 33 Years in Power], Vilnius: 2000, pp. 140–141.

<sup>50</sup> *Didžiosios tremtys: Altajus ir Jakutija...* [The Largest Deportations: Altai and Yakutia], p. 70.

<sup>51</sup> *Didžiosios tremtys: Buriatija. 1948 m.* [The Largest Deportations: Buryatia], editor in chief: Dalė Rudienė, Vilnius: Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras, Vilnius, 2018, p. 32.

communists did not wait for the returnees; the deportees did not find the Lithuania of their dreams. Anušauskas points out that not only the deportations were never condemned (the cases of the deportees were reviewed by the same organisers of the genocide of the Lithuanian people, such as Kazys Preikšas, Alfonsas Gailevičius, etc.), but they were continued to be regarded as an important political action. The communists were more concerned about the colonists coming to build industrial giant facilities in Lithuania than about the fate of the Lithuanians who had suffered and were still suffering in Siberia.<sup>52</sup> Other members of the Soviet repressions also took part in the decision-making by the Commission on the release of the deportees, these were: Karolis Didžiulis, the 1945 commissioner of the council of people's commissars of the LSSR and the LCP's CC in charge of confiscating the property of the deportees in the Trakai and Kretinga counties, Stasys Naujalis, an employee of the LSSR's NKVD in July 1940–June 1941, NKVD Col. Jonas Vildžiūnas, chief of the LSSR's NKVD Vilnius city board in September 1940–June 1941, member of the operational trio for the deportation of people of Lithuania in Vilnius city and county on 14 June 1941, Kazimieras Liaudis – Commissioner for deportations of the LSSR's CM and the LCP's CC in Zarasai, Rokiškis, Utena, Anykščiai, Ukmergė counties in 1948–1950, and in 1950–1953 in Klaipėda region, and Leonardas Martavičius – one of the main organisers of the Lithuanian genocide and perpetrator of the repressions. It is characteristic that virtually all the members of the Commissions in 1953–1957 were genocide organisers and perpetrators of repressions.

Correspondence between the communist authorities and the KGB shows that they were deeply concerned about the return of political prisoners and deportees. The LSSR's KGB representative in Kaunas, Capt. Bronius Baliulis, in his note of March 1955 to E. Kasnauskaitė, Secretary of the LCP Kaunas city committee, stated that from the beginning of 1954 to May 1955, 636 persons who had been convicted of anti-Soviet crimes returned to Kaunas city. The KGB official notes that according to their agency's data, the former President of Lithuania, Aleksandras Stulginskis, has gone to visit his family in the Altai region and was planning to bring them back to Kaunas. It is mentioned that the former Minister of Education, Juozas Tankūnas, had gone to his family in Kazakhstan and was trying to bring them back to Kaunas, that the leader of the Nationalists' Party, Zigmas Toliušis, would come to Kaunas, as would the active Social Democrat Valys Drazdauskas, the former nationalists Jankauskas, Viskanta, Butvydis and others. The Kaunas KGB had no doubt that the arrival of such prominent figures would activate the hostile element in the city and was asked to appeal to the LCP's CC and the LSSR's CM to prohibit people in this category from settling down in Kaunas.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 274.

<sup>53</sup> LSSR KGB Kauno m. įgaliotinio Baliulio pažyma apie atvykusius gyventi į Kauną buvusius politinius kalinius [Note from the LSSR's KGB Kaunas city commissioner Baliulis on former political prisoners who came to live in Kaunas], 28-02-1955, in: *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 192, b. 51, l. 223–228.

In her report letter, E. Kasnauskaitė, secretary of the Kaunas city committee of LCP, informs the secretary of the LCP's CC, A. Sniečkus, about the anti-Soviet actions on 2 November 1955 in the Kaunas central cemetery, where a crowd of the faithful made their way to the monument to the fallen Lithuanian volunteers of 1918–1920, sang the Lithuanian national anthem and the song *Where the Šešupė River Runs*, with an anti-Soviet chorus. In her letter, Kasnauskaitė also complained that the KGB had failed to identify who hoisted the Lithuanian three-colour flag on 16 February 1955 at the Town Hall, who sprayed sulphuric acid on Soviet flags hoisted on several houses on 1 May 1955, and many other similar facts. In view of all this, the communist leader of the LCP Kaunas branch noted that 1,315 political prisoners had already returned to Kaunas and that not enough was being done to identify the deeply entrenched hostile element, the returning bourgeois party figures. It was mentioned that the following camp returnees were living in Kaunas: the former General Secretary of the Nationalists Party Simonas Janavičius, the former leader of the Christian Democrats Leonas Bistras (anti-Soviet), the former Ambassador to France Petras Klimas, the former leader of the Nationalists Z. Toliušis, and the active Social Democrat V. Drazdauskas. It was noted that the presence of these and similar persons in Kaunas escalates the hostile element, and it was requested to arrange, through the LSSR's CM, that prominent figures of bourgeois Lithuania, convicted of anti-Soviet activities, be forbidden to reside in Kaunas. A request was also made to mediate through the higher organs of the Soviet Union that Kaunas should have the status of a regime (passport control) city.<sup>54</sup>

On 5 December 1956 Sniečkus signed a top-secret resolution of the LCP CC's bureau, asking the CPSU CC's Presidium to adopt an order forbidding former Lithuanian government representatives, party leaders, active members of nationalist organisations and armed groups, who had been convicted for treason of the homeland (the homeland in this case meant the Soviet Union – *author's note*), to return to Lithuania. Moscow did not adopt the requested decision but recommended that the fate of the returnees should be decided by a new commission under the Presidium of the LSSR's SS.<sup>55</sup> The CPSU CC's Bureau also asked the USSR CC to include Kaunas in the list of regime cities by the above-mentioned resolution on the grounds that many hostile elements were returning to Kaunas.<sup>56</sup> This request was granted, and on 17 December 1956, by a resolution of the USSR's CM, a passport regime came into force in Kaunas, prohibiting former political prisoners from getting settled in the city.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> LKP Kauno m. sekretorės E. Kasnauskaitės ataskaitinis raštas LKP CK sekretoriui A. Sniečkui [Report from LCP Kaunas city secretary E. Kasnauskaitė to LCP CC secretary A. Sniečkus], 12-11-1955, in: *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 192, b. 51, l. 74–76.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* l. 106, 107.

<sup>56</sup> LKP CK biuro nutarimas [Resolution of LCP CC bureau], 05-11-1956, in: *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 190, b. 10, l. 101–103.

<sup>57</sup> Kristina Burinskaitė, „Režimo priešininkų represavimo ir persekiojimo tendencijos po 1954 m.“ [“Post-1954 Trends in Repression and Persecution of Dissidents of the Regime”], in: *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2012, Nr. 1(31), p. 113.

Against increasing numbers of returning deportees and political prisoners measures were taken to stop this. These measures were also influenced by the escalation of anti-Soviet activity in Lithuania after the Hungarian uprising in 1956, and the 1956 All Souls' Day actions in Kaunas and Vilnius. The 1956 events in Hungary caused concern for the Soviet authorities about the stability of the system and encouraged them to take actions to prevent a repetition.

On 25 December 1956 the 2nd Secretary of the LCP's CC, Boris Sharkov, wrote a top-secret note to the highest authority of the Soviet Union, the CPSU's CC. (The 2nd secretary was one of the most important and influential posts in Soviet Lithuania. Usually, it was a person sent from Moscow, who had no connection with Lithuania and did not speak Lithuanian, who had to supervise the processes inside the republic. In society, this position was called 'governor general').<sup>58</sup> In this note it was said that more than 15,000 persons who had been convicted of various counter-revolutionary crimes, including leaders of bourgeois parties, senior officials of the Lithuanian bourgeois government, members of armed groups and the national underground, their associates and supporters, and senior Catholic clergy and priests, returned to Lithuania from places of detention. It was noted also that according to the information available to the LCP's CC some of those returnees have not renounced their hostile views and were getting themselves organised for the national underground movement in Vilnius, Kaunas and other places in the republic. Prison returnees were also exerting a harmful influence on politically wavering youth.<sup>59</sup> The note also pointed out that the LSSR's KGB under LSSR's CM were unable to cope with an increasing workload and to suppress the nationalist element with the staff and structure it had at the time. The note stressed that, in terms of posts and funding, the then KGB apparatchiks (i.e. agents) in Kaunas and Klaipėda cities were regarded in the same way as KGB apparatuses in districts, which hindered recruitment of experienced chekist cadres to the apparatuses of these cities. Therefore, the LCP's CC was requesting from USSR's KGB: to regard the KGBs of Kaunas and Klaipėda in terms of posts and funding as operational departments of the LSSR, and to provide for additional posts in the LSSR's KGB: 50 officer posts, 21 sergeant posts, and 41 civil servant posts.<sup>60</sup> At the end of 1956, in response to a request from the leaders of the LCP, the USSR leadership authorised an increase in the number of staff at the LSSR's KGB.

The secretaries of the LCP district committees reported to the LCP secretary, A. Sniečkus, on the political situation in the districts related to the return of political prisoners and deportees. For example, on 5 March 1957, secretary of Pasvalys district committee of

<sup>58</sup> Vytautas Tininis, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>59</sup> LKP CK sekretoriaus B. Šarkovo raštas SSKP Centro komitetui [Note from LCP CC secretary B. Sharkov to CPSU central committee], 25-12-1956, in: *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 190, b. 10, l. 130, 131.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 131.

the LCP, J. Novickas, sent a top-secret letter to A. Sniečkus titled Political information on the behaviour of returnees from exile and prisons. The letter noted that in 1956–1957, 85 persons convicted under Article 58 of the Penal Code (i.e. political prisoners) had returned to the Pasvalys district after serving their sentences, and 26 families had returned from exile. The note mentioned that:

[...] most of them keep a low profile, staying out of politics. However, 4 citizens have emerged who have started to promote anti-Soviet agitation, basically against the collective farms. There have been incidents when people who have served their sentences attempted to reclaim their former homes, which do not belong to them now, and have tried to evict honest collective farm workers, former *paupers*, who live in those homes by threatening them. For example, Juozas Karinauskas returned to the collective farm of March 8th after serving his 10-years' prison sentence. Karinauskas spread rumours among the collective farm workers that America would soon come and that he would get even with the chairman of the collective farm and the Soviet-oriented collective farm workers he did not like. To prevent Karinauskas' anti-Soviet actions, we exercised the right of expulsion for threats granted to the district prosecutor's office and the people's court. On 20 February 1957, the people's court of Pasvalys district ruled that Karinauskas should be exiled for 3 years to Irkutsk region with permanent accommodation.

**The secretary of the Pasvalys district committee of the LCP notes that:**

[...] The verdict made a very strong political impression in the district, especially among returnees from prison. All those who had recently been engaging in anti-Soviet speech immediately bit their tongues. But the communists in the countryside, the honest collective farm workers, and especially those who live in the houses nationalised from former kulaks or bandit families, are very positive about this verdict of the people's court and have increased their efficiency.<sup>61</sup>

**Information of a similar nature On attacks by anti-Soviet hostile elements in the Raseiniai district was sent on 26 January 1957 by S. Malinauskas, Secretary of the LCP Raseiniai district committee, to the LCP's CC. The letter, marked "Top Secret", said that:**

[...] recently, in connection with the events in Hungary and Egypt,<sup>62</sup> national elements, in particular former bandits and their associates who are returnees from places of imprisonment and exile, have intensified their activities. In total there are 134 bandits and their associates who have returned to the district. A number of them are currently trying to demoralise and intimidate collective farm workers by threats and anti-Soviet rumours and are carrying out hostile anti-Soviet propaganda. For example, Pranas Liba, an associate of bandits, was sentenced to 25 years. He has now returned and lives on the *Tarybiniu keliu* collective farm. He has declared that when the time comes, just as it happened in Hungary, he will be the first to join the struggle for liberation.

**Secretary Malinauskas notes that with the rise of nationalist elements in the district, there is a shortage of KGB officers (only 4) who could prevent hostile elements from spre-**

<sup>61</sup> LKP Pasvalio RK sekretoriaus J. Novicko raštas A. Sniečkui [Letter from J. Novickas, secretary of district committee of LCP Pasvalys district committee, to A. Sniečkus], 05-03-1957, in: *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 193, b. 22, l. 31, 32.

<sup>62</sup> After Egypt nationalised the Suez Canal in July 1956 and forbade Israel to use it, Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula on 29 October 1956 and occupied most of it, including the Gaza Strip and the coasts of the Gulf of Aqaba (*author's note*).



**Fig. 5.** The deportees are returning to Lithuania in the same cattle wagons they were deported to exile. Tulun in Tulunsky District of Irkutsk Oblast in 1957  
From the archives of the LGGRTC's "Exile and Places of Imprisonment" program



**Fig. 6.** A family that returned to Lithuania after 10 years of exile, sitting by their house, which another family had already moved into. Prienai District, 1958  
From the collections of the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights

ading. The number of militia in the district is also too small – 10 people in total. Malinauskas also informs the LCP's CC that the situation with weapons in the district is unsatisfactory: "the KGB staff have only 2 machine guns, the militia are armed with pistols only, and they have no other combat weapons. Moreover, there is a shortage of pistols to arm the district activists."<sup>63</sup>

The return of the repressed was influenced both negatively and positively by famous Lithuanian people, cultural figures, and writers. It is important to note that in order to justify repression, imprisonment and exile, the communist authorities sought the support of well-known Lithuanian cultural figures. Hatred towards deportees was incited deliberately. For example, on 26 May 1948 the 20th issue of the *Literatūra ir menas*, published four days after the mass deportation of 40,000 people, well-known writers unreservedly called for a crackdown on the 'enemy'. Juozas Baltušis wrote that Lithuania "can no longer endure despicable slugs". Julius Butėnas argued that the Lithuanian people "demand to be cleansed of all the disgusting parasites".<sup>64</sup> There were also cases to the contrary. Writer Antanas Vienuolis was involved in politics and was elected deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR three times – in 1947, 1951 and 1955. It is known that he transferred money, medicines, food parcels and Lithuanian books to his compatriots in labour camps and in exile or to their relatives in Lithuania. He used his status to help some of them return to Lithuania. Some 50 people received some form of assistance from the writer. Juozas Keliuotis, publisher and editor of the cultural magazine *Naujoji Romuva*, Kazys Inčiūra, writer, Vladas Mongirdas, physician, and his relatives, among others, returned to Lithuania through Vienuolis' efforts. It is also known that Vienuolis had prepared a speech on the issue of the return of deportees to Lithuania for the session of the Lithuanian SSR held on 12–13 March 1957. In this speech, which has survived to this date, the writer stated that:

[...] the return of deportees would have a positive impact on the agricultural and industrial boom in our country. It goes without saying that if deportees are allowed to return, they should be provided with houses in the countryside and apartments in towns, and that they should be allowed to settle down and find work with the help of the government. On the basis of what has been said here, I would like to ask the Soviet Government to allocate some budgetary funds for the resettlement and employment of returnees and to ensure that their terrible situation of

<sup>63</sup> LKP Raseinių r. komiteto sekretoriaus S. Malinausko raštas Lietuvos KP Centro komitetui [Note from S. Malinauskas, secretary of LCP Raseiniai district committee to the Lithuanian CP central committee], 26-01-1957, in: *LVA*, f. 1771, ap. 193, b. 22, l. 68–70.

<sup>64</sup> Kęstutis Girmius, „Ar lietuviai buvo sovietų genocido auka?“ [“Were Lithuanians Victims of the Soviet Genocide?”], online: <https://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/k-girmius-ar-lietuviai-buvo-sovietu-genocido-auka-75538979> (07-02-2024)



having no rights to claim even their own dilapidated huts is never to be repeated”.<sup>65</sup>

Unfortunately, this speech was not delivered. Writer A. Vienuolis said:

“...at the fifth session of the Supreme Soviet I wanted to make a speech on the matter of the deportees, but on Sunday Antanas Venclova and Kostas Korsakas came to see me to advise against speaking, because my interventions would never go down well. I did not speak, but after the session I went to the Presidium (meaning the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the LSSR) and gave the speech I had written to my friend Justas Paleckis<sup>66</sup>.

In this way Vienuolis was hushed, and the ideological communists took care that the writer did not wonder off ‘the straight and narrow’. As early as on 21 December 1956 Venclova, the chair of Lithuanian Soviet writers union, contacted Sniečkus, stressing that “Vienuolis is under ‘attack’ in Anykščiai by local clerical forces”, asking for an apartment in Vilnius be provided for our most senior writer, and stressing that “it is in our own interests to demand that writer Vienuolis lived in a healthier environment.”<sup>67</sup> According to some sources, in 1957 Vienuolis was given an apartment in Vilnius, but he lived in a ‘healthier environment’ for a very short period of time – he died on 17 August 1957.<sup>68</sup> There are more known cases of writers helping deportees. Writer Teofilis Tilvytis helped Šapokienė to retain her freedom after fleeing from exile (two Šapokienė’s daughters had already been secretly smuggled back to Lithuania by her husband). Writer Ieva Simonaitytė sought ways to convey to Paleckis a request for the return of the parents of Evangelical Lutheran priest Jurgis Gavėnas, who had been exiled to Tajikistan (they had been repressed as Germans in 1945 and died there soon after).<sup>69</sup> The multi-volume continuous publication *Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas* (in English: *the Genocide of the Lithuanian Population*) features Albina Šapokienė, a teacher who was deported in 1941, with her daughters Vida Marija and Skaidrė Gražina, who escaped from exile in 1947. It is likely that it was T. Tilvytis who helped them. Marijona Šapokienė, who had been deported with her children in 1945 and returned to Lithuania in 1947 after escaping from exile, is also mentioned in this LGGRTC publication. However, this family suffered further repression. On 29 December 1948, M. Šapokienė was arrested and imprisoned in Utena, Vilnius, and Šilutė. On 2 March 1949,

<sup>65</sup> Inga Liepaitė, Antanas Verbickas, „Kodėl A. Vienuolis 1957 m. LSSR Aukščiausioje Taryboje nepasakė kalbos, raginančios leisti tremtiniams grįžti į Lietuvą?“ [“Why didn’t A. Vienuolis make his speech at the LSSR’s Supreme Soviet calling for authorisation to deportees to return to Lithuania?”], online: <https://www.15min.lt/gyvenimas/naujiena/ar-zinai/kodel-a-vienuolis-1957-m-lysr-auksciausiojoje-taryboje-nepasake-kalbos-raginancios-leisti-tremtiniams-grizti-i-lietuva-1634-1285206> (07/02/2024).

<sup>66</sup> Inga Liepaitė, Antanas Verbickas, *op. cit.*

<sup>67</sup> Lietuvos tarybinių rašytojų sąjungos valdybos pirmininko A. Venclovos raštas A. Sniečkui [Note from A. Venclova, chair of the board of the Lithuanian Soviet writers union to A. Sniečkus], 21-11-1957, in: *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 193, b. 25, l. 167.

<sup>68</sup> The house No. 3 on A. Goštauto street in Vilnius has a memorial plaque indicating that in 1957 the folk writer Antanas Vienuolis-Žukauskas lived there (author’s note).

<sup>69</sup> Regina Laukaitytė, *Pokaris Lietuvoje belaukiant išlaisvinimo* [Post-War in Lithuania Awaiting Liberation], Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas, 2022, p. 272.

she was sentenced to three years in a labour camp and released on 23 March 1951. Her daughter Palmyra, who had secretly returned with her mother from exile, was arrested on 13 September 1949, imprisoned in Utena, released on 24 February 1951, and son Mykolas was arrested on 29 December 1948, imprisoned in Utena, Vilnius. On 2 March 1949, he was sentenced to three years in a labour camp, released on 20 March 1951 (together with his mother, he was imprisoned in Šilutė labour camp).<sup>70</sup> Antanina Baltrušienė, June 1941 deportee, mentions that when she returned from exile in 1956, she met her great spiritual leaders, namely writers Sofija Kymantaitė–Čiurlionienė and Vincas Mykolaitis–Putinas, whom she had known from her gymnasium and university years. She notes that:

[...] they both wanted to help, to intercede, but in those years of general wrath it was not possible, because they were both "*persona non grata*" (unwanted persons). The years passed and I started to establish myself in my homeland, although with great obstacles; I could still not get myself registered, I did not get a more suitable job. I earned my living by giving private lessons.<sup>71</sup>

On 27 April 1957 Chairman of the LSSR's KGB, Maj. Gen. K. Liaudis sent a report to the LCP's CC on LSSR's KGB activities in 1956–1957 in which he emphasised an increasingly active anti-Soviet and nationalist activities triggered by more than 17,000 returnees from the camps and exile recently who had previously been convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes. Among the returnees there were former political figures and officials of bourgeois Lithuania, active members of anti-Soviet parties and organisations, former partisans, and members of underground organisations, as well as authoritative Catholic clergymen and priests, some of whom did not renounce their hostile attitude towards the Soviet government. The list included the former leader of the Nationalists' Party, Z. Toliušis, the former Ambassador to France, P. Klimas, the former diplomats Tadas Petkevičius and Vladas Nosevičius, the Commander of the Lithuanian Liberty Army (LLA), General Pečiulionis, the former Chairman of the Christian Democratic Party and Prime Minister, Leonas Bistras, the former Chairman of the Nationalists Party, Domas Cesevičius, as well as other participants in anti-Soviet parties and organisations. Also mentioned were former participants in armed groups and the national underground, their supporters and associates, authoritative Catholic clergy (Bishops Teofilus Matulionis, Pranciškus Ramanauskas, Canon Vincentas Vizgirda, Priest Petras Rauda). It was argued that some of the returnees have not renounced their hostility towards the Soviet government, and are having a harmful effect on a wavering section of society, especially the youth.<sup>72</sup> Liaudis also noted that the KGB, for its part, has reviewed some cases of partisans and leaders of

<sup>70</sup> *Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas [Genocide of the People of Lithuania]*, t. 1 (A–Ž), 1997, p. 797, t. 2., (Š–Ž), p. 21, 22.

<sup>71</sup> Antanina Baltrušienė, *Kelionė į niekur ir atgal: Atsiminimai [A Journey into Nowhere and Back: Memoirs]*, Kaunas: Naujasis lankas, 1993, p. 141.

<sup>72</sup> LSSR KGB pirmininko K. Liaudžio ataskaita LKP CK sekretoriui A. Sniečkui [Report from K. Liaudis, Chair of the LSSR's KGB, to LCP CC secretary A. Sniečkus], 29-04-1957, in: *LVA*, f. 1771, ap. 190, b. 11, l. 24–48.

anti-Soviet organisations who, in the KGB's view, were released after serving incomplete sentences and returned to Lithuania. It noted that it would be appropriate to expel these persons either to places of detention or from Lithuania. In 1956 and in early 1957, some 40 of such individuals were identified, 13 of whom were sent back to labour camps to serve their full sentences.<sup>73</sup>

Based on the activity report of the LSSR's KGB in 1956 and the first half of 1957, on 10 July 1957 the Bureau of the LCP's CC adopted Resolution No. 79/8. It noted, among other things, the poorly organised work with ex-convicts for counter-revolutionary crimes and returnees from prisons and labour camps. It stressed that some of them remained hostile, re-established their criminal links, were gathering hostile elements around them, inciting politically wavering persons to anti-Soviet sentiments and calling upon them to fight against the Soviet authorities. Moreover, it pointed out that special attention should be paid to the returnees from imprisonment and exile who used to be prominent figures of bourgeois Lithuanian, members of bourgeois parties and anti-Soviet organisations, some of whom were currently active in the building of a highly-secret underground in Lithuania, primarily in Kaunas, Vilnius, Šiauliai, Klaipėda, and Panevėžys.<sup>74</sup> The Bureau of the LCP's CC concluded that the city and district committees of the LCP failed to gain sufficient insight into the KGB activities, do not regularly manage the KGB and do not provide the necessary assistance to the KGB service. The Bureau of the LCP's CC decided to propose to the city and district committees of the LCP to take care of finding employment for returnees from prisons, labour camps and exile pardoned and released by the Soviet government, and to improve the political-indoctrination work among them. The Bureau of LCP's CC also instructed the KGB city and district branches to monitor more closely the returned political prisoners and to prosecute them should they continue their hostile activities. It also ordered city and district committees of LCP to intensify their mass-political activities in society, to expose the essence of reactionary bourgeois ideology, to denounce them, with concrete facts, as agents of the imperialists waiting for the comeback of the capitalist order for the benefit of workers, and to strike decisively in response to all hostile excesses. This resolution of the Bureau of the LCP's CC was signed by the Chairman of this Bureau, Secretary of the LCP's CC, A. Sniečkus.<sup>75</sup>

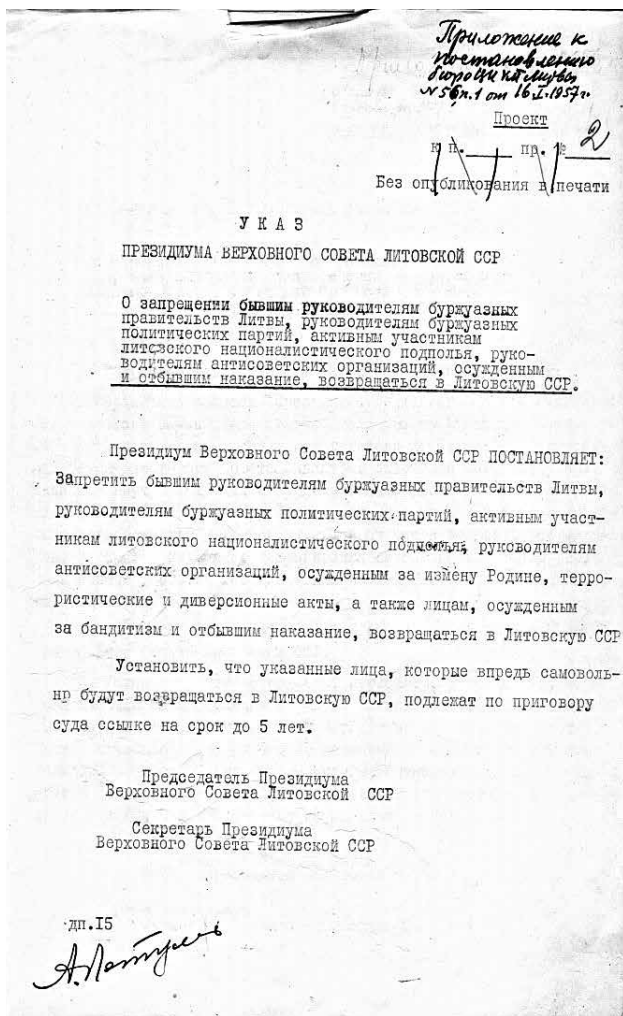
Most deportees (about 86% of all those released) were released without restitution of confiscated property.<sup>76</sup> They had to start their lives from scratch. Moreover, returnees were subject to discrimination: they were denied registration and employment, forbidden

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 41.

<sup>74</sup> LKP CK biuro nutarimas Nr. 49/8 [Resolution No. 49/8 of the LCP CC Bureau], 10-07-1957, in: *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 190, b. 11, l. 4–6.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 10, 20.

<sup>76</sup> Eugenijus Grunskis, *Lietuvos gyventojų... [of the people of Lithuania]*, p. 607.



**Fig. 7.** A decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR banning political prisoners who had served their sentences from returning to the Lithuanian SSR, which was approved at a meeting of the Central Committee office of the Lithuanian Communist Party. 16 January 1957

From the Lithuanian Special Archives

to live in the same districts wherefrom they had been expelled, prevented from taking up managerial posts, and from travelling abroad. Some categories of civil servants in independent Lithuania were denied recognition of their length of service in Lithuania, so they did not receive pensions and were left without any source of livelihood.<sup>77</sup> Unable to survive in their homeland under such conditions, some returned to the former places of exile, others settled in Latvia, Belarus, and Kaliningrad region trying to be as close to their home as possible. The deportee V. Rimkus mentions that “those people who got tired of trying to get themselves registered headed to East Prussia, Latvia, some returned to Russia or even to Siberia.”<sup>78</sup> The following comparison came to mind during this research: the expulsion of a family is like uprooting of a tree with all its roots and the transfer to Siberia. There, the tree withered, suffered, and then, on its return to Lithuania, it was not allowed to re-establish its root in the customary soil of its homeland. It had to look for another place, another soil to save itself from death <...> In the saddest cases, there was no longer place in Lithuania for the former repressed.

### **Return of Deportees and Political Prisoners to Lithuania in 1957: New Opportunities and New Prohibitions**

Since the Commission under the LSSR's CM was formally unable to make decisions on deportees in accordance with the orders of the USSR's Supreme Soviet (SS) and the directives of the repressive structures, the Commission for the review of the deportees' cases was established under the Presidium of Lithuanian SSR's SS in 1957. On 16 January 1957 the Presidium of the LSSR's SS adopted a decree On the establishment of a commission for the review of the cases of deportees who were deported in accordance with the decisions of the USSR NKVD–NKGB special meeting. The task of the Commission was to review the cases of deportees exiled in accordance with the decisions of the former USSR's MGB–NKVD special consultative meeting and in accordance with the individual directives of these bodies. On 21 January 1957 the Commission was established by order of the Presidium of the LSSR's SS with the following composition: the deputy chairman of the LSSR CM (chairman of the commission), the chairman of the LSSR's KGB, the chief prosecutor, the minister of the interior, and the chairman of the supreme court.<sup>79</sup> In principle, the new Commission consisted of the same members as the commissions under the LSSR's CM,

<sup>77</sup> *Lietuvos gyventojai lageriuose ir tremtyje: 3 knyga, 1940–1958: Kasdienybės vaizdai* [People from Lithuania in Labour Camps and Exile: Book 3, 1940–1958: Images from Every Day Life], compiled by Virginija Rudienė, Vilnius: Lietuvos nacionalinis muziejus, 2018, pp. 388–389.

<sup>78</sup> V. Rimkus, *Tremtis – patirtis dabarčiai ir ateičiai: Sibiro Alma Mater* [Exile – Experience for the Present and the Future: the Siberian Alma Mater], Šiaulių universiteto leidykla, 2009, p. 18.

<sup>79</sup> LSSR AT prezidiumo įsakas „Dėl komisijos sudarymo...“ [Decree by the LSSR's SS Praesidium On the establishment of the commission], 16-01-1957, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 421, l. 97–99.

with the only difference being that the newly established Commission under the Presidium of the LSSR's SS was of a higher rank in the Soviet governmental framework and could decide on the fate of deportees in accordance with the decisions of the Communist government and repressive structures of the USSR. This should have accelerated the release of deportees from exile. However, the Lithuanian communist authorities were frightened by the increasing number of returnees from repression, especially after the recent Hungarian uprising. This uprising lasted from 23 October to 10 November 1956. Around 3,000 Hungarian rebels were killed in its suppression. Incidentally, the Hungarian uprising was in turn linked to the crackdown on workers' protests in Poznan, Poland, in June 1956, in which around 100 protesters were killed. It was on 23 October 1956 that students from the Technical University of Budapest staged a demonstration in solidarity with the Polish workers' uprising in Poznan.

The protests in Poland and the Hungarian uprising mainly scared the Ukrainian communist government. By 10 October 1956 the MVD of the Ukrainian SSR had registered more than 45,000 returnees to the western provinces, including 39,000 convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes. In addition, there were around 50,000 Hungarians living in the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine, many of whom were anti-Soviet – a sentiment that was reinforced by the Hungarian uprising. Thus, while the Hungarian uprising was still ongoing, the Presidium of the Ukrainian SSR's SS adopted an order on 9 November 1956 “forbidding former leaders and active members of the Ukrainian nationalist underground, who had been convicted and had completed their sentences, to return to the western regions of Soviet Ukraine. Violation of the order was punishable by five years' imprisonment.”<sup>80</sup>

The Lithuanian Soviet authorities were also afraid of a possible greater anti-Soviet escalation in Lithuania with the return of an increasing number of resistance fighters, and they were especially frightened by the protests in the old Vilnius Rasos and Kaunas cemeteries on 2 November 1956 held in solidarity with the Hungarian uprising. Without further ado, on 21 January 1957, the Presidium the LSSR's SS issued a similar decree, banning the return to Lithuania of former leaders of Lithuanian bourgeois governments, leaders of bourgeois political parties, active participants in the Lithuanian nationalist underground, leaders of anti-Soviet organisations, those convicted of treason, terrorist and subversive acts, and those convicted of banditry who had served their sentences. Moreover, the decree stipulated that the above-mentioned persons, if they would return in the future to the Lithuanian SSR arbitrarily, were to be imprisoned for up to 5 years by a court sentence. This decree was signed by the chairman of the Presidium LSSR's SC, J. Paleckis.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>80</sup> A. Weiner, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

<sup>81</sup> LSSR AT prezidiumo įsakas „Dėl uždraudimo grįžti į Lietuvą...“ [Decree by the LSSR's SS Preasidium On prohibition to return to Lithuania], 21-07-1957, in: *LVA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 549, l. 39.

The Latvian and Estonian authorities issued similar orders a little later, on 12 October 1957, which provided for the deportation of offenders for one to three years. The Latvian and Estonian authorities seem to have referred to the order by the Presidium of the LSSR's SS.

One of the organisers of the Lithuanian genocide, the minister of the interior A. Gailevičius (in 1940–1941 he was the head of the NKVD, later the head of the NKGB, and in 1948–1953 – deputy minister of the MGB), proposed to apply the order retroactively and to arrange a new deportation to be applied to all former deportees who returned before 21 January 1957 (he referred to this proposal as 'administrative removal'). However, the highest communist authorities of the LSSR were afraid of the resulting resistance of the population and refrained from such initiative.<sup>82</sup> On 3 April 1957, prosecutor of the LSSR, G. Bacharov, and the minister of the interior, A. Gailevičius, sent an explanatory note to their subordinates, noting that the decree of the LSSR's SS of 21 January 1957 was not retroactive, and that, based on the corresponding orders of the USSR's SS in 1952 and 1956, Lithuanian nationalists who had served their sentences and whose families had been deported were being sent for family reunification.<sup>83</sup> If we did not have the information that the minister of the interior, A. Gailevičius, himself proposed the retroactive application of this decree, he might appear in this case as an innocent interpreter of the decree of the USSR' SS.

On 1 February 1957 the heads of the repressive structures of the LSSR published this decree of the Presidium of the LSSR's SS to the prosecutors of the cities and districts of the LSSR, the heads of the militia divisions attached to the councils of workers' deputies of the cities and districts, people's courts and district commissioners of the committee for state security attached to the LSSRs CM.<sup>84</sup> In February 1957, Nikolai Dudorov, Minister of the USSR's MVD, reacting to this order of the USSR's SS, ordered all the ministers of the interior of soviet and autonomous republics, chiefs of the internal affairs boards of provinces and regions, and chiefs of correctional labour camps, to inform the above-mentioned persons, upon their release from places of repressions, of prohibition to reside in Lithuania and of the criminal liability for their arbitrary return to Lithuania. The formerly repressed persons in the above categories were ordered to sign their acknowledgement which was attached to the personal files of the people to be released.<sup>85</sup>

In addition, on 19 April 1957, a decree of the LSSR's SS On larger criminal liability for malicious violation of the passport regime was issued, stating that persons who had pas-

<sup>82</sup> Arvydas Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos...* [of the People of Lithuania], p. 380, 381.

<sup>83</sup> Petras Liubartas. *Tamsios aukštumos: LTSR milicija 1940–1987 metais* [The Dark Heights: USSR's Militia in 1940–1987], Vilnius: Versus, 2019, p. 358.

<sup>84</sup> LSSR KGB pirmininko K. Liaudžio raštas [Letter from LSSR KGB Chairman Kazimieras Liaudis], 01-02-1957, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 653, l. 34, 34 ap.

<sup>85</sup> SSRS MVD ministro N. Dudorovo raštas [Letter from USSR Minister of Internal Affairs Nikolai Dudorov], 02-1957, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 653, l. 35.

sports but who lived in areas where a special passport regime had been introduced and who had no registration, should be punishable by imprisonment for a period from six months up to two years if they have violated the passport regime after having been warned repeatedly in writing by the police authorities to leave.<sup>86</sup> This was how the right to reside in Lithuania upon return was being manipulated. The above-mentioned decrees slowed down the return of the repressed individuals, but most politicians who had survived imprisonment in the camps and exile had already returned by the beginning of 1957. The Lithuanian SSR authorities had to come to terms with this, and the KGB had to organise their surveillance and isolation from society.<sup>87</sup> On 27 March 1957 the LSSR's KGB certificate analyses the number of anti-Soviet actions (raising the three-colour flag, distributing anti-Soviet leaflets, etc.) carried out in the course of 3 months in Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda and in each Lithuanian district, in correlation with the number of returnees from labour camps. The certificate indicates that in 1957 there were 316 former political prisoners in Vilnius, 1,600 in Kaunas, 520 in Klaipėda, 660 in Panevėžys, 662 in Šiauliai and 211 in Alytus.<sup>88</sup> According to the data of the LCP's CC, in 1956–1957 more than 17 thousand people who had been convicted of the so-called counter-revolutionary activities returned to Lithuania from forced labour camps and exile, including about a thousand leaders and activists of 'nationalist' organisations.<sup>89</sup>

When the Presidium of the LSSR's SS announced the above-mentioned order of 21 January 1957, the KGB, the 'sword and shield' of the communist party, immediately joined in its implementation. As per the Party's instruction, the officials of the 4th Board of the LSSR's KGB drew a list of 60 persons present in labour camps and still in exile, who were prominent figures of Lithuanian political parties and organisations, partisan leaders and active participants in the underground, dated 12 September 1957.<sup>90</sup> The list included Andrius Raštikis, brother of General Stasys Raštikis, former minister of agriculture Juozas Skaisgiris, former minister of justice Stasys Šilingis, deputy commander of *Prisikėlimo* partisan district Jonas Jasinevičius, priest Pranas Račiūnas, Edvardas Burokas, convicted of anti-Soviet activity in 1953, and many others. Such lists were drawn up to prevent their return to Lithuania.

<sup>86</sup> Petras Liubartas. *Tamsios aukštumos...* [*The Dark Heights*], Vilnius: Versus, 2019, p. 358.

<sup>87</sup> Regina Laukaitytė, *Pokaris Lietuvoje...* [*Post-War Lithuania <...>*], p. 195.

<sup>88</sup> LSSR KGB 4-os valdybos pažyma „Apie priešiškus veiksmus, įvykdytus 1957 m. ir iki 1957-03-20 grįžusių iš lagerių skaičius“ [Note from the LSSR's KGB board No. 4 On the hostilities committed in 1957 and the number of returnees from labour camps until 20 March 1957], 27-03-1957, in: *LYA*, f. K-1, ap. 1, b. 530, l. 53a, 53b, 53c.

<sup>89</sup> Bronius Puzinavičius, *Sovietinis režimas Lietuvoje 1953–1965 metais* [*The Soviet Regime in Lithuania in 1953–1965*], Vilnius: Generolo Jono Žemaičio Lietuvos karo akademija, 2001. p. 71

<sup>90</sup> LSSR KGB 4-os valdybos parengtas lageriuose ir tremtyje esančių žymių Lietuvos valstybės veikėjų, partizanų vadų ir aktyvių pogrindžio dalyvių sąrašas [A list drawn by LSSR's KGB board No. 4 including state politicians, partisan leaders and active underground members], 12-09-1957, in: *LYA*, f. K-1, ap. 1, b. 529, l. 105–117.



On 5 February 1957, the Commission reviewed and took decisions on 29 deportee families. Some of these families were to be released from exile because they were declared not to be *kulaks*. Some of the families were released because their family members had already been released from labour camps or had been granted amnesty. With regard to some cases non-standard decisions were made. For example, the family of Jonas Balčikonis (born in 1887) was released from exile without property restitution, even though the family had been deported justifiably because they owned 70 hectares of land. The reason for their release was as follows: Balčikonis' brother was a professor working at the USSR's Research Academy. Another atypical decision of the Commission was the release of the family of Vladas Mongirdas (born in 1877), deported in 1941 (as socially dangerous elements – large landlords). One of the reasons for their release was that Mongirdas was a doctor, and his son Boleslov was an engineer, and there was a shortage of such specialists in the country. Another very interesting reason for the release is that during the tsarist era, Mongirdas had already been exiled to the Caucasus for his anti-state activities, and then to Siberia, i.e. the commission had recognised him a victim of the tsarist Russian authorities. It was also decided to release Bronė Skirienė (born 1904), who was deported from Kuršėnai in 1941 as a socially dangerous element – a servant – without the right of property restitution. The Commission decided that Skirienė had been expelled justifiably, as her husband was police *wachtmeister* (i.e., non-commissioned officer), was member of the Nationalist and Riflemen's Unions, had been arrested, and died in the labour camp in 1942 while awaiting trial. The Commission decided to release Skirienė from exile on the grounds that her daughter was living in Lithuania. However, of the 29 family cases reviewed by the Commission, only 12 families received favourable decisions. For the other 17 families, the Commission found no grounds for release from exile. The main reasons for refusal were that the family farm was large or that family members were former partisans. Thus, on 5 February 1957, it was decided not to release from exile the family of the famous partisan commander Juozas Vitkus–Kazimieraitis: his wife Genovaitė Vitkienė (b. 1904), sons Vytautas (b. 1930), Rimgaudas (b. 1937), Liudvikas (b. 1944), and daughter Jūratė (b. 1937). These decisions of the Commission were signed by the Chairman of the Commission, K. Preikšas, and by the members of the Commission: the LSSR chief prosecutor, G. Bacharov, LSSR KGB deputy chairman L. Martavičius, the LSSR minister of the interior A. Gailevičius, and vice-chairman of the LSSR supreme court Vladas Deksnys.<sup>91</sup> A full text of 5 February 1957 Commission's decision on the 29 families of deportees was approved on 14 March 1957. The resolution of the Presidium of the LSSR's SS was signed by the chairman of the presidium J. Paleckis.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>91</sup> LSSR AT prezidiumo tremtinių bylų peržiūrėjimo komisijos sprendimai [Decisions by the commission for the review of deportees' cases of LSSR's SS Praesidium], 05-02-1957, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 387, l. 3–13.

<sup>92</sup> LSSR AT prezidiumo nutarimas dėl tremtinių bylų peržiūrėjimo komisijos sprendimų patvirtinimo [Resolution by LSSR's SS Praesidium approving decisions by the commission for the review of deportees' cases], 14-03-1957, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 387, l. 2.

### Deportee Henrika Dronseikaitė–Almonaitienė wrote in her memoirs:

[...] When the Polish leader, Władysław Gomułka, announced that he was reclaiming his countrymen from exile, the Poles left. A spark of hope shone for Lithuanians too. In the summer of 1956, I got my passport. I'm free! But my husband is not free. So we waited another year. Finally, in the spring of 1957, he got his passport too. We started preparing for our journey back home. We had no idea that not even the closest people would be waiting for us, that the label of deportees would stick with us for all our lives. The homeland we found was no longer the same and the Lithuanians were no longer the same. When my husband was looking for a job, the first question was 'do you have a registration?', and the militia would not register you if you were unemployed. This is how we were pushed from one institution to another. My husband despaired and decided to go back to Siberia, where there was guaranteed shelter and work. I begged him to wait, to try. The very thought of our children in a foreign country attending a Russian school, speaking a foreign language, shook me like an electric current.<sup>93</sup>

These memoirs refer to an important geopolitical fact that the Polish deportees from Lithuania had the right to move to Poland for imprisonment or exile. This was convenient for the authorities of the Lithuanian SSR, as many anti-Soviet people left for Poland. At the end of 1955 and the beginning of 1956, around 3,000 persons repressed from Lithuania and western Ukraine during the first post-war years were handed over to Poland. At the same time, more than 400 Polish deportees from Lithuania left directly from their places of exile in Irkutsk. Polish deportees and political prisoners from Krasnoyarsk, Khabarovsk and other regions also left for Poland. Some of them also visited Lithuania on their way to Poland to visit their homeland.<sup>94</sup>

And the government did not welcome the returning Lithuanians. Here is a typical example. The deportee Jonas Runas ended his exile in 1957.

Back at home there was a large house, new stables, a four-door barn, recently rebuilt with new logs. From our father's buildings, three Soviet collaborators built one solid house each, leaving only half a barn... We came back from Siberia together with my sisters and my brother Juozas and went to the Šakiai militia to register together. But the head of the militia said that they would not register us, and we had to leave Šakiai district within three days. If not, they would arrest us, because our family were bandits. Then I left for Kudirkos Naumištis.<sup>95</sup>

On 1 of July 1957, almost 55,000 Lithuanians were still in exile, which at that time was almost one third of the total number of deportees in the Soviet Union. Compared to 1953, Lithuanians accounted for only 3.5% of all deportees.

The Commission of the Presidium of the LSSR's SS for the review of the cases of per-

<sup>93</sup> *Mes sugrįžom...* (Vilkaviškio rajono politinių kalinių ir tremtinių prisiminimai) [We've come back <...>]. (Memoirs of Political Prisoners and Deportees from Vilkaviškis Region), Kaunas, 2010, p. 28, 29.

<sup>94</sup> Vitalija Stravinskienė, „Represuoti Rytų ir Pietryčių Lietuvos gyventojai lenkai: sugrįžimas ir adaptacija (1953–1964 m.“ [“Repressed Poles from Eastern and South-Eastern Lithuania: Their Return and Adaptation”], in *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2014, Nr. 1 (35), p. 35.

<sup>95</sup> *Mes sugrįžome...* [We've come back], p. 208, 209.

МВД РСФСР  
УПРАВЛЕНИЕ  
ВНУТРЕННИХ ДЕЛ  
Исполнительного Комитета  
Красноярского Краевого Совета  
депутатов трудящихся

Видом на жительство не служит  
при утере не возобновляется.

18 декабря 1957 г.



№ \_\_\_\_\_  
г. Красноярск

СПРАВКА № 180

Выдана гражданину(ке) Вилунайтэ  
Альфонсе д'Альфонса  
год рождения 1927 национальность литовка гр. СССР  
уроженцу(ке) Жмергского уезда  
ЛитССР

в том, что он(она)  
содержался(ась) на спецпоселении с 10 мая 1949 г.  
по 18 декабря 1957 г., откуда освобожден(а) на основании  
Постановления Совета Министров  
СССР и ЗУР-216 от 12 III 56г без  
права возврата к прежнему  
месту жительства в ЛитССР

Начальник отдела УВД  
Начальник отделения



**Fig. 8.** Certificate on the release of Alfonsa Vilūnaitė from exile without the right to return to Lithuania. Solgon, Krasnoyarsk Krai, 1957

From the collections of the Museum of Occupations and Freedom Fights

sons sent to special exile in accordance with the resolutions of the Special Consultation of the former USSR MGB–MVD, and in accordance with the separate directives of these bodies, from the beginning of its work on 5 February 1957 to 25 December 1957, reviewed the cases of 11,027 families. Decisions were made to release 8,172 families from exile, a total of 25,886 persons. 576 families (2125 persons) were declared to have been deported unjustifiably. The remaining 7,587 families (23,708 persons) were released exceptionally without the right of property restitution. Of the 11,127 family cases reviewed, 2,896 families (9784 persons) were denied release from exile.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, among all decisions made by the Presidium Commission of LSSR's SS in 1957, out of the total of 11,127 families, it was decided to release about 73% of families from exile. It was found that of the 8,172 families released, as many as 7% had been deported unjustifiably (that is, they were released with the right of restitution of confiscated property). The remaining 93% of families were released from exile on an exceptional basis, without the right of restitution of confiscated property. Of the total number of deportee cases reviewed in 1957, as many as 26% of the families were denied release from exile, so that the process of return of the deportees was still on hold.

## Conclusions

1. The Lithuanian communist authorities avoided the sudden return of large numbers of repressed people. The release from exile and labour camps was organised in stages, stretched over a period of about 10 years, virtually the same period as the deportations or imprisonment in labour camps. The gradual release was also due to the limited resources allocated by the Soviet authorities. The Commissions and the teams of officials who processed the deportees' requests were unable to cope with the volume of requests, and as a result, the families of the deportees had to wait for long stretches of time for the commissions' decisions, even when orders and decisions of the Soviet authorities were favourable towards them.
2. The (non)release of Lithuanian deportees and (non)restitution of property were decided by commissions under the LSSR's Council of Ministers (set up in 1953) and under the LSSR Presidium of the Supreme Soviet (1957). Almost all the members of these commissions were perpetrators of the recent repressions. The group of LSSR's MVD officials working on the cases of deportees and submitting material to the commissions worked slowly, as this was not a priority task for them.
3. The LSSR's LCP and the repressive structures actively cooperated on the return of political prisoners and deportees. The Soviet authorities sought to reduce the con-

<sup>96</sup> LSSR AT prezidiumo tremtinių bylų peržiūrėjimo komisijos pažyma [Note from the commission for the review of deportees' cases of LSSR's SS Praesidium], December 1958, in: *LYA*, f. V-135, ap. 7, b. 421, l. 63.

centration of former repressed people in the major cities and to prevent them from returning to their native towns and settlements, where they could have a greater political impact in their social environment. The city and district committees of the LCP regularly provided information to the LCP Central Committee on anti-Soviet sentiment in the context of returning political prisoners and deportees. The LCP's Central Committee assessed this and adopted new resolutions. As the number of returning political prisoners and deportees was increasing, measures to strengthen the ranks of KGB officers and militia in towns and districts were strategised and coordinated.

4. After the 1956 Hungarian uprising and the 1956 All Souls' Day events in Kaunas and Vilnius, the Lithuanian communist authorities feared that the increased return of political prisoners and deportees in 1956 could become a catalyst for broader anti-Soviet action. Sniečkus and his associates, fearing of falling out of grace with Moscow and being replaced, took drastic action against the returning political prisoners and deportees. On 21 January 1957 the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the LSSR issued an order prohibiting the return of certain groups of repressed people to Lithuania. In the activities of the new Commission for the review of the deportees' cases under the Presidium of the LSSR Supreme Soviet, established in January 1957, a large proportion (26%) of deportees were not released from exile that year, and only 7% of the families of those released could claim restitution of confiscated property. By leaving a significant number of deportees and political prisoners still in exile in 1957, the Soviet authorities avoided a major upsurge in anti-Soviet activity and, for the majority of those who returned without the right of property restitution, economic problems.

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Arvydas Gelžinis

**Lietuvos represuotų gyventojų paleidimas ir grįžimas 1953–1957 metais:  
tarp laisvės ir suvaržymų**

*Santrauka*

Straipsnyje aptariama tema – tremtinių ir politinių kalinių išlaisvinimas ir grįžimas į Lietuvą. Modifikuojant sovietinį režimą, nuo 1953 m. buvo ne tik atsisakyta masinių represijų, bet ir didelei daliai represuotųjų gyventojų leista grįžti. Žinoma, kad 1953 – 1958 m. iš tremties ir įkalinimo vietų į Lietuvą grįžo per 40 tūkst. žmonių. Politinių kalinių išlaisvinimas SSSR represijų fone yra aiškesnis. Politinis kalinys buvo paleidžiamas į laisvę trimis atvejais: atlikęs visą bausmės laiką, paleistas iš įkalinimo vietos anksčiau laiko, pvz., iškalėjęs 2/3 bausmės laiko arba trečiuoju atveju – po lagerio atbuvęs tremtyje fiksuotą laiką, kuris dažniausiai buvo 5-eri metai. Konkretus trėmimo laikas nebuvo įtvirtintas, sovietiniai baudėjai naudojo terminą, kad tremiama „na viečno“ (liet. amžiams, amžinai). Dėl to tremtiniams išlaisvinti komunistinė valdžia ir represinės struktūros turėjo imtis įvairių sprendimų: priimti daugelį įsakų, nutarimų, tremtinių bylų peržiūrėjimo komisijose spręsti dėl kiekvienos šeimos likimo. Todėl straipsnyje, atsižvelgiant į tokias sudėtingas tremtinių išlaisvinimo procedūrų sąlygas, tremtinių išlaisvinimui skiriamas didesnis dėmesys.

Šiame darbe tiriamas Lietuvos komunistų partijos ir represinių struktūrų bendradarbiavimas siekiant, kad tremtiniai ir politiniai kaliniai grįžtų dozuotai, nes represuotųjų grįžimas kėlė sovietų valdžiai daug rūpesčių: pradedant tuo, kad daliai jų reikėjo grąžinti konfiskuotą turtą (kurio dažnai nebebuvo) ir baigiant galima grėsmė, kad staigus ar masiškas šių asmenų grįžimas sustiprins Lietuvoje antisovietines nuotaikas. Remiantis archyviniais dokumentais, tiriama Tremtinių bylų peržiūrėjimo komisijų veikla. Pateikiami tiek statistiniai duomenys, tiek atskirų šeimų likimų svarstymas minėtose komisijose. Lygiagrečiai vyko grįžusių tremtinių ir politinių kalinių „priežiūra“ stiprinant LSSR KGB represinį aparatą, buvo daromos kliūtys grįžusiems įsiregistruoti, įsidarbinti, draudžiama grįžti į tėviškę. Todėl dalis grįžusių negalėdami įsikurti išvyko į Latviją, Kaliningrado sritį ar net atgal Sibirą, kur jiems buvo garantuotas darbas. Taip Lietuvos komunistų valdžia bandė sudaryti tokią Lietuvos gyventojų „kritinę masę“, su kuria galėtų žygiuoti į „šviesų komunistinį rytojų“.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** LSSR CK biuras, LSSR Ministrų taryba, LSSR Aukščiausioji taryba, sovietinės represijos, tremtiniai, politiniai kaliniai, Tremtinių bylų peržiūrėjimo komisija, buvusių represuotųjų paleidimas, grįžimas, suvaržymai, izoliacija.