

Jarosław Krasnodębski, *Z Wilna nad Wilią do 'Wilna nad Wisłą'. Ekspatriacja i osiedlenie się mieszkańców Wileńszczyzny w Toruniu (1944–1948)*, Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Toruńskiego Mikołaja Kopernika, 2019. 266 p. ISBN 978-83-231-4247-8

Toruń's Nicholas Copernicus University occupies an important place among Polish institutions undertaking research into 20th-century Lithuanian studies. Knowing that Toruń and Vilnius are closely linked, this status should be no surprise. As we know, a significant number of residents of Vilnius and its region found their way to Toruń, and even further, after the Second World War. Most of the former academic staff of Stephen Bathory University, some of Vilnius' Polish artists and members of cultural institutions (librarians), and personnel from the medical field, settled in Toruń in 1945 and 1946, where they made a significant contribution towards establishing and expanding the university, modernising the city itself.

This monograph by Jarosław Krasnodębski is devoted to the relocation of Poles from Vilnius to Toruń, revealing the process of their adaptation. In the context of the postwar relocation from Lithuania to Poland, the case of Toruń does not play a very great role in terms of numbers: of between 170,000 and 180,000 people who left Lithuania, around 4,000 settled in Toruń.<sup>1</sup> However, in a qualitative sense, on the map of resettlement, the city played a very important role. In the words of the author, these resettlers developed the cultural life of 'Vilnius on the Vistula' (p. 152).

The monograph was written according to the chronological-problematic principle. The chronological boundaries of Krasnodębski's research

<sup>1</sup> According to official data from institutions that carried out the relocation of the population, between 1944 and 1947, around 171,200 people left the LSSR for Poland. However, in reality, a great deal more left, as some hid in railway carriages, and others crossed the still poorly controlled border with Lithuania on foot or on horse-drawn carts. In addition, several thousand Lithuanians from Lithuania managed to return to the Suwałki region in the spring and summer of 1944, from where they had been deported according to a 1941 agreement between the USSR and Germany. B. Makauskas, 'Lietuvių išseldinimas iš III reicho okupuoto Suvalkų krašto (1940–1941 m.)', in: *Terra Jatwezenorum*, 1 (2009), p. 242.

are completely understandable and justifiable: in the autumn of 1944, on the orders of the Soviet leaders, decisions were made to organise the expatriation, and it began at the end of the year, when the first people left Vilnius. The year 1948 marked the end of the settlement of expatriates in Toruń. Of course, these quite strictly defined chronological boundaries are crossed several times, when the goal is to show the outcome of the long-term process and other aspects.

The author's work consists of two main parts: the research (pp. 9–153), and appendices (pp. 155–239). The research has an introduction, seven chapters and a conclusion. The book ends with the necessary elements typical of an academic monograph: abbreviations, tables, lists of sources and literature, and an index of names. The research can be broken down into three smaller sections: 1) a discussion of the situation in the Vilnius region during the Second World War (Chapter 1); 2) the process of expatriation from Vilnius and its region to Toruń (Chapters 2 and 3); and 3) issues with adaptation in the new geographic space (Chapters 4 to 7).

The author analyses the expatriation, from the resolutions that initiated the process to its complete implementation. Due to specific details of the process, the research is divided between Lithuania and Poland, Vilnius and Toruń.

The monograph begins with a description of the situation of the population in the Vilnius region during the Second World War. Krasnodębski views the population of Vilnius and the surrounding territories as inhabitants and citizens of the Republic of Poland. However, it should be noted that in late 1939 and the first half of 1940, much of the population of the region became inhabitants of the Republic of Lithuania, and around 50 per cent of the inhabitants of Vilnius had Lithuanian passports.<sup>2</sup> Of these, most were Poles and Jews. From December 1939 to June 1940, the 'family heads' of around 11,500 Vilnius Polish and 10,100 Jewish families received Lithuanian passports.<sup>3</sup> Lithuanian officials did not push passports on to these people; their issue was strictly regulated and restricted.

<sup>2</sup> V. Stravinskienė, 'Lietuvos Respublikos pilietybės suteikimas Vilniaus krašte (1939–1940 m.)', in: *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis* 2016/1 (2016), p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Announcements by the head of the Vilnius City Passport Department dated 13 February to 8 July 1940 to the Ministry of Internal Affairs referent for citizenship and the Vilnius City burmeister, Vilnius Regional State Archive, col. 764, inv. 4, file 30, pp. 15–16, 86, 92, 98–99, 113, 125, 146, 162, 168, 178, 207, 264. A Lithuanian passport issued to the 'head of the family' meant that the whole family (parents and minors/children) became citizens of Lithuania.

In terms of research, one of the most important chapters in the monograph is the 'Organisation and Course of the Expatriation Process' (pp. 38–61). However, it does not contain any major new information or insights. The author discusses mostly facts and interpretations that are already well known in historiography. It more or less repeats the statements made in a similar study by Alicja Paczoska in 2003.<sup>4</sup>

The expatriation process was not easy, either physically or emotionally. The new arrivals faced social, psychological and other problems. That is why the author's attention to living space, receiving compensation for moveable and immovable property of their former place of residence, and an analysis of relations between the new arrivals and existing inhabitants (Chapters 3 to 7) helps the reader gain a better understanding of the complexity of the process. It is these aspects that make Krasnodębski's work novel and original. He has built on the research by Paczoska, where the emphasis was on revealing the mechanisms behind the expatriation process. Krasnodębski's research shifts the main focus to the establishment and adaptation of the new arrivals. According to this book and other studies,<sup>5</sup> in the future it will be possible to analyse issues relating to the lives of former inhabitants of Vilnius and the Vilnius region in this new location over a longer period of time, and to compare the situation in different regions of Poland.

Appendices make up the second part of the monograph. Documents regarding statistical data about the ethnic structure of Vilnius in the 1930s and 1940s are presented, as well as recollections from Polish state archives and private archives, and the press. The last appendix stands out, in which the author gives a list of individuals who were monitored by Polish state security institutions. It features 1,221 people who were relocated from Vilnius (pp. 179–239). To compile this kind of list requires a great deal of time and careful work, making its research value unquestionable. First of all, this is new material being introduced into academic circulation. On the other hand, it might inspire new research. The list shows that the Polish government at the time did not trust the new residents of Toruń at all, for almost one in four of those who relocated from Vilnius and the Vilnius region were monitored by Polish state security. In addition, this list of 'unreliable individuals' makes it possible to examine behavioural changes in times of changing political

<sup>4</sup> A. Paczoska, *Dzieci Jajty. Exodus ludności polskiej z Wileńszczyzny w latach 1944–1947* (Toruń, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> *Między Wilnem a Olsztynem. W 70. rocznicę przybycia Polaków z Wileńszczyzny na Warmię i Mazury*, ed. P. Bojarski, A. Szmyt (Olsztyn, 2016).

conjuncture. The example of Vytautas Legeika is particularly interesting. This doctor arrived in Toruń in 1946 as Witold Legiejko (p. 203). In Vilnius, he was known as the Lithuanian Vytautas Legeika. He was a member of the Vilnius Lithuanian Sanitation Society, a doctor, director of a Lithuanian clinic, and a close family friend of Konstantinas Stašys, the unquestionable leader of Vilnius' Lithuanians.<sup>6</sup> In order for him to leave Soviet-occupied Vilnius, he indicated that he was a Pole. Examples of similar behaviour (but in other cities in Poland) have also been found.

In terms of the historiography and sources used, material from Poland certainly dominates in Krasnodebski's monograph. Former inhabitants of Vilnius who became permanent residents of Toruń are an important link in the history of Lithuania and Poland. Sources from Lithuania would have enhanced the work, and would have made it possible to make a more accurate reconstruction of the issue discussed. Had he used Lithuanian archive sources, the author would have found that Moscow handled the organisation and provision of transport, which played an especially important role in the dynamics of the process, that Moscow applied a principle of centralisation and confirmed railroad carriage provision schedules across the three bordering republics, and that many of the applications made by the LSSR executive representative for evacuation requesting quicker provision and a larger number of railway carriages were often unrealised. For example, the applications made by Albertas Knyva, the LSSR executive representative for evacuation, regarding the provision of transport were fulfilled as follows: in January 1946, he requested 2,452 carriages, but received 462; in February, instead of the 1,400 he asked for, only 601 were sent; in March, instead of 4,000, only 1,503 were provided.<sup>7</sup> We should also not forget that numerous carriages for the transport of passengers for expatriation purposes were redirected to Belarus and Ukraine. Furthermore, Lithuanian sources do not confirm that people were relocated to Poland on flat carriages, which happened in other Soviet republics and in Poland itself. The difficult economic situation at the time was just as important in the expatriation process as personal factors (the position taken by members of institutions that carried out these relocations and other agencies), and sometimes the determined

<sup>6</sup> A. Žalnora, *Visuomenės sveikatos mokslo raida Stepono Batoro universiteto medicinos fakultete ir visuomenės sveikatos būklė Vilniaus krašte 1919–1939 metais. Daktaro disertacija* (Vilnius, 2015), p. 67; J. Jautakienė, 'Su Dainora sėdėjome viename suole', in: *Voruta*, 28 September 2019, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Railway carriage provision schedules to the LSSR in January to June 1946, Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas (LCVA), col. R-841, inv. 6, file 3, pp. 67–70.

efforts by separate individuals to resolve a problem provided tangible results. The following example shows the complexity, and also the absurdity, of the situation. On 11 June 1946, Jonas Silickas, the deputy of the LSSR executive responsible for evacuation, ordered 60 carriages to arrive at Vilnius railway station on 24 June. The carriages arrived on time. However, after inspecting them, Silickas stated that only 19 were suitable for use, as the others had broken walls, floors and ceilings. He demanded that these be exchanged for others suitable for the transport of people. However, a representative of the LSSR railway board informed him that his staff had inspected the carriages, and confirmed that 54 were suitable for use, and refused to provide any more. The deputy of the evacuation agency then appealed to the LSSR Council of Ministers, which called a meeting. It was decided to inspect the carriages again. The participants in the meeting decided that there were 20 suitable carriages, 14 were partly suitable (for transporting livestock), and the remainder had to be changed. However, the LSSR railway board did not replace the carriages with others. Silickas appealed to the LSSR Council of Ministers again, which, having formed a special commission, stated that some of the carriages did need to be changed. Only then were suitable carriages provided.<sup>8</sup> All this took almost four days to resolve.

The author's poor use of Lithuanian historiography has affected the quality of his work. Krasnodebski uses works by Polish authors for his analysis of various social and economic problems in Vilnius and the Vilnius region in 1939–1941, and completely ignores those by Lithuanian authors. As a result, he could have avoided inaccuracies and unfounded claims. In Chapter 1 'The Vilnius Region during the Second World War', the author writes about Soviet repressions in the autumn of 1939 and during the first Soviet occupation (1940–1941). He indicates that in September and October 1939, the Soviet government arrested 800 people in Vilnius, who were held in Lukiškės, Vileika and Minsk prisons before being deported to the depths of the USSR. This fate befell Dr Wiktor Maleszewski, the president of Vilnius city, the vice-president Kazimierz Grodzki, the vice-voivode Józef Rakowski, and many other senior state officials and Polish intellectuals (p. 19). However, the Soviet government persecuted not only Poles, but also members of other ethnic groups: Jews, Belarusians, Lithuanians, etc. For example, among those who were arrested were the Belarusians Ian Pazniak, Anton Luckievich, Roman Trepka,

<sup>8</sup> Announcement by J. Silickas, the deputy LSSR executive representative for evacuation, about Vilnius transport No 110–113, *ibid.*, file 304, pp. 7–9.

Antanina Astrouskaia, Viktor Astrouski and Viacheslav Bagdanovich, the Jews Avrom Tsimbler, Yakov Fridman, Zalmen Reyzen and Eliyash Zaks, and the Lithuanians Konstantinas Stašys, Rapolas Mackonis, and others.<sup>9</sup> The Soviet government applied both an ethnic and a class principle. In this way, during the first Soviet occupation, between 19 September and 27 October 1939 around 400 people were taken to the USSR (mostly to Belarus) from the Vilnius and the surrounding areas that were part of Lithuania.<sup>10</sup> Lithuanian researchers have conducted a number of studies of Soviet repressions, valuable anthologies of documents have been published, and lists of people who were persecuted have been compiled. Had he used this material, the author would not have repeated the claim already entrenched in Polish historiography that between 14 and 19 June 1941, around 48,500 people were deported from the Vilnius region (p. 28). The actual number of imprisoned and deported people was lower. The list of names published by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania indicates that in 1939 and 1941, around 30,000 people were persecuted, of whom 19,200 were Lithuanians, 4,800 were Poles, 2,600 were Jews, 500 were Russians, 200 were Belarusians, 100 were Germans, and 1,100 were of other or unidentified nationalities.<sup>11</sup> Between 14 and 18 June 1941, approximately 17,000 people were sent into exile and to work camps: 12,000 Lithuanians, 1,600 Poles, 2,000 Jews, 200 Russians, and 400 people of other or unidentified nationalities.<sup>12</sup>

The author's source selection criteria also raise questions. It is hardly accurate to refer to statistical data from 1921 when speaking about the expatriation of Polish landowners to Poland in 1945 and 1946 (p. 127). We should not forget that in Lithuania in 1940 and 1941, the Soviet government conducted agricultural reforms, accompanied by the nationalisation of property, the establishment of collective farms, and the persecution of the population. People who owned more land and enjoyed a better material situation were the target of these processes, and estate owners were undoubtedly among them. Nor is it credible to view Konrad Górski, a professor of literary history at Stephen Bathory University in

<sup>9</sup> 'Białarusy wywiezieni ja Ź Saviety', in: *Krynica*, No 1 (1939), p. 2; T. Błaszczak, *Białorusini w Republice Litewskiej 1918–1940* (Białystok, 2017), p. 313; J. Wołkonowski, *Stosunki polsko-żydowskie w Wilnie i na Wileńszczyźnie 1919–1939* (Białystok, 2004), pp. 319–320; Pro memoria from E. Turauskas, the director of the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Policy Department, dated 21 October 1939, LCVA, col. 648, inv. 1, file 54, p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> *Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas*, t. 1 (Vilnius, 1999), p. 49.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

Vilnius, as a reliable source on the impact of Soviet economic reforms on the Polish population (p. 25). Perhaps a more accurate view could have been formed by referring to resolutions of the Communist Party of Lithuania, Bureau meeting decisions, and other directives held in the Lithuanian Special Archives, or which have been discussed in works by Lithuanian authors.<sup>13</sup> The claims made by the author about the economic benefits that Lithuania allegedly gained through the conversion of worthless zloty to litas are also questionable (p. 23). The research by the Lithuanian historian Gediminas Vaskela shows that at the time, it was both economically beneficial and rational to introduce a low-as-possible zloty-litas currency exchange rate, and to use inflation to address the ensuing financial problems. However, the Lithuanian government rejected this option, and set a currency exchange rate that was more favourable for the people.<sup>14</sup>

The population expatriation process was much more complicated than it is made to appear in Krasnobębski's work. According to the author, around 110 families (440 to 480 people) who settled in Toruń left property behind in the Vilnius region (p. 133). Let us recall that around 4,000 people who arrived from Lithuania settled in this city. The author explains this major disproportion between arrivals and those who had to leave immovable property behind by using the words of the son of the former rector of Toruń university Wacław Dziewulski: 'Academic individuals do not need anything ... [if someone] has an apartment, books, then they have everything' (pp. 133–134). At this point, it should be explained that there were deeper reasons for this. A large number of academics and artists settled in Toruń, most of whom arrived in Poland with only moveable property (books, household and personal items). As most had lived in Vilnius in state or rented apartments, they could not receive evaluation acts for the immovable property they had left behind, which served as a basis for compensation.

Some more minor comments. The concepts 'the Lithuania of Kaunas' and 'Smetona's Lithuania' that the author uses (pp. 27–28, 59) should be written in quotation marks, as the political compounds he mentions did not exist in reality, even though such descriptions of the Republic of Lithuania were frequently used in Poland in the interwar years, and

<sup>13</sup> *Lietuva 1940–1990: okupuotos Lietuvos istorija*, ed. A. Anušauskas (Vilnius, 2005), pp. 106–126.

<sup>14</sup> G. Vaskela, *Lietuva 1939–1940 metais. Kursas į valstybės reguliuojamą ekonomiką* (Vilnius, 2002), p. 64.

carried a decidedly negative connotation. There are instances of incorrectly used names (on page 31, the name should be Marijonas Padaba, not Podabas, the first name of Archbishop Reinyš was Mečislovas, and the first name of Pranculis mentioned on pages 156 and 264 was Gustavas).

To sum up, it can be said that Krasnodębski's research introducing the expatriation of citizens from the Vilnius region and their subsequent adaptation to life in Toruń between 1944 and 1948 will receive mixed responses from readers. Lithuanian readers will most likely question the absence of new assessments, insights and interpretations, while a Polish audience will undoubtedly accept it in a favourable and positive light.

*Vitalija Stravinskienė*

Lithuanian Institute of History