

# Memory of Internment Camps in Lithuania on the Basis of Questionnaires Prepared by the Historical Section and the Documents Bureau of the Polish Army in the East

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## Abstract

The present article has been divided into two sections. The first presents the methodology and achievements of research relative to the history of Polish-Lithuanian relations from the mid-19th century to the incorporation of the Republic of Lithuania into the USSR in summer 1940. International relations between the two nations in the interwar period are also presented, in order for a better understanding of the realities faced by prisoners. It is against such background that the second part analyzes the questionnaires prepared by the Historical Department and the Documents Bureau of the Polish Army in the East, storied in the archives of the Hoover Institution.

The first to lay the foundations of research on historical memory was French researcher Maurice Halbwachs (1969), who was active prior to the Second World War, and who developed the theses of Sigmund Freud and Émile Durkheim (2010). The greatest acceleration in the development of this new branch of academia came about in the 1960s, when the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss (2001) and Jacques Le Goff (2008) were published. Currently, the most prominent scholars in the field of historical memory include Paul Connerton (2012) and Jan Assmann (2008). In Poland, theoretical and practical research was conducted in the past and continues to be carried out by Robert Traba (2006), Marcin Napiórkowski (2014, 2016, 2018, 2019), Stefan Czarnowski (1946), Magdalena Saryusz-Wolska (Saryusz-Wolska & Traba, 2014), Przemysław Czaplński (2016), Ewa Domańska (2006), and Barbara Szacka (2006), in addition to authors associated with the “Pamięć i Przyszłość” quarterly publication (2008–2018). The study of historical memory is an undertaking characterized by profound interdisciplinarity; a historian’s work may draw upon sociology, literary criticism, anthropology, political science, etc.

Work on the historical memory of Lithuania is still at an exiguous stage. Some exceptions are the few books on, for example, Jogalia and Vytautas (Nikžentaitis, 2000), on Lithuanian history until 1569 (Błachowska, 2009), and on Polish-Lithuanian relations (Volkonovski & Gaidis, 2009). Most of the published literature is dedicatory in nature and concerns, for example, the Pact of Horodło (Kiaupienė, 2014; Sikorska-Kulesza, 2016) or Grunwald (Staliūnas, 2016). The matter of a comprehensive treatment of historical memory has not yet been addressed, although scholars have voiced the need for such research (Sikorska-Kulesza, 2016, p. 26).

The source material for the present article includes the accounts of Polish soldiers serving in the Polish Army in the East, collected at the turn of 1942 and 1943, during the so-called “questionnaire operation” conducted by the Independent Historical Section of the Polish Armed Forces under the General Staff of the Armed Forces in the USSR, established in winter 1941 and later renamed the Documents Bureau in spring 1943. This “questionnaire operation” was a large-scale campaign carried out with the approval of government agencies to gather testimonies of Polish men and women who had passed through the Soviet terror apparatus and then found themselves enlisted in Anders’ Army. In order to systematize the incoming documents, the Historical Section – and later the Documents Bureau – attempted to introduce uniform templates for questions that the former internees, deportees, and exiles were to answer. In addition to personal details, respondents were asked to state the time and location of their arrest, and the names and characteristics of the camps through which they had been processed. Furthermore, each respondent was asked to describe the attitude of the НКВД with regard to Poles, medical care, possibility to contact their home nation, and the circumstances under which they signed up for the re-established Polish Army. The questions

were formulated in advance with the intention to help preserve a narrative line while, at the same time, avoiding suggestions for possible answers. In reality, however, the respondents sometimes strayed from the prescribed path (Stępniań, 1997; Wieliczko, 2006; Zamorski, 1990).

There is no shortage of longer statements in the answers that do not follow the established framework and template. These are the most interesting from the perspective of research into historical memory. The respondent, given free rein, was able to convey what he or she actually experienced and remembered from their time in the USSR. This is significant as it aids in highlighting the anchorage of individual, selective memory. The digressive nature of these descriptions by no means obscures the image of the past; on the contrary, it makes it possible to penetrate the multifaceted picture of experiences formed in the minds of the respondents.

Other sources have been used in addition to selected accounts that were collected during the so-called “questionnaire operation,” including some accounts of people who were associated with Polish uniformed personnel interned in Lithuania. Adam Bogusławski recorded his memoirs in a book subtitled *Internowanie Polaków na Litwie IX 1939–VII 1940 [Internment of Poles in Lithuania. September 1939–July 1940]* (2004). Wiesław Lasocki (1993) similarly noted a section concerning Lithuania. Zbigniew Siemaszko published a collection of source material in which he gathered the letters, notes, and diaries of former prisoners-of-war from September 1939, who were deported from the eastern areas of the Second Polish Republic deep into the USSR, as well as of Anders’ exiles and Home Army soldiers based in Vilnius (Siemaszko, 1999). Another published source employed herein is Stanisław Glinka’s memoirs of internment in the First Republic of Lithuania (Glinka, 1999). The perspective of the non-interned is provided by the accounts of Leon Mitkiewicz, a military *attaché* in Kaunas (Mitkiewicz, 1968), and Joanna Mackiewiczowa, an employee of the Lithuanian Red Cross (Mackiewiczowa, 1996).

Some limitations of the present article should be presented prior to proceeding. Research concerned only those accounts collected during the so-called “questionnaire operation” in which the author in particular admitted to having been interned. It has not been verified how many soldiers confirmed their presence in the First Republic and how many kept that fact a secret. To determine this, it would be necessary to consult the identity cards issued by the Lithuanian authorities to people entering internment camps and compare them with the questionnaires filled in by Anders’ soldiers.

The context in which historical memory should be examined in the accounts collected as part of the questionnaire operation and storied in the archives of the Hoover Institution is the history of Polish-Lithuanian relations from the mid-19th century until the end of the interwar period. This is further bolstered by an understanding that living memory, in its broadest sense, reaches back three or four generations, or from 80

to 100 years. This limit of one century comfortably encompasses a range from emotional, personal memories to impersonal and undemonstrative history. The soldiers who recorded their memoirs between 1942 and 1943 could cast their imagination of the past back to a maximum limit located somewhere in the middle of the 19th century.

The general perception of the other side of these interactions, relative to the embeddedness of stereotypes in the minds of the respondents, had a considerable impact on what they remembered and how they recalled their times in Lithuania from autumn 1939 to summer 1940. These stereotypes and their significance in mutual relations between Poles and Lithuanians are examined by Krzysztof Buchowski in his book *Litwomani i polonizatorzy. Mity, wzajemne postrzeganie i stereotypy w stosunkach polsko-litewskich w pierwszej połowie XX wieku* [*Lithuaniphiles and Colonizers. Myths, mutual perceptions and stereotypes in Polish-Lithuanian relations in the first half of the 20th century*] (Buchowski, 2006). This article strives to use both Lithuanian and Polish monographs describing the issue of the internment of Polish uniformed officers on the territory of the First Republic, and thus avoid the primacy of a single narrative (Roman, 2015).

The annals of historical Lithuania (Aleksandravicius & Kulakauskas, 2003; Kosman, 1992; Jurkowski, 2001; Dąbrowski, 2011; Fajhauz, 1999; Mędrzecki, 2018; Bujnicki & Romanowski, 2000) and Vilnius from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century have already received rich biographies (Breidis, 2008; Venclova, 2006). The birth of the new Lithuania movement opened an entirely new chapter in the history of Polish-Lithuanian relations. In search of its own identity, the nascent Lithuanian nation began to contest the legacy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The consolidation of social change took place after a revolution in 1905; the conflict that had been smoldering between the two nations escalated at the end of the First World War, when disputes over the nationality of Vilnius flared. The Lithuanians considered the city to be their ancient capital, while the Poles felt it was a city that had become an inseparable part of Polish history. Control over the city changed hands between the Lithuanians, Poles, and Soviets several times towards and immediately after the end of the Great War. Essential to the further understanding of relations between Poland and Lithuania was the so-called Suwałki Agreement in October 1920, which temporarily regulated the border between the two states. The Lithuanians believed that Vilnius remained in their possession alone, while Poland considered the issue still to be open. Nevertheless, the most important event involving the two nations during that period was Żeligowski's Mutiny. Lithuania was never able to reconcile with the loss of Vilnius.

All through the interwar period, the city remained the capital of Lithuania according to national nomenclature, while Kaunas was merely a temporary seat of power. The incorporation of the quasi-state of Republic of Central Lithuania into the Republic of Poland only exacerbated

an already tense situation between the two countries. Lithuania carried out an intensive and large-scale propaganda campaign aimed at engaging the international community in regaining Vilnius. The intent to return the beloved city to their country was one of the most important motives for the newly-formed state (Mačiulis & Staliūnas, 2015). A breakthrough in Polish-Lithuanian relations occurred on 11 March 1938, when Stanisław Serafin pseud. "Orany," a gunner of the Border Protection Corps (*Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza*, KOP), was killed during a routine patrol. The Polish government used the soldier's death to issue an ultimatum to Kaunas, in which Warsaw called for a normalization of relations. Lithuania yielded to Poland's demands. This represented a humiliation for the public opinion in Lithuania, and was remembered for a long time by its people. Nevertheless, the requested normalization of mutual relations became an established fact (Łossowski, 2010, pp. 143–161).

All efforts to improve mutual relations were severed on 1 September 1939. Kaunas remained neutral despite strong pressure from the Third Reich (Łossowski, 1985, pp. 9–35). Under the terms of Chapter 2 of the Hague Convention, Lithuania, as a neutral power, should intern any troops belonging to the belligerent armies, which it received on its territory (*Convention (v) respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land*, 1907). Relations between Poland and Lithuania during the war grew more convoluted by the day. The Polish envoy in Kaunas was withdrawn in mid-October 1939 as a sign of protest against the agreement made between Lithuania and the USSR, according to which Vilnius and the surrounding region were granted to the First Republic (Łossowski, 1985, p. 53). With the Red Army invasion of the eastern territories of the Second Polish Republic on 17 September 1939, Polish units operating in the Vilnius region began to break through toward neutral states (Praga, 1995, pp. 100–101; Szczurowski, 2004, p. 92) due to the impossibility to oppose the overwhelming size of the enemy forces. Following the Soviet attack on Poland, Kaunas closed its border and began work to reopen it on 20 September. After 24 September, only small, scattered groups of soldiers were able to cross at sporadic intervals. Lithuania also began to carry out a quiet operation to mobilize as a preventive measure (Łossowski, 1985, pp. 36–38).

Around 15,000 uniformed personnel from various formations of the Polish Army, police, gendarmes, border and prison guards, and KOP units, including some 3,000 officers and 12,000 non-commissioned officers and privates, were interned in Lithuania (Vilkielis, 1995; Szczurowski, 2004, pp. 92–93). These were treated in accordance with the provisions of the 4th and 5th Hague Conventions (*Convention (iv) respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its annex: Regulations concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land*, 1907; *Convention (v) respecting the Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land*, 1907). The groups crossing the border also included civilians, who will

not be examined in the present article. Entrance into Lithuania required a laying down of arms and then transport to one of the numerous camps in the country (Łossowski, 1985, pp. 38–40; Surgailis, 2013, pp. 207–218). In the period from autumn 1939 to summer 1940, Polish soldiers were held in camps in the vicinities of Birštonas, Kalvarija, Kolotovo, Kaunas, Kuršėnai, Alytus, Palanga, Rokiškis, Vilkaviškis, Vilkmėrgė, and Vaitkuškis (Praga, 1995, p. 102).

The internment camps for Polish soldiers were spread throughout Lithuania and varied in number. In terms of living conditions, it is possible to split the camps into two groups: summer compounds that were unfit for year-round use, and places suitable for housing all year (old barracks, forts, etc.). There was also a third category comprising transit camps created *ad hoc* during the initial phase of internment. It should be noted that Lithuania was prepared to arrange separate camps for both sides of the conflict – the Second Polish Republic and the Third Reich (Szczerowski, 2004, p. 95). The Lithuanians strove to maintain acceptable standards of food and lodging in the internment camps, and a prisoner's rations were hardly different from those distributed to Lithuanian soldiers. The "senior," usually the highest ranking Polish officer, was responsible for camp affairs and was its main representative. Nevertheless, the most important person in establishing relations between the internees and the environment was the Lithuanian camp commandant. Despite the relatively good living conditions, the Lithuanian officer was generally depended upon the most. An internee's life was organized according to a strict schedule: wake-up call, breakfast, dinner, supper, and rest. Libraries, orchestras and chapels were all organized within the camp grounds. Correspondence with loved ones was permitted, as were visits from family members. This did not mean, however, that ennui could not seep into the daily life of the internees.

In Kaunas' view, the prisoners represented quite a problem. Providing food and lodging for more than 15,000 soldiers who were unable to earn a wage was a considerable expense. Cost estimates published by the Lithuanian authorities appeared to have been exaggerated and deliberately inflated. The state seized a large amount of Polish military property, provisions, medicines, and other items of value on its territory. These items were given to the army of the First Republic, used to supply internment camps, or distributed among the residents of the Vilnius region (Szczerowski, 2004, pp. 95–96).

In addition to problems of a purely financial nature, the Lithuanian government also faced diplomatic difficulties. Holding a large number of military personnel on its own territory, in a country that the two main powers in the region – the Soviet Union and the Third Reich – believed had ceased to exist, posed a serious challenge. The Germans and the Soviets applied pressure with a view to resolving this issue. Sending soldiers to France or Britain would have encouraged far-reaching retaliation.

Kaunas tried at all costs to remain neutral in the first stages of the war, and Lithuania repeatedly presented its difficult situation to the Allies in the west, but received no aid from them (Pięta, Roman & Szczurowski, 1997, pp. 34–35; Mitkiewicz, 1968, pp. 287–288). The only way out of this impasse was to gradually reduce the number of detained Polish soldiers. The servicemen were released on the basis of certificates from the medical commission, which proved to be very liberal in its rulings. Those who wanted to leave the camp and return to their homes (i.e. territories under Soviet or German occupation, or to Sweden) were allowed to do so (Surgailis, 2013, pp. 220–263). It should also be noted that numerous escapes from the camps were observed (Praga, 1995, pp. 104–106).

Turning now to the second part of the article, the vast majority of Polish soldiers interned in Lithuania only briefly alluded to this fact in their accounts. The sources often include dry comments made in passing; the authors only state the names of the camps where they were interned, or very often they declare nothing more than the fact they were interned at all: “Date and circumstances of arrest: from 19.09.[19]39 to 10.07.[19]40 in Lithuania” (Relacja Stanisława Bagińskiego, n.d.). Many of the questionnaires begin with a statement that the respondent was arrested at the internment camp and deported deep into the USSR, completely skipping the period they spent in the First Republic (e.g. Relacja Władysława Kapustki, n.d.).

The presentation of these memories from the beginning of the war may have several explanations. Firstly, attention must be paid to the questions contained in the “Questionnaire of a former prisoner of war – internee – prisoner – ‘gulag worker’ – exile in the USSR,” the title of which dictated to some extent the range of answers. More information is contained in accounts given from outside norms imposed from above, when the writer was able to construct the story of his or her plight in their own words. Another explanation is the relative lack of activities in the camps in Lithuania, and the harrowing experiences of exile in the Soviet Union. When comparing the monotony of internment (when a rhythm was set by waking up and turning out the lights in the evening, with a relatively good economic existence) with the extreme experiences in the USSR (cattle cars, starvation rations, work beyond human strength), it may be suspected that the latter memories became more engraved in the memory of the respondent. The monotonous periods, without any sticking points, merge into a whole. It is easier to remember when such points can be pinpointed.

The accounts sporadically mention the time before the border was crossed. The main recollection is the Red Army’s incursion into the Second Polish Republic on 17 September 1939 (Relacja Zygmunta Czechowskiego, n.d.). Occasionally, this is supplemented by rudimentary information about the September struggles against the USSR (Relacja Ferdynanda Wróblewskiego, n.d.; Relacja Władysława Sramkowskiego, n.d.). In this

context, the testimony of Staff Sergeant Bernard Chodoff is of particular interest:

On 18 September at 5 p.m. the company which I headed was manning a defensive section stretching from a transmitter to the Rossa cemetery in Wilno. At 7.15 p.m. a messenger came to my company with a letter from the battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel Szyłejko, ordering me to take my company and march to the highway between Wilno and Grodno. [...] The soldiers who went with me were residents of Wilno. At Legionowa Street they declared that they wouldn't go with me, but would go home instead. At Legionowa Street I met Captain Mickiewicz, an officer from my battalion. He told me that an order had been issued to cross the Polish-Lithuanian border (Relacja Bernarda Chodoffa, n.d.).

Similarly, policeman Stanisław Glinka, remembered that he had with him a change of underwear and 20 PLN in cash, apart from weapons and ammunition, when entering Lithuania (Glinka, 1999, p. 139). Nevertheless, even in these accounts, the course of events appears similar: fighting the enemy, orders to go to a foreign country, and crossing the border.

The most common recollection is that the border between Poland and Lithuania was crossed as a unit on the order of command; it matters little in this case whether these units were military (Relacja Karola Waśniowskiego, n.d.; Relacja Józefa Roznowskiego, n.d.; Relacja Henryka Wołowskiego, n.d.) or another formation (Relacja Wacława Ignaczewskiego, n.d.). Those who gave their accounts talk about laying down their arms (Relacja Stanisława Kuska, n.d.), and occasionally there are references to clashes on the border (Relacja Wacława Porowskiego, n.d.). Misunderstandings sometimes occurred. Glinka remembers that he had a problem crossing the border because he served in the police. However, he managed to negotiate and convince the Lithuanians that the police had been incorporated into the Polish army, and thus were covered by all international agreements, and the border guards agreed to let the senior constable enter Lithuania (Glinka, 1999, p. 139). The frequent mention of orders to enter territory of a neutral country and lay down arms can, to some extent, be seen as an expression of genuine trauma: the annihilation of their homeland, which, for most of the witnesses, born at the turn of the 19th century, represented their whole adult life, must have been deeply engraved in their memory. On the other hand, it may also show that the soldier as an individual did not act autonomously, and so the responsibility was shifted to officers, generals, and the government, while the soldier himself remained innocent.

After crossing the border, the soldiers were transported to their places of internment. Senior Warrant Officer Stanisław Żelazny remembers that



the Lithuanian servicemen interrogated each detainee in order to record their personal data before they were allowed to enter the camp. They assured him that this was only required for issuing temporary Lithuanian documents and reporting the detainee to the Lithuanian Red Cross (Relacja Stanisława Żelaznego, n.d.). Nevertheless, some preferred to conceal their true identity (Relacja Władysława Ciarki, n.d.) because they feared the security police, the so-called Saugumas (Pięta, Roman & Szczurowski, 1997, pp. 30–31). The internees had to surrender all their sharp tools – razors, penknives, etc. – and were given a receipt in exchange before they entered the camp (Relacja Henryka Kowalowskiego, n.d.). In order to facilitate the management of the detainees, they were divided into companies, platoons, and squads according to prewar military practices (Relacja Ferdynanda Wróblewskiego, n.d.). The description of the route from the border to the camp is fragmentary (Relacja Emila Rewranza, n.d.). Thus is Lasocki’s account, written after the war, presented in an interesting light: “We drove through a country that was very similar to Poland, passing woods, fields, and meadows” (Lasocki, 1993, p. 9).

As previously noted, the internees were sent to camps located across Lithuania. In the soldiers’ accounts, the towns already mentioned are recurring cases, namely: Birštonas, Kalvarija, Kolotovo, Kaunas, Alytus, Palanga, Vilkaviškis, and Vilkmergė. Most of the detainees gave the place names in Polish, or sometimes in Polish and Lithuanian (Relacja Stanisława Wrzoska, n.d.). Of course, there were errors and misspellings (Relacja Bolesława Świetlika, n.d.). Sometimes, as in the case of localities deep in the USSR, the internees gave precise coordinates and brief descriptions of the isolated location (Relacja Ferdynanda Wróblewskiego, n.d.; Relacja Stanisława Kezuka, n.d.); not infrequently, they also indicated the original purpose of the buildings that had been adapted to suit the needs of the camp. Sergeant Major Jan Konopko claimed that seaside villas in Palanga and tsarist barracks in Vilkaviškis were used as internment camps (Relacja Jana Konopki, n.d.). The thesis that Lithuania deployed uniformed soldiers on an *ad hoc* basis is supported by the fact that the camps only became completely enclosed over time. For example, the Palanga camp was not immediately surrounded by barbed wire (Relacja Michała Garsteckiego, n.d.).

Leon Mitkiewicz described the beginning of the war, crossing the border, and uniformed soldiers traveling to isolated locations in a completely different way in his memoirs. As an employee of the Polish diplomatic mission, he had a broader perspective of the events. Mitkiewicz vividly depicted the wave of refugees that reached Kaunas:

Poland’s tragedy reached us, too, in Kaunas. Escapees! Terrified, broken, with no means to get by, because their piles of Polish złoty are worthless here, without warm clothes, dressed only in their summer outfits (Mitkiewicz, 1968, p. 322).

Interestingly, he noted a change in the attitude of the Lithuanians toward the Second Polish Republic that occurred over the course of September 1939. At first, words of appreciation and general courtesy from governmental spheres dominated, but as time passed, reactions became more measured and cool. Eventually, Mitkiewicz withdrew the Polish diplomatic mission from Kaunas in protest against the incorporation of Vilnius into the First Republic. Importantly, however, he distinguished between the behavior of Lithuanian servicemen posted in internment camps and the reaction of the public (pp. 285–350).

When the respondents of the questionnaires described their living conditions, they briefly presented them as tolerable (Relacja Stanisława Żelaznego, n.d.; Relacja Pawła Hellera, n.d.) or good (Relacja Jakuba Walikowskiego, n.d.; Relacja Zygmunta Wróblewskiego, n.d.; Relacja Mieczysława Janiszewskiego, n.d.; Relacja Józefa Kokosińskiego, n.d.): “Lodging for the internees was good, louse infestation no more than 5%” (Relacja Władysława Jocza, n.d.). Sometimes there were more elaborate descriptions (Relacja Stanisława Kezuka, n.d.). Occasionally, there were complaints about lack of hygiene (Relacja Stanisława Orkisz, n.d.; Relacja Piotra Kozłowskiego, n.d.). Some of the internees stated that the food and lodgings deteriorated over time (Relacja Stanisława Kuska, n.d.). Corporal Stanisław Kusek noted that housing conditions in the Lithuanian internment camps were initially quite good, but gradually grew worse (Relacja Antoniego Obrządk, n.d.). Some of the internees openly declared that their living conditions had been austere (Relacja Wilhelma Pawłowicza, n.d.). Nevertheless, even these internees were forced to admit that conditions were much worse in the depths of the USSR. Sergeant Franciszek Sochacki wrote: “In Russia, the camps in Yukhnov, Murmansk, and the Kola Peninsula – when you think about what they did to us in those camps, you lose your mind” (Relacja Franciszka Sochackiego, n.d.). In addition to providing food and lodging, sick internees were brought to camp hospitals, while more difficult cases were treated in civilian clinics (Relacja Henryka Kowalowskiego, n.d.). Doctors and nurses who arrived in Lithuania in autumn 1939 were employed at camp clinics (Relacja Władysława Jocza, n.d.; Relacja Henryka Wołowskiego, n.d.; Relacja Edwarda Tippelta, n.d.).

The detainees gave very rough estimates of the numbers of people being held in the internment camps, without distinguishing between the various formations (Relacja Władysława Baszkiewicz, n.d.). Nevertheless, some of the more complete accounts make it possible to gain a more detailed insight into the community of Lithuania’s detainees. The internees came from different units and formations, had different ranks, represented different national groups, and had worked in varying professions in civilian life. The primary division, however, was made between military personnel and non-military persons (police, КОР, border guards, prison guards, gendarmerie, etc.) or between officers and privates, with

a secondary division made between nationalities (Relacja Mariana Janickiego, n.d.; Relacja Wacława Wawerni, n.d.; Relacja Stanisława Ziemiękiewicza, n.d.). Sergeant Major Franciszek Szczyпка said that in all the camps he visited in Lithuania there were about 4,000 people, half of whom were soldiers comprised mainly of non-commissioned officers, with the rest being police and border guards. Poles predominated in terms of nationality, with very few Jews and Belarusians (Relacja Franciszka Szczyпки, n.d.). Other reports mention *Volksdeutsche* (Relacja Edmunda Bojankiewicza, n.d.), Russians (Relacja Cyryła Daszkiewicza, n.d.), and Ukrainians (Relacja Jana Konopki, n.d.; Relacja Stanisława Bognackiego, n.d.). According to Major Henryk Kowalowski, the divisions in the camp were not made according to rank, nationality, or education; the most important determinant was the individual's attitude toward Germany or Russia, while another was the way the internee dealt with the stress caused by the harsh realities of the camp (Relacja Henryka Kowalowskiego, n.d.).

Many of the internees remembered good mutual relations. They emphasized compassion, high moral standards, and impeccable behavior (Relacja Stanisława Kuska, n.d.). One internee noted: "The prevailing mood was very good in the camps where I stayed, with the exception of some units" (Relacja Józefa Nowakowskiego, n.d.). Nevertheless, more extensive accounts reveal the presence of cracks in this narrative. Lieutenant Stanisław Kezuk claimed that these formed between privates and officers, and further, between those who believed in the future rebirth of their country and malcontents who began to sympathize with the Germans (Relacja Stanisława Kezuka, n.d.). The news that reached the internees from without the confines of the camps had a great impact on their moral stance. The long-awaited offensive on the western front did come to fruition, and instead of joy, the inmates remembered being gripped by a malaise in summer 1940 when they learned of the Third Reich's victories. The constancy that had bolstered their spirits since the beginning of their internment – the prospect of an Allied attack on the western front – was gone. "The fall of France was followed by a renewed moral breakdown" (Relacja Edmunda Bojankiewicza, n.d.).

Despite relatively good living conditions and an absence of major conflict within the camps that would have caused permanent division (Relacja Ferdynanda Wróblewskiego, n.d.), the internees felt as though they were in prison simply because they were separated from their homeland (Relacja Maksymiliana Cichowicza, n.d.; Relacja Edwarda Toppelta, n.d.). Importantly, however, the Lithuanian authorities issued the inmates with passes and allowed them to leave the camps for a certain time (Relacja Feliksa Tatarowskiego, n.d.; Relacja Stanisława Rokity, n.d.). Initially, inmates were permitted to leave without an escort. Marian Giczewski recalled that the Polish officers were allowed to be visited by their own families and unrelated individuals. Nevertheless, this freedom to meet with civilians was gradually limited over time, as were cases of departure

from the camp. Another way to maintain contact with loved ones was to write letters (Relacja Mariana Giczewskiego, n.d.).

The accounts make no mention of any labor imposed by the Lithuanian authorities (Relacja Michała Garsteckiego, n.d.). The internees themselves carried out the work for their own camp and only within the grounds of the camp itself (Relacja Ludwika Studniarskiego, n.d.; Relacja Michała Ruczkowskiego, n.d.). Major Henryk Kowalowski noted that “there were set times for waking up, morning gymnastics, breakfast, lunch and supper, and then going to bed at night and lights out” (Relacja Henryka Kowalowskiego, n.d.). The internees participated in cultural and patriotic events to maintain morale. Edmund Bojankiewicz mentioned the Self-Help Organization, whose task it was to provide material aid to the internees to the greatest possible extent (Relacja Edmunda Bojankiewicza, n.d.). Occasionally, officers of the First Republic tried to organize free time for their subordinates (Relacja Ferdynanda Wróblewskiego, n.d.; Relacja Henryka Kowalowskiego, n.d.).

Descriptions of the period spent in Lithuania contain information about reading materials (Relacja Bartłomieja Szczurka, n.d.), as the camps possessed relatively well-stocked libraries (Relacja Jana Zasadzińskiego, n.d.). Platoon Leader Waław Porowski mentioned the collection of books in his camp amounting to 2,000 items sent by the Polish community in Lithuania. In addition to secular publications, the diaspora apparently also provided religious literature (Relacja Waław Porowskiego, n.d.). Joanna Mackiewiczowa provided more details on aid provided by representatives of the Polish community in Lithuania to civilian internees and deportees. Namely, they collected food and served hot meals to those in need, as well as organized temporary lodgings for non-uniformed people (Mackiewiczowa, 1996, pp. 13–19). Polish films were shown and radio programs broadcast in the common rooms. Corporal Stanisław Kusek remembered that discussions about Poland were held in the common rooms (Relacja Stanisława Kuska, n.d.). Language courses were provided in order to improve the internees’ skills (Relacja Ferdynanda Wróblewskiego, n.d.; Relacja Henryka Kowalowskiego, n.d.). Warrant Officer Cyryl Daszkiewicz recalled that internal schools with varying educational portfolios operated within the camps (Relacja Cyryla Daszkiewicza, n.d.). The inmates also spent their free time practicing sport (Relacja Ludwika Studniarskiego, n.d.) or doing various craft and artistic work:

Some carved and assembled boxes from plywood, others painted, still others cut cigar holders from the roots of frozen fruit trees. There were some craftsmen who forged and polished razorblades made from tin rings taken from barrels (Relacja Henryka Kowalowskiego, n.d.).

These activities were considered to be socially useful, but certain means of coping with a superfluity of free time were deemed to be worthy condemnation and reprimand, although they were not officially penalized by the Lithuanian authorities. Lieutenant Stanisław Kezuka remembered that some internees gambled at cards (Relacja Stanisława Kezuka, n.d.). Those who got drunk were looked upon unfavorably, as their drunkenness had a negative effect on their fellow inmates (Relacja Stanisława Rokity, n.d.). One of the authors of these accounts claimed that “due to a lack of work, some people were rambunctious and gossipy, which, as we know, had already done us a great deal of harm” (Relacja Henryka Kowalowskiego, n.d.). The previously mentioned desire to return home was considered particularly destructive for the entire camp community (Relacja Edmunda Bojankiewicza, n.d.).

All these activities may be considered part of everyday life. In a similar way, holidays were quite different. The internees were permitted to participate in religious rituals, but it must be mentioned that very few testimonies mention holy mass. Platoon Sergeant Władysław Porowski recalled that Sunday mass was celebrated by a Polish priest, but the Lithuanian authorities did not permit the singing of the song *Boże, coś Polskę* [*God, Thou Hast Poland*] (Relacja Wacława Porowskiego, n.d.). Rituals of other faiths were not mentioned at all in the prisoners’ memoirs.

The secular holiday, namely, Poland’s Independence Day, was quite different. The national celebration was introduced in 1937, with the main celebrations held annually on 11 November. In order to better understand the mood of the Polish community in the camps at the time, it should be noted that the holiday came around less than two months after the fall of the Second Polish Republic. Some people mention that celebrations took place, although there are no detailed descriptions. There is information, however, that the Lithuanian authorities opposed any celebration of independence (Relacja Andrzeja Molendy, n.d.; Relacja Antoniego Obrządką, n.d.). Moreover, the events of 11 November 1939 are described in terms of the tragic incidents that occurred as a result of the Polish community’s attempt to celebrate the day. This is how the Independence Day was remembered by Staff Sergeant Ferdynand Wróblewski, quoted above:

On 11 November, the entire Polish camp celebrated the Independence of Poland. The Lithuanians did not like this and started shooting at the windows. Three Poles were killed. I do not remember their names. Following intervention by Poles in Lithuania, Major Sokolas and his aides were removed – they were villains and devourers of Polish people. Major Zdanowicz was appointed camp commandant. Our conditions improved thereafter (Relacja Ferdynanda Wróblewskiego, n.d.).

If the members of the Polish community interned in Lithuania are taken as a whole, regardless of their overarching military unit, education, etc., then the Lithuanians must be considered a separate community. As it has already been shown in the introduction, the relations between the two nations had been greatly affected by history. The attitude of the Lithuanians toward the Poles varied; some showed friendship and understanding, others neutrality or hostility. In the accounts found in the archives of the Hoover Institution, there is no opinion that the behavior of the Lithuanians was a foregone conclusion. An internee could meet a friendly guard or a heartless commandant, or vice versa. Nevertheless, as regards hostility, it is not difficult to see that much of the unpleasantness had its source in mutual prejudice.

Poles encountered friendly and hostile behavior throughout their stay in the First Republic. Lasocki cited a story about how he met an elderly man on his way to the camp: "As my horse approached him, I heard the words: 'Brothers, you couldn't handle the Russkis. You couldn't handle them...'" (Lasocki, 1993, pp. 9–10). In his account, Corporal Stanisław Kuszek, who has already been quoted many times, wrote that Lithuanian soldiers comforted their Polish comrades and sympathized with them: "Some even said that Poland would be freed and that we would still be neighbors" (Relacja Stanisława Kuska, n.d.). The Lithuanian Major Zdanowicz could serve as an example of an understanding but firm camp commandant (Relacja Ferdynanda Wróblewskiego, n.d.). Colonel Wiktor Kozłowski (Viktoras Kazlauskas), the commandant of the Kaunas Fort VI camp, was described in a similar way. Marian Giczewski, cited above, recalled that it was during Colonel Kozłowski's appointment that the prisoners had excellent food and almost full liberty to go on a holiday, and the commandant himself even hosted Polish officers in his private apartment (Relacja Mariana Giczewskiego, n.d.). It is worth noting that the names of Lithuanian officers who cared for their subordinates were written in Polish in the accounts, although they should have been noted in Lithuanian. This may also indicate a high degree of fraternization between the inmates and the military officers of the First Republic in question.

Nevertheless, the collections in the Hoover Institution include a preponderance of accounts showing that the Lithuanian military did not take kindly to Poles. Lieutenant Stanisław Pieczora recalled that the general attitude of the Lithuanians was one of simple hostility (Relacja Stanisława Pieczory, n.d.). This is confirmed by Stanisław Rokita's statement that hatred and hostility towards the detainees could be felt intrinsically (Relacja Stanisława Rokity, n.d.). Lieutenant Tadeusz Cisek was of a similar opinion, and assessed the behavior of the Lithuanians as very hostile (Relacja Tadeusza Ciska, n.d.). The forester Waldemar Narkiewicz-Jodko recalled that some political repressions took place in the camps, although he did not elaborate on the issue (Relacja Waldemara Narkiewicz-Jodko, n.d.). Some internees remembered individuals who behaved

badly toward them. Officer Tadeusz Dyderski remembered a military man whose behavior was considered by all Polish officers as highly inappropriate (Relacja Tadeusza Dyderskiego, n.d.). Others point to entire formations – the Šauliai – that were characterized by a hostile attitude toward the internees (Relacja Antoniego Obrządk, n.d.). Reserve Lieutenant Józef Kazimierowski claimed that the Lithuanians aimed to systematically destroy the Polish spirit (Relacja Józefa Kazimierowskiego, n.d.). Cavalryman Jan Bik wrote openly that the Lithuanian camps in Birštonas and Kalvarija treated the inmates with brutality (Relacja Jana Bika, n.d.).

The most common forms of unpleasantness shown with regard to the internees included verbal disputes. Some reminded the Poles of their historical past, especially the more recent events. The Lithuanians criticized the policies of the Polish government, which had led to the consequent collapse of the Second Polish Republic (Relacja Wacława Porowskiego, n.d.). Ludwik Studniarski, cited above, recalled that the camp authorities often rebuked Poles for the events of 1938: “Where is your ultimatum? Are you on your way to Kaunas yet?” (Relacja Ludwika Studniarskiego, n.d.).

There were also cases of beatings (Relacja Wacława Porowskiego, n.d.). Cyryl Daszkiewicz wrote that Lithuanian soldiers would use invidious language and sometimes struck him with a rifle butt (Relacja Cyryla Daszkiewicza, n.d.). Resistant or problematic inmates were transported to the camp in Kaunas. One was tried before a Lithuanian court for his activity in the Polish Military Organization in as far back as 1918 (Relacja Szaniawskiego, n.d.); another was sentenced to death for deserting the army of the First Republic, with the sentence eventually changed to 12 years in prison (Relacja Władysława Jocza, n.d.). Staff Sergeant Władysław Ciarka, who escaped from the camp, wrote about the detention centers to which offenders or escapees gathered up by the Lithuanian authorities were sent (Relacja Władysława Ciarki, n.d.).

Among the most tragic memories were the deaths of fellow inmates. Reserve Lieutenant Jan Czarnowski tells the story of two inmates of the camp: the first of them was shot in the back and killed allegedly without any reason; the second died during an escape attempt, when a guard opened fire on him after having accepted a bribe from the inmate (Testimony of Jan Czarnowski, n.d.). Henryk Jacewicz stated that Lieutenant Strokowski was shot while escaping from the Kalvarija camp, and Lieutenant Tadeusz Tułodziecki was wounded in the stomach (Relacja Henryka Jacewicza, n.d.).

One of the commandants of the Kalvarija camp, Lithuanian army major Petras Jakštas, is deserving of individual examination. Second Lieutenant Maksymilian Cichowicz noted in his account that Major Jakštas was an infamous Lithuanian chauvinist (Relacja Maksymiliana Cichowicza, n.d.). Captain Eugeniusz Roth added that the commandant did everything to make the inmates feel like they were in prison (Relacja Eugeniusza

Rotha, n.d.). Eventually, a revolt broke out in the Kalvarija camp as a consequence of his insulting the Polish coat of arms (Relacja Eugeniusza Rotha, n.d.). The inmates went on hunger strike (Relacja Jana Pietkiewicza, n.d.), and the Lithuanian authorities became involved in the matter and removed Major Jakštas from his position as commandant. Lieutenant Edmund Bojankiewicz and Captain Eugeniusz Roth both remember that the conditions in Kalvarija improved greatly after that event (Relacja Eugeniusza Rotha, n.d.; Relacja Edmunda Bojankiewicza, n.d.).

Prisoners were known to commit suicide during their internment in Lithuania. Of course, this does not mean that someone who tried to kill himself in the camp would not have done so in other circumstances. Stanisław Rokita remembered two incidents of his comrades hanging themselves (Relacja Stanisława Rokity, n.d.).

The end of the Polish internees' stay in Lithuania was related to an order from Lavrentiy Beria issued on 6 July 1940, stating that they were to be handed over to the Soviets before the Lithuanian Republic officially joined the USSR, after which some of them were made victims in the Katyn Massacre (Jaczyński, 2004; 2006).

For most internees, the summer of 1940 was the first memory they wrote about. As mentioned in the introduction, there could be several reasons for this, such as the way the questions in the questionnaire were worded, or the monotony of the detainees' lives and the very strong contrast of later experiences in the USSR. Nevertheless, the accounts of those who were in Lithuania and then sent to the Soviet Union show that the summer of 1940 marked the beginning of a new chapter in their lives (Relacja Henryka Sanieckiego, n.d.; Relacja Zygryda Zalewskiego-Korciuk, n.d.).

The internees who left the most extensive accounts described the time of their arrest quite accurately. They remembered the units that replaced the Lithuanian guards in the camps in different ways, calling the new arrivals "Bolsheviks" (Relacja Emila Rewranza, n.d.), "the Soviet Army" (Relacja Jana Nowaka, n.d.), "the Soviets" (Relacja Stanisława Rokity, n.d.), "the НКВД" (Relacja Wacława Porowskiego, n.d.), or "the Red Army" (Relacja Stanisława Nicewicza, n.d.). Before the Soviet authorities took custody of the Polish servicemen, the Lithuanians had issued a decree that the bedding, uniforms, and underwear issued by the camp administrators be surrendered. Holidays were cancelled. Finally, the inmates also had to surrender any sharp objects they still possessed (Relacja Feliksa Tatarowskiego, n.d.). The authors of these accounts gave the exact date and time when the Soviet officers began to take over their camp (Relacja Karola Trzosa, n.d.).

Arrests were preceded by announcements of the order to leave the place of internment. The inmates were given some time to pack their belongings. They were allowed to take only as much as they could carry when leaving the camp, even if transport to the station was arranged with



the Lithuanians' help. No provisions were made for the transport of any larger luggage (Relacja Władysława Ficka, n.d.). The journey began when they were taken out of the barracks. In the camp square, the prisoners were divided into privates and officers (Relacja Wacława Porowskiego, n.d.), searched thoroughly and had their personal data checked (Relacja Stanisława Jędrzejczyka, n.d.). After verification, they had to walk from the camp to the place of loading, i.e. the railroad station, which was usually located a few kilometers from the town (Relacja Stanisława Grzegorzycy, n.d.). The march was carried out under heavy escort, and the internees were instructed that the NKVD had the right to shoot in the event of an escape attempt (Relacja Stanisława Kuska, n.d.). The uniformed men left Lithuania confined to overloaded, stuffy cattle cars without adequate water or food supplies (Relacja Stanisława Rokity, n.d.). The journey from the camp to the depths of the USSR usually took several days (Relacja Stanisława Stachury, n.d.). One of the first stops on the route was Molodechno, where the privates were separated from the officers (Relacja Władysława Filipowicza, n.d.; Relacja Bronisława Grzymajło, n.d.; Relacja Stanisława Nicewicza, n.d.).

The fate of the internees in the USSR varied. Some went through several Soviet camps (Relacja Antoniego Burjana, n.d.), others ended up in only one (Relacja Tadeusza Mąkoszy, n.d.). Under the Sikorski-Mayski Agreement, those who survived were given the opportunity to go free (Jaczyński, 2018). For most of the detainees, the stay in the Soviet Union was a veritable Hell in comparison to their experiences in Lithuania.

The memory of the internment camps in Lithuania is to some extent reconstructable based on the accounts stored in the Hoover Institution. One limitation that inherently obscures the developed image, however, is the bias of the sources. Of course, this is not a reproach, as the accounts were written for a specific purpose and at a specific time. It is apparent that their later context played a significant role in the assessment of these events. Similar opinions about the internment conditions and relations with the Lithuanians can be found in memoirs published many years later, including those of Wiesław Lasocki (1993) and Joanna Mackiewiczowa (1996).

There was some consistency in the subjective perceptions of the authors of the accounts: detention in Lithuania was a relatively unimportant stage in their war epic, and when they did write about it, they reported that living conditions in the camps were generally bearable. Comparing this with the descriptions of their experiences in the USSR, it is easy to see that they were more favorable in the First Republic. Given the type of material elicited by the respondents' questionnaires, whether their time in the Soviet Union was not specifically portrayed in a worse light than it actually was remains a separate issue.

(transl. by Ian Stephenson)

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