STUDENT UNREST IN LITHUANIA AFTER STALIN'S DEATH, 1953-1960*

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ABSTRACT. *Following Stalin's death, the political rivalry for the highest posts in the Kremlin and the 'new political course', initiated by Lavretii Beria, affected the social activity of Lithuanian students. Tendencies of the anti-Soviet movement again increased in Lithuania. Student national actions (in the documents of the Communist Party and state security referred to as 'nationalistic anti-Soviet actions') were detected in all the institutions of higher education in Lithuania in that period. Patriotically-minded students required to introduce Lithuanian in state offices and stop falsifying the history of Lithuania. They collected signatures for the return of the former names of the main streets of Vilnius and Kaunas (instead of being named after Stalin) and for the erection of a monument to the founder of Vilnius, Grand Duke Gediminas, in the capital. In 1955-57 the celebration of All Souls' Day (2 November) became a peculiar form of student demonstration in the cemeteries of Vilnius and Kaunas. That was the first open action of protest after the suppression of the armed resistance. The 'nationalistic actions' of the students were associated with the changes in Eastern European countries. 'The instigators of the disturbances' were punished, expelled from the institutions of higher education, deprived of scholarships, dismissed from the hostels, etc. When Khrushchev had clearly established his superiority in 1959-1960, control from Moscow was strengthened and the pressure of the political regime and russification intensified. In some cases heads and teachers of the institutions of higher education were dismissed for their national orientation. Nevertheless, the re-introduction of the Lithuanian spirit and the processes of liberation helped to foster the national intelligentsia, which was at the head of the national re-birth movement in the late 1980s.*

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After the death of the dictator of the Soviet Union Joseph Stalin (5 March 1953), people in Soviet-occupied Lithuania expected changes for the better. They looked back to the cases in history, when a new ruler in power slightly changed the state system and 'fed the population with new promises'. In fact, the internal struggle for power in the higher echelons of the Party and state leadership did not bypass Lithuania. In the Kremlin a strong political competition started not only because of the former USSR leader's longing for power and status, but also because of the very nature of the political state system created by Stalin. That system could function only with a single recognized political leader at the helm. The notion of 'collective leadership' remained a myth and served as an ideological screen to cover the unscrupulous struggles, which started after Stalin's death. That struggle, without doubt, influenced the political development not only in the Soviet Union but also in the Eastern Central European countries that depended upon it (the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Hungary and others).

At that time Lavrentii Beria, Nikita Khrushchev and Georgii Malenkov occupied the highest posts in the Kremlin. Beria, playing the 'Stalin trump card', quickly found himself in the leading position.¹ He started to talk about the mistakes made by Stalin in the areas of domestic and foreign policy of the Soviet Union and initiated the investigation of political cases, fabricated by the MGB. In his ruling of 3 April 1953, Beria stated that the Ministry of Internal Affairs, led by him, found serious crimes and demanded that the fabrication of cases be outlawed as well as use of physical and psychological torture for the extraction of incriminating evidence from the 'accused'. This practice was to be banned in all repressive structures.

Using the MVD structures Beria also attempted to reveal the mistakes of national politics in Ukraine, Western Belorussia and in the three Baltic republics. These were allegedly made in Party organizations of those republics and regions during post-war years. This was an ambitious project launched by Beria himself. He submitted to the Presidium of the CPSU some suggestions regarding the shortcomings in the activity of local Party officials in Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania and Latvia. On the basis of the MVD reports, the Presidium of the CPSU passed decisions on the activities of Party organizations of the above-mentioned republics. Those documents stressed the importance of promoting national (local) cadres to all areas and levels of Party and state structures as well as the obvious

¹ On 5 March 1953, after the MVD and the MGB were merged into one - the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Beria became the head of the joint repressive organization.

requirement for the officials working in these positions to be able to speak the national (local) languages.

In this paper we seek to analyze the impact made by Beria's activities, after Stalin's death, on Lithuanian students especially in the institutions of higher learning. However, we do not propose any evaluation of Beria's actions between March and June 1953, since that this is an theme of a separate research. In passing it should be noticed that Russian historians, political scientists, eyewitnesses of the time and foreign authors controversially treat Beria's activities of those four months. Some of them state that he was first to start the process of de-Stalinization. He was the first to denounce Stalin's repressive actions and to start rehabilitation of the victims of the repression of the 1940s, making the first step into the period of the 'thaw'.² Meanwhile others argue that Beria cleverly manipulated the materials of the oppressive structures at his disposal. By way of partial rehabilitation and control of the 'initiative of changes', he sought to establish his status and to overcome his political opposition in the struggle for the post of the dictator.³ The historian Vytautas Tininis, while commenting on Beria's attempts to establish himself in the political government, pointed to his 'nationalist card' – the promotion of local national members to Party and state positions and the use of the national language in the offices.⁴ Thus, by replacing the cadres, Beria sought to gain the support of the newly promoted officials in his struggle for power.

Ideological censorship of historical research, when the whole periods of the history of the Lithuanian nation were falsified, and tragic events of its history were either ignored or interpreted in a biased manner, finally came to an end in the late 1980s. Historians availed themselves of the opportunity to work with recently declassified archival documents, which was not possible in the Soviet years, and engaged in the study of the forties and early fifties. They unveiled the consequences of the criminal government policy in Soviet-occupied Lithuania. The years between 1940 and 1941 and between 1944 and

² А. П. Артузов и Р. А. Усиков, 'В августе 49-го...', *Родина*, 8-9 (1992); Б. А. Старков, 'Сто дней "лубянского маршала"'. *Источник*, 4 (1993); А. И. Кокурин и А. И. Пожаров, "'Новый курс" Л. И. Берии 1953 г.', *Исторический архив*, 4 (1996); П. А. Судоплатова, *Разведка и Кремль* (Москва, 1996); Françoise Thom, 'Tęstinumas', *Lietuvos aidas*, 1992 rugs. 12.

³ В. П. Наумов. 'Был ли заговор Берии? Новые документы о событиях 1953 г.' *Новая и новейшая история*, 5 (1998); *Страницы истории КПСС* (Москва, 1989).

⁴ V. Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva ir jos veikėjai* (Vilnius, 1994), p. 74.

1953 were marked by a forced Sovietization of the state and public life; and economy and culture of the country. In their investigations historians revealed the stubborn Lithuanian resistance to Nazi and Bolshevik occupiers. They disclosed the crimes committed by the Soviet power: deportations,⁵ imprisonment in the gulag camps and prisons of the USSR.⁶ The publication of documents played an important role in revealing the post-war problems of Lithuanian history.⁷ However, so far the evolution of the totalitarian regime has received little attention,⁸ despite the fact that in the history of Communism this period is of particular importance. Firstly, it represents attempts of top Soviet Communist Party officials to get rid of the aftermath of Stalin's rule and to do it without any changes in the Soviet government structure. They intended to limit themselves only to rectifying the so-called 'mistakes' of Stalin and his comrades in arms. The ruptures in the system of the totalitarian regime that appeared in this decade could not develop into a democratic multiparty system that would finally destroy the Soviet Union as a totalitarian state overnight. It took another quarter of a century for Michail Gorbachev's perestroika to start the reformation of the system of the Soviet State.

In our opinion, the research of this process in occupied Lithuania is important in one more respect - it was a period which displayed the stamina of the then repressed national consciousness. On the other hand, it was proven that the reconstruction of the local social structure was influenced not only by the changes in Moscow, but also by the

⁵ E. Grunskis, *Lietuvos gyventojų trėmimai 1940-1941, 1944-1953 metais* (Vilnius, 1996); V. Kašauskienė, 'Deportations from Lithuania under Stalin, 1940-1953', *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 3 (1998), pp. 73-82; V. Kašauskienė, 'Verbannungen der Einwohner Litauens in den Jahren 1941 und 1945-52: Überblick über Publikationen der Jahre 1988-1992', *Jahrbuch für historische Kommunismus-forschung* (Mannheim, 1993), pp. 276-283.

⁶ A. Anušauskas, *Lietuvių tautos sovietinis naikinimas 1940-1958 metais* (Vilnius, 1996).

⁷ *Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas 1939-1941 m.*, 1 (Vilnius, 1992); *Lietuvos gyventojų tremimai 1940-1941, 1944-1953 metais sovietinės valdžios dokumentuose*. Sudarė: E. Grunskis, V. Kašauskienė, H. Šadžius (Vilnius, 1995).

⁸ *Свет и тени "великого десятилетия". Н. С. Хрущев и его время* (Ленинград, 1989); Е. Ю. Зубкова, 'Маленков и Хрущев: личный фактор в политике послесталинского руководства', *Отечественная история*, 4 (1995); 'Борьба Н. С. Хрущева за единоличную власть. Доклад Хрущева на XX съезде КПСС', *Новая и новейшая история*, 2, (1996); А. И. Аджубей, *Те десять лет* (Москва, 1989).

processes developing at the time in Poland and Hungary. Therefore, historians should direct their attention to these areas of research. In the period between Stalin's death and Khrushchev's accession to power, the Soviet government itself was undergoing important changes that are worth a more detailed examination. However, so far the publications that contain an overview of the changes that took place in Lithuania in the 1950s are few.⁹ The same could be said about student unrest in the institutions of higher education at that time¹⁰ as well as about youth resistance to the Soviet regime during the years of occupation in general.¹¹

The changes that occurred in the Soviet Union in the 1950s were important to Lithuania. After Stalin's death Beria initiated a new political course. It centred around the issue of the local cadres which had to constitute the majority of the Party members and the state officials in the republics. National languages had to be used in the public life instead of Russian. The author of this paper focuses attention on the aftermath of the struggle for the highest post of the USSR in Lithuanian society and examines the influence of de-Stalinization on the formation and dissemination of the ideas about a freer and more independent life in Lithuania.

Political situation

The decision of the Central Committee Presidium of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union 'Issues Relating to the Lithuanian SSR'

⁹ V. Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva ir jos veikėjai* (Vilnius, 1994); V. Tininis, *Sniečkus: 33 metai valdžioje (Antano Sniečkaus biografinė apybraiža)* (Vilnius, 1995); B. Puzinavičius, 'Politinė raida Lietuvoje naujomis sovietinio režimo sąlygomis (1953-1965)', *Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centro darbai*, 1 (1996), pp. 115-133; A. Streikus, 'Politinės ir ekonominės raidos bruožai Lietuvoje 1953-1955 m.', *ibid.*, 2 (1996), pp. 68-83.

¹⁰ *Vilniaus universiteto istorija 1579-1994* (Vilnius, 1994), pp. 286-296; V. Kašauskienė, 'Medžiaga apie Vilniaus universiteto dėstytojų ir studentų "nacionalistinę" raišką 1958-1959 metais', *Lituanistica*, 2 (30) (1997), pp. 111-124; V. Kašauskienė, 'Medžiaga apie studentų "nacionalistinę" raišką Vėlinių dieną Vilniaus ir Kauno kapinėse 1955-1957 metais', *ibid.*, 3 (35), (1998), pp. 95-103.

¹¹ N. Gaškaitė, 'Jaunimo pasipriešinimas ir jo slopinimas šeštajame-septintajame dešimtmetyje', *Laisvės kovų archyvas*, t. 19 (Kaunas, 1996); J. R. Bagušauskas, 'Youth Resistance Organizations in Soviet-occupied Lithuania', *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 3 (1998), pp. 83-109; J. R. Bagušauskas, 'Jaunimo antisovietinis pasipriešinimas Lietuvoje 1944-1960 metais', *Laisvės kovų archyvas*, t. 17 (Kaunas, 1966), p. 21-54; J. R. Bagušauskas, 'Antisovietinio pasipriešinimo organizacijos Lietuvoje 1954-1960 metais', *Lituanistica*, 3 (19) (1994), 77-97; J. R. Bagušauskas, *Lietuvos jaunimo pasipriešinimas sovietiniam režimui ir jo slopinimas* (Vilnius, 1999).

(26 May 1953) contained directions how to implement in Lithuania a new political course initiated by Beria. This decision was based on Beria's information about the situation in the republic. It¹² was discussed at the fifth plenary session of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party held on 11-12 June 1953. The main points of the session were dealt with in the report of Antanas Sniečkus, secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian CP, in the speeches of the participants and the resolutions adopted.¹³ The leader of the Lithuanian CP had to acknowledge at the session that the Soviet power was weak in Lithuania and it could survive relying on force. Non-Lithuanians predominated in the Party and state institutions, the Lithuanian language was ousted from administrative offices, state security bodies organized repressive actions (arrests, deportations) against the Lithuanian people. However, Beria was not fated to gain power in the Kremlin. He was removed from his post, convicted and executed. The July 1953 resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU 'The anti-Party and anti-state activities of Beria' was discussed at the sixth plenary session of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian CP, which was held on 13-14 July 1953.¹⁴ The activists of LCP and officials of Soviet administration found themselves in an unenviable position, only a month ago having supported fully Beria's views about the political situation in the republic. At that session they stated that Beria's provocative disposition was aimed at discrediting the Soviet power, instigating 'nationalistic manifestations', distancing the Lithuanian language from the 'great Russian language, which was used by Lenin and Stalin'.

Nevertheless, though Beria's ideas were criticized as harmful to Lithuania, the changes in national policy were not recalled. The Russian-speaking Party and state officials had to be replaced by the speakers of Lithuanian and the Lithuanian language introduced in the public life. The officials who came to Lithuania from Russia after the Second World War were gradually driven out of Lithuania. In 1953 over 3,000 Russian officials were called back to Moscow.¹⁵ Lithuanians replaced the Russian members of the Central Committee of the

¹² The Lithuanian Archive of Social Organizations (LVOA) (former Party Archive) does not possess the aforementioned decisions and Beria's report about the situation in Lithuania.

¹³ The material of the plenary session was kept at the Party archive stamped 'not for research' and was not available to historians until the restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990; LVOA, f. 1771, ap 131, b. 178, 179, 180.

¹⁴ Ibid, b. 187, 189.

¹⁵ V. Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva*, p. 75.

Lithuanian CP and the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR and that weakened Moscow's control.

The winds of change had reached Lithuania prior to the announcement of the de-Stalinization course in the twentieth congress of CPSU (1956). Although the Party decisions about the national policy changes were not made public, the rumours and actual personnel changes lifted spirits of the Lithuanian population. Lithuanians hoped that after the departure of Russians, Lithuania would gradually restore its independent and democratic state, private property would be returned to the former owners, collective farms disintegrate, the people, deported, imprisoned and kept in the gulags, would return.¹⁶ Rumours about the dissolution of collective farms considerably destabilized the situation in Lithuania. In addition, the radio stations of the free world - the Voice of America, the BBC and Radio Free Europe - fuelled these hopes. At the time six Lithuanian programs were broadcast every day.¹⁷ These radio stations in Russian and Lithuanian languages spread information about the changes taking place in the Eastern European people's democracies and in the Soviet Union, and about the revision of the cases of prisoners and deportees. Some people returned back from prisons and places of exile in 1954-1957. Many, however, did not get permission to return to their native places. On 5 November 1956, the Central Committee of the LCP adopted a resolution forbidding members of the former government of the Republic of Lithuania, leaders of the anti-Soviet underground movement and members of their families¹⁸ to return to Lithuania. 443 persons who had returned to Kaunas from exile were evicted from the city.¹⁹

Student Unrest

With the weakening of the totalitarian regime in Lithuania there appeared tendencies of anti-Soviet activity. In 1953 some issues were discussed in the open in Lithuanian institutions of higher education:

¹⁶ A. Sniečkus' speech at the plenary session of the CC of the CPSU on 3 July 1953. Пленум ЦК КПСС, июль 1953 года. Стенографический отчет. *Известия ЦК КПСС*, 1 (312), 1991, с. 209-210; A. Streikus, 'Politinės ir ekonominės raidos bruožai Lietuvoje 1953-1955', *Lietuvos gyventojų genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centro darbai*, 2 (1991), p. 72.

¹⁷ *Известия ЦК КПСС*. 1 (312) (1991), с. 207.

¹⁸ V. Kašauskienė, *Deportations from Lithuania under Stalin, 1940-1953. Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 3 (1998), p. 81; E. Grunskis, *Lietuvos gyventojų trėmimai*, p. 600-603.

¹⁹ V. Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva*, p. 81.

1) the mistrust and nihilistic attitude prevalent in the circles of the Party and Soviet *nomenklatura* towards the older generation of Lithuanian lecturers who had acquired their education in the pre-war Lithuanian and Western European universities. Their places were often occupied by Communist lecturers arriving from the USSR. In some departments the latter made up the majority of all lecturers. (For instance, in the departments of social sciences of the Kaunas Institute of Polytechnics there were 19 lecturers, and only four of them were Lithuanians²⁰);

2) therefore lectures were delivered in Russian and students took their examinations through interpreters. The students' native tongue and history of Lithuania were ignored. In 1954-1955 several students of Lithuanian literature Vytautas Martišius, Balys Jauniškis, Vytautas Laugalis, and a student of history Antanas Tyla from the Faculty of History and Philology of the University of Vilnius openly came forward in defence of national values. They were labelled 'bourgeois nationalists', promoting anti-Soviet ideas among students.²¹

The students were inspired not only by political reforms in the Soviet Union but also by the events in Poland (1955) and, in particular, in Hungary (1956). These countries expressed their wish to live independently, i.e., not as satellites of the Soviet Union. These processes strengthened patriotic aspirations in Lithuania. The Lithuanian language, history and other areas vital for the state became issues of current concern. New approaches to these issues were particularly appealing to the academic youth. In 1955-1956 the Lithuanian KGB disclosed 61 secret anti-Soviet organizations consisting mostly of young people.²² Anti-Soviet leaflets were disseminated and the prohibited national flag of Lithuania hoisted. The nationalist self-expression of students (which in the state security and Party documents was referred to as 'chauvinistic' and anti-Soviet manifestations) was recorded in all Lithuanian institutions of higher education. The students demanded the Lithuanization of state institutions. They collected signatures petitioning the authorities to erect a monument to the founder of Vilnius grand duke Gediminas and to return the old names to the main streets of Vilnius and Kaunas (at that time named after Stalin).

²⁰ Kauno politechnikos instituto partines organizacijos susirinkimo (1953 06 31) protokolai, LVOA, f. 3542, ap. 5, b. 1, l. 66.

²¹ Vilniaus universiteto Istorijos ir filologijos fakulteto partinio biuro (1955 02 26) protokolai, LVOA, f. 7017, ap. 2, b. 39, l. 142.

²² V. Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva*, p. 82.

Students openly expressed their opinion that Communists did not respect the past and customs of the Lithuanian people and demanded more Lithuanian songs and dances in the repertoires of local amateur folklore groups instead of songs about Stalin and the Party. The student audience broke into an ovation, when in 1956 the academic choir of Vilnius University performed the patriotic song 'Lietuva brangi' (Lithuania Dear) by Maironis (for which the conductor of the choir would have ended up in Siberia during the post-war years). The traditional student anthem 'Gaudeamus' spread from the University not only to other Lithuanian institutions but to the universities in the USSR as well.²³

Students' self-consciousness, their readiness to ignore the officially established norms became particularly evident in the autumn of 1956 as a consequence of the Hungarian uprising (1956). Youth meetings in Vilnius and Kaunas cemeteries on 2 November 1956²⁴ were an obvious expression of national identity and the protest against the existing regime. Those manifestations were the first actions of the political protest after the suppression of the armed resistance movement in Lithuania. During such manifestations young people sang national songs, lit candles and put flowers on the graves of the celebrated Lithuanian people. In a Kaunas cemetery a group of 200-300 people formed an active part of the meeting.²⁵ This group included more than 50 students from institutions of higher education.²⁶ The fact that these student manifestations in the cemeteries coincided with the events in Hungary was of great concern to the repressive and ideological structures of Lithuanian SSR. Anti-Soviet graffiti and the so-called counter-revolutionary and nationalistic leaflets appeared on the walls of the University of Vilnius. They contained such phrases as 'Long live the Hungarian revolution'.²⁷ In the duty roster of a student hostel of the University the following inscriptions were found:

²³ Vilniaus universiteto istorija, p. 310-311.

²⁴ A day of praying for all the dead (All Souls' Day).

²⁵ LKP CK sekretoriaus V. Niunkos pasisakymas Kauno politechnikos instituto partinės organizacijos susirinkimą (1956. 11. 14), LVOA, f. 3542, ap. 6, b. 4, ll. 191-192.

²⁶ LKP CK instruktorės V. Kemeklytės informacija apie Kauno politechnikos instituto partinės organizacijos susirinkimą (1957. 01. 16), *ibid.*, f. 1771, ap. 188, b. 40, l. 14.

²⁷ Vilniaus universiteto partinės organizacijos 1957 10 20 susirinkimo protokolai, *ibid.*, f. 1771, ap. 2, b.s 61, l. 9.

²⁸ N. Gaškaitė, 'Jaunimo pasipriešinimas ir jo slopinimas šeštajame-septintajame dešimtmetyje', *Laisvės kovų archyvas*, 19 (1996), p. 33.

'... The Hungarian nation has risen. Honour to the freedom fighters ... did not frustrate their high aims, on the contrary, even more activated the world, especially the progressive youth, which must change the world'.²⁸ These manifestations proved that a part of the student body were dissatisfied with the existing regime. At the lectures and meetings students demanded explanation why some students, who on 2 November were in the cemetery to honour the dead, were arrested; why no objective information was available about the events in Hungary; why in the government offices of the capital the majority of the employees could not speak Lithuanian; why one could not communicate in Lithuanian in Vilnius; why distinguished Lithuanian people were not remembered and respected.²⁹ The Communist Party and state structures were afraid that students might not take part in the celebrations of October Revolution on 7 November in Vilnius and Kaunas, and even their participation could not pass without anti-Soviet incidents. In these cities security measures in the traditional parade were increased. In Kaunas, according to the description of one of the department heads of the Institute of Polytechnics, 'we [teachers and students] marched surrounded by vehicles and militia'.³⁰

For the dissemination of anti-Soviet ideas and 'for the preparation of the counter-revolutionary incident' in the cemetery on 2 November Party leaders of Vilnius, according to the rector of the University, suggested to punish students in the strictest manner: 'to expel 120-130 students both from the University and Pedagogical Institute and 35 - from the Institute of Art and the Conservatory'.³¹ However, the rectors of these institutions considered this suggestion too 'provocative' and refused to implement it, but in every school students could not avoid other ways of being reprimanded. For the participation in the celebration to commemorate the dead on All Souls' Day, students were punished - excluded from schools and hostels, or had their scholarships cancelled. Students Antanas Juodėnas, Zigmas Tamakauškas, Algis Vaitkus were expelled from the University of Vilnius. Valentinas Ardžiūnas was transferred to the part time department, Algirdas Endriukaitis was expelled from the Young Communist League and student hostel and his scholarship was cancelled; at the beginning of 1957 he was arrested and jailed for six

²⁹ Informacija apie LKP CK sekretoriaus A. Sniečkaus susitikimą su Vilniaus miesto studentais (1956 m.), *ibid.*, f. 1771, ap. 188, b. 40, ll. 35-36.

³⁰ Kauno politechnikos instituto partinio susirinkimo (1956. 11. 14) protokolas, *ibid.*, f.3542, ap. 6, b. 4, l. 190.

³¹ A. Kazlauskio interviu su J. Bulavu, 'Kaip Vilniaus universitetas sulietuvėjo', *Gimtasis kraštas*. 1988 gruodžio 8-14.

years.³² Four students - Benita Banionytė, Jonas Kondrotas, Algimantas Virbalis and Benediktas Masaitis - were expelled from the Vilnius Pedagogical Institute for 'anti-Soviet activities',³³ others received administrative and Young Communist League fines.

In the Lithuanian Conservatory an action was brought 'against the most nationalistically inclined students'. They were accused, according to their opponents, of misinterpreting the Hungarian events and of promoting 'antagonistic ideas' during the seminars of social sciences. Thus in 1956-1957, students Virgilijus Juodakis, Konstantinas Petrauskas, Algimantas Burdulis and Algis Bubnelis were expelled from the Conservatory.³⁴ For similar 'anti-Soviet activities' Arunas Tarabilda had to interrupt his studies at the Vilnius Institute of Art. He was forcefully sent to serve in the Soviet Army.³⁵ In Kaunas, too, students were castigated for 'the participation in nationalistic anti-Soviet actions' on 2 November. In the Kaunas Institute of Polytechnics 36 students were punished: two were expelled on political grounds, eight - for 'hooliganism', and 26 received various administrative fines, others were expelled from their hostels.³⁶ Similar facts were registered in other Lithuanian schools.³⁷

At the end of 1956 several commissions from the USSR Ministry of Higher Education and the Central Committee of the Young Communist League of the Soviet Union inspected the 'state of the political education' of Lithuanian students. The inspection documents contained a list of students' 'sins': national songs urging to fight against the Soviet power, dissemination of the so-called bourgeois literature and anti-Soviet leaflets, participation in cemetery manifestations, poor knowledge of Soviet and Russian songs and dances, etc.³⁸

³² Informacija apie LKP CK sekretoriaus A. Sniečkaus susitikimą su Vilniaus miesto studentais (1956m.), LVOA, f. 1771, ap. 188, b. 40, l. 119; *Vilniaus universiteto istorija*, p. 311-312.

³³ Vilniaus valstybinio pedagoginio instituto 1956-1957 m.m. ataskaita, LVOA, f. 1771, ap. 188, b. 45, l. 32.

³⁴ Lietuvos konservatorijos 1956-1957 m.m. atsakaita, *ibid.*, b. 43, l. 238.

³⁵ V. Kašauskienė. 'Medžiaga apie studentų "nacionalistinę" veiklą Vėlinių dieną Vilniaus ir Kauno kapinėse 1955-1957 metais', *Lituanistica*, 3(35), 1998, pp. 98-99.

³⁶ LKP CK instruktorės V. Kemeklytės informacija apie Kauno politechnikos instituto partinės organizacijos susirinkimą (1957. 01. 16), *ibid.*, f. 1771, ap. 188, b. 40, l. 14.

³⁷ LKP CK darbuotojo M. Rodino raštas apie Kauno medicinos instituto partinės organizacijos susirinkimą (1957. 01. 18); Šiaulių pedagoginio instituto partinės organizacijos susirinkimo (1957. 01. 15) protokolai, LVOA, f. 1771, ap. 188, b. 39, l. 14; f. 7364, ap. 2, b. 1, l. 8.

³⁸ LVOA, f. 4421, ap. 12, b.s 57, ll. 30-31,33.

In order to prevent an upsurge of anti-Soviet sentiment spreading on All Souls' Day, 2 November 1957, in Vilnius and Kaunas cemeteries, State security and Communist Party institutions prepared in advance. They increased intelligence-gathering, intensified the shadowing of persons known for their anti-Soviet views, 'tightened the passport control' and resorted to other actions against suspected individuals.³⁹ 40 people, tried in the past for counter-revolutionary crimes, were evicted from Kaunas. On the night of 2 November the officials of the KGB department of Kaunas arrested eight people, who, in their opinion, being opposed the system, were planning to instigate anti-Soviet activities in the cemetery. Visiting hours of the cemetery were limited to 7 p.m. and other restrictions imposed. Disregarding established visiting hours people gathered in the cemetery after 7 p.m. They tried to make their way to the monument to the Lithuanian fighters, to lay flowers and light candles. The crowd at the monument was about 1.500-2.000 strong. People sang the banned national anthem of the Republic of Lithuania and the hymn *Maria, Maria* (the main idea of which is the plea to the Virgin Mary for the protection of the homeland). As the crowd did not disperse, additional military and militia units were called - about 150 militia students and a KGB unit. 105 persons, including 11 students of the institutions of higher education and 13 students of secondary and vocational schools were arrested.⁴⁰ Between 1956 and 1958 all together 226 persons were arrested in Lithuania for anti-Soviet activities.⁴¹ However, it is difficult to ascertain the number of arrested students, because very often the nationalistic political manifestations of students were interpreted as 'hooliganism' in archival documents.

Repressive and ideological structures started investigating the past of 'politically unreliable' students. Cases were discovered when young people, who after Stalin's death had returned from gulag prisons and exile, studied at Lithuanian institutions of higher education.⁴² It

³⁹ Valstybės saugumo komiteto prie LTSR MT pirmininko K. Liaudžio raštas LKPSK sekretoriui A. Sniečkui apie antitarybinių nuotaikų raišką 1957 m. lapkričio 2 d. Kauno kapinėse, LVOA, f. 1771, ap. 190, b. 11, l. 105; V. Kašauskienė, 'Medžiaga apie studentų "nacionalistinę" raišką Vėlinių dieną Vilniaus ir Kauno kapinėse 1955-1957 metais'. *Lituanistica*, 3 (35) (1988), p. 100.

⁴⁰ V. Kašauskienė, 'Medžiaga apie studentų "nacionalistinę" veiklą Vėlinių dieną Vilniaus ir Kauno kapinėse 1955-1957 metais'. *Lituanistica*, 3(35), 1998, p. 101.

⁴¹ V. Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva*, p. 82.

⁴² *Vilniaus universiteto istorija*, p. 313; Kauno politechnikos instituto partines organizacijos susirinkimo (1956. 02. 14) protokolai, LVOA, f. 3542, ap. 6, b. 4, l. 229; b. 1, l. 229; Kauno medicinos instituto direktoriaus ataskaita apie studentų politinį auklėjimą 1956-1957 m.m., *ibid.*, f. 1771, ap. 188, b. 46, l. 36; b. 54, l. 51.

was very difficult for young people who in the past had been convicted for anti-Soviet activities or had been deported with their parents from Lithuania to enter institutions of higher education or resume their studies. Violating their political rights, the officials of local authorities prevented them from studying or choosing their desired employment and labelled them as ‘persons antagonistic to the Soviet state’. Very often their studies depended on the views and good will of the rector of the school and on the recommendations of the higher government institutions.

At the end of the fifties students’ dissatisfaction with the present Soviet regime was often expressed through their creative work. The officials of the Communist Party discovered ‘revisionist, decadent, nihilistic views’ among students of humanities. In 1958 the very first issue of the literary almanac *Kūryba* (Creation) prepared for publication by the students of the Lithuanian Department of the University of Vilnius immediately attracted the attention of ideological censors. First of all the editors were criticized for opening the almanac with the poems by Paulius Drevinis, who had been sentenced to 25 years of jail according to article 58 of the law code of the RSFSR. He had served part of the time (10 years) and afterwards was freed under the terms of the amnesty and continued his studies.⁴³ Original works in the almanac were found apolitical, of low artistic standards and imbued with decadent, individualistic ideas. ‘Aspects of bourgeois ideology’ were detected in the critique articles of the students Vladas Žulys and Tomas Venclova.⁴⁴ On 11 February 1959 the Party bureau of the University passed a resolution to suspend the publication of the almanac. Its editor-in-chief Docent Adolfas Sprindis and members of the board students Ricardas Pakalniškis, Romualdas Sadauskas and Juozas Tumelis were criticized for their irresponsible selection of the material. Some lecturers of the Department of Lithuanian Literature were reproached for the appearance of ‘nationalistic sentiments in some students’ writings’.⁴⁵ The students, nevertheless, sought ways for their creative activities. Under various pretexts their organized groups of like minded enthusiasts within the limits of current Soviet laws.

The Communist Party and the Young Communist League tightened their political control of student activities because the anti-

⁴³ Lietuvos KP CK instruktorės V. Lisauskaitės (1958. 12. 31) informacija LKP CK sekretoriui A. Sniečkui, LVOA, f.1771, ap. 189, b. 25, ll. 203-204.

⁴⁴ Ibid., ll. 209-211.

⁴⁵ ‘Vilniaus universiteto partinio biuro (1959. 02. 11) nutarimas “Apie rimtas klaidas, paruošiant universiteto jaunųjų literatų kūrybos almanachą *Kūryba*”. *Lituanistica*, 2 (30) (1987), pp. 122-123.

Soviet sentiments continued to be quite evident in 1958-1959 and in later years.⁴⁶ The unrest among Lithuanian youth in the fifties was not isolated from the manifestations of anti-Soviet attitudes elsewhere in the European part of the USSR. In 1956-1957 the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR passed several resolutions condemning 'intolerable' political actions of the youth.⁴⁷

The change of the political situation

The structures of Lithuanian Communist Party started an ideological attack on the Department of Lithuanian Literature of Vilnius University. At the tenth Party congress (1958) it was pointed out that lecturers of this Department supported and promoted only those aspects of the cultural heritage that nurtured nationalistic insularity, idealization of the past and nationalistic sentiments.⁴⁸ The rector of the University was criticized for overlooking revisionist tendencies in the ideological work.⁴⁹ On 5 May 1958 the University meeting of the Party agreed with that ideological evaluation of the work of the Department, stating that 'the lectures of individual teachers contained idealization of the writers of the past, deviation to aesthetics; the main shortcoming of the academic work was escapism to the past, evasion to study Soviet Lithuanian literature and the problems of Socialist Realism, and revisionist tendencies were evident in the research work of some lecturers'.⁵⁰

The importance of the University of Vilnius to the national orientation during the 'thaw' years was unquestionable. That is why,

⁴⁶ V. Kašauskienė, 'Medžiaga apie Vilniaus universiteto dėstytojų ir studentų "nacionalistinę" raišką 1958-1959 metais'. *Lituanistica*, 2(30) (1997), pp. 111-124.

⁴⁷ Постановление ЦК КПСС и Совмина СССР от 3 ноября 1956 г. "О попытках распространения антисоветских листовок в г. Ленинграде и в городах Эстонской ССР, Государственный Архив Российской Федерации. Архив новейшей истории России, т. 111: "Особая папка" Н. С. Хрущев (1954-1956). Серия "Каталоги". Москва, 1995, с. 179; Постановление ЦК КПСС и Совмина СССР от 6 ноября 1957 г. 'О вызывающем поведении молодежи в г. Тарту и задержании группы студентов сельскохозяйственной академии, являвшихся зачинщиками беспорядков в городе и призывавших к расправе над работниками милиции, *ibid.*, с. 229.

⁴⁸ A. Sniečkaus pranešimas LKP X suvažiavime, *Literatūra ir menas*, 1958 vasario 15.

⁴⁹ Lietuvos KP X suvažiavimo stenograma, LVOA, f. 1771, ap. 191, b. 430, l. 368.

⁵⁰ Vilniaus universiteto partinio susirinkimo (1958. 05. 05) medžiaga, LVOA, f. 7017, ap. 2, b. 77, l. 129.

when the campaign for 'strengthening friendship of the nations' and 'the fight against local nationalism' in the Soviet Union developed, Lithuanian Party leaders, without waiting for criticism from Moscow, hurried to denounce heads of some state, science and education institutions 'for distorting the Leninist national policies'. The rector of the University Juozas Bulavas was dismissed from his post by the decision of 27 June 1958 of the CC Bureau of the Lithuanian Communist Party for not 'ensuring the improvement in personnel education'.⁵¹ On 28 July 1959 by the resolution of the Bureau he was expelled from the Communist Party of Soviet Union 'for political mistakes' and 'the distortion of the principles of proletarian internationalism'.⁵²

In the late fifties the Lithuanian Communist Party leaders found it difficult to defend themselves from the complaints sent by the Moscow colonists concerning their dismissal and replacement by the Lithuanians. The Russians complained and accused the leaders of the Lithuanian Communist Party for the promotion of Lithuanian nationals in the Party and state offices. The Communist Party of the USSR reacted to these complaints not only because they were written by Russian-speaking people and the Centre was 'obliged to defend them', but also because at that time the political situation in the country was rapidly changing and the process of de-Stalinization was on the wane. On the other hand, the Kremlin was concerned that the 'local' and 'nationalistic' tendencies of the Baltic republics would not set a precedent for other republics of the Soviet Union to follow.⁵³

When Khrushchev established himself in 1959-1960 the relations between Moscow and Soviet republics became more rigid, and the political regime and Russification intensified. On 28 May 1959 the Central Committee of the CPSU passed a resolution 'On the personnel policy of the Lithuanian Communist Party'. It criticized the Lithuanian Party leaders for an 'excessive' promotion of Lithuanians to the leading positions. On 14-17 July 1959, this question was also discussed at the sixth plenary session of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party. Its leader Antanas Sniečkus acknowledged his mistakes and criticized the heads of some ministries and institutions higher education for the escalation of allegedly anti-Russian views. Some heads of the departments and lecturers were dismissed. On 15 July 1959 the pro-rector of the Pedagogical Institute of Vilnius

⁵¹ *Vilniaus universiteto istorija*, p. 292.

⁵² Lietuvos KP CK (1959. 07. 28) biuro nutarimas, LVOA, f. 1771, ap. 196, b. 129, l. 2.

⁵³ V. Tininis, *Sovietinė Lietuva*, p. 85.

Docent Jonas Laužikas was dismissed 'for the incorrect nationalistic platform'.⁵⁴ Between 1959-1961 lecturers Meilė Lukšienė, Vanda Zaborskaitė, Irena Kostkevičiūtė and Aurelija Rabačiauskaitė were dismissed from the Department of Lithuanian Literature of the University of Vilnius.⁵⁵

The Khrushchev 'thaw' period was short-lived. In the late fifties and early sixties the ideological pressure from the Kremlin was tightened, and the implementers of Lithuanization of Lithuanian institutions of higher education were used as scapegoats. However, their efforts were not in vain. Subsequently the Lithuanian intelligentsia was educated in a more Lithuanian and slightly more liberal atmosphere. Some resistance of students and lecturers to the Soviet regime continued in the later years as well. During Gorbachev's 'perestroika' the Lithuanian academic and artistic intelligentsia formed the nucleus of the *Sąjūdis* – the Lithuanian Reconstruction Movement (*Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sąjūdis*) and actively fought for the rebirth of the Lithuanian State, which had been destroyed by the Soviet Union in 1940. The most important political result of this struggle was the Act of 11 March 1990, re-establishing the independent Lithuanian State.

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⁵⁴ Vilniaus pedagoginio instituto direktoriaus J. Mickevičiaus (1959. 06. 24) pranešimas, LVOA, f. 4903, ap. 3, b. 3, ll. 234-235.

⁵⁵ V. Kašauskienė, 'Medžiaga apie Vilniaus universiteto dėstytojų ir studentų 'nacionalistinę' raišką 1958-1959 metais', *Lituanistica*, nr. 2 (30) (1997), pp. 118, 120.

STUDENTŲ NERAMUMAI LIETUVOJE
PO STALINO MIRTIES (1953–1960)

Santrauka

VANDA KAŠAUSKIENĖ

Šiame straipsnyje parodoma, kaip po Stalino mirties (1953 m.), vykstant politinei kovai Kremliuje dėl aukščiausiosios valdžios posto, L. Berijos pradėtas vykdyti „naujas politinis kursas“, veikė Lietuvos studentijos visuomeninį gyvenimą. Slaptuose partiniuose dokumentuose buvo nurodyta, kad Lietuvos partinėse ir valstybinėse struktūrose vyrauja iš svetur atvykę darbuotojai, kad lietuvių kalba išstumta iš administracijos įstaigų, valstybės saugumo įstaigos vykdė masines represijas: trėmė ir kalino gyventojus. Nors konkurentai Beriją nušalino, tačiau nuostatos dėl lietuvių kalbos, svetimšalių pakeitimo vietos kadrais nebuvo atšauktos. Prasi-dėjus kadrų atlietuvinimui, Lietuvos gyventojai ėmė puoselėti viltis, kad rusams išvykus, Lietuva pamažu taps nepriklausoma ir demokratine valstybe, kad bus sugrąžinta nuosavybė, paleisti kolūkiai, iš tremties sugrįš Lietuvos gyventojai. Išsilaisvinimo viltis gaivino ir laisvojo pasaulio radijo stotys, kurios lietuvių ir rusų kalba informavo radijo klausytojus apie vykstančius politinius pokyčius Rytų Europoje ir Tarybų Sąjungoje. Lietuvoje vėl sustiprėjo antitarybinės veiklos tendencijos. Studentų tautinė raiška (to laikotarpio saugumo ir partiniuose dokumentuose įvardinta „nacionalistiniais“, antitarybiniais „išsišokimais“) buvo išaiškinta visose Lietuvos aukštosiose mokyklose. Patriotiškai nusiteikę studentai reikalavo, kad būtų atlietuvintos valstybinės įstaigos, neklastojama lietuvių tautos istorija. Jie rinko parašus, kad Vilniaus ir Kauno pagrindinės gatvės vietoje Stalino pavadinimo atgautų senuosius pavadinimus, kad Vilniuje būtų pastatytas miesto įkūrėjo kunigaikščio Gedimino paminklas. Studentų tautinio susipratimo forma buvo jaunimo demonstracijos, vykusios lapkričio 2 dieną Vilniaus (Rasų) ir Kauno (miesto) kapinėse 1955–1957 metais. Tai buvo atvira politinio protesto akcija po rezistencijos nuslopavimo Lietuvoje. Studentų „nacionalistiniai išsišokimai“ buvo siejami su pokyčiais Rytų Europos šalyse. „Neramumų skleidėjai“ buvo baudžiami: įkalinami, šalinami iš aukštųjų mokyklų, nutraukiamas stipendijos mokėjimas, šalinami iš bendrabučių ir pan. Chruščiovui įsitvirtinus valdžioje, 1959–1960 metais sugriežtėjo Maskvos kontrolė, sustiprėjo politinis režimas ir rusifikacija. Už tautinę orientaciją buvo pašalinti iš pareigų kai kurių aukštųjų mokyklų vadovai ir dėstytojai. Tačiau aukštųjų mokyklų atlietuvinimas, liberalėjimo procesai padėjo ugdyti tautiškai susipratusią inteligentią, kuri tautinio atgimimo metais atvedė į 1990 metų kovo 11 dieną – Lietuvos nepriklausomos valstybės atkūrimą.

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