

# Transfer of Public Authorities and Institutions of the Republic of Lithuania to Vilnius in 1939–1940: Plans and Their Implementation

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*Abstract.* On 27 October 1939, Vilnius and its region de facto became a part of Lithuania. The process of integration of the city and the whole region into the Republic of Lithuania, which also involved the resettlement of certain public authorities and institutions in the historical capital, began. The article analyses the transfer of Lithuanian public authorities and institutions from Kaunas to Vilnius between 1939 and 1940, reveals the position of the Lithuanian government regarding their relocation to Vilnius, its mechanism, discusses the results achieved, their statistical expression, and the impact on the ethnic-demographic situation in Vilnius.

*Keywords:* transfer of public authorities and institutions, Vilnius, capital, Lithuanians, Poles.

*Anotacija.* Straipsnyje analizuojama Lietuvos valstybinių institucijų perkėlimo iš Kauno į Vilnių akcija 1939–1940 m., atskleidžiama Lietuvos valdžios pozicija dėl institucijų perkėlimo į Vilnių, perkėlimo mechanizmas, pasiekti rezultatai, t. y. kokios institucijos persikėlė į Vilnių, aptariama statistinė akcijos išraiška ir poveikis Vilniaus etninei padėčiai.

*Esminiai žodžiai:* institucijų perkėlimo akcija, Vilnius, lietuviai, lenkai.

## Introduction

Though Lithuania was not capable of defending the territories of its establishing modern state by arms and failed to achieve more remarkable positive outcomes in the diplomatic struggle over them, the Lithuanian society did not lose hope that Vilnius, Lithuania's historical capital, would soon become a part of Lithuania. To that end, Lithuanians consolidated their efforts and played an active role in the campaign for the liberation of Vilnius. It culminated in the autumn of 1939, when Vilnius and its region were ceded to Lithuania on the grounds of the Soviet-Lithuanian treaty. On 28 October 1939, when the Lithuanian army set foot in Vilnius, the process of integration of Vilnius and its region into the Republic of Lithuania, which lasted over seven months, began. The transfer of Lithuanian public authorities and institutions from Kaunas, the temporary capital, to Vilnius was a part of this process.

The research problem is a little known and studied area in Lithuanian historiography. Several authors mentioned the transfer of individual authorities and institutions and their personnel to Vilnius and its region<sup>1</sup>. This topic was probably most comprehensively discussed by historian Regina Žepkaitė, who addressed the problem of the integration of Vilnius into the Republic of Lithuania in the period 1939 to 1940. The author paid attention to the issue of transferring the capital from Kaunas to Vilnius. She pointed out that due to political and social reasons, Vilnius could not become the capital of Lithuania at that time. The shortage of premises for public authorities and institutions and their employees was one of the obstacles. According to Žepkaitė, around 12,000 civil servants had to resettle in Vilnius; if we add their family members, the number of people would be approximately 47,000<sup>2</sup>. The delay of Lithuanian central authorities to move to Vilnius was also observed by Liudas Truska. He noted that Antanas Smetona, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was firmly determined not to move to Vilnius<sup>3</sup>.

The article by Modestas Kuodys<sup>4</sup> addressing the reaction of the Lithuanian society and the press towards the transfer of the capital from Kaunas to Vilnius deserves a special mention. The author paid attention to the particularly joyful reaction of Lithuanian residents after the retrieval of Vilnius and the attitude of the elite towards the resettlement in the historical capital. Kuodys notes that “the resettlement of the elite in the historical

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<sup>1</sup> ŽEPKAITĖ, Regina. *Vilniaus istorijos atkarpa 1939–1940*. Vilnius, 1990, p. 103–109, 141; TRUSKA, Liudas. *Tautinis atgimimas ir istorija*. Vilnius, 2012, p. 488–489; MAČIULIS, Dangiras; STALIŪNAS, Darius. *Vilnius – Lietuvos sostinė: problema tautinės valstybės projekte (XIX a. pabaiga – 1940 m.)*. Vilnius, 2015, p. 260–274; BRUKAS, Algirdas. Lietuvos miškininkų likimai 1939–1953 m. *Genocidas ir rezistencija*, 2012, Nr. 1, p. 7–31.

<sup>2</sup> ŽEPKAITĖ, Regina. *Vilniaus istorijos atkarpa 1939–1940*, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> TRUSKA, Liudas. *Tautinis atgimimas ir istorija*, p. 489.

<sup>4</sup> KUODYS, Modestas. Laikinosios sostinės saulėlydis? Kauno likimo klausimas Lietuvos spaudoje 1939–1940 m. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2013, t. 2, p. 173–184.

capital was considered a privilege and even a certain duty”<sup>5</sup>. However, to add to what was already said by the author, it should be noted that though the Lithuanian press elaborated on the rush of public authorities and institutions to transfer their headquarters and their personnel to Vilnius, the reality was rather different. A complicated social, economic and ethnic situation in Vilnius soon cooled the enthusiasm of Lithuanians, leading to the gradual and slow institutional transfer.

Other authors<sup>6</sup> mainly focused on the Lithuanian ethnic policy in Vilnius and its region in the period 1939 to 1940 and Polish-Lithuanian cross-ethnic relations in Vilnius by merely mentioning Lithuanian authorities and institutions and their civil servants in Vilnius. Researchers Piotr Łossowski and Stanisława Lewandowska pointed out that masses of public officials and teachers taking up higher-ranking positions flooded Vilnius. As they were in great demand, every public official from Lithuania could get a placement in Vilnius without any difficulty. Personal identity was the decisive criterion<sup>7</sup>. Historian Krzysztof Buchowski stated that upon arrival in Vilnius, Lithuanian civil servants isolated themselves from local residents and took a reserved approach towards them<sup>8</sup>. However, for the sake of objectivity, it should be noted that Lithuanian civil servants were not very eager about moving to Vilnius where the conditions of work and living were far more difficult compared to their previous residence. Besides, it should be noted that not only a part of Lithuanian civil servants took a reserved approach and were more willing to communicate with their Lithuanian colleagues; the majority of Vilnius residents of Polish origin also took a conservative and isolated approach and considered Lithuanians “ordinary occupiers” who “will not stay here for long”.

<sup>5</sup> KUODYS, Modestas. Laikiniosios sostinės saulėlydis? Kauno likimo klausimas Lietuvos spaudoje 1939–1940 m. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2013, t. 2, p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Litwa a sprawy polskie 1939–1940*. Warszawa, 1985, s. 87–94; BUCHOWSKI, Krzysztof. *Litwomani i polonizatorzy. Mity, wzajemne postrzeganie i stereotypy w stosunkach polsko-litewskich w pierwszej połowie XX wieku*. Białystok, 2006; LEWANDOWSKA, Stanisława. *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej*. Warszawa, 1997; TOMASZEWSKI, Longin. Społeczeństwo Wileńszczyzny wobec władzy litewskiej i sowieckiej (wrzesień 1939 – czerwiec 1941). In: *Społeczeństwo białoruskie, litewskie i polskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1939–1941*. Warszawa, 1995, s. 326–333; WEEKS, Theodore R. *Vilnius between Nations 1975–2000*. Northern Illinois University Press, 2015; KASPEROVIČIUS, Algis. Stosunek władz i społeczeństwa Litwy do Polaków na Wileńszczyźnie (wrzesień 1939 – czerwiec 1940). In: *Społeczeństwo białoruskie, litewskie i polskie na ziemiach północno-wschodnich II Rzeczypospolitej w latach 1939–1941*. Warszawa, 1995, s. 307–315; LIEKIS, Šarūnas. Primordialistinis ilgesys ir 1939–1940 m. Vilniaus mitų griūties šokas. In: *Lietuva ir Lenkija XX amžiaus geopolitinėje vaizduotėje*. Kaunas, 2012, p. 141–154.

<sup>7</sup> ŁOSSOWSKI, Piotr. *Litwa a sprawy polskie 1939–1940*, s. 89; LEWANDOWSKA, Stanisława. *Życie codzienne Wilna w latach II wojny światowej*, s. 37.

<sup>8</sup> BUCHOWSKI, Krzysztof. *Litwomani i polonizatorzy*, s. 340–341

Lithuanian press<sup>9</sup> and collections of documents<sup>10</sup> were useful for the reconstruction of the research problem. They helped to reveal the dynamics of the institutional transfer, the criteria of selection of civil servants and their expectations with regard to the transfer to Vilnius as well as the difficulties disturbing the process of resettlement, etc.

The memoirs of the people who were involved in the transfer process or observed it and conveyed the experience of Vilnius residents were also a valuable contribution to the analysis of the process of transfer<sup>11</sup>. It should be noted that the experience of Lithuanians and Poles was absolutely different. The Lithuanian enthusiasm to restore the capital for a new life was tempered by the situation in Vilnius, which was more complicated than it could have been imagined, and the troubles of daily life, whereas the moods of the Vilnius Poles were radicalised by the changed status of the city as well as their new status, economic difficulties, etc.

The article is based on the Lithuanian archival material. The documents of Lithuanian public authorities and institutions (Council of Ministers, ministries, scientific, educational, economic, etc. institutions) kept in the Lithuanian Central State Archives provided an opportunity to reconstruct the transfer plans, the dynamics of the process, to identify the obstacles disturbing it, etc. The documents from the Fund of the Lithuanian Council of Ministers (F. 923) enabling the determination of the attitudes of the Lithuanian government towards the institutional transfer and its practical implementation were highly valuable as well.

Documents of specific departments (Vilnius Commandant's Office (F. 496), Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior (F. 394), Vytautas Magnus University and Vilnius University (F. 631, R-856), etc.) enabling us to take a look at the process of transfer at the micro-level, as if from the inside, were useful as well. After all, owing to the planned transfer to Vilnius, individual authorities and institutions had more work to do: they had to revise their existing posts, volumes of work, etc.

The documents from the Vilnius Regional State Archives (F. 761) were an important contribution to the documents from the Lithuanian Central State Archives. They clar-

<sup>9</sup> Lietuvos Žinios, Lietuvos Aidas, XX Amžius, Vyriausybės Žinios, Tautos Ūkis, Šaltinis, Vilniaus Balsas, Mūsų Girios, Geležinkelininkas, Gazeta Codzienna, Kurjer Wileński.

<sup>10</sup> *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos diplomatiniai santykiai 1938–1940 metais*. Vilnius, 2013; *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos santykiai 1917–1994*. Vilnius, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> UŽDAVINYS, Vincas. *Chronicles. Manuscripts Department of the Wroblewski Library of the Academy of Sciences* (hereinafter – MAVB RS), f. 183-677; JUKNEVIČIUS, Antanas. *Atsiminimai*. Vilnius, 2016; KONČIUS, Ignas. *Mano eitis kelias 2*. Vilnius, 2006; MACKONIS, Rapolas. *Amžiaus liudininko užrašai*. Vilnius, 2001; MACKONIS, Rapolas. *Diaries, 1941. Lithuanian Special Archives* (hereinafter – LYA), f. K-1, ap. 58, b. 20317/3; GIMBUTIENĖ, Marija. *Dienoraštis ir prisiminimai*. Kaunas, 2015; JOKIMAITIENĖ, Pranutė. *Apie Gediminą ir save. Metai*, 1992, Nr. 9–10, p. 140–154; DAUGIRDAITĖ-SRUOGIENĖ, Vanda. *Apie 1939–1940-uosius mokslo metus Vilniuje. Kultūros barai*, 2001, Nr. 2, p. 53–57; KRZEPKOWSKI, Mieczysław. *W Wilnie: ze wspomnień. Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, t. 9, 1970, zeszc. 4, s. 573–594; FEDOROWICZ, Zygmunt. *Trzydzieści lat mego pobytu w Wilnie 1914–1944*. Bydgoszcz, 2010; ROMER, Michał. *Witaj, Wilno. Karta*, 2013, nr 78, s. 54–76.

ified certain data and extended the research in terms of time helping to shed light on the tendencies of the research problem. The process of the institutional transfer did not discontinue after Lithuania's occupation; it continued in the second half of 1940 and at the beginning of 1941.

The article sets out to investigate the transfer of public authorities and institutions from the temporary capital of Lithuania, Kaunas, to Vilnius from the end of 1939 to the first half of 1940. The following objectives were set to achieve the goal: 1) to determine the position of the Lithuanian government regarding the transfer of public authorities and institutions to Vilnius; 2) to reveal the mechanism and results of the institutional transfer; 3) to analyse the impact of the process of institutional transfer on the ethnic-demographic situation in Vilnius.

The chronological limits of the article cover a rather short period from 28 October 1939 to 15 June 1940 when Vilnius and its region were an integral part of Lithuania, and the integration of this territorial unit to the political, economic, social and cultural life of the republic was implemented. The process of integration was discontinued by Lithuania's occupation on 15 June 1940.

## **Policy of Lithuania's leadership regarding the transfer of public authorities and institutions and their staff to Vilnius and its implementation**

On 28 October 1939, the Lithuanian army set foot in Vilnius, and the stage of integration of Vilnius city and region into the life of the republic began. However, it should be noted that the opinions of the representatives of the Lithuanian government and the public regarding the integration of Vilnius diverged from moderate (President of Lithuania, the members of the Government and the Authorised Representative to the City and Region of Vilnius were willing to act slowly and carefully) and radical (the representatives of the public who supported the Nationalists preferred to achieve fast results). However, the general line was clear, i.e. the region's smooth integration and the strengthening of Lithuanianhood in it. The transfer of public authorities and institutions to Vilnius was one of the measures to implement this objective. In this respect, Kaunas, which had the largest concentration of central authorities and organisations, had to face major changes. According to Dangiras Mačiulis and Darius Staliūnas, the Lithuanian government was convinced that the transfer of central authorities and institutions to Vilnius had to be well-prepared<sup>12</sup>. Such a position was also expressed in the press: "We regained control over Vilnius which was exhausted and devastated. Hence, the transfer of central authorities to Vilnius could not be done as soon as Vilnius was handed over to Lithuania. First of

<sup>12</sup> MAČIULIS, Dangiras; STALIŪNAS, Darius. *Vilnius – Lietuvos sostinė: problema tautinės valstybės projekte (XIX a. pabaiga – 1940 m.)*, p. 262.

all, we had to put things in order, to normalise life and get ready”, and a proposal was put forward “to do it at a slower pace and with due consideration rather than hastily”<sup>13</sup>. Yet another important moment was the source of human resources for the integration: whether employees had to be resettled together with public authorities and institutions or it was considered to resort to the experience of Lithuanians, Poles or Jews living in Vilnius, who were better aware of local conditions. It is likely that in building up the new apparatus, the Lithuanian government expected to rely on the loyal segment of Vilnius residents, i.e. the Lithuanian community; however, its resources were very scarce<sup>14</sup>. It should, however, be noted that the practice of staff transfer to Vilnius prevailed, and the Lithuanian resources available in Vilnius were not exploited to the full. A Lithuanian from Vilnius described the situation of the Vilnius Lithuanians in the following way: “Vilnius residents expected that the men of the Lithuanian government would now offer them a job. In fact, some of them were indeed hired very soon, but not all of them. Others waited for a day or two, but nobody came with a job offer. Money was lacking, but people still needed to live somehow. When meeting each other, people used to ask where they got employed, but the answer was usually ‘nowhere’. One afternoon, we were invited to gather in the Romuva club. Trimakas, the former Lithuanian consul in Vilnius, came and explained to us that the Lithuanian government respected all Vilnius residents irrespective of their nationality and tried to get them employed as soon as possible.”<sup>15</sup> Konstantinas Stašys, a Vilnius resident who was appointed to the office of the burgomaster of Vilnius on 5 December 1939 (on 7 December according to other sources), was probably most successful in climbing the career ladder in the Lithuanian civil service<sup>16</sup>. Lithuanian lawyer Antanas Juknevičius recalls that the appointment of Stašys to the position of the burgomaster required the approval from Lithuanian President Antanas Smetona, who ordered to appoint him to this post. According to the lawyer, the Lithuanians of Vilnius were actually pushed aside<sup>17</sup>. Generally speaking, it should be noted that not only the Vilnius Lithuanians but also other residents of the city were viewed with reservation. The experience of some of them (e.g. Poles or Jews) was only required during the transitional period until the administration of Lithuanian authorities and institutions took over the handling of all affairs in Vilnius into their hands.

<sup>13</sup> Į sostinę persikėlus. *Geležinkelininkas*, 1940, Nr. 8, p. 121; Tautos vadui į sostinę vykstant. *Geležinkelininkas*, 1940, Nr. 11, p. 169.

<sup>14</sup> MAČIULIS, Dangiras; STALIŪNAS, Darius. *Vilnius – Lietuvos sostinė: problema tautinės valstybės projekte (XIX a. pabaiga – 1940 m.)*, p. 274.

<sup>15</sup> MACEIKA, Juozas. Vilnius mūsų... 1935–1939 metus prisiminus. *Pergalė*, 1989, Nr. 10, p. 165.

<sup>16</sup> 13 December 1939 Letter of the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Lithuania to the Minister of the Interior. *LCVA*, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1098, l. 7; 9 December 1939 Telephoned telegram from the Ministry of the Interior to the Burgomaster of Vilnius. *VRVA*, f. 761, ap. 1, b. 86, l. 1; Jews of Vilnius were continued their professional work too. *Prisiekė Vilniaus advokatai. Lietuvos Aidas*, 1940, balandžio 6, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup> JUKNEVIČIUS, Antanas. *Atsiminimai*, p. 241.

The transfer of public authorities and institutions to Vilnius was surrounded by various rumours and speculations. For instance, in the autumn of 1939, there were talks that the Ministry of National Defence, the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of the Interior as well as several educational institutions from Kaunas, Šiauliai and Panevėžys would be the first to be transferred to Vilnius<sup>18</sup>. However, such information proved to be wrong. The officers required for Lithuania's security, public order and other functions were first moved to Vilnius (to the war commandant's office, police, courts, etc.); they were followed by the employees from the institutions of agriculture, communication, education, science, etc. The Vilnius Lithuanians found the situation rather surprising: "After Vilnius was passed to Lithuania, Lithuanian authorities and institutions were in no rush to move from Kaunas, as if they were waiting for something. Only two faculties of the university were relocated to Vilnius. All ministries and more prominent newspapers, such as *Lietuvos aidas*, *XX amžius*, *Lietuvos žinios*, etc. continued their work in Kaunas as well. They only had their reporters in Vilnius."<sup>19</sup> Such a transfer of certain institutions at the end of 1939 as if shows that there was no special transfer plan. However, the issue of the transfer of central authorities was considered by the Lithuanian Council of Ministers in the spring of 1940 only. The meeting held on 17 April that year resolved to transfer them gradually<sup>20</sup>. A commission led by Deputy Prime Minister Kazys Bizauskas was set up for drafting the transfer plan. The commission gathered to consider the issue of the institutional transfer twice: on 26 May in Vilnius and on 28 May in Kaunas. The commission only addressed the transfer of central authorities as much as it was concerned with the premises required for them. The members of the commission did not adhere to the principle of "succession" of authorities, i.e. the premises which had previously been occupied by the authorities of the Vilnius Voivodeship of the Republic of Poland did not necessarily have to become the property of equivalent Lithuanian public authorities. They put forward a proposal for the President's Office of the Republic of Lithuania to move to the Representative Palace in present-day Daukanto Square; the Council of Ministers was proposed to move to the then premises of the Division Headquarters at the foot of Gediminas Hill; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was offered to resettle in the premises of the Polish Land Bank in present-day Gedimino avenue; the Ministry of Education was advised to move to the former building of the Educational Consistory in Volano street, etc.<sup>21</sup> However, the proposals were not put to practice, because the former three public authorities did not move to Vilnius, whereas certain institutions took the

<sup>18</sup> Kelsis ministerijos į Vilnių. *Šaltinis*, 1939, Nr. 43, p. 802; GINTAUTAS, J. Vilniaus universiteto problema. *Lietuvos Žinios*, 1939, spalio 28, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> MACEIKA, Juozas. Vilnius mūsų... 1935–1939 metus prisiminus. *Pergalė*, 1989, Nr. 10, p. 167.

<sup>20</sup> 17 April 1940 Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Lithuania. *LCVA*, f. 923, b. 1557, l. 58; 20 April 1940 Letter of the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers to the Government's Authorised Representative to the City and Region of Vilnius. *Ibid.*, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1533, l. 113.

<sup>21</sup> 20 April 1940 Letter of the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers to the Government's Authorised Representative to the City and Region of Vilnius. *Ibid.*, l. 114ap.

premises of equivalent Polish institutions. For example, the Pedagogical Institute from Panevėžys was relocated to the premises of the Polish Pedagogical Institute in Aušros Vartų street<sup>22</sup>. A question can reasonably be posed why specific plans of the institutional transfer were only undertaken in the spring of 1940 and why economic and educational institutions prevailed among those institutions which were moved to Vilnius. Apparently, the major problem was concerned with the attitude of the Western countries towards the changes in the political belonging of Vilnius. As shown by documents, the Western countries demonstrated through their diplomatic representatives that the issue of the belonging of Vilnius was the subject of future decisions; they did not support the idea of the transfer of the capital to Vilnius claiming that if the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was moved to Vilnius, they would ignore such a decision and would not transfer their legations to Vilnius<sup>23</sup>. Consequently, the Lithuanian government had to take such a stance into account. Apparently, this is the answer to the question why Lithuanian central authorities (President's Office, Council of Ministers, etc.) were not relocated to Vilnius immediately. On the other hand, there may also be another reason explaining the procrastination in transferring the central authorities to Vilnius, i.e. the process of transfer was disturbed by economic factors, as the transfer required additional funds (for the repair of premises, transportation of property, allowances for employees moving to Vilnius, etc.)<sup>24</sup>. For example, the Forestry Department under the Ministry of Agriculture requested the sum of 30,000 litas for the transfer of the institutions and agencies under its auspices<sup>25</sup>. However, there is no surprise that funds were severely lacking. In fact, due to the costly integration of Vilnius, the Vilnius loan bonds were distributed among all Lithuanian civil servants and various organisations on a mandatory basis. The loan of 5 million litas provided to the city municipality for the most urgent needs of Vilnius (salaries, stabilisation of social situation through public works, etc.) was not enough; the funds were exhausted very quickly. Therefore, a greater contribution of the city to the amelioration of infrastructure (e.g. repairs of buildings) was not considered. Besides, the shortage of buildings suitable for the central authorities in Vilnius was a serious obstacle and barrier for organising the transfer process. As it was concluded by the special commission for drafting the transfer plan, "there is a serious shortage of appropriate buildings for the central authorities in Vilnius. <...> occasionally, beautiful facades cover such scrap which would cost more to repair than new construction"<sup>26</sup>.

Conditional stages of development of Lithuanian public authorities and institutions in Vilnius can be singled out: 1) establishment of special authorities (Government's Authorised Representative to the City and Region of Vilnius, Commander of Vilnius City and

<sup>22</sup> Vilniaus Pedagoginis Institutas. *Vilniaus Balsas*, 1940, vasario 2, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos diplomatiniai santykiai 1938–1940 metais*, p. 508.

<sup>24</sup> 17 April 1940 Minutes of the Council of Ministers. *LCVA*, f. 923, b. 1557, l. 58.

<sup>25</sup> Estimate of Extraordinary Expenses of the Ministry of Agriculture. *Ibid.*, b. 1117, l. 276.

<sup>26</sup> Minutes of the Commission for Distribution of Public Buildings [end of May 1940]. *Ibid.*, b. 1533, l. 114.



County, etc.) and the departments of authorities required to ensure the public security in the city (police, the prosecutor's office, etc.) – end of October–beginning of November 1939; 2) establishment of the branches of those organisations which were required for the economic life of the city (*Lietūkis, Maistas, Pienocentras*) in Vilnius – beginning of November 1939; 3) transfer of research, educational, charity, communications and other institutions – the second half of November 1939–the first half of 1940. A number of institutions moved to Vilnius in the spring of 1940 (e.g. Railway Board, Lithuanian Writers Union, etc.)<sup>27</sup>. The first, rather small, institutions resettled in Vilnius in the second half of November 1939. The Forest School relocated from Alytus was one of them<sup>28</sup>.

### *Qualitative indicators of staff transfer*

The qualitative indicators of the transfer process is one of the key questions, i.e. how many employees of Lithuanian public authorities and institutions were to be transferred or hired. It should be reminded that 31,000 civil servants were in Lithuania according to the estimates of 1938<sup>29</sup>. According to Žepkaitė, 12,000 employees had to be transferred to Vilnius<sup>30</sup>. Was it actually implemented?

The surviving documents show that the Ministry of Transport and Communications and the Ministry of the Interior experienced the most remarkable increase in the number of posts due to the integration of Vilnius and its region. The number of posts in the former ministry rose by nearly 2,300<sup>31</sup>. The Railway Board (1,351 posts) and the Postal Board (950 posts) had to hire the highest number of people. The Police Department under the Ministry of the Interior planned to send 1,421 people to the public police and its reserve and 54 people to the Address Bureau operating under the auspices of the State Security Department<sup>32</sup>. Besides, the number of posts in the ministry was also increased by the employees of its other subsidiary bodies. Due to the establishment of the Labour Inspectorate of Vilnius County, the Commander of Vilnius City and County, the posts of engineers and doctors for the city and the county, Vilnius State Obstetricians School,

<sup>27</sup> Į Vilnių kėlimosi tvarka. *Geležinkelininkas*, 1940, Nr. 6, p. 102; Lietuvos rašytojų draugija išsikelia į Vilnių. *Rytinis Lietuvos Aidas*, 1940, balandžio 30, p. 4; Sostinės naujienos. *Ibid.*, 1940, gegužės 1, p. 2; gegužės 18, p. 2; gegužės 23, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Miškų mokykla Vilniuje. *Mūsų Girios*, 1939, Nr. 11, p. 578; Jau persikėlė miškininkų mokykla. *Vilniaus Balsas*, 1939, lapkričio 21, p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> MIKALAUSKAS, Arvydas. *Valstybės tarnautojai ir valstybės tarnyba pirmojoje Lietuvos Respublikoje (1918–1940 m.): daktaro disertacija*. Kaunas, 2007, p. 45.

<sup>30</sup> ŽEPKAITĖ, Regina. *Vilniaus istorijos atkarpa 1939–1940*, p. 141.

<sup>31</sup> Susisiekimo Ministerijos etatų pakeitimas. *Vyriausybės Žinios*, 1940, Nr. 690, p. 55–65; Papildyti geležinkelių etatai. *Geležinkelininkas*, 1940, Nr. 3, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> Top-secret information on the posts of public police of the commander of Vilnius city and county and chiefs of police. *LCVA*, f. 394, ap. 7, b. 28, l. 39–44; Vidaus Reikalų Ministerijų etatų pakeitimas. *Vyriausybės Žinios*, 1940, Nr. 699, p. 154.

Vilnius Mental Hospital and Vilnius Hygiene Institute, the number of the ministry's employees rose by 148 people<sup>33</sup>.

Agriculture and forestry in Vilnius region were important for the Lithuanian Government. It is probably not by accident that the Ministry of Agriculture was among the first ministries to re-establish its structures in Vilnius. It was planning to establish 771 new posts<sup>34</sup>. It is interesting to note that attempts were made to receive support for as many new posts as possible. The representatives of the ministry tried to make sure that 5 assistant manager's posts, 5 liquidator's posts and as many as 9 clerk's posts were established in the Land Management Agency of Vilnius County<sup>35</sup>. However, Šiauliai county land manager Mikas Jasudėnas appointed as the head of the agency had "only" 3 assistants and 4 office employees<sup>36</sup>. The increase in posts was also planned in the Forestry Department. Around 550 posts were projected for the needs of Vilnius region, of which 80 posts were planned for the administration and the remaining ones were required for direct forest work (foresters, chief forest guards and forest guards)<sup>37</sup>. Certain individuals were transferred to Vilnius region even before their official appointment. For example, on 29 October 1939, 9 individuals were sent to the central apparatus of the Vilnius Division of the Forestry Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and 20 employees were sent to its divisions in the provinces<sup>38</sup>. It is noteworthy that there were fewer employees in the Lithuanian forestry administration in Vilnius region than in the previous administration. The administration of the Polish National Forestry Authority had 226 posts<sup>39</sup>.

A number of new posts were also anticipated for the Ministry of Education. For example, 184 posts were planned for Vilnius University as of 1 January 1940<sup>40</sup>. By the decree of the President of the Republic of Lithuania of 18 January 1940, 17 professors and associate professors of the Faculty of Humanities and 13 of the Faculty of Law were transferred to Vilnius University from the beginning of the year<sup>41</sup>. Mykolas Biržiška, Vosylius Sezemanas, Ignas Jonynas, Vincas Mykolaitis, Jurgis Baltrušaitis, Vladas Jurgutis, Mykolas Romeris, Petras Šalčius were among the first to arrive at the university. The reform also covered lower-level educational institutions (gymnasiums, lower secondary and handicraft schools). However, the lack of data makes it difficult to establish the total number of posts. The available data show that at the start of 1940 there were over 700 posts in the

<sup>33</sup> Vidaus Reikalų Ministerijos etatų pakeitimas. *Vyriausybės Žinios*, 1939, Nr. 679, p. 720; 1940, Nr. 689, p. 39–40.

<sup>34</sup> Project of changes in the posts of the Ministry of Agriculture. *LCVA*, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1064, l. 37.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Iš Lietuvos gyvenimo. *Šaltinis*, 1939, Nr. 44, p. 818.

<sup>37</sup> *Kronika. Mūsų Girios*, 1939, Nr. 12, p. 656.

<sup>38</sup> *Kronika. Mūsų Girios*, 1939, Nr. 10, p. 534.

<sup>39</sup> VILČINSKAS, Jonas. Vilniaus miškai. *Mūsų Girios*, 1939, Nr. 11, p. 556.

<sup>40</sup> Vilniaus universiteto etatai. *Vyriausybės Žinios*, 1939, Nr. 685, p. 835.

<sup>41</sup> 21 February 1940 Transcript of the decree of Vilnius University Rector Biržiška. *LCVA*, f. R-856, ap. 1, b. 597, l. 82; 18 January 1940 Transcript of the decree of the President of the Republic of Lithuania. *Ibid.*, f. 631, ap. 1, b. 230, l. 69–69ap.

departments of elementary schools, secondary and special education under the Ministry of Education, the Wroblewski Library, and the archives<sup>42</sup>. Besides, 367 doctors, nurses or other staff had to work in the clinics subordinate to the ministry<sup>43</sup>. Hence, the system of the ministry in Vilnius and its region involved up to 1,500 employees.

As of 1 November 1939, Vilnius County Court and the Court Prosecutor's Office as well as other judicial structures under the Ministry of Justice hired 196 new employees<sup>44</sup>. There are no data on the posts planned by other ministries (e.g. the Ministry of Finance) and other organisations (printing-houses, etc.) for Vilnius region. It can be considered that the number of employees involved in the transfer, which was provided by historian Žepkaitė (around 12,000), is objective.

## Changes in the staff of public authorities and institutions in Vilnius

It is important to find out what criteria were applied in selecting the staff for public authorities and institutions in Vilnius. Certain documents and press publications make it clear that the principle of the transfer of people was applied<sup>45</sup>. It was announced that “our eternal capital Vilnius shall only welcome the fairest and most flawless civil servants, because they will be those citizens raised in freedom who will have to deal with the Vilnius Lithuanians all the time. Only the strongest forces of civil servants will get a placement in Vilnius”<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, some believed that more local Lithuanians had to be hired to the leading positions, whereas experienced civil servants transferred to Vilnius could act as their assistants<sup>47</sup>. However, such a practice was not followed. For example, the leadership of the Lithuanian Forestry Department delegated the employees from other Lithuanian forest enterprises to the leading positions in Vilnius and its region<sup>48</sup>. Lithuanians coming from Vilnius region were appointed to lower positions

<sup>42</sup> Lists of former Polish civil servants admitted and not admitted to the service of the Ministry of Education. *Ibid.*, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1113, l. 2–3.

<sup>43</sup> Švietimo ministerijos etatų pakeitimas. *Vyriausybės Žinios*, 1940, Nr. 688, p. 32.

<sup>44</sup> Teisingumo ministerijos etatų papildymas. *Vyriausybės Žinios*, 1939, Nr. 674, p. 685–686; Koki teismai bus Vilniuje. *Vilniaus Balsas*, 1939, lapkričio 8, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> KUODYS, Modestas. Laikiniosios sostinės saulėlydis? Kauno likimo klausimas Lietuvos spaudoje 1939–1940 m. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2013, t. 2, p. 181–182.

<sup>46</sup> Geriausi žmonės – Vilniui. *Lietuvos Aidas*, 1939, spalio 16, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> 12 December 1939 Secret report of the Commandant of Vilnius City and County to the Commander of the Vilnius Detachment. *LCVA*, f. 496, ap. 2, b. 22, l. 8ap; KLIMKAITIS, M. Vilnius klaipėdiečio akimis žiūrint. *XX Amžius*, 1939, spalio 30, p. 5.

<sup>48</sup> Iš žemės ūkio ministrų įsakymų knygos. *Mūsų Girios*, 1939, Nr. 11, p. 602; Nr. 12, p. 662; Miškų dep-to atstovai į Vilniaus kraštą. *XX Amžius*, 1939, spalio 30, p. 2.

(as forest guards)<sup>49</sup>. A ten-day training course in Vilnius (20–30 November 1939) was organised for 150 of them<sup>50</sup>.

Archival sources show that one of the motives for selecting a person for the post in Vilnius and its region was whether the person was fluent in at least one local language<sup>51</sup>. However, the person's moral qualities were not taken into account; therefore, there were negative phenomena as well. For example, it was observed that the civil servants who were transferred or hired or the persons arriving at the city for a short stay did not always behave ethically, i.e. they used to be under the influence of alcohol in public places, produced noise, engaged in currency or commodity speculation<sup>52</sup>. Apparently, it is not by accident that the Vilnius Postal Board prohibited its uniformed employees from going to bars and saloons, carrying various heavy items and bags in public places and engaging in any other work which was not compatible with the purpose of the uniform<sup>53</sup>. In the view of the leadership, it deteriorated the authority of the Lithuanian civil servant and also the government. Hence, they were instructed not to humiliate the name of the civil servant by their conduct in public places; those who did not obey the requirement were warned of redundancy or, in case of police officers, several-day arrests or reprimands were applied<sup>54</sup>. It should be noted that certain civil servants were not suitable for the new position; experience was lacking. For example, the city commandant used the following wording to describe the new chief of Vilnius police: "The present chief of police would be good for Raseiniai, perhaps Panevėžys, but not for Vilnius."<sup>55</sup> From a demographic-ethnic perspective the city differed from other Lithuanian cities: there were around 200,000 Vilnius residents, excluding several tens of thousands of war refugees flooding the city; the city community was represented by over 10 ethnic groups with Poles and Jews dominating among them (the former group consisted of around 120,000–130,000 people; the latter group comprised approximately 55,000–60,000 people)<sup>56</sup>.

The recruitment policy carried out by the Lithuanian government in Vilnius region with regard to Polish civil servants can be conditionally divided into the following stages:

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<sup>49</sup> Kronika. *Mūsų Girios*, 1939, Nr. 12, p. 660; IVANAUSKAS, L. Eigulių kursai Vilniuje. *Mūsų Girios*, 1939, Nr. 11, p. 584.

<sup>50</sup> IVANAUSKAS, L. Eigulių kursai Vilniuje. *Mūsų Girios*, 1939, Nr. 11, p. 584.

<sup>51</sup> Letter of the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers to the members of the Cabinet. LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1082, l. 31; V. R. Pirmasis pusmetis Vilniuje. *Lietuvos Aidas*, 1940, balandžio 27, p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> Letter of the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers to the members of the Cabinet. LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1082, l. 38; V. R. Pirmasis pusmetis Vilniuje. *Lietuvos Aidas*, 1940, balandžio 30, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> Vakar ir šiandien. *Lietuvos Aidas*, 1940, gegužės 10, p. 8; Lietuvoje. *Geležinkelininkas*, 1940, Nr. 10, p. 166.

<sup>54</sup> 29 December 1939 Transcript of Order No. 54 of the Director of the Police Department. LCVA, f. 496, ap. 7, b. 17, l. 17; 24 May 1940 Transcript of Order No. 44 of the Minister of the Interior. Ibid., b. 20, l. 54.

<sup>55</sup> 12 November 1939 Report of the Commandant of Vilnius City and County to the Commander of the Vilnius Detachment. Ibid., ap. 2, b. 22, l. 5.

<sup>56</sup> STRAVINSKIENĖ, Vitalija. Ethnic-Demographic Changes in the Data of the Statistical Sources of the City of Vilnius (1920–1939). *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, 2013, vol. 17, p. 143; ATAMUKAS, Solomonas. *Lietuvos žydų kelias*. Vilnius, 2007, p. 178.

1) end of October–December 1939 – when the old employees were left in their posts. It was concerned with the takeover of Polish public authorities and institutions and the reorganisation of activities; 2) beginning–middle of June 1940 – when the old employees were made redundant on the grounds of the lack of Lithuanian citizenship and knowledge of the Lithuanian language. The leaders of ministries issued orders according to which the full-time employees of their subsidiary bodies were required to have Lithuanian citizenship and to pass the 6-year school's Lithuanian language examination. Those who failed to meet the second requirement could be hired as freelance employees on condition that they learnt both spoken and written Lithuanian within an established period of time and presented evidence to prove it.<sup>57</sup> The individuals who were not Lithuanian citizens could take up the posts in the civil service in exceptional cases only.

Redundancies mostly affected the individuals of Polish nationality. In fact, until the outbreak of the war Poles took most of the positions in public and municipal authorities. For example, Jews made up about one-third of residents in Vilnius, but there were only 30 of them in the system of transport and communications (railway, postal service)<sup>58</sup>. Jews, Lithuanians and people of other nationalities prevailed in the educational sector, because the individuals speaking the language of the national minority had to work in the schools where Polish was not the language of instruction.

A number of former Polish employees were made redundant in the fields of communication and education. For example, at the end of 1939, about 2,400 people were made redundant in the railway sector; around 1,500 people lost their jobs in schools and the university<sup>59</sup>. It is estimated that about 6.7 thousand people were made jobless in Polish institutions; 11.6 thousand people lost jobs due to various reasons<sup>60</sup>. A number of economic entities terminated their operations due to the shortage of raw materials, loss of markets; yet others were reorganised into smaller, etc. Consequently, over 18,000 people became unemployed. If we add their family members (where a family is considered to have 3 members), we would get more than 50,000 people who remained without the source of living. The lack of Lithuanian citizenship was probably the major reason of redundancy. However, apparently, there were other motives as well, namely the employee's qualification or need. There were cases when the persons who were not granted or could not be granted Lithuanian citizenship continued their work, whereas those who applied for Lithuanian citizenship and were likely to receive it, were made redundant<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> Iš žemės ūkio ministro įsakymų knygos. *Mūsų Girios*, 1940, Nr. 1, p. 57.

<sup>58</sup> ATAMUKAS, Solomonas. *Lietuvos žydų kelias*, p. 179.

<sup>59</sup> Z 4010 kolejarzy wileńskich zostało przy pracy 1646. *Gazeta Codzienna*, 4 grudnia 1939, s. 3; Lists of former Polish employees admitted to the positions of civil servants and made redundant. LCVA, f. 923, b. 1113, l. 2–3, 104, 116–136ap.

<sup>60</sup> *Lietuvos ir Lenkijos santykiai 1917–1994*, p. 134.

<sup>61</sup> Lists of civil servants admitted and not admitted to Vilnius State School of Commerce. LCVA, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1113, l. 105–106.

## Daily life of the new residents of Vilnius and cross-ethnic relations

At first, the conditions of living of those individuals who were transferred to Vilnius or were hired to new posts were rather difficult. The families of most of them stayed in Kaunas or other places, some due to the education of their children, yet others, for example, police officers, were instructed to move without families.

The daily routine of certain Lithuanian civil servants who resettled in Vilnius was not convenient as well. For example, all civil servants from Vilnius Police Station No. 1 lived in a hostel in a rather cramped space; they were lacking raincoats, winter coats and hot food; they used to eat the food brought from home or bought in a shop; they complained that their resettlement in Vilnius made them incur material losses; besides, their salaries were late<sup>62</sup>. The staff of other police stations lived under similar conditions. It is therefore not surprising that certain employees sent to Vilnius used to travel on the route Kaunas-Vilnius-Kaunas a lot. The leadership of certain public authorities took care of their employees and their family members by issuing fixed-term train tickets for them free of charge; others paid substantial bonuses (e.g. directors of forest enterprises and their deputies used to receive LTL 100; foresters used to receive LTL 75); yet others paid housing allowances as, for example, the employees with families from the institutions subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior used to receive 12 per cent of the basic salary of the first level; those without families received 5 per cent<sup>63</sup>. Besides, the servants transferred to Vilnius or its region were paid the relocation allowance. Its size depended on whether the servant had or did not have a family. If a civil servant was single, he or she was paid the relocation allowance equal to 80–90 per cent of the basic salary; the servants with families used to receive an additional bonus for the spouse and children<sup>64</sup>. In case of Vilnius University professors and other employees, their baggage transportation was covered as well.

Yet another important problem faced by transferred servants was the search for housing and its rent. It should be noted that the Vilnius housing rental market reacted to the changes immediately. The Lithuanian press predicted as far back as the middle of October 1939 that after thousands of civil servants moved from Kaunas to Vilnius, apartment prices would fall in some places and rise in others<sup>65</sup>. When the transfer of public authorities and institutions or the establishment of their branches in Vilnius began,

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<sup>62</sup> 30 November 1939 Report of the Chief of Border Police to the Director of the Police Department. *Ibid.*, f. 394, ap. 7, b. 19, l. 54–56.

<sup>63</sup> 25 November 1939 Transcript of the letter of the Secretary General of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Lithuania to the Minister of the Interior. *LCVA*, f. 394, ap. 7, b. 19, l. 52; *Kronika. Mūsų Girios*, 1940, Nr. 2, p. 124.

<sup>64</sup> MIKALAUSKAS, Arvydas. *Valstybės tarnautojai ir valstybės tarnyba pirmojoje Lietuvos Respublikoje (1918–1940 m.)*, p. 62, 65.

<sup>65</sup> Artimiausi ūkiniai uždaviniai Vilniaus krašte. *Lietuvos Aidas*, 1939, spalio 11, p. 5.

the city saw a substantial increase in the demand for housing rent and rental prices. For instance, the civil servants of the Lithuanian railways who had to move to Vilnius found it difficult to find apartments in Vilnius and thus chose an alternative, i.e. daily driving from Kaunas to Vilnius<sup>66</sup>. The university personnel transferred to Vilnius had a similar plan. For example, according to Prof. Mykolas Romeris, “as regards our professors, at least from the Faculty of Law, nearly all of them, including some assistants, are going to maintain their residence in Kaunas and travel to Vilnius for lecturing purposes only”<sup>67</sup>. Besides, the influx of war refugees from the territories of Poland occupied by Germany and the USSR into the city made an impact on the Vilnius housing rental market as well.

Various apartments were available on the city’s rental market: small (1–2) and large (5–8 rooms). The latter could only be afforded by the civil servants of the highest rank (e.g. the staff of the Authorised Representative of the Lithuanian Government to the City and Region of Vilnius), enterprises and institutions. Small apartments were most popular. It was announced in the press that “two nice apartments with all amenities are available for rent in the heart of the city, Mickevičiaus street 48, Apartment No. 2. The preferred tenants are public officials or military officers”<sup>68</sup>. Landlords in Kaunas were dissatisfied with the fall in clients and income<sup>69</sup>. According to the information published in Vilnius press, rental prices slumped by 2–3 times in the residential area of Žaliakalnis in Kaunas<sup>70</sup>.

One of the reasons which undermined the transfer of civil servants was people’s unwillingness to worsen their social situation. Pranutė Jokimaitienė, a witness of that year, remembered that “it was the time when a lot of institutions and civil servants were moving to Vilnius. Some did that willingly, others were quite reluctant. Of course, those who had excellent apartments or houses in Kaunas or other cities were dissatisfied with their resettlement in Vilnius”<sup>71</sup>. Her words were also reiterated by a long-year resident of Vilnius, member of the Lithuanian community in the city Rapolas Mackonis: “There were few who were actually willing to move to Vilnius. They were conveniently settled in Kaunas and other cities, and when they had to move, they tried to escape it in every possible way. Even the glorified leader of the nation, Smetona, was not kind enough to set foot in Vilnius in seven months and did not even consider the transfer of central authorities.”<sup>72</sup> He observed that the Nazi occupation triggered the opposite process – to escape from Vilnius to Kaunas by all means possible. It should be noted that the above

<sup>66</sup> Rytinės naujienos. Ten pat, 1940, balandžio 13, p. 4.

<sup>67</sup> ROMER, Michał. Witaj, Wilno. *Karta*, 2013, nr 78, s. 68.

<sup>68</sup> Skelbimai. *Vilniaus Balsas*, 1939, lapkričio 4, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Kronika. *Tautos ūkis*, 1939, Nr. 41, p. 768; Nr. 44, p. 828; KUODYS, Modestas. Laikiniosios sostinės saulėlydis? Kauno likimo klausimas Lietuvos spaudoje 1939–1940 m. *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2013, t. 2, p. 179.

<sup>70</sup> Wilno obniżą cenę placów w Kownie. *Gazeta Codzienna*, 16 grudnia 1939, s. 5

<sup>71</sup> JOKIMAITIENĖ, Pranutė. Apie Gediminą ir save. *Metai*, 1992, Nr. 9–10, p. 150. Antai Geležinkelio valdybos centro įstaigoje 1940 m. dirbo 435 darbuotojai, iš kurių 95 turėjo namus Kaune ir jo apylinkėse. Kiek geležinkelininkų keliasi į Vilnių. *Geležinkelininkas*, 1940, Nr. 5, p. 85.

<sup>72</sup> Rapolas Mackonis’ diary entry, 15 July 1941. *LYA*, f. K-1, ap. 58, b. 20317/3, l. 1–56.

author's observations were not absolutely accurate. The surviving documents show that at first, the opinion of certain employees transferred to Vilnius was not even taken into account (e.g. police officers), and it was indeed considered to move central authorities. Besides, the transfer of institutions and their personnel was not discontinued after Lithuania's occupation. For example, employees from Kaunas, Panevėžys or Šiauliai were further being transferred to the divisions of *Maistas*, *Lietūkis* and other economic organisations in Vilnius; from the school year 1940–1941, a conservatory, a secondary music school and the national philharmonic had to open their doors in Vilnius. A special commission had to coordinate the work related to the transfer of such institutions from Kaunas to Vilnius<sup>73</sup>.

On the other hand, cross-ethnic tensions between arriving Lithuanian civil servants and local Polish residents were sensed in the daily life of the city. For example, in the autumn of 1939, a Lithuanian woman was assigned to the position of the principal in the girls' gymnasium in Vilnius. She remembered her first days in Vilnius in the following way: "I was even afraid to walk, I was advised not to go anywhere alone. I would always walk with a couple of other teachers. I was threatened to have my windows broken, I was also threatened with various English or French repressions."<sup>74</sup>

Polish residents did not support the city's Lithuanization when the signs and street names were changed, and the Polish language lost its status as the dominant language. They viewed Lithuanians as temporary newcomers. For example, according to a Polish shopkeeper, "Lithuanians are in Vilnius only temporarily" and "Lithuanians will have to flee from Vilnius in the upcoming spring as they already did in 1920"<sup>75</sup>. Hence, there were cases when the Poles who were willing to cooperate with Lithuanians were even threatened by their compatriots saying that after Poland was re-established, there would be no chance for them to stay in Vilnius.

Mutual knowledge based on stereotypes and lacking objective information played an important role in daily life: Lithuanians arriving in Vilnius from various places were not very much aware of the region's specificity, Vilnius residents and their way of life, whereas the latter had no knowledge of the realities of Lithuania at all, not to mention Kaunas, Šiauliai or other cities, imagined Lithuanians as backward and provincial and nicknamed them offensively ('turkeycocks', 'eaversdroppers', 'bounders', etc.). A young

<sup>73</sup> 5 February 1941 Letter from the head of the Labour Department of Vilnius City Executive Committee of the Lithuanian SSR Gavendas to the Labour Management Board of the Working People's Commissariat. *VRVA*, f. 761, ap. 4, b. 42, l. 207; 7 September 1940 Letter from People's Commissar for Education Venclova to the Burgomaster of Vilnius. *Ibid.*, l. 1; Transcript of the Regulations for Organisation of the Commission for the Transfer of Governmental Authorities of the Lithuanian SSR from Kaunas to Vilnius and Its Activities, [March 1941]. *Ibid.*, b. 905, l. 3–5.

<sup>74</sup> DAUGIRDAITĖ-SRUOGIENĖ, Vanda. Apie 1939–1940-uosius mokslo metus Vilniuje. *Kultūros barai*, 2001, Nr. 2, p. 53–54.

<sup>75</sup> 18 January 1940 Letter from the Commander for Vilnius County of the State Security Police to Vilnius Military Commandant. *LCVA*, f. 496, ap. 1, b. 1893, l. 501.



Lithuanian woman who returned to Vilnius in the autumn of 1939 after many years of absence made the following observation: “There is a huge contrast between the material reality and the living element. Crowds of starving people stroll around the streets, cocky ‘mocarstwo’ representatives walk around with their hands in the pockets. After all, it is ‘chwilowa okupacja’. They say that the foodstuffs from our company *Maistas* come from England or even America, our soldiers and police officers ‘wear French or English uniforms’, etc.”<sup>76</sup>

During the first months the life in Vilnius was troubled by economic problems. Due to the shortage of the main foodstuffs, unrests used to flare up immediately. According to a Vilnius resident of that time, “on Tuesday, 31 October, a riot sparked in Vilnius. According to the testimonies which I managed to collect, some individuals started provoking the people standing at the end of the queue for bread and urged them not to pay 90 grosz per kilo. Apparently, it was not very difficult to hear what they were saying, because yesterday bread cost 40 grosz, 35 grosz on the day before yesterday and 20 grosz three days ago”<sup>77</sup>. The Lithuanian police had to interfere. The card system for such foodstuffs which was applied in Vilnius until the beginning of 1940 was supposed to regulate the purchase of foodstuffs.

Criminogenic situation in the city was not good as well. On the one hand, before transferring the government into the hands of Lithuanians, the Soviet government released criminal prisoners from prisons. On the other hand, having lost their income from legal work, people used to raise money illegally (thefts, robberies, etc.). Besides, people were pushed into poverty when they lost their purchasing power due to the depreciation of the Polish currency, and purchasers turned into sellers, i.e. people started selling their personal items. The ‘new’ Vilnius residents, i.e. the Lithuanian civil servants sent to Vilnius and more well-off war refugees, became the buyers of the items being sold as well as the clients of Vilnius craftsmen. There was a segment of Vilnius residents who lived worse than war refugees, because the latter were taken care of by various Lithuanian and foreign organisations, whereas nobody took care of the old city residents. There were cases, when war refugees, having received support, used to give its share to Polish residents who became jobless and did not acquire Lithuanian citizenship<sup>78</sup>. A Lithuanian woman described the life of an ordinary family of the Vilnius Poles at that time in the following way: “A small two-room apartment was rented by an ordinary family of a Polish civil servant of an apparently moderate rank: father, mother and two teenage daughters – Halina and Kristina. <...> Whereas the father was made redundant, the family had no source of living, and they were forced to rent out one of their rooms <...>. We had brought quite a large fitch of bacon from home and kept it in the chest-of-drawers. We later observed

<sup>76</sup> GIMBUTIENĖ, Marija. *Dienoraštis ir prisiminimai*, p. 68.

<sup>77</sup> KRZEPKOWSKI, Mieczysław. W Wilnie: ze wspomnień. *Rocznik Historii Czasopiśmiennictwa Polskiego*, t. 9, 1970, zeszc. 4, s. 578.

<sup>78</sup> Description of the economic situation in Vilnius region, undated. *LCVA*, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1477, l. 4.

that the piece was gradually getting thinner. We knew what was happening but we said nothing. We felt sorry for our half-starving landlords.”<sup>79</sup>

However, there was also another side of the life in Vilnius. As noted by the contemporary of that period, “despite their misfortunes, Vilnius residents are not losing their optimism. Though it is not allowed to walk in the streets after 11 p.m., there is hardly another city in Europe with so many revues, theatres, cafés, and similar places. Most café visitors are refugees gathering to “discuss” their residence permits and the handling of visas”<sup>80</sup>.

The adaptation of the Lithuanian civil servants transferred to Vilnius was not easy. Some of them could have been shocked by the city, which was absolutely different from Kaunas. As noted by one of the chiefs of Vilnius transferred to the city, “Vilnius is not like Kaunas where the public is calm and has some basics of discipline and mainly Lithuanian sentiments. The situation is quite the opposite here: each public group, being undisciplined and scheming, is driven by its own political and economic goals”<sup>81</sup>. A female civil servant transferred to work and communicate with the Vilnius Polish community did not spare bitter words to the women in Vilnius: “The daughters of colonels and all military officers all have their pretensions and they all are very chauvinistically minded.”<sup>82</sup> It is therefore natural that the employees transferred to Vilnius did not feel very comfortable in the city which the Lithuanian society had been dreaming about for two decades.

## Conclusions

The stance of the Lithuanian government with regard to the transfer of public authorities and institutions to Vilnius was influenced by international and local factors: 1) the negative position of Western countries towards the transfer of the Lithuanian capital from Kaunas to Vilnius by asserting that the issue of the belonging of Vilnius was the matter of future decisions; 2) Lithuania’s economic and social situation was not favourable for the transfer of public authorities and institutions requiring considerable investments; 3) the situation of Vilnius was exceptional (specific ethnic-demographic composition, lagging economy, etc.). As a consequence, the Lithuanian government undertook the gradual transfer of secondary public authorities and institutions to Vilnius.

The transfer of public authorities and institutions took place together with the transfer of their staff to the city and region of Vilnius. On the one hand, it was necessitated by

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<sup>79</sup> JOKIMAITIENĖ, Pranutė. Apie Gediminą ir save. *Metai*, 1992, Nr. 9–10, p. 151.

<sup>80</sup> Description of the economic situation in Vilnius region, undated. *LCVA*, f. 923, ap. 1, b. 1477, l. 4.

<sup>81</sup> 25 November 1939 Report from the Commandant of Vilnius City and County to the Commander of the Vilnius Detachment. *Ibid.*, f. 496, ap. 2, b. 22, l. 5.

<sup>82</sup> DAUGIRDAITĖ-SRUOGIENĖ, Vanda. Apie 1939–1940-uosius mokslo metus Vilniuje. *Kultūros barai*, 2001, Nr. 2, p. 53.

the rapid integration of Vilnius and its region into the state of Lithuania which required experienced personnel. A small number of experienced administrators, accountants and other specialists among the Lithuanians in Vilnius (it was not planned to use the experience of the former Polish specialists) intensified the transfer of staff to Vilnius. The Lithuanian government tried to exploit the potential of local Lithuanians and hired them to lower-ranking positions, which mostly involved the communication with residents.

Stereotypical thinking affected the cross-ethnic relations between the Lithuanians transferred to Vilnius and the Vilnius Poles. Both sides were lacking objective information. Lithuanians from Kaunas, Šiauliai, Panevėžys and elsewhere were convinced that Vilnius residents were eagerly waiting for their liberation from the *Polish oppression*, whereas the Polish residents from Vilnius and its environs basically imaged a Lithuanian as someone who was backward, little educated, and uncultured. By objecting to the changes of the belonging of Vilnius and the policy implemented by Lithuania, the Vilnius Polish community followed a conservative and isolated position and refused to cooperate with the Lithuanian government and local authorities (with several exceptions), whereas Lithuanian-Polish cross-ethnic relations radicalised.

The campaign of the transfer of public authorities and institutions had to contribute to the changes in the ethnic-demographic structure of Vilnius. It was planned to transfer around 12,000 civil servants who, together with their families (around 35,000 people), would have made a significant contribution to the Lithuanian population in the city. However, the reality was rather different, and the statistical expression of the transfer campaign was far more modest. Those who arrived due to their placement, studies or residence in Vilnius constituted about one-fourth of the planned number.

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## Lietuvos Respublikos institucijų perkėlimas į Vilnių 1939–1940 metais: planai ir jų įgyvendinimas

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### Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas Lietuvos valstybinių institucijų perkėlimo iš Kauno į Vilnių 1939–1940 m. procesas, analizuojama Lietuvos valdžios pozicija tuo klausimu, perkėlimo mechanizmas, aptariami perkėlimo akcijos rezultatai.

Remiantis archyvine ir istoriografinė medžiaga teigiama, kad Lietuvos valdžios pozicijai dėl valstybinių institucijų perkėlimo į Vilnių turėjo įtakos keli veiksniai: 1) Vakarų valstybių neigiama pozicija dėl Lietuvos sostinės perkėlimo iš Kauno į Vilnių, nurodant, kad Vilniaus priklausomybės klausimas – ateities sprendimų reikalas; 2) nepalanki Lietuvos ūkinė ir socialinė padėtis; 3) Vilniaus padėties išskirtinumas. Tačiau Lietuvos vyriausybės sprendimu valstybinės institucijos laipsniškai buvo perkeliamos į Vilnių pradedant nuo viešajai tvarkai, saugumui, socialinei padėčiai stabilizuoti būtinų struktūrų (policijos, saugumo, ūkio organizacijos) ir baigiant mokslo bei švietimo įstaigomis. Tuo pat metu buvo įgyvendinama ir tų institucijų darbuotojų perkėlimo praktika.

Nagrinėtas procesas paveikė Vilniaus miesto etninę demografinę struktūrą ir tarptautinius lietuvių ir lenkų santykius. Buvo planuojama į miestą nukreipti apie 12 tūkst. tarnautojų, kurie kartu su šeimų nariais (apie 35 tūkst. asmenų) būtų labai padidinę lietuvių skaičių mieste. Tačiau šie planai nevirto realybe. Perkėlimo akcijos statistinė išraiška atrodė taip: nukreiptų į tarnybas, atvykusių studijuoti ar gyventi į Vilnių buvo apie 12 tūkst. lietuvių. Pridėjus Vilniaus lietuvių bendruomenės narius, lietuvius pabėgėlius, 1940 m. vasarą Vilniuje gyveno apie 18 tūkst. lietuvių. To meto Vilniaus miesto gyventojų buvo apie 200 tūkst. (neskaičiuojant karo pabėgėlių). Stereotipais paremtas mąstymas veikė tarptautinius lietuvių ir lenkų santykius. Tiek vieni, tiek kiti neturėjo objektyvios informacijos apie gyvenimą Lietuvoje ir Vilniaus mieste, abi pusės laikėsi izoliacinės pozicijos, daugiausia bendravo tik savo bendruomenėse. Todėl prie Vilniuje egzistavusių žydų, lenkų, rusų, baltarusių pasaulių atsirado dar vienas – atvykusių lietuvių – pasaulis.

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