

Darius Petkūnas



The Repression
of the Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Lithuania
during the Stalinist Era

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Klaipėdos universitetas

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Klaipėda, 2011

UDK 284(474.5)(091)
Pe222

Spausdinti rekomendavo Klaipėdos universiteto Humanitarinių mokslų fakulteto redakcinė komisija 2010 m. lapkričio 13 d. (protokolas Nr. 57)

Aprobuota Klaipėdos universiteto Humanitarinių mokslų fakulteto Baltistikos centre, 2010 m. spalio 19 d. (protokolas Nr. 46H-BC-2)

Recenzavo:

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Knygos leidimą parėmė Martin-Luther-Bund.

Viršelio nuotrauka: Kunigas Erikas Leijeris 1948 m. laiko pamaldas prie sovietų valdžios uždarytos Pakruojos liuteronų bažnyčios durų.

Published by recommendation of the editorial committee of the Faculty of Humanities, University of Klaipeda. November 13, 2010 (Protocol No. 57).

Approved by the Center for Baltic Studies, Faculty of Humanities, University of Klaipeda. October 19, 2010 (Protocol No. 46H-BC-2).

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The publication of this book has been made possible through the generous support of the **Martin-Luther-Bund**.

Cover Photo:

Pastor Erikas Leijeris defiantly holds a Divine Service in front of the closed Pakruojis church, 1948.

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ISBN 978-9955-18-583-3

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PREFACE

The reader will find in this study a record of some of the great trials which the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania endured during the Stalinist years.

All churches in Lithuania suffered repression during that time, but the Lutheran Church was singled out for special attention, because it had for so long been considered by many to be a "German Church." More than 70 percent of the Lutheran churches in Lithuania were closed or demolished. No other church lost so high a percentage of its houses of worship and other properties. In addition, the members of the Lutheran Church were often considered to be Germans in heart and mind and were treated as such, even if they were in fact native Lithuanians. When the directive was issued by the NKGB-NKVD in 1944 that any and all Germans in Lithuania were to be deported, Lithuanian local communist officials turned their attention to the Lutherans and deported many of them to Tajikistan, where a large number of them perished. The results of this deportation were particularly devastating in Suvalkija where the Lutherans were afraid to disclose their Lutheran identity for fear of reprisals. For that reason only a single organized parish in Sudargas was able to survive.

The clergy also faced great difficulties. Although in terms of numbers many more Roman Catholic priests were arrested and deported, the arrest and deportation of four Lutheran priests represented the loss of half of the active Lutheran clergy in the country. Now the remaining pastors had to take on the responsibility of serving as many as eight or more parishes in a time when travel was difficult and hazardous. The fear of imminent arrest and incarceration was constantly on their minds. The loss of clergy and the additional burden imposed upon those who remained made it necessary for the church to take the step of ordaining for the work of the ministry men who had received no advanced theological edu-

cation. These men served simply on the strength of their personal piety and dedication.

I would like to express my appreciation to Dr. Charles Evanson of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, U.S.A. and former faculty member in the Department of Evangelical Theology in the University of Klaipėda, for his valuable assistance in the preparation of this material. I am thankful also to Dr. Gary Arp for his careful reading of the manuscript and his helpful suggestions for improvements.

I also wish to express my profound thanks to my wife Inga Petkūnienė for her enthusiastic support and inexhaustible patience, and to my daughters Ieva and Auguste for their understanding when my work so greatly infringed on our time together.

It is my hope that the readers of this volume will be moved to a greater appreciation of the fortitude and patience of the clergy and people of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania in a time of almost unimaginable tribulations.

ABBREVIATIONS

APA	Alkiškių parapijos archyvas (Records of the Parish Church of Alkiškiai)
CARC	Совет по делам религиозных культов при Совете Министров СССР (Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults of the USSR Council of Ministers)
GULAG	Главное управление исправительно-трудовых лагерей и колоний (The Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and Colonies) of the NKVD
JKA	Vyskupo Jono Kalvano archyvas (The Document Collection in the Library of Bishop Jonas Kalvanas, Sr.)
KA	Lietuvos evangelikų liuteronų Bažnyčios Konsistorijos Archyvas (Archives of the Consistory of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania)
KGB	Комитет государственной безопасности СССР (The Committee for State Security, 1954-1991)
LCVA	Lietuvos Centrinis Valstybės Archyvas (Lithuanian Central State Archives)
LELB	Lietuvos Evangelikų Liuteronų Bažnyčia (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania)
LVA	Latvijas Valsts Arhīvs (The State Archives of Latvia)
LYA	Lietuvos Ypatingasis Archyvas (Lithuanian Special Archives)
LYA LKP	Lietuvos Ypatingojo Archyvo Lietuvos Komunistų Partijos dokumentų skyrius (The Document Department of the Lithuanian Communist Party at the Lithuanian Special Archives)
LYA VRM	Lietuvos Ypatingojo Archyvo Vidaus Reikalų Ministerijos dokumentų skyrius (The Document Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Lithuanian Special Archives)
MGB	Министерство государственной безопасности СССР (Ministry for State Security, 1946 - 1953)
MVD	Министерство внутренних дел СССР (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1946 - Present, МВД РФ)
NKGB	Народный комиссариат государственной безопасности (People's Commissariat for State Security 1941-1946)
NKVD	Народный комиссариат внутренних дел (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs, 1934-1946)
WCC	World Council of Churches

INTRODUCTION

This study deals with the attempts by soviet security services (NKGB-MGB-KGB), agencies for internal affairs (NKVD-MVD), and other governmental organizations, to repress ordinary members and clergy of the Lutheran Church in Lithuania during the Stalinist years. It consists in an examination of the rationale behind the decision to repress, the methods employed to accomplish it, and the fate of those who were the victims of repressive measures. The investigation also presents a picture of the nature of the threats to the church, its clergy, and the faithful during this period and pictures the difficulties under which the faithful and their pastors lived and labored.

The repressive measures practiced by the soviet regime were meant to subdue groups and their members, to expose their activities as detrimental to the soviet state, and to hold the size and activities of those groups in close control by whatever means were necessary. Repressive measures differed from genocide, by which was meant the total annihilation of a particular group, or families, or individuals. It differed also from the soviet practice of instituting particular "administrative measures" against individuals and groups. Such measures were instituted from the beginning of the soviet occupation of Lithuania and were meant to ensure a close supervision of group activities. All religious groups in Lithuania were subject to these "administrative measures" which controlled and in many cases curtailed religious activity. Repression went further; it consisted in the removal of individuals deemed detrimental, undesirable, or uncontrollable.

The repression of Lutheran Church members was an incidental consequence of the program initiated by the Soviet Union and Lithuanian security and internal affairs agencies to rid the country of Germans and German influences. The program, which was instituted on December 16, 1944, determined that all Germans in Lithuania must be deported and moved to the depths of the soviet interior - an action previously employed in 1941 against the German

settlements along the banks of the Volga River. Local NKGB, NKVD, and other communist officials in Lithuania were instructed to take a census of Germans still residing in their communities. Many of these officials were not of a mind to overburden themselves by paying close attention to their instructions, which sought to ferret out genuine Germans. Although officials were aware that the Germans in their communities had been repatriated in 1941 and that those who had returned during the war had subsequently left again in 1944, they correctly understood that they were expected to produce results and to find individuals in their communities who were German enough to enable them to draw up the required lists.

In Lithuania the Lutheran Church was popularly referred to as the “German Church,” and it seemed to make sense to the local officials to concentrate their attention on the Lutherans. It was this which led to the repression of ordinary members of Lutheran congregations. Even some radical patriots who strongly asserted their Lithuanian ethnic identity were victims of repression because there were members of an ecclesiastical organization associated with Germany and things German. The 1945 deportation of Lithuanian Lutherans was a major blow which struck at the heart of the Lutheran Church in the country.

Lutheran Church leaders protested to top communist officials in Vilnius, but their protests were in vain. In the eyes of the Lithuanian Communist Party leaders the action had nothing to do with the church as such; it was simply an act of political necessity.

The 1945 repression stands out as a singular event in the history of the Lithuanian Lutheran Church and the repression of Christians in Lithuania.

The extent to which Lutherans suffered for their faith in the mass-deportations of Lithuanians in 1948, 1949, and 1951 needs to be further explored. The primary intention of these deportations was to complete the collectivization of the farms and rid the country of formerly rich farmers and other undesirable individuals.

A repression of Lutheran Church members of singular significance took place in Katyčiai during the mass deportations in the years

1948 - 1951. According to a contemporary witness 18 out of the 20 local residents who had signed the registration documents for the Katyčiai Lutheran parish were deported along with their families.¹ They had been zealous to maintain their parish and place of worship and had often complained against local communist officials who obstructed the worship services in the church. As a result, they were considered an annoyance and the local communists were able to use the occasion of the mass deportations to get rid of them. The repression of the Lutheran Church members during the 1948, 1949, and 1951 mass deportations is beyond the scope of this present study.

The general repression of the clergy was carried out quite apart from the repression of the members of the church and the mass deportations. The communist government looked upon local parish priests as belligerents who were not willing to obey the laws concerning religious cults, obstructed the collectivization of the land, and interfered with the program of teaching communist ideals to children and young people. They were understood to be promoting a foreign ideology, and in fact the only foreign ideology which had not yet been overcome in the country. The Communist Party understood the clergy to have been a major impediment to its attempts to sovietize the rural areas. Officials blamed the priests for their religious zeal and their power to influence the people. Although repressive measures against the clergy were undertaken immediately after the end of WWII, it was not until 1948 that the party instituted a program to identify priests who obstructed the progress of sovietization so that they could be isolated and punished as criminals. Officially it was always stated that measures taken against the clergy really

¹ Klumbys 1993, 40-41. Pastor Martynas Klumbys' statement is supported by archival materials. On September 3, 1949 Pastor Fridrichas Mėgnius informed Pastor Jonas Kalvanas that by that time 12 of the 20 members who had signed the parish registration document and their families had already been deported. Among those deported were Cantor Pranas Kestenius, who regularly preached in Katyčiai when the pastor was absent, and congregation Chairman Emilis Pyperis. Others may have been deported in the third mass deportation in 1951. September 3, 1949 letter of Pastor Mėgnius to Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950.

had nothing to do with religion. They were being punished for their “crimes” against soviet society, for their support of insurrectionists, and other causes. Careful study and analysis, however, reveals that in many cases their real crime was their zeal for the church and their Lithuanian patriotism. It was not an open opposition to the government which motivated the vast majority of the clergy.

Soviet practice required that accused clergy must be tried in court. Therefore they were not included on the lists of those who would be subjected to mass deportations without trial or the possibility of offering a defense. The clergy were highly visible, and the disappearance of priests and pastors would prove inconvenient to the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Moscow and its commissioner in Lithuania, since they would have to respond to inquiries and letters of complaint, as well as requests that the parishes be allowed to have officiating clergy. If the clergy were to be repressed, it would need to be done legally through judicial processes. Therefore the clergy were accused under the terms of Article 58 of the Russian Criminal Code of engaging in counter-revolutionary activity or in activity which gave aid and comfort to the enemies of the people, or actions which might be interpreted as threatening the security of the state and its stability.

Almost every clergymen, Roman Catholic and Lutheran, concerning whom a “formulary file” was opened under the terms of Article 58 was subsequently taken to court, declared guilty, and sent to a labor camp. A significant number of them perished in those camps.

Although some studies of the repression of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Church have been written, no similar study of the repression of the Lutheran Church has appeared. Most secular historians have not concerned themselves with the repression of churches and have left this subject to the church historians. It is only in the last decade that the Lutheran Church in Lithuania has been able to turn its attention to this subject and undertake the task of researching the relevant archives and of assembling and evaluat-

ing this material in order to come to correct conclusions concerning it. This is the task which has been undertaken by the present writer.

This study indicates that the category of repressed groups must be redefined and broadened. The general conclusion that among the Christian Confessions in Lithuania it was only Roman Catholic priests who suffered repression is incorrect. Fifty percent of the Lutheran clergy who were still in the country at the end of the war suffered repression. Furthermore, the Lutherans were the only traditional Christian Confession in Lithuania to suffer repression as a group. No study of religious persecution in Lithuania can be complete without a recognition of this fact.

The aim and objective of this study is to provide and evaluate evidence about the repressive measures undertaken by the communist government and its official representatives against the members and clergy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania during the Stalinist era. It seeks also to provide evidence of the strategies used by the Lithuanian Communist Party, the state security services, the local executive committees, the commissioner of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Moscow, and other communist agencies in their attempts to counteract the influence of the church and its clergy. Special attention is given to the deportation of members of Lutheran congregations who were designated "German," although many of them were in fact ethnic Lithuanians. They were included in the deportation lists only because they were Lutherans.

The present examination provides the results of the analysis of source materials collected from historical archives and critically evaluated in the context of the history of the period. The study proceeds as an historical narrative of the period, incorporating the results of this examination and an evaluation in the context of the life of the church and the history of the period.

Research on this subject has required the personal examination of documents marked "Secret" and "Top Secret" in the State Archives of Lithuania and Latvia, as well as materials found in church and parish archives and the personal libraries of the clergy.

Included among the archives examined are the Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCVA), the Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA), the Document Department of the Lithuanian Communist Party in the Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA LKP), the Document Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA VRM), and the State Archives of Latvia (LVA). In addition the archives of the Consistory of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania (KA), the records of the Parish Church of Alkiškiai (APA), and the document collection in the library of Bishop Jonas Kalvanas, Sr. (JKA) were also carefully examined.

The documents consulted offer a detailed picture of the soviet attempts to destroy the influence of the church and the repressive measures it employed against clergy and church members. It demonstrates also the duplicity, double dealing, and prevarications of the Communist Party and its representatives on every level. It provides also a record of the attempts of the NKGB-MGB-KGB agencies to recruit agents within the local communities, within the parishes, among the clergy, and others associated with the work of the church.

Secondary sources include important information concerning the deportation of the Lithuanian Germans, provided by Nastazija Kairiūkštytė in her article *Lietuvos vokiečiai – pirmieji pokario metų tremtiniai* (*Lithuanian Germans – the First Deportees after the War*), which appeared in the 1993 Lithuanian History Annual, published in Vilnius in 1994. Other important secondary sources provide a general overview of the period, including the deportations and life in the gulags.

This book will be of interest to readers concerned with the Lithuanian and Baltic history in the twentieth century, as well as clergy and students of theology. In addition, it will be of value to historians studying the Communist Movement, the history of the Lithuanian nation, and the plight of the churches under Communism. Because the research deals with the work and service of pastors in extraordinary circumstances, it will be of value also to those concerned with the difficulties of pastoral ministry in trying circumstances.

1. REPRESSION AS A FACTOR IN GOVERNMENTAL ATTEMPTS TO CONTROL THE CHURCH

In 1940 Lithuania and its Baltic neighbors, Latvia and Estonia, were incorporated into the Soviet Union and became the Soviet Socialist Republics. The soviet communists began immediately to make sweeping changes in every area of life. Their control of the government, however, was short lived. With the advance of the German Army Lithuania and other Baltic States came under German control and remained so until 1944 when the Red Army swept westward through the countries. Now Lithuania once again came under soviet communist control and the so-called reordering of society to free the people from the fascists and from the bourgeois exploiters of the workers and farmers was resumed.

The imposition of communism on the Lithuanian people brought great changes in every area of life. Now Joseph Stalin's Constitution would be the law of the land and would govern the lives and activities of the Lithuanian people and all their institutions. The Constitution claimed to guarantee freedom of religion to all soviet citizens. It declared that church and state were entirely separate, and that the state had no intention of interfering in the spiritual lives of its citizens. However, these were empty words. The Communist Party had taken upon itself the task of building communism by fighting against what it considered to be ignorance, superstition, and unscientific attitudes. All these were believed to slow the forward march of Socialism and the creation of the communist state. As a result, the churches were isolated as much as possible from society. Their activities were classified as strictly private activities which must be confined within the walls of church buildings, so as not to intrude into the public square. The Party officially stated that with the passing of time the principles of dialectical materialism, first articulated by Karl Marx and later refined by Vladimir Lenin, would

necessarily supplant unscientific patterns of thought and would lead the people out of darkness into the communist light.

This program looked good on paper, but it did not translate well into life. The history of the implementation of the Marxist-Leninist principles proved far more difficult than its advocates had imagined. The new scientific approach to religion did not much impress the Lithuanian people. They did not regard it as a more enlightened point of view. As a result, the regime had to take strong measures.

More was needed to bring the people into the new communist day than the articulation of Marxist principles. The words of Marx and Lenin lacked the power to attract and convince most Lithuanians to cast the Christian faith aside. It was clear to them that the communists had failed to understand the power of faith and had underestimated the influence of the churches and the commitment of the clergy and the people. The commissioner of religious affairs in Vilnius, Bronius Leonas-Pušinis, discovered to his chagrin that the Lithuanian people were far more deeply committed to their Christian faith than he had ever imagined. He wrote to his superiors in Moscow that if anyone thought that he could stand before a crowd of 40,000 pilgrims at Žemaičių Kalvarija and convincingly argue that there is no God, he had best think more deeply about the matter. It would take more than words to move this people. It would take indoctrination and “administrative measures.” If all this failed, it would be necessary to take appropriate action against the churches. This action would include the repression of the clergy, whom Commissioner Pušinis called a “magnet” which draws the people together and “concrete” which unites them.²

In general, the repression of the clergy was directed against the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Church. On July 9, 1948 the Bureau of the Lithuanian Communist Party approved a secret policy concerning special measures to be taken because of “the hostile reaction of the Roman Catholic clergy and its disclosure.” It undertook the task of strengthening ideological propaganda. In addition it was

² LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 38-40.

concerned to expose the hostile activities of priests, to speed up the registration of clergy and parishes, to bring to a halt organized children's catechetical instruction, and prevent any and all anti-soviet activity of priests. The document was ambivalent in its terms. The general impression was given that measures against the clergy should be mainly "administrative," however here and there one finds in the document phrases like "to bring perpetrators to justice."³

This secret document and the repression which followed it were meant to break the power of the Roman Catholic Church, stifle resistance to the process of registration of the parishes and clergy. It also was meant to further the scheme of Commissioner Pušinis to amalgamate Roman Catholic dioceses into larger units. Repressive measures by the MGB would be instituted against those clergy who obstructed new directives concerning "administrative control" of the church and those who protested loudly against the antireligious policies of the state. Here the commissioner and MGB were able to work in close cooperation. The repression of the Lutheran clergy was undertaken within this scheme of anti-Roman Catholic policies administered by the Lithuanian communist government.

The repression of the clergy for their religious zeal was coordinated between Commissioner Pušinis and the MGB. However, even in "secret" and "top secret" documents any mention that the disobedient clergy were being repressed because they were priests



Bronius Leonas-Pušinis,
Commissioner of the Council for
the Affairs of Religious Cults
1948-1957.

From: LKP istorijos apybraiža, 1971.

³ LYA LKP f. 1771, a 11, b. 11, 10.

and because of their religious zeal was carefully avoided. In his correspondence with the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Moscow Commissioner Pušinis would simply state that this or that priest had been arrested. Nowhere would he mention the word repression, because that word would signal that the soviet government and its agencies were applying unjust methods. This could never be admitted, because it was claimed that the soviet political system was the most just political system in the world. Pušinis preferred to use inoffensive terms which referred to the guilty party as being appropriately disciplined or "isolated" because of his crimes.⁴ The MGB files as well would never indicate that any priest had been repressed. It would instead say that this or that priest had violated Article 58 of the Russian Criminal Code so that it would be clear to all that his crime had nothing to do with his religion. Those who had to be disciplined were disciplined because of their defiant attitudes and deliberate disobedience.

The fact that priests were being repressed is clearly indicated by statistical evidence, which shows that between 1949 and 1951 the Roman Catholic Church lost 282 priests - a drop from 1012 to 730, or around 30 percent.⁵ Of the eight Lutheran pastors who were able to continue in active ministry after the war, four of them, 50 percent of the total, were repressed. Not all were repressed because of their religious zeal. The NKGB-MGB-KGB were often able to identify priests as having close connection with insurrectionists or with other disobedient acts such as vocal protests against the people's government. However, many of those who suffered were repressed because of their dedicated priestly activity.

Only in 1951 did Pušinis reveal in his secret correspondence with the Council in Moscow that Communist Party had in fact been involved in a systematic repression of priests. He suggested that the program of repression might be stopped because the number

⁴ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 37-40; LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 62; LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 41, 9.

⁵ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 27, 5.

of those repressed was large. Furthermore it would not be helpful in the building of Socialism because it would cause divisions in the working class, between those who were religious and those who were not. He also stated that continued oppressive activities might lead to a strong negative reaction in the populace.⁶

The repression of the church's general membership as such because of faith was never officially considered in soviet Lithuania. As in the case of clergy, only disobedient individual Christians would be selected and dealt with appropriately specifically because of their disobedience to the soviet religious laws. The only exception to this pattern was the Lutheran Church, which was the single traditional religious group to suffer repression because of its confession. Although communist officials might continue to insist that they never repressed Christians because of their faith, this is precisely what they did in the case of the Lithuanian Lutherans.

⁶ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 27, 5-6.

2. THE REPRESSION OF MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH

2.1 The Identification of Ethnic Lithuanian Lutherans as “Germans”

The repression of ethnic Lithuanian Lutherans in 1945 was often linked to the fact that they were members of the Lutheran Church. In the mind of communist officials, as well as the Lithuanian people in general, the Lutheran Church was a “German Church” and therefore it could be assumed that its members were “Germans.” There was, of course, some truth to the perceived identity between Lutherans and Germans. In the 1923 census it had been reported that there were 64,538 Lutherans in Lithuania and that 28,671 of them were Germans. At that time there were in the Lutheran Church also 22,312 Lithuanians and 13,555 Latvians. According to these statistics a clear majority of Lutherans in Lithuania were Germans and indeed there were in fact more Germans than there were Lithuanians. Furthermore, only 207 Germans in Lithuania identified themselves as Roman Catholics.⁷

The notion that the Lutheran Church was a “German Church” was further supported by local people because frequently the language of the divine service and sermons was German. In the parishes of Kėdainiai, Ariogala, Raseiniai, Kelmė, and Skaidvilė all services were in German.⁸ The parishes in Suvalkija were overwhelmingly German and in Kaunas, Tauragė, Jurbarkas, Kretinga, and many smaller congregations services were held in both German and Lithuanian.

In addition, the conflicts in the Lutheran Church between Germans and Lithuanians which were caused by the patriotic Lutheran organization “Pagalba” and the Kaunas Consistory which

⁷ *Lietuvos gyventojai* 1926, 28.

⁸ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 756, 45.

since 1925 had attempted to “Lithuanize” parishes by promoting divine services in Lithuanian and by replacing German pastors with Lithuanians, were given much publicity not only in German press, but also in Lithuanian newspapers. These numerous reports awakened general Lithuanian public interest and only strengthened the perception that the Lutheran Church was German.

This situation continued until the 1941 repatriation when the Germans left the country. In fact repatriation strengthened the general notion among Lithuanians that the Lutheran Church was a “German Church,” since in many cases any indication of Lutheran identity was counted as evidence of German nationality and this was regarded as sufficient cause for repatriation.⁹ Even after repatriation the general perception that the Lithuanian Lutheran Church was a “German Church” did not change. After the war local communist officials still regarded “Lutheran” and “German” as almost coterminous. In 1944 after the soviets reoccupied the country local communist officials were asked to report on church building statistics. Their reports on Lutheran churches stated that there were no Germans left in the community or that the “German church building” was vacant.¹⁰ So too, the 1945 reports of the Commissioner Alfonsas Gailevičius in Vilnius stated that it was very difficult for him to count the Lutherans, because most of them were Germans and with the approach of the Red Army they had fled.¹¹

⁹ *Arbušauskaitė* 2002, 67-68.

¹⁰ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 2, 5.

¹¹ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 3, 13-14.

2.2 The Plans for the Deportation

With the coming of the Red Army the soviet government made plans for the removal from Lithuania of all remaining Germans.

The Germans in Russian territories were no strangers to oppression and repressive measures. They had come to know them already in the days of the tsars.

Tsarist Russia had initially been responsible for the restoration of the religious privileges of the Lutheran Church in Lithuania and Poland in 1768 and 1775, and after Lithuania became a part of Russia in 1795, the earliest decades of tsarist rule brought the Lutheran Church freedom and prosperity. Throughout the empire the Lutheran Church enjoyed the respect and support of the tsarist governments in those early days. Later the situation changed. In the age of growing European nationalism, the reactionary tsarist program of Russification and WWI the church began to suffer ill effects. Russian officials made the claim that the Germans in Russia represented the first wave of a coming German conquest of the entire country. This led to the creation of *The Commission for the Attack against German Oppression* which led to the liquidation of German property owners, the expulsion of colonists from the southern and western border areas they had so long inhabited, the confiscation without compensation of their property, and mass deportations to Siberia and elsewhere.¹² By the end of the summer of 1915 over half of the 150 thousand Volhynian Germans in Russian lands bordering Germany had been deported and tens of thousands of them had died.¹³ So too, Lutherans in regions bordering East Prussia, most notably in Kretinga, Palanga, Žemaičių Naumiestis, Tauragė, and Jurbarkas, as well as the Klaipėda region (Germ. *Memelland*) and nearby areas of East Prussia, were deported in large numbers to the

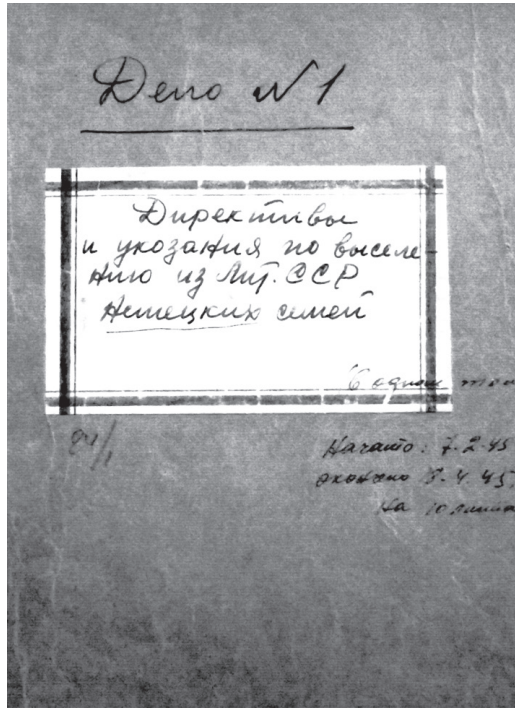
¹² Duin 1975, 658.

¹³ Кypуло 2002, 102; Duin 1975, 658; *Luthers Erbe in Russland* 1918, 98.

interior of the tsarist Russia.¹⁴ By 1916 plans were being made to expel the Germans from their ancestral homes in the Volga River valley. German language publications, even religious, were forbidden, German teachers were fired, and every aspect of German school life was russified.¹⁵

After the revolution Lenin declared that Bolshevism was to unite people of every race and nation without exception, and Stalin's Constitution forbade the singling out of any nation or ethnic group. All

were equal in the eyes of the Soviet Union. Racial and ethnic hatred was to be replaced by hatred of kulaks and bourgeois elements, that is, those who despised communism and worked against it. Such people could never make good citizens and therefore they must be removed all together from society.



File of directives for the deportation of Lithuanian German families.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

¹⁴ Gaigalaitis 1998, 23, 32, 155; Gaigalaitis I 1915, 32-38; Atsišaukimas prūsų lietuvių belaisvių šelpimo reikalu (Appeal for Aid to Prussian Lithuanian Captives) Gaigalaitis I 1915, 38-40; Gaigalaitis II 1915, 60-64.

¹⁵ Duin 1975, 658.

By the beginning of WWII in 1941, however, it was becoming clear that in fact not all nations and ethnic groups were fit for the building of a communist society. Between 1941 and 1944 other groups such as Chechens, Crimean Tatars, Ingushians, Kalmucks, Qaracajs, and Balqars would be adjudged intransigent and their autonomous republics would cease to exist. On August 28, 1941, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Presidium of the Supreme Council in the Kremlin issued a directive *On the Resettlement of the Germans Living in the Volga Area* and the dissolution of the Volga German Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic itself.¹⁶ This decree would lead to the expulsion of Volga Germans from their homes to the depths of Soviet Union. The reason given was that there were thousands or even tens of thousands of German spies and saboteurs who were waiting for the signal from Germany to launch devastating terrorist acts. By September 20 no less than 370,000 of the Volga Germans had been resettled in Krasnoyarsk, Altai, Novosibirsk, Omsk, and other regions. This was devastating to Russian Lutheranism. Even earlier, beginning on August 31, 1941, Germans living in the Ukraine, Crimea, Kharkov, Leningrad, Moscow, Kalinin, and elsewhere in European Russia were resettled. Many perished during these resettlements and those who survived were widely dispersed throughout the central Asian republics and elsewhere in the Soviet Union. As of January 17, 1939 there were 1,427,232 Germans in the Soviet Union of whom at least a million were Lutherans.¹⁷ The forced moves tore the community apart and there was little possibility of interconnection. What had happened on a massive scale in the Volga region was repeated on a far smaller scale everywhere else in the Soviet Union where there was any concentrated German population.

Germans in Lithuania were repatriated in 1941, but within a year *Reichsleiter* Alfred Rosenberg, Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories, revealed his plan that Lithuania should be

¹⁶ *Duin* 1975, 848; *Лиценбергер* 2003, 428.

¹⁷ *Лиценбергер* 2003, 428-429.

resettled by the very Germans who had so recently been repatriated. The problem was that they were still living in resettlement camps and many had become homesick and had begun to wonder why they could not simply return to their native Lithuania. According to Rosenberg's plan German farmers would return to resettle in their home areas in Lithuania, chiefly in the Suvalkija and Tauragė regions. Hitler initially was against the plan. He complained that the Lithuanian Germans had never been sufficiently supportive of his national socialist program, and even now they had not yet been indoctrinated thoroughly enough to understand and enthusiastically accept it. Heinrich Himmler, however, supported Rosenberg and eventually Hitler was won over to the plan. Some disagreements developed between Himmler's and Rosenberg's agencies over how the returnees should be deployed. A compromise was reached according to which many were indeed able to return to the regions from which they had come, while others were settled along the line proposed by Lithuanian General Commissar Adrian Theodor von Renteln which included the regions of Kėdainiai, Šiauliai, Panevėžys, and Biržai. The first repatriates arrived in Lithuania on June 10, 1942. By November 16,786 Lithuanian Germans had been resettled on 3,499 farms. By January 1944 the number of settlers had risen to 29,972, 23,496 of them were former repatriates reentering Lithuania. The remaining 6,476 settlers were colonists who were loyal sons of the *Reich*; their presence was meant also to inspire the other settlers to fervent devotion to the fatherland. 3,140 of them settled in Kaunas.¹⁸ In July 1944 with the Red Army making rapid advances it had become obvious that Lithuania would be reoccupied by the Soviet Union, *SS-Sturmbannführer* Dr. Joachim Duckart, formerly of the now closed SS Settlement Department (Germ. *SS Ansiedlungsstab*), was given Berlin's approval to begin the evacuation of the entire German Lithuanian community. By the beginning of

¹⁸ Arbušauskaitė 2002, 149-152, 174-176; Hermann 2000, 260-261.



Aleksandras Gudaitis-Guzevičius,
People's Commissar for NKGB
of the Lithuanian SSR.

From: LKP istorijos apybraiža, 1978.

August the last of the Germans and the German occupational administration had left.¹⁹

Now Moscow began the systematic work of cleansing Lithuania by eradicating all foreign and subversive elements. The soviet government saw the necessity to ferret out any Germans who might be masquerading as Lithuanians, such as those who had missed the opportunity to escape, and to determine who among the Lithuanians had been or was even now a collaborator with the Nazi Germans.

The program of cleansing soviet Lithuania was initiated in July 1944. Between July 16 and September 1 at least

1,100 people were arrested and were forced to undergo examination for possible anti-soviet activities.²⁰ Primary attention in this early program was given to putting down any possibility of armed resistance against the soviet government and its agents by insurrectionists, whom the soviets called bandits. On November 13, 1944 Lithuanian SSR prosecutor Michail Baljasnikov (Rus. Бальясников) explained in a letter to USSR prosecutor Konstantin Gorshenin (Rus. КОНСТАНТИН ГОРШЕНИН), that the security forces had determined that such actions were necessary,

¹⁹ Hermann 2000, 269; Paul Tittelbach's Memorandum. - Hermann 2000, 271-273.

²⁰ *Kairiūkštytė* 1994, 93.

not only against bandits in the forest but also against their families, so that banditry might be put down once and for all.²¹

The program proposed by prosecutor Baljasnikov was approved by Moscow, and on November 29, 1944 the Lithuanian NKGB-NKVD headquarters in Vilnius issued a secret directive stating that counter-revolutionary families, whether German or otherwise, must be uncovered and dealt with by resettlement. The NKGB-NKVD offices were instructed to undertake a secret census covering ten groups: (1) families in which at last one member was of German nationality; (2) families which, although not necessarily German, had at least one member who had moved to Lithuania from Germany during the war; (3) families of traitors to the native land, that is families with one or more members who had served in German security agencies or some member of which had left the country with the German army; (4) families in which one or more members had been arrested for association with Lithuanian or Polish armed nationalist groups, such as the *Lithuanian Freedom Army* (Lith. *Lietuvos Laisvės Armija* – LLA) or the *Polish Home Army* (Pol. *Armia Krajowa*); included also were families which had hidden members of these groups or provided shelter for them, or permitted them to hold conspiratorial meetings, or had been involved with other banditry; (5) families which had actively supported officials and agents appointed by the German government; (6) families with members which had been arrested for active involvement in German intelligence or had provided shelter for such agents; (7) families which held large properties or had owned and operated businesses; (8) families some members of which had been involved in the smuggling of contraband items; (9) families in whose dwellings criminals and other lowlifes had regularly congregated; (10) prostitutes.²²

On December 14, 1944 the chief of the NKGB-NKVD operational group in Marijampolė Major Cvetkov (Rus. Цветков) and Major Dolzhenko (Rus. Долженко), chief of the local NKGB, reported that there were 391 such families in their region with a total of 1,310 mem-

²¹ LYA LKP f. 1771, a 7, b. 92, 43.

²² LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 3.

bers. 20 families with 45 members had been identified as Germans.²³ On December 25, 1944 the report came from Kretinga that there were 304 families with 1180 members on their list. 17 families with 63 members were Germans.²⁴ On December 26, 1944 the Vilkaviškis list included 181 families with 643 members. 14 of these families with 41 members were identified as German.²⁵ The Tauragė list arrived on December 31, 1944 and listed 65 families with 230 members. Of these 12 families with 38 members were identified as Germans.²⁶ Of course, not all those listed were guilty. Many were spouses or even the innocent children of supposed “subversives” who had to be dealt with for the sake of the well-being of the socialist state.

It is unclear what criteria was used by security and internal affairs organizations to identify Germans in the turbulent months of the war or to what extent their membership in the Lutheran Church could be regarded as legitimate evidence that they were Germans.²⁷ Indeed, no uniform criteria were imposed from above. Officers in each area could set their own criteria for identifying individuals and families as German. It is also unlikely that Russian officers, who took the census and filed the reports, knew much about the local population or knew the Lithuanian language. They depended largely on information provided by local collaborators. The size of the numbers reported was also a reflection of the zeal with which local NKVD and NKGB agencies and their representatives approached their task.

As had been done earlier in the Volga region, the soviet government in Moscow now determined that Lithuania must be purged of

²³ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 2-3.

²⁴ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 18-19.

²⁵ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 24-25.

²⁶ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 85-86.

²⁷ In addition, in December 1944 the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party formulated a plan to re-appropriate the farm lands which were formerly occupied by German colonists. This effected the eviction of Lithuanian farm families which had occupied some 4,300 farms of repatriated Germans. These farms would later form the foundation of the new collectives. *Arbušauskaitė* 2002, 185.

all Germans and German influences. Juozas Bartašiūnas and Aleksandras Gudaitis-Guzevičius, People's Commissars of Internal Affairs (NKVD) and State Security (NKGB), were charged with the responsibility of seeing to the removal of all Germans to the inner depths of the Soviet Union. On December 16, 1944 they ordered that all Germans regardless of age, sex, occupation, or place in society, along with their families and relatives living in their households were to be banished from Lithuania. NKVD agents were warned that because those of German background would undoubtedly try to hide that fact, all personal documents must be closely examined and local NKGB and NKVD agents must collect data by whatever means they found appropriate, using also data provided by local collaborators. The census was to be done in secret. The forms were printed and officials were told that the process must begin immediately after the reception of the directive and within 10 days reports on the progress of its implementation must be submitted to Vilnius. Initial results should be submitted by January 1, 1945.²⁸

Сов. секретно. 9

НАЧАЛЬНИКУ ОПЕР.ГРУППЫ НКВД-НГБ поУЕЗДУ
.....ТОВ.

НАЧАЛЬНИКУУЕЗДНОГО ОТДЕЛА НКВД
.....ТОВ.

НАЧАЛЬНИКУУЕЗДНОГО ОТДЕЛА НГБ
.....ТОВ.

На территории Литовской ССР проживают семьи и отдельные лица немецкой национальности. Сообразуясь с оперативной необходимостью, на органы НКВД-НГБ Литовской ССР возложена задача очистить советскую Литву от лиц немецкой национальности.

Выселение на постоянное место жительства в отдаленные районы Советского Союза подлежат все немцы, проживавшие на территории Лит.ССР, независимо от их семейного положения, действительного возраста и пола; все лица не немецкой национальности, но тесно связанные с немецкой семьей - жена, муж, приемные дети, родственники, состоящие в браке с семьей или проживающие на территории этой семьи.

Всем начальникам опер.групп НКВД-НГБ уездов, а в городах и крупных населенных пунктах - начальникам соответствующих комитетов по делам Литовского округа, начальникам уездных отделов НКВД и НГБ под личную ответственность предлагается к 1 января 1945 года произвести полный учет лиц немецкой национальности, проживающих на территории Вашего уезда. При проведении этой работы учесть, что лица немецкой национальности, участвовавшие в партизанском движении, подлежат исключению; поэтому для определения национальности, учитывать оригинальные документальные данные и данные, полученные через агентуру.

На каждую семью, подлежащую выселению, составить постановление о выселении. Постановления о выселении вносить на главную семью с обязательным включением всех членов семьи, подлежащих к выселению, включая установочные данные: ф.и.о., национальность, год и место рождения, сведения о родителях, роде занятий и жилищно-коммунальные данные.

На каждую выселяемую семью к постановлению приложить справку от волостного или городского с данными всех членов семьи, тактику выселения семьи и справку-характеристику оперативного работника, согласованную с начальником УО НКВД для НКВД.

За сведениями расспросами НКВД СССР на 1 декабря 1944 г. года, каждой выселяемой семье разрешается взять с собой личные вещи и продовольствие весом до одной тонны на семью. Все личное и нематериальное имущество выселяемых должно быть передано местным властям или городским советам депутатов трудящихся, по соответствующим актам. Личный и продовольственный скар, который выселяемые не могут взять с собой, должно быть передано представителям Народов. Наркомате и Наркомате международного пролетариата по принадлежности с соответствующими оформлениями. Передача имущества должна производиться публично или в личном присутствии.

Вся подготовительная работа произвести немедленно.

December 16, 1944 decree concerning the deportation of Germans, issued by People's Commissars Bartašiūnas and Gudaitis-Guzevičius.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

²⁸ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 16, 9-10.

2.3 Lutherans under Surveillance

The implementation of the December 16, 1944 directive began immediately. By the end of December or in the first days of January 1945, the Lutheran people of Jurbarkas district noticed governmental agents going from village to village and from house to house searching for Lutherans and writing the names of the families and gathering other information without indicating for what purpose this information was being gathered. When asked the reason for this census, no precise answer was given. However, the census was restricted to those of the Lutheran faith and counted as Lutherans were members of the church of the villages Kalupėnai, Paleikiai, Vadžgiris, Šapališkės, Eržvilkas, and Kalniškiai.

Many parishioners turned to Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis in Jurbarkas asking what he knew about the purpose of the census. He in turn approached the Jurbarkas executive committee to ask for an explanation. The committee members pleaded ignorance. They stated that they were not taking a census, and that they had not been given any instructions to do so. They knew nothing. He then approached representatives of the NKVD who told him that they had been instructed to register all foreigners. This came as a surprise to Pastor Gavėnis who wondered why Lutherans might be considered foreigners. They were all ethnic Lithuanians whose families had long resided in that region. Subsequently he wrote to Pastor Jonas Kalvanas to inform him that the census had been taken, perhaps as a result of inquiries by Kalvanas about the matter.²⁹

According to Gavėnis the census of Lutherans in the Jurbarkas district was not carried out systematically but on a random basis. He was unsuccessful in his efforts to discover why the census had been taken and for what purposes the information gathered was to be used.

²⁹ April 1945 letter of Pastor Gavėnis to Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA *Bažnyčios istorija*.

It is unclear whether the census of Lutherans was conducted so openly elsewhere. Pastors would doubtless have taken note of it but there were few pastors. In the whole region of Suvalkija no Lutheran pastor remained and no divine services were being held, except in Sudargas. There was no one to ask for clarification about the census of Lutherans. Nothing was mentioned about the census in the Tauragė district in the prolific archives left by Pastor Kalvanas. Only after the arrests did Kalvanas speak of the deportation of Lutherans who had resided in the Tauragė district.³⁰

³⁰ May 4, 1945 letter of Pastor Kalvanas to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

2.4 The Examination of the Files by Vilnius Authorities



Juozas Bartašiūnas, People's
Commissar for NKVD of the
Lithuanian SSR..

*From: Mažoji lietuviškoji tarybinė
enciklopedija, 1966.*

By January 1945 the data on persons suspected of being German was ready to be presented to NKVD chief Bartašiūnas.

The data from the Šakiai region was supplied on January 27. It listed 41 persons from that region as Germans. If Bartašiūnas agreed, they and their families would be among those to be deported.³¹ The data supplied also revealed that the source of the information, had in many cases, been the Jurbarkas executive committee. The undated document signed by that committee's Chairman Jonas Olekas supplied the names of 21 families with 88 members.³² 61 percent of them, 13 families, were from the small rural area of Kiduliai, just across the Nemunas River (Rus. *Неман*)

from Jurbarkas. This is an indication that, as in the case of Jurbarkas itself, the representatives of the executive committee did not overburden themselves by doing a careful census of Germans; they simply counted the number of Lutherans.

In other regions NKVD agencies simply sent additional copies of the data they supplied Vilnius after the secret directives had been issued on November 29, 1944. This appears to have been the case in Marijampolė, where in its report of December 29, 1944 the lo-

³¹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 96-97.

³² LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 73-75.

cal NKVD-NKGB operational group simply copied the data they had sent a month before. Their letter stated that in the Marijampolė region there were 20 German families with a total of 45 individuals. On January 16, however, NKGB Major Dolzhenko sent a list with the names of 19 persons.³³ The same pattern can be seen in the January 15, 1945 report from Vilkaviškis, which simply repeated the earlier report that had given the number of German families as 14.³⁴ On January 10, 1945 Kaunas NKVD chief Lieutenant-Colonel Svechnikov (Rus. Свечников) reported that in that city there were 30 German families who would need to be “relocated.” He included 11 completed files and a statement that other files were being prepared and would be sent within the next few days. The total number of individuals to be listed was 119.³⁵ The Tauragė NKVD increased the number of German families which they had supplied on December 31, 1944 from 12 to 18, according to the February 19, 1945 report of NKVD Major Ignatev (Rus. Игнатъев).³⁶

The Kretinga NKVD was less productive than some other regional branches. On January 29, 1945 regional NKVD chief First Lieutenant Kirjanov (Rus. Кирьянов) reported to Bartašiūnas that there was only one German family living there - the Schulz family with 5 members. He justified the “ineffectiveness” of his office in tracking down Germans by stating that many in that region had fled from the battle area. He promised that he would send additional data as soon as he could.³⁷ The Kėdainiai report indicated that there were no German families there at all. Apparently the locals decided that all the Germans had left in July 1944 and could not be bothered to look for any others.³⁸ The NKVD - NKGB headquarters in Vilnius was not satisfied with the Kėdainiai report. Surely there must be at least one German lurking there! The Kėdainiai NKVD branch

³³ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 31, 45.

³⁴ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 44.

³⁵ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 41; LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 1.

³⁶ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 84-86.

³⁷ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 49.

³⁸ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 91.

beat the bushes and finally came up with two. In a letter to Vilnius on March 12 they named Jonas Kinas and Petras Kinas,³⁹ a family known to be Lutheran.

On January 20 reports from all 17 Lithuanian regions were collated. 272 individuals were named as German. They and their families would be subject to the deportation.⁴⁰

More data was arriving in Vilnius from the regional branches of the NKVD and NKGB. On February 28 Captain G. N. Hisamutnikov (Rus. Хисамутников) of the Šakiai NKGB increased the number of Germans there from 41 to 66 and sent personal data on each family.⁴¹ Some of those named were still under investigation. On March 13 he sent 39 reviewed files, stating that all of those named in them were to be relocated.⁴² So too the Kaunas NKVD Lieutenant-Colonel Svechnikov provided the names of 9 families, their individual members, and their local addresses.

File folders were established to hold data on each person suspected of being a German. Each file bore the general title: "File No___ of the Department of Visas and Registration of Foreigners of the NKVD Department of Police (Rus. *Милиция*) of the Lithuanian SSR." The file listed every member of the family.

An examination of the files indicates the evidence used to "prove" that a suspected individual was German. Some evidence was found in passports. This might explain why there were considerable numbers of women with Lithuanian or Russian surnames who were identified as Germans. It was claimed that they were German women who had married Lithuanian or Russian men and had taken their surnames.

The 1941 German repatriation was another source of evidence. Local NKVD officials saw no need to search the archives from the repatriation, because they had available the testimony of

³⁹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 114.

⁴⁰ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 14, 2.

⁴¹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 96-97.

⁴² LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 115-116.

local collaborators who could identify this or that family as having returned from Germany after the repatriation. Of course not all of the 50,000 individuals repatriated in 1941 had been German. A large number of them had been Lithuanian. Less than 20 years earlier, in 1923, the national census had listed the number of Germans in Lithuania as 28,671.⁴³ That number surely did not double in 18 years. It is evident that Lutheran identity was regarded as sufficient cause to label a person German and some used this fact to escape soviet Lithuania as “Germans”.⁴⁴ The statistics of the 1941 repatriation indicate that 43,245 of those repatriated were “Evangelicals,” the vast majority of whom were Lutheran. Only 5,309 were listed as Roman Catholics. Statistically 87.5 % of those repatriated were “Evangelicals” and 10.8 % were Roman Catholics.⁴⁵ Some of those repatriated, both Germans and Lithuanians, chose to return during the war and most of the Germans who returned were evacuated back to Germany in July 1944. The fact that one had repatriated in 1941 was regarded by the local NKVD personnel as evidence that the

Handwritten text on the form includes:

- 10 высланы
- Литовцы - Пересел
- Многодетный
- Начато 1944 г.
- Скончено 1944 г.
- На
- Листах
- Омичев

Typical file folder issued for each deportee and family members.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

⁴³ Lietuvos gyventojai 1926, 28

⁴⁴ Arbušauskaitė 2002, 67-69.

⁴⁵ Arbušauskaitė 2002, 92.

person listed was German and was therefore subject to deportation, although the person in question might not have been German at all!

The fact that one might have a family member living in Germany was also taken as evidence that one was himself a German. So it was that Emilis Knopė of Skaudvilė area was listed as subject to deportation because his brother lived in Germany.⁴⁶ This criterion affected many Lutherans because they had relatives who formerly resided in East Prussia and had since moved to Germany with the retreating German army. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the north-western region of East Prussia had been called "Prussian Lithuania" or "Minor Lithuania."

In some exceptional cases, chiefly in Kaunas, the NKVD interrogated suspected individuals to determine their nationality. Sergej[us] German[as] was among those interrogated. The real basis for such interrogations was most likely never revealed. The primary purpose of it was to uncover Germans.⁴⁷

A person might be identified as a German if some member of his family left with the German army when it retreated in 1944. Such was the case with Juozas Kalvaitis. He was labeled German because his two sons had left with the German army when it retreated.⁴⁸

A person might also be labeled German simply because he or she was suspected of harboring anti-soviet attitudes or pro-German sentiments, as was the case with Elena Okmantaitė from Veiveriai area.⁴⁹ To have had any close connections with the German occupational government was enough to earn one the designation "German." If one had played host in his home to members of the German civil administration or had entertained military personnel, this too could be taken as an indication of German sympathies or even as proof that one was a German.

⁴⁶ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 86.

⁴⁷ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 76

⁴⁸ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 7

⁴⁹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 8

So too correspondence with relatives living in Germany was enough to ensure that one's name would be placed on the list of those who must be deported, as happened in the case of Ana Makarovienė of Kaunas.⁵⁰

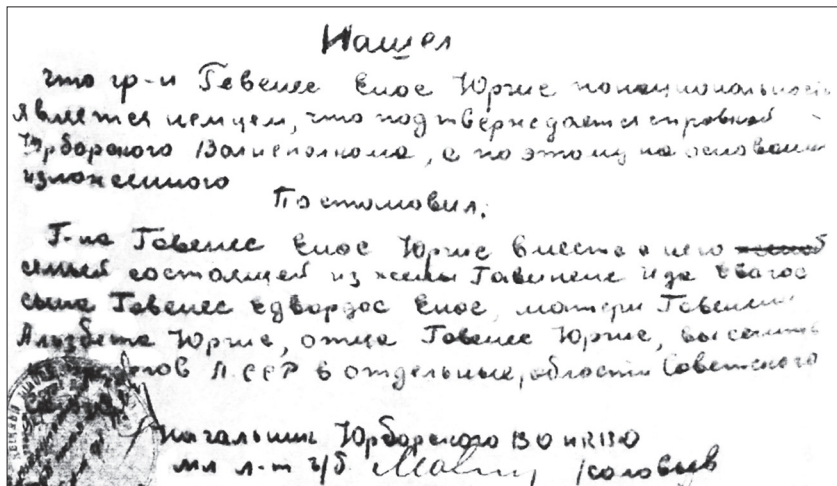
Lithuanian families in which either the husband or the wife was repatriated in 1941 and was now living in Germany were judged to be Germans themselves and therefore subject to deportation. This directly contradicted the directive which had stated that only the Germans and their families living in Lithuania were to be deported. Such was the fate of Sofija Mertenienė of Vilkaviškis district whose husband had left Lithuania in the earlier repatriation.⁵¹

In some places the fact that an individual was a Lutheran was regarded as sufficient cause to label him a "German." The executive committee responsible for conducting the census of Germans simply attested that these Lutherans were Germans. No evidence beyond that statement was required. Of course, in no case was it stated that these people were Germans because they were Lutheran. In the file that was opened on Jonas Gavėnis, the brother of Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis, Lieutenant Junior Grade Solovjov (Rus. Соловьѳв), the chief of the Jurbarkas NKVD, stated that "according to nationality Jonas Gavėnis, the son of Jurgis, is German; this is confirmed by a note from the Jurbarkas district executive committee." On this basis Solovjov determined: "Jonas Gavėnis and his whole family, consisting of wife Ida Gavėnienė, son Gavėnis Edvardas, mother Elžbieta Gavėnienė, father Jurgis Gavėnis are to be deported from within the borders of Lithuania to other regions of the Soviet Union."⁵² This judgment was made against a Lithuanian Lutheran family which had been a primary force behind the patriotic Lithuanian Lutheran newspaper "*Srovė*." This newspaper had sought by every means possible to counteract German influence in the Lithuanian Lutheran Church. Elžbieta Gavėnienė, mother of

⁵⁰ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 243.

⁵¹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 80

⁵² LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 58.



Statement of Lieutenant Junior Grade Solovjov that Jonas Gavėnis is German;
cited and provided as evidence by Jurbarkas executive committee.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

Jonas Gavėnis, had been the editor of this anti-German newspaper. Because Jonas Gavėnis had been labeled a German, this meant that Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis ought also to have been included on the list. However, the Jurbarkas executive committee was not willing to take that step against a prominent member of the community, a pastor whose disappearance could not be hidden.

It cannot easily be determined to what extent Lithuanian Lutherans in other regions in the country were arrested simply because they were members of the so-called "German Church." A pattern similar to that in Jurbarkas can be seen in Šilalė. There Vilhelmas Nikelis, his wife and two daughters from the village of Nevočiai, were included on the list of deportees because a note from the Šilalė district executive committee stated that he was a German. There were two other families in Nevočiai with the surname Nikelis. They too were included on the list of those to be deported. The

local executive committee supposed that they too must be Germans.⁵³ This may have been determined to be highly probable because the families were Lutheran. Present day members of the Šilalė Lutheran parish who knew the Nikelis families state that Vilhelmas, Albertas, and Fridrikas were in fact not Germans at all. They were Lithuanians through and through.⁵⁴

The Šakiai executive committee also submitted its report, listing 27 families with 88 individuals. The names of 7 families with 31 members were included in the deportation lists only on the basis of the testimony of the local executive committee.⁵⁵

Nationality was carefully separated from religion in all official documents, excepting in the case of Fricas Skėrys. His file stated that he was a German, and the evidence to support this claim was the word of First Lieutenant Belskij (Rus. Бельский), chief of the 5th branch of the Tauragė NKVD, who stated that “Skėrys Fricas, the son of Jurgis, is of German origin and nationality. He is a German living in the territory of Lithuania, and at the present time he confesses the Lutheran faith.”⁵⁶ The report added that his brother Jonas

69. ВЕЛИКО БОГДАНОВИЧ	1895	ОМОН	Р.А.СЕМЫН	Х.Тренишис, Казулис В. Павалонис: 1945.10.02.
70. ВЕЛИКИНИ Юлия А. Фридриха	1887	—	КОНВ	—
71. ВЕЛИКИНИ Алфред В. Фридрихович	1911	—	ОМН	—
72. ВЕЛИКИНИ Рихардас С. Фридрихович	1913	—	—	—
73. ВЕЛИКИНИ Марта А. Фридриховна	1924	—	ДОЧЬ	—
74. ВЕЛИКИНИ Густавас С. Фридрихович	1927	—	ОМН	—
75. ВЕЛИКИНИ Онна А. Фридриховна	1925	—	ДОЧЬ	—
76. ВЕЛИКИНИ Оскарис	1931	—	ОМН	—
77. ВЕЛИКИНИ Амбала Фридриховна	1930	—	ДОЧЬ	—
78. ВЕЛИКИНИ Земвалас С. Фридрихович	1936	—	ОМН	—
79. ВЕЛИКИНИ Аларис Фридрихович	1937	—	—	—
80. ВЕЛИКИНИ Леокас С. Фридрихович	1967	—	Р.А.СЕМЫН	Х.Александрович, П. Павалонис: 1945.10.02.
81. ВЕЛИКИНИ Каролис	1911	—	КОНВ	—
82. ВЕЛИКИНИ Урота	1913	—	ДОЧЬ	—
83. ВЕЛИКИНИ Мартина	1935	—	—	—
84. ВЕЛИКИНИ Антанас С. Фридрихович	1934	—	ОМН	—
85. ВЕЛИКИНИ Конас С. Фридрихович	1937	—	—	—
86. ВЕЛИКИНИ Юнукис Альфред	1938	—	ДОЧЬ	—
87. ВЕЛИКИНИ Иеронимас Альфред	1939	—	—	—
88. ВЕЛИКИНИ Онна А. Фридриховна	1925	—	—	—

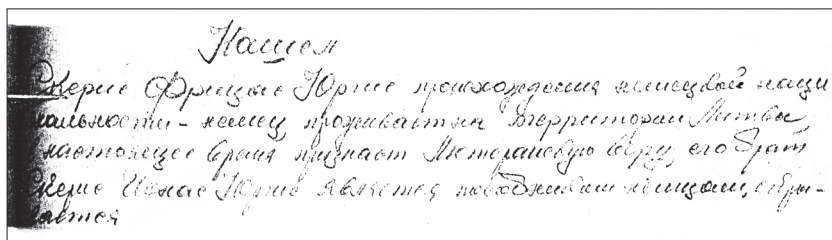
List of “German” families with pertinent data supplied by the Šakiai executive committee Chairman, Jonas Olekas, 1945.

⁵³ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 102.

⁵⁴ Personal interview with Ida Juozupaitienė of the Šilalė Lutheran parish on March 29, 2011.

⁵⁵ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 73-75.

⁵⁶ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 110.



Statement from the file of Fricas Skėrys indicating that he is at present confessing the Lutheran faith, taken as evidence of his German nationality.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

collaborated with the Germans. The case of Fricas Skėrys indicates that an attitude similar to that common in Jurbarkas could also be found in Tauragė. A Lithuanian could be identified as a German and deported simply because he was a member of the Lutheran Church. Usually additional proofs were required such as a note from the local executive committee. However, it is clear that Lutherans were included in the deportation lists because of their membership in the church.

In a similar case in the Vilkaviškis region religion was taken as evidence of German identity. Ona Stanaitienė was marked for deportation because her son had been identified as a “German Pastor.” The “German pastor” in question was Julius Stanaitis, who together with many other Lithuanian Lutheran pastors, was repatriated in 1941. In his own report to the Ministry of Education in 1938 Pastor Stanaitis had clearly indicated that he was a Lithuanian in both nationality and citizenship.⁵⁷ His mother and his two sisters Olga and Ida, were included on the deportation list simply because Julius was a Lutheran pastor. Additional evidence stated that not only Julius but also his brother had fled from the country. This was all the NKGB-NKVD needed to know.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 754, 16.

⁵⁸ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15, 96.

The NKVD headquarters in Vilnius tried to give the impression that they were very careful in their attempts to trace a person's ethnic identity, and that they thoroughly and conscientiously examined each file. Many of the files which they received from local branches were in fact incomplete or inconsistent. In some cases the files did not even state that the suspected person was a German. These files were sent back to the local NKVD offices with the requests that they be corrected and completed.⁵⁹

After the files were examined in Vilnius the NKVD and NKGB magnanimously struck off the names of 15 families. They stated there was no compelling evidence that these people were Germans, but that they would need to be closely watched in the future. Among the reasons given for removing names from the list was that a husband or son had been inducted into the Red Army.⁶⁰

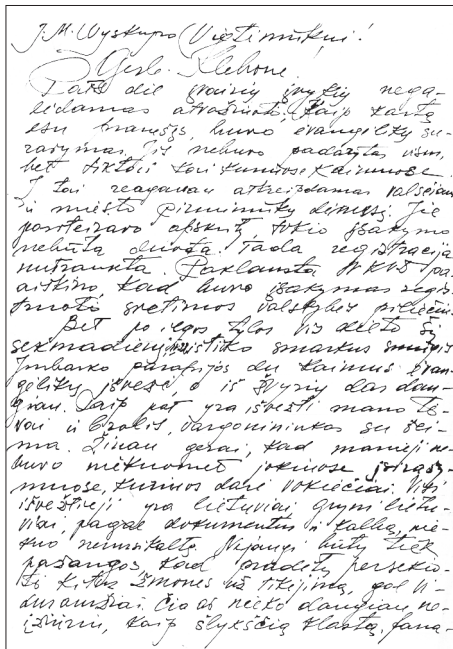
The NKGB headquarters were not always satisfied with solid evidence and preferred to listen to the statements of talebearers, gossips, and those who bore grudges. The divorced husband of one woman claimed that, although her passport clearly identified her as a Lithuanian, she was really a German. The NKVD officers requested that she turn over her passport for "correction." She was subsequently added to the list of deportees.⁶¹

⁵⁹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 12 gives ample records and correspondence.

⁶⁰ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 12, 2, 61, 70.

⁶¹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 72.

2.5 The Deportation



April 1945 letter of Pastor Gavėnis
to Pastor Kalvanas informing him of
deportation of Lutherans
in the Jurbarkas district.

On February 7, 1945 Vasilij Chernyshov (Rus. Василий Чернышов), the assistant chief of the entire NKVD, issued from his office in Moscow a secret directive, addressed to Bartašiūnas, the chief of the Lithuanian NKVD. It stated that those marked for deportation were to be sent to the Komi ASSR (Rus. *Кому*), and more specifically to corrective labor camps in the Pechora (Rus. *Печора*) forest industry. Deportees would need to be forewarned that they must take with them personal goods, such as clothing, shoes, food, jewelry, etc., not to exceed 1000 kilograms in *toto*. Those

who had no food for the journey would need to be supplied with dry food. Property left behind by the deportees would need to be carefully accounted for by the responsible parties in the local executive committees. A copy of that accounting would need to be given to the deportee. The arrests of the deportees must be done simultaneously in all regions and all deportees must depart the country on the same railway train. To facilitate the arrests and to accompany the deportees to the place of embarkation, the Lithuanian NKVD

must provide a sufficient number of NKVD troops and supply the deportees with sufficient funds – 100 rubles.⁶²

By the end of March the investigation of the files was finished. On March 20, 1945 307 “German” families, consisting of 1049 individuals - 297 men, 411 women, and 313 children up to the age of 16, would be sent to Komi ASSR.⁶³

Subsequently, on April 9, a correction was issued. On that day Bartašiūnas, Guzevičius, and Dmitrij Rodionov (Rus. Дмитрий Родионов), USSR NKVD-NKGB Commissioner in Lithuania, reported to Sergej Kruglov (Rus. Сергей Круглов), the assistant chief of NKVD in Moscow, stating that 300 families, consisting of 1000 individuals, would be included in the deportation - 291 men, 396 women, and 313 children. They asked Kruglov to direct that the Lithuanian railway must assign 55 railway cars to transport them. Although the decree did not state what sort of accommodations were to be provided, it was clearly not passenger cars that would be used for this journey to take the deportees to the railway station on North Pechora road at Knjazh Pogost (Rus. КНЯЖ-Погост).⁶⁴

On April 18 Bartašiūnas issued the order to gather the deportees in preparation for their deportation and provided detailed instructions as to the procedure to be followed in gathering them. His order also stated that local communist party committees and executive committees must be informed of the operation in order to assist the NKVD personnel in its execution. He carefully avoided speaking of arrests or detainments. He instead used the term “withdrawal” (Rus. “изъятие”). The “withdrawal” of the families must be done carefully so as to avoid any possibility that revolutionary justice would be violated. The “withdrawal” must be carried out by personnel with a reputation for honesty and personal integrity. The “withdrawal” of each family could proceed only after the workers from the local executive committee had carefully inventoried all the

⁶² LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 16, 1.

⁶³ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 14, 7.

⁶⁴ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 14, 5.

property which the family was leaving behind and the responsible worker from the NKVD or NKGB must in every case explain to the head of the household that they have a right to take personal property and goods up to 1000 kg per family, including money, assets, clothing, shoes, bedding, food, and house ware.

Those who were being “withdrawn” were also to be informed that they needed to supply themselves with food for a journey of at least 45 days. The directive stated that those who did not have such a supply must be supplied with dry food through local trade agencies.

The property left behind was to be carefully recorded by the representatives of the local executive committee. One copy of the inventory was to be given to the head of the family, the other to the NKVD to be added to the personal file of the family. Before the “withdrawn” were brought to Kaunas, they had first to be taken to a collection point, such as Marijampolė, Kretinga, Šiauliai, or Tauragė.

The impression was given that the NKVD was concerned about the personal comfort of those being “withdrawn,” since the directive stated that proper facilities must be provided and that in case of bad weather or delay medical service and medications must be provided for those in the collection facilities. The “withdrawal” must begin on April 24 and the “withdrawn” were to be directed into the railway cars and brought without further delay to Kaunas where the cars would be joined to form the train. NKGB Lieutenant Colonel Svechnikov, chief of the Kaunas NKVD, was put in charge of the “withdrawal” operation. Those involved in its execution were warned that they must take into account that lawless elements (bandits) might try to obstruct the relocation process and might even attack the collection points and railway cars. The NKVD must take this possibility seriously and provide necessary armed defense. Colonel Chechev (Rus. Чечев), the chief of the Lithuanian prison system, was given responsibility for the control of the implementation of the whole operation.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 16, 2-6.

The directive was written in language which sought to give the impression that those who had been selected for “withdrawal” were in no way going to experience any violation of their rights as soviet citizens and that the property they were leaving behind would still be waiting for them when they returned. However, there was not one word in the directive to indicate those who were experiencing soviet justice were given any opportunity to defend themselves in court. The supposed guilt of one member of the family meant that the whole family, often including parents and even maiden aunts living with them, were subject to deportation. None of those being “withdrawn” could ever have imagined the horrors awaiting them in the depths of the Soviet Union.⁶⁶

On April 19 NKGB Lieutenant Ershov (Rus. Ершов), who was in charge of the train, was given 300 files on the families which included information about the regions from which they were coming: 30 families from the Tauragė region and 23 from the region of Šiauliai. In addition, 2 were being sent from the Seinai region, 24 from Marijampolė, 3 from Telšiai, 5 from Panevėžys, 3 from Mažeikiai, 41 from Vilkauskis, 4 from Kretinga, 4 from Ukmergė, 53 from Šakiai, 38 from Raseiniai, 4 from Alytus, 3 from the Kaunas region, and 63 from the city itself.⁶⁷

On April 25, 1945 Lieutenant-Colonel Svechnikov signed a plan for the arrests of the deportees residing in Kaunas. The operation there was to begin early the next morning, April 26 at 6 AM. Svechnikov himself would be in command. In the local districts of the city NKVD chiefs were appointed as commanding officers with the soldiers of the 298th NKVD military regiment and guards from the No. 3 Kaunas prison assisting. The total number of families to be gathered was 59, included among which were 117 individuals. Two officers accompanied by two soldiers and members of the Kaunas NKVD were to effect the arrest of each family.⁶⁸ At 4 PM on April

⁶⁶ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 98ad.

⁶⁷ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 14, 8.

⁶⁸ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 84-85.

25 those who would be involved in the arrests were gathered and supplied with specific information about each family. They were informed that the collection point for deportees from all over the country had already been prepared the previous day.

The operation was undertaken as planned at 6 AM on April 26. 263 officers and soldiers were involved. Representatives of the real estate agency of the local executive committee were invited to be present to inventory the possession of each family involved. The operation was completed by 10 AM. In all, 57 families with 154 individuals were detained. 5 families were nowhere to be found. One family of two was left because its head was in a hospital in serious condition. 4 other families had moved and could not be located. One family was stricken from the list by order of Bartašiūnas himself. A total of 19 family members were left behind, most of whom had left the city. One man could not be found because he had been conscripted into the Red Army, two others were able escape, one because he had seen the soldiers coming. It was found that some families had children not named on the lists, and since the directive stated that children must be deported with their parents, 11 such children were taken into custody.⁶⁹

In the regions of Šiauliai, Panevėžys, Mažeikiai, and Raseiniai the gathering of those to be “withdrawn” began several days earlier, on April 22. In Tauragė, the NKVD police arrived at the designated front doors on April 23. They met no resistance, but neither did they find everyone at home! In the area around Kartena near Kretinga the NKVD was able to find only 11 out of the 23 persons marked for deportation. The April 27 report stated that the results of their efforts could perhaps be called satisfactory and that they had not experienced any attacks from bandits living in the forests thereabouts.⁷⁰

A few individuals were able to escape by one means or another. In Tauragė Elena Nikelienė slipped away from the detention center

⁶⁹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 124-126.

⁷⁰ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 14, 9-9ad.

with her twelve year old daughter Elena and her seven year old son Albertas. Marija Skėrienė, Bronė Šerienė, and Jurta Osvaltienė also escaped. The sergeant responsible for guarding the deportees reported that 76 individuals from the 23 families arrested had been put into several barracks near the railway station, but only two guards had been provided by the NKVD to guard this large number of people - two guards for four barracks. It took six days for the railway cars to arrive. The sergeant had expressed his concern about the small number of guards to the chief of the local NKVD and had requested that a larger number of guards be provided. The chief of the NKVD had refused his request saying that the people surely would not run away. As a matter of fact, however, 6 people did.⁷¹

People began to arrive at the collection center in Kaunas on April 25. Bartašiūnas complained that the railway agency had not supplied a sufficient number of cars. Finally, on April 29 forty-eight cattle cars, providing space for 742 deportees, were coupled together in Kaunas.⁷² The next day the deportees were loaded into the cars, but the train could not depart because the 70 deportees from Tauragė had not yet arrived. They came only in the early morning of May 3rd.⁷³

Train No. 48066 left Kaunas on May 3, at 9:30 AM, according to the report of Lieutenant-Colonel Svechnikov to Colonel Chechev of the Vilnius NKVD.⁷⁴ There was some confusion as to the number of deportees. Svechnikov's report to Chechev stated that the train included 812 individuals, about half of whom were young children or elderly, or infirm. He stated that 263 were children under age 16 and 136 were over age 56. There were 220 middle age women and 329 men. When added together this data indicates that the total number of the deportees was not 812 but 948.⁷⁵

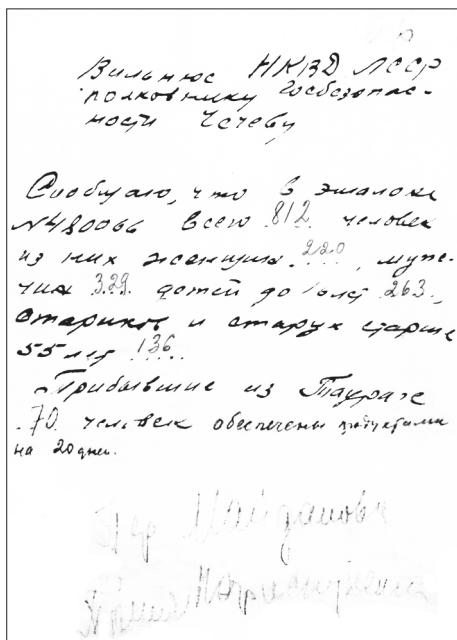
⁷¹ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 14, 14ad.

⁷² LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 107.

⁷³ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 126.

⁷⁴ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 108.

⁷⁵ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 106



Report of Lieutenant-Colonel Svechnikov
to Colonel Chechev giving total number of
deportees on the train No. 48066.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

Only families from rural areas were able to bring sufficient food for their journey, and those from Tauragė region did manage to gather enough food for 20 days. Most city dwellers had little possibility of bringing more than enough provisions for a few days. When the time came for embarkation Captain Safanov (Rus. Сафанов) would not permit those without sufficient provisions to be boarded. He insisted that the Kaunas NKVD must provide sufficient food from storage.⁷⁶ The report of Lieutenant-Colonel Svechnikov indicates that

the Kaunas NKVD directed that food-supply agencies provide 8500 kg of bread, 1587 kg of rye flour, 291 kg of grits, 262 kg of canned meat, and 48 kg of sugar.⁷⁷

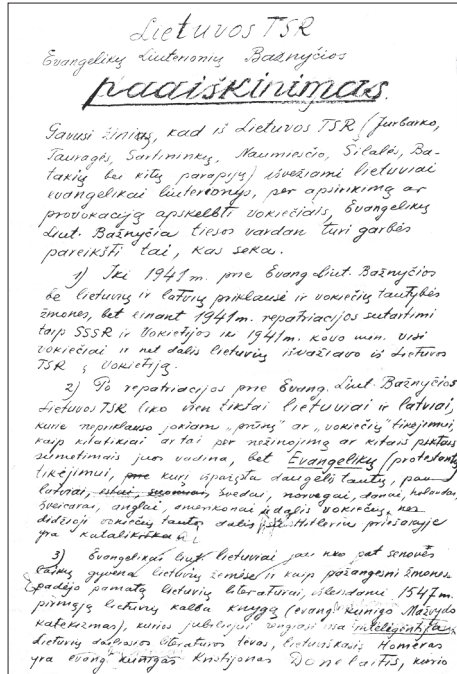
⁷⁶ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 120.

⁷⁷ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 127.

2.6 Attempts by the Church to Rescue her Members

Within a short time Lutheran pastors were informed about the arrests and deportations. Before the end of the month Pastor Gavėnis wrote to Pastor Kalvanas about the deportations in the Jurbarkas district. He stated that on Sunday April 22, 1945 the NKVD had struck the Lutheran parishes. Some Lutherans of two villages in the Jurbarkas parish and a number from the Skirsnemunė-Žvyriai parish had abruptly disappeared. Included among those who had disappeared were Pastor Gavėnis' own parents, his brother, and the parish organist with his

family. There was no basis for suspecting that any of them harbored any German sympathies whatever. They had in past decades been staunch Lithuanians who had never, even for a moment, entertained any thoughts of repatriation in 1941. He wondered whether the country had now regressed to medieval times when many suffered for their faith. He said that it was a clear example of treachery and betrayal, fanaticism and cruelty. They had been herded on to a boat which then set sail for Kaunas. They were permitted to take with them only the barest minimum of food and clothing. He asked that Pastor Kalvanas inform the consistory Chairman, Pastor Leijeris, of this situation so that



April 1945 Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania.

he could immediately take up the matter with the government. Pastor Gavėnis did not understand the scope of this program or who was behind it. He naively thought that it had been engineered by the Jesuits. In the margins of Pastor Gavėnis' letter Pastor Kalvanas put a notation that 40 families from the villages of Kalupėnai, Paleikiai, Vadžgirys, and Šapališkės had been forcibly shipped to Kaunas on April 22, and 5 additional families had been sent from the villages of Eržvilkas and Kalniškiai on April 26.⁷⁸ The pastors stated that families from the area of Smalininkai in the Klaipėda region (Germ. *Memelland*) were also included among the deportees. It is not clear on what basis they made this claim, because nowhere in any of the deportation documents is there any indication that an attempt was made to enumerate Germans in the Smalininkai area. Perhaps the pastors mistakenly confused some local repression in the Smalininkai area by security services as part of the pacification process after the retreat of the German army.

The pastors responded immediately. On April 28, 1945 Pastors Leijeris, Kalvanas, Mizaras, Gavėnis, Baltris, and Preikšaitis wrote to the Lithuanian communist government that Lutherans who were Lithuanian by nationality and sentiment were being deported from Jurbarkas, Tauragė, Smalininkai, Naumiestis, Šilalė, and Bataikiai parishes. These had all been incorrectly identified as Germans. Since the repatriation of Germans in 1941, the Lutheran community in Lithuania consisted of only Lithuanians and Latvians who held allegiance to no "Prussian" or "German" faith. Others may have improperly identified the Lutherans as German to further their own purposes, but the truth of the matter was that the world-wide Lutheran community includes Swedes, Norwegians, Danes, and Americans who have no allegiance whatever to Germany or the Germans. Furthermore not all Germans were Lutherans.

They pointed out that Lutheran contributions to Lithuanian cultural and national life were numerous and outstanding. One need only mention such great Lithuanian literary figures as Lutheran Pastors Martynas Mažvydas, Jonas Bretkūnas, and Kristijonas Donelaitis. They noted also the great sufferings which the Lithuanian Lutheran

⁷⁸ April 1945 letter of Pastor Gavėnis to Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA *Bažnyčios istorija*.

community had suffered at the hands of the Nazis and some, such as Jagomastas family, had been martyred by the *Gestapo* in the Paneriai forest near Vilnius. If one were to claim that all Lithuanian Lutherans were German, then one should go all the way and agree with the Nazis that all of Minor Lithuania and the Klaipėda region really belong to Germany. Lithuanian Lutherans did not collaborate with the Nazis nor did they participate in the torture and execution of Jews and Russians. Lithuanian Lutherans were grieved that they were being considered separately from other Lithuanians and were being deported as enemies of the state. The pastors expressed their confidence that with these facts now before them the government would surely guarantee the rights of its Lithuanian Lutheran citizens.⁷⁹

The pastors, who were busy counting missing families, were in a state of shock. In his May 4, 1945 letter to Leijeris Pastor Kalvanas noted that 12 families of the Jurbarkas parish, 12 families from the vicinity of Tauragė had been deported along with many from Skirsnemunė-Žvyriai and other parishes in Suvalkija. He was sure that on the basis of the letter which the pastors had sent in April the government would investigate and correct the situation.⁸⁰

Pastor Gavėnis was determined to prove that the deportees from his parish had been mistakenly identified as Germans. He went from village to village collecting names and created a file for each family. In addition he sought to meet with local government officials who had known these people and could attest to their Lithuanian ethnicity. In a July 9, 1945 letter to Chairman Leijeris he stated that he had passed the information he had gathered to Kazys Preikšas, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party in Vilnius, by way of a courier. His information would doubtless be well received.⁸¹

⁷⁹ April 28, 1945 Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Lithuanian SSR (Lietuvos TSR Evangelikų Liuteronų bažnyčios pareiškimas). - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

⁸⁰ May 4, 1945 letter of Pastor Kalvanas to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

⁸¹ Jul 9, 1945 letter of Pastor Gavėnis to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA *Gauti raštai 1943-1946*.

Tauragė, 1945. V. 4. *Moras*

K. PETKŪNAS.

127
 Mielas Senjore,

Jurbarko distrikto kunigaikštystės ir m. IV k. iš jo parapijos išsėta 12 evangelikų šeimų, tarp jų jo tėvai ir brolis su žmona.

Is mano parapijos ir flejys iki šiol 12 šeimų. Taip pat ir Zuprys ir Suvalkijos parapijos.

Per misionerius ar kitatikių provokaciją jie užduotai patikėtais. Tuo reikabiu Vyriausybės įsakyta bus. Ir bus. Būsimasis pasiskelbimas bus kiti varden.

Tikrai, kad Vyriausybės iš dabar įsakyta ir nusipra-timas bus skelbiama.

Grades skundis šio pasiskelbimo nuostatai ir 2 kodus apie tikintį priėjus perlaizę.

Antanas Tauragauskas

May 4, 1945 letter of Pastor Jonas Kalvanas to Pastor Erikas Leijeris noting the arrest of 12 Lutheran families from the vicinity of Tauragė and Lutheran families from parishes in Jurbarkas, Skirsnemunė-Zvyriai, and the Suvalkija region.

His courier was Antanas Tauragauskas, who had been the chief of personnel at the Council of Ministers beginning in 1945, now living in retirement.⁸² Also helpful was the famous Minor Lithuanian writer Ieva Simonaitytė, who had direct access to very important people in the Lithuanian Supreme Council. She was a Lithuanian Lutheran who was aware of the history of the tensions between the Germans and Lithuanians in Minor Lithuania.⁸³ Pastor Gavėnis received word that his material had been forwarded to Moscow, but as yet had received no response to it. In his letter he noted that, to the great joy of the Kaunas congregation, Simonaitytė had attended and participated in the congregation's Divine Service.⁸⁴

⁸² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 20-21.

⁸³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 21-24.

⁸⁴ July 9, 1945 letter of Pastor Gavėnis to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA Gauti raštai 1943-1946.

To follow up on matters Pastor Gavėnis decided that he must travel to Vilnius. It was his hope that he could gain an audience with top government officials. On July 28, 1945 Pastor Kalvanas issued him a travel permit to journey to Vilnius for two months to transact important church business. Included also was a request that the relevant authorities assist him in his travels.⁸⁵ What Pastor Gavėnis really hoped to accomplish was to uncover what fate had befallen his parents and family. He hoped to show that they were a patriotic Lithuanian Lutheran family and find justice for them. They had



Pastor Erikas Leijeris, Chairman of the Consistory. November, 1948.

been leaders in the church in the struggle against the Germans during the President Smetona years. He was unable to gain access to any high officials and asked Ieva Simonaitytė to intercede on behalf of his family. She wrote to Paleckis, Chairman of the Lithuanian Communist Supreme Council, but nothing came of it.⁸⁶

Lutherans were living in constant fear of deportation. New fears were aroused on August 6 – 7, 1945, when local officials informed them that they must go to Jurbarkas for registration. They took this as a clear indication that yet another mass deportation of Lutherans would soon follow. On August 9 Pastor Gavėnis wrote to the chairman of the Raseiniai regional executive committee stating that once again local officials were erring by assuming that Lutherans were Germans. He repeated his earlier statements that Lithuanian Lutherans in the Jurbarkas district had been wrongly deported in April and stated that this mistake must not be repeated. He went on

⁸⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12325, 20/8.

⁸⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 21-24.

to say that this new census of the Lutherans was unconstitutional. It was a clear violation of freedom of conscience and religion, both of which were guaranteed by Stalin's Constitution. Ordinarily this would be a matter for the consistory to handle, but he was taking the initiative because of what had happened in the past.⁸⁷

Pastor Leijeris, the chairman of consistory, still held out the hope that soviet policies could be changed. He wrote to the chairman of the Supreme Council of LSSR on September 5, 1945 again stating that Lithuanian Lutherans in the regions of Tauragė and Jurbarkas had been mistakenly identified by the local communist government as Germans and had been deported on that basis. He stated that it was his hope that this did not represent the policies of the government officials at the highest level, but that some local governments had been content to assume that all Lutherans were Germans. In all likelihood he knew otherwise.⁸⁸

What Pastor Leijeris did not realize was that the Lithuanian Supreme Council did not intend to change the deportation policies. They were not willing to admit any errors which might have been made on the local level, nor would they admit that the repressions had anything to do with religion. The Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party was in fact planning the deportation of even larger numbers of Lithuanians.

⁸⁷ August 9, 1945 letter of Pastor Gavėnis to Raseiniai district executive committee. - JKA *Išsiųsti raštai 1935-1947*.

⁸⁸ September 5, 1945 letter Pastor Leijeris to the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR. - LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 6, 111; JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*; JKA *Išsiųsti raštai 1935-1947*.

2.7 Fortunes of the Deportees

The deportation train left Kaunas on May 3, 1945. It traveled northward until on May 9 it reached Vologda (Rus. *Вологда*). Then the train turned southward, and on May 31 it arrived at a new destination, Stalinabad, the capital of Tajikistan.⁸⁹ Today Stalinabad is Dushanbe, the capital of the sovereign nation of Tajikistan. It is not clear why for almost a week the train traveled northward. NKVD documents make no mention of Stalinabad, but speak only about Komi ASSR up until the day that the train left. Several lists of passengers are included in documents which list Stalinabad as the final destination. However, these lists are not dated. They are simply reports by NKGB Lieutenant Ershov (Rus. Ершов), who was in charge of the train about who were passengers on this journey into deportation. The earliest dated document concerning the travelers' destination gives the date May 12. It is addressed to Andrej Vladimirovich Harchenko (Rus. Андрей Владимирович Харченко), People's Commissar for NKVD of the Tajik SSR, asking the Tajikistan NKVD about whether or not three named women had been on the train. By that date the train was already well on its way toward its destination.⁹⁰ Secondary sources indicate that a decision to change the destination was made known on April 13. This, however, seems not altogether likely because of the initial northward direction of the train toward Komi ASSR.⁹¹ The first word that any of the deportees heard about the change in destination was communicated by a soldier after the train arrived in Vologda. He told them that the head of the train had been informed that the destination had been changed and that therefore the train would now change direction. He provided no information about where their final destination might be.⁹²

⁸⁹ Tarasonis, *Bajoriūnas, Gediminskas* 1992, 20; *Vaitkienė* 1990.

⁹⁰ LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 13, 97-102, 128.

⁹¹ *Grunskis* 1991, 129.

⁹² *Vaitkienė* 1990.

It was a long and difficult journey for the travelers, who were packed like cattle into the railway cars without adequate food or water and were constantly attacked by lice and other insects. Even beyond the physical discomfort was the deep anxiety of all the travelers, who had no idea where they were going or what they would face when they got there. When they finally arrived in Stalinabad they were packed into trucks and taken to collective farms in the Kuybyshev region, near the Afghanistan border. Local residents were told that the newcomers were despicable German fascists, and they treated them accordingly. Only later did they realize that the newcomers were not fascists, but simply displaced Lithuanians. The deportees were housed in *Kibitkas* – windowless thatched huts without indoor sanitation.⁹³

They were put to work under the hot sun to pick cotton in conditions where the temperature might rise as high as 50 degrees Celsius. The food provided for a week's work by a family of three amounted from 1.5 to 3 kilograms of barley flour. Drinking water was in short supply. They received no monetary payment for their labors. In order to survive the settlers resorted to selling their clothing, shoes, and other personal possessions, although to do so was strictly prohibited. Those who were caught were punished severely. Letters to home reported that food and parcels sent in response to their pleas often went astray. Children hunted turtles, and these were regarded as a tasty treat.⁹⁴

The mortality rate was very high. The weak and infirm were taken by diarrhea, dysentery, malaria, or they simply starved to death. After a few months of hard work and harsh conditions even the strong began to weaken. Within two years only 9 individuals survived of the 50 families which had settled in the village of Ujal.⁹⁵ The children were the first to die. Children who survived their parents were sent to orphanages and became “internationals” (Rus. *интернационалы*) – people without national identity.⁹⁶ There was no wood for coffins.

⁹³ Tarasonis, *Bajoriūnas*, *Gediminskas* 1992, 15, 17.

⁹⁴ Tarasonis, *Bajoriūnas*, *Gediminskas* 1992, 16; Zubreckas 2005, 16, 39.

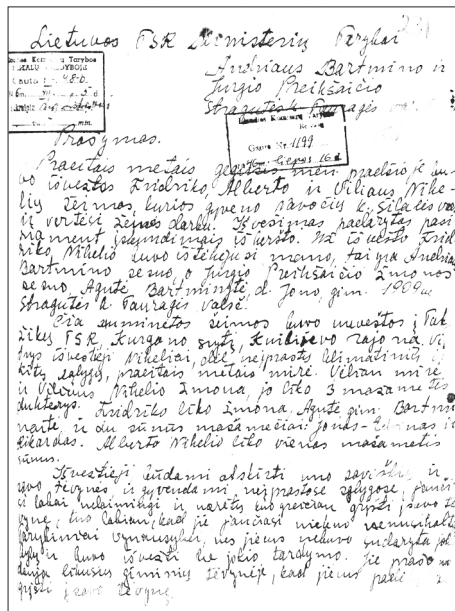
⁹⁵ Tarasonis, *Bajoriūnas*, *Gediminskas* 1992, 16; Zubreckas 2005, 15.

⁹⁶ *Kairiūkštė* 1994, 101.

Those who died were simply buried in the earth without cross or memorial. It was difficult to dig a decent grave. Nothing more could be done than to scratch out a little rocky soil for the bodies. By night jackals would quickly dig up the graves and feast on the corpses.⁹⁷

During the first winter many adults and children perished. According to statistics gathered in an expedition to Tajikistan in 1991 around 300 of the 812 deportees died within the first 7 months after their arrival. In 1946 - 280 perished and in 1947 another 80 died. Only 20 died in 1949. The accuracy of these statistics cannot be determined, but those who survived and returned to Lithuania after Stalin's death numbered only about 300.⁹⁸

Some of the deportees and their families continued to insist that they were not guilty of any crime and that they were not Germans. In a letter to the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR dated April 25, 1946, Andrius Bartminas and Jurgis Preikšaitis of the village of Stragutė near Tauragė insisted that the families of Albertas Nikelis, Fridrikas Nikelis, and Vilhelmas Nikelis were not anti-soviet and had been added to the list of the deportees only



April 25, 1946 letter of Andrius Bartminas and Jurgis Preikšaitis to the Lithuanian Council of Ministers.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

⁹⁷ Tarasonis, *Bajoriūnas, Gediminskas* 1992, 16.

⁹⁸ Tarasonis, *Bajoriūnas, Gediminskas* 1992, 17. This study provides an incomplete listing on the names of the deceased deportees, as found in the records of the Civil Registry Bureau of Kuybyshev and Kurgan Tube archives. Tarasonis, *Bajoriūnas, Gediminskas* 1992, 58-68.

as an act of revenge. The letter stated that Fridrikas, Albertas, and Vilhelmas had died in 1945, as had also Vilhelmas' wife Frida. Her three preteen daughters were now orphans. Of the Fridrikas Nikelis family his wife Agutė and two preteen sons had survived him, and of the Albertas Nikelis family only the preteen son was still living. Bartminas and Preikšaitis asked that the remaining members of these families be permitted to return to Lithuania, since they had been deported without any court hearing and had never been given any opportunity to defend themselves. They were living in extreme conditions and their lives were constantly at risk. Added to the letter were the signatures of 108 Navočiai villagers all of whom affirmed that the deported families were not anti-soviet.⁹⁹

These letter writers and others like them harbored the vain illusion that they could find justice in Stalin's Soviet Union. Their letters of protest simply piled up. It is not known whether any of the letters were ever answered. In fact the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party and its First Secretary Antanas Sniečkus were at that time planning to increase the number of deportees. They had little interest in questions of justice. Whether or not the protestors were Germans meant little to them. These people had been declared enemies of the state, and they had been deported in order that the state might prosper.¹⁰⁰

The death of Stalin brought policy changes. On November 24, 1955 the Council of Ministers in Moscow issued a decree, entitled: *Removal of Surveillance from Some Displaced Persons* (О снятии с учета некоторых категорий спецпоселенцев).¹⁰¹ This opened the way for the release of the surviving deportees. Approximately 300 of them returned to Lithuania.¹⁰² The local governmental officials still continued to suspect them, and many tried to hide the fact that they had been deported. Some were told by local communist officials that they were not welcome in Lithuania and should go elsewhere,

⁹⁹ LCVA f. R-754, a 14, b. 76, 231-231ad.

¹⁰⁰ LYA LKP, f. 1771, ap. 190, b. 10, 76.

¹⁰¹ LCVA f. R-754, a 14, b. 76, 141.

¹⁰² Tarasonis, *Bajoriūnas, Gediminskas* 1992, 21.

because the November 24 decree stated that former deportees could reside anywhere in the Soviet Union, excepting the place from which they had been deported. Furthermore, with only a few exceptions, those who returned were not able to get back any of their property. In desperation a few even decided to return to Tajikistan, where conditions had improved somewhat. After the 1958 agreement between Konrad Adenauer and Nikita Khrushchev, Germans were allowed to leave the Soviet Union and about two dozen of the surviving Tajikistan deportees left for Germany.

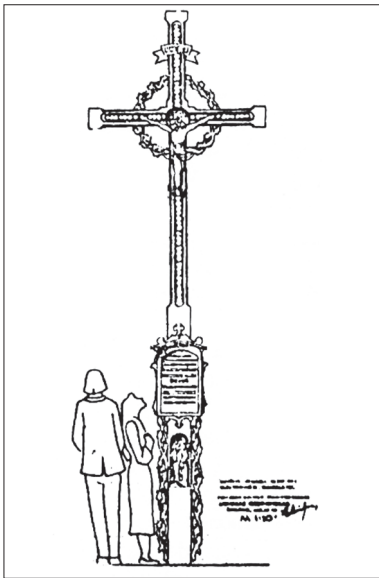


Antanas Sniečkus, First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party.
From: LKP istorijos apybraiža, 1985.

The Lithuanian Communist Party never admitted that it had made any mistake in sending innocent families to deportation. Even after the cult of Stalin had been denounced, First Secretary Antanas Sniečkus insisted that repressive measures taken against Lithuanian citizens were justified because they had been a necessary part of the first phase of the building of Socialism in Lithuania. So he stated in a June 6, 1956 report to the Central Committee in Moscow concerning the denunciation of Stalin's cult of personality and its consequences.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ LYA LKP, f. 1771, ap. 190, b. 10, 76.

2.8 Concluding Observations



Memorial cross in Lithuanian cemetery at Kuybyshev, erected by a delegation of former deportees and their families, consecrated on October 25, 1991.

From: Tarasonis, Bajoriūnas, Gediminskas, 1992.

A significant number of the deportees were in fact ethnic Lithuanians who had been wrongly identified as Germans. Nastazija Kairiūkštytė suggests that as many as one third of the deportees were in fact native Lithuanians.¹⁰⁴ The present author believes that the number of Lithuanians was in fact even higher, because even in cases where one member of the family was German, whole families and households were deported.

It is also evident that many of the deportees were Lutheran.¹⁰⁵ However, questions remain as to how many of the deportees suffered the fate of being identified as “German” simply because they were members of the Lutheran Church.

No one has been able to determine their number accurately because such designations as “Lutheran”

and “Evangelical” were strictly avoided in official documents. In his records Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis wrote that at least 45 such families were deported from the Jurbarkas district.¹⁰⁶ Secret NKVD data reduces this number to 38 families.¹⁰⁷ A close examination of the documents reveals

¹⁰⁴ Kairiūkštytė 1994, 102.

¹⁰⁵ Tarasonis, Bajoriūnas, Gediminskas 1992, 16; Zubreckas 2005, 15; Kairiūkštytė 1994, 98.

¹⁰⁶ Handwritten notes added by Pastor Kalvanas to a letter he received from Pastor Gavėnis in April 1945. - JKA *Bažnyčios istorija*.

¹⁰⁷ The names and surnames of the deportees from the Jurbarkas district are listed in LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11, 97-98.

that individuals were classified as German because the Jurbarkas executive committee decided to so. Thus 31 families in the Jurbarkas district with 114 persons were labeled "German." Many among them were loyal and patriotic Lithuanians who suffered repression simply because the executive committee decided to call them Germans because of their membership in the Lutheran Church.

However, the picture is still incomplete. There may be many more who suffered deportation simply because they were Lutheran. The case of Fricas Skėrys indicates that Lutheran faith was in fact taken to be an evidence of German identity. Ona Stanaitienė was named for deportation because her son was a "German pastor." Although religion was seldom mentioned in any document as the basis for deportation, these cases indicate that membership in the Lutheran Church could be and sometimes was taken as the basis for identifying one as a German. This greatly simplified the task of those who needed to produce the names of Germans to implement the December 16, 1944 directive. The likelihood of this was even higher in regions where Lutherans were organized into sizable communities, which other local residents often labeled "German." Such was the case in the city of Kaunas (5% Lutheran), the regions of Marijampolė (5%), Raseiniai (4%), Šakiai (8%), Šiauliai (3%), Tauragė (12%), Vilkauskis (15%).¹⁰⁸ Indeed, statistics indicate that a majority of deportees came from precisely these areas.

The Jurbarkas case indicates that evidence of the German identity of families which were in fact Lithuanian and patriotic was provided by the local executive committee and not by any more reliable data. This indicates that the NKVD-NKGB agencies were unable to find any strong evidence of German identity at all. Therefore it seems probable that in those places where the evidence of local executive committees was provided, membership in the Lutheran Church was taken as evidence of German identity. In some of these cases no other evidence of German origin or affiliation was given, no accusation of collaboration with the German government, no evidence of repatriation, no evidence of family members living in Germany. All that was provided

¹⁰⁸ *Lietuvos gyventojai 1926*, 35.

was a note from the local executive committee which indicated that no careful examination had been made. Statistics indicate that this was certainly the case in four regions: Raseiniai (Jurbarkas district) 15 families with 68 members, Šakiai (Kiduliai area) - 6 families with 22 members, Tauragė (the village of Nevočiai in Šilalė district) - 3 families with 13 members, and Vilkaviškis (Virbalis and Kybartai areas) - 4 families with 9 members.¹⁰⁹ Altogether this careless examination involved 28 families with no less than 112 individual members.

In other regions the NKGB-NKVD sought to supplement the information provided by executive committees to determine whether the lists they were provided were trustworthy. This was the case in the larger cities. In Kaunas the city executive committee provided notes on each suspected individual and frankly indicated that in most cases it was unable to provide any reliable evidence. It was left to the NKVD to dig more deeply into the investigation of the suspected individuals and families. In some places the search for Germans was carried on with more precision. Such was the case in Kretinga where there was a sizable Lutheran community but only two families were included on the list of those to be deported. Extant documents indicate that NKVD agencies sometimes sought diligently for evidence to fit the criteria which would enable them to enroll families on the lists of those to be deported.

The picture is still incomplete. Although the verdicts listing persons and families as subjects for deportation are extant, the supporting files are no longer available. They may be in KGB archives stored in Tajikistan, the destination of the deportees. The extant copies of verdicts submitted to Vilnius NKVD-NKGB in many cases simply do not include any indication of the evidence used to reach verdicts. The verdicts simply state that this or that person was German without supplying any evidence. It may be that those who wrote down the verdicts neglected to preserve the evidence, or it may be that those who reached the verdicts did so on the basis of sketchy

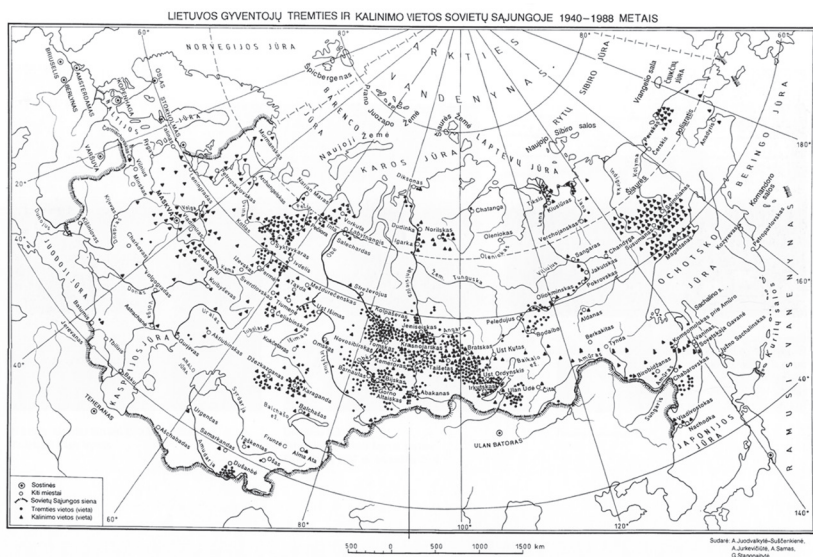
¹⁰⁹ The data for the cause for deportation on each family can be found in LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 15.

notes from executive committees. No *prima facie* evidence was provided for the verdicts reached against 18 families with 73 members in Raseiniai, 10 families with 46 members in Šakiai, 2 families with 8 members in Tauragė, 15 families with 46 members in Vilkaviškis, 6 families with 16 members in Marijampolė, 1 family with 5 members in Ukmergė, 2 families with 4 members in Panevėžys, 2 families with 6 members in Šiauliai, 3 families with 7 members in Kaunas. It is highly probable that these 45 families with 173 individuals from the regions of Raseiniai, Šakiai, Tauragė, and Vilkaviškis landed on the list simply because they were Lutherans.¹¹⁰

The 1945 deportation brought great consternation to the Lithuanian Lutheran community. It was now clear to many that it was dangerous to be a Lutheran and in some areas, particularly in Suvalkija which bordered what had formerly been East Prussia. There the Lutherans found it wise to hide their identities. When the consistory attempted in 1945-46 to reorganize and register parishes in that region, few individuals were willing to come forward and state publicly their Lutheran confession. Local officials could report to the commissioner for the affairs of religious cults in Vilnius that, although there were Lutheran church buildings in their communities, apparently all the Lutherans had been Germans and had long since departed. Frequently found in official documents are statements such as the following: "The Germans have repatriated," "There are no Germans here."¹¹¹ Lutherans still resided in Vilnius, Šakiai, and elsewhere, but they made no attempt to gather as congregations for fear of reprisals by local communist officials. They had no desire to share the fate of their brothers and sisters in the faith who had been sent to Tajikistan.

¹¹⁰ The total number of families involved in verdicts in which no *prima facie* evidence was included numbered 59. 211 individuals were involved.

¹¹¹ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 2, 5; LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 13, 2-3, 44.



Sites of Lithuanian deportees 1940-1988.
From: Naikintos, bet nenugalėtos tautos kelias, 2003.

3. REPRESSIVE MEASURES AGAINST THE CLERGY

3.1 Persecution Focused on the Roman Catholic Church

In Lithuanian society, in countryside, village, and city alike, the clergy were held in the highest respect, higher than any public official, elected or otherwise. Immediately upon the first invasion of the Red Army into Lithuanian territory in 1940 it was evident to the communists that the priests would need to be isolated and their authority destroyed. The priests were a problem which would need to be dealt with swiftly and effectively. However, the isolation of the priests from the rest of society was a time consuming process and the communists ran out of time. They were forced to retreat. In the June 15, 1941 deportation they were able to rid themselves of only the nation's highest officials, the most prominent of the intelligentsia, the wealthy, and priests who had been actively and deeply involved in Lithuanian politics.

When the communists returned in 1944 they immediately reactivated their anticlerical program. Now time was on their side. First to be dealt with were priests publicly known to be anti-communists, those who had written letters in the public press, or in public forums had ridiculed communism, or incited the people against the rule of the workers. Also singled out were priests who were known to be in close contact with the insurrectionists in the forests. Those who fell into these categories were arrested and taken to the NKVD prison in Vilnius where they were interrogated and sentenced. Then they were sent into the depths of the Soviet Union where they were imprisoned or sent to labor camps administered by the Chief Administration of Corrective Labor Camps and Colonies of the NKVD and



Alfonsas Gailevičius,
Commissioner of the Council for
the Affairs of Religious Cults
1944-1948.

From: LKP istorijos apybraiža, 1978.

later the MVD, the well-known *Gulag*.¹¹²

Most of the anticlerical action of the communists in Lithuania was directed toward Roman Catholic priests, of whom there were more than 1,000. Gailevičius wrote to Ivan Poljanskij (Иван Васильевич Полянский), chairman of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults in Moscow in January 1947 that by then a total of 103 priests had been arrested.¹¹³ There would be further anticlerical action. In 1949 ninety-one Roman Catholic priests were placed under arrest and convicted.¹¹⁴

Action needed to be taken against the bishops simply because of their position as leaders of the church. Bishops would not be easy

to replace, because they were appointed from Rome and the soviets had no diplomatic contacts with the Vatican State. As a result one diocese after another would find itself without an occupant on its bishop's throne. The communists saw this as an ideal strategy for creating unrest in the church and exercising state control over the church. On February 5, 1946 Vincentas Borisevičius of Telšiai, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Žemaitija, was arrested and shortly afterward he was executed by firing squad. On December 18, 1946 Auxiliary Bishop Pranciškus Ramanauskas of the same diocese was arrested, convicted, and sentenced to 25 years in prison. On the same day Bishop Teofilius

¹¹² "Gulag" (Rus. Главное Управление Исправительно-Трудовых Лагерьей и Колоний) was an official term which later, by metonymy, came to be used to denote the entire penal labor system in the USSR.

¹¹³ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 9, 57.

¹¹⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 10, b. 151, 198.

Matulionis of the Kaišiadorys diocese was arrested. On June 12, 1947 Archbishop Mečislovas Reinys of Vilnius archdiocese joined the ranks of those who died in soviet prisons. By the end of 1947 only one bishop of the five who had been serving in 1944 was left, Kazimieras Paltarokas of the Panevėžys diocese. Though no communist sympathizer or collaborator, he was sufficiently flexible in his dealings with them that he was able to avoid arrest or imprisonment.

It was never difficult to find reasons for arresting priests. One could always find something that they had said or done which could be interpreted as anti-soviet activity. NKGB-MGB agents infiltrated the parishes and sat with other parishioners taking careful note of what the priest said from the pulpit which might be used against him. A file on almost every priest, full of information received from field agents, was kept in the MGB headquarters in Vilnius. When the decision was made to arrest this one or that one, all that needed to be done was to take out his file and read the list of words or acts which could be interpreted as counter-revolutionary and then send him to Vilnius for interrogation. Interrogation always led to the addition of further accusations and within a short time enough incriminating information would be assembled and he would be declared guilty. Some priests could be broken; others could not and would continue to protest their innocence. One more step was needed. In almost all cases the files were forwarded to Moscow to be scrutinized objectively by a *Special Board* (Rus. *Особое совещание*) in MGB headquarters. The decision of Board was always clear and always final. No defendant was ever permitted to mount a defense.

The local agents used by the NKGB-MGB-KGB were, in many cases, local residents, and even members of the parish, who had been known by the priest for many years and who had married them and baptized their children. Some became reluctant agents forced into it by intimidation, blackmail, or threats of deportation to Siberia. Some became agents because of threats to their families; others simply hired on for a small salary. Those who received salaries presented themselves as individuals who had suddenly "got re-

ligion." They were model parishioners - always present at services, actively involved in parish affairs, and worthy to be made members of the parish council. They put themselves in a position where nothing would be said or done which escaped their notice. In every case those who were made agents found themselves pressed to find something to report, consequently even words and acts which were totally inoffensive quickly grew into matters about which the MGB must be informed. Those who were not good agents would find themselves the subject of accusation for lack of zeal or for covering up for the priest. Sooner or later a few of them would become remorseful or simply become sick and tired of the wholly sorry business. Such people were simply written off, unless some cause could be found for the MGB to move against them.

Almost every prosecution of priests and other undesirables was based on Article 58 of the Russian Criminal Code, which was written in such broad terms that innocent words and actions could easily be thought to fall within its parameters. The article describes as counter-revolutionary any action in word or deed which might in any way contribute to the overthrow, subversion, or weakening of people's government or any of its units, or which could be interpreted as threatening of the security of the state and its stability. It was not sufficient that one should refrain from any word or action which might be considered in any way detrimental to the system, one was equally guilty if it was determined that he had not been sufficiently zealous in promoting the system and furthering the cause of the work of workers and peasants. Article 58 section 1 stated that acts determined to be treason against the Fatherland were those which damaged its military power, its national sovereignty, or the inviolability of its territory, such as espionage, betrayal of military or state secrets, traitorous activity, or flight. These were punishable by the confiscation of all property and execution, or, if circumstances warranted, deprivation of liberty for 10 years and the confiscation of all property. Section 2 of the same article further provided that participation in an armed uprising, association with

subversive movements, or aid given to a subversive was punishable by execution or by the confiscation of one's property, loss of citizenship, and imprisonment for no less than 10 years. A person living in the countryside or forested regions who gave as little as a scrap of bread to a person later determined to be a subversive or insurrectionist could be punished under the terms of this section. Section 4 covered association with or support of foreign organizations or individuals who could be termed counter-revolutionary.

Lutheran clergy could be accused on the basis of association with clerical brothers in Germany or elsewhere. Lithuanian Lutheran pastors were loath to receive any communication from pastors in the West even if the messages contained only words of encouragement to downtrodden brothers in the faith. Infractions could lead to confiscation of property, imprisonment, and even execution by firing squad.¹¹⁵

The most useful provisions were those in section 10, which prohibited any propaganda or agitation which could be interpreted as serving to inspire rebellion, subversion, disregard of proper authority, or criminal acts against the state. This included possession, distribution, or preparation of material which might be interpreted as advocating these counter-revolutionary crimes. In addition any hint of statements, oral or in print, which played upon religious or nationalistic prejudices were punishable by imprisonment or execution. It would be difficult for any priest or other soviet citizen to defend himself against charges made under this section. Any hint from an informer that a person was in possession of any book, periodical, or newspaper, which in any way might be adjudged to be critical of Stalin or the soviet regime, was punishable by the most extreme measures. Section 11, which forbade association with any organization judged to be counter-revolutionary, was likewise punishable. Section 12 made punishable any failure to denounce counter-revolutionary crimes, any failure to inform the authorities of any hint of counter-revolutionary activity and any failure to re-

¹¹⁵ RTFSR *baudžiamasis kodeksas* 1941, 36-37.

port what might, in any way, be critical of the regime. Section 14 characterized as counter-revolutionary sabotage any failure by an individual or group to follow government directives or any failure to perform defined duties. It forbade failure to report to the collective farms when required to do so. It also forbade the aiding of any person attempting to avoid the following of directives. All this was described as economic sabotage and the penalty was confiscation of property, imprisonment, and possibly also execution.¹¹⁶

Article 58 was like an executioner's ax on the neck of every citizen from the lowest peasant to the higher echelons of the Party. No one was safe. During the upheavals of the great cleansing of the 1930's initiated by Stalin even the most loyal communists were condemned and put to death. After the war the provisions of Article 58 were used in Lithuania and elsewhere against anyone who might be adjudged troublesome. There were not enough prosecutors, judges, and courts to deal with all those accused of counter-revolutionary activities. Formal trials were most often dispensed with and accusations led inevitably to punishment. Consequently only the most prominent citizens, or those whose prolonged interrogation and prosecution might prove useful, were ever brought to court. All others were simply herded into trains and sent into the depths of Siberia or other remote locations.

In 1948 Bronius Leonas-Pušinis assumed the position of State Commissioner of Religious Affairs. He was directly responsible to the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults of the USSR Council of Ministers in Moscow. On August 24 he informed Poljanskij in Moscow that he would prefer to use economic and related means to break the church, rather than resort to open persecution.¹¹⁷ He quickly found that breaking down the Catholic Church in Lithuania was no simple matter. In particular there were priests who stood in the way. They would have to be dealt with, not only by persecution, but by prosecution. On April 9, 1949 he informed Poljanskij, Sniečkus,

¹¹⁶ *RTFSR baudžiamasis kodeksas* 1941, 40-41.

¹¹⁷ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 14, 4.

and Gedvilas that the fruitful talks with the Roman Catholic clergy, which he had initiated the year before, had now broken down as the result of the directives of governmental agencies which had the power. It was his considered opinion that it might be useful to create dissensions which would split the priests and divide the Catholic community into warring factions, such as conflicts among young priests against the hierarchy, etc.¹¹⁸ He did not specify which governmental agencies he was referring to "directive organizations," but it is clear that he was referring to the Lithuanian Communist Party and its agencies and departments.



Commissioner Bronius
Leonas-Pušinis.

From: LKP istorijos apybraiža, 1978.

He stated that the problem needed to be confronted more directly. "To make the Hydra less dangerous, one must cut off its head."¹¹⁹ In the first cooperative effort with the MGB it was decided that to cripple the Catholic Church in Kaunas and Vilnius some priests must be "encouraged" to leave the city. In Vilnius 22 and in Kaunas 29 were placed on the list of those who would be invited to leave. Regretfully, the "directive organizations" lowered the number of those who should leave Kaunas to 19.¹²⁰ Pušinis reported to Moscow that 50 percent of the priests had left Marijampolė and Žemaičių Kalvarija and 30 percent had left Panevėžys - for reasons not altogether clear. He did not note the fact that among the causes of these departures was the closure of

¹¹⁸ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 2.

¹¹⁹ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 14.

¹²⁰ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 7.

many Roman Catholic parishes and the arrest of priests.¹²¹ He also reported that some priests had disappeared without leaving a trace. The total of these, he said, was 32, 12 of whom were from the Telsiai diocese, the most from any single diocese.¹²²

Pušinis, whose official responsibility was to coordinate the activities of the church with the state, was in fact actively involved in disposing of those priests who stood in the path of his plans. He had decided that there were too many Roman Catholic dioceses in Lithuania, and that their number should be lowered by the amalgamation of the existing dioceses. However, diocesan administrators were not amenable to this plan. They were an obstruction. The commissioner determined that they should resign and new elections should be called to nominate and elect their replacements.

Dioceses without administrators would be ripe for amalgamation. On July 9, 1949 Pušinis wrote to Poljanskij that the task of amalgamating the dioceses of Kaunas and Vilkauskis had proved to be formidable. However, it became possible to achieve when Vincentas Vizgirda, the administrator of the Vilkauskis diocese, was arrested and imprisoned in May. He informed the Vilkauskis chapter that they must elect a successor within 8 days or forfeit the right to do so. He attended the session of the chapter during which the election was held. Aleksandras Grigaitis was the unanimous choice of the canons. Pušinis then ventured to give his opinion. He stated that this was a matter of serious concern to him and that he had determined that the wisest course of action would be for the diocese to amalgamate with the Kaunas archdiocese. The canons protested that this was contrary to the statutes of the Roman Catholic Church and that no such action should be taken without the concurrence of the Vatican and the pope. Pušinis then reminded the canons that this would be a problem. The soviet state had no official relationship with Rome and there was no possibility of Vatican input concerning the Lithuanian dioceses. The canons were of human origin and ought to be followed when it was

¹²¹ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 8.

¹²² LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 28.

possible to do so. It was, however, impossible in the present case, so the best solution was to think through the matter logically and look for the most appropriate solution. The Kaunas archdiocese had an administrator and they did not. It would make good sense to amalgamate with the archdiocese.¹²³

Pušinis' grand plan was that Lithuania should have only three dioceses, the two present archdioceses of Vilnius and Kaunas and the diocese of Telšiai. The Kaišiadorys diocese would need to amalgamate with Kaunas. The administrator at Kaišiadorys was not amenable to the suggestion that he should resign and move to Tauragė. In a letter to Moscow on September 27, 1949 Pušinis stated that Administrator Sužiedėlis had been unwilling to relinquish his post. Two months later he was arrested for attempting to impede the implementation of the revolution. The chapter had not been able to agree on a suitable replacement and decided that Bishop Paltarokas of Panevėžys ought to be named administrator. Again Pušinis advised that, since Kaunas had an administrator and they did not, they ought logically to amalgamate with Kaunas. The chapter refused his advice and elected Bishop Paltarokas. The next day Pušinis informed the newly elected administrator, Bishop Paltarokas, that the election had been held without his approval and was illegal. The bishop decided that it would not be wise to make an issue of the matter and declined the election. Within a few days the chapter voted to amalgamate with Kaunas under administrator Stankevičius of Kaunas.¹²⁴

To disagree with Pušinis was dangerous. He could call upon the MGB agencies to deal with anyone who opposed him. The power of the Roman Catholic Church had been weakened, but the will of the people had not been broken. Pušinis recognized that to do this he would have to break the power of the priests who, he stated, were the "the mortar which cemented the people together."¹²⁵ He needed to destroy the influence of the priests.

¹²³ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 20-33.

¹²⁴ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 19, 13-14; LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 46.

¹²⁵ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 38.

Pušinis now turned his attention to the popular gatherings of the Catholic faithful. They would gather in assemblies of as many as 30,000 individuals for pilgrimages to Žemaičių Kalvarija, Vepriai, Vilniaus Kalvarija, Šiluva, and other shrines. He wrote to Poljanskij on October 20, 1949, that “to make a reasonable appeal to a mob of religious fanatics, would be futile.”¹²⁶ He would need to control the priests. He informed Administrator Juodaitis of the Telšiai diocese of new regulations governing pilgrimages to Žemaičių Kalvarija. To “bring order” to the pilgrimages it would be necessary to reduce their length from 15 days to 2 days. Furthermore the number of guest priests assigned to attend to their spiritual needs could not exceed three. This created an impossible situation. It was in no way possible that a priest could hear 10,000 confessions in two days or provide spiritual counsel to that number of people. Pušinis himself had visited the site on July 2-3 to observe the event. He noted that over 30,000 pilgrims had congregated on the second day, far too many to confess to a priest. Consequently a large number of the pilgrims had left and returned on Sunday when the crowd was thinned out. He informed Poljanskij that he personally had become so exhausted that upon arriving at home he was taken to his bed with a high fever. Administrator Juodaitis had agreed concerning pilgrimages. However, he continued to resist any efforts to cut the church’s ties with Rome and he called a meeting of Samogitian priests in Palanga to unite them against so-called “progressive priests” who were collaborating with the government. For this Pušinis had him arrested by the MGB on December 20, 1949. On January 28, 1950 he informed Poljanskij in Moscow that Juodaitis had been isolated for counter-revolutionary activity.¹²⁷

With few exceptions none of the Lutheran or Roman Catholic clergy in Lithuania could be called enthusiastic supporters of the soviet regime. The Catholic priests, however, were more open and outspoken in their criticisms of their godless government. The

¹²⁶ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 38.

¹²⁷ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 37-40; LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 22, 62.

Lutheran clergy were far less direct in their statements. By 1948 the Lutheran Church was small, reduced to 33 registered parishes with only 8 priests to serve them. The Lutherans represented a smaller proportion of the Lithuanian population and had to contend with the popular notion that Lutheranism was German and fascist. The Lutheran pastors realized that any outward expression of criticism would bring immediate and devastating reprisals. In a conversation with a visiting pastor from Moscow Pastor Baltris stated that, in order to avoid suspicion, Lutheran priests found it wise to avoid even casual conversations with Roman Catholic clergy. Although in the eyes of the government the Lutheran Church and its Lithuanian clergy were said to be termed "loyal," Lutheran pastors were not exempt from prosecution, arrest, and deportation.

3.2 Gustavas Rauskinas – from “Courlandian Fortress” to Siberian Forests



Pastor Gustavas Rauskinas.

Long before 1949 Pastor Gustavas Rauskinas (Latv. Gustavs Rauskiņš) was singled out for supposed anti-revolutionary activities. He was born in 1902 in a small community of Mazsalaca in the Valmiera region of northeastern Latvia. In 1919, upon graduation from the school in Mazsalaca, he enrolled in the Riga military academy. From his graduation in 1922 until 1929 he served as a Lieutenant in the 9th division of the Riga infantry. Between 1929 and 1932 he was enrolled as a student of theology in the Riga Theological Institute.

Upon graduation he was called to serve the Latvian speaking congregation in Alkiškiai, Lithuania. He served there from 1932 until October 1944.¹²⁸ During this period he served under the authority of the consistory of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania. In 1938 Latvian President Kārlis Ulmanis decorated him with a medal for his meritorious service to Latvians living in Lithuania.¹²⁹ In addition to his service in Alkiškiai, beginning in 1941, he took upon himself the responsibility of ministering of Lutherans in the Šiauliai region because Pastor Theodor Kupffer had been repatriated to Germany. After the beginning of WWII he moved his residence from Alkiškiai to the Saunoriai parsonage in the Šiauliai parish.

¹²⁸ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 8-9.

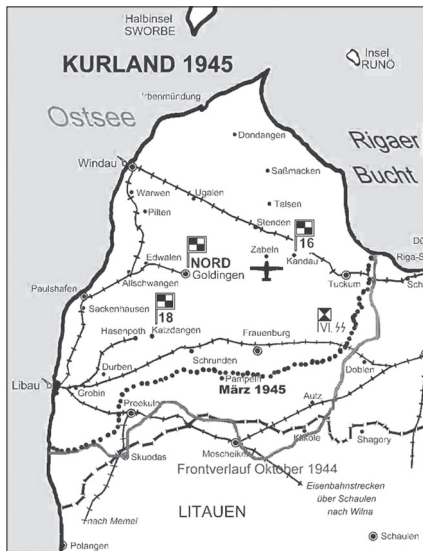
¹²⁹ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 17-18.

The fortunes of the region changed dramatically in 1944 when the German army was forced to retreat following its unsuccessful Battle of Kursk (Rus. *Kypck*) in 1943. By October 1944 about 32 German divisions totaling 500,000 soldiers moved into the region and found themselves cornered and cut off from the rest of the German army. To the west and north was the Baltic sea, to the east and south was the soviet army. The Latvians referred to the region as *Courlandian Kettle* (Latv. *Kurzemes katls*) and the Germans called it *Fortress Courland* (Germ. *Festung Kurland*; Latv. *Kurzemes cietoksnis*). Like a kettle, the region seethed with battles between the Germans and the Red Army. Like a fortress, the region was strongly defended and despite the heavy loss of the soviet soldiers it could not be taken. On the front line, forming a crescent from the Bay of Riga to the Baltic, were Tukums (Germ. *Tukum*), Saldus (Germ. *Frauenburg*), Skrunda (Germ. *Schrunden*), and Liepāja (Germ. *Libau*).

Latvians, Lithuanians, and Estonians were forced to join the efforts of the German army to prevent a soviet takeover. Although there was no love lost between them and the Germans, they understood that their situation under the soviets would be far worse than what they had experienced during 1941-1944 at the hands of the Nazis. The Latvians were placed in, what came to be called, the Latvian 19th Division of *Waffen-SS*. Although many objected to the name, they were powerless to change it. They were, however, successful in insisting that the Latvian flag be included along with the German insignias. In all 20,000 Latvians served along side 500,000 German soldiers.¹³⁰

Stalin understood that he needed to purge the region of German influence and threw division after division into the battle to take the region. The first major attack on October 16, 1944 was a failure. The soviets were not able to breach the front. A second offensive on October 27 made no further gains, no doubt because no careful study of the geographical region had been undertaken by the soviet commanders and little was known about specific defense lines and

¹³⁰ Freivalds I 1954, 127-130.



"Courlandian Fortress" 1944-1945.

other important military considerations. The Russian soldiers were simply slaughtered. Both of the Red Army assaults were followed by yet another offensive on November 20th, which again, was unable to destabilize the defensive line of the Germans and Latvians. Further attacks on December 21, 1944, January 24, 1945, February 20, and March, 18 were all unsuccessful. Even after Berlin fell in May, Courland still resisted soviet advances. The Russians were unable to gain even a single kilometer of

ground from February 24 until May 8, 1945. The unsuccessful efforts of the Red Army to take the region by force cost it 320,000 soldiers killed, wounded, or taken prisoner, almost 2,400 tanks, more than 650 planes, 900 cannons, and 1440 machine-guns.¹³¹

The willingness of the Latvians to fight so fiercely to defend Courland was, in no small measure, a result of Hitler's empty promises that the reward of their efforts would be the establishment of an independent Latvia. General Rūdolfis Bangerskis was informed by the Nazis on February 6, 1945 that he could form the Latvian National Committee to organize a civil administration for Courland. The Latvians took this to mean that they were now authorized to form a provisional Latvian government. Bangerskis was designated as president and influential Latvians were named as secretaries of the necessary national departments of agriculture, finances, justice, culture, and others.

¹³¹ Freivalds I 1954, 130-177; Kurzemes cietoksnis. - *Latvju enciklopēdija* 1951, 1057-1152; Kurzemes cietoksnis. - *Latvijas enciklopēdija* 2005, 583-584.

In October 1944 Pastor Rauskinas was evacuated to the Rubā county of the Saldus region. With the Red Army drawing near, he fled from there to the coastal city of Liepāja where he assumed the pastorate of Holy Trinity church in the center of the city.¹³² His first encounter with General Bangerskis came when the Latvian 19th military division attended the Christmas service at Holy Trinity church in 1944. After the service General Bangerskis raised his strong objections to the pastor's sermon. He complained that Rauskinas had not said anything patriotic or anything to encourage the people in anti-soviet attitudes and actions, and had missed a wonderful opportunity to instill patriotic fervor. He himself at the close of the service took up a position in front of the congregation and proceeded to say what he thought the pastor should have said.¹³³

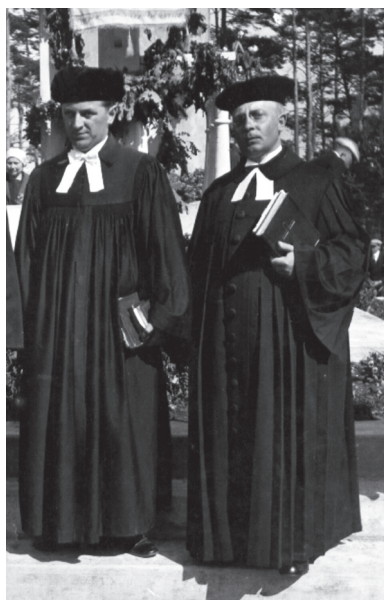
Subsequently three articles appeared under Pastor Rauskinas' name in the newspaper *Tēvija*, which took a strong tone against the soviets. The first article was published on January 23, 1945 under the title "*Kas esat jūs?*" ("*Who are You?*") which called upon the people to heroically stand with the defenders of the nation and not flee to the forests like men who were afraid to stand publicly for the nation. The article looked forward to an early victory over the enemies of independent Latvia.¹³⁴ The second article "*Lūdzamā dienā*" ("*Day of Prayer*") appeared on February 21, at the beginning of Lent. It drew a parallel between the passion of Christ and the sufferings of the Latvian people. It called people to be brave and resolute and to think always of the brave fighting men who are willing to surrender their lives to bring freedom to Latvia. Victory would go to those who believed in victory.¹³⁵ A third very moderate article "*Liieldienas*" ("*Easter*") appeared on April 1, on Easter. It looked upon the resurrection victory of Christ as a picture of the victory which would come in the battle between God and Satan in Courland. It recalled

¹³² LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 8-9.

¹³³ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 17-18.

¹³⁴ *Tēvija* 1945 No. 19, 1.

¹³⁵ *Tēvija* 1945 No. 44, 1.



Pastors Leijeris and Rauskinas.
Žeimelis, 1934.

how the brave sons of Latvia were willing to go to the gates of hell to fight against Satan and insure a victorious and prosperous future for the nation. They went the way of Golgotha so that the Latvian people might reap the fruit in victory and live in freedom.¹³⁶

In the early months of 1945 Bangerskis sought to rally the Latvians in Courland behind the establishment of an independent Latvia, which would be a German protectorate. In April he called the leading citizens of Courland in Liepāja to ask for their support. Pastors Rauskinas, Ernests Liepa, and Leopolds Roze were present and after the meeting they met

together with Pastor Arnolds Zviņģis in the sacristy of St. Anna's church. They decided that they were willing to support Bangerskis' proposal. However, they took exception to his plan in that they were certain that anti-German feelings in Courland were such that there would be little enthusiasm for the notion that Latvia could be so closely associated with Germany. They also believed that Bangerskis should have made a stronger effort to involve a cross-section of Courlandians in his plan, instead of limiting his appeal to the upper classes. All things considered, they would support from their pulpits the establishment of an independent Latvia.¹³⁷

Courlandian opposition to the soviets continued until the last days of the war. The surrender of Germany was the occasion of the surrender of Courland. Now it became clear to the NKVD and NKGB what

¹³⁶ *Tēvija* 1945 No. 78, 1.

¹³⁷ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 20-22.

steps would need to be taken to pacify the region. Those who had advocated the creation of an independent Latvia and other anti-revolutionary activity would need to be taken into custody and their influence neutralized. About those who served in the military there would be no question. They were herded into trains and sent to Russia. The civilian population would need to be carefully examined so that agitators and anti-revolutionaries could be identified and dealt with. The articles of Rauskinas in *Tēvija* were regarded by the NKGB as *prima-facia* evidence that he was a dangerous subversive who must be dealt with.

The verdict was handed down on August 27, 1945 by Lieutenant Junior Grade Boldinovski (Rus. БОЛДИНОВСКИ) and Senior Lieutenant Poronnik (Rus. ПОРОННИК). They said he was pastor to the Latvian 19th military division and wrote for the fascist newspaper *Tēvija* to slander the soviet government and incite hatred against Bolshevism. On the same day Lieutenant Junior Grade Makarov (Rus. МАКАРОВ) declared that he suspected the pastor was an enemy of the state who must be incarcerated at once, so that he could not hide from the courts and a just verdict must be pronounced against him. He would be tried for violating Article 58-1“a” and the full force of the provisions of that article would be brought to bear on him.¹³⁸

Before the day was out the NKGB searched his apartment in Liepāja. Among the items found there were the Easter edition of *Tēvija*, (direct evidence of his criminality), a silver pectoral cross, silver pocket watch, two suits, a “Talar 50 percent used,” 10 pairs of underpants, a pillow, two blankets and two woolen blankets, and one clerical costume. All would be confiscated under the terms of Article 58.¹³⁹

After his arrest Rauskinas was immediately subjected to an interrogation. He was encouraged to admit his anti-soviet activities and state clearly when and under whose direction these activities had been undertaken. That same day the NKGB authorities decided to send him to Riga for further interrogation.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 1ad.

¹³⁹ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 4-5.

¹⁴⁰ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 8-9.

This interrogation began immediately the next day, August 28, 1945 under the direction of Lieutenant Junior Grade Boldinovski who asked specific questions about what the pastor knew concerning the Latvian National Committee. Rauskinas replied that he knew nothing more than he had read in the Liepāja newspaper *Tēvija* and on the placards which were prominently displayed throughout the city. These proclaimed the establishment of a Latvian National Council under the leadership of General Oskars Dangers. Rauskinas stated that he knew nothing more, because he had no personal connection with Generals Bangerskis and Oskars Dangers. The interrogator would not let the matter rest, since NKGB records indicated that Rauskinas and other clergy had been present at a meeting with Bangerskis in April. Rauskinas was suspected of being the chaplain of the Latvian legionnaires, but Rauskinas insisted that Priest Arturs Voitkus had served in that capacity and had also served as director of the Church Department of the National Committee.¹⁴¹

The pressure of these intense interrogations took its toll. At 11 PM on September 1 Captain Lenskij (Rus. Ленский) began yet one more interrogation, which continued until 2:30 the next morning. Lenskij informed Rauskinas that he was accused of the anti-soviet activity, and he warned him that he must confess all his crimes at once or he would be executed for his crimes under the terms of Article 58. At this point Rauskinas broke and accepted the accusations lodged against him. He confessed that he had written anti-soviet articles in the newspaper *Tēvija*, but would admit to nothing more than that. The interrogator accused him of holding back and warned him that he had better be more forthcoming in his confessing his fascist activities. Rauskinas could think of nothing more except for the fact that he had held a Christmas service at Trinity church in Liepāja, at which Bangerskis and some of his troops had been present.¹⁴²

Rauskinas was again interrogated on September 11 from 11:45 PM to 4:20 AM. He was warned that time was running out. He must

¹⁴¹ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 10-12.

¹⁴² LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 27.

reveal his anti-soviet activities completely before his appearance in court. Otherwise he would suffer dire consequences. Rauskinas declared that he had told everything already on September 1. Lenskij again resorted to bullying. He insisted that from the early days of 1945 he had been a member of the Latvian National Committee. Rauskinas replied that he had met Rūdolfis Bangerskis only once and had never been a member of the Committee.¹⁴³

On the basis of his so-called "confessions" Rauskinas was publicly accused on September 13 of violating Article 58-1"a" of the Russian criminal code - treason against the Motherland, the Soviet Union. He had collaborated with the German occupying forces and engaged in anti-soviet activities, which included writing anti-soviet articles and collaboration with nationalistic fascists.

This was not enough for the interrogators. On that same day Rauskinas was again called for further interrogation in a session which began at 11:15 PM and continued until 4:20 the next morning. Lenskij insisted that he must confess that he had been chaplain of the Latvian legionnaires. He insisted that Rauskinas confess that he had had contact with Bangerskis and bourgeois nationalist clergy and lay people, and that he was actively involved in a plot to create an independent bourgeois nationalist Latvia. He was also pressed to admit activities which would implement Bangerskis' nefarious anti-soviet plans. Rauskinas could add nothing to what he had said before. The interrogator declared that the NKGB had proof that he and his anti-soviet comrades had simply gone underground and were waiting for the right moment to hatch their anti-soviet plots.¹⁴⁴

On October 29 the three articles Rauskinas had written for *Tēvija* were added to his file as evidence of his crimes.¹⁴⁵ On the same day the protocol of the interrogations of Pastor Rauskinas was closed and it was decided to take him to court. In usual soviet style, Rauskinas was asked whether he wished to protest against any of the items

¹⁴³ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 20-22.

¹⁴⁴ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 20-22.

¹⁴⁵ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 29.

of testimony and evidence gathered against him. Of course he had no objections.¹⁴⁶ The next day he was examined by Doctor Drege to establish his fitness for physical labor and was given shots. The doctor declared him to be in excellent health and fit for physical labor.¹⁴⁷

The indictment against Pastor Rauskinas was read to him on October 31, 1945. He was an enemy of the soviet government and had written anti-soviet articles in *Tēvija* openly expressing his animosity against the soviet government. He had attempted to inspire nationalist feelings in the people and had participated in the Latvian national "bourgeois committee government." With others he had enthusiastically supported the creation of an independent nationalist Latvia under the protection of the fascist German state. He had misused his pastoral office to manipulate the people and move them to anti-soviet attitudes and actions. It was noted that he had admitted all this and had not protested when the charges against him were read. He was accused under Article 58-1 "a," and all materials regarding the case were turned over by the military prosecutor to the courts.¹⁴⁸

It was not until December 14 that the records of the still imprisoned pastor were given to the tribunal, which consisted of 11 high rank military officers, whose examination of the records led them to send the matter to the court of the military tribunal.¹⁴⁹ Three days later, on December 17, the accused was informed that, if he wished, he could engage an attorney to represent him. He did ask for legal representation and attorney J. S. Paberzs was appointed.¹⁵⁰

The trial began on December 26 with a biographical summary of the accused. The pastor was then asked whether he wished to object to any matters for which he was on trial. The accused had no objections and simply stated that he wished for attorney J. S. Paberzs to represent him. Rauskinas was then asked if he was familiar with the terms of the indictment and did he understand the accusations

¹⁴⁶ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 31.

¹⁴⁷ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 32.

¹⁴⁸ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 33-34.

¹⁴⁹ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 38-39.

¹⁵⁰ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 42.

against him. Finally he was asked if he agreed that he was guilty of the charges leveled against him. Rauskinas stated that he understood the indictment and that he confessed his guilt. He admitted that he had written three articles in question but had been in no position to refuse the government's insistence that he write them. It is noteworthy that the indictment stated that he was paid 100 rubles for each article. It was hardly credible that the Germans would be paying for articles in rubles, instead of the deutschmarks. He further stated that he had never been chaplain to the *Waffen-SS* Latvian legionnaires.¹⁵¹

The defense attorney stated that he had nothing to add but asked that the court be lenient because life during the German occupation had been very difficult and that if the pastor had refused to collaborate he would have lost his position. The defendant was given the last word. He asked that the court not go hard on him.

The trial lasted only 40 minutes. At 11:10 the judges retired to consider their verdict and sentence. Those questions detained them only 20 minutes. It was decided that Pastor Rauskinas must remain in custody. He was judged to be guilty of violations against Article 58-1 "a" and the verdict against him was 10 years incarceration in a corrective labor camp and the confiscation of all property.¹⁵² He was sent to the corrective labor camp at *Ozernyj lager* (Rus. *Озерный лагерь*), near the town of Tajshet (Rus. *Тайшет*) in the region of Irkutsk (Rus. *Иркутск*), Siberia.¹⁵³

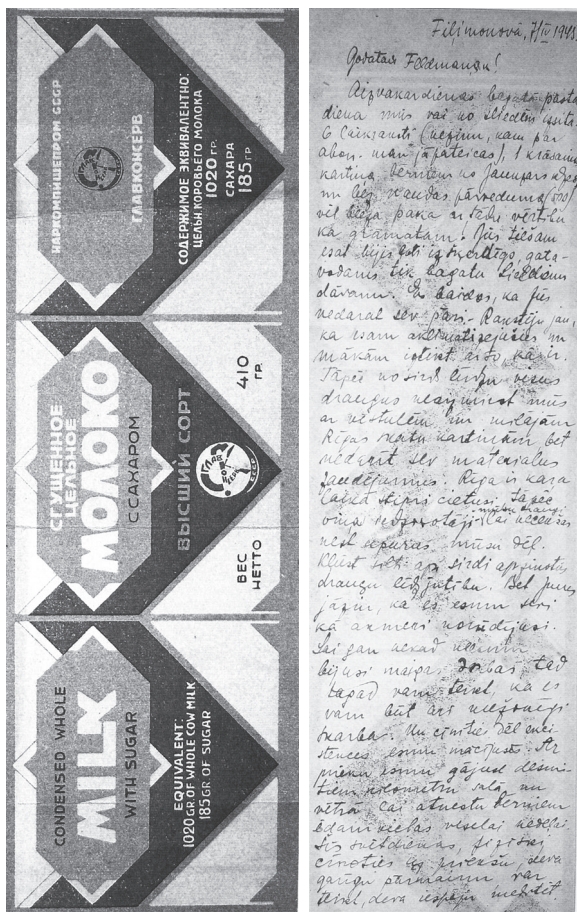
It was not until April of the next year, 1946, that the order to confiscate his property was acted upon. However, when police came to his flat on April 9 they found that nothing was there. His property was gone. They could do no more than simply document the fact that they had gone as directed but they found no property to confiscate. The protocol was signed by the pastor's mother, Mina Rauskiņš, and witnessed by Gintars and Upiss.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 42.

¹⁵² LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 43-47.

¹⁵³ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, p.78.

¹⁵⁴ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 58.



April 1945 letter written from Siberia by the wife of Latvian Pastor Edgars Rumba († 1943). Since no paper was provided to political prisoners, the letter was written on the back of milk can label.

From: Lutera Akadēmija archives, Riga, Latvia.

tion was poor. Two rows of bunks were separated by a space of 1 to 1.5 meters. In the middle of the building was a stove, which provided a little heat for the prisoners to dry their cloths. Survivors of these camps claimed that the area around the buildings was

Labor camps in Tajshet, in the Irkutsk region and elsewhere typically included from 5 to 12 barracks. Each housed from 100 to 300 detainees. Because so many prisoners were sent to these camps, some barracks actually held as many as 500 prisoners in a space meant for little more than half that number. Bunk beds with several levels were pressed together so closely that one could barely turn over in his sleep without disturbing his neighbor. Windows were few in number and small and ventila-

stripped of grass leaving only bare earth. There was no place for a person to sit or lay and enjoy the scenery.¹⁵⁵

The prisoners were called "*smertniki*" ("*the condemned ones*"). In Russia the term traditionally referred to the prisoners who deserved the death sentence but who instead had been given hard labor, such as the tiling of fields, lumbering, and laying railway track. While communist propaganda always stated that young communists eagerly volunteered for such heavy tasks, the fact of the matter is that most of this work was given to the political prisoners. It was the prisoners, and not the young communists, who built the railroad from Tajshet to Bratsk (Rus. *Братск*) and on to Komsomolsk-on-Amur (Rus. *Комсомольск-на-Амуре*). The mortality rate was very high. The workers were little more than walking skeletons; tuberculosis was rampant, as was starvation.¹⁵⁶

Rauskinas was fortunate in that he was assigned to work as a medical assistant. He never spoke much about his time in the camp or his work. When he was pressed to do so he tried always to put a positive light on the experience or to change the subject. There were many Lutherans in the camp and Pastor Rauskinas was able to carry on a clandestine pastoral ministry among them, baptizing, blessing marriages, and conducting funerals. Because he had no clerical vestments the authorities appear not to have noticed. It is not known whether he was able to celebrate the Lord's Supper, but it is known that in other camps Roman Catholic priests were able to make a kind of crude wine by soaking raisins in water and allowing them to ferment.

Stalin's death raised hopes that political prisoners would be permitted to return to their homes. In 1954 Rauskinas' mother, who was seriously ill, wrote to the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union asking that her son Gustavas be permitted an early release. The chancellery of the Supreme Council referred the case to Riga where it was decided on November 3, 1954 that charges to which he had admitted were sufficiently serious that an early release was not warranted. He must

¹⁵⁵ *Naikintos, bet nenugalėtos kartos kelias* 2006, 9.

¹⁵⁶ *Naikintos, bet nenugalėtos kartos kelias* 2006, 8.



Lithuanian deportee children with teacher
Teofilė Mikutavičienė at Sujeticha, Tajshet, 1948.
From: Naikintos, bet nenugalėtos tautos kelias, 2003.

be made to serve his entire 10 year term of incarceration plus 5 additional years under restriction.¹⁵⁷ Early in 1955 Mrs. Rauskiņš again petitioned for the release of her son. Moscow again passed the request along to officials in Riga this time stating that, if it was decided that Rauskinas could not be released, all materials must be returned to Moscow. On February 24, 1955 prosecutor V. Lipin (Rus. Липин) wrote to the chancellery of the Supreme Council in Moscow that he and his colleagues had determined that there was no real reason why Rauskinas should be released.¹⁵⁸

On April 8, 1955, almost 10 years after his incarceration, Rauskinas was sent to the village of Zabolotnyj (Rus. Заболотный), in the region of Krasnoyarsk, to begin to serve his time of restriction.¹⁵⁹

On May 15, 1955 another request came from Mrs. Rauskiņš, this time accompanied by a report and recommendation of the Akmenė

¹⁵⁷ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 50-51.

¹⁵⁸ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 54.

¹⁵⁹ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 82.

District Executive Committee. Their letter stated that she was 75 years old, without any means of support, ill, and in dire need of the assistance that her son could provide her if he were released. A follow-up letter from Mrs. Rauskiņš was sent on June 9, pleading



Rauskinas house in Alkiškiai after his return from Siberia, 1956.

that her son be allowed to come to her, even if only temporarily.¹⁶⁰

The responsible officials appeared to have paid little or no attention to her pleas or the recommendation of the regional executive committee. On July 5, 1955 they ordered that Rauskinas be given a document stating that he had completed his time of incarceration in the corrective labor camp on April 7 and now was to live in the Krasnoyarsk region (Rus. *Красноярск*).¹⁶¹

Shortly after that it was determined that there were mistakes in his records which necessitated a special session of the Military Tribunal Court in Riga. The corrected records do not speak of his release, but simply state that he had been incarcerated on August 27, 1945, and not November 4, as indicated in his records. This decision was sent to Tajshet on August 20, 1955 and Rauskinas was asked to sign off on it. No further documents about his incarceration are extant.¹⁶²

Surprisingly, within a short time Rauskinas was back in Lithuania. He was not permitted to return to Saunoriai. All the possessions of the

¹⁶⁰ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 80, 79.

¹⁶¹ LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 81.

¹⁶² LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 78.



New Alkiškiai parsonage under construction, 1957.



Pastor Rauskinas at the altar of the Alkiškiai church.

church there had been taken by the state. However, in Alkiškiai the parish was permitted to provide building material and build a small hut in which he could live. It was a crude dwelling, not very large, and with only the

necessities of life provided. However, it was preferable to any place in the slave labor camp and in the village of Zabolotnyj, where the pastor had dwelled in the previous 10 years.

The consistory was delighted to have available an educated and highly regarded pastor. On March 7, 1956 they announced that he would now become pastor of the Alkiškiai parish and Pastor Burkevičius would transfer to Būtingė.¹⁶³ The decision was sent to the commissioner in Vilnius for his approval and he raised no objections.

In 1957 the parish realized that its pastor was being asked to live in very poor conditions. They resolved to provide him a more suitable

¹⁶³ KA LELB Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1955-1990, 10-11.

parsonage. In 1957 Rauskinas wrote to the consistory stating that the parish had determined that the money it would ordinarily send to the consistory to support its work would this year be needed to help pay for the new parsonage. The parsonage would cost them 20,000 rubles. Therefore the parish would, on this one occasion, fail to pay its annual gift to the consistory of 260 rubles.¹⁶⁴

The parish wanted to complete at least some rooms in the dwelling before the parish Bible Feast on September 15, 1957, which that year would mark the 25th anniversary of Pastor Rauskinas' ordination.

¹⁶⁴ KA LELB Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1955-1990, 25-25ad.

3.3 Jurgis Gavėnis – Zealous Defender of the Jurbarkas Church



Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis, 1970.

The second pastor to be arrested and convicted of “anti-soviet” activity was Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis.

He was born in 1909 in Kalnėnai, a village in the Jurbarkas district. Gavėnis and his parents were very active Lithuanian patriots. His family was instrumental in the establishment of the Lutheran patriotic organization *Pagalba (Support)*, which sought to eliminate German influence in the Lithuanian Lutheran Church. The name of his mother, Elžbieta, appeared on the masthead of *Srovė*, the newspaper of *Pagalba*. She was

identified as its editor, although in fact the writing and editing was chiefly done by Gavėnis himself.¹⁶⁵ In 1928 he matriculated as a student in the faculty of theology at the University of Vytautas the Great in Kaunas.¹⁶⁶ Because Lithuanian pastors were so sorely needed, Chairman Vilius Gaigalaitis and the consistory adopted the policy of sending students to work in parishes as administrators. Some of these were ordained as pastor-deacons, but Gavėnis was not among them. In 1931 he was sent as administrator to Garliava and Prienai parishes where he was permitted to conduct reading services.¹⁶⁷ Because of the growing tension between Gaigalaitis and *Pagalba*, the consistory rejected the 1932 request of the Garliava

¹⁶⁵ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 715, 75.

¹⁶⁶ LCVA f. 631, a 12, b. 520, 6.

¹⁶⁷ LCVA f. R-181, a 2, b. 80, 3; LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 622, 103, 106-110, 112.

parish that Gavėnis be ordained.¹⁶⁸ One year later the consistory court declared him guilty of showing disrespect to Chairman Vilius Gaigalaitis.¹⁶⁹ The *Pagalba* organization was able to have this verdict reversed, and the Lithuanian president before long released Gaigalaitis from his chairmanship of the consistory.¹⁷⁰ The increasingly reactionary positions taken by the *Pagalba* organization moved the Ministry of Education to reevaluate its usefulness. In 1935 the Pagalbians sought the immediate ordination of Gavėnis. The consistory concurred, but because of the objections sent by Senior Pastor Tittelbach to the Ministry of Education, permission to ordain him was withdrawn.¹⁷¹ Within a month *Pagalba* had lost its influence in the consistory. The Minister of Education pressed the consistory's executive secretary Mikas Preikšaitis to resign and removed Procurator Martynas Kavolis.¹⁷² Gavėnis then requested that he be released from his responsibilities as administrator of the Garliava and Prienai parishes.¹⁷³ In that same year the Ministry of Education dissolved the *Pagalba* organization and dispersed its assets.¹⁷⁴ A 1937 letter from the Tauragė parish to the Ministry of Education requested that Gavėnis be permitted to complete its examinations.¹⁷⁵ The request was denied and in 1938 he was conscripted into the Lithuanian army.¹⁷⁶ The Lithuanian Ministry of Education issued him a diploma in the name of the defuncted Kaunas Faculty of Theology on August 24, 1940, shortly after the country was annexed to the Soviet Union.¹⁷⁷

¹⁶⁸ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 622, 111; LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 756, 46.

¹⁶⁹ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 622, 95, 101.

¹⁷⁰ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 713, 81.

¹⁷¹ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 631, 205.

¹⁷² LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 631, 198, 242ad, 244, 246.

¹⁷³ KA LELB *Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1935-1941*, 10; LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 756, 52.

¹⁷⁴ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 755, 207-210.

¹⁷⁵ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 756, 46-47.

¹⁷⁶ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 756, 48; Ordination certificate of Jurgis Gavėnis. - JKA *Gauti raštai 1941-1944*.

¹⁷⁷ August 23, 1940 Ministry of Education diploma issued to Jurgis Gavėnis. - JKA *Gauti raštai 1941-1944*.



Jurbarkas parish choir with choirmaster Benediktas Vasiliauskas and Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis, 1945.

Only in the last days of repatriation, on March 2, 1941, he was finally ordained to the Holy Ministry at Šakiai church by Superintendent Henrikas Dzerdžislovas Sroka.¹⁷⁸ The repatriation of the vast majority of Lutheran pastors made it necessary for Gavėnis to take charge of all of the remaining parishes in Suvalkija. Gavėnis came under the supervision of the consistory in 1943, although at first he was largely independent of its activities.¹⁷⁹ According to 1945 consistory documents, he was officially designated as pastor of the parishes of Jurbarkas, Skirsnemunė-Žvoriai, Sudargas, Raseiniai,

¹⁷⁸ August 26, 1946 letter of Pastor Gavėnis to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA III pokarinio sinodo 1976.06.20 medžiaga.

¹⁷⁹ September 15, 1943 consistory meeting minutes. - JKA Gauti raštai 1941-1944.

and Šakiai.¹⁸⁰ It is ironic that despite their pro-Lithuanian and anti-German attitudes, the pastor's parents and his brother and family were designated among those to be deported as pro-German. Gavėnis was exempted from deportation only because he was a pastor. It would take more than just suspicion to banish a pastor or priest but, given the proper time and efforts, the NKGB officials could surely find evidence sufficient to accomplish it.

Gavėnis was a man of strong opinions and a zealous defender of his people. At the same time he extended a strong helping hand to others during the war years. Among those whom he helped were former communists, partisans, and others who were being interrogated in preparation for termination. Witnesses later testified that it was Gavėnis who had defended them before the Nazis and had saved their lives.¹⁸¹ He had helped Leiba Meigelis to escape execution and in later times Meigelis openly testified to the importance of the help Gavėnis had given him and his family. This took great courage for to hide a Jew, or provide him help without asking for payment, would result in the accusation that one was working with the partisans. The penalty for that was execution.¹⁸² Gavėnis himself later admitted to Commissioner Justas Rugienis that by helping such people escape execution and by providing them shelter he had risked his life.¹⁸³ He fought against injustice no matter what its source. He had fought against Nazi injustice and in the face of soviet injustice he felt compelled both to speak and to act.

¹⁸⁰ February 5, 1945 pastoral identification card of Pastor Gavėnis (J. Gavėnio tarnybinis pažymėjimas). - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

¹⁸¹ October 21, 1959 letter of Antanas Tauragauskas, Ženė Barkauskienė and Zina Rickevičienė to the Supreme Court of LSSR. - LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 116, 19, 23; October 26, 1959 letter of Juozas Rudaitis and to the Supreme Court of LSSR. - LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 116, 20; December 15, 1959 letter of Juozas and Ona Paškauskai to the Supreme Court of LSSR. - LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 116, 21-21ad;

¹⁸² October 19, 1959 letter of Meigelis Leiba to the Supreme Court of LSSR. - LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 116, 22.

¹⁸³ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 116, 18;

In June 1948 the MVD and MGB agencies summarily evicted the Pastor Gavėnis, his wife, and three children between the ages of one and a half and five, as well as 10 children from rural areas that the pastor had taken into his home in order to provide them with room and board while they attended school in the community. They were given no alternative lodging. The pretext given was that the agencies needed this space for their officers.¹⁸⁴ Pastor Gavėnis, who was quick tempered, protested loudly and complained bitterly. He moved his family out of the city to the village of Barkūnai, but he himself moved into the church sacristy and set up a small apartment for himself less than 20 yards from the offices of the security agencies.¹⁸⁵ The MVD turned the parsonage barn into a jail and installed "interrogation facilities," a place to torture insurrectionists caught in the forests. The pastor could hear their cries, and this complicated matters for the security police. They did not want him there. They told him to get out but he refused to go.

To make matters worse, he wrote a letter of complaint to the Jurbarkas city executive committee about the illegal confiscation of church property and the forced removal of his family. Pastor Gavėnis was becoming a problem, and problems with a man who is willing fight back and assert of his rights, were not easily solved. On June 15, 1948 the Jurbarkas district executive committee declared that the pastor was wrong. The buildings had not been confiscated. In fact they had been nationalized already on December 17, 1940 and given to the *Sojuzutil* (Rus. *Союзutils*) company, which simply had not bothered to make use of the space. The executive committee said that *Sojuzutil* had in turn given the property over to the forestry agency, a transaction which, if in fact it ever transpired, no one knew anything about it. They stated further that these buildings were meant to be used for the good of general public, a use to which they had now been put by the MVD and MGB. They passed along their decision to the

¹⁸⁴ LCVA f. R - 181, a 1, b. 28, 76-76ad; LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 67, 10.

¹⁸⁵ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 14, 111; LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 16, 166; LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 67, 10.

regional executive committee for its approval. It took that committee only three days to announce that, after painstaking investigation, they had determined that Pastor Gavėnis' complaints were groundless. On same day, June 18, they announced that because there was such a shortage of buildings in Jurbarkas, they were turning the property over to the real estate administration.¹⁸⁶ They passed their decision along to the Council of Ministers in Vilnius for review. If they had waited 24 hours they would not have needed to bother. The next day, June 19, the Council of Ministers announced the nationalization of all church property in Lithuania.



The Jurbarkas church before WWII.

Gavėnis and his parish council protested these actions, which they understood to be in clear violation of their rights as defined in the Stalin's Constitution. The parish council pointed out in a letter to the Council of Ministers on June 25, 1948 that in fact the property of the congregation had not been nationalized in 1940 and 1941. They expressed shock that their pastor, a soviet citizen, should be thrown out into the street with no place for him and his family to live.¹⁸⁷ Gavėnis decided that he needed to discuss this matter personally with Commissioner Pušinis in Vilnius. To facilitate this the consistory issued a travel document to him on July 29.¹⁸⁸ Apparently the meeting did take place and on August 5 Pušinis, the same man who had boasted to Moscow that with, the help of

¹⁸⁶ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 35, 113; LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 26, 169.

¹⁸⁷ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 26, 128-129.

¹⁸⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S. b. P-12325, 20/9.

[illegible]

Clergy identification card issued to Pastor Gavénis by Pastor Kalvanas, 1948.

supportive local committees, he had evicted many Catholic priests and left them homeless, wrote to Jurbarkas executive committee to complain about this shocking situation! It is strictly prohibited, he said, that any man and his 10 member family should be thrown out on the street without a place to live. They should in fact be given living accommodation of at least 90 m². Anything more than that could be taken from them and given to another family, but they must be permitted at least that much. Lutherans, he said, are loyal citizens, supportive of the government and not subject to such arbitrary action as eviction.¹⁸⁹ His purpose in doing so was made clear in a letter to he sent to Pisarev (Rus. Писарев), which arrived on the desk of the assistant to the chairman of the Council of Ministers on August 13. He expressed his concern about the matter because this incident would prove useful to those who spread propaganda

¹⁸⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S. b. P-12325, 20/13.

against the soviet government and accused it of mistreating its own citizens. In his letter he noted that he had been arrested, detained, and then confined to his place of dwelling because of his opposition to the decision of the local executive committee.¹⁹⁰ The matter needed resolution, because the Jurbarkas parish was capable of creating a major disturbance if it was not resolved. In his letter to Sniečkus on September 24 he complained that no one had paid any attention to his council. To make matters worse, the barn was being converted into a jail in clear contradiction to Moscow's directives, and this was causing considerable agitation.¹⁹¹ He later claimed that he had taken the matter up with Kapralov, the minister of the MGB in Vilnius, who, according to his report, telephoned the MVD branch in Jurbarkas to put a stop to it.¹⁹²

Nothing came of the matter. The MVD had the building and had already begun to use it as a jail, with Gavėnis living less than a stones' throw from the place, they were busy convincing prisoners to assist in their investigations. To further complicate the situation, parishioners were coming to church services to the sound of ringing church bells, causing the MGB no little irritation.¹⁹³ It was obvious that Gavėnis had become a problem and would have to be dealt with efficiently and quickly.

MGB had a file on Gavėnis going back to 1946. It was full of information supplied by their agents and informers. In October 1946 agent "Ivanovas" reported that Gavėnis had said that no good would come of the present political order, and that its only fruit would be starvation. He said that he had purchased and read a book which condemned the soviet system as producing slackers and near-do-wells. Agent "Juknevičienė" reported that in a sermon on November 20, 1946 the pastor had exhorted the people to remember in their prayers those who had died in Lithuania and in

¹⁹⁰ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 23, 49.

¹⁹¹ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 16, 111, 135.

¹⁹² LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 28, 81.

¹⁹³ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 67, 10-17.



Jurbarkas confirmands with Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis, 1946.

far off Tajikistan. He reminded them that it was for their idle words that so many were suffering and dying. Agent "Dobilas" reported in September 1947 that two insurrectionists, "Šilaitis" and "Dūda," had come to him and reported that the famous Minor Lithuanian writer Ieva Simonaitytė was in fact working for the partisans, and using Gavėnis as the conduit for her messages of encouragement to these partisans, whom the soviets called "forests bandits." Furthermore the insurrectionists used Gavėnis to get messages to her to guide her in formulating her messages of support in her newspaper articles. Agent "Sergėjus" stated that in a sermon on July 20, 1947 Gavėnis had said that the hearts of the people had been broken by the war. They longed for something better and were looking to the West, to England and America. In his July 10, 1947 report agent "Dobilas," who apparently was presenting himself as a partisan, wrote that Gavėnis had complained that "Dobilas" had not come to him. He stated that he had been unable to use "Rūta," his usual

contact person with the bandits, and trusted no one else. He further stated that Gavėnis told him that Priest Sabaliauskas had crossed the River Nemunas to help the partisans there, and that he was now alone with no one to help him in his valiant fight. In a report on July 7, 1948 agent "Nelke" reported his meeting with Gavėnis on July 2. Gavėnis had said to him, "We must pray for those who are abroad and wait patiently for them to extend their brotherly hand to help us." Agent "Briedis" wrote on July 18, 1948 of a meeting with Gavėnis in which the pastor stated that anti-soviet work abroad was increasing throughout the world. Soon there would be a major upheaval. Lithuanians must wait patiently for that day to come when it will become clear whether or not the world will be rid of communism and slavery. He stated that the western nations were determined to do away with communism to an extent hardly conceivable. Its destruction would be complete; it would be wiped off of the face of the earth and out of minds of men. When the agent asked for help from the underground, Gavėnis replied in words which identified him clearly with the insurrectionist movement. The agent reported that Gavėnis had stated that its purpose was to produce propaganda and medical aid and therefore could not help him. Reporting on August 19 agent "Nelke" said that a member of the pastor's household, Kasablaitienė, told him that the pastor had changed dramatically. He was nervous, highly agitated, and was saying things which no loyal soviet citizen would ever say. In his sermons he never failed to add some word of criticism against the soviet government.¹⁹⁴

Gavėnis was surrounded by agents who were willing to twist his words and even make up reports in order to curry favor and keep their jobs. He was effectively portrayed as an enemy of the people and would have to be dealt with.

Even more serious than his supposed criticisms and association with the partisans was the Mikolaitis incident. In 1940 Marta Mikolaitienė, who lived in the neighboring village of Kalnėnai,

¹⁹⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 82/4.

Lietuvos TSR
Švietimo ministerija
Konsistorija
 № 24
 20-3

LIETUVOS YPATINGASIS ARCHIVAS
 Nr. 41 1053 1 1945-8-8
 TIKRA
 Skaitmuo v. 102148

Komandirovka

Kunigas Jurgis Gavėnis,
Jurgis s. Jurbarko br. br. Vainučių
Kabonas, yra komandiruojamas Vilniai
bažnytiniais reikalais nuo 1945 m. II 28 - III 25
ii Jurbarko; Vilniaus bažn.

Konsistorija prašo visų kunigų ir
sviesių įstaigos jį kelionėje pala-
tyti ir rasti.

Tauragė, 1945 m. II 28

Kunigas J. Gavėnis
1945 m. III 25

С.С.С.Р.
Венерательская Литовская
духовная
Консисто́рия
 № 24
Командировка.

Священник Юргис Гавенис, сын
Юргиса, настоятеля Еванг. прил. Церкви
в Юрбаркас, командирован по важным
церковным делам от 28 II до 25 III с.г.
от Юрбаркас в Вильнюс
и обратно.

Консисто́рия просит всех военных
и гражданских властей по пути следствия
в дороге помочь.

Полуроты, 28 III 1945

Священник Г. Гавенис
Вице-президент Литовской
 158

Вильнюс
1945 m. III 25

Travel certificate issued to Pastor Gavėnis by Pastor Kalvanas on behalf of the consistory, 1945.

where the pastor's parents lived, asked Pastor Gavėnis if he would be willing to take her son Albertas into his household, so he could attend school in Jurbarkas. In return he would be happy to serve as sacristan in the parish. The pastor agreed and for the next several years the young man lived with the Gavėnis family and attended school. In 1945, when he was beginning eighth grade, he approached the pastor and asked his permission to go to visit his mother. In fact he went to the forest and joined a group of partisans led by Paulaitis. In the dead of winter he returned to Gavėnis cold and hungry and asked for shelter for a day or two. He returned again in January 1947 and took up secret residence in the pastor's household. Later that month he was apprehended and sent to jail. In November he was released,

apparently because of his youth. Again he became a clandestine resident in the parsonage until the next spring. In April, after having told the pastor that he was going to his mother's home, he again returned to the forest and the partisans. On February 1, 1948 he appeared at his mother's door and said that he had had enough. He wanted to become legal again. He was afraid to go to the MGB officials for fear of reprisal and asked her to speak with Kleopas Kriščiūnas in Jurbarkas to see if he could help him. She agreed to do so, but before the matter could be settled a garrison of soldiers arrived



Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis prior to his arrest, 1948.

in the village and the boy panicked. He fled to the forest, where he was shot by soldiers less than 2 kilometers from his home. Pastor Gavėnis consoled the mother and buried the young man who had faithfully served as sacristan.¹⁹⁵

Now the MGB had something solid to go on. Gavėnis had given aid and comfort to the enemies of the state. He had sheltered a partisan bandit. On the day the young man died agent "Briedis" fabricated a fictitious report that the young man had been hidden in the Gavėnis household until the very day he died and that he even brandished a revolver. On April 19 agent "Paulaitis" reported that, since October 1945 Mikolaitis had been a member of the same band of Paulaitis as he himself had been a member.¹⁹⁶

When Gavėnis took up residence in the sacristy in defiance of the NKGB, the agency began actively to call upon agents, neighbors,

¹⁹⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 2-2ad, 25-28, 44-45, 46-49, 70-72, 82/4.

¹⁹⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 82/4.

and others to interrogate them about the pastor's crimes. Among those interrogated was a former partisan, Kleopas Knataitis, the price of whose legalization was that he had become a secret agent of the NKGB. He was interrogated on June 14, 1948 and reported that he discovered that Mikolaitis was staying in the parsonage, and Mikolaitis asked him to keep the matter to himself and tell no one.¹⁹⁷ Stanislova Šliburienė was interrogated on August 3 and stated that she really did not know Pastor Gavėnis. She had only met him once, but it was common knowledge that his sermons were full of vitriolic statements against the soviet government. Even outside the pulpit he had made provocative and slanderous anti-soviet statements which were meant to incite people to rebellion. In May 1948 Birutė Adomaitytė, a 17 year old girl, told that she had heard the pastor preach a sermon in the presence of over a hundred worshipers, many of whom were former German repatriates. She accused the pastor of saying that the Lithuanians were not to be trusted, they betray each other, and hasted out the pastor and his household and others into the street with no place to go. She falsely stated that the pastors said that the soviet activists should be killed and their bodies defiled. All this, she reported, was said in the presence of innocent children and other impressionable people.¹⁹⁸

On August 5 Birutė Adomaitytė was interrogated. When asked about the sermon she stated that she had never heard any such sermon. She was a Roman Catholic and not a Lutheran, and had never heard Pastor Gavėnis preach at all. In fact she had been only in a Lutheran church one time and that was for a marriage service of a relative. When the interrogators pressed her about what Gavėnis had said in his sermon, she protested: "I never heard him preach; I left the church during the sermon."¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 46-49.

¹⁹⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 52-53.

¹⁹⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 57-58.

When asked what she knew of Gavėnis' anti-soviet activities, Marta Jakštienė, a resident in the same village of Kalnėnai where the Gavėnis family was living, reported that on August 3, 1948 Gavėnis had savagely denounced the Communist government. Gavėnis had come once to her house to buy fish and had broken into a tirade against the soviets, saying: "Pray God, soon we will be rid of these scoundrels; the English and the Americans will come and set us free." She revealed her spiteful motivation by stating that before the war and its upheavals the Gavėnis family had possessed 30 - 40 hectares of lands, 5-6 cows, 4-5 horses, and 15 hired hands to work the farm. She reported also that she had gone to the funeral of "that bandit Mikolaitis" and heard with her own ears Gavėnis say: "Your son may not have lived at home, but his home was always at his heart. His body is placed into the earth of the beloved land for which he fought and for which he died." "Nowhere," he said, "are there cemeteries in which there do not rest the bodies of young people who gave up their lives for their native land; indeed there are many cemeteries of which no one even knows."²⁰⁰

TVIRTINU
UTVĖRINU
OKTUBRIS 1948 g.
Lietuvos Tarybų Socialistinio Valstybės Ministrų Tarybos
Lietuvos Tarybų Socialistinio Valstybės Ministrų Tarybos
Lietuvos Tarybų Socialistinio Valstybės Ministrų Tarybos

ARESTA SANKCIONUOJU
AREST SANKCIONIRUOJU
ЗАМ ПРЕКРОПА ЛИТОВСКОЙ ССР
СОВЕТСКИМ ТУЖИМ 3-го августа 1948 года

(МАРТАКЕ) NUTARIMAS (арестуй) ПОСТАНОВЛЕНИЕ (на арест)

КТОРИ М-ца 8 1948 г. 6 1948 года, Гор. Вильнюс.

Лит. ТСР ВРЛК ДВМУ Оперуполномоченный 2-го отделения отдела "О" УРКМ НКВД Лит. ССР (делитель - делитель) МГБ Литовской ССР (делитель - делитель)

МЛ. лейтенант ПОГОДИН (делитель - делитель)

в связи с тем, что Гавенис Е.Е., 1909 г.р., уроженца дер. Кельняны, Дубарского уезда, Литовской ССР, в 1948 г. скрывал у себя дома сожителя - Миколaitis по кличке "Гавенис" (делитель - делитель)

РАДАУ: НАШЕЛ:

Гавенис Е.Е. враждебно настроен к Советской власти, среди своего окружения проводит антисоветскую агитацию, наружу с этим о 1945 года по февраль 1948 г. скрывал у себя дома сожителя - Миколaitis по кличке "Гавенис" (делитель - делитель)

1/П-48 г./

Свидетель ЯКОБЕНЕ на допросе 3-го августа 1948 г. показала: ...

Свидетель КНАТЛИС на допросе 3-го августа 1948 г. показала: ...

Warrant for the arrest of Pastor Gavėnis.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

²⁰⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 54-55.

Another woman, Stasė Paulikienė, of the village of Milušiai, was asked on August 4 what she knew of Gavėnis. She said that she knew very little and had only seen him two times. She knew that despite his cleverness and cunning he was very much opposed to the soviet government and he would warn his congregation about the evils of communism. She too had gone to the funeral of Mikolaitis and heard the pastor say that “many young give up their lives for love of their homeland. Mikolaitis loved his homeland and died for it and no more would he come to his mother’s house in the middle of the night to tap quietly on the window.”²⁰¹ On August 6 a report was given by Jonas Dikšaitis during his interrogation which stated that Gavėnis would come to their Naujininkėliai village and stay at the home of Jurgis Gavėnis, who was not his relative. Here he would hold Lutheran services and stay overnight. Dikšaitis was convinced that Jurgis Gavėnis supplied the necessities of life to the bandits of the “Eimutis” band in Naujininkėliai. When asked if any of the bandits attended the service, he said that he did not know. Although he was a Lutheran, he did not go to church.²⁰²

On August 12, 1948 the NKGB then interrogated the bridegroom, Vincas Jakas, at whose wedding Gavėnis had officiated. He was asked about the anti-soviet statements which the pastor had made during the service. The young man said that the pastor had not made any statements about the government or the political system. Since he himself was a Roman Catholic, the pastor said to him that the Roman Catholic Church was not a true church. Its priests drink vodka and marry people for money. He insisted that he must become a Lutheran like his wife. Jakas had replied that he would think about it.²⁰³

The interrogation reports and “eye witness” accounts of the agents were all that the NKGB needed. They decided that he was clearly anti-revolutionary and that their evidence proved it beyond

²⁰¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 56-57.

²⁰² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 59-60.

²⁰³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 61-61ad.

a shadow of a doubt. He was definitely a criminal under the terms of Article 58 of Russian criminal code, and his support of the counter-revolutionaries proved it.

On October 6, 1948 Junior Lieutenant Pogodin (Rus. Погодин) of the "O" branch of MGB wrote a summary of the subversive activities of Pastor Gavėnis. His guilt was clearly evident, he stated. His criticism of the government, his anti-soviet statements, his hiding of Mikolaitis, a known insurrectionist, and the eye-witness report of a former partisan Knataitis were all proof of his guilt. Furthermore, these accusations were attested by the testimony of Šliburienė, Dikšaitis, and Paulikienė.²⁰⁴ That same day Colonel Shljapnikov, the chief of the "O" branch, approved the report and, to keep him from fleeing, issued a warrant for the arrest of Gavėnis.²⁰⁵

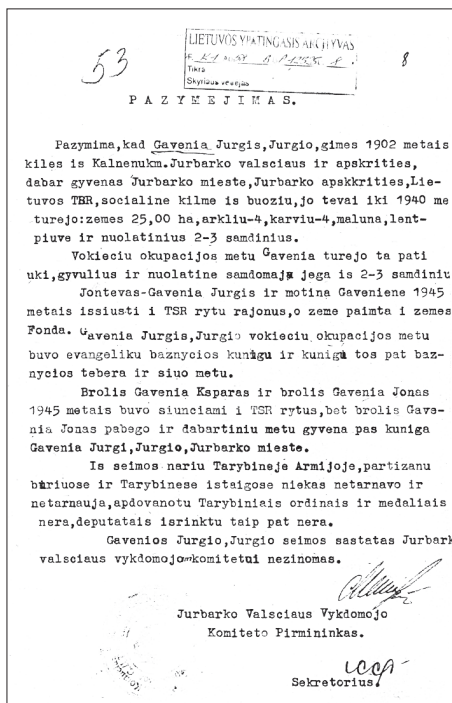
At the same time the Jurbarkas executive committee issued a report condemning the Gavėnis family as Kulaks - that is rich farmers who before the war had owned 25 hectares of land, 4 horses, 4 cows, a grain mill, and a saw mill. They had also employed 2 workers. In 1945 Gavėnis parents, Jurgis Gavėnis and Elžbieta Gavėnienė, had been "removed to the depths of the Soviet Union." Their seized property was turned over to the land bank. Also placed under arrest was Kasparas Gavėnis, brother of the pastor, and sent to the soviet interior. Attempts to apprehend another brother, Jonas Gavėnis, were frustrated when it was found that he had taken flight. It was not known to the soviets that he was living in the parsonage. The committee could not uncover information about any additional family members.²⁰⁶

Pastor Gavėnis was arrested on October 15, 1948 in Barkūnai, where his family had taken up temporary lodging. During the search of the premises the NKGB agents reported that they uncovered and confiscated letters from at least 200 correspondence as well as articles critical

²⁰⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 2-2ad.

²⁰⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 3-3ad.

²⁰⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 8.



Pastor Gavėnis family characterized as kulaks by the Jurbarkas executive committee.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

Pastor Gavėnis. They stated that they could not understand this action since every member of the parish, from its pastor to its least member, was completely loyal to the soviet government. They noted Gavėnis had refused repatriation in 1941 and had taken up the cause of Russian prisoners of war who were maltreated and malnourished, and had encouraged his parishioners to do the same. In this way he had saved several prisoners and others from certain

of the soviet regime.²⁰⁷ Since the correspondence was in Lithuanian, Lithuanian Lieutenant Junior Grade Alekna, who was stationed in the MGB headquarters in Vilnius, was ordered to examine it.²⁰⁸

On October 21 Gavėnis' wife, Monika, signed the list of personal property, which was then put under police control. Later all of it would be confiscated.²⁰⁹

On October 23, 1948, in a state of perplexity, Jurbarkas parish council wrote to the Presidium of the Supreme Council of LSSR to ask that their pastor be released. In their letter they rehearsed the course of events which had transpired, including the seizure of parish property and the arrest of Pas-

²⁰⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 9-10, 17.

²⁰⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 11.

²⁰⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 13.

death. They noted also that he had been a leading figure in opposing the attempts of some to turn the Lithuanian Lutheran Church into a vassal of the Germans, and he had assisted his mother in her work as editor of the anti-German *Srovė* newspaper. Furthermore, his family was now in acute distress. The parishioners asked that his arrest warrant be revoked and that he be returned to them to carry on the work of the pastoral ministry.²¹⁰ On behalf of the consistory Chairman Leijeris also wrote to Pušinis. He stated that all the members of the consistory were shocked by this arrest. They would now have only 7 pastors to serve 40,000 Lutherans. He stated that since so many churches had been confiscated and a pastor was now under arrest, many might conclude that there was a vendetta against the Lutheran Church. He went on to say that this action violated both the Soviet Constitution and the 1946 Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, which was meant "to put and end to persecutions based upon race or religion." He asked for a statement of the charges against the pastor and, on behalf of the consistory, asked that the pastor be released immediately.²¹¹

MGB case file of Pastor Gavēnis 1948.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

²¹⁰ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 28, 76-76ad.

²¹¹ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 28, 71; October 31, 1948 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Commissioner B. Pušinis. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

However, the government would do nothing. On November 4, 1948 the chairman of the Supreme Council turned the whole business over to Pušinis.²¹² Pušinis passed the matter on to the NKGB Minister Kapralov on November 5 stating that an intolerable situation had developed. He said that in the eyes of the people Pastor Gavėnis was being made a martyr and this was neither necessary nor productive. He asked Kapralov to look into the matter. He also wrote to Sniečkus on that same day and laid the whole matter before him. He claimed that on numerous occasions he had tried to prevent an incident. At his urging Kapralov had insisted that the local MGB cease using the barn of the parsonage as a prison and interrogation center because this had caused much agitation in the congregation. No one had acted on his demands or those of Kapralov. Now the pastor was under arrest and the congregation believed that the precipitating factor was his defense of the congregation and its property. If he had been arrested in order to isolate him and diminish his influence, the timing of it could not have been worse. Now he was regarded as a martyr and the people were incited to stronger faith and loyalty to the Lutheran Church.²¹³

Jurbarkas parish was not willing to surrender its pastor without a public struggle. It wrote a letter of complaint to the Council of Ministers in Vilnius. The Council in turn forwarded the letter to Pušinis with instructions that he should deal with the matter.²¹⁴ He felt it was sufficient that he simply asks the MGB Minister Dmitrij Efimov (Rus. Дмитрий Ефимов) on February 2, 1949 to attach this letter of complaint to the file. The Council of Ministers continued to forward reports from the Jurbarkas executive committee to Pušinis and on April 22 the Council of Ministers vice-Chairman A. Sokolov (Rus. Соколов) pressed Pušinis for a decision about the resolution of the Jurbarkas executive committee to “remove the pastor to

²¹² LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 28, 78.

²¹³ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 16, 170.

²¹⁴ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 20, 31.

Skirsnemunė” and confiscate the property of the Jurbarkas parish.²¹⁵ The June 1, 1949 reply of Pušinis to Sokolov avoided mentioning that the pastor had been incarcerated. He simply stated that everything was in order and that there was no problem moving Pastor Gavėnis to Skirsnemunė, since that parish was regularly served by him.²¹⁶ He simply closed his eyes to the situation hoping that, if he did not acknowledge it, it would go away.

The Jurbarkas congregation found itself in an impossible situation, as also did the other parishes served by Gavėnis: Skirsnemunė-Žvyriai, Sudargas, Raseiniai, Šakiai, Kaunas, Smalininkai, and Viešvilė. On October 30, 1948 Cantor Briedis wrote to Pastor Kalvanas stating that the people of these parishes were in desperate need of a pastor. He was doing everything he could do as a cantor but he was not a pastor and the people were in desperate need of the sacramental ministry of a pastor. The sick and dying wanted to receive the Sacrament as did the whole congregation at Skirsnemunė-Žvyriai, but there could be no Lord's Supper without a pastor. The Skirsnemunė-Žvyriai congregation had approached Pastor Vilhelmas Gruodis (Germ. *Wilhelm Grodde*) in Smalininkai, but he could not help them. He was not registered and, if he were to hold services, the congregation's contract to use the church would be forfeited and their church building would be seized.²¹⁷ The consistory acted immediately and on November 2 Kalvanas wrote to Pastor Preikšaitis in Batakliai stating that the consistory was authorizing him to serve as pastor in the parishes of Jurbarkas, Skirsnemunė-Žvyriai, and Sudargas.²¹⁸ This was by no means an ideal solution, since Pastor Preikšaitis lived over 50 kilometers away from Jurbarkas. However, there was no other option. Kalvanas was already carrying a very heavy load and there was no one else close by to help.

²¹⁵ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 35, 112.

²¹⁶ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 35, 111.

²¹⁷ January 30, 1948 letter of Pastor Briedis to Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

²¹⁸ November 2, 1948 letter of Pastor Kalvanas to Pastor Preikšaitis. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

After his arrest Gavėnis was sent immediately to MGB headquarters in Vilnius. On the next day, October 16, 1948, he was interrogated by Lieutenant Colonel Loktev (Rus. Локтев) of the "O" branch. It amounted to little more than a recounting of his personal history, the name of his parents, the place of his birth, etc. Because it was low key, Gavėnis may have thought that he was not in serious trouble.²¹⁹ There were no further interrogations until October 22 when he was taken at 9:30 PM for his second interrogation. The session continued until 2:30 AM. Lead interrogator Akkuratov (Rus. Аккуратов) asked him to detail the anti-soviet activities he engaged in after the Germans had been ejected from the country. Gavėnis said that he had not been involved in anti-soviet activity. The interrogator insisted that it would go easier for him if he would confess. Gavėnis maintained that he had done nothing.²²⁰ The next interrogation was held three days later, on October 25, between 9:30 PM and 1:30 AM. Now he was questioned about his acquaintances in Kaunas. The interrogators were unconcerned about his church organist brother Jonas but questioned him in detail about his relationship with Ieva Simonaitytė and her relationship with Paleckis and other important people in the government. Simonaitytė had interceded with Paleckis, the chairman of the Supreme Council, on behalf of Gavėnis, when he wanted to secure the return of his parents from Tajikistan. The interrogator wondered what Simonaitytė had written to Paleckis. Gavėnis said that the letter had been given to Tauragauskas who had delivered it to the Central Committee and the Supreme Council, but he did not know anything of its contents. The interrogator asked about the identity of Tauragauskas and how it was that he had access to such high officials in the Lithuanian soviet government. Gavėnis replied that he had been the chief of personnel at the Council of Ministers until his retirement in 1945 because of ill health. He had met him in 1942 during the Nazi persecution and had given him refuge. Seeing that this was a blind alley

²¹⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 14-15.

²²⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 16-18.

Akkuratov turned his attention again to Simonaitytė. Why had she come to see him in Jurbarkas? Gavėnis replied that she had not. She had come to see Zina Šneideraitienė, a member of his parish. While she was in town she came to the Easter service and the pastor invited her to dinner after the service. At dinner they spoke together about contemporary literature. Politics were not discussed.²²¹

Another five hour interrogation took place on October 28, 1948. By this time the interrogator was beginning to wonder how he could find something useful to condemn the pastor. He noticed the name of Mikolaitis in the files and decided to explore that incident. Gavėnis explained that Mikolaitis had come to him in 1940 as a student looking for a place to live. He stayed at the parsonage until 1946, except for a short period of time in 1945 when he went to visit his mother. He knew nothing about the details of his arrest. The interrogator decided that Gavėnis knew more than he was saying. The mother had not mentioned any visit from her son in 1944-1945. It must have been during that time that he joined the insurrectionists. Gavėnis must have known about it and most probably was himself involved in their banditry.²²²

On this basis an indictment was prepared and delivered on October 29. It stated that Gavėnis had engaged in anti-soviet activities, preached against the regime, and possessed materials critical of the Soviet Union. All were serious crimes according to the terms of Article 58-10 of the Russian criminal code. This article dealt with propaganda and agitation calling for the overthrow, subversion, or weakening of governmental authority, carrying out of other counter-revolutionary activities, or distribution, preparation, or preservation of the materials of this nature. Senior Lieutenant Akkuratov, Captain Golicyn (Rus. Голицын), and Lieutenant Colonel Chelnokov (Rus. Челноков) signed the indictment.²²³

²²¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 19-24.

²²² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 25-28.

²²³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 29.

The prosecutors knew that they had to break him. He was called again for interrogation on November 11 from 10:30 PM to 2:00 AM. He was told that the counter-revolutionary book *Žemaitijos kankiniai* (*The Martyrs of Samogitia*) had been found in his sacristy. It detailed the beating to death of Samogitian prisoners by soviet guards and their Lithuanian collaborators before their retreat in 1941. Copies of the newspaper *Ateitis* from 1942 – 1943, which contained caricatures of high soviet officials in the Kremlin, had also been found in the sacristy.²²⁴ On November 15 he was again interrogated. The interrogator claimed that the NKGB had found a secret compartment in the cupboard in the church corridor and it contained his private correspondence. This alone was sufficient to convict him, Gavėnis was told.²²⁵

On November 18, 1948 in one last theatrical gesture the MGB produced three “witnesses” to accuse Gavėnis to his face. After careful preparation by Vilnius NKGB officers Marta Jakštienė repeated her August statement. Pastor Gavėnis had come to her house and exhorted her to pray that God would quickly send Americans and the English to topple the communist government. She stated that her husband and son had been “*Stribai*” (NKVD collaborators who fought against the insurrectionists; Rus. *устребительные батальоны*)²²⁶ and that her husband had died and her son wounded by insurrectionists. She said that every time she saw the pastor he chided her, saying that if her husband and son had not supported the soviets, they would have avoided their fate. She repeated what she had said about his anti-revolutionary sermon at the Mikolaitis funeral.²²⁷ Stanislova Šliburienė stated that her August testimony had not been correctly reported. She had met Gavėnis only once and had not heard him make anti-soviet statements. However, she

²²⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 33-34; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 83/1, 83/2.

²²⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 35-36.

²²⁶ The NKVD units were called People’s Defense Platoons. The Russian name “*устребители*” (“exterminators”) was shortened by the Lithuanians to “*Stribai*.”

²²⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 62-64.

had heard reports that he did not like the soviets and did not care much for the Catholics either, because their slanders had sent many Lutherans to the slave labor camps.²²⁸

Stasė Paulikienė stated, in the presence of Gavėnis, that in his sermon at the Mikolaitis funeral he had glorified the insurrectionist and stated that the earth was receiving the bodies of many brave men. At the close of the service he also thanked the people for coming to bury this insurrectionist. Gavėnis contradicted her replying that he had only said that while Mikolaitis was in his household he remained on the right path and that it was traditional in Lutheran funerals to thank those who had come to the burial for comforting the bereaved.²²⁹

On December 1 and 2 Gavėnis was again interrogated. This time he was asked about Simas and Jurgis Gavėnis, at whose home in Naujininkėliai, Gavėnis had held services from time to time in 1946-1947. Gavėnis stated that they were not relatives of his and that he knew them only because the church services were held in their house. He knew nothing of any connection they might have had with the insurrectionists and that his conversations with them were limited to matters concerning the church service and everyday life. In the second interrogation he was asked why he had hidden the fact that his acquaintance Juozas Simukaitis had been a captain in the Lithuanian army. He could only say that the man had come to him in 1947 looking for a place to live and for employment as a bell ringer.²³⁰

No more interrogations were held. It had long since been decided that Gavėnis must be convicted, so it was decided to get on with it. Although Gavėnis denied all the accusations against him, that was of no interest to the prosecutors.

Four days later, December 6, the medical commission reported that Gavėnis appeared to be in good physical health, fit for physical labor.²³¹ A day later it was discovered that no official record had been

²²⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 65-66.

²²⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 67-69, 70-72.

²³⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 37-39, 40-43.

²³¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 75.

made of Gavėnis' possession of the anti-soviet book *Žemaitijos kankiniai* (*The Martyrs of Samogitia*) and the patriotic newspaper *Ateitis*. These were quickly cataloged and the record of it signed the same day.²³²

On December 7 the final report concluding the investigation was read to Gavėnis and he was asked whether he would like to add anything to it or lodge a formal complaint against it. He answered that he understood the charges, he wished to add nothing and would file no complaint.²³³ On December 13 the indictment against him was handed down. It went far beyond the testimony of the witnesses. He was charged with inciting young people to rebellion and with encouraging them to join the insurrectionists in the forests. It stated also that he had freely admitted that he had harbored an insurrectionist in his household and buried him with solemn honors. He further admitted that he possessed anti-soviet literature in the form of books and newspaper articles. The report stated that he was charged under Article 58-10 and it was recommended that he be sentenced to 10 years incarceration. The report was then sent to the MGB in Moscow to be examined and a verdict rendered.²³⁴

The MGB in Moscow was busy and it was not until the February 12, 1949 that a final decision was made by a *Special Board* at the ministry of the MGB. The decision was that all his property should be confiscated and that he be sent to a corrective facility, a labor camp, for 10 years with credit given for time already served since his arrest in October.²³⁵

No time was lost in sending a letter to "A" branch Lieutenant Colonel Grishin (Rus. Гришин) instructing him to execute the sentence immediately by sending prisoner Gavėnis to corrective labor camp number 24396. This Gulag was located at Vorkuta (Rus. Воркута) in Siberia and is known to have been among the harshest of all such facilities.²³⁶

²³² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 74.

²³³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 76.

²³⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 77-79.

²³⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 82.

²³⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 83.

Not only was he punished personally, but his wife and three children, all under the age of 5, lost everything. Their property at Kalnėnai was appropriated in 1945, at which time Gavėnis' parents were sent to Tajikistan. Then their parsonage was taken from them, forcing them to move with their few remaining possessions and one cow and a horse to the village of Barkūnai. There they found refuge in the home of friends. Finally, everything they possessed was confiscated in accordance with Moscow's dictum. It was not until November 9 that Vilnius got around to sending a memo to the Jurbarkas MGB ordering the immediate seizure of all Gavėnis property and its sale through the local executive committee.²³⁷ On December 27 Šakiai MGB Major Zubkov (Rus. Зубков) wrote to Vilnius saying that there were problems and it seemed that no one could find an inventory of Gavėnis' property.²³⁸ If Vilnius would furnish them with an inventory they would get about the business of seizing it. Whether because of bureaucratic laziness or incompetence, it took two years for Vilnius to come up with the required inventory. On March 10, 1952 it was sent to the MGB branch at Šakiai with special attention to Major Zubkov. He was instructed to take the property immediately.²³⁹ After another five months, on August 14, Zubkov informed Vilnius that the property had not yet been taken because his agents could not seem to find the family in Barkūnai. He received a quick response from the "A" branch chief Grishin who stated that this was Zubkov's problem and not his and that he had better conclude the matter quickly. Zubkov contacted the passport department in Šakiai inquiring the whereabouts of Monika Gavėnienė.²⁴⁰ He finally tracked her down in the village of Zypliai of Šakiai district. They found that she had three beds, three chairs, a pig weighting 40 kg and a cow, which apparently they did not bother to weigh. Total value 1,250 rubles. Seven items

²³⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12325, 17.

²³⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 T, b. P-12325, 4.

²³⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 T, b. P-12325, 7.

²⁴⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 T, b. P-12325, 9, 11.

mentioned in the inventory of October 14 were missing, including the horse, a small table clock, and a few miscellaneous items in little value. Of course Gavėnienė was closely interrogated concerning the missing items and she was required to sign a statement that the items were missing. On October 16 Vilnius was informed that Monika Gavėnienė's property had been taken and the proceeds had been turned over to the financial department in Šakiai.²⁴¹

In the eyes of the soviet government Pastor Gavėnis was a dangerous convicted criminal, condemned to a long prison term, deprived of his property, and stripped of his citizenship. A memorandum dated November 20, 1954 reports that his passport had been burned. He was no longer citizen; he was now a man without rights.²⁴² He no longer had a name, but only a number.

Gavėnis was sent to one of the harshest and most notorious camps in the entire soviet Gulag. Vorkuta was a complex of forced labor camps, located in the Komi ASSR in the foothills of the Ural Mountains in the far north of Russia. The camp was about 160 km north of the Arctic Circle and just 90 kilometers from the Arctic Ocean.

This camp had been founded in 1941 to mine the rich coal deposits in the area. From the very beginning its work force was comprised of slave laborers who built the camp, the railroad which furnished it, and the dwellings in which they lived. At first the railway cars were pulled by humans, only later was horse power used. The Vorkuta complex consisted of some 50 camps which included coal mines, brick factories, power plants, construction units, kitchens, hospitals, etc. The prisoners were divided into two categories - the *Vorkutlag* (Rus. *Воркутлаг*), which consisted of criminals and the *Rechlag* (Rus. *Речлаг*), which was made up of political prisoners.²⁴³ In 1953 there were 37,067 inmates in the *Rechlag* section: 33,265 men and 3,802 women, almost one-third of whom were serving terms of 25 years. A significant portion of this population consisted of Balts; together with the Ukrainians, they comprised almost

²⁴¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 T, b. P-12325, 12-13, 15.

²⁴² LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12325, 20/1.

²⁴³ *Burokas* 1998, 113.

50% of the total population. In the *Rechlag* there were 10,495 Ukrainians, 2,935 Lithuanians, 1,521 Estonians, and 1,075 Latvians. This was only part of far a larger complex. The entire population of the camp, which was run by *Vorkutugol* (Rus. *Воркуты́голь*), a joint operation of the MVD and soviet coal industry, was over 200,000 slave workers, representing 90 nations.²⁴⁴



Vorkuta as seen from the site of coal mine No. 8.
From: Burokas, 2008.

The Baltic prisoners conducted themselves in a matter which quickly gained the respect of their fellow inmates. Generally they were incorruptible, hardworking, and true to their word. They did not treat others in a condescending manner. Solzhenitsyn said of the Baltic prisoners that they made him ashamed of himself and his homeland.²⁴⁵ He would often read to them in Russian while some of them would translate his words into their own languages. When he read the report in the propaganda sheet about the great rejoicing in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia on the 10th anniversary of their “liberation,” and about the great prosperity that the people were now enjoying for the first time, howls of protest were raised from these people whose homes had been ruined, whose goods had been looted, and whose families had been left destitute – that is if they were not in fact themselves on the way to Siberia.²⁴⁶ The greatest joy was news that their families had not been placed under arrest and ban-

²⁴⁴ Latkovskis I 2005, 18-21.

²⁴⁵ Solzhenitsyn 1976, 43.

²⁴⁶ Solzhenitsyn 1976, 35.

ished to the depths of Russia. He noted also, that their friends back home showed far greater generosity in sending them food parcels than was the case with the Russians, and that all the Baltic peoples were known for their staunch intransigence. They made friends easily with people of other nations, although they tended to keep to themselves. They avoided those who were real soviets, because, as they said, their way of thinking was completely foreign to them.

The Baltic prisoners at Vorkuta were well organized and presented special problems for the camp authorities. Of them MVD General Kuzma Derevjanko (Rus. Кузьма Деревянко), the camp commander, said: "The soviet authorities have no enemy so numerically small, yet so implacable in their enmity, as the Balts. We shall, therefore, have to see to it that this vermin disappears from the face of the earth."²⁴⁷

Along with 4,000 other prisoners, about a third of whom were Lithuanians, Gavėnis worked in coal mine No 8. The Physician Henrikas Sinkus, a fellow Lithuanian, said that Gavėnis was assigned a particularly difficult job on the ground. Most of the workers in the camp worked below ground in mines which could be reached only by descending poorly constructed stairs to mineshafts which were dark, humid, and cramped. Many miners had to lie on their sides or kneel to pick at the venous of coal with their hammers, often times in running water no more than 5 degrees Celsius. Many were injured, even more lost their health permanently because of arthritis, coal miners' lung, and other occupational hazards. In was not until 1950 that any modern mining techniques were introduced and then only to increase production, not to improve working conditions.²⁴⁸ Sanitary conditions in the barracks were abysmal. Mattresses and pillows were simply cloth bags filled with woodchips. No sheets or blankets were provided. Roaches, flees, and lice flourished.²⁴⁹

This particular aspect of the soviet paradise was not given much publicity! One Lithuanian worker received from home a newspaper

²⁴⁷ Latkovskis I 2005, 23.

²⁴⁸ *Vorkutos politinių kalinių atsiminimai* 1998, 211, 216.

²⁴⁹ *Vorkutos politinių kalinių atsiminimai* 1998, 215.

in which he found his picture attached to an article that described the wonderful work being done by dedicated young communists who were building the city of Vorkuta. He decided to keep it and show it to others so that they would understand that they were not really political prisoners at all but committed young communists working to the glory of the people!²⁵⁰



Mining camp No. 8. From: Burokas, 2008.

Physician Henrikas Sinkus recalled that in the little free time available he and Gavėnis would search out a quiet corner in the hospital to chat about the homeland and to commiserate about their present circumstances. They shared in common a strong hope that one day they would be permitted to return to their homes and families. Among their friends in the Vorkuta Gulag were engineer Stepas Jotautas, economist Jurgis Baltenis, Doctor Vytautas Stonys, teacher Vladas Oškeliūnas, and other Lithuanians. They would quietly hum or sing Lithuanian songs or hymns taught them by Gavėnis to bolster their faltering spirits. Sinkus reported that with their quiet songs and hymns they chased away the cold, hunger, and depression. It all had to be done very quietly so that the Russian guards would not hear them and punish them.²⁵¹

Prisoners in the Gulag were allowed no public practice of religion. Any religious activity could be carried out only in extreme secrecy when the guards were looking the other way. There were

²⁵⁰ *Vorkutos politinių kalinių atsiminimai* 1998, 212.

²⁵¹ *Sinkus* 1994, 10.

a large number of clergy in the Vorkuta population, both Lutheran and Roman Catholic. In addition to Pastor Gavėnis there were also Latvian Pastors Pauls Rozenbergs, Janis Udriis, and Augusts Alers. There were also several Lithuanian Roman Catholic Priests Kazys Vaičaitis, Juozas Katinas, Antanas Šeškevičius, Pranas Račiūnas, and Stangaitis,²⁵² and also five Latvian Roman Catholic priests. One of their number, Viktors Pentjuss, said that he and some Lithuanian priests regularly held secret services for the Catholics and tried to do so on a regular basis on the feast days. They held their services in remote parts of mine shafts, in forests, and in the barracks. In every case it was necessary to post lookouts to warn of the approach of guards.²⁵³

It was in Vorkuta that the unthinkable happened – an event so incomprehensible that it caught the soviets completely off guard. It was thought beyond possibility that the people could ever rebel against their people's government, but that is what happened. There had been strikes earlier, but this strike was on a far larger scale. It involved the entire camp complex.

Strikes had started earlier in Karaganda (Rus. *Караганда*). There the unrest began in late 1952 and continued until April 1953 when the ringleaders were dispersed to other camps. They took their grievances with them and those who were sent to Norilsk (Rus. *Норильск*) and Vorkuta soon provoked rebellion in both places. The rebellion started first in Norilsk and popular support for it increased when news came of a strike by East German workers on June 17, 1953. At this point rebellion broke out at Vorkuta. The center of the strike was coal mine No 7. Efforts by the administration to isolate this mining camp and keep news of the rebellion from spreading were unsuccessful. As rumors spread so did the strike. Now administrators tried to negotiate a settlement. The strike committees in each camp prepared their demands, which included such

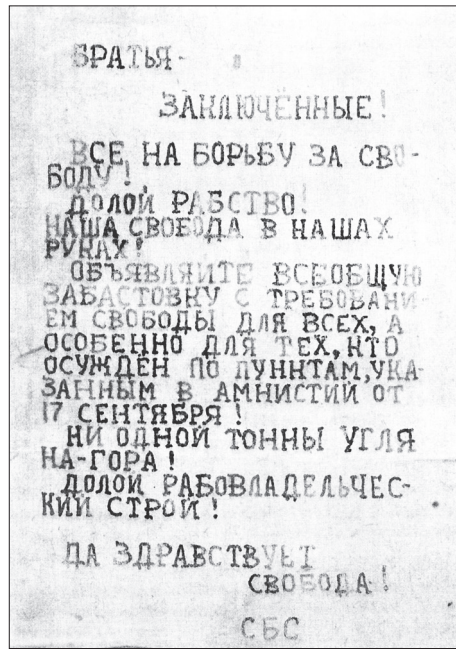
²⁵² *Vorkutos politinių kalinių atsiminimai* 1998, 29, 215; *Naikintos, bet nenugalėtos kartos kelias* 2003, 67.

²⁵³ *Latkovskis I* 2005, 28-29.

matters as removal of bars from the windows, an end of using numbers instead of names to refer to prisoners, and the granting of permission to contact relatives. Even those who did not actively take part in the strike showed their solidarity. According to one source everything was either slowed down or shut down. Coal production dropped from 1,000 tons a day to only 30. Alarm was beginning to spread throughout the government. The economy was being affected. A high level delegation led by General Ivan Maslennikov (Rus. Иван Масленников),

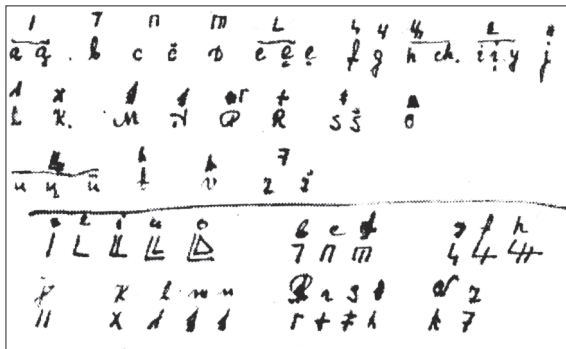
the deputy chief of the MVD, and General Roman Rudenko (Rus. Роман Руденко), the chief prosecutor of the entire Soviet Union, along the forty MGB officers and two battalions of elite troops were flown in. They found that even the railway workers and locomotive engineers were taking a strongly sympathetic attitude toward the strikers. Locomotive engineers blew their whistles when they passed the camps and railway workers waved in greeting.²⁵⁴

The commission members met with the strikers and initially used threats to try to get them back to work. General Kuzma Derevjanko warned that they were guilty of “sabotage” and “disgraceful behavior” and would be suitably punished. This approach did not work and much more conciliatory attitude was taken. The strikers



Circular calling for miners to strike
From: Burokas, 2008.

²⁵⁴ Latkovskis II 2005, 5-15.

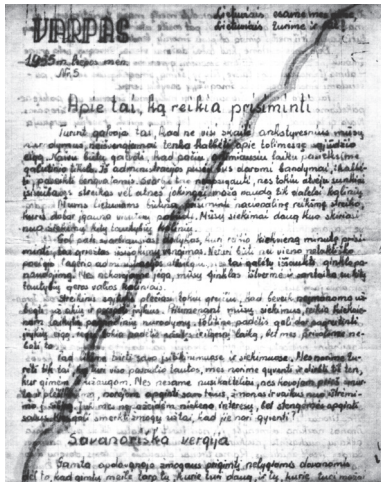


Coded note from coal mine No. 4 to camp No. 62.
From: Burokas 1998.

everyone else was going back to work. Soon all did return to work except the miners in coal mine No. 29. Maslennikov addressed them

as citizens and promised them that everything would change. In response the prisoners stated: "You have sucked our blood long enough. We shall not return to work before you have reviewed the indictments against us."²⁵⁵

This was, of course, intolerable. No such response could be allowed in the Soviet Union. Fortifications were set up around the camp and troops arrived to take up their positions. General Procurator Roman Rudenko arrived at the front gate with a thousand troops and shouted out his final invitation for them to call off the strike. He admonished



Vorkuta underground newspaper
"Varpas" ("Bell").
From: Burokas 1998.

²⁵⁵ Latkovskis II 2005, 19; Burokas 1998, 113

them to stop listening to rebels but to open the gates and come back to work or face execution. Only seven of the strikers heeded his admonition. The others refused. They called out: "Give us freedom, or give us death," as they stood proudly with joined hands and heads held high. General Rudenko fired his pistol. It was a signal to the troops to begin the bloodbath. Those who did not die in the hail of bullets were attacked with clubs and iron bars by the soldiers to drive them out of the camp. There were many conflicting reports about the number of killed and injured. Some stated that hundreds were killed and hundreds wounded.²⁵⁶ Some said 66 were killed. The official MVD report, which was kept private, were 42 dead and 135 injured. Survivors from coal mine No. 29 stated that perhaps as many as 70 were killed and 600 were wounded.²⁵⁷

This did not end the strikes. The revolts continued until the Gulags were closed. Major revolts occurred in Kengir (Rus. *Кенгур*) in 1954 and again in Vorkuta in 1955.

The prisoners assigned to coal mine No.8 experienced one more devastating blow during the years Gavënis was assigned to it. Until 1949 this mine had been peopled by prisoners convicted of criminal activity. Restrictions on prisoners labeled criminals were not as strict as those imposed on political prisoners. They were able to communicate with family and friends and received packages on regular basis. Political prisoners were treated far more harshly. Not only did the administration restrict them to two letters a year and one parcel, but the criminal population despised them and made clear by both word and action that they had no use for these "fascists." In 1950 coal mine No. 8 was converted to a facility for political prisoners with all of the additional restrictions which that designation required. These restrictions included bars on all windows and a severely restricted diet for each prisoner based on his productivity. The area was surrounded by barbed wire and a so-called dead zone controlled by soldiers ordered to

²⁵⁶ *Vorkutos politinių kalinių atsiminimai* 1998, 26, 38.

²⁵⁷ *Latkovskis* II 2005, 23;



Pastor Gavėnis (left) with doctors V. and H. Sinkus and their children at their home in Vorkuta, 1955.



Pastor Gavėnis (left) and the Sinkus family await the appearance of the northern lights. Vorkuta, 1955.

kill anyone trying to escape.²⁵⁸ In the next several years a mixed population was introduced, so that by 1955 criminals outnumbered political prisoners. This was a part of the prison administration's plan to create conflict and repressive situations, which would give political prisoners little time to plan strikes and other demonstrations. On September 29, 1955 an open conflict between the criminal and political prisoners broke out. The administration announced movie night and gave all the front seats to the criminal prisoners. The political prisoners had to take their seats in back and began to complain because their view of the screen was obstructed. In response the criminal prisoners attacked them and the political prisoners fled to their barracks and locked the doors behind them for protection against the criminal prisoners who outnumbered them as much as ten to one. They soon discovered that the criminal prisoners had set their barracks on fire. When some of them tried to escape through the fence behind the barracks the guards shot them. Military police did not arrive to restore order for more than 30 minutes. They opened the dead zone and allowed the political prisoners to escape the fire and certain death.²⁵⁹

Pastor Gavėnis survived all the harshness of life in the Gulag. Eventually some restrictions were relaxed, at least to the extent that some prisoners were permitted to move freely within the compound and walk to Vorkuta, the town which was within the complex of camps. On March 24, 1956 the Supreme Council of the USSR in Moscow decided that the cases of some of the political prisoners should be reviewed. Among the cases to be reexamined were those whose crimes were economic, those related to malfeasance in office, and those whose crimes were purely political in nature. Gavėnis' case was reviewed, and on October 13 he was released for good behavior and because of his excellent work record. The tribunal stated that his sentence was commuted as of that day, and he was released to return to Lithuania.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ *Vorkutos politinių kalinių atsiminimai* 1998, 67-68, 208-210, 215-216.

²⁵⁹ *Burokas* 2008, 257-262.

²⁶⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 84.



Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis and his wife Monika (right) with daughters Salvinija, Daiva (left), and Dalė, 1969.

From album of Daiva Gavėnytė-Kriščiūnienė.



Pastor Gavėnis at Šakiai. September 1977.

Long before the MGB had characterized him as a man who was always smiling. His file stated that this was his most notable characteristic. And so it was. He would not allow himself to become disheartened; he would not give up hope. He would survive.

3.4 Jonas Mizaras – Open Protester against Soviet Occupation

Next to come to the special attention of the MGB was Pastor Mizaras of Kaunas. Born in 1901 and raised in the village of Iškonys in Biržai district. He studied in the gymnasium at Biržai, where he determined that he was called to the ministry of the Reformed Church. He pursued his theological studies at Edinburgh, Scotland in 1924, and in 1927 he was made assistant pastor in the Biržai parish. In 1930 he took up the ministry in Kėdainiai, but resigned after one year, stating the parish did not permit him the full exercise of his ministerial duties. He took a job as a customs inspector and was assigned to Virbalis, where he was given a responsibility of assessing the value of imported items and assessing custom's duties on them. In 1933 he moved to Kaunas and took a job as bookkeeper in the *Pieno centras* (Kaunas Dairy Center). He remained there until the arrival of the Red Army in 1944.²⁶¹ By that time he had already applied to the Lutheran consistory for admission to the clergy roster of the Lutheran Church. His formal application was filed with the consistory on January 17, 1943. After due consideration the consistory approved his application and called him to Kaunas, which was in dire need of a pastor.²⁶² The German pastors in the church had been



Pastor Jonas Mizaras, 1945.

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²⁶¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B. b. P-12309, 16-17, 23-24.

²⁶² September 15, 1943 consistory meeting minutes. - JKA *Gauti raštai* 1941-1944.

forced to repatriate in 1941, and the two who dared to return had to restrict their activities to German speaking Lutherans in Kėdainiai and Panevėžys. The large parish at Kaunas would be served only infrequently by Pastor Kalvanas and others. Clearly the need of the Kaunas parish was great. As the Red Army approached Kaunas the people of the city began to take flight. Mizaras with his family fled to Jurbarkas where he was given refuge in the parsonage by Pastor Gavėnis. They remained there until the danger was past.²⁶³

A shell-shocked and anxious Mizaras now began to show the affects of his ordeal. On July 9, 1945 Gavėnis wrote to Leijeris that Mizaras had been seriously ill. He appeared to be improving, but it was unclear when he would be able to resume his work. Gavėnis took on the responsibility of the Kaunas parish and sent his brother to serve there as organist and cantor. For the services of the Lord's Supper he himself would come to minister to large crowds of parishioners. On other Sundays Jonas Gavėnis, the pastor's brother, would lead the Service of the Word, and two days a week he would hold choir rehearsals and catechize the young people of the parish.²⁶⁴ By the autumn of 1945 Mizaras' health had improved to the point when he was able to again take up his work. He was, however, hardly up to it, as Pastor Kalvanas reported to Chairman Leijeris on December 18, 1945. His nerves were cracking. By the spring of 1946 he had once again recovered his health to the point that he could undertake the repair of the church building.²⁶⁵ On May 9, 1946 Mizaras had reported that, as a result of a flood, church property had been damaged. Even the fence around the building had washed away.²⁶⁶ On May 30 he wrote to Leijeris requesting that special of-

²⁶³ November 22, 1944 letter of Pastor Gavėnis to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA *Gauti raštai 1943-1946*.

²⁶⁴ July 9, 1945 letter of Pastor Gavėnis to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA *Gauti raštai 1943-1946*.

²⁶⁵ December 18, 1945 letter of Pastor Kalvanas to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA *Pasiųstų raštų nuorašai 1941-1943*.

²⁶⁶ May 9, 1946 letter of Pastor Mizaras to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA *Gauti raštai 1943-1946*.



Confirmation Day 1945 at Kaunas with pastors Mizaras and Gavėnis.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

ferings be taken in the congregations to enable the Kaunas church to install new window frames and windows, repair its roof, and the flashing around the steeple.²⁶⁷ In 1947 and 1948 first his father and then his mother died.²⁶⁸ The grief of their passing only added to his heavy mental and emotional load.

To add to an already heavy burden, the parish was saddled with an extraordinarily heavy tax bill of some 4,000 rubles a year, payable quarterly. The parish was already financially strapped with the expense of the repair work and the need to maintain its building. In his frustration Mizaras did something, which in the eyes of the government, was unpardonable. On June 26, 1948 he wrote a strong letter of complaint to Pušinis protesting that this tax bill was unfair and completely illegal. It was putting a burden not on the church

²⁶⁷ May 30, 1946 letter of Pastor Mizaras to Pastor Leijeris. - JKA *Išsiųsti raštai* 1935-1947.

²⁶⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B. b. P-12309, 16-17.



Pastoral identification card issued by Consistory Chairman Leijeris 1945.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

against the building. Finally, he stated that in the entire world the autonomy of the church is recognized and that the violation of this autonomy and the ejection of priests and other church workers from their households was illegal and must cease.²⁶⁹

In his own mind Mizaras could not help but compare the present oppression of the church by the state with the far more favorable conditions enjoyed in the days when Lithuania was an independent republic. All aspects of life seemed to have been better in former times.

On August 9, 1947 he started to put his thoughts on paper and completed his work on September 25, 1948.²⁷⁰ He began work on a Memorandum, entitled: *Lietuvių tautos ir Lietuvos Respublikos šio meto opiausieji klausimai* (*The most pressing questions facing the Lithuanian republic and nation*). In it he would compare every aspect of soviet life, economic, political, social, and religious, with life in Lithuania only a decade earlier. He would give a first hand picture of what

as an organization, but upon its faithful parishioners who, as soviet citizens, were already paying heavy taxes. He stated flatly that henceforth he intended to pay only what a normal soviet organization would be required to pay. Furthermore, he stated that he would pay only the land taxes, not taxes levied

²⁶⁹ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 26, 183-183ad.

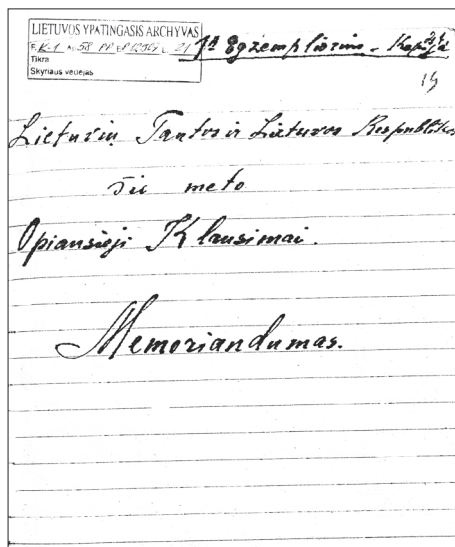
²⁷⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 PP, b. P-12309, 3-19, 21-56; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 54/24 - 54/62.

Lithuanians were thinking about their new government and the Sovietization of their nation.

It was clear to him that life under communism was far harsher than it had been in the days of independent Lithuania. The history of the last 20 years demonstrated that the Lithuanian nation could make its own way in the world without the so-called help of the soviets. He demonstrated from history and statistics that the nation had moved forward from tsarist days to become an independent state. Although he knew

nothing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, he could see that the Lithuanian delegation, under the leadership of Urbšys, minister of foreign affairs, had been summoned to Moscow simply to be informed that the Soviet Union was going to establish military bases on Lithuanian soil as a defense against German aggression. The Lithuanians and other Baltic States had been given no option but to sign the so-called voluntarily agreement allowing it. The Soviets used the German invasion of France as the occasion to insist that the Baltic States allow it to station as many troops in their lands as it wished. On June 15, 1940 the border had been crossed and all agreements were null and void.

Mizaras described the government of soviet Lithuania as a puppet regime, controlled from Moscow. Its only purpose was to annex Lithuania to the Soviet Union. The elections held a month later, on



Mizaras 1948 Memorandum
 "Most pressing questions facing the
 Lithuanian republic and nation."
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

June 14-15, were meaningless. Every aspect of the election had been controlled even to the point of stamping the passports to insure that everyone voted. On July 21 the new Lithuanian soviet parliament dutifully asked that Lithuania to be admitted to the Soviet Union. This request did not in any way represent the true feelings of the Lithuanian people. Deportations began immediately. He noted that deportations began on June 10, 12, and 15, 1941 cattle cars filled with prominent, loyal Lithuanian citizens began their eastward journey. The majority of the 55,000 who were sent perished. More deportations would have followed had not the war intervened. Under the leadership of the government-in-exile, the Lithuanian people declared their independence and, even before the Russians fled the approaching German armies, Lithuanian flags were flying in the cities. Unfortunately it became clear that the German invaders were no better than the soviets they had driven out. Lithuania would not be allowed to be independent. Few Lithuanians were willing to collaborate with the Nazis, who utterly disregarded any standards of human decency. When the soviet armies returned three years later the majority of the intelligentsia, who well remembered the barbaric communist captivity, left for the West. Lithuanian men were immediately conscripted into the Red Army and those who refused or attempted to flee were arrested. Many of them were shot. The communists sponsored cleansing of the nation left heaps of bodies of young men piled in public squares throughout the land. A single word of criticism could lead to immediate execution under the pretext that another malicious traitor had sought to flee his just fate. Many men were shot before the eyes of their wives and children. Those who managed to escape the Red Army banded together and gathered weapons to fight back. The result was robbery, plunder, and looting with peaceful Lithuanians caught in the middle between the partisans and the soviets. It was not until 1946-1947 had the soviet military was successful in its attempts to eliminate most of these partisan groups.

The soviets proceeded to ruin the Lithuanian economy. Quotas impossible to meet were established for farmers, and local executives committees used these quotas as a pretext to confiscate animals and property. The small farmers who were able to meet their quotas were given only 1/50 of the true value of what they had produced, while the government sold what it had taken from the farmers to city dwellers at an exorbitant price. The monthly pay of a worker was barely enough to feed him for one week. The pay was adequate only to supply people with simple bread and perhaps one or two meat meals in a month. To survive people had to sell their property and possessions. As a result many turned to thievery, and foremost among the thieves were the police.

Prosperous farmers were condemned as kulaks and parasites who lived off other people's labor. Those who had 30 hectares or more of land were deprived of it. Those who had from 20-30 hectares had to surrender part of their holdings, both in property and animals to the land commissions. Those who had from 10 to 20 hectares were heavily taxed. The government's real purpose was to put an end to all private ownership of farms and collectivize them. The first collective farms to be created out of larger holdings of private farmers produced little or nothing of any value, but were given substantial subsidies for their trouble. The collective farms, Mizaras stated, were classic lesson in how not to govern and how to insure failure. They showed how to effectively impoverish a nation. Fifty to seventy percent of the collective farm animals perished and the animals brought in to replace them fared little better. Those which survived the harsh winter wandered aimlessly through the meadows looking for something to eat. To prop up this abortive collectivization of the farms it was decided that they need pay no taxes for three years and that no quotas would be established for them.

Meanwhile soviet citizens seeking to escape starvation migrated to Lithuania where former manor houses were turned into russification centers with special Party privileges. In the cities a flood of Russian officials poured in commandeering the best living accom-

modations. It was little wonder that Lithuanian agencies and organizations soon began to speak Russian and present themselves as Russians. Lithuanian schools embarked on a program to glorify “Father” Joseph Stalin and “Uncle” Vladimir Lenin, the great saviors of the people without whom life would barely be possible. Only the older pupils could remember a time when they lived in freedom without these glorified “fathers” and “uncles” with their magical powers. They could remember a time when the school day began with prayer. Students in the upper grades and some of their teachers could see through the bleak, nihilist Marxist materialistic worldview of the communist propaganda. They recognized the irony in all this talk about the struggle of the masses and class warfare.

The free press was now enslaved, and no one could find anything worth reading except the few lines in the back of the newspaper about world news. What they saw on the front pages about life in the nation was totally contradicted by what they could see with their own eyes. In rural areas the newspapers served only the useful purpose of wrapping butter and bacon and other fatty pork products. It was clear that, in the name of the classless society, everyone in Lithuania had been reduced to serfdom.

The church was fiercely persecuted. The ancient Christian calendar was replaced by the modern soviet calendar with its special festivals. Christian name days were replaced by communist name days, names which sounded foreign to Lithuanian ears. Students and pupils were pressed to engage in voluntary unpaid work on Sundays to keep them from church. The churches remained open but attendance was strongly discouraged as unfaithfulness to the principles of the Party. Whenever possible the Party turned church buildings into sports halls, cinemas, grain storage facilities, dance halls, or garages. In addition many were demolished. The churches and their clergy were burdened with heavy taxes. As a result smaller parishes were unable to pay and their buildings were confiscated. Resistance would lead to prison. Religious education was forbidden and the publication of Christian literature ceased. Mizaras noted

that no such literature had been printed for more than three years and yet the Lithuanian people were not discouraged. They were a religious people and many continued to attend services.

It was clear to Mizaras, and he said as much, that the Lithuanian soviet government was illegal; it had been forced upon the people by foreigners and therefore must be removed and replaced by a truly democratic government. He stated that the elections on February 10, 1947 had been a cruel insult, a wicked caricature of a democratic election. Nowhere in a true democracy would there be only one candidate for each office. The one candidate, the soviets allowed, was handpicked by the Party and forced upon the people against their will. The country needed to return to its 1922 constitution and the freedoms which that constitution guaranteed. In fact, Mizaras stated, Article 17 of the Soviet Constitution guaranteed the right of any republic to freely leave the Soviet Union. No free election could ever be held as long as soviet troops remained in the country. They must be forced to leave so that genuinely free elections could be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. However, this would never be permitted by the soviets.²⁷¹

After the first great deportation in May 1948 Mizaras updated his Memorandum with additional facts and figures. What had begun as a small memorandum now grew into a 70 page document. He called it a *Priedas prie Memorandumo: Lietuvių tautos ir Lietuvos Respublikos šio metu opiausieji klausimai* (*Supplement to the Memorandum: The most pressing questions facing the Lithuanian Republic and nation*). It was dated November 3, 1948.

Mizaras now repeated his charge that Lithuania had been illegally annexed by the Soviet Union and that, as a result, Moscow had taken all control of political and economic life and enslaved the nation. It had established a Party dictatorship against which the people had no recourse. Farmers were driven of their land, their property was confiscated and they were sent to distant areas in far away eastern Russia. The deportations of May 20-25, 1948

²⁷¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 PP, b. P-12309, 3-19, 21-56; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B. b. P-12078, 54/24 - 54/62.

displaced tens of thousands of Lithuanians and far exceeded the earlier deportation in 1941. He complained that Moscow exploited the Lithuanian nation taking everything and giving back a mere 20 percent or less. More than a 100,000 small farms, less than 20 hectares, had ceased to operate. Increased pressure was put on the church. Parish houses were seized, priests were turned out of their dwelling places, many church buildings were closed, and all church land was made government property.

Mizaras pleaded that the dire situation of Lithuania and the other Baltic States was such that the United Nations and the Security Council must act, so that these independent nations would be restored and given membership in the UN. A commission must be established to examine and verify what he had written and act upon it. Furthermore the soviet government must make reparation for what they have done to the nation and its people. The illegal mass deportations must be denounced and the deportees allowed to return to their homelands. Baltic peoples living abroad must take up the cause of their homelands and insist that these independent nations be restored.²⁷²

It was Mizaras' hope that when this report was read in Vilnius and Moscow, interference in the life of the church would cease. Furthermore, the Lithuanian communist government would be forced to resign, opening the way for free elections with foreign observers present to insure that there was no interference by the army or the police.²⁷³

Mizaras wrote eight copies of his Memorandum by hand and stated that he intended to write two more. Copies were mailed to the Supreme Council of LSSR and the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov. He mailed them from the Kaunas central post office on November 3, 1948.²⁷⁴ Copies were also sent to the Secretary of State of the United States, the foreign minister of the United Kingdom, the foreign minister of France, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the World Organization of Friendship Through the Churches, the

²⁷² LYA f. K-1, a 58 PP, b. P-12309, 58-62.

²⁷³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 25-27.

²⁷⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 54/63.

World Council of Churches, the Papal Nuncio in Rome, and the foreign minister of the Kingdom of Sweden.²⁷⁵

The beginning of September 1948 Mizaras notified Commissioner Pušinis in Vilnius that he was directing his appeal to the United Nations and the World Council of Churches. He stated that his Memorandum plainly demonstrate how the Lithuanian churches were being persecuted by the soviets. Pušinis notified MGB Minister Kapralov on September 4.²⁷⁶ Clearly this was a matter for the MGB to deal with without delay.

Close watch would need to be kept on such a dissident.

Now Mizaras began to follow through on his plans. The copies addressed to the foreign minister of Soviet Union and the Supreme Council in Vilnius were sent and delivered, but Mizaras was not sure just how to get his work into the hands of the general secretary of the United Nations. He was unable to find his address, so on November 2 he sent a copy to the ambassador of the United States in Moscow with instructions that it be sent to America via diplomatic pouch for forwarding to the general secretary of the United Nations.²⁷⁷ He wrote:

LIETUVIŲ VYATINGAŠIS ARCHYVAS
F. K-1, a. 58 B, b. P-12309, 22.
T. 1, p. 16, 88.
1948 m. 9 mėn. 4 d.

Kauno Evangelizacijos
Parapijos Tėlobonas.
Kaunas.
Prieplaukės Nr. 45 Nr.
Kaptelicio m. 24 d. 1948 m.
Nr. 4.

Ministrai Tgaliatini
Religinis Kultū Mėkalams TSRS
Kiekviena, jora Ministrų Taryba
Vilniuje.
Ministrai Tgaliatini
Ponui Pušiniui.

Gerbiamas Poni Ministre!
Gyždamas prie mano tui
metu birželio mėnesio 25 dienos rašto Nr. 117
rugpjūčio mėnesio 21 dienos rašto Nr. 21
tū metu rugpjūčio mėnesio 7 dienos
rašto Nr. 3, praneša Poni Ministrui.

Atsakykite atsiliepi
naujojo Mėgalo de eor
naujojo a. 1948 m. 9 mėn.
16 dienos rašto Nr. 117
1948 m. 9 mėn. 16 d.

Defiant letter of Pastor Mizaras to
Commissioner Pušinis, 1948.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

²⁷⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 54/7; LYA f. K-1, a 58 PP, b. P-12309, 22.

²⁷⁶ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 16, 88.

²⁷⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 54/63.

*To the USA Ambassador
in Moscow
His Excellency
Ambassador Sir Smith*

Dear Sir,

*I have the honour in
passing to you the Memo-
randum -*

*The Urgent Questions
of Lithuanian Republic
and Lithuanian Nation
and the Supplement
to it.*

*You are respectfully
asked to pass it to
The General Secretary
of the United Nations
Organisation.*

If required.

Covering letter of the Memorandum
addressed to USA ambassador
in Moscow.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

"To the USA Ambassador
in Moscow, His Excellency
Ambassador Sir Smith.

Dear Sir, I have the
honor in passing to you the
Memorandum - The Urgent
Questions of Lithuanian Republic
and Lithuanian Nation and
the Supplement to it. You are
respectfully asked to pass it to the
General Secretary of the United
Nations Organization. If required
fuller appeal to complete
addresses in Memorandum,
duly signed by institutions in
Lithuania, may follow later.

I beg to remain.

Yours very respectfully,
Rev. Jonas Mizaras, the Min-
ister of Evangelical Church in
Kaunas. Kaunas, November
the 2nd, 1948."²⁷⁸

Neither his manuscript or the cover letter ever arrived. They
were intercepted by the MGB, as later reports made clear. On Nov-
ember 24 he sent a letter to the Commissioner Pušinis along with
his Memorandum stating that he had reported the whole scandal-
ous business of the seizure of the Kaunas parsonage to the Supreme
Council in Vilnius, the foreign minister of the USSR, the Secretary
General of the United Nations. He included a notation that he had
also put in his packet the contract between the Kaunas executive
committee and the Kaunas parish. He stated it would no longer
be needed, for soon Lithuania would again be a free nation.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 PP, b. P-12309, 20-20ad.

²⁷⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 PP, b. P-12309, 71.

Pušinis passed the note immediately to the MGB with a note written in the margin stating that Mizaras still harbored the notion that the nation would return to the good times of the Smetona era and independence.²⁸⁰

At this point apparently no one in Vilnius took Mizaras very seriously or regarded him a threat. They had managed to prevent his manuscript from leaving the country, but no further action was taken against him.

Now Mizaras decided it was time to arouse the intelligentsia of the nation. He thought that he could provoke a major discussion about the present quality of life in Lithuania, and that this would lead to action. He decided that his work must be made known to the state university in Kaunas. In earlier times it had been known as the University of Vytautas the Great. In December or early in January he decided to lay the whole matter before the university rector personally. He appeared in the rector's office on January 3, 1949 and was told that he would need to return another time because the rector was not available. Mizaras, however, was too energized to wait. He went to the office of the vice-rector. Upon reading his manuscript the vice-rector realized that this matter was too hot to handle and told Mizaras that he would need to see the rector. He again appeared at the rector's office on January 10, 1949. Again he was told that the rector was busy and was sent away. This time he decided to leave his manuscript with the secretary. He said he would return in two months after the rector had had time to examine it.²⁸¹

In order to inform church leaders of his work, he had approached Pastor Jašinskas, the vice-chairman of the Reformed consistory in Biržai, who scanned his Memorandum and without commenting on its contents said that he had written a great deal and that perhaps it was unwise for him to circulate it, since it might get him in trouble. Mizaras took back his manuscript and left. On January 2, 1949, while he was visiting family relations in the region, he left his

²⁸⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 PP, b. P-12309, 64.

²⁸¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 15-18, 36-37, 48-51.

suitcase and briefcase for a time with Jašinskas. In them were all of his correspondence with state officials and a copy of his Memorandum addressed to the foreign minister of the United Kingdom. It was his intention that Jašinskas should read the Memorandum. Some days later his wife came to pick up the Memorandum.²⁸²

Mizaras decided that he must also inform Chairman Leijeris about this gift he was offering for the benefit of the Lithuanian churches. Leijeris had been aware as early as September that all was not well with Mizaras, and he suspected that he was up to something which would involve state agencies. On September 1 he asked Gavėnis to serve as assistant administrator in Kaunas in order to keep an eye on him.²⁸³ On November 10 matters came to a head. Mizaras informed Leijeris that he had written his Memorandum and delivered it to the representatives of the state.²⁸⁴ Two days later, on November 12, a horrified Leijeris wrote a quick note reprimanding him and saying that what he had done was not within the authority of a single individual. Only the consistory could speak on behalf of the church. He asked him to send a full copy of his Memorandum at once.²⁸⁵ That same day a highly agitated Leijeris sent two more letters to Mizaras. In the first he requested that he send the registration documents of the Kaunas parish, along with a full accounting of the parish's tax bill and a description of all the repair work than had been done and its cost, along with the name and address of the parish bookkeeper responsible for the church funds.²⁸⁶ In the second letter he sought to forestall any personal visit from Mizaras by stating that under no circumstances was he to come to Leijeris, for it would be a waist of money.²⁸⁷

²⁸² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 15-18, 36-37, 48-51.

²⁸³ November 26, 1948 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Pastor Kalvanas. – JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

²⁸⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 76/14.

²⁸⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 76/14.

²⁸⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 76/15.

²⁸⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 76/17.

It was clear to Leijeris that Mizaras was no longer an asset to the Kaunas parish. On November 16 he wrote to Kalvanas that he had met that day with the commissioner and found out that the Kaunas parish was not even registered. This was a matter that needed to be taken care off immediately. He asked that this task be assigned to Gavėnis for immediate action.²⁸⁸ On November 26, 1948 Leijeris wrote a stern letter to Mizaras, insisting that beginning on December 1 he was to take a vacation for the sake of his health and after that he was not, without specific permission

from him, to hold any services.²⁸⁹ He immediately sent off two other letters that same day, one to the council of the Kaunas parish and the other to Pastor Kalvanas. He informed the parish council that it was now clear that Mizaras' health had deteriorated to the point where he could no longer effectively serve. Accordingly, the Kaunas parish was now being put under the administrative leadership of Pastor Kalvanas in Tauragė.²⁹⁰ In the second letter he apologized to Kalvanas for taking this action without having consulted him. The situation was both complicated and critical and that there was



Pastor Mizaras shortly
before his arrest.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

²⁸⁸ November 16, 1948 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

²⁸⁹ November 26, 1948 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Pastor Mizaras. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

²⁹⁰ November 26, 1948 letter of Pastor Leijeris to the Kaunas parish council - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

really no option but that he take over as administrator. Mizaras was simply too sick to go on. He was sure that Pastor Kalvanas would be happy to share the load and that he himself would do anything he could to be of assistance. "I know, dear colleague, that you are already overburdened with too many duties, but I beg you not to reject this urgent request."²⁹¹

Although Kalvanas knew that it would be difficult to administer the Kaunas parish from Tauragė, 130 kilometers away, he accepted the appointment. In Tauragė he already had the largest parish with services every Sunday. In addition he had the burden of all the other pastorless parishes in that region. Furthermore the situation in Kaunas was complicated. The Reformed Church had been closed, and the Kaunas Lutherans were permitting the Reformed congregation the use of their building. There were in effect two different church organizations under one roof. On December 3 he wrote to Jašinskas suggesting that they coordinate services so that he would come once every two months and Jašinskas would hold services in the month between.²⁹²

Contrary to his specific instructions, Mizaras arrived at Leijeris' door on December 8, 1948. Leijeris was not at home, but a women physician who boarded in the parsonage permitted him to stay the night. The next morning he appeared in Leijeris' office, and after a short interview it became clear to Leijeris that Mizaras had paid no attention to any of his directives.²⁹³ That same day Leijeris informed the parish council in Kaunas that this situation could not continue. Pastor Kalvanas alone was in charge; he was to be the liturgist at all services. Pastor Mizaras was relieved of all duties.²⁹⁴ Leijeris still needed to write to Mizaras. On December 28 he sent a letter of reprimand for not following his directions to send him the Memorandum and turn

²⁹¹ November 26, 1948 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

²⁹² December 3, 1948 letter of Pastor Kalvanas to Pastor Jašinskas. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

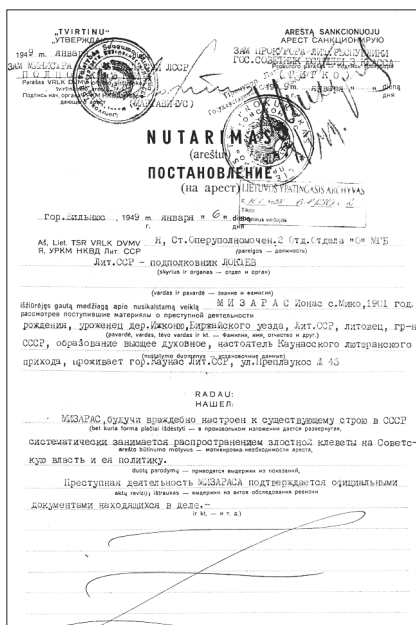
²⁹³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 76/14; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 39-41.

²⁹⁴ December 9, 1948 letter of Pastor Leijeris to the Kaunas parish council - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

the ministry over to Pastor Kalvanas. He demanded that, for the sake of his own health and his continued service, he stop holding services and relinquish all administrative duties to Pastor Kalvanas. His failure to do so could result in his being prohibited from the performance of any priestly duties in the Lutheran Church.²⁹⁵

Leijeris again expressed his thanks to Pastor Kalvanas for taking on the difficult job at Kaunas. On January 15, 1949 he wrote that he hoped now the situation would normalize and the whole unfortunate business Mizaras had stirred up would blow over.²⁹⁶

It was not until January 6, 1949 that MGB officials decided the time had come to take decisive action against Mizaras. Lieutenant Colonel Loktev of the "O" branch issued an arrest warrant stating that Mizaras was hopelessly opposed to the government and was in contravention of Article 58-10. He was systematically spreading wicked slanders against the government of the Soviet Union and its policies. The orderly process of investigating requires his detention.²⁹⁷ No action on the warrant was taken until January 16, when Mizaras was taken into custody in his hometown, the village of Lapakrita at Nemunėlio Radviliškis area, and sent to Vilnius.



Arrest warrant for Pastor Mizaras.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

²⁹⁵ December 28, 1948 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Pastor Mizaras. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*.

²⁹⁶ January 15, 1949 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950*; JKA *Pasiųstų raštų nuorašai 1941-1943*.

²⁹⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 3.

РЕВИЗИЯ
1992 - 1993 г.

РЕВИЗИЯ
1964-1966 гг.
10

Министерство Государственной безопасности

Секретная Чистое

ТЕМ.УЧЕТ
1967-1963 г.

АРХИВ

РЕВИЗИЯ
1976 - 1977 гг.

ДЕЛО № 15189

Полное наименование документа
№ 15189

По обвинению *Мизарашвили*

Гонимая сина Шиколова

в прест. предум. ст.157 УК РСФСР

Начато *16. Авгста* 1918 г. В *2* томе

Окончено *104* г. Том *II*

Предмета не входящего в производство следственных дел, а также выходя из ареста и в другие органы или органы МГБ, хотя бы и временно, представляется исключительно через:

Директор МГБ Дин Джан ССР

К делу должны быть приложены документы:
з-е 11133

в (или) копии ССР № 00359 от 10 марта 1939 года.

Переданных архиву МГБ СССР

П-216249

Арх. №

Сдано в архив " " 194 г.

Рассмотрено в Стеласе *11133*

П-12309 - 111

Case file on Pastor Mizaras.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

Lithuanians who had suffered during the soviet occupation. When asked what anti-soviet propaganda he had produced and spread, he replied that he had produced no propaganda. He had simply told the truth in the Memorandum which he freely shared with high soviet officials.²⁹⁹

The second interrogation began at 12 noon on January 29 and lasted only two hours. This was very unusual, because the NKGB greatly favored interrogating detainees in the middle of the night when they were physically tired and not mentally alert. Napping during the day was of course prohibited. In the case of Mizaras it was not necessary to follow the usual procedure, because he was very open and direct in his answers and made no attempt to hide

His home was immediately searched for incriminating materials, but nothing was found.²⁹⁸

Mizaras was put in a cell with several other prisoners and there he sat for 11 days. At 11 PM on January 27 he was interrogated for 4 hours by Captain Golitsyn. Everything that he was asked he freely answered, blissfully unaware of the consequences. He was asked about what organizations he supported during the Nazi occupation. He stated he had supported and raised funds for *Mutual Support*, which had gathered clothing and money for

²⁹⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 10.

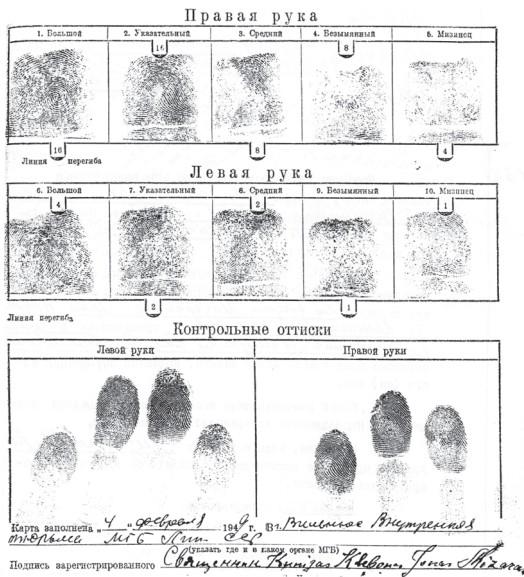
²⁹⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 15-18.

anything. He was asked whether he understood the accusation against him under Article 58-10.³⁰⁰ He replied that the whole matter was quite unclear to him. The interrogator pressed the matter, explaining the article and showing how Mizaras actions contravened it. Mizaras stated "I wrote what I was thinking and shared it with high officials and in my report I criticized the manner by which the communist government took control of our country, as well as some of its decisions and the decision of the Party, but these are not simply my opinion. This is the opinion of the whole Lithuanian nation." He was asked whether he recognized that his Memorandum was slanderous, and he replied that, from the standpoint of the soviet government it was anti-soviet, but from his point of view it was simply the truth. That was all the MGB needed. That same day the bill of indictment was written up stating that he was guilty of anti-soviet agitation and the writing and distribution of anti-soviet materials.³⁰¹

Collaborating evidence was then gathered to support the indictment. Mizaras was put in a cell with informants who carefully plied him for incriminating statements. The reports were examined on February 4 and agent "S," a collaborative cellmate, stated that Mizaras had expressed some surprise at his arrest. He had thought it would come sometime in the spring, rather than in January. He declared that there was no justice in the Soviet Union. Although Soviet Foreign Minister Andrej Vyshinskij (Rus. Андрей Вышинский) had claimed before the UN that there was freedom of the press and even signed documents asserting that, the fact was that no religious literature was allowed to be printed in Lithuania and the government had strict control over all newspapers and magazines. Agent "S" said Mizaras asserted that when the western nations had settled the German question, they would undoubtedly turn their attention to the Soviet Union, and that as a result the Russians would be forced to leave the Baltic states and to clean up their own mess at home. If

³⁰⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 19.

³⁰¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 20-21.



Fingerprint file of Pastor Mizaras.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

the matter could not be settled peacefully there would be war. In any case the soviet regime would collapse. He also spoke against the collective farms, saying that they left the workers penniless and brought them only poverty as could easily be seen.³⁰²

In order to try to implicate him in other activities, such as association with foreign organizations, an additional

interrogation was held on February 10, which lasted from 9:00 PM until midnight. Mizaras was asked about his foreign correspondence. He answered he had gotten several letters from the West, not addressed to him personally, but to the pastor of the Kaunas parish whoever he might be. One was from the General Superintendent of Kurmark in Germany, asking whether any of his old comrades in Lithuania were still around. Mizaras said he did not know the man or anyone whom he might have known. He knew only that the superintendent had served in the Klaipėda region before WWII.³⁰³

Again on February 21 Mizaras was interrogated. This time the session started at noon and lasted until 5 PM. Mizaras was asked who had incited him to write his anti-soviet propaganda. He stated that it was neither anti-soviet nor propaganda. It had been the

³⁰² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 77/2 – 77/7.

³⁰³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 22-24.

soviets themselves that had incited him to write, because of the persecution of the church and the mass deportation that had taken place in May 1948. At that time several families of his Kaunas parish had been taken from their homes and sent to Siberia. The interrogator immediately contradicted him. Those who had been sent to Siberia were criminals, their collaborators, and their families. They had been implicated because of their support of the anti-soviet underground and their punishment was wholly justifiable. Mizaras replied: "They were not anti-soviet agitators involved in the underground. They were strong, resourceful farmers whose success the communist could not tolerate." When asked what had been his purpose in writing his Memorandum, he responded that he wanted the soviets to stop interfering in church affairs and he wanted the Lithuanian communist government to resign and allow free elections with foreign observers and with candidates from many parties, and without interference from the Communist Party or the military. He based all this on the Soviet Constitution itself because it promised that any member state could decide for itself whether to stay or leave and by statements made by the Soviet Union at an international conference. He was then asked whether other Lutheran pastors had become involved with him, whether they made plans together to write the document or to implement their suggestions. He answered that he had no spare time to share his thoughts or to discuss any of these matters with them. He had given the Memorandum to Leijeris, but Leijeris did not read it - at least not in his presence.³⁰⁴

In the case of Pastor Mizaras the MGB could show how they had thoroughly examined his case before determining that he was in fact guilty of crimes against the people worthy of lengthy incarceration. Other purposes were also served. Since it was clear that Mizaras was suffering from some disability which had affected his judgment and was almost effusive in his answers to the questions put to him, it needed to be determined what involvement others may have had in the preparation of his Memorandum, who they were, and what

³⁰⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 25-27.

contacts he had established with the West, particularly officials in the USA and UK occupied territories in Germany. What was he not telling them? Since he was speaking so freely, might he not in fact be hiding the truth behind the blizzard of words meant to mislead his interrogators. The “masters” of the human psyche overlooked the fact that he might in fact be just a simple soul incapable telling anything but the truth.

Trying to uncover yet more information which would be of value to the MGB, Captain Golitsyn decided on March 9, 1949 that the term of detention of Pastor Mizaras must be extended. They must determine who were his collaborators in the Lutheran and Reformed Churches, who were his contacts in the West, and what individuals in nationalistic organizations were actively involved in attempting to overthrow the peoples’ government. Furthermore, they must track down that unknown secretary at the university who received and registered Mizaras’ document. Since these “upholders” of Lithuania in the Vilnius MGB could neither read nor speak Lithuanian, they must find a translator who could tell them in minute detail what his documents said, so that they could determine what it really meant. Not the least of their concerns was to show their superiors how seriously they took this matter and how hard they were working to unravel the secrets that this clever Mizaras was hiding.³⁰⁵

They still were concerned about his involvement with the *Mutual Support* organization for Lithuanians and Germans who had suffered at the hands of the Bolsheviks in 1940-1941. In the March 12 interrogation Mizaras stated that he had collected more than two thousands *deutschmarks* by going from house to house to present his appeal. He had twice received letters of commendation from the Lithuanian General Commissar in Kaunas. Was he unaware, they asked, that he was in fact working against the interests of the people and the Soviet Union, that these funds were to be used to support the German army and those who fought against the interests of the

³⁰⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 48-51.

Soviet Union? Mizaras replied that he heard those rumors but he had dismissed them.³⁰⁶

Why, they asked him on March 15, had he sent to Commissioner Pušinis in Vilnius an incomplete contract for the rental of the Kaunas parish church? He replied that it was, and still is, his opinion that the people's executive committee had no right to take the church's property and then graciously allow the church to use its own building under strict regulations. This was an improper interference in the internal operation of the church. He was asked to explain the comment he made in the letter to the commissioner on November 24, that a contract was not needed since Lithuania would soon be free and would no longer be a part of the Soviet Union. They asked if he was advocating the return of Lithuania to capitalist domination and exploitation. After thinking about it a moment Mizaras replied that "yes," he expected that Lithuania would soon regain its freedom and independence. Did not Mizaras realize, his interrogator asked, that everyone knows the Soviet Union represents the highest expression of democracy in all the world? What sort of democracy could he expect from the West? Mizaras replied that his vision was that of the early days of Lithuanian independence after WWI before President Smetona's takeover of the government in 1927. Did he not realize that his Memorandum was a slander against the Soviet Union? Mizaras responded that he had carefully thought through everything he had written and had decided that it in no way misrepresented the soviet government. It was nothing but the truth, and he would gladly take responsibility for every word.³⁰⁷

Interrogations on March 17 and March 29 revealed nothing further. The same questions were asked again and again, and Mizaras always answered simply and consistently.³⁰⁸ On March 30 attention turned to the fact that from 1924 to 1927 he had studied in Edinburgh. The interrogators wondered what subversive contacts

³⁰⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 28-30.

³⁰⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 31-32.

³⁰⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 33-34, 36-37.

he had made while he was there? Who had he associated with? Had he been given an English passport? What were the sources of his funds during his time abroad? What assignments had he been given to carry out when he returned to Lithuania? His answers, of course, told them nothing.³⁰⁹ On April 1 he was asked on what occasions had he preached anti-soviet sermons? He replied that from time to time he would exhort the people to pray that their life in Lithuania might become better and that those who had been banished to the depths of the Soviet Union might be permitted to return. Later that day he was again interrogated. This time he was asked about his contacts with people who had returned to Lithuania from the American and British zones in Germany. He stated that he knew of some parishioners who had contact with some persons who had come back. They mentioned that they had had a good life there, and that they had received welfare support from the Americans and the British. None of them had reported that they had ever heard anti-soviet propaganda in the West. In fact, he said, the only report he had ever heard of it was in the soviet press itself. When asked what he knew about the Committee in Germany for the Baltic States, he replied that he knew of it only from an article he had read of it in *Pravda*. It was evident that further interrogation would be futile. It was decided that the evidence they had already collected was all they were going to get. It was time to close the case and to turn their attention to other matters.³¹⁰

Their evidence was laid before Mizaras as clear proof of his guilt. He had written a slanderous Memorandum, he attempted to communicate with the American ambassador in Moscow, and he had raised money for a committee working against the interests of the Soviet Union.³¹¹ On that same day, April 1, 1949 an additional notation was attached to his file noting that Jašinskas in Biržai had been given the Memorandum, and, although he had it in his posses-

³⁰⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 42-43.

³¹⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 44-47.

³¹¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 52-53.

sion only briefly, he had failed to report it. It was also noted that Chairman Leijeris had received the document and kept it without reporting it to the authorities.³¹²

On April 2 Mizaras was asked to examine and sign off on his file and to add anything which he thought might be relevant to the case.³¹³ Mean-

while the search for the unknown university secretary proceeded. The MGB knew that there were several secretaries in the rector's office but they had not yet been able to track down the guilty party.³¹⁴

On April 5 the obligatory medical examination was conducted and Mizaras was declared fit for physical labor. Apparently there were no inquiries into his psychological and emotional states.³¹⁵ On April 6 he was brought before the MGB examiners and read the bill of indictment against him. The whole long litany of his crimes was recited. Particular note was taken of his defeatist attitude, which had become clear in his letter to Pušinis. The greatest crime of all was his Memorandum, which advocated the overthrow of the soviet government in Lithuania. His file was then sent to Moscow with notations indicating that he was guilty of gross violations of Article 58-10, for the punishment of which they recommended that he be imprisoned for 10 years.³¹⁶ A *Special Board* at the MGB head-

Выписка из протокола № 41	
Особого Совещания при Министре Государственной Безопасности Союза ССР	
от 14 мая 1949 г.	
СЛУШАЛИ	ПОСТАНОВИЛИ
71. Доло №-15439 МРБ Литовской ССР, по обвин. МИЗАРАС Ионаса с. Миколае, 1901 г. р., г.р. Литовской ССР, литовца, гр. СССР.	МИЗАРАС Ионаса с. Миколае за изготовление и распространение антисоветского клеветнического документа заключить в исправительно-трудовой лагерь сроком на 10 лет, считая срок с 16 января 1949 г.
Совин. по ст. 58-10 ч. II УК РСФСР.	

Нач. Секретариата Особого Совещания

Verdict announcement of the Moscow
"Special Board."

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

³¹² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 54-55.

³¹³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 56.

³¹⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 77/1.

³¹⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 57.

³¹⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 58-60.

quarters in Moscow on May 14 declared him guilty on all counts and sentenced him be sent to a corrective labor camp for 10 years.³¹⁷ The sentence was not executed until the MGB branch “A” chief received an order of execution on June 23, stating that Mizaras was to be sent to the labor camp *Ozernyj lager*.³¹⁸

Some concern was later raised about the fact that no inventory of his property had been taken when he was arrested, and that nothing was mentioned about the seizure of his property when he was sentenced in Moscow. In order to cover what seemed to be a glaring omission of standard procedure, the MGB chief at Nemunėlio Radviliškis was informed on July 7, 1949 that, since his property had not been seized, all mention of it should be stricken from the arrest record.³¹⁹ Apparently some question about the matter still remained, and further inquiries had to be made as to why the property had not been taken. The matter was finally laid to rest in a May 17, 1950 report. The answer to this gnawing question had at last been found. His property had not been seized because he had no property to seize!³²⁰

Life at *Ozernyj lager* was very harsh and difficult. Rauskinas served his sentence in the same Gulag, but it was such a large complex of camps that it is unlikely they ever met each other. He was concerned about his own personal situation but did not close his eyes to the plight of the believers in Lithuania. In a July 1, 1950 letter to the chairman of the Supreme Council in Vilnius, with copies to the ministers of the MVD and MGB, Mizaras stated that, since there was such an urgent need for pastors in Lithuania, they should review his file in short order and send him the needed documents, so that he might return to active ministerial service in his homeland.³²¹ Nothing came of it. Formal rejection of the request was sent on October 31, 1950 from Major Koval (Rus. Ковал) of the “A” branch in

³¹⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 62-63.

³¹⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 64.

³¹⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12309, 21.

³²⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 T, b. P-12309, 3.

³²¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12309, 42ad.

Vilnius to Captain Civilev (Rus. Цивилев), chief of the special corrective camp No 7 *Ozernyj lager*, Irkutsk region, Tajshet district.³²²

Pastor Mizaras survived in the gulag less than 12 full months. He died there on June 25, 1951. According to the record of the 3 doctors who attended him, he had been admitted to the camp hospital on May 24 suffering from a number of medical problems. His death certificate stated that the cause of death was cardiac insufficiency and a streptococcus infection.³²³ His passport was burned on October 10, 1954, as though the soviets considered him still alive and a prisoner who needed to be stripped of his rights.³²⁴

No news of his death was sent to Lithuania. On May 10, 1957 Pastor Jašinskas wrote to Pastor Kalvanas stating he had met with Mrs. Emilija Mizarienė who told him that she had no information concerning his death, and that she had met someone who had come from the Siberia who said that he was still alive. Jašinskas suggested that since there was no reliable information concerning his death, no mention of it should be made in the annual calendar. It would appear that the communists, whom he frustrated so completely during his life, could not even properly handle the report of his death.³²⁵

³²² LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12309, 34.

³²³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 65.

³²⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12309, 42ad.

³²⁵ May 10, 1957 letter of Pastor Jašinskas to Pastor Kalvanas. – JKA *Papildomi dokumentai*.

3.5 Erikas Leijeris – Bold Witness and Uncompromising Leader



Pastor Erikas Leijeris, c. 1945.

Pastor Erikas Leijeris, chairman of the consistory from 1941 to 1949, was the next to be detained for supposed anti-soviet activities.

Erikas Leijeris, a native Lithuanian, was born on January 18, 1906 in Biržai and there he received his schooling. He studied in the Faculty of Evangelical Theology in Kaunas and graduated in 1929.³²⁶ He was ordained to the holy ministry in Žeimelis parish on June 9, 1929³²⁷ and continued to serve there until his arrest 20 years later. In 1929 the Latvian synod of the Lithuanian church elected

Leijeris, a young graduate, as a member of the consistory representing the Latvian ethnic group.³²⁸ In 1933 the Latvian synod named him their senior pastor, and he served as representative of that group in the consistory.³²⁹ In the church's internal conflict between Pastor Gaigalaitis and the patriotic organization *Pagalba* he sided with the Pagalbians and sought to curtail German influence in the Lithuanian church. After Gaigalaitis was removed from the consistory by President Smetona his place as chairman was taken

³²⁶ LCVA f. 631, a 12, b. 400, 3.

³²⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 53/3 – 53/3ad.

³²⁸ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 760, 212.

³²⁹ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 760, 212.

by Leijeris' Latvian Synod colleague Mr. Liudas Bandrevičius.³³⁰ On April 23, 1936 both Bandrevičius and he resigned from the consistory in protest when the Lithuanian government outlawed and disbanded *Pagalba*.³³¹ However he remained senior pastor of the Latvian group until 1938.³³² Leijeris, who could be described as both socially gregarious and forthright, continued to serve as pastor in Žeimelis and was subsequently awarded membership in the Order of Grand Duke Gediminas Fourth Grade and received the appropriate decorative medal, called the *Star of Šauliai*.³³³

When repatriation was announced and most Lutheran pastors left the country, Leijeris decided to remain. On January 31, 1941 the old consistory held its last meeting and Leijeris was named to membership in the new consistory. He was designated senior clergyman of the whole Lithuanian Lutheran Church.³³⁴ When the new consistory, under the leadership of its president Prof. Dr. Otas Stanaitis, showed itself to be ineffectual, Leijeris called a special meeting on April 28, 1941 at which he was elected to succeed him.³³⁵ From that point on he was, without question, the leading Lutheran pastor in the country. The Nazis forbade German services and warned German speaking Lithuanians that they must not attend Lithuanian services. However, the Lithuanian congregations were permitted to continue their work. Although Leijeris remained as chairman of the consistory, there was no hint of collaboration between him and the occupying government.

³³⁰ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 713, 80, 81.

³³¹ LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 755, 149.

³³² LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 760, 212.

³³³ *Juška* 1997, 238.

³³⁴ The January 31, 1941 Act of Formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Consistory in Lithuanian SSR (Lietuvos TSR Evangelikų liuteronų Konsistorijos sudarymo aktas). - KA LELB *Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1935-1941*, 355-357.

³³⁵ The April 28, 1941 Act of Formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Consistory in Lithuanian SSR (Lietuvos TSR Evangelikų liuteronų Konsistorijos sudarymo aktas). - JKA *Gauti raštai 1941-1944*.



Pastor Leijeris at his desk. May 1948.

Tensions quickly developed however, when the Red Army returned and Leijeris soon came to the attention of the MGB. He was as fully suspect as the Roman Catholic bishops of being under influences which the Party did not know and could not control. The Roman Catholic bishops had the advantage of a strong national organization which was internally cohesive and well respected by the citizens. At least for a time they were in some measure able to resist the anti-religious programs of the Party and even openly opposed edicts from the commissioner. As a result all but one of the Roman Catholic bishops

were arrested between 1945-1947.

Leijeris was in a different position. The Lutheran Church was small; it was widely suspected as being German in its mentality and its sympathies. As a result Leijeris had to move cautiously. He could not openly oppose anti-religious policies of the Party, as the Roman bishops had tried to do, and he could look for little support when pressed by local executive committees. The church was in an unenviable position of having to defend its loyalty to the Lithuanian people and of having to convince the atheistic state that, though not really enthusiastic, the Lutherans were at least not disloyal, nor did they openly support rebellion against communist rules.

Never did Leijeris follow the example of Lutheran bishops and higher officials in other Baltic states by publicly pledging his com-

plete solidarity with the regime. No one could ever accuse him of being a collaborator. When he met with public officials it was to pursue the interests of the church according to the terms of Soviet Constitution. He did not advise his pastors and congregations to openly oppose governmental restrictions, nor did he do so himself. He tried to maneuver within the law to keep the churches open and the pastors free to pursue their duties. When the necessity of registering the parishes was first ordered, he initially advised parishes and clergy against it, but when it soon became clear what might be the results of failure to register, he then counseled both congregations and clergy to comply. His opposition to the regime was not open and dramatic, but quiet and diplomatic.³³⁶



Pastor Leijeris in the Šiauliai city hospital. August 1935.

Still a man in his position could hardly avoid close scrutiny from the NKGB, which was looking for an opportune moment to act against him. When local churches were pressured or otherwise attacked he was quick to register official complaints to the highest communist authorities, so too when many Lutherans were deported as German sympathizers in 1945, he did not hesitate to protest.³³⁷ This identified him immediately as a man who might become a problem for the regime, a man to be watched.

³³⁶ July 10, 1946 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950; JKA Išsiųsti raštai 1935-1947*.

³³⁷ September 5, 1945 letter of Pastor Leijeris to the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the LSSR. - LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 6, 111; JKA *Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950; JKA Išsiųsti raštai 1935-1947*.

Pastor Kalvanas characterized him as bold, determined, and strong, always ready to go to the defense of his churches. This view of him was shared by his fellow clergy. Kalvanas thought of him as a man who would not compromise but would instead pursue each matter to its conclusion.³³⁸

His compassion and bravery were demonstrated by the course of action that he took in the case of Major-General Stasys Raštikis. Raštikis had been named Chief of the General Staff in 1934. From 1935 to 1940 he served as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and in 1938 he served temporarily as Minister of National Defense. His wife Elena was the daughter of President Antanas Smetona's brother, Motiejus. When the communists invaded both president Smetona and General Stasys Raštikis fled the country. It did not occur to the general that the communists would take reprisals against his family. However they did. They placed his wife in the Kaunas prison for interrogation so that they could hunt him down. They got nothing out of her. While she was in prison her parents took her children into their home. Next the communists moved against the family. The grandfather of the girls was guilty of the crime of being the brother of President Smetona - in the eyes of the a punishable offence. To punish Raštikis they deported his parents-in-law and his three daughters: 1 year old Alda, 5 year old Elena, and Laima, age 11. On the first day of the German invasion the citizens of Kaunas rebelled against the communists and opened the prison doors. Mrs. Raštikienė fled. With the country in German hands Raštikis was free to return and be reunited with his wife. In Siberia things did not go well for his parents-in-law and children. Within a few months little Alda died, and one year later, grandfather Motiejus joined her in death. When the Red Army returned in 1944 Raštikis and his wife again fled the country for safety in Germany. The communists were still determined to track him down. They decided that the best way to accomplish this was to bring his two surviving daughters back to Lithuania with their grandmother. There they would be forced

³³⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 71-76.

to write plaintive letters to their parents, pleading with them to return so that the family could be reunited. The plan did not work. The general and his wife could easily see through this thinly disguised attempt to bring

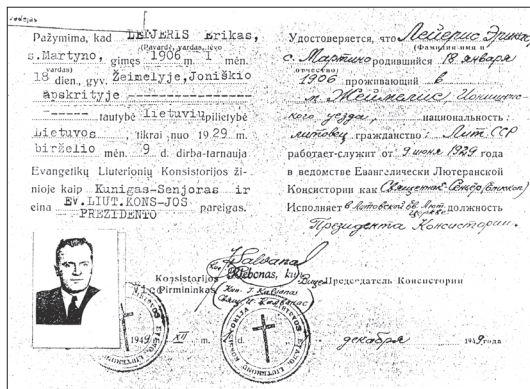


"Now I am Meilutė Nerytė," December 5, 1949.
Photo furnished by Birutė Šabanaitė. From: KA.

them back for punishment. The communists decided that the girls must be sent back to Siberia with their grandmother, but before they could act on their decision the girls disappeared without a trace. Laima was taken by friends to a secret location in the Akmenė region in Samogitia. Elena was taken into Pastor Leijeris' household in Žeimelis where she lived under an assumed name. Elena Raštikytė now became Meilutė Nerytė. In the Leijeris household the pastor taught this young fugitive, who had lived over half her life in Siberia, how to live like a normal Lithuanian child. He schooled her in the Lithuanian language, mathematics, and history, and twice a week a local piano teacher would come to teach her music. She remained in the household until Leijeris was taken into custody. The communists never learned of his crime of harboring a fugitive.³³⁹ This alone would have been conclusive proof of his anti-revolutionary activities.

Leijeris expected that he might be arrested at any moment. He was widely respected, not only in the church, but in the greater Lithuanian

³³⁹ *Priespaudos metu kunigo-superintendento Eriko Leijerio išgelbėtos iš tremties Meilutės Marijos Raštikytės-Alksnienės pasakojimas.* - Lietuvos Evangelikų Liuteronų Bažnyčios Šiaurės Lietuvos latviškai kalbančių parapijų 2003 metų Metraštis ir 2004 metų Kalendorius. Redaktorius ir sudarytojas Erikas Laiconas. - KA Eriko Laicono rašytinis palikimas.



Clergy certificate of Pastor Leijeris issued by
Pastor Kalvanas, 1949.

community, where he was known as an upright and courageous patriotic Lithuanian. In meetings he was accustomed always to remind pastors that should they have difficulties with the MGB, they should purposely point the finger of blame at him, as Pastor Kalvanas

later recalled. He added that if, he should be arrested he would never, under any circumstances, implicate anyone else. He would instead shoulder the entire responsibility for his actions.³⁴⁰

Leijeris came to the attention of the MGB almost immediately after the soviet takeover. He was named, along with 20 other prominent, Lithuanians as a signer of the November 8, 1941 proclamation "Tėvynainiai" ("Compatriots"), issued by the *Savitarpio Pagalba* (Mutual Support) organization, which had been created in 1941 to aid those who had been victimized by the communists following their 1940 invasion.³⁴¹ Because he did not appear to be actively involved in opposing the communist regime at present, the MGB did not take him into custody, but did keep an eye on him. As a result of the Mizaras affair, Leijeris came under closer scrutiny. In the interrogation of Mizaras it was revealed that he had given Leijeris a copy of his manuscript. Leijeris had not brought this manuscript of subversive material to the immediate attention of the MGB as

³⁴⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 71-76.

³⁴¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 54/2 – 54/5; October 19, 1941 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Pastor Rauskinas. – APA Lietuvos Ev.-lut. Baznīcas Konsistorijos raksti par 1933. gadu. 1941-1944 g.

required by law. Now the question arose, "What other anti-subversive laws had he violated?" Was it not possible that he himself was involved in subversive activities and had confiscated the manuscript to try to prevent any action which might turn the attention of the MGB to the church and to himself? When it was revealed that Leijeris had taken a copy of the manuscript, the MGB decided on March 9, 1949 to interview him for information to substantiate their charges against Mizaras.³⁴² On April 1 Captain Golicyn ordered that a report of the Mizaras interrogation should be attached to Leijeris' file since he had neither given the manuscript back to Mizaras, or reported in to the MGB.³⁴³

On April 27 Leijeris was interviewed by Joniškis MGB Lieutenant Lapienkov (Rus. Лапенков). He was asked about the circumstances which surrounded his taking possession of Mizaras' Memorandum. He stated in reply that in August or September Mizaras had informed him that he had written a Memorandum to the government on behalf of the church. At that time Leijeris told him that only the consistory had such an authority and he requested that he send him a copy of his Memorandum at once. When it did not come, he

“0” е/с осдб

МГБ Литовской ССР

ОТДЕЛ

ЛЕЙТЕРИС ЯНИШКАС

НАБЛЮДАТЕЛЬНОЕ ДЕЛО № 17573

По общ. Лейтерис Янискас с. Марбичюс

П-12078-20

Начато 30-11-1949

Окончено 35-13-1950

Арх. № 17573

27 фев 1950 3665 АЗ

Лит. АРХ. ЖСР. 3. 17/48

Surveillance file of Pastor Leijeris.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

³⁴² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 48-51.

³⁴³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 54-55.



Pastor Leijeris and confirmands enter Žeimelis church, 1947.

wrote to Mizaras twice asking that he send the document without delay. Finally, in December Mizaras showed up on his doorstep and, after a short interview, Leijeris asked him about his Memorandum. Mizaras said he would leave it on the table in the sitting room as he left. Since Leijeris was busy with other matters he did not bother to check it until later. When he did finally go to check the Memorandum, he could not find it. Mizaras had not left it after all. It was only later that it arrived by post.³⁴⁴ On May 4 the Žeimelis MGB decided that they needed to look in Leijeris' file for any material relevant to

the Mizaras case in general and the Memorandum in particular. They found and took the Memorandum, together with copies of the Mizaras' letters to the United Nations and the American embassy in Moscow, as well as two letters to the Supreme Council in Vilnius, two letters to the commissioner, and a letter to Molotov, the minister of foreign affairs the USSR.³⁴⁵ Now it was clear that Leijeris himself was in violation of Article 58-12. He had failed to denounce an anti-revolutionary insurgent involved in acts which intended to lead to the overthrow of the people's government. However, they would not move against him, unless they were forced to do so, because he was creating difficulties and becoming a problem.³⁴⁶

³⁴⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 12-13.

³⁴⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 42.

³⁴⁶ RTFSR *baudžiamasis kodeksas* 1941, 40.

Telegrama №1

Святейшему Провосхождению
Пресвятому Всемому Министерству
Сталин
Москва

Всего много, еще неслыханным образом, а именно
евангелики, лютеранские церкви, в сентябре, все это
безпредельно взята зарегистрирована, и с этого
никуда, церкви в городе Петербурге, которая
была одна из двух еще оставшихся церквей в городе.
Об этом было сказано в газете "Известия" 1949 года
в Ленинград, потому что эта церковь была
создана в 1916 году в Ленинграде.

Одному из евангеликов, лютеранского вероисповедания
эти Святейшему Провосхождению, Пресвятому

Telegram of Pastor Leijeris to Stalin.

The seizure of the Joniškis church became the occasion for stronger action against Leijeris. Frustrated by the unresponsiveness of the local executive committee to his pleas that the church be returned to its proper use, and the failure of the Supreme Council and Commissioner Pušinis to do anything about it, on October 11, 1949 Leijeris wrote to Stalin about the matter.³⁴⁷ This telegram came to the attention of Poljanskij in Moscow, who was embarrassed that he knew nothing of the business at Joniškis. On October 20, 1949 he turned his wrath on Pušinis for not keeping him up-to-date. An order was fired off from Moscow to Pušinis that the church was to be returned to the use of the parish immediately and without question.³⁴⁸ Pušinis informed the local executive committee in Joniškis that a "directive

³⁴⁷ October 11, 1949 telegram of Pastor Leijeris to Stalin. – JKA Konsistorijos raštai 1940-1950.

³⁴⁸ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 31, 69.



Pastor Leijeris at the Žeimelis church, 1948.

agency" had ordered the return of the church and this order must be followed with no "ifs," "ands," or "buts."³⁴⁹ Leijeris had won a battle, but in the course of it he had made for himself dangerous enemies. He had become a problem. Kalvanas later recalled that when Leijeris was called in for questioning, he was accused of not showing respect for the decisions of the local executive committee. His letter to Stalin was taken to indicate a lack of respect for the local committee. Leijeris replied: "I do not respect decisions that are illegal."³⁵⁰

Now Leijeris was a marked man. It would be only a matter of time before the enemies he had made for himself would exact their retribution. On December 27 Lieutenant Colonel Loktev of the "O" branch issued instructions for the arrest of Pastor Leijeris. He used as his basis the already well-known support that he given for the organization *Mutual Support* when he allowed his name to be used in connection with their fund raising effect, and, of course, his possession of dangerous anti-soviet literature, i.e. the Memorandum of Mizaras.³⁵¹ At 9 AM on December 30, 1949 MVD operatives were on the doorstep of the parsonage at Žeimelis. They spent three hours searching the house for incriminating material, but found nothing.³⁵² Leijeris asked that the arresting officers allow him to go to the church to pray before he was taken to jail and they agreed.³⁵³

³⁴⁹ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 21, 75.

³⁵⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 71-76.

³⁵¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 2-3ad.

³⁵² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 8-9ad.

³⁵³ Letter of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė (No date). - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

Leijeris was put into the MGB prison in Vilnius and now the church as well suffered from the loss of its chief pastor and spokesman. Everyone was fearful, wondering who would be next. There was no possibility of a strong public response as had been the case when Gavėnis was arrested. Indeed it was hard to tell what was going on and who would be arrested next.

The pastors were of the opinion that Leijeris had been arrested because of his zeal for the church and especially for his involvement in the struggle for the Joniškis church. This opinion was not without some basis. It was apparent that Pušinis himself had been actively involved in the arrest of Leijeris. He began his January 31, 1950 letter to Poljanskij with the words "Leijeris has already been isolated," giving the impression that the action had been well thought out.³⁵⁴

Early in 1950 Pastor Kalvanas, who now would have to take on the burden of another parish as well as the acting chairmanship of the consistory, traveled to Žeimelis to hold a service in the Latvian language and to find out what he could about the situation there. A local physician Doctor Elena Šabanaitė, who had been charged by MGB with the responsibility of securing Leijeris office and belongings, freely allowed Pastor Kalvanas access to all Leijeris' files and correspondence. None of this material had been inventoried during the *pro-forma* search on December 30. They had noted that Leijeris had a desk and a file cabinet, but did not bother to see if anything was in the desk doors or cabinet, so Kalvanas took the contents of



Pastor Erikas Leijeris.
November, 1948.

³⁵⁴ LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 41, 9.

[illegible]

Arrest warrant for Pastor Leijeris.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

branch in Žeimelis for only one month. He had resigned because of a disagreement with the chairman of the local group, Tadas Radkus, a Roman Catholic priest. He was asked to explain why his name was found, together with that of many prominent Lithuanians, in the November 8, 1941 letter of the *Mutual Support* committee to the nation, which called upon them to assist and support the Lithuanian families who were suffering because of the war. Leijeris stated that he did not recall having signed such a letter. The interrogator would not accept his explanation.³⁵⁶

The indictment against Leijeris was presented to him on January 11. He was accused of serving as an active member of the Joniškis

both with him when he returned to Tauragė on January 5, 1950 and hid them.³⁵⁵

Leijeris' formal interrogation began a one week after he was taken into custody. At midnight on January 6, 1950 he was escorted by his guards to a two hour interrogation at which Trubochistov (Rus. Трубочистов) questioned him about his involvement in the *Mutual Support* organization and his role as a member of the general committee of that group. Leijeris stated that he had never been a member of the general committee and had been associated with a local

³⁵⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 70.

³⁵⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 14-18.

branch committee of the *Mutual Support* organization. The purpose of that organization, according to MGB, was to assist the German army in its war against the peoples' government and to give aid and comfort to those who were being punished because of their anti-revolutionary activities. He had signed a letter which called upon the Lithuanian people to take up arms against the Soviet Army (sic!). In addition he had kept in his possession for four months the slanderous anti-soviet Memorandum, which called for the overthrow of the rule of workers and peasants. Leijeris was asked whether he understood and agreed with this bill of indictment. He replied that he understood it, but did not agree. He had seen no need to turn over the Memorandum, since Mizaras had sent copies of it to the Lithuanian Supreme Council and other communist agencies, and it was clear to him that they were already well aware of Mizaras position. When he was reminded that Article 58-12 required that he turn over such materials, he admitted that technically he had violated the law, but added that the contents of the material was already well-known and would hardly come as a surprise to government officials.³⁵⁷

Even in this impossible situation the church kept looking for ways to help Leijeris. Pastor Leijeris was held in high respect among Roman Catholics, secularists, and some prominent Lithuanian communists, although the later could hardly be expected to say so out loud. When called upon by Pastor Kalvanas, they promised to see if there was anything that they could do on behalf of Leijeris. Kalvanas was able to make contact with the sister of a well-known revolutionary who had been widely honored by the communists because of his revolutionary activity during the Smetona regime. He was so prominent that streets were named for him and the communists raised monuments to honor him. The sister was a religious woman and was willing to take up the cause of Pastor Leijeris. She approached Pušinis who promised that he would intervene on Leijeris' behalf, but he did nothing. Pastor Kalvanas recalled the old Lithuanian

³⁵⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 19, 20-23.

expression “Even if the devil says that he is white, he is still the devil.”³⁵⁸

Leijeris was subjected to two additional interrogations. On January 23, 1950 Trubochistov again pressed him about the Memorandum and his failure to turn over this slanderous document. Leijeris again stated that the document and its contents were already well-known to communist state leaders and they had no need that he send yet another copy of it.³⁵⁹ On February 6 he was again confronted about the appearance of his name on the letter of *Mutual Support* organization. He again declared that he had neither signed it nor authorized anyone to sign it on his behalf.³⁶⁰

A study of Leijeris’ file indicates that there is in it no collaborating evidence from MGB agents. It seems no evidence was necessary, since his possession of the Mizaras Memorandum and his name on the *Mutual Support* document were sufficient to warrant his arrest by the MGB at any time. The certificate of physical evidence issued on February 10 stated that the appearance of his name on the letter to the nation and his possession of the slanderous Memorandum was all the proof needed to show that he was guilty of crimes against the people.³⁶¹ That same day the medical commission examined Leijeris and determined that because of some health issues he should be assigned only light physical labor.³⁶² The next day the document stating that the interrogation had come to an end declared that the evidence was conclusive, and that the accused had raised no objection and did not intend to write a letter of appeal.³⁶³ On February 16 Leijeris was read the verdict of his interrogators. He was guilty of possession of anti-soviet material and failure to report it, and he was guilty of having been a member of a committee in Žeimelis for one month, which gave aid and comfort to the enemies of the people and had even raised money in support of those who had been

³⁵⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 71-76.

³⁵⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 24-30.

³⁶⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 31-35.

³⁶¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 43; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 54/1.

³⁶² LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 45.

³⁶³ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 44.

punished by the soviet government for their anti-soviet activities and insurrections. Finally, he had allowed his name to appear on a letter to the nation which had called for the Lithuanian people to act in a manner detrimental to the Soviet Union. Their recommendation to Moscow was that his property be confiscated and that he be sentenced to 10 years in a corrective labor camp.³⁶⁴ The same day they sent a cover letter to the *Special Board* at the MGB ministry in Moscow. In it they described Leijeris as an especially dangerous criminal who should be put in a special corrective environment.³⁶⁵ The *Special Board* met in June 3 and determined that



Leijeris at the Žeimelis church, 1949.

Leijeris was a dangerous criminal who had collaborated with the fascists and had been instrumental in fomenting anti-soviet agitation. They sentenced him to 10 years in a corrective labor camp, counting from the time of his incarceration.³⁶⁶ MGB branch "A" was instructed on July 15 to transport the prisoner to the camp.³⁶⁷ This order was carried out on August 19.³⁶⁸

On October 20, 1950 the chief of the Žeimelis MGB branch received the order to instruct the local executive committee to take possession of Leijeris' property, sell it, and remit the proceeds to the state budget.³⁶⁹ On November 27 the financial officer of the Linkuva

³⁶⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 46-48.

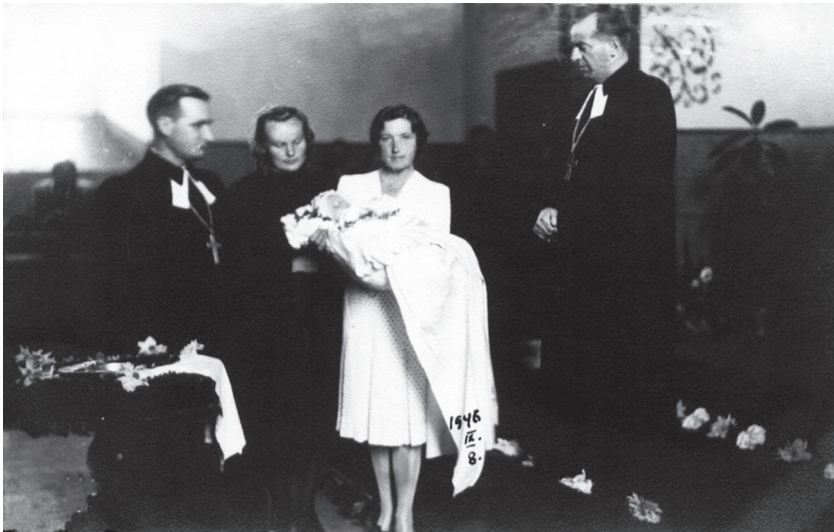
³⁶⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 49-50.

³⁶⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 52.

³⁶⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12078, 5.

³⁶⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12078, 17.

³⁶⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12078, 9; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 56/4.



Pastor Leijeris at the baptism of his goddaughter Kristina-Marta Kalvanas.
September 8, 1946.

district took inventory of Leijeris possession as of the time of his arrest. They consisted of one cow, one horse, 3 mottled geese, 6 laying hens, 3 suits, several pairs of stockings and shoes, as well as desk and other furniture. The total value of the property to be turned over to the state budget was 8,185 rubles.³⁷⁰ A copy of the inventory and its proceeds was sent to the MGB for their files.³⁷¹

It is worthwhile to note that Pastor Kalvanas was able to obtain through secondhand sources reliable information about Leijeris' interrogation and the judgment concerning the charges against him. His main source of information was the same Christian who was the sister of a well-known revolutionary from the days of Smetona and who had been highly honored by the communists. It should be noted also that all information concerning Leijeris was labeled top secret, for in-house use only. Because the information was second-

³⁷⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 58 T, b. P-12078, 1-1ad.

³⁷¹ LYA f. K-1, a 58 T, b. P-12078, 10.

hand, it was not always accurate, but from it Pastor Kalvanas was able to learn that the file on Leijeris was complete. He sent Pastor Mėgnius to Vilnius to check out the information he had received about Leijeris. His messenger came back on July 14, 1951 with information which proved to be incorrect, in that, he was told that Moscow had determined that the charges against Leijeris were not complete and had sent his file back to Vilnius.³⁷² It was in fact complete and the verdict had already been determined.

On October 24, 1950 Leijeris arrived at the Gulag, which was situated in a forested area remote from any village, identified only as Suslov (Rus. *Суслов*) station, Krasnoyarsk (Rus. *Красноярск*) railroad, Kemerov (Rus. *Кемерово*) region.³⁷³ Because of his poor health he was placed in the barracks for handicap prisoners and was given modified work and an environment not as harsh as other prisoners in the Gulag were forced to endure. His letters provide information about his life in the Gulag.

The barracks in which he lived was divided into two sections – one part provided the living accommodations for the prisoners, the other part served as infirmary for prisoners whose work had brought them to the point of physical exhaustion. He lived in a section which also housed four other Lithuanians, among whom were Father Kazimieras Liesevičius, pastor of St. Bartholomew church in Giedraičiai, located on the road between Vilnius and Molėtai, Romas Poškus of Varėna, Jonas Kilčiauskas of Joniškis, and Antanas Karpavičius. All four lived in the upper bunks of the bunk beds and shared their experiences and memories of the homeland.

In a letter on February 4, 1951 Leijeris stated that the weather conditions at that time were not too extreme. The temperature overnight had been -42 degrees Celsius and during the day from -20 to -31. Writing again on March 12 he stated that some days before the temperatures had dropped to -52, but now the mornings were far

³⁷² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 80-88.

³⁷³ October 23, 1951 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Elena Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.



Christmas Eve dinner in the barracks
From: Naikintos, bet nenugalėtos tautos kelias, 2003.

less severe, -25. Every three months the prisoners in the barracks for the handicapped were reexamined to determine whether they were fit for heavier work. In his September 18 letter he wrote that he was thankful to God that it was the judgment of the doctors that he should stay in those barracks.³⁷⁴

Prisoners in the barracks for the handicapped were given a special privilege in that they were allowed to write two letters a month. General political prisoner in Gulags were permitted only two letters a year.³⁷⁵ To prevent problems for the Lithuanian church Leijeris decided not to write directly to Pastors Kalvanas, Mėgnius, Baltris, and others, but to address most of his letters to his physician Elena Šabanaitė, who had been a resident in the parsonage at Žeimelis in happier

³⁷⁴ March 12, 1951, February 4, 1951, September 18, 1951 letters of Pastor Leijeris to Elena Šabanaitė. - JKA Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas.

³⁷⁵ *Vorkutos politinių kalinių atsiminimai* 1998, 49, 216.

days. She could share the contents of his notes with the pastors. In his letters the pastors were usually identified by code names. He might on some occasions refer to them by the first initial of their surname, on other occasions he referred to Kalvanas as the "Tauragian" and to Degis in Žeimelis as "my successor." At times, when inspectors were not carefully examining the outgoing mail, he might include as many as 6 letters in one packet. Usually the inspectors insisted that all letters be written in Russian since they could not read Lithuanian and the Russian notes would arrive with evident marks of censorship – words or sentences blacked out. The travel time of the letters was usually about 40 days. "Letters from home," he said, "were like rays of sunshine in the dark for a patient in the infirmary." "It is painful," he said, "to see brothers who were suffering the same fate who never receive any word from home."³⁷⁶ Even to receive Lithuanian editions of *Pravda* and other propaganda pieces were welcomed because they gave some small glimpse of life in the homeland, after one filtered through the nonsense. In his February 10th letter he stated that his Russian New Testament had disappeared, depriving him of his most important source of spiritual strength. Would the doctor please send him the small Lithuanian New Testament from his library?³⁷⁷

Because he received an inordinate number of parcels from members of his parish and his clergy brothers and others, he had much to share with other prisoners who soon gave him the respectful title "Our good close friend." When a parcel arrived he would first go to those in the barracks who were most seriously ill to share with them what he had received. If any money was included in a parcel, the prisoner would usually be given up to a 100 rubles. Anything in excess was kept aside for him "on account" and doled out from time to time. Money that came by letter was confiscated; the prisoner was given a receipt but never got the money. Many parcels came from unexpected sources. Leijeris said that

³⁷⁶ January 21, 1951, March 30, 1951 letters of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

³⁷⁷ February 10, 1951, May 27, 1951 letters of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.



Sketch of Pastor Leijeris after his arrival in camp.

he had no way of showing the givers his gratitude, except to remember them in his prayers that God would in his own way reward them.³⁷⁸

No photographs were permitted but if there was someone with artistic talent there was always the possibility of a sketch or drawing. On April 4 Leijeris sent two such "photos," one to his doctor and one to his goddaughter.³⁷⁹

Even in his prison situation he wondered how things were going back home in the church. He wrote to his doctor that she should ask his "colleague" (Kalvanas) whether or not there had been any progress in the attempt to get the Biržai church designated as a national monu-

ment - a project he had been working on at the time of his arrest. He also wondered whether the taxes had been paid for the Žeimelis church. In a note dated July 17 he wrote that if there was not sufficient cash, then half should be paid and the money could be gotten by selling off some of his property that had not been included in the confiscation. The church tax problem was always on his mind; he was fearful lest the church be confiscated. He stated that paying the taxes must be a priority item, much more important than sending him parcels. On August 2 he mentioned it again, stating that perhaps in this way he could help to support his parish which had been the source of his joys and sorrows for over 20 years.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ October 15, 1951, November 2, 1951, September 18, 1951, August 2, 1951 letters of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

³⁷⁹ April 4, 1951, June 13, 1951 letters of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

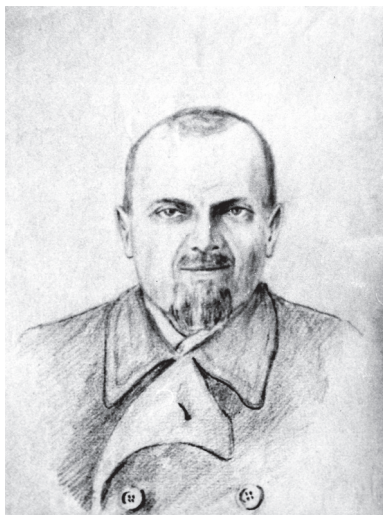
³⁸⁰ July 17, 1951, August 2, 1951 letters of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

Leijeris was able to see the hand of God at work for good in his incarceration. On March 22, 1951 he wrote that this was now the second Easter he had celebrated in captivity. He stated that, although his conditions were harsh, he willingly and faithfully submitted himself to life in prison in obedience to God's will. "In God's hands are the fate of nations and of the solitary soul and he brings all things to good effect."³⁸¹ On April 16 he wrote that for the past several days he had awoken early before the general wake up call and gone outside to set his face towards his fatherland and to pray fervently but silently, opening his captive heart to God. On May 7 he wrote that the hardships he was enduring had sharpened his vision, like glasses when one with impaired vision was now able to see clearly what before had been indistinct. In this way hardships and tribulations strengthen faith and deepen love. On July 17 he wrote that as he deposited this letter in the mail he would also pray that God would richly bless all those who had so thoughtfully remembered him and supported him in his hardship and that he would grant also his blessing to those who had wished him ill. His prayers were for them all, his homeland, the church, his friends, and even his foes. Were he able to return to Lithuania he said he would joyfully kiss the ground of his native land and embrace them all since he bore no resentment toward anyone.³⁸²

On November 24, 1951 he was transferred back to the infirmary complaining that something was wrong with his head. In his last letter on December 23 he said that he had now been in the infirmary for a month, but there had been no improvement in his health. He constantly heard ringing in his ears and suffered such extreme headaches that he could barely move his head from side to side. He thanked everyone who had remembered him and sent letters and parcels, especially the "Tauragian" (Kalvanas) whom he

³⁸¹ March 22, 1951 letter of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

³⁸² April 16, 1951, May 7, 1951, July 17, 1951 letters of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.



Sketch of Pastor Leijeris
after a year in camp.

hoped would soon send him news about the church. He asked doctor Šabanaitė to thank a large number of people whose names he listed in the letter with special thanks to his colleagues and most especially to the Kalvanas family.³⁸³

His Lithuanian colleagues visited him at every opportunity. On December 29 he had a long visit with his friend Poškus. When Poškus came again the next morning, he found that Leijeris was unable to respond. He gave him a pencil and paper to write his last will and testament to be sent to doctor Šabanaitė. Whatever was

hidden and had not been confiscated should be given into her keeping to be used for the benefit of the church. At 12:00 noon on December 31, 1951 the doctors pronounced Leijeris dead. Poškus wrote that he died well. He had commended his soul to God and breathed his last. After his death prison officials quickly came and gathered up all his belongings, lest the prisoners take them. They wanted to make sure that he could not in death bestow gifts on them as he had in life.³⁸⁴

In a letter written on March 15, 1952 Poškus reported that news of his death had spread quickly through the barracks. All the Lithuanians and Latvians along with others who held him in high esteem accompanied the body to the gates of the camp. There they bid their last farewell as his remains were carried into the forest

³⁸³ November 25, 1951, December 23, 1951 letters of Pastor Leijeris to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

³⁸⁴ March 15, 1952 letter of Romas Poškus to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

to be placed in some unknown place, in an unmarked grave. "We were not permitted to go beyond the gate," he wrote, "into the forbidden zone." He remembered that when they were brought to the Gulag, they had passed a cemetery on the hillside in the forest, some 17 kilometers outside the gates. He thought that perhaps it was there that he was laid to rest.³⁸⁵

Leijeris had earlier remarked that it was a sad thing to die in a strange land far from home, laid in a grave unmarked by flowers or any other remembrance of the departed, unvisited by loved ones and friends. But in all things God's will is done. An unknown correspondent, who identified himself as "Boris Peskov" wrote a short letter of consolation on March 31, 1951 to doctor Šabanaitė. He expressed his great admiration for the pastor and told her that she could not even imagine the power of his influence. It had awakened in him the desire to, in some small measure, imitate his example.³⁸⁶



Bishop Jonas Kalvanas, Sr., standing beside the memorial to Erikas Leijeris on the day of its dedication on August 4, 1991 in the cemetery of the Žeimelis parish. The memorial was erected over the grave of Pastor Leijeris' mother.

³⁸⁵ March 10, 1952, March 15, 1952 letters of Romas Poškus to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

³⁸⁶ March 31, 1952 letter of "Boris Peskov" to Šabanaitė. - JKA *Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas*.

3.6 Jonas Kalvanas - a Pastor under Constant Surveillance



Pastor Jonas Kalvanas.
November, 1940.

Within months of the 1944 soviet takeover of Lithuania the NKGB began to scrutinize the activities of Pastor Jonas Kalvanas and create a file. Kalvanas could hardly escape soviet attention, for he was the vice-chairman of the Lutheran Church in Lithuania and was subject to the same suspicions of foreign influence as were officials of the larger Roman Catholic Church. The NKGB suspected that Kalvanas had secret contacts with the West and supported anti-revolutionary elements in the society.

Kalvanas was born in the Biržai region in 1914 to a Latvian family.

He began his study of theology in the Evangelical Faculty at Kaunas in 1933. In 1935 he was elected chairman of the Student Christian fellowship in the university. When that faculty was closed in 1936, it was necessary for him to go abroad to complete his studies. Since he was by birth a Latvian and read and wrote Latvian as his native language, he had no difficulty completing his studies with the theological faculty at the University of Riga. He completed his studies in Riga in 1939.³⁸⁷ Although he expressed a desire to be ordained and serve in the Lutheran Church in Latvia, the Lithuanian consistory called him home to be ordained in Lithuania and assume the pastorate of the Latvian

³⁸⁷ January 26, 1940 CV of Pastor Kalvanas. - JKA *Kalvano Jono asmens byla*.

speaking congregation in Būtingė.³⁸⁸ He was ordained on July 28, 1940 in Tauragė by Pastors Paul Tittelbach, Adomas Gelžinius, and Arnoldas Laukozilis, representing the three linguistic groups in the Lithuanian church - German, Lithuanian, and Latvian.³⁸⁹ A new emergency situation, however, made it impossible for him to go to Būtingė. On July 23, 1940 the consistory named him administrator of the Mažeikiai parish to serve there and in Alkiškiai with Alkiškiai as his place of residence.³⁹⁰ This soon changed again. Because of the serious illness of Pastor Vymeris it was necessary that Kalvanas should assume his duties in the Tauragė congregation, the largest in the Lithuanian Church.³⁹¹ He remained there throughout his entire ministry. Consistory president Kristupas Gudaitis was impressed by the knowledge and dedication of this young pastor. After the Russian invasion, when it became necessary for the members of the consistory to repatriate to Germany, Kalvanas was made a member of consistory and pastor of all parishes in Samogitia.³⁹² On April 28, 1941 Leijeris found it necessary to reconstitute the consistory and invited Kalvanas to continue on it as its youngest member.³⁹³ On the same day he was appointed pastor of no less than 15 parishes - Tauragė, Bataikiai, Skaudvilė, Kelmė, Raseiniai, Ariogala, Šilalė, Sartininkai, Ž. Naumiestis, Švėkšna, Gargždai, Kretinga, Palanga, Kaunas, and Vilnius.³⁹⁴ The fulfillment of this responsibility would not be without its dangers. When Kalvanas arrived in Kretinga on April 27, 1941 to conduct the divine service, he was detained by the

³⁸⁸ KA LELB *Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1935-1941*, 297, 345; September 20, 1939 letter of Pastor Kalvanas to the Consistory. - JKA *Kalvano Jono asmens byla*.

³⁸⁹ KA LELB *Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1935-1941*, 297, 345-346.

³⁹⁰ KA LELB *Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1935-1941*, 348.

³⁹¹ KA LELB *Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1935-1941*, 351.

³⁹² KA LELB *Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1935-1941*, 355-356.

³⁹³ The April 28, 1941 Act of Formation of the Evangelical Lutheran Consistory in Lithuanian SSR (Lietuvos TSR Evangelikų liuteronų Konsistorijos sudarymo aktas). - JKA *Gauti raštai 1941-1944*.

³⁹⁴ April 28, 1941 consistory meeting minutes. - JKA *Gauti raštai 1941-1944*.

NKVD and interrogated for three days.³⁹⁵ In 1942, when consistory vice-Chairman Martynas Preikšaitis left the consistory, Kalvanas was chosen vice-chairman and special assistant to the chairman.³⁹⁶ It was a fortunate choice. Although he could have left for the west when the Red Army re-entered the country in 1944, he decided that his calling in Tauragė and the church-at-large must take precedence. He decided to remain. Because travel was restricted it fell to Leijeris and Kalvanas alone to make most of the important decisions in the name of the consistory. Indeed Leijeris determined that he would make no important decisions without first consulting with his younger colleague.

Already by 1945 a file was being gathered by the NKGB delineating Kalvanas' supposed anti-revolutionary activity and connections with the underground. It was noted that he had studied for two years at the University of Riga and had written his dissertation - a paper entitled *The Reformation in Lithuania*, for which he was granted the degree licentiate of theology. On August 20, 1944 agent "Vytenis" reported that, on Trinity Sunday of that year, Pastor Kalvanas had fanned the flames of anti-soviet sentiment in the congregation by making reference to what he called, "the cruel treatment in 1941 of the great Lithuanian patriot Colonel Mykolas Kalmantas," who had been the leader of the anti-soviet organization *Šauliai* (*Lithuanian Riflemen's Union*). He intimated that the return of the soviets would bring with it more such incidents of cruelty and the torture of patriots. He did not cease his anti-soviet rhetoric even when Lithuania was freed at last from German occupation. On September 2, 1945 agent "Burakova" reported that in the burial service for a loyal soviet Lutheran who had been killed by insurrectionists, he had preached an anti-soviet nationalistic sermon in which he stated: "You died because you loved another government more than your own and

³⁹⁵ Report of ecclesiastical activities of Pastor Kalvanas from January 23, 1941 to October 1, 1943 (Kun. J. Kalvano bažnytinės veiklos apžvalga nuo 1941.01.23 iki 1943.10.01). - JKA *Gauti raštai* 1941-1944.

³⁹⁶ September 15, 1943 consistory meeting minutes. - JKA *Gauti raštai* 1941-1944.



Kalvanas (seated second left) in front of the Faculty of Theology in Kaunas. Spring, 1936.

God punished you for betraying your native land.” On August 25 of the same year agent “Vytenis” had reported that Kalvanas had purchased from people of the community 100 tsarist Russian rubles and 100 USA dollars, both in gold, in preparation for an invasion and take over from the West.³⁹⁷

The report of agent “Burakova” was taken to be a serious indication of Pastor Kalvanas’ continued anti-soviet sentiments and activities even after the restoration of the people’s government. The exact identity of agent “Burakova” is not indicated in the report, although it is clear that she was either Mina Fedorovna Dergunova (Rus. Мина Федоровна Дергунова) or Margarita Karlovna Libliko (Rus. Маргарита Карловна Либблико) living in Tauragė. It is un-

³⁹⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 8-9.



Kalvanas working on his fathers farm during vacation.

clear how either of them would have known enough Lithuanian to be able to understand sermons in that language and interpret their meaning accurately. Both reported that while walking in Tauragė they saw a horse driven funeral carriage and decided to follow it and in the cemetery they had heard the deprecating words of the pastor about the deceased and his loyalty to the soviets.³⁹⁸

These were serious charges but the NKGB thought them to be too insubstantial to justify immediate action. There was still no indication of direct ties between the pas-

tor and the insurrectionists. The NKGB decided to try to recruit him to become an agent. On November 5, 1945 NKGB Lieutenant Colonel Pochkaj (Rus. Почкай) in Vilnius wrote to Major Ivanov (Rus. Иванов), chief of the NKGB in Tauragė, that he should interview Kalvanas with the purpose of recruiting him. He should intimidate and frighten the pastor by making direct references to his Trinity Sunday 1944 anti-soviet sermon and his August 2, 1945 sermon at the burial of a loyal soviet subject who had been ruthlessly murdered by insurrectionist bandits. This he was sure would break him but Kalvanas emerged from the meeting unbroken.³⁹⁹

Vilnius now decided to take direct action. On July 26, 1946 NKGB Second branch Lieutenant Colonel Pochkaj and officer Chechurov (Rus. Чечуров) wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Lapinas, the chief of the Tauragė branch, instructing him to send to them, before September 1, all their compromising material concerning Pastor Kalvanas

³⁹⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 15, 31-32.

³⁹⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 222.

together with his evaluation of the plan to make him their agent to inform about the activities of Lutheran pastors.⁴⁰⁰

To make it easier to compromise him they also decided to enlist his closest associates as informants against him. Among those they would attempt to recruit was Elena Vymerytė, the daughter of Pastor Augustas Vymeris of Tauragė. She had left the country in 1944 with the German army because her four brothers had served in the German military. She had feared reprisals, but decided to return to her homeland on October 6, 1945.⁴⁰¹ On January 30, 1946 Tauragė NKGB Major Ivanov wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Nopenpukom (Rus. Нопенпуком) of the NKVD in the same city asking whether there was any compromising information about her, or whether she might in fact already be working as an informer. The immediate response was that there was no compromising material about her in the NKVD files and that she was not working as an informant. The attempts to enlist her were not fruitful.⁴⁰²

Of little value was the September 17 report of agent "Skromnaja," which stated that on September 13 Pastor Kalvanas had gone to Katyčiai parish to catechize confirmands. That action was technically a violation of Russian criminal code but it was not enough to warrant the kind of action the NKGB wanted to initiate against Kalvanas.⁴⁰³

Now the NKGB decided that all of the pastor's incoming and outgoing correspondence must be carefully examined for compromising material. What they examined was of little help to them. Typical was the letter Kalvanas sent to Pastor Baltris on October 16, 1947. It spoke only of preparations for the coming festival of the Reformation.⁴⁰⁴ Agents translated it into Russian and carefully scrutinized it, but found nothing of value. Baltris replied to the letter on November 18. Once again disappointed NKGB officers had

⁴⁰⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 221.

⁴⁰¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 28.

⁴⁰² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 223.

⁴⁰³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 15, 34.

⁴⁰⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 175.



Ordination of Pastor Kalvanas, July 28, 1940. Back row: Pastors Jonas Kalvanas, Adolfas Keleris, and Ansas Trakis; seated: Senior Pastors Arnoldas Laukozilis (Latvian synod), Paul Tittelbach (German synod), and Adomas Gelžinčius (Lithuanian synod).

to report that it contained only information about internal church matters and nothing incriminating could be found in it.⁴⁰⁵ Letters of Leijeris and Burkevičius were no more helpful in the quest to incriminate Kalvanas.⁴⁰⁶

One letter, however, did excite their interest. It came on October 27, 1947 from the village of Matīši, Latvia. In it a woman named Natalija Predite asked Kalvanas to provide biographical information from church records which she needed it in order to obtain a passport.⁴⁰⁷ NKGB wondered whether perhaps Kalvanas was supplying false information to support persons engaged in criminal activities. After close examination it was found that Predite had lived in

Ylakai, near Mažeikiai and had moved from there to Latvia. On February 13, 1948 Colonel Shljapnikov wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Senin (Rus. Сенин), chief of the MGB in Mažeikiai, to inquire where she had gone and whether he could supply any details about her.⁴⁰⁸ One week later, on February 20, Shljapnikov wrote to the MGB headquarters in Riga inquiring about her and asking whether she

⁴⁰⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 182.

⁴⁰⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 185-186.

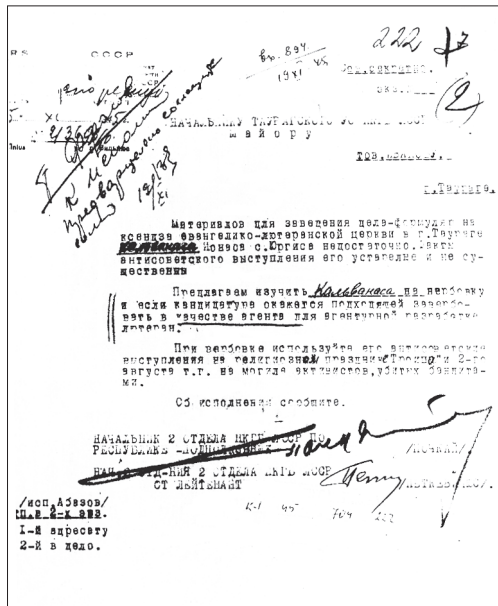
⁴⁰⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 8-9; LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 176, 198.

⁴⁰⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 197.

might be made a collaborator. He did not mention Pastor Kalvanas' name but it was clear that he hoped that she could be persuaded to be an informant against him.⁴⁰⁹

The MGB, which now replaced the NKGB, determined to redouble its efforts to implicate him in illegal activity. On November 12, 1947 agent "Fricas" reported that when he went to Kalvanas to ask him to bury his aunt, Kalvanas reminded him that he had not been paying his church fees and that

every time he came to him requesting pastoral services he would remind him of this until he had paid all his past fees. In the same report he noted that Tauragė church bell ringer Milkeraitienė had told him that a Lutheran bishop had come to preach at the Reformation service. "Fricas" had not heard the sermon but did see the clergy procession in front of his house on Juozo Tumo Vaižganto street with the visiting bishop in the lead. This should have been a clue to the MGB that "Fricas" was not a very active Lutheran, since he thought that Chairman Leijeris was a visiting bishop. They did not take the hint. "Fricas" was instructed to go his bell ringer friend and do whatever was necessary to find out the name of the bishop and to determine what he had said in his sermon. "Fricas" was told that



Decision of Tauragė NKGB to try to recruit Pastor Kalvanas.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

⁴⁰⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 199.



Pastor Kalvanas wedding. June 9, 1946.

he must also be reconciled with Kalvanas and that the MGB would give him sufficient funds to pay all of his fees.⁴¹⁰

A more promising report came in September 1947. It stated that Martynas Naujokas, a Lithuanian national who had been inducted into the soviet army and had been stationed in Riga, had deserted. In an effort to obtain legal status he had gone to Kalvanas and clearly identified his situation. Kalvanas consulted the church records and gave him a document which enabled him to present himself to the passport agency and obtain a passport – a clear violation of soviet law. Furthermore, it was suspected that he had contact with suspicious persons.⁴¹¹

The MGB still did not arrest Pastor Kalvanas. He might still prove useful to them. Since the Tauragė MGB branch had once again shown itself not up to the task of turning him, the Vilnius

⁴¹⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 35-35ad.

⁴¹¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 8-9.

office decided that it was time for them to do it. On January 23, 1948 Vilnius "O" branch Lieutenant Colonel Shljapnikov instructed the Tauragė branch to send all their compromising material on Kalvanas, so that they could undertake the work of recruiting him as MGB agent in Vilnius.⁴¹²

On January 29, 1948 the Tauragė MGB branch had to inform Vilnius that nothing of any substance had been found which could be used against Pastor Kalvanas. All that could be reported by Lapinas was that Kalvanas was widely known in Lithuanian Lutheran circles, and often traveled to the Lithuanian parishes. He also carried on active correspondence with the pastors in Klaipėda, Kretinga, Pagėgiai, and other parishes. Time had run out for this stage of the investigation, so nothing more could be done than to send his file to the archives.⁴¹³

Shljapnikov, the chief of branch "O" in Vilnius, was not satisfied. He insisted that the investigation must move forward, and on February 25 he wrote to Lapinas that he must open a formulary file against Kalvanas. He included a list of 35 compromising items to be added to this file in preparation for the eventual indictment of Kalvanas. He insisted that the time had come for a much more active pursuit of the pastor and noted that he would be sending a separate letter about the recruitment of Kalvanas as an agent.⁴¹⁴

The Tauragė MGB branch decided that it must comply and, as the initial action in its attempts to compromise the pastor, it ordered the search of his house. The order was issued on May 13. The next morning at 4 AM the MGB officers arrived to conduct a five and a half hour search of the Kalvanas house. Officer Novonjukov (Rus. Новонюков) subsequently reported to Lapinas that Kalvanas seemed very apprehensive about the search. Marta Kalvanienė was sure that she, her husband, and her children were now going to be deported. She pleaded that they be allowed to remain in Tauragė.

⁴¹² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 233.

⁴¹³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 228.

⁴¹⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 230.



Three Kalvanas planting a Christmas tree at the parsonage in Tauragė. Kristina and Irena are joined by their younger brother, the future Bishop Jonas Kalvanas, Jr. June, 1949.

The officers who knew that the May deportations would begin within the next week asked why she thought that the family might be deported. She answered that it was just a feeling, and they assured her that this search was not an indication that the family would be deported. Novonjukov, who interrogated Pastor Kalvanas, came up with the news that Kalvanas was in fact a Latvian who had lived in Tauragė since 1940. He had married in 1946 and was the father of two children. He regretted that he had not been able to uncover any incriminating materials. It was found that the pastor had a large library, which consisted largely in religious material in

Lithuanian or German, but also included Lithuanian translations of classic soviet writers. Their search also uncovered many letters but all of them had to do with church and family matters.⁴¹⁵

They also discovered that on the first floor of the *Vymerinė*, the parsonage, the widow of Pastor Vymeris Leonina and her daughter Elena were living with a lady friend by the name of Ramonienė. Also living on the first floor were Jonas Preikšaitis, the parish organist, and a Russian military officer, Dmitrij Danilovich Otrashkevich (Rus. Дмитрий Данилович Отрашкевич), his wife Evgenija Petrovna Aleksandrova (Rus. Евгения Петровна Александрова), and their daughter Olga (Rus. Ольга). The captain was in charge

⁴¹⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 231-232.

of a detail which searched the forests for partisans. The Kalvanas family lived on the second floor as did also Helga Mielulienė, a family helper, and Edvard Reingoltz, an indigent who had no visible means of support and no registration papers.

The report written the same day stated that this lengthy search had yielded nothing of a suspicious nature. No physical proof of the pastor's disloyalty could be found. This was another set back for the MGB.⁴¹⁶

Unknown to Kalvanas he had a traitor living in his own home who was constantly reporting to the MGB. She was Eugenija Deichner, a native of the Saratov region, who had moved to Tauragė. The MGB called her agent "Leršė." When the house in which she and her husband were living burned to the ground, Pastor Kalvanas and his family invited her to live with them until she could find other accommodations. Even after she left the household she would constantly come to visit with them and report back to headquarters everything that she saw and heard. She reported that on May 14 she went, as usual, to buy milk from Marta Kalvanienė, and found both the pastor and his wife somewhat upset. She asked what might be the matter, but Kalvanas said nothing. In conversation with Russian

Копия

Прислано
из В. У. М. Кудряшова
14 мая 1948 г.

История
История "Лершė"
14 мая 1948 г.

Секретное дело
(к. по Таврагского УМГБ)

Сегодня историк, как всегда пришел к ней к Ксении Кальванас. Историю против вышедшего на У. Вайсманиса, за молоко, т. е. она регулярно у него покупает молоко, при этом историк заметила, что Ксения Кальванас и его жена, когда расспрашивали и когда она у него спрашивала, чем то вы так растроены, Ксения на это ничего не сказала, но в дальнейшем беседе с его клерикантом (русский гражданин его называл историк узнала, что сегодня в доме Ксении милиция производила обыск.

(подпись)

Вопрос верна за Н. К. по Таврагского
УМГБ 14/V-48
14/V-48
История
История
История
История

Report of agent "Leršė"
to the Tauragė MGB.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

⁴¹⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 231-232.

officer who lived on the first floor she found that they were anxious because the MGB had conducted a search of the premises.⁴¹⁷

Kalvanas' contacts and correspondence were closely monitored and the MGB kept him under constant close personal surveillance, looking for some means to convince those with whom he came into even casual contact to inform against him. On June 2, 1948 Kalvanas was summoned to appear at military conscription center (commisariat) in Vilnius. Earlier Lapinas had written to Shljapnikov that, unknown to him, he would be followed on the same train by Junior Lieutenant Perjohin (Rus. Перёхин), assistant chief interrogator in Tauragė.⁴¹⁸ It was their hope that Kalvanas would use the occasion of the journey to Vilnius to make contact with subversives.

The file continued to grow. On May 29, 1948 agent "Lesnaja" who worked as the caretaker in the Tauragė cemetery, reported that a suspicious man had visited the pastor in April. The man was Jonas Aušra, a native of the Klaipėda region. Aušra had migrated to Tauragė in 1939 when his home region was annexed to Germany; he had become a border guard under the old regime and had returned from Germany in 1946.⁴¹⁹

Later that month he was again summoned. This time to appear at the MGB headquarters in Vilnius for interrogation. His wife, who was afraid that he would be arrested and taken from her, made the trip with him. They parted at the doors of the headquarters not knowing whether they would ever meet again. The interrogator Lieutenant Gorlov (Rus. Горлов) began his interrogation by warning Kalvanas that if anything he said prove to be false, he would be prosecuted under the terms of Article 95 of the Russian criminal code. He was asked immediately to give his full biography and the names of all of his family members and relatives, as well as the names of all pastors that he knew. He was asked about Jonas Aušra. Kalvanas stated that he had known him since 1942 when he worked

⁴¹⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 48.

⁴¹⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 235.

⁴¹⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 49.

in the market in Tauragė. He knew that he had left the country in 1944 and when he returned in 1946 and asked that Kalvanas help him by giving him a job as a cantor. Kalvanas had sent him in that capacity to the Vyžiai parish, but it was clear that his training was not adequate. Consequently Kalvanas sent him to work under Cantor Artūras Timpa in Sartininkai. However, he simply refused to apply himself, and after a year he was released from service. Then he went to Natkiškiai to work on his farm there. Kalvanas was then asked to name all the men who were serving as cantors in Lutheran parishes in Lithuania.⁴²⁰

Now the interrogator turned to the most important matter. To whom, he asked, had Kalvanas given copies of their church records. Kalvanas replied that he had so many requests for baptismal records that he could not possibly remember them all. The interrogator asked what he could tell them about Martynas Naujokas of the village of Talminai. Kalvanas recalled that he had come to him asking for a copy of his records, but he had not asked him for what purpose he wanted the record. The interrogator slammed his fist on the table, saying: "You are lying. Naujokas was a deserter from the Red Army and needed documents to get a passport. I have warned you had better tell the truth."⁴²¹ He said that Naujokas had told them that he had informed Kalvanas that he was a deserter and needed records to get a legal passport. This meant that Kalvanas had helped a fugitive from soviet justice. Without blinking Kalvanas replied that Naujokas had made the whole interview up and his testimony was of no value. He knew nothing of the purpose for which he needed a certificate. The MGB had thought that they could intimidate and break him, but they could not. He left as he came, on his own two feet.

The MGB had also been told by informants that Kalvanas was in collusion with rebellious dissidents. On November 22, 1948 "Balsys" reported that Juozas Delkus, a suspected underground activist, wanted to meet with Kalvanas to coordinate anti-soviet activities.

⁴²⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 39-43.

⁴²¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 44.

He reported that Delkus was a Lutheran, and that he had met with Jonas Globys of Tauragė on November 15. It was said that after some discussion they had decided to give Pastor Kalvanas a copy of the partisan newspaper *Laisvės Varpas* (*Bell of Freedom*). In February of the next year “Balsys” reported that it was now known that Delkus had indeed given the newspaper to Kalvanas. Senior Lieutenant Terehin (Rus. Терехин) ordered “Balsys” to actively connect with Delkus for the purpose of catching Kalvanas. On May 16, 1949 Lapinas reported to Shljapnikov that the report Kalvanas had been given the illegal publication was false. The information they had received about the *Bell of Freedom* came mostly from “Balsys” and it now appeared that he was not a reliable informant. On November 7 “Balsys” reported that a new issue of the *Bell of Freedom* had been published and that Pastor Kalvanas and some person in the Tauragė hospital would receive copies. He was assigned to look into the relationship between Delkus and Kalvanas and report of the nature of Kalvanas’ anti-soviet activities.⁴²² Again there was nothing substantial behind the report. “Balsys” was being paid for his information and he always made sure that he had something to report. It did not seem to have occurred to the MGB that Kalvanas would hardly be willing to accept an underground newspaper from mere acquaintances.

The failure to substantiate any of the charges against Kalvanas only led the MGB to redouble their efforts. They had no intention of leaving Kalvanas in peace. He refused to leave himself open to accusation in that he did not say anything of a political nature either in church or at home. He refrained from signing letters of complaint about injustices visited upon the church. What he did write was signed by groups of parishioners. Outwardly he appeared to be a loyal soviet citizen. This was not good enough for the MGB. They wanted to get into his mind to see what anti-revolutionary thoughts might be lurking there.

⁴²² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 57.



Pastor Kalvanas and Cantor Petras Knispelis
with the 1949 Lauksargiai confirmation class.

Attempts were also made to recruit Lutheran clergy to inform against Kalvanas. On January 26, 1948 Shljapnikov instructed Lapinas in Tauragė to immediately send to him information about the pastors and parishioners in the Tauragė region who might prove useful in implicating Kalvanas in anti-soviet activities. On May 27 Lapinas replied that the only name were able to come up with was their agent "Lesnaja," who worked in the cemetery and had frequent contact with Lutheran clergy there. Attempts to enlist Pastor Preikšaitis and Cantor Artūras Timpa had proven futile, since no material compromising them could be found. They had much more information about Kalvanas than they had about Preikšaitis and Timpa, but, of course, most of what they had about

Kalvanas was insubstantial.⁴²³ The MGB continued its efforts to recruit Preikšaitis, but nothing came of it. In desperation “O” branch Lieutenant Colonel Boronkov (Rus. Боро́нков) wrote to Lapinas on May 12, 1949 that something must be found against Kalvanas. He was the “number two” man in the Lutheran Church in Lithuania and surveillance of him had to be a priority matter.⁴²⁴ The Tauragė MGB could not admit that it was unsuccessful in its attempts to recruit Pastor Preikšaitis and so they reported that the matter was still in progress. On May 16 Lapinas wrote Shljapnikov that it was just a matter of time. He had to report, however, that “Lesnaja” had not been of much help. She was just a simple woman and could not see behind the mask of the soviet man that the pastor presented to the public.⁴²⁵ “Lesnaja” was no help, Preikšaitis refused to collaborate, and Artūras Timpa could not be recruited.

Next they turned to Pastor Mėgnius in Žemaičių Naumiestis. He too had refused to betray him. Later Mėgnius had told Kalvanas of these attempts and said that he had told the MGB that he was old and hard of hearing and his eyes were growing dim, and besides all that, when he talked with anybody he always immediately forgot what had been said. Next they tried Cantor Dovydas Baltutis of Šilutė parish. He later informed Kalvanas that he told them that he was sick and tired of being summoned so often to meet with the MGB. He had decided that enough was enough and he would resign from his position as cantor.⁴²⁶

By this time Kalvanas had MGB agents swarming around him like flies. At least 14 agents and informants were regularly reporting on where he was going, with whom he talked, what he did, and every other imaginable detail of his daily life. Still they were getting nowhere. They could not get into his mind and the pastors who did know him kept their mouths shut. The MGB however, had one

⁴²³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 234.

⁴²⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 238.

⁴²⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 240.

⁴²⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 72.

more special agent whom they were sure would be able to give them everything they needed to force Kalvanas to confess. He was Pastor Arthur Pfeiffer who now lived in Moscow.

Pastor Pfeiffer had been born in Saratov region in 1926 and, until 1924, had served as a school teacher. In 1925-1926 he enrolled in a series of courses in, Leningrad seminary organized by the Lutheran Church in Russia. At the conclusion of his study he was ordained. From 1926 until 1934 he served as a pastor in the Saratov region at Jagodnaja Poljana (Rus.



Arthur Pfeiffer.
From: Diedrich, 2007.

Ягодная Поляна) and in the city of Saratov. In 1930 he was arrested but released for lack of evidence. In 1934 he and his brother, Pastor Emil, were arrested and convicted of supporting the fascist organizations in Germany and of engaging in espionage against the soviet regime. He was sent to a labor camp in Novosibirsk region for 5 years. In December 1939 he was suddenly released during Stalin's great cleansing.⁴²⁷ It is probable that by this time he had decided to become an agent of the regime. In 1940 this former convict, who had been jailed for anti-soviet activity and espionage, was now suddenly a school teacher in Moscow. As an agent he was given the code name "Schultz" ("Шульц").

He made an ideal agent. As a former pastor he could easily gain the confidence of other pastors who would accept him at face value and assume that he shared their sympathies. Before approaching Kalvanas he visited first with Pastor Pēteris Kamols in Rucava, Latvia, a former classmate from Leningrad days. Kamols gave his

⁴²⁷ Лиценбергер 2006, 186; Diedrich 1997, 434.

silver cross in gratitude for his visit, unaware that soon he would be deported to the *Solovki* (Rus. *Соловки*) Gulag.⁴²⁸ To what extent the deportation can be traced back to Pastor Pfeiffer's visit cannot be determined, but it is clear that he did not simply drop by to have a pleasant chat. In any case, it is hardly likely that a former pastor, now a school teacher, would have the freedom to travel through the Baltic and visit pastors.

The MGB was sure that Kalvanas would open up to Pfeiffer and would give them everything they needed. His task was not only to provide evidence against Kalvanas, but to visit widely and gather information about other pastors and cantors as well.

Agent "Schultz" arrived in Vilnius on July 14, 1949 and immediately set out for Klaipėda. There he made contact with *Memellanders* who told him that there was no longer an organized Lutheran parish in the city but that Pastor Baltris from Kretinga came occasionally to gather the Lutherans for worship. "Schultz" immediately left for Kretinga. Arriving there on July 16 he was told that Pastor Baltris was in the hospital recovering from surgery and it was expected that he would be released the next day. Two days later, on July 18, 1949, he appeared at Baltris' door carrying a pound of sugar and a small tort. Baltris was overjoyed to be visited by a brother pastor from so far away. It was neither necessary nor possible for "Schultz" to ask him any questions because for more than 4 hours Baltris just poured out everything that was on his heart and on his mind. "Schultz" reported that he did not dare to interrupt him because he was already proving to be such a rich source of information. He told of his early years and his induction into the German army in WWI to fight against the Russians, he told of the problems he had with the Nazis who wondered whether he might not have subversive leanings. He had to assure them that he was a loyal Lithuanian, born and bred. He noted, however, that he greatly admired the high culture of the German people. He noted also that Pastors Leijeris and Kalvanas were in fact Latvians, but that the Lithuanian church was completely free of any foreign ties. When

⁴²⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 60-71.

"Schultz" finally was able to ask a question, he asked what was Baltris opinion of communism. Baltris was not shy in declaring that he thought it was a wonderful theory. He himself preached constantly on the Second Table of the Law which deals with the treatment of one's neighbor. Unfortunately, he lamented, there are no true communists. There are those who claim to be communists, but they do not act accordingly. They are communists on paper only. He remarked that if he ever met a real communist, he would gladly bow down before him.

In his report "Schultz" stated that Baltris was a complex man, not easy to understand and describe accurately. He would say of him however, that although he has no real loyalty to the soviet government, he is not active in any movements which could be termed anti-soviet, did not speak openly against the government as other pastors, especially Kalvanas, did. He believed that the present regime must be accepted as God's judgment. In his sermons he preached that God is chastising his people and is dealing with the nation with his left hand, the hand of judgment and punishment and with the right hand of grace and mercy. He sees no alternative but to accept this cross and bare it without complaint. He did not entertain the possibility of any real communism in this world, but said that he knew how to

СОВЕРШЕННО СЕКРЕТНО	
10 января 1951 года Л.Ш. № 173	Источник: "Улицы" ПРИНЦ: "Литванов"
<p>ОПРАВКА: - Агент "Улицы" по своему замыслу являлся в Литовской ССР для разработки антисоветского элемента из числа литовского духовенства. В частности "Улицы" поручалось посетить известное в литовской литературной церкви лицеевское училище и выяснить имеет ли он связь с зарубежными литературными центрами и с антисоветско-националистическим подпольем.</p> <p>Проходящий по донесению [УЛИЦЫ] является близкой связью "УЛИЦЫ" и других священников литовской церкви во время (течетворной войны) [УЛИЦЫ] служил в немецкой армии радиолюбом, в настоящее время работает радиолюбом на радиоулице в Вильнюсе.</p> <p>10-го января источник вышел из Москвы в Литву и 1-го января вечером прибыл в г. Вильнюс.</p> <p>1-ю ночь на 5-е января вышел через Ридзвильякис в Таураге, куда прибыл 10-го января в 11 часов утра и сразу же пошел на квартиру к пастору (Калванасу) [УЛИЦЫ]. Калванас радостно принял источник, объясняя его, что он является в Вильнюс из того, что источник так долго не писал и он [УЛИЦЫ] и все его товарищи-пасторы, которые (книжки) очень беспокоились не случилось ли что-нибудь худого с источником за то, что Калванас о нем все время говорил, что он окончил немецкий пастор из России. Не окончил ли он ординат МД? Но тут же заявил из Литвы.</p> <p>Источник объяснил, что этого не нужно было бояться, так как он абсолютно ничего незаконного не делает, и известить пастора не может быть причиной ареста, для этого должны быть какие-нибудь другие причины.</p> <p>Калванас ответил, что "они" знают всегда причину или причину, а если знает, то и будут чуждыми осудить и осудить в лагерь без причины. По своему мнению Калванас литовской церкви в Литве и других пасторов в Калванасе и Вильнюсе, заявил Калванас, "теперь без суда и без всякого процесса арестовывают и убивают на разных сроках людей в сабординированной Литве."</p> <p>Источник ответил, что он тоже не заграничный, в Москве и хорошо знает, что это не может быть. Правда, раньше была особая озабоченность, но озабоченность ли они все теперь, источник не знает, но аресты никогда не были без всякого процесса.</p>	

Report of agent "Schultz" after his visit with Kalvanas in 1950.

From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

deal with the soviets, and they left him in peace. He said that some of his parishioners maintained contact with Germany and constantly reported church and political news from there. He really had no authority in church circles. He was formerly a cantor who had been ordained as a pastor-deacon because of the church's urgent needs. Since he had no proper academic theological training, the other pastors tended to look down on him.⁴²⁹

The next day, July 19, 1949 "Schultz" made his way to Tauragė to see what he could learn from Pastor Kalvanas. Kalvanas met him at the door in his usual reserved way and invited him into his study room. "Schultz" identified himself by stating that he was a Lutheran pastor but that he was not serving any parish actively because he did not want to jeopardize his son who was studying in the university. Therefore he had taken a job as a school master and librarian. At this point Kalvanas greeted him cordially and broke out a bottle of hard cider while his wife quickly prepared a plate of appetizers for them to share as they chatted.

Kalvanas described the Lutheran pastors in Lithuania as the "last of the Mohicans." There were only 6 of them, and already two had been arrested and sent to the Gulags. He fully expected he would be the next to go. He noted that the church in Latvia was facing the same tribulations, and pastors there too were being picked off one by one. At this point "Schultz" said that he had a good friend in Latvia, Pastor Kamols of Rucava. They had studied together at the seminary in Leningrad and, when he had visited him recently, Kamols had given him his silver pastoral cross, a keepsake. He showed Kalvanas the cross. Kalvanas replied, this must be very precious to him. "I knew this dear brother very well and recently spent a week in his parish, but now he is gone. He was arrested and sent to the Gulags, and there he died."

"Schultz" wondered what contacts Kalvanas had managed to keep with foreigners. Kalvanas responded that he of course knew many Latvian pastors and Russian Orthodox priests and in addition

⁴²⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 60-61.

he had for a while maintained some contact with Pastors Leitner and Zibo in the Kaliningrad region. Zibo, he noted, had formerly been a priest in Sweden. He had been drafted into a German army and captured by the Russians. After his release he had returned to Kaliningrad, but now there was no further contact between them. He reckoned that he may have gone to Germany with the rest of the surviving Kaliningrad Prussians.

“Schultz” wondered about what it was like to be a pastor in Lithuania in such times as these. Kalvanas said that the life of the pastors was very hard. There were many tribulations, not the least of which was the oppressive burden of high taxes, which was impossible to bear. His own tax burden was so heavy that he was constantly selling off his own personal possessions in order to make the payments.

In the course of the conversation Kalvanas remarked that he had a German parishioner, Eugenia Deichner from Saratov, one of the *Volga Deutsch*, who married another member of the Volga German community, an officer by the name Kindefater. He later disappeared without a trace and she married Endrušėnas who also subsequently disappeared. He decided on the spot to arrange a get together between the two of them, not knowing that they were both MGB agents. Indeed neither of them knew that the other was an agent, but both obediently filed their reports about the meeting with them to MGB superiors. “Schultz” reported that Deichner had told about her wanderings in Germany and her intense desire to return to Saratov and see how life was there in these days.

Kalvanas then remarked that on Sunday he would celebrate the Holy Eucharist in the Žemaičių Naumiestis parish and would be honored if “Schultz” would be able to participate. At this point “Schultz” began to consider that he did not want to stick around long enough for Kalvanas to start thinking more deeply about him and his cover story. He declared that, although he would be honored to do so, he simply could not stay until Sunday. He had to

continue his travels. Kalvanas then suggested that they meet at the home of Cantor Baltutis at Šilutė, and "Schultz" agreed.⁴³⁰

On Saturday "Schultz" arrived in Pagėgiai. He had not understood Kalvanas directions and could not find the residence of Cantor Baltutis, nor could anyone show him the way. So he went to the Kasiulis family. Meanwhile Kalvanas was waiting for him at the train station. Later in the afternoon they finally met again at the home of the Kasiulis family and from there traveled together to Šilutė and Žemaičių Naumiestis on horse back, chatting as they rode. "Schultz" wanted to know more about the pastors and Kalvanas spoke quite freely, about Baltris and Mėgnius. About Mėgnius in particular he noted that before the WWI he had been a publisher of the church newspaper *Svečias*, but he had incurred the anger of the Tsarist government and had been sent to Siberia to the region of Irkutsk. He said that he was a staunch nationalist who had despised the tsarist regime but was equally critical of the communists. He was particularly scathing in his criticisms of the collective farms, but was careful to mask his sentiments and spoke about it only in private conversations with him. His fierce determination has created many problems for himself, but he is old, and now the communists did not pay him much attention.

At Žemaičių Naumiestis "Schultz" went to the Lord's Supper, and after the service both men went to share a meal in the parish house. Kalvanas and he were interrupted by Cantor Baltutis who spoke with Kalvanas for a while in Lithuanian and then left. "Schultz" casually asked what they had talked about. Kalvanas replied it was church business and then went on to remark that Baltutis had a very responsible job in the Šilutė post office and because of his many contacts in the postal service he served as a kind of intelligence agent keeping church officials up on all the latest news. In addition he was very good friend of a man named Gudvytis, a radio telegrapher with excellent radio equipment, who shares with him news from the BBC, Voice of America, and Western

⁴³⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 61-62.

German sources. Kalvanas warned "Schultz" not to mention his name in Šilutė. He had formerly been in the German Army and had served as an intelligence agent in Italy where he had been captured by the Americans. To contact him it was best to ask around about the wife of Gudvytis.

"Schultz" mentioned casually that he would be going to Vilnius and wondered where he might find a place to stay. Did Kalvanas perhaps have some friend in Vilnius who might accommodate him? Kalvanas replied that he had a good friend by the name of Jurkaitis who was a museum worker. During the Smetona years he had been a strong democrat who was strongly critical of the president and his regime, but who remarked that he despised the communists fully as much. He had earlier worked in the supply ministry, but had been arrested and after release had taken a job in the museum. If "Schultz" would mention Kalvanas' name and bring greetings from him, he would gladly take him into his house. He remarked that Jurkaitis regarded the communists as a bunch of scoundrels - a judgment with which he could not disagree. When "Schultz" got to Vilnius he discovered that Jurkaitis and his wife were on vacation.

"Schultz" now was ready to file his analysis of Pastor Kalvanas. He stated that he hated the regime and was clearly an anti-communist. This was already evident from the kind of people with whom he associated. In addition, he had expressed some sympathy for the insurrectionist movement, although he regretted that they had not restricted their activities to hunting down communists and their collaborators, but had caused many innocent people to suffer. "Schultz" reported that he had asked Kalvanas whether he knew and had contact with any insurrectionists. Kalvanas reported that he did not know any, but that Pastor Gavėnis had been arrested for harboring an insurrectionist whom he had hoped would study for the priesthood. He noted also that he was constantly surrounded by MGB agents who heard every word he said and listened to every sermon.

He had already been interrogated twice about his preaching, and he expected that before long he would be placed under arrest.⁴³¹

"Schultz" returned to Moscow and presented his report. The MGB in Moscow immediately communicated his findings to their Vilnius office. It appeared that the situation in the Lutheran Church in Lithuania was very serious. It was crawling with anti-communists. "Schultz" had expressed great concern about Jurkaitis and Vilius Gudvytis and, in response, officers Raslanas and Chirkov (Rus. Чирков) of the MGB had immediately sent his report on Kalvanas to the MGB Colonel in Tauragė. Their orders were to check Kalvanas activities closely and take immediate action by ascertaining who Kalvanas associated with so that they might recruit them as possible spies against him. In addition Kalvanas should be watched around the clock and every indication of anti-soviet words and actions must be logged. Furthermore, any contact between Kalvanas and Gudvytis in Šilutė and Jurkaitis in Vilnius must be carefully documented.⁴³²

This deeper investigation was unable to provide any solid evidence against Kalvanas, so Moscow decided that it would be worth the expense to sent agent "Schultz" back to Tauragė. On January 5, 1950 he appeared once more on the Kalvanas doorstep and was received warmly with a hug and a kiss. Kalvanas said he had been worrying about him and had been distressed that he had heard nothing from him. He had feared that, because "Schultz" was a Lutheran pastor, the MGB might have arrested him when he left the country. "Schultz" sought to reassure him saying: "I would not be arrested. I simply visited some pastors. That is not the crime in the Soviet Union. I did nothing to violate the law; no one should fear arrest unless he has seriously violated soviet law." Kalvanas could only chuckle and say to him that if the MGB decided to arrest the man, and send him to Gulag or to his death, they could always come up with some reason to justify it." "Even now," he said, "people are arrested without proper warrants and without trial they are sent to the Gulags in Siberia."

⁴³¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 62-64.

⁴³² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 59.

"Schultz" protested: "This could not be. Perhaps in the past under very special circumstances it had been done, but he knew of no instances where the MGB was now holding meetings of the *"Special Board"* to judge and condemn people who had not been properly tried and convicted in open court. Besides he was a Muscovite and enjoyed the full protection of soviet laws. He had nothing to fear."⁴³³

Kalvanas went on to say that he had not had a very happy new year, because the consistory's Chairman, Pastor Erikas Leijeris, had been placed under arrest and was now undergoing interrogation in Vilnius. Kalvanas said he was a great man and the loss to the church was indeed tragic, but that Leijeris had seen it coming. He had known that his days were numbered.

Now the church had lost yet another pastor and was in dire need. He invited "Schultz" to stay on in Lithuania to help them. Of course, he said, the people do not know Russian, so he would have to learn Lithuanian language. If he were to declare that he was German his Russian passport would be confiscated and he would be sent to East Germany where the communists had now built even more interment camps than the Nazis had. He could preach in German and the people would understand him, but it might create problems with the government. His own thought on the matter was that "Schultz" should lecture the untrained pastors, most of whom had been cantors and lacked the necessary education. Kalvanas would do it himself, but he simply did not have enough time, since his parish was large and he was already too busy.⁴³⁴

"Schultz" wondered what news Kalvanas had received from abroad about life in the church. With whom was he in contact? Kalvanas remarked that he had some friends in Sweden, and East and West Germany, but had no contact with them. He did not know where they were or how to contact them if he wanted to. Parishioners who had come back from East German interment camps occasionally spoke of the church and life in general there, and

⁴³³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 69-70.

⁴³⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 70-71.

now and then he might possibly use Lutherans leaving Lithuania as go-betweens, but really it was too dangerous to do so.

"Schultz" then asked about the insurrectionists and if Kalvanas' had ties with them. Kalvanas replied that it was the government itself that made the insurrectionist movement strong, because it was punishing landowners by deporting them to Siberia and forcing people into the collective farms. As a result the young people had no option but to go to the forest and hide, so that when the soviets came they found only small children and old people, many of whom they arrested and sent to Siberia. "Schultz" wondered about life in the forest and what it must be like among the bandits. Did Kalvanas know any of them? Kalvanas said that it was impossible to know who they were, because they looked and acted just like everyone else. When they were in the forest they hunted down communists who confiscated land and persecuted innocent people and agitators, put them on trial, convicted them in the name of independent democratic Lithuanian Republic, and executed them. Others they left alone, but woe to anyone who betrayed them. They seemed to know everything that was going on and betrayers are dealt with very harshly. "Schultz" wondered whether some of them came to church. Kalvanas replied, that perhaps they did, but neither he nor anyone else would know who was an insurrectionist.

"Schultz" discovered that Kalvanas was clearly in violation of soviet laws, especially with regard to the catechization of young people. The soviets strictly forbade group catechization of children. On January 6, 1950 "Schultz" observed that there was a three hour Epiphany service in the Tauragė church, attended mainly by young teenagers. It was the dead of winter and the unheated church was like the inside of a freezer, and yet the shivering children dutifully sat or stood, or knelt as required without murmur or complaint. He noticed that when this long service was over, the adults and children all left the church through the main door, but at least 50 of the children quickly disappeared around the building and reentered the church by the back door through the sacristy for another 90 minutes



Tauragė confirmation. St. John's Day, 1949.

of instruction and assignments. "Schultz" reported that Kalvanas knew and had admitted that this was a violation of the law.⁴³⁵

In his report of this second visit with Kalvanas "Schultz" told his masters in Moscow that he was certain that Kalvanas had close links with the insurrectionist bandits and knew their names. It must be so, since some were his parishioners. Concerning his foreign connections, it seemed that he did not have any close connection with the West, although he was unusually well informed about what was going on there. He had no ties with Estonia, but was well acquainted with many pastors in Latvia. He had shown himself to be a very careful man, as might be expected of someone who knew that he was under constant surveillance. Even if he were to leave the parish for only a few days, the MGB men would begin to pester his parishioners, asking, "Where is he? where did he go? What is he doing? When will he return, etc?" He noted that radio operator Gudvytis had come under suspicion and had been taken in for questioning,

⁴³⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 73-74.

but had been released for lack of evidence. In the course of their conversation “Schultz” noted that Kalvanas warned him that he must be very circumspect in what he says and to whom he says it.⁴³⁶

There was increasing frustration in Vilnius over the failure of the Tauragė branch to substantiate any charges against Kalvanas. The Tauragians realized that they needed to come up with a new plan, and on March 31, 1950 Terehin, assistant chief of operations in Tauragė, unveiled it with the approval of Lieutenant Colonel Popov (Rus. Попов), chief of the Tauragė MBG. It was now obvious to them that “Lesnaja” was ignorant and of little help as an agent. They would need to subvert someone who had the confidence of Pastor Kalvanas. Their new candidate was organist Jonas Preikšaitis, whose brother Mikas was pastor in Batakliai. In addition they would need to make better use of agents “Leršė,” who had once been a member of the Kalvanas household and “Čiornyj,” a close relative of Kalvanas. They would also need to continue monitoring all of the pastor’s correspondence.⁴³⁷

Vilnius was not at all satisfied. On April 20 Major Petras Raslanas, chief of the fifth branch, already called the “Butcher of Rainiai,” wrote to Lieutenant Colonel Popov to say that Tauragė plan was unworkable and therefore rejected. It was a meaningless fairy-tale with magic words like “gather, prepare, supply, etc.” It had no concrete terms and it had no timetable and, in fact, it was never made clear just what it was supposed to accomplish. Vilnius was not interested in vague plans. Vilnius wanted to know who is in charge of recruiting agents, how they were recruited, by what means, and for what purpose. “We want a specific plan for getting the answers to these questions, and we want it within five days.”⁴³⁸

The constant attention of the MGB was a source of irritation and of constant anxiety to Pastor Kalvanas and his family. He was aware that he could be taken into custody at any time with far more dire

⁴³⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 76.

⁴³⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 11.

⁴³⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 10.

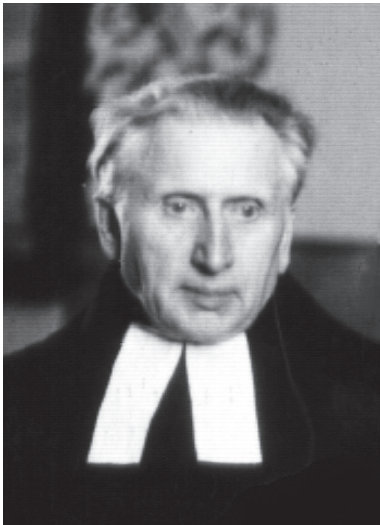
results than had been the case of the past. He was a husband and now the father of six small children, the pastor of the largest Lutheran parish in the country, and responsible for many other parishes besides. Perhaps he could get the MGB off his neck by resigning from the consistory. Surely, he thought, if he were no longer the highest official in the consistory of the church, the MGB would lose interest in him. But first he would need to find a pastor capable of taking his place in the consistory. It seemed to him that the best candidate was Pastor Baltris of Kretinga. He had a good reputation as a pastor, and it was well-known that he had been incarcerated by the *Sicherheitspolizei* in Klaipėda,⁴³⁹ which would surely make glad the hearts of the soviets. They would be loath to arrest a man who had suffered for his opposition to the Nazis.

The minutes of the consistory meeting held in Tauragė on April 26, 1950 report that Chairman Leijeris had been unable to fulfill his duties since December 30 and vice-chairman Kalvanas was resigning from the consistory. New officers were now elected - Anas Baltris of Kretinga, Fridrichas Mėgnius of Žemaičių Naumiestis, vice-chairman, and Martynas Klumbys of Ramučiai, executive secretary. The minutes noted that the names of Kalvanas and Preikšaitis had also been placed in nomination as candidates for consistory membership.⁴⁴⁰

Kalvanas' fond hope that the MGB might lose interest in him proved to be entirely mistaken. The MGB was still determined to get him. Despite the fact that all their efforts to watch his every move had yielded such meager results, it was decided to give agent "Schultz" one more go at him. In particular the MGB wanted to know whether and to what extent Kalvanas had links with Pastor Karl Roze from Latvia, who was in West Germany, and Willem A. Visser't Hooft, the first general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva, who had been actively involved in providing liaison be-

⁴³⁹ LCVA f. 383, a 7, b. 2181, 135-144; LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 84.

⁴⁴⁰ April 26, 1950 consistory meeting minutes. - JKA *Vilniaus Žano Burkevičiaus asmens byla*.



Consistory Chairman
Pastor Ansas Baltris, 1949.

tween the West and the churches in countries which Soviet Union had "liberated." As a reward for his earlier successes "Schultz" was permitted to bring with him his wife and daughter, and one of her friends.

On July 14, 1950 the "Schultz" entourage arrived to be greeted by a jubilant Kalvanas, who proudly announced "Now I am just an ordinary pastor." He informed his visitor that the new chairman was Pastor Baltris. He was well-known and had many acquaintances among the Russians, Roman Catholics, Jews, and even among the leaders of the sects. He knew

how to deal with the communists by speaking to them in simple and understandable words. He was not two faced. He was reliable, faithful, and completely trustworthy. His vice-chairman Mėgnius was very elderly and was left alone by the MGB. "And the beauty of all this," Kalvanas chuckled, "is that I am still in charge. They consult me before they make any decision, but the MGB does not bother with me, because I am just an ordinary pastor." He did not realize that his every word would be recorded in the "Schultz" file. That report would be studied carefully in Tauragė, Vilnius, and Moscow.

Before this last trip to Lithuania "Schultz" had been sent to West Berlin in the guise of a librarian who had once been a pastor, but who was now engaged in a search for rare books to be brought to the Soviet Union. Of course since he had been a pastor he would surely want to visit Lutheran clergy in West Berlin. His real assignment, however, was to find out what contacts these pastors had in the Soviet Union, for example in Lithuania. Among those

with whom he met was Pastor Karl Roze, who had formerly been involved in the activities of the *Deutscher Kulturverband* (German Culture Union) in Latvia. When "Schultz" again returned to Tauragė he told Kalvanas that he brought him warmest personal greetings from his old Latvian classmate. Kalvanas was happy to receive the greeting but also expressed great concern, saying that he hoped that "Schultz" had not given Roze his address, since to receive a letter from him would be very dangerous. "Schultz" assured him that he had given no addresses at all, excepting his own.⁴⁴¹

"Schultz" mentioned also that while in Germany he had met with Dr. Visser't Hooft, the general secretary of WCC, and wondered if perhaps Pastor Kalvanas knew him. Kalvanas recalled that he had met him once at a meeting of priests and other church workers at Saldus in Latvia. "Schultz" then mentioned that Visser't Hooft wanted to send greetings to a woman in Latvia, who was also a friend of Karl Roze and active in the student Christian movement in the Baltic States. Perhaps Kalvanas might know her. "Yes," he answered, "her name is Lilija Bitenieks, a very active and dedicated church woman who had hoped that she could travel with Visser't Hooft to the West. Unfortunately she could not."

Meanwhile Vilnius and Tauragė continued to work on a new plan to catch Kalvanas. Five months after the new plan was announced it was replaced by yet another plan, which was itself simply a repetition of the old plan. The so-called new plan, signed by Terehin, Captain Volkov (Rus. Волков), and Lieutenant Colonel Popov, was inaugurated in August 1950. Now "Lesnaja" would again be reactivated, organist Jonas Preikšaitis would be recruited, and agent "Čiornyj" would be set to work on Kalvanas. None of this had worked before, and it did not work this time either. "Lesnaja" was no more effective than she had been in the past, Preikšaitis again proved to be unrecruitable, "Čiornyj" refused to collaborate, and the correspondence was, as usual, unproductive.⁴⁴² The wheels were

⁴⁴¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 84-85.

⁴⁴² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 14.

turning but nothing moved. When a request came from the Linkuva branch asking for information on Kalvanas, Popov responded “we are working on it,” and then simply repeated unproven accusations, which described him as an anti-soviet man who provided aid and comfort to deportees of families of kulaks and bandits. In his letter to Linkuva he also mistakenly described Kalvanas as vice-president of the church, a position from which he had resigned more than a year earlier. Perhaps this information had not yet been noted by Popov’s informants, or perhaps it had gotten lost on his desk.⁴⁴³

The file on Kalvanas continued to be a dumping ground of information of little value. Most entries did little more than demonstrate that the MGB Tauragė branch was hard at work and nothing, no matter how insignificant, escaped its notice. Agent “Sirotkā” reported on April 27, 1951 that Kalvanas was teaching religion at his home. He knew this because he had seen 3-4 girls near his home talking about religious matters. That did not give the MGB much to go on, so the agent was told that he must find out who the girls were, what questions they were asking, and what answers they were being given.⁴⁴⁴ Agent “Domas” reported on June 15, 1951 that he had been in a service with about 250 other people in Kaunas and heard him say that Christians should forgive the sins of their neighbors, just as Christ forgave those who crucified him. He went on to state that much evil in the world was the result of unreasoned hatred against individuals and even nations. Agent “Domas” was told that now he needed to gather information about just who it was that Pastor Kalvanas had ties with in Kaunas.⁴⁴⁵

By the middle of 1951, six years after the MGB had started to gather information on Kalvanas, they could prove nothing. However, they were still suspicious and sought to confirm their suspicions that the pastor of Tauragė was an anti-soviet man, but they just could not prove it. Their usual methods had failed them time and time again.

⁴⁴³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 244.

⁴⁴⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 89.

⁴⁴⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 91.

They simply gave new names to old plans and tried again what had failed before. In the summer of 1951 agents “Vytenis,” “Lesnaja,” and “Fricas” were assigned to seek out members of the congregation who could be recruited and then to compose a plan to compromise the pastor. The only new element this time around was the decision to try to engage Friedrich Forster, from whom Kalvanas had bought a 100 tsarist rubles and 100 dollars in gold back in 1945, to work as an informant.⁴⁴⁶ As usual, nothing came of the plan. Still they could not accept the possibility that Kalvanas was not anti-soviet. They were in the business of uncovering important subversives. Here was an important man who because of his importance, must be considered subversive. They should know, after all, it was their business to know. They assured themselves and others that given enough time and effort they would surely be able to indict Kalvanas.

By this time the MGB in Vilnius was becoming impatient. “Schultz” was dispatched to Tauragė yet again. On June 21, 1951 Pastor Preikšaitis met him at the Kalvanas front door and asked him when he was finally going to make up his mind to come to Lithuania to serve as a pastor, since his help was so sorely needed. “We have parishes ready for you to serve; we wait and wait and still you stretch the whole business out and make no decision.”⁴⁴⁷ His excuse was again that Lithuanian language was too difficult to speak and German was too dangerous to speak. Kalvanas interjected that Hitler had wanted them to pray in German, the soviets want them to speak in Russian, but they just wanted to be Lithuanians, both when they prayed and when they spoke. Preikšaitis remarked that, unbelievable though it seemed, the church had the support of some leading Lithuanian communists who had no great love for the Russian language and liked the fact that the church used Lithuanian. He cautioned that this must not be spoken of openly. “Schultz” furled his brow. “But you are not supporters of Hitler, you are not politicians, but pastors, who do not mix in politics.”

⁴⁴⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 250.

⁴⁴⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 97.

To this Kalvanas replied: "Faith and religion always have political significance. Hitler wanted to Germanize us and our church; we want to Lithuanize it, and in this sense every pastor is a politician." "Furthermore," he said, "we like you personally; we respect you. We would like to have you in our fellowship, but we do not want our church to be Germanized. We are Lithuanians, and will do everything that we can to support Lithuanians, and want you to help us to defend the Lithuanian identity of our church."⁴⁴⁸ In the course of the conversation it came out that Preikšaitis would meet with Kalvanas every day and at night he stayed with his relatives who had a short wave radio and listened to the news reports from West Germany, the United Kingdom, and the USA. He remarked that it was clear to him that the wisest man of the international scene was Dean Acheson, the American Secretary of State. At this "Schultz" howled with laughter. Kalvanas and Preikšaitis both insisted that it was clear to them that no one understood the international situation better than Acheson. At the same time they started making "insulting statements and childish jokes" about Stalin, calling him "*Batiushka*" (Rus. *бабушка*) – an old father in the Kremlin.⁴⁴⁹

When this report came in there could no longer be any doubt that Kalvanas had no love for the present regime, however, there was nothing that anyone could do about. His guilt could not be proved without revealing who was testifying against him and the MGB could ill afford the unmasking of this very effective agent. As a result, the file on Kalvanas had to remain open and the local agents would have to continue to scurry around peeking in his windows and checking his grocery bags, and exposing themselves to preaching which might indeed begin to soften their hardened hearts.

"Schultz" made his report and the Tauragė branch once again took up its surveillance of Kalvanas with renewed vigor. New names appeared on the reports. Agent "Užpolkaitis," a Lutheran, reported on July 17, 1951 that the pastors were going to meet in Šilutė on

⁴⁴⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 97-98.

⁴⁴⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 98-99.

July 22 for some sort of celebration. He himself had visited the Vyžiai parish church and with his own ears had heard Pastor Klumbys say: "God shines upon us with many stars, but now there are those who come with only one star. God will cast



Jonas and Marta Kalvanas, c. 1950.

them out."⁴⁵⁰ Agent "Užpolkaitis" was then assigned the task of befriending all the pastors, so that he might gain their confidence and sound out their political views. He was also to find out where they held secret meetings and obtain admission to those meetings, so that he could inform the MGB concerning which pastors were disloyal.

It was dangerous for pastors to speak critically with their parishioners about the political and social matters. Only criminal activities could be criticized, not governmental policies. At Christmas 1950, when Pastor Kalvanas was visiting parishioners in the rural areas outside Tauragė, one of his parishioners drove him back to town by horse cart. During the journey the pastor was asked about his opinion of the insurrectionists in the forests. He would say nothing except to condemn their criminal activities. This was a wise course of action, since his driver was MGB agent "Jagminas," who reported the conversation. Since Kalvanas had said nothing incriminating the agent did not bother to make note of it until August 13, 1951.⁴⁵¹

The regional headquarters of the MGB in the Klaipėda region was also concerned that Vilnius should know that it was hard at

⁴⁵⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 92-93.

⁴⁵¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 95.

work in the effort to bring down Pastor Kalvanas. Lieutenant Colonel Vasiljev (Rus. Васильев) in Klaipėda wrote to the Tauragė office on October 15 requesting that he be sent the names of all agents involved in the investigation of Kalvanas, so that he might include them in his own report to Vilnius.⁴⁵² Tauragė responded on November 29 by sending a copy of their eight page master plan to find evidence against the pastor.⁴⁵³

In the eyes of the MGB, Kalvanas had become something like a skin rash which would not heal. The more they scratched the more painful it became. It was becoming a major problem to them that they simply could not seem to get the evidence they needed to put him away.

In February 1952 they came up yet with another plan. It was clear to them that Kalvanas was in contact with Baltris, and other Lutheran pastors in Lithuania, but they did not know what they were talking about and they desperately wanted to know. It appeared to them that Kalvanas was still in contact with Pastor Mizaras, a statement, which if true, should have sent shivers down their spines, since Mizaras was dead! It was noted also that he was in contact with Lutheran pastors in the Latvian Soviet Social Republic. In those days Latvia would not ordinarily be considered a foreign country, but for their purposes the MGB considered his contact with Latvian clergy to be an illegal association with foreigners. The Tauragė branch had to find some basis on which to jail him as a danger to the people's government.⁴⁵⁴

Now a seven point program was drawn up to expose the pastor. Among the points was a directive that former organist Mikas Preikšaitis must now be persuaded to become their agent and reveal Kalvanas' activities. This directive was simply more proof that the Tauragė MGB officers were incompetent. Mikas Preikšaitis was not a former organist. He was a pastor in Bataikiai! The rest of the points were just the same old stuff. "Leršė" and other informers in

⁴⁵² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 252.

⁴⁵³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 254.

⁴⁵⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 15-16.

the congregation must keep a log of all objectionable statements and actions. Agents “Vytenis” and “Burakova” must uncover Kalvanas’ foreign and underground connections. The MGB branches in Kretinga, Šilutė, Pagėgiai, and elsewhere must ascertain which of their agents had been in contact with Kalvanas for any reason and send them to Tauragė to pump him for information. The plan of action was very specific, stating what was to be done, by whom, and by when it was to be completed. The ears of the MGB heads in Tauragė were still ringing from the rebuke of Major Raslanas. Now they would show that they were indeed a polished, efficient, and deadly organization.

A request for the names of agents was sent to Kretinga, Kaunas, and other towns in which Lutheran pastors lived. The letter to Kretinga, dated March 3, 1952, noted that Kalvanas was a good friend of Pastor Baltris of Kretinga, and that Baltris and Pastor Preikšaitis often met with him in his study. It was claimed that they spoke only of church affairs but of course this was not to be believed. The report of agent “Bruno’s” must be passed on to Tauragė for examination and, if possible, he should be sent to Tauragė personally to see what he could learn from personal conversations with Kalvanas.⁴⁵⁵ A July 4 letter from Captain Andreev (Rus. Андреев) assured Tauragė that the Kretinga branch was hard at work on the Baltris-Kalvanas connection, but nothing had yet been uncovered. It was only a matter of time.⁴⁵⁶ From Kaunas Major Marchukov (Rus. Марчук) wrote on July 7 that the Kaunas office had no compromising material on Kalvanas at all. Furthermore they had been unable to determine what close ties he had in Kaunas. Agent “Balsys” stated that he did not know Kalvanas personally but only by reputation.⁴⁵⁷

Some reports were wholly fictitious while others mixed truth and error. The April 4, 1952 report of agent “Matas” claimed that Pastor Kalvanas would come occasionally to see chief doctor Norkus in

⁴⁵⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 255.

⁴⁵⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 267.

⁴⁵⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 269.

the Tauragė hospital. He claimed that Norkus hated the communists because they demanded so much and gave so little. The hospital desperately needed medical equipment, but the communist promises were only empty words. "Matas" stated that he himself was sitting in the room with Norkus when the Tauragė pastor entered. He described the pastor as an imposing man with a beard. He said that the pastor refused to talk in his presence and said that he would wait until "Matas" had left, because he had private matters to discuss. "Matas" said that he observed several such visits during which the pastor and doctor huddled together in private. The Pastor in question could not have been Kalvanas, who never had a beard.⁴⁵⁸

Vilnius seems not to have been suitably impressed by the Tauragė plan; a revised plan was submitted on July 28, 1952. Now the goal stated was that the links between Pastor Kalvanas and "Pastors" Baltris, Gudvytis, and Baltutis must be firmly established. Apparently the MGB did not realize that there is a distinction between pastors, radio operators, and former cantors. Firm links must be established connecting Kalvanas to foreign organizations. "Leršė," "Leskov," and "Ivanovas" from Kretinga, all of whom had close ties to Kalvanas, must investigate these connections. "Leršė" particularly must use her relationship with Marta Kalvanienė, the pastor's wife. She must tell Pastor Kalvanas that his boarder, a Hollander by the name of De Graf, urgently wanted to leave the country to be reunited with his wife. She must ask him how this can be arranged. Also she must determine what contacts he had with Pastors Gerhard Zibo and Leitner, formerly of Kaliningrad and now in Germany. The new plan also stated that efforts to recruit former Cantor "Leskov" must be renewed. He had resigned his position as an agent, because of his unwillingness to betray Pastor Kalvanas. He must be shown the error of his ways. Apart from this, the plan remained much as before.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 108-109.

⁴⁵⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 18-19.

It appeared to the MGB that Lutheran clergy were increasing their anti-soviet activity. On July 30, 1952 Major Luzakov (Rus. Лузаков) decided that the Kalvanas file should be re-classified and designated a *Formulary file*. This meant that Pastor Kalvanas was subject to immediate arrest if or when the MGB decided to move against him.⁴⁶⁰

In June 1952 MGB Colonel Stoljar (Rus. Столяр) at Kaliningrad reported that Pastor Gerhard Zibo, originally from Thuringia, was MGB agent "Fogel." He had moved to East Germany together with Pastor Leitner and all relevant materials had been sent to the MGB bureau chief there.⁴⁶¹ This meant that they had a foreign source who might be able to furnish them with important intelligence about Kalvanas' foreign connections.

Now the agents began to file their reports. A report from "Ivanovas" arrived on July 2. It stated that he had met with met with Kalvanas on May 25 and they had discussed theological and ecclesiastical matters. In 1948 Pastor Baltris had presented to "Ivanovas" the challenge to seek ordination, but he had declined. Kalvanas wondered why. "Ivanovas" reported that he had the young family to take care of and the life of the clergy was simply too problematic and full of jeopardy. Kalvanas replied: "We must remember that life is hard, but, as we

Formulary file on Pastor Kalvanas.
From: Lithuanian Special Archives.

⁴⁶⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 5.

⁴⁶¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 265.

are told in the Holy Scriptures, nothing in this world is eternal.” “Ivanovas” reported that Kalvanas had not ended the sentence and what he meant by it was unclear.⁴⁶² What was clear to the MGB was that this report was of little use to them.

The MGB thought that perhaps “Ivanovas” could be of some use to them, if he would go back to Baltris and bring him greetings from Kalvanas, and say that they had spoken together very confidentially about the present international situation. It would be his assignment to try to sound Baltris out about his opinion of the current state of international affairs. However, he must be very careful not to say anything that could be considered anti-soviet and he must speak in laudatory terms of Kalvanas as a highly educated and faithful pastor. The MGB was also concerned that “Ivanovas” should try to uncover any links between Kalvanas and repatriated pastors from Lithuania in the British and American zones in West Germany.

A May 28, 1952 letter from Tauragė to Colonel Senin (Rus. Сенин), chief of the MGB in the Klaipėda region, contained even more fictitious information. It was reported by agent “Dobilas” of Jurbarkas, that Pastor Kalvanas had organized a group of agents in Smalininkai, including the brothers Emilis, Mikas, Andrius, and Jonas Martinaičiai, all of whom were foresters. “Dobilas” reported that Kalvanas would come to them every Sunday to get their intelligence about how many deportees were being sent to Russia, how many were imprisoned, what prices were being charged, and what wages were being given to collective farm workers, but now this pattern had changed. Every Sunday one or another of the brothers would go to Kalvanas in Tauragė to supply him with this highly sensitive intelligence data. It was obvious that he was the boss and they were his gang. Tauragė asked Senin to mobilize his agents who were Lutheran, so that this criminal could finally be brought to justice.⁴⁶³

Agent “Dobilas” also provided fanciful information which led Senior Lieutenant Šmotavičius of the Jurbarkas MGB branch to re-

⁴⁶² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 112.

⁴⁶³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 263.

quest on June 3 that Tauragė send him immediate information from their files concerning Kalvanas, including a complete physical description, because “Dobilas” had told them that Kalvanas was in fact was an American espionage agent.⁴⁶⁴ This excited the Tauragė branch greatly. Now they thought the end of their quest was in view. They sent the information at once. On June 16 Major Abramov (Rus. Абрамов) in Jurbarkas informed Tauragė that they were sending agent “Dobilas” to assist them in the work of exposing Kalvanas.⁴⁶⁵

Six months later nothing had happened, no progress had been made. On January 19, 1953 Tauragė MGB assistant chief Luzakov asked Jurbarkas whether agent “Dobilas” had any additional data which might be of value to them. He requested that they interrogate prisoner Emilis Martinaitis who had confessed the involvement with the bandits. His statements should be compared to the reports of “Dobilas” to see if they coincided.⁴⁶⁶ On February 3 Abramov responded that Martinaitis had been very responsive to questioning and had revealed the hiding places of the bandits in December 1952, but he had not one word to say about Kalvanas and any supposed involvement of him with the bandits. The Jurbarkas branch was of the opinion that any further interrogation of Martinaitis about Kalvanas would be fruitless.⁴⁶⁷ Fully as fruitless was information supplied by agent “Liepa,” the former chairman of the Šilutė parish. He had fallen out with Pastor Klumbys and was no longer closely associated with any of the pastors, and the information he gave was not always reliable, as could clearly be seen in his April 17, 1953 report.⁴⁶⁸ No more helpful was the October 19, 1952 report of agent “Kaliūnas” on his visit with Pastor Deacon Petras Knispelis at Lauksargiai. When “Kaliūnas” asked about Kalvanas, the pastor had stated that Kalvanas had restricted his activities because he had been ordained by Pastor Baltris without the usual preparatory training. Therefore

⁴⁶⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 266, 273.

⁴⁶⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 113.

⁴⁶⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 283.

⁴⁶⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 284.

⁴⁶⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 132-132ad.

he and Pastor Kalvanas were not particularly close.⁴⁶⁹ A little over a year later, on November 13, 1953 Lieutenant Vilkas, of the MGB Pagėgiai branch, informed Tauragė that his office was sending agent “Kaliūnas” to meet with Kalvanas.⁴⁷⁰ Again nothing came of it.

Agent “Leršė” reported on July 25 that she had run into Marta Kalvanienė in the market two days earlier, but they had had only a brief conversation. Kalvanienė said that they had again been ejected from their new flat and were living in the countryside in the village of Paberžė, far distant from Tauragė. The Kalvanas family, which included 6 small children, had been ejected from the parsonage in 1948 and had been given no place to go. The pastor had found a place for them to live and when he had completed repairs to make it livable, they were again ejected and had to go to relatives of Pastor Preikšaitis in the countryside. In response to her report agent “Leršė” was told that she must visit Marta Kalvanienė in the new home and determine who visited them from the local community and from Tauragė. She did her duty. She went to the Kalvanas home and tried to get the information she had been told to get, but Pastor Kalvanas had very politely told her that he did not mean to offend her personally, but he just simply did not engage in idle talk with women.⁴⁷¹

Agent “Leršė” was a dedicated agent who tried to fulfill all MGB assignments, but by this time Pastor Kalvanas was becoming just a bit irritated and suspicious. On March 2, 1953 she came again and while she sat in the kitchen with Marta trying to pump her for information the pastor appeared and started to question her; just what was she doing these days, what was her source of income, did she have a job? Without blinking she replied: “I have no regular job. Thanks be to God, two times I have won the lottery, and so I have been able to pay all my bills.” Pastor Kalvanas mused that perhaps she could get a job with the MGB, since they pay 300 rubles and even more to people with an interesting story to tell. He noted that

⁴⁶⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 120.

⁴⁷⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 148.

⁴⁷¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 116, 118-119.

they particularly liked to recruit women, since by nature they love to talk and their ears are even bigger than their mouths. She replied that she was not a gossip and knew of no way for a women like her to making a living, other than to work as a seamstress. She reported that this seemed to satisfy the pastor; he had left them to their gossiping. However, now she was afraid that she would not be able to get much information out of him. A handwritten note in the MGB report stated that she had received a payment of 200 rubles in November 1952, but she was perhaps a bit too passive in her attempts to gain the information they needed.⁴⁷²

“Leršė” continued to try to do her job. She reported on June 5, 1953 that she had been in church the previous Sunday but Kalvanas had limited himself to Bible talk and had said nothing against the communists. She noted also that Kalvanas family had a little garden by their new living place and had given a portion of it to her. They had all worked together in the garden planting vegetables, but since there were other people around Kalvanas, he had not said much and had not invited her to take refreshments with him. On the basis of this report she was told that she must spend as much time as possible in the garden and when the pastor came to engage him in conversations about the international situation because, since Stalin’s death, it had become quite a hot topic in the Baltics. She should also sound him out about the replacement of Russian officials with Lithuanians.⁴⁷³

She dutifully reported on July 1 that she had gone to the church on the previous Sunday (the day of confirmation) and there were many people there, including about 40 young people who stood around the altar in a semi-circle while Pastor Kalvanas give them a drink of wine out of a bowl. This is how she described First Communion! She reported also that she had gone often to the garden and had tried to engage the pastor in conversation, but he had not shown much enthusiasm about talking with her. She tried

⁴⁷² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 129.

⁴⁷³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 136.

to sound him out about the strikes in Berlin but he said: "It is all in the newspapers. She could read about it there, although what is in the papers is no more reliable than any other gossip."⁴⁷⁴ Marta was more forthcoming and would gladly give her opinion, but the pastor told to keep her thoughts to herself. When it came to kitchen table talk about meaningless subjects both spoke very freely.

Now the Vilnius office was losing patience. On November 12, 1953 Colonel Dolmatov (Rus. ДОЛМАТОВ), chief of the 4 branch, fired off a letter to Senior Lieutenant Dargis, chief of the Tauragė MGB, saying that he wanted action and was sending back Kalvanas' *Formulary file*. The MGB knew that although he had rejected the chairmanship of the consistory, he was still the *de facto* leader of the church. His anti-soviet attitudes were now influencing Pastors Preikšaitis, Klumbys, Degis, and Briedis and, through them, influencing Chairman Baltris and the rest of the Lutherans. The Vilnius office expressed its dissatisfaction that the Kalvanas investigation was going nowhere and that the agents, who ought to be providing them with clear evidence of his anti-soviet activities, were failing to do so. It was their first responsibility to get the information the MGB needed to reveal his subversive activities and his connections with foreign Lutheran organizations. "In short, use your agents more effectively, and recruit new agents who will be better sources of the information you need." This should include recruiting agents in the towns where Pastors Degis, Baltris, Preikšaitis, and Klumbys were serving. A new plan to bring this whole matter to its desired conclusion must be submitted on or before December 5.⁴⁷⁵

The agents did all they could, but nothing came of their efforts. Once again Moscow would have to step in. On January 8, 1954 agent "Schultz" once again arrived in Tauragė. As result of his visit "Schultz" was able to file a long report, but it was not what the MGB was looking for. Kalvanas had spoken quite freely to him about the internal situation in the Lithuanian Lutheran Church. He

⁴⁷⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 137.

⁴⁷⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 20-21.



Marta Kalvanienė with her children April, 1955.



Pastor Kalvanas family. June, 1957.

again emphasized to “Schultz” his presence in Lithuania was sorely needed. Because of the urgent need for pastors, Baltris had taken to ordaining cantors and other warm bodies totally lacking in even most basic theological education. They did not know the difference between a Lutheran and a Baptist and could not care less. What was being heard from the pulpits was drivel and downright heresy. With regards to the government, he stated that it seemed to him, to Cantor Mickus, and to Pastor Klumbys that Lavrentij Beria (Rus. Лаврентий Берия) had introduced a far more moderate regime in which Lithuanians communists replaced Russians in the top government jobs and the people were now free to visit the Curonian Spit (Lith. *Kuršių Nerija*), and there was a more lighthearted spirit of liberty in the land. But then all of a sudden Beria disappeared, and the old policies were reinstated. In other words, all that he reported were known facts. There was nothing confidential reported. The MGB would find this report of very little value.⁴⁷⁶

The situation with the uneducated pastors was indeed serious. The Lutheran Church was being threatened from within. It could easily lose its identity as a Lutheran Church. Kalvanas was well aware of this, and for him it was a matter of great concern. However he did not dare to rejoin the consistory and again become the official chief of the church. The suggestion that he do so presented itself when Pastor Baltris died in January 1954. At that time Kalvanas could easily have become the official chief of the church and, if he had been in the good graces of the MGB, he surely would have done so. The consistory met on February 5, 1954 to reorganize itself. Pastor Kalvanas did not offer himself as a candidate for membership on the consistory, much less chairmanship. He saw that the best course of action was to use his influence, which was considerable, to guide the consistory in making a wise choice. He therefore suggested that the chairmanship ought to go to Pastor Vilius Burkevičius, a former lawyer whom he had personally tutored in Lutheran theology, while he remained on the outside. He was, of course, still the lead-

⁴⁷⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 157-165.

ing Lutheran pastor in the country, and the new chairman wisely sought his counsel.⁴⁷⁷

The death of Stalin and the subsequent disappearance of Lavrentij Beria brought the replacement of the MGB by the KGB. This meant only that the ministry was renamed a committee but its brief remained much the same. There was, however, one important change. On July 20, 1954 the new committee ordered a review of all operating files for the purpose of weeding out those which had proved unproductive.⁴⁷⁸

The Kalvanas file was not among those laid aside. On October 21 Dargis, the chief of the Tauragė branch, wrote to Vilnius that because of his uncommunicative nature it had been impossible to adequately explore Kalvanas' illegal activities. He suggested that perhaps agent "P" might be able to uncover additional contacts of Kalvanas which would reveal something of his character, intentions, and activities.⁴⁷⁹ However, on April 25, 1955 the Tauragė branch had to report to Vilnius that agent "P" had uncovered nothing and that the Kalvanas file was no longer growing.⁴⁸⁰

Still the KGB remained resolute in its determination to continue its investigation of Kalvanas. Even after 8 years of surveillance in which the KGB and its predecessor agencies had minutely examined every letter to and from him. No secret information had been found. The February 16, 1955 letter of Lieutenant Colonel Kučinskas to Tauragė had to admit as much.⁴⁸¹ Pastors who were in communication with Kalvanas came under suspicion. On September 10, 1955 Lieutenant Polzunov (Rus. ПОЛЗУНОВ) of the Linkuva branch wrote to Tauragė asking for information about Kalvanas because they were gathering information about Pastor Degis. What information,

⁴⁷⁷ February 5, 1954 consistory meeting minutes. – JKA *Viliaus Žano Burkevičiaus asmens byla*.

⁴⁷⁸ *Streikus* 2002, 179.

⁴⁷⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 290.

⁴⁸⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 22-23.

⁴⁸¹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 191.



Consistory of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Lithuanian SSR 1955-1958.

he wondered, could they give him, so that he could compromise Degis because of this association with Kalvanas.⁴⁸²

The ineffective plans to compromise Kalvanas had to be constantly revised. The KGB came up with a new idea on April 26, 1955. It suggested that perhaps a certain Gustavas Martinaitis, who had been a member of a SS battalion during the war and was known to have maintained contact with the bandits, should be recruited. Kalvanas was described as a man of great authority among the clergy. It was suspected he had gathered the more reactionary among them around himself as an inner circle to influence the consistory.⁴⁸³ Vilnius did not think much of this idea. On September 12 Tauragė was informed by Colonel Zverev (Rus. Зверев) that it had until October 15 to come

⁴⁸² LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 294.

⁴⁸³ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 22-23.

up with a better plan.⁴⁸⁴ Tauragė could not come up with a better plan, and this made them the target of the colonel's anger. On July 12, 1956 Zverev fired off a letter to Senior Lieutenant Dargis insisting that they must come up with a plan with no further delay.⁴⁸⁵

A glimmer of light appeared on July 2, 1955 when Jurbarkas' Senior Lieutenant Evsejchik (Rus. Евсейчик) wrote to Tauragė that they suspected that Mikas Martinaitis had ties with West German intelligence and they knew (but could not prove) that Martinaitis used



Pastor Jonas Kalvanas, c. 1960.

to meet during 1950-1952 with Kalvanas. Kalvanas would come to him to receive data useful to the enemies of the state. This meant that the search must widen. What other pastors were working in the Tauragė parish at that time and what compromising material about them could be found? Those still living in the region must be carefully examined as to their possible ties with foreign intelligence agents. It must also be determined whether any of them were agents of the KGB who knew Martinaitis. They should be sent to Martinaitis to sound him out.⁴⁸⁶ Four days later, on July 6, Senior Lieutenant Krajcev (Rus. Крайцев) responded to Jurbarkas that Kalvanas had been in Tauragė for many years and could be labeled as anti-soviet. He was known to have associations with Martinaitis. He suggested

⁴⁸⁴ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 292.

⁴⁸⁵ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 298.

⁴⁸⁶ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 297.



The Kalvanas children on the first day of school, September 1, 1960.



Kalvanas family on the confirmation day
of Julija and Jonas, Jr., June 23, 1963.

that the brother of Mikas, who lived in Tauragė, should be made an agent to explore that connection.⁴⁸⁷

As the years went by the Kalvanas file grew fatter but it was fat with no meat in it. Nothing could be used to compromise him. Much money had been expended, and no less than 24 agents and informers had dedicated themselves to exposing this man who was considered such a great danger to the soviet cause. Time, money, and man power had produced nothing which could possibly warrant spending even one more ruble or one more minute in this pursuit. Still the KGB could not admit that it had been wrong. It decided simply to move the file to the archive without further comment. On August 28, 1958 Tauragė announced that it considered the Kalvanas business closed. Nothing of any substance had been added to file for an extended period of time, therefore it was turning over the matter to Vilnius.⁴⁸⁸ On August 30 the formulary file was sent to Vilnius along with a request from Dargis that his action be approved.

The file on Kalvanas was examined in Vilnius on September 3, 1958. The whole record was carefully studied, including the reports of Kalvanas' supposed anti-soviet sermons, the reports of the agents, etc. In his cover letter Captain Dargis had noted all this and stated that Kalvanas had left the consistory and was now an ordinary pastor. Recent reports on him had not provided any fruitful information about anti-communist activities. He was therefore recommending the file to be closed and put in the KGB archives. He noted that a copy of it could also be kept in the files at Tauragė.⁴⁸⁹ Major General Liaudis in Vilnius agreed and stated that to carry out further investigations would be pointless.⁴⁹⁰

Kalvanas did not share the fate of other church leaders because his opposition to the regime did not express itself in the usual way, by open resistance and disobedience to government policies and regulations. Gavėnis was banished because of his refusal to follow

⁴⁸⁷ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 295-296.

⁴⁸⁸ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 303.

⁴⁸⁹ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 25-26; LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 304.

⁴⁹⁰ LYA f. K-1, a 45, b. 704, 25.



Pastor Kalvanas with Jonas and Irena after divine service
in the Būtingė church, c. 1963.

the directive which called upon him to stop using the church sacristy as his residence. Leijeris was sent to a labor camp because of his open defiance of local authorities as evidenced by his appeal to Joseph Stalin. In the case of Mizaras every word and action seemed to have been an active defiance of authority. The same could be seen in the persecution, exile, and execution of Roman Catholic priests and bishops. Kalvanas was no less faithful and patriotic than they, but he did not by word or act give any indication that he thought himself to be above governmental authority and therefore did not need to pay any attention to it. He understood that open rebellion always leads to harsh reprisals.

That the KGB could not leave him alone, but felt it necessary to find some way of accusing and destroying him, indicates the government's fear of anyone with honor and authority among the people who was not under government control. This was especially true in the case of the clergy and hierarchy, because they alone were able to speak publicly without using Marxist rhetoric and without referring to Marxist ideology. As far as the KGB was concerned such men must be kept under control and made agents. In the case of Kalvanas this proved to be impossible. The agency sought out means to compromise him and make him their own, but they were unable to do so. The mobilization of their highly intricate network of agents and the ever growing pile of reports never yielded any conclusive proof which they could use against him. They continued their surveillance but nothing ever came of it. Their efforts were in vain, although they dare not admit it to themselves or anyone else.

3.7 Epilogue

The actions taken by the Lithuanian Communist Party, the Commissioner of CARC, and the NKGB-MGB-KGB to discourage religiosity among the people, restrict the activities of priests, and destroy the influence of the churches in the Lithuanian community did not receive the measure of public favor expected. The socialist dreamers had convinced themselves that Lithuanians would not react strongly to actions thought to be strictly local and not of wider significance. They were incorrect. The people did not react by going on strike or by issuing manifestos condemning the government. That would have been futile. If they had done so governmental reprisals would have been swift and severe. The communists soon came to understand that, while the people seemed to be passive, they were becoming increasingly resentful of the government and were beginning to hate communism.

Commissioner Pušinis reflected candidly on the situation in a memo to Poljanskij, dated February 10, 1951, that the Party now needed to re-evaluate the steps which it had taken to implement repressive measures against the churches. Although the number of the Roman Catholic Churches in Lithuania had dropped from 711 in 1948 to the present 541 and the number of active priests had been reduced from 1012 in 1949, to 826 in 1950, and down to 730 in 1951, the people were no less religious than they had been in former days. By way of example he noted that a comparison of data collected since 1938 from the Telšiai diocese showed that repressive measures taken against the priests had little effect and the people were no less religious.

Pušinis had to admit that, if the present policies continued in force, within a few years the situation in Lithuania would be similar to that in Western Belarus where the number of priests had been ruthlessly cut. He observed that when a Belarusian Catholic sees a priest, he treats him like a savior. Furthermore, the Belarusians were increasingly coming to Lithuania to seek the services of the clergy. He asked Party leaders what course to follow. He observed that, if they continued the repressive measures of cutting the num-

ber of priests so drastically that those who remained cannot handle the load, it would cause widespread anger among the masses. It would set workers who were religious against workers who were not. Where the workers are not united the building of Socialism cannot be accomplished. Clearly, if workers were set in two opposing camps great harm to the socialist cause would result. It would be necessary to consider carefully how to deal with this situation. "I spoke with Comrade Sniečkus about this and he suggested that since two heads are better than one, I should consult with Poljanskij in Moscow about it. Together we would surely find a solution."⁴⁹¹

On March 19, 1951 Poljanskij wrote to Pušinis that he had submitted the question to the appropriate Party agencies in Moscow and had also spoken with Comrade Sniečkus on March 13. All agreed with Pušinis' analysis. Further repressive measures would not be helpful. The Lithuanian Communist Party had issued orders that the repression of priests be ended.⁴⁹²

Now the hands of Pušinis and the MGB were tied. They would need to follow some other course of action to curtail church activities. An example of this is the incident at Varniai. Reports came to Pušinis that in 1951 at Varniai Priest Leonas Veselis had sponsored a special celebration for young people graduating from school. During the course of the celebration the priest raised a toast to which everyone readily agreed. He said: "May God grant that we will soon be rid of these bastards!" Pušinis ordered the local MGB officer to open a file and begin gathering information about this priest at once. Although the officer agreed to do so, he subsequently found that he could not since recent changes in Party directives reserved this action for special cases only. A frustrated Pušinis declared to Gedvilas on June 28, 1951: "I can take no action, because the new instructions forbid it, and in the present situation the propagandizing of the masses will accomplish nothing."⁴⁹³

⁴⁹¹ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 27, 5-6.

⁴⁹² LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 27, 15.

⁴⁹³ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 28, 50.

Of course priests could be arrested for violating Article 58 of the Russian criminal code. In fact almost every Lithuanian citizen had violated it in one way or another and was liable to arrest and imprisonment, but that would have no propaganda value. Even the most dedicated communists were guilty of violating Article 58 and could be prosecuted, as many had been during the *Great Purge* (Rus. *Чистка*) trials of 1937-1938. It was determined that of the 139 members and candidates of the Party's Central Committee who were elected at the 17th Congress of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), 98 persons, i.e. 70 percent, were arrested and shot (mostly in 1937-1938). Of 1,966 delegates with either voting or advisory rights, 1,108 persons were arrested on charges of anti-revolutionary crimes, i.e., decidedly more than a majority.⁴⁹⁴ At that time Stalin had used the NKGB against the Bolsheviks in a purge which resulted in the death of some 850,000 Communist Party members, about 36 percent of the total membership.⁴⁹⁵ By making use of Article 58 Stalin had destroyed the generation of communists which had formed the Russian Revolution of 1917. He had rebuilt the Party around people who owed their loyalty to him. In addition, millions of innocent civilians were killed or sent to slave labor camps in the frigid forests of Siberia or elsewhere in the Soviet Union. In 1938 the number of victims forced into gulags rose to its highest number. The total number of Stalin's victims in gulag camps, labor colonies, "kulak" resettlements, and prisons in 1937-38 may have reached as many as 3.5 million.⁴⁹⁶

Until the death of Stalin neither the Commissioner of CARC nor anyone else in the top echelons of the Lithuanian Communist Party would ever admit openly that priests were being prosecuted and punished for religious zeal. They would instead state that the priests had been found guilty of anti-revolutionary activity. It was only after Stalin's death that Pušinis would admit that the arrest of priests had been part of a concerted effort to break the power of the church. He admitted

⁴⁹⁴ Yoder 1993, 24.

⁴⁹⁵ Brzezinski 1956, 25.

⁴⁹⁶ Getty, Rittersporn, Zemskov 1993, 1021.

this at the meeting of the Plenum of the Lithuanian Communist Party on June 11-13, 1953. He reminded the delegates that Lavrentij Beria, the chief of the MVD and assistant chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, had declared to the Central Committee in Moscow that mistakes had been made in national questions and particularly in actions taken against the Roman Catholic Church in Lithuania. He had gone on to say, undoubtedly it was for this reason that banditry was still a problem in Lithuania and that, in addition to disgruntled kulaks and other criminals, there had been more than a few poor peasants and poor unemployed workers who had been mistakenly branded as bandits or kulaks and marked for deportation.⁴⁹⁷

This was the first time that Pušinis would admit openly that the repressive measures against priests had been based not so much on anti-revolutionary behavior, but had been a part of calculated effort to break the church. About this he was unapologetic. He stated that those who had been punished had set Roman Catholic canon law above soviet laws governing religious cults. Priests had paid no attention to the Soviet religious laws and thought of themselves as "officers of the Vatican State." Attempts to reason with them had been met by stubborn resistance and a refusal to collaborate. As a result in 1948 the Lithuanian Communist Party had no option but to adopt the position of Lenin, who had stated that where education fails, stern administrative measures must be taken. Many priests had to be isolated and repressed because of their own stubbornness and belligerence. In 1949 this brought a speedy end to the church's resistance. This policy was so effective that in 1952 only one priest needed to be removed from his position in the Telšiai diocese. It was no longer necessary to take repressive measures against priests, he stated, and the Party had decided that this policy need no longer be followed.⁴⁹⁸

Further changes came after the newly elevated Nikita Khrushchev made his famous speech about the "cult of personality," which had been cultivated by Joseph Stalin. The Lithuanian Communist Party

⁴⁹⁷ LYA LKP f. 1771, a 131, b. 181, 30-36.

⁴⁹⁸ LYA LKP f. 1771, a 131, b. 181, 34.

was asked by the Kremlin to study and reflect upon Khrushchev's words. In general the Lithuanian Communist Party was unquestionably in agreement, although some had reservations. Among these was First Secretary Sniečkus. In a letter to Moscow on June 6, 1956 he stated that Lithuanian communists were in complete agreement with the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union Communist Party, which had condemned Stalin's forced movement of ethnic peoples from their traditional homelands to remote regions. However, he went on to say, it must be asserted that in the case of the kulaks and certain other elements in Lithuania this had been a proper course of action. The Party had quite properly punished those who had resisted collectivization or engaged in banditry which terrorized the general population. The repression of certain other elements was also justified. The masses must still be taught that these measures had been necessary and were by no means an attempt to destroy Lithuania as a distinct nation. At the same time he admitted that past actions must be carefully reviewed.⁴⁹⁹

Nowhere did Sniečkus mention priests or intelligentsia but it was quite clear that he included them under the general heading "other elements."

For the next few years the Lithuanian Communist Party followed a policy of the "coexistence" with the Roman Catholic Church. On April 29, 1957 Kazimieras Liaudis, Lithuanian KGB Chairman, defined coexistence to mean the elevation of pro-soviet priests and KGB agents to positions of leadership in the Church. As leaders they would be in a position to insist upon the loyalty of priests to the government and obedience to Party directives on religious matters. He noted, however, that the situation was precarious because now many Roman Catholic leaders and priests, previously deported, had returned and were resuming their earlier hostile stance. They were implementing well thought out plans to curtail the state's influence on the church. Accordingly the KGB would continue to isolate reac-

⁴⁹⁹ LYA LKP f. 1771, a 190, b. 10, 66-76.

tionary priests and those who were openly intransigent. It would also recruit priests who had come from the Gulags to serve as agents.⁵⁰⁰

Although the repressions had come to an end, disloyal and disobedient clerics would still be subject to arrest and prosecution. In each case it would need to be shown that the arrests had resulted from an open and flagrant violation of soviet law, such as clear evidence of close connections with the insurrectionists, connection with foreign groups advocating the overthrow of the regime, or speeches and publications meant to incite the people against their government.

Between 1944 and 1953 364 Roman Catholic priests were placed under arrest and sent to prison, work camps, or firing squads. In 1949 alone 91 priests were arrested and convicted. During the period of repression 30 percent of, what had been a force of about 1200, Roman Catholic priests were repressed.⁵⁰¹ During the same period 4 of the 7 Lithuanian Lutheran pastors suffered a similar fate.

Few prisoners ever returned home during the Stalin years: 1951-9, 1952-2, 1953-6.⁵⁰² After Stalin's death and the loosening of policies large numbers of political prisoners were released. According to the July 11, 1958 report of commissioner Justas Rugienis, 242 priests had come home since the inauguration of the new policy: 1954-35, 1955-49, 1956-127, 1957-21, 1958-4.⁵⁰³ Rugienis described these returnees, who included among them the Roman Catholic Bishops Teofilius Matulionis and Pranciškus Ramanauskas, as an "army of clergy" whose return had revitalized the church. This concerned him greatly. Among this "army of clergy" who returned home were Lutheran Pastors Gustavas Rauskinas and Jurgis Gavėnis.

None of the returnees were any less committed to their faith and churches as a result of soviet repression. Now the communists understood that they would need to change their tactics and do

⁵⁰⁰ LYA LKP f. 1771, a 190, b. 11, 29, 37, 40-41.

⁵⁰¹ *Streikus* 2002, 109.

⁵⁰² LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 52, 31.

⁵⁰³ LCVA f. R-181, a 3, b. 52, 31.



Roman Catholic Auxiliary Bishop Pranciškus Ramanauskas of Telšiai with four diocesan priests after years in corrective labor camps in Siberia.

From: Kviklys 1980.

everything in their power to form a wedge between the people and their priests. This would be a formidable task.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰⁴ On January 16, 1989 the Presidium of the Supreme Council in Moscow issued a decree: "Concerning the Means Taken to Restore Justice for Victims of Repressions through the 1930's, 1940's, and 1950's." This opened the way for the rehabilitation of those who had been punished under the terms of Article 58. Following this on August 3, 1990 the Latvian Supreme Council announced the rehabilitation of Stalinist victims, among whom was Pastor Gustavas Rauskinas. LVA f. 1986, a 1, b. 13899, 82.

Following Moscow's decree the Lithuanian soviet government instructed the State Prosecutor's office to review all relevant cases. On May 25, 1989 Pastor Erikas Leijeris was rehabilitated, on June 29, 1989 the Pastor Jonas Mizaras was rehabilitated, and one day later, on June 30, 1989, LSSR Prosecutor Vidutis Barauskas announced the rehabilitation of Pastor Jurgis Gavėnis. Regrets were expressed that these men and their families had suffered great hardships, and in accordance with the September 26, 1955 decision of the Lithuanian Council of Ministers each of them should be given two months pay and, if he is deceased, this amount should be given to his survivors. LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12078, 57-58; LYA f. K-1, a 58 S, b. P-12078, 18/1; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 66; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12309, 79/2; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 88-89; LYA f. K-1, a 58 B, b. P-12325, 85/3.

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JKA Eriko Leijerio atsiminimas (unpaged).

JKA Gauti raštai 1941-1944 (unpaged).

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JKA III pokarinio sinodo 1976.06.20 medžiaga (unpaged).

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JKA Pasiųstų raštų nuorašai 1941-1943 (unpaged).

JKA Viliaus Žano Burkevičiaus asmens byla (unpaged).

KA LELB Konsistorijos protokolų knyga 1935-1941.

KA Eriko Laicono rašytinis palikimas.

LCVA f. 383, a 7, b. 2181.

LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 622.

LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 631.

LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 713.

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LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 754.

LCVA f. 391, a 4, b. 755.

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LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 2.

LCVA f. R-181, a 1, b. 6.

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LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 11.
LYA VRM f. 135, a 7, b. 12.
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Darius Petkūnas

THE REPRESSION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
IN LITHUANIA DURING THE STALINIST ERA

Maketavo Karolis Saukantas

Viršelio dailininkė Laura Tūnik

Klaipėda, 2011

SL 1335. 2011 06 07. Apimtis 16 sąl. sp. l. Tiražas 500 egz.

Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, Herkaus Manto g. 84, 92294 Klaipėda

Tel. (8 46)398 891, el. paštas: leidykla@ku.lt, interneto adresas: <http://www.ku.lt/leidykla/>

Spausdino spaustuvė „Petro ofsetas“, Žalgirio g. 90, LT-09303 Vilnius

Darius Petkūnas has provided us with a clear picture of Lithuanian Lutheranism during a particularly dark period in the history of that small nation. It reveals also the zeal with which pastors and members lived out their faith during the Stalinist years and the dedication of pastors who remained faithful to their calling in the face of almost insurmountable obstacles. No study of Lithuanian religious oppression in this period can be complete without recognition of the sufferings of the Lithuanian Lutherans. Other Christians in Lithuania were also oppressed, but the oppression of Lutherans went beyond this. They suffered as a group simply because they were Lutherans.

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Darius Petkūnas lays before us the fruits of his useful and careful study of the nature and scope of the repressions suffered by the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Lithuania and its clergy during the Stalinist period. This is the first such study to appear. It sets down in graphic terms the constant dangers faced by church members and the clergy who served them after the end of WWII and their determined efforts to keep the faith in the face of great hardships and painful persecution. It demonstrates how what could have ended in disaster issued instead in victory.

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