

# Lithuania: A Problem of Disclosure

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**A**s centripetal forces spun the Soviet Union out of control and, ultimately, out of existence in the late 1980s and early 1990s, an unlikely country became the vanguard of those USSR states seeking independence. Through political maneuverings and public demonstrations, Lithuania gained independence and resisted the half-hearted attempts of the Soviet Union to prevent the secession of its Eastern European satellites.

Since then, Lithuania has struggled with its Soviet-era demons. Like the rest of the former Soviet Union, Lithuania had been controlled by the KGB and its predecessors. The KGB's historic power, and its pervasive influence on Lithuanian society (which persists even today), has been a defining feature of the country's tortured path toward democracy.

## The First Soviet Occupation

Following the collapse of the Russian and German empires in 1918, Lithuania finally was able to assert its statehood. On February 16, 1918, Lithuania declared its full independence. However, a mere two years later, Lithuania's capital and province of Vilnius was annexed and subsequently controlled by Poland until World War II. Following the onset of the war, specifically the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact by Iosif Stalin and Adolph Hitler in August 1939, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia were forced to accept Soviet occupation.

In October 1939, Soviet troops arrived on Lithuanian soil. The following May, the Soviet Union delivered a note to the Lithuanian government accusing it of complicity in the kidnapping of two Soviet soldiers. Through these and similar instruments of intimidation, the Soviets forced the creation of a new government led by the Soviet Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs and a quasi-elected People's Diet.

This new government, in turn, began the Sovietization of Lithuania in earnest. A steady progression of laws and edicts gradually eroded national independence. Assaults on the economy devalued the country's currency to a mere fraction of its

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actual value.<sup>1</sup> Financial institutions were nationalized and owners of private property were evicted—their dwellings seized to make way for the incoming Communist bureaucracy. The Lithuanian army was reorganized into the “People’s Army,” and renamed the Soviet Union’s 29th Corps. By December 1, 1940, Soviet laws had formally superseded all statutes once existing in independent Lithuania.

The Soviet authorities paid special attention to Lithuania’s social fabric. Primarily an agricultural state when integrated into the Soviet Union, large-scale collectivization of farmlands, both from “wealthy farmers” (those possessing more than seventy-five acres of land) and others, wreaked havoc on internal conditions. In all, twenty-eight thousand landowners—roughly 10 percent of the total agrarian population—were affected by Soviet measures. What land was not given to landless peasants was placed into “perpetual tenure,” and its sale, purchase, or transfer prohibited. Despite Soviet rhetoric to the contrary, the purpose of this measure was not to bring social justice to the countryside, but to splinter the Lithuanian farming base and prevent the formation of a cohesive unit of resistance.<sup>2</sup>

The true horrors for the Lithuanians came in the form of mass arrests and deportations. The NKVD (secret police apparatus), accompanied by garrison troops, arrived in fall 1939. Its initial operations were limited pending reinforcements. With the arrival of additional troops in June 1940, however, the NKVD launched a wave of terror that resonated throughout Lithuania.

Beginning on the night of July 11, 1940, the Soviets commenced widespread arrests and detentions. On that night alone, at least two thousand individuals received eight-year prison sentences and were immediately deported. By the end of the year, the pace of arrests had reached an average of 200 to 300 per month.<sup>3</sup> All social, ethnic, and political classes were affected. Convenient minipurges removed Soviet officials who had fallen out of favor from their posts. Prominent Lithuanians, particularly politicians who had ruled in independent Lithuania, were gathered up as well.

These acts reached their peak on June 13 and 14, 1941. Over the course of both evenings, Soviet officials approved mass deportations to Siberia of more than thirty thousand individuals.<sup>4</sup> Using carefully created lists, the NKVD rounded up individuals believed to be dangerous to the current regime. Along with removing the potential leadership of subversive elements, these deportations were designed to strike terror into the hearts of those not yet involved with what the Soviets termed “unhealthy” activities. This served as the rationale for systematic targeting not only of the resistance leadership, but of their families as well.

The actual plans and target lists had been drawn up well in advance. The Lithuanian Communist Party (LKP) realized that their hold on the country was tenuous at best and due mostly to the power of the occupying Soviet Army. In late May 1941, the Party drafted a top-secret communiqué ordering the NKVD and NKGB to prepare for the mass arrests and deportations of “counter-revolutionaries and socially dangerous elements.”<sup>5</sup> In doing so, the Communists had a clear idea of what elements in society demanded neutralization. Only days before the deportations took place, the NKGB generated a list of potential victims for deportation, which included individuals associated with any counterrevolutionary or anti-Soviet nationalist

parties, the former (Lithuanian) police and military, and their families, as well as common criminals, prostitutes, and individuals who had been repatriated from Germany.<sup>6</sup> Anticipating the deportations, NKVD orders for all three Baltic States dated May 19, 1941, outlined the procedures to be used. In detail, these orders described how units were to prepare, the means to be used to approach and arrest those targeted, what the victims were to bring, how the victims were to be transported to the departure points, and how the victims were to be loaded onto the trains.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Nazi Occupation**

On June 22, 1941, Germany led a surprise attack, dubbed “Operation Barbarossa,” on its supposed Soviet ally. After forcing the Soviet Union out of Lithuania, the Germans soon replaced a weak anti-Soviet provisional government with a Lithuanian *Vertauensrat* (Council of Trustees). The *Vertauensrat* was headed by an ethnic Lithuanian, General Petras Kubiliunas, and was granted some autonomy in local affairs.

Public cooperation with the Nazis was kept at a minimum during their three-year occupation of Lithuania. Unlike the other two Baltic republics, Lithuania never formed an SS detachment or fully participated in the creation of all-Lithuanian units in the German army. However, over the three-year Nazi occupation, occupation authorities succeeded in recruiting or capturing tens of thousands of Lithuanians to work in Germany or serve in the military. In addition, about 185,000 Jews (85 percent of Lithuania’s Jewish community) were murdered by Nazi squads with the assistance of Lithuanian collaborators.<sup>8</sup>

### **The Second Soviet Occupation**

With the defeat of the German army on the eastern front in 1944, the Soviets’ return became imminent. Soviet armies subsequently recaptured Lithuania in the summer of 1944. Having witnessed the nightmares of the first occupation, the Lithuanians feared that the Soviets would be even more aggressive in the second occupation.

Given the carnage of the war and poor Soviet communication with the occupying force in Lithuania, the initial period of the second occupation was tenuous. Damaged cities, roads crowded with refugees, and bands of armed men in the forests hampered the Red Army’s ability to gain effective control of the country. This provided ample opportunity for a partisan war, one which would grow to near-mythic proportions for Lithuanians and the Lithuanian diaspora. Facing overwhelming odds, Lithuanian partisans managed to resist the Soviets until a general disarmament in 1952. The war became so troublesome that the USSR was forced to pour additional men into the country simply to maintain control.

As the Red Army swept through the country, the administration of the occupied land fell into the hands of the civil authorities. Security forces, in the form of the NKVD, were granted sweeping powers to gain and maintain control. It was primarily against these forces that the partisans fought their war, and it was the security forces that waged an aggressive campaign against the Lithuanian population. As before, the Soviets’ most damaging weapon was deportation. Between late 1947 and summer 1949, an estimated 220,000 persons were deported from Lithuania.<sup>9</sup>

This time, it was the rural population, the so-called kulaks, who were targeted. In part, this was due to land reorganization, but it was also an effective means of reprisal against those individuals who were suspected of aiding the partisans.

Over time, resistance to Soviet rule faded from armed combat to passive opposition. Demonstrations, self-immolation, and an active underground press became the primary means of resistance. The Soviets, in turn, instigated a program of Russification designed to wipe out any ethnic or nationalist tendencies. Over the course of the occupation, an underground war would be waged between the Lithuanian KGB and those determined to maintain a sense of national identity. Despite its best efforts, the Lithuanian KGB would never be able to fully eliminate its chief nemesis—the underground press.

National renaissances in all three Baltic republics during the 1980s contributed to the destruction of the Soviet empire as a whole. Food shortages, dissatisfaction with the conflict in Afghanistan, and the glasnost process all conspired against the Soviets. The deterioration of the regime led to the creation of the Sajudis (Unity) national party.<sup>10</sup> Running on a platform of an independent Lithuania, the party secured the majority in the LiSSR Supreme Soviet and formally declared the restoration of the Republic of Lithuania on March 11, 1990.

For the Soviet Union, this was the beginning of the end. For Lithuania, it was the start of a long and painful process of repairing the damage caused by Soviet occupation.

### **The KGB Evaporates**

Having declared its independence from the Soviet Union, the Lithuanian government quickly identified two threats to its continued freedom: the Soviet military and the KGB.

Although the military could easily have run roughshod over Lithuania had it chosen to do so, the Soviets realized that such a move would have ignited a tinderbox. With the ill-fated incursion into Afghanistan fresh in its memory, the Soviet military's participation in reestablishing control over the breakaway republic was both hesitant and minimal.

The KGB, on the other hand, possessed many of the tools necessary for such a coup. Along with its cadre of clandestine agents, the KGB also maintained a sizable paramilitary force of unquestionable loyalty. Its mission was to ensure that all organizations dangerous to itself and the crumbling Soviet Union were thoroughly compromised. The astonishing successes charted by the Sajudis party point to the fact that the KGB ultimately failed in this critical task.

The first signs that all was not well within the KGB even preceded the declaration of independence. General Eismuntas, head of the KGB, tendered his resignation on March 6, 1990. The following day, a report from the information agency of Sajudis recommended that, among other actions, the KGB should be made subordinate to the Lithuanian republic.<sup>11</sup> This report indicates that the KGB was viewed as a threat and its control essential to the continuation of an independent republic.

Confusion within the ranks of the KGB at the time was evident in the public commentary made by KGB officials. For example, in an interview with the newspaper

*Sovetskaya Litva*, the deputy chairman of the KGB insisted that the role of the KGB was to “provide a stable political situation in Lithuania. . . .”<sup>12</sup> However, while the state security organs were “required to observe the processes that are occurring,” they believed that “under no circumstances should we interfere with them. At least until they do develop into violations of the Constitution and laws.”<sup>13</sup> Likewise unclear was what role the KGB would play in an independent Lithuania: “at the present time our position is ambiguous—we are subordinate to both the Union and the Republic.”<sup>14</sup>

Even the ruling Communists saw the writing on the wall. On March 2, 1990, during a meeting of the Lithuanian Communist Party’s Central Committee Bureau, a resolution that depoliticized many of the security organs within Lithuania was adopted.<sup>15</sup> The KGB suddenly found itself bereft of its traditional patron, the Communist Party, and adrift in a rapidly changing sea.

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A battle of wills quickly emerged over what was to be done with the KGB. The intelligence apparatus remained clearly subordinate to the Soviet Union, which continued to issue orders despite its mounting disarray. Declaring that a lack of directional clarity existed, the head of the KGB claimed the organization would keep functioning until its existence was determined by negotiations.<sup>16</sup> The nascent Lithuanian government, for its part, wanted to dismantle the organ but had no roadmap on how to do so. In the end, the government simply created its own security service, directed by Mėcys Laurinkus, to provide intelligence support and security.

Laurinkus found himself in an unusual situation. He did not want to rely on the KGB to help create the new intelligence service, but he realized that its practical knowledge was invaluable. Admitting his shortcomings, he hired a few ex-KGB officials and also turned to various books published in the West for information regarding Western security services.<sup>17</sup> Such books, which would never have been published under the Soviets, provided outlines from which he formulated a blueprint for functionality and intelligence security. Other sources included official contacts with Western intelligence services, especially the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.<sup>18</sup>

Even today, the employment of former KGB agents remains contentious. Although both Laurinkus and Jurgis Jurgelis, former head of the Lithuanian security service, believed that ex-KGB agents provided guidance and training, at times society took a very dim view of such actions. As a compromise, those ex-KGB agents that were hired could only be Lithuanian nationals and capable of proving their loyalty. Whether this action ultimately will prove wise remains to be seen; however, it did provide the opportunity to jump-start the organization.

The political tug-of-war between Vilnius and Moscow lasted throughout 1990, until its abrupt and bloody resolution on January 13, 1991. Learning that the Soviet KGB militia planned to occupy the television towers in Vilnius, the Lithuanian government called for civilian volunteers to form human barricades to prevent the Soviets from succeeding. (Significantly, the ability of the Lithuanian government to learn of this impending action was a testament to the growing effectiveness of its fledgling intelligence service.) The resulting bloodshed exacerbated the internal schisms within the KGB. In the wake of the incident, a group of KGB senior officers publicly denounced the attack and tendered their resignations.<sup>19</sup> The divided loyalties that plagued the Lithuanian KGB began to bear fruit. Officers began to abandon their posts and melt into civil society. The KGB, for the most part, simply evaporated.

Violence continued in Lithuania through 1991, culminating on July 31 with a vicious attack at a customs outpost in Medininkai. There, the outpost's officers were overwhelmed and shot execution-style in the head. Only one of the eight officers survived the murders. In the wake of the incident, accusations against the KGB and OMON forces, special militia units within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD), were immediately raised and investigated. Although both units denied involvement in the affair and commenced their own investigations,<sup>20</sup> it soon became clear that this final spasm of violence was aimed at disrupting the Lithuanian government.<sup>21</sup> These suspicions were further confirmed when two KGB officials admitted that the KGB was involved in the inquiry solely for the purpose of misdirecting investigators.<sup>22</sup>

The August 1991 putsch marked the end of the Soviet Union. On August 24, a transitional period confirming the sovereignty of Lithuania and mandating the cessation of all activities within Lithuania by the Soviet KGB was instituted.<sup>23</sup> Protocols for the transfer of buildings were signed, transferring Soviet ownership of buildings to the Lithuanian government. On September 22, the Lithuanian president was assured that the KGB would be disbanded "as soon as possible" by Deputy Soviet KGB Chief Nikolay Stolyarov.<sup>24</sup> Although the Soviet KGB refused to reveal its network of agents, the structures of its Lithuanian counterpart simply dissolved soon thereafter.

### **The KGB Archives**

Bureaucratic in nature, the KGB left as its legacy an extensive, well-indexed archival system. Documents of unique historical value, dating from the start of the Soviet Revolution through the collapse of the Soviet system, had been kept by various security services throughout the USSR. The archives in Lithuania were no exception—the historical and political value of the documents therein was explosive, fueling a politically charged atmosphere rife with scandal. Consequently, Lithuanian lawmakers were determined to bring these archives under some form of control.

As Soviet control crumbled, crowds began to throng to the KGB building in Vilnius. These demonstrations were a testament to the Soviet Union's total loss of internal control. (Indeed, the sheer presence of protests against the KGB was

itself a clear indicator of the dramatic shift in power that had begun to take place within the country.) But the demonstrations also served a more practical purpose: the crowds were attempting to prevent the removal of archive files by KGB officials into friendlier territory. This move would later prove prudent. Despite the population's best efforts, numerous files were removed by the Soviets on at least two separate occasions: the time period surrounding the Lithuanian declaration of independence and immediately after the failed August 1991 putsch.<sup>25</sup> Suspicions also abounded about the unofficial attrition of files as a result of the illegal activities of KGB officials and *apparatchiks* operating for personal gain and blackmail. These charges, however, have proven nearly impossible to substantiate—the consistent removal of files by all concerned created a black market that cannot be traced to any single entity.

Once the Soviets granted the Lithuanians unimpeded access to the archives, it quickly became clear that the Soviets had undertaken a rushed purging of documents. Many files, particularly those dealing with operational issues, were censored, with entire pages torn away or portions cut out. The Soviets had also attempted to burn as many files as possible; numerous accounts of wastebaskets full of ashes and heating stoves choked with burnt paper served as evidence of this fact.

The chaotic nature of the final days of the Lithuanian KGB was also evident in the state of the headquarters building. The floor was littered with piles of paper that had been tossed aside or thrown on the floor for incineration. Bound volumes were scattered across both archival rooms and work areas. Initially, security was amazingly relaxed; several individuals recount being able to wander through the archives unescorted and unchallenged, and even to pick through files randomly. One individual even detailed how he found a blank KGB identification badge which was easily removed from the premises and kept as a souvenir.

As the security situation deteriorated, the government intervened, tasking the military to guard the building against further looting. This measure, while reducing the number of thefts at the former headquarters, did not stop them entirely—at least four further thefts were reported, including one in which papers were simply handed down through a ground floor window to men standing in the street.<sup>26</sup> It also did nothing to halt the removal of documents and files by government bodies themselves. Such practices, which began during this time period, took place under highly suspicious circumstances. On September 5 and 16, 1991, for example, members of the Home Defense Department were observed removing documents from the very building they had been charged with guarding. Jurgis Jurgelis, the parliament deputy who made these accusations, actually named the perpetrators in public and pointed out that practically all official organizations had ignored his information.<sup>27</sup> Denials came from members of the commission tasked to study KGB activities,<sup>28</sup> as well as from Defense Minister Audrius Butkevicius.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, Butkevicius later admitted—during an interview with the author—that he had, in fact, ordered the documents removed.

Accusations began to fly that the newly-installed government was collecting files for the express purpose of discrediting political leaders not associated with

the Sajudis party. Other allegations accused the movement of not only attempting to discredit the left, but of covering their own tracks by removing files incriminating its party members. Incidents in which former KGB informers were blackmailed with disclosure of their personal files began to occur.<sup>30</sup> Even the renamed LKP, the Lithuanian Democratic Workers Party (LDDP), which would come to power in the years to come, found itself targeted—the organization was offered the chance to purchase the file of a former senior government official.<sup>31</sup>

Soon after the removal of the documents, reports of KGB activities began to circulate in the press. One newspaper in particular, *Lietuvos Aidas*, carried a series titled “Voratinklis” (The Spider’s Web) describing the involvement of various individuals with the KGB, using information allegedly taken from KGB files. Reactions to these exposés were mixed; although some viewed the public accusations as a valid means of lustration, the majority expressed displeasure with the series, seeing it as little more than yellow journalism. Adding credence to this assertion, the articles themselves were sensationalistic in nature, with quotes and references from the alleged files (which were never publicly produced) serving as the only “proof” for the accusations. Some even asserted that these stories actually created rifts in Lithuanian society by prompting spurious accusations of KGB involvement. Others have viewed this series in a still more sinister light, as a psychological operation by the KGB, intended to control the mood of the population through a deliberately amateurish process of carefully released documents, thereby ensuring that no meaningful lustration took place.<sup>32</sup>

Given the dismantled state of the KGB, however, public dissemination of the files by members of the Sajudis party and other right-wing elements appears to be the most likely answer. Lending credence to this assumption, most of the individuals targeted were leftist politicians and others who had lost favor with the conservative government. Notably, however, even some popular conservative politicians were dragged down by their alleged involvement with the KGB during this period.

In the same vein, the files removed by the Soviet KGB were of grave concern to the Lithuanian government. Surprisingly, however, KGB officers retained free access to the archives even after the KGB building had been turned over to the custody of Lithuanian authorities.<sup>33</sup> The Russian government’s continued access to KGB files was an alarming development, despite the fact that most classified material had already been removed the year before. Naturally, the Lithuanian government was anxious to have the files, and it commenced a series of negotiations with the Russian Federation.<sup>34</sup> One of the sticking points on the Russian side was concern that former KGB agents would be persecuted. Unless grounded in more sinister urges, such as the desire to retain control over agents within Lithuania, these fears were unrealistic. The Russian government seemed unwilling to accept that Lithuania considered itself to have been occupied by the USSR and maintained the right to decide the fate of those who could validly be considered traitors.

Over the course of the negotiations, which stretched out for years, the files were partially returned to the Lithuanians. The first delivery, on June 26, 1992, consisted of roughly twenty-four hundred boxes of material. Declassification of



this material began quickly.<sup>35</sup> On February 3, 1994, files of KGB pensioners residing in Lithuania were turned over to Lithuanian authorities.<sup>36</sup> The significance of this second delivery was highly questionable, as those identified were elderly people whom it would have been difficult for the Lithuanian government to pursue and who presented little, if any, threat.

The exact contents of those files removed by the KGB prior to the transfer of the archive to Lithuanian hands remains an open question to this day. The vetting and removal of documents began at some point in 1988–89. The head of the Lithuanian National Archives, Gediminas Ilgunas, believed that had the KGB known what was coming, the files would have been more thoroughly destroyed. By compiling the chaos left behind, archivists have determined that among the files and indices removed were:

- Nearly 14,000 personnel files of former KGB collaborators
- Personnel and working files of 5,169 agents (with a further 36,000 known to have been destroyed)
- Nearly 16,000 files of soldiers
- 4,688 operation records
- 629 secret files
- 417 files of selected correspondence between the Lithuanian Communist Party and KGB<sup>37</sup>

The KGB had been meticulous in attempting to deny the new Lithuanian government access to these papers, which could have provided some clues as to the identities of former KGB agents. Operational files that remained after the KGB vacated the building had been scoured in efforts to render them useless.

Alongside the KGB files were thousands of sensitive Soviet-era documents. In January 1994, the Lithuanian government adopted a resolution declassifying those documents issued by state institutions such as the prosecutor's office, the court system, and all structures of the Lithuanian Communist Party.<sup>38</sup> Not all documents were allowed to be declassified. Papers containing state secrets, including the identities and activities of former KGB agents, were to remain secret until further notice.<sup>39</sup>

With the acquisition of the former KGB files, the Lithuanian government began the torturous task of cataloging what remained. In September 1991, a commission headed by Mecys Laurinkus was established to investigate the contents of the archives. The commission's initial focus was clear: realizing that former agents of the KGB posed a potential threat to the safety of the new nation, primary emphasis was placed on their identification.

The archives were transferred in October 1992 to the recently created Genocide Center for further study and review. This decision was controversial both in timing and management. The creation of the center and the transfer of documents into its custody took place just before the elections that ousted the ruling conservatives in favor of the leftist Lithuanian Democratic Workers Party (LDDP), composed of many former Communist officials. In contrast, the Genocide Center's

staff was composed mostly of former political prisoners and deportees, sparking the fear that the center's staff would use the files as a political instrument to damage the LDDP. On the other hand, rumors circulated that the LDDP wanted to destroy the archives to protect itself.

Subsequently, the archives were transferred to state control and the custody of the National Archives in April 1993. Mandates requiring security, organization, and public access to the files were established, and the task of organizing the documents began. As their work progressed, archivists placed the files into four distinct categories.<sup>40</sup> First were files related to the punishments inflicted on individuals for various crimes, including those of a political nature. The notable exception

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were the files on deportees, which were controlled by the Ministry of the Interior. The second category covered files created for refugees who fled Lithuania during the war and returned upon the cessation of hostilities. Although interviewed to ensure that none had collaborated with Nazis, these individuals were nonetheless viewed as untrustworthy by the

Soviets. The third category of files was about individuals who had traveled abroad (comprised of interviews with the individuals and their associates). KGB operations, including agents and informers, made up the fourth category. Naturally, the latter files caused the most controversy in Lithuania, revealing the identities of people who worked for the KGB in one capacity or another. The veracity of this information was questionable, since files contradict one another as to the status of a certain individual,<sup>41</sup> and the exact nature of an agent's cooperation could not always be fully determined. In some cases, the supposed agent may not even have known he was considered one by the KGB.<sup>42</sup>

The process of cataloging the files continues even today. The files themselves are open to the public, with certain restrictions. Any political prisoner or their family may see his own file in its entirety, including the names of individuals who may have betrayed him to the security services. Access can also be gained with a written request explaining the nature of the research to be conducted. Approved researchers then must abide by specific rules and regulations designed to safeguard the files from theft or vandalism. Photocopies of material are permitted for researchers to continue their work off-site.

The Lithuanian government realizes the treasure it maintains within the old KGB archives; the history of the repression the nation suffered under Soviet rule is well documented. It is not, however, ignorant of the potential dangers contained within the files or even in those Russia refuses to return. But, as the democratic system continues to mature, the belief grows that the current system can survive these potential threats.

### **Botched Lustration**

The lustration process in Lithuania has been slow and torturous. The issue remained hotly debated as late as 2000, with President Valdas Adamkus openly questioning the constitutionality of some aspects of the latest efforts. The question of voluntary and zealous collaboration with the former KGB constitutes part of the problem. Although the archives contain many examples of “agents” reporting on their fellow Lithuanians, whether this was done with the knowledge of the reporting agents is unclear. As has been well documented, the Soviet Union required individuals in positions of authority to generate reports on the activities of their subordinates. How much was done with the conscious intent of keeping subordinates in line or if this was simply a bureaucratic exercise will never be fully known. Given the relatively small number of Lithuanians who belonged to the Lithuanian Communist Party,<sup>43</sup> one can surmise that many of the reports were either involuntary or fabricated by overzealous intelligence officers.

With this problem in mind, in December 1992 the Supreme Council passed a law mandating that elected deputies with a clear connection to the former KGB undergo a special, separate election in their districts. Hoping also to target lower-level former employees, a law was introduced prohibiting former KGB agents and collaborators from holding state office for a defined period of time. After debate, however, this law was never passed.

The effect of this proposed law was a sudden search through the corridors of power for former agents of the KGB. A formal inquiry was set up under the auspices of the Gajauskas Commission. Deputies were forced to prove their loyalty to the new state by fending off accusations of collaboration with the enemy. Surprisingly, the first two victims to fall were not members of the leftist party, but of the Sajudis party.

The first to face accusations was Virgilijus Cepaitis, who had supposedly worked for the KGB under the codename of “Juozas.” From the outset, Cepaitis denied all the accusations leveled against him by the commission. Although acknowledging contacts with KGB “representatives,” and even admitting to penning a report for the KGB in 1988 on ethnic relations in Lithuania,<sup>44</sup> he steadfastly proclaimed his innocence. Cepaitis asserted that he had authored the report due to “patriotic considerations” that had prompted him to “state the truth.”<sup>45</sup> In the face of public scrutiny and scandal, however, Cepaitis eventually left the political scene.

The second person to face these accusations was none other than Sajudis party member and prime minister, Kazimiera Prunskiene. Prior to her political career, Prunskiene had worked at the Institute of Agricultural Economics, which had required her to travel to the Federal Republic of Germany and to have certain contacts with the KGB. While at the Institute of Agricultural Economics, according to the accusations, she reported not only on what she observed, but also on the statements and activities of her colleagues. This, her accusers said, was proof positive that her involvement was more than simply an effort to protect her career.

In response, an indignant Prunskiene denied all accusations and demanded that the government formally drop all charges against her.<sup>46</sup> She also lashed out,

claiming the charges to be the work of a conspiracy composed of leftists, rightists, and former KGB agents bent on destroying her. She even went so far as to suggest that the KGB had initiated an operation to infiltrate the parliament with operatives who would try to take over the legislative process.<sup>47</sup>

Eventually her case went to trial, and on September 14, 1992, the court ruled that the evidence had established “the juridical fact of the deliberate cooperation” of Prunskiene with the former KGB.<sup>48</sup> The result was a suspension of her powers as a prime minister. Prunskiene responded with a news conference in which she denounced the verdict, claimed the evidence against her to be a forgery, and resolved to appeal the decision. In the end, it did not make much of a difference. She has since been reelected to the Seimas (Lithuania’s unicameral legislative body) as a member of the Women’s Party. But the scandal has remained a fixture of Lithuanian public life. To this day, Prunskiene maintains her innocence and claims that she knows the identities of those individuals involved.<sup>49</sup>

Even as Lithuanians were drawn into the debate over Cepaitis, Prunskiene, and other possible KGB leftovers, the newspapers and tabloids quickly filled their pages with their own accusations. In a country rife with fears of conspiracy, no one was entirely innocent. One popular belief circulated was that the KGB never truly disbanded. If anything, the organization had cleverly infiltrated Lithuanian society and proceeded to shore up its power there. The unfortunate corollary of this theory is that any and all successful entrepreneurs in post-Soviet Lithuania run the risk of accusation as a former KGB official or agent. In one such instance, the founders of a joint British-Lithuanian English-language radio station were accused of being former KGB simply because their company was able to acquire a plot of land on the Baltic Coast with little competition.<sup>50</sup>

The Voratinklis series remains a prime example of the public’s apprehensions. Sensational journalism at best, many claimed that this series actually impeded any chance for a fair public debate over what should be done regarding the legacy left by the KGB. Even the General Prosecutors Office complained about the public disclosure of select KGB documentation. “By publishing documents of the former KGB in the press,” asserted Juozas Gaudutis, head prosecutor of the criminal investigation department, “the [Gajauskas] committee tied the hands of law enforcement officials who are unable to act instantly and efficiently.”<sup>51</sup> Members of the committee themselves felt that the process was becoming politicized. Deputy Jurgis Jurgelis, who would later head the intelligence service, at one point, publicly claimed that the Sajudis party was trying to include its deputies on the committee so that those who “previously had contacts with the KGB” were not exposed.<sup>52</sup>

The clearly-evident politics accompanying these public accusations eventually began to underscore the true nature of the attacks. Among those accused of complicity with the KGB were Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius;<sup>53</sup> former Ambassador to the United States Stasys Lazoraitis;<sup>54</sup> and even former President Vytautas Landbergis. Along with specific accusations came general allegations guaranteed to drum up press for the accuser. They ranged from the believable to

the outrageous. For example, Zbignev Balcevicz, representative of the Polish faction within the Seimas (Lithuania's unicameral legislative body), maintained that former KGB agents had actively tried to foment tensions between the minority Poles and Lithuanians.<sup>55</sup> One supposed KGB agent within the Seimas, code-named "Pranas," even claimed that KGB infiltrators had helped to drive a wedge between President Landsbergis and the voting public.<sup>56</sup>

The lustration debate continued for several years, until the Seimas passed a law in summer 1998 banning former KGB employees from holding government office and certain private sector jobs for a period of ten years. This led to a confrontation with Lithuania's executive branch, with then-President Valdas Adamkus vetoing the measure. Instead, a compromise agreement was reached, whereby the law would go into effect on January 1, 1999, ahead of its review by the Lithuanian Supreme Court.

Since then, a series of measures—including lists effectively rendering certain jobs off-limits to KGB employees and the imposition of fines on companies that failed to eliminate KGB-affiliated workers—have haltingly attempted to push the lustration agenda forward despite political resistance.<sup>57</sup>

### Conclusion

After the suffering endured under Soviet rule in the interwar and post-World War II periods, the Lithuanian people maintain a strong loathing of the KGB—one that has persisted to the present day. At times, this revulsion has become paranoia, blaming the KGB for every ill experienced by the nation. The KGB continues even today to be the ultimate bogeyman in some political circles. The fact that the Lithuanian SSR KGB self-destructed fuels this paranoia. Uncertainty over what happened to former Soviet KGB officials, and the extent of their current activities, simply compounds the problem. The lack of a concerted lustration process and a politicized witch hunt in the wake of the Soviet collapse has yet to allow the Lithuanian nation to come to terms with itself.

### NOTES

1. According to one source, the Lithuanian currency was reduced from 3 to 5 rubles per Litas to 0.9 rubles. See V. Stanley Vardys, *Lithuania: The Rebel Nation* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 53.

2. Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 35.

3. *Ibid.*, 39–40.

4. *Lithuania: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1996), 181.

5. "LKP(b) CK biuro nutarimas del gyventoju suemimo ir istremimo is Lietuvos," Lietuvos gyventoju tremimai 1940–1941, 1944–1953 metais sovietines okupacines valdzios dokumentuose (Vilnius: Pasaulio Lietuviu Bendromene, 1995), 159–60.

6. "SSRS NKGB 3-iosios valdybos 4-ojo skyriaus 3-iojio poskyrio virsininko Rudakov'o pazyma apie sovietiniam okupaciniam rezimui pavojingu zmoniu Lietuvoje, Latvijoje ir Estijoje skaiciu," Lietuvos gyventoju tremimai 1940–1941, 1944–1953 metais sovietines okupacines valdzios dokumentuose (Vilnius: Pasaulio Lietuviu Bendromene, 1995), 164–65.

7. "SSRS valstybes saugumo liaudies komisaro pavaduotojo I. Serov'o instrukcija del 'Sovietiniam rezimui pavojingu gyventoju' istremimo is Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos," Lietuvos gyventoju tremimai 1940–1941, 1944–1953 metais sovietines okupacines valdzios dokumentuose (Vilnius: Pasaulio Lietuviu Bendromene, 1995), 152–58.

8. *Lithuania: A Country Study*, 184.

9. Misiunas and Taagepera, *Baltic States*, 99.

10. The Sajudis party was the emerging conservative nationalist political coalition that put forward a program of democratic and national rights coupled with support for an independent Lithuania.

11. "Lithuanian Control of Lithuanian KGB Suggested," FBIS-SOV-90-046, March 8, 1990, 95.

12. "Lithuanian KGB Chief Views Current Role," FBIS-SOV-90-056, March 22, 1990, 93.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*, 99.

15. "Lithuania Depoliticizes MVD, KGB, other Organs," FBIS-SOV-90-065, April 4, 1990, 74.

16. "Lithuanian KGB Head Reviews Responsibilities," FBIS-SOV-90-157, August 14, 1990, 53.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Interview with the author.

19. "KGB Members Denounce Force Against Lithuania," FBIS-SOV-91-011, January 16, 1991, 72.

20. "KGB Statement Denied Shield Claims," FBIS-SOV-91-165, August 26, 1991, 54.

21. "Shield Says KGB, OMON behind Medininkai Deaths," FBIS-SOV-91-154, August 9, 1991, 51.

22. "More on Shield Inquiry, Allegations," FBIS-SOV-91-154, August 9, 1991, 51.

23. "KGB Agrees to a 30-Day Transitional Period, Vaisvila Signs Protocol," FBIS-SOV-91-165, August 26, 1991, 54–55.

24. "KGB to be Disbanded 'As Soon As Possible,'" FBIS-SOV-91-186, September 25, 1991, 40–41.

25. According to one source, no less than "eleven or twelve sacks" of information were removed by Soviet officials. See "Security Head Says KGB Files Must Be Returned," FBIS-SOV-94-087, May 5, 1994, 56.

26. "Theft Reported at Former KGB Headquarters," FBIS-SOV-91-219, November 13, 1991, 49.

27. "Deputy Discusses Removal of KGB Documents," FBIS-SOV-91-211, October 31, 1991, 42–43.

28. *Ibid.*

29. "Prime Minister Cited on KGB Materials," FBIS-SOV-91-218, November 12, 1991, 37.

30. "Official to be Prosecuted for KGB Informer Blackmail," FBIS-USR-93-049, April 21, 1993, 95.

31. *Ibid.*

32. Dalia Kuodyte, the director of the Genocide Center, interview with the author.

33. "Prime Minister Cited," 37.

34. "KGB Archival Materials to Return to Lithuania," FBIS-SOV-92-030, February 13, 1992, 42; "Official Discusses Russia's Return of KGB Files," FBIS-SOV-92-182, September 18, 1992, 45; "Russia Refuses to Return Lithuanian Archives," FBIS-SOV-94-063, April 1, 1994, 60; "Security Head Says KGB Files Must be Returned," FBIS-SOV-94-087, May 5, 1994, 56–57; and "Russia Seen Unwilling to Provide KGB Documents," FBIS-SOV-95-166, August 28, 1995, 90.

35. "KGB Archives Returned," FBIS-SOV-92-097, August 3, 1992, 117.

36. "Russia Hands Over Files of KGB Pensioners," FBIS-SOV-94-025, February 7, 1994, 73.

37. Arunas Bubnis, "The Former KGB Archives of the Lithuanian SSR: Composition, Quantity, and Organizing of Documents."
38. "Declassification of Soviet Era Documents Viewed," FBIS-SOV-94-020, January 31, 1994, 89.
39. *Ibid.*
40. Interview with Gediminas Ilgunas, Director General of the National Archives.
41. "KGB Archives Still Causing Major Problems," FBIS-SOV-95-049, March 14, 1995, 103–5.
42. Interview with Gediminas Ilgunas.
43. Misiunas and Taagepera, *Baltic States*, 359–60.
44. "Controversy Over Officials' Past KGB Connections Continues," FBIS-USR-92-053, May 4, 1992, 76–77.
45. *Ibid.*
46. "Former Prime Minister Denied KGB Charges," FBIS-SOV-92-093, May 13, 1992, 91.
47. For details of her defense see "Prunskiene Rebutts KGB Involvement Charges," FBIS-USR-92-057, May 13, 1992, 121–23.
48. "Court Confirms Deputy Prunskiene's KGB Links," FBIS-SOV-92-179, September 15, 1992, 56–57.
49. Interview with the author, March 17, 1997.
50. "Radio Station Founders Said to be KGB Agents," FBIS-SOV-92-140, July 21, 1992, 59.
51. "Prosecutor Comments on KGB Investigation," FBIS-SOV-92-112, June 10, 1992, 85.
52. *Ibid.*
53. "Terleckas Comments on Vagnorius-KGB Link," FBIS-SOV-92-112, June 10, 1992, 85.
54. "Lithuanian Deputy Retracts Charges Against Former Ambassador," OMRI Daily Digest, June 12, 1996, 3–4.
55. "Official: Former KGB Agents Instigate Feuds," FBIS-SOV-92-155, August 11, 1992, 75.
56. "Former Agent Claims KGB Plotting in Seimas," FBIS-USR-92-129, October 9, 1992, 116–17.
57. "Lithuania Publishes List of Jobs Off-Limits for Former KGB Employees," RFE/RL Newsline, January 15, 1999.