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Lithuanians in the Kazakh SSR: Deportation Policy, Forced Settlement, and Rehabilitation (1940-1956)

This article examines the history of Lithuanian communities that ended up in the Kazakh SSR during the period from 1940 to 1956. Their presence on Kazakh soil predates the Stalinist deportations — a number of Lithuanian peasant families had already relocated to the steppe voluntarily under the Stolypin agrarian reforms. The forced chapter began with mass deportation operations of 1941 and continued through successive waves of 1944-1948, when tens of thousands of Lithuanian citizens were transported to Kazakhstan and placed in corrective labor camps, assigned to special settlements, or attached to collective farms in remote districts where they had no prior connection to the land. The research draws on materials from two principal archival repositories — the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow and the Presidential Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Astana — as well as published documentary collections, personal memoirs of survivors, and academic literature produced over the last thirty years by scholars working in Kazakhstan, Russia, Lithuania, and Western countries. These sources made it possible to establish more reliable figures for the total number of deportees, to identify the particular oblasts and raions to which they were directed, and to reconstruct the conditions of daily existence — including labor arrangements, food provisioning, medical care, and strategies through which displaced communities attempted to preserve elements of their cultural identity. The chronological framework encompasses six distinct periods. Special emphasis falls on three oblasts — Karaganda, Pavlodar, and East Kazakhstan — where Lithuanian deportees were settled in the greatest numbers. The study also addresses Lithuanian participation in the Kengir camp uprising of 1954 and devotes particular attention to a phenomenon that existing scholarship has largely overlooked: the remarkable solidarity demonstrated by ordinary Kazakh families, who voluntarily shared their own limited resources with deportees arriving in a condition of complete material deprivation. The methodological approach integrates four national scholarly traditions, each possessing its own archival base and analytical conventions. The findings underscore that this segment of Soviet deportation history remains insufficiently researched and that productive international cooperation — particularly between Kazakhstani and Lithuanian academic institutions — constitutes an urgent necessity for future progress in the field.

Keywords: Kazakh SSR, Lithuanians, deportation, special settlers, forced migration, GULAG, Karaganda, Kengir uprising, Stalinist repressions, Baltic states, memorialization, rehabilitation.

Introduction

The Soviet practice of forcibly uprooting entire populations remains, to this day, among the most contested and emotionally charged areas of twentieth-century historical inquiry. Lithuanians occupy an unusual place within this broader story. Their deportation cannot be understood apart from the disputed political process by which Lithuania became part of the USSR, nor apart from the years of armed partisan warfare that followed annexation. Kazakhstan — specifically the Kazakh SSR — received a substantial share of deported Lithuanians. Remarkably, though, scholars working inside Kazakhstan have devoted little sustained attention to this particular thread of the republic's deportation history.

The chronological scope of this study spans the period from 1940, when Lithuania was incorporated into the Soviet Union and the first deportation operations were prepared, to 1956, when the rehabilitation process gained momentum following the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU. Within this timeframe, the article also briefly addresses the pre-deportation period of voluntary Lithuanian peasant migration to Kazakhstan during the Stolypin agrarian reforms of 1906-1911, which forms the necessary historical background.

What accounts for this neglect? The answer is partly institutional. Textbooks in Kazakhstan continue, by and large, to treat deportation through a Soviet-era lens. Where specific ethnic groups are mentioned at all, the discussion tends toward the formulaic — and Lithuanians rarely feature. Archives, meanwhile, have opened. Russia and Kazakhstan both declassified significant holdings over the last thirty years. Fresh

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material exists. The Lithuanian case, however, has barely been touched. Add to this a widening scholarly conversation about transitional justice — a conversation that increasingly connects the Baltic and Central Asian regions — and the gap becomes harder to justify. There is, too, a dimension that resists abstraction. A Lithuanian community persists in Kazakhstan to this day. It is not large. But its members are carriers of firsthand and inherited memory, and what that memory reveals — about how strangers helped one another under repressive conditions, about cultural endurance in the face of systematic pressure — cannot be captured by numbers on a page.

Scholarship on Lithuanian deportations has grown at different rates in different countries. Under the Soviet regime, published work either ignored the deportations altogether or cast them as a legitimate security response aimed at “class enemies” and “nationalist elements.” The post-1991 period brought change, though unevenly. In Russia, M.I. Semiriaga and N.N. Platoshkin, working with newly accessible archival funds, produced more nuanced readings — without, however, resolving the ongoing disagreement about how Soviet actions in the Baltics should properly be classified: occupation, annexation, or voluntary incorporation [1], [2]. Lithuanian scholars and institutions — the Center for the Study of Genocide and Resistance of Lithuanian Residents in Vilnius, first and foremost — have built an extensive documentary and oral-historical record oriented around the lives of deportees and their descendants. A. Anušauskas, in particular, assembled a meticulous account of the repressive apparatus established during the initial Soviet occupation of 1940-1941 [3]. In the West, M. Solska, A. Steen, J. Bernier, and M. Keating situated Lithuanian deportation within wider theoretical debates on minority nationalism, citizenship policy, and post-Soviet identity construction [4], [5], [6], [7]. Kazakh researchers — Z.E. Kabuldinov, M.Ch. Kalybekova, T. Allaniyazov — have addressed deportation from the perspective of the territory that absorbed the deportees, documenting camp life and settlement administration [8], [9], [10].

A conspicuous gap persists nonetheless. No published study has attempted a continuous reconstruction of Lithuanian presence in Kazakhstan — tracing the path from voluntary pre-revolutionary migration through successive waves of forced resettlement to rehabilitation — while bringing together all four historiographical traditions. We set out to do precisely that.

The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the history of Lithuanian communities in the Kazakh SSR during the period 1940-1956, to identify the causes, stages, and scale of deportations, and to assess the conditions of life in places of forced settlement. The specific objectives include: analyzing the pre-deportation Lithuanian presence in Kazakhstan; proposing an original six-phase periodization of the deportation process and substantiating its methodological basis; documenting the geography and conditions of settlement through analysis of available statistical and narrative sources; examining instances of resistance, particularly the Kengir Uprising; and evaluating contemporary memorialization efforts as a basis for shared historical understanding between Kazakhstan and Lithuania.

Materials and Methods

We worked with several categories of source material. At the archival core are documents from the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF), above all Fond R-9401, Opis 2, Delo 187 — NKVD operational reports on deportation actions across the Baltic states in 1939-1941 [11]. From the Kazakh side, we drew on the Archive of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan (AP RK), Fond 708, Opis 1, Delo 56, List 12, which documents the reception and placement of special settlers within the Kazakh SSR [12]. Together, these two collections contain statistical summaries, administrative correspondence between Moscow and regional authorities, and operational directives governing transport and settlement of deportees.

Published documentary collections form a second layer. The multi-volume compilation “From the History of Deportations: Kazakhstan, 1939-1945” brings together transcribed archival materials on the bureaucratic management of deportation on Kazakh soil — transport schedules, demographic breakdowns, memoranda [13]. The volume “ALZHIR Prisoners,” compiled by V.M. Grinev and V.V. Goretsky, catalogues women held in the Akmola division of the Karaganda Corrective Labor Camp; Lithuanian nationals appear in those lists [14]. Documentary publications on the Steplag uprising in “Otechestvennye arkhivy” supply both eyewitness testimony and official records from the 1954 Kengir revolt [15], [16].

A third category consists of scholarly monographs and journal articles. We engaged with research by Kazakh historians on special settler regimes and wartime labor formations [8], [9], with T. Allaniyazov and O. Naimushina’s reconstruction of prisoner resistance in Steplag [10], with Western work on Baltic nationalism and Soviet nationality policy [4], [5], [6], [7], and with A. Statiev’s granular study of Soviet counterinsurgency in the western borderlands [17]. L. Viola’s monograph on Stalin’s special settlements

provided valuable comparative perspective from across the broader Soviet system [18]. We also consulted online resources maintained by memorial institutions — notably the ALZHIR Museum-Memorial Complex and the Lithuanian DELFI news portal [19], [20].

The methodological framework of this study is grounded in the following approaches. The comparative-historical method was applied to juxtapose the experiences of Lithuanian deportees across different periods and regions of Kazakhstan, and to compare Kazakh, Russian, and Lithuanian historiographical interpretations of the same events. Source criticism was employed to evaluate the reliability and completeness of archival documents, many of which were produced by Soviet security organs and therefore carry inherent institutional biases. The chronological method provided the basis for the original six-phase periodization proposed in this study; the boundaries of each phase are determined by a combination of three criteria: (1) changes in Soviet political decision-making regarding the Baltic states, (2) the timing and organizational character of individual deportation operations, and (3) shifts in the administrative regime governing deportees and special settlers. Statistical analysis was applied to demographic data on the numbers and geographic distribution of Lithuanian deportees. The method of synthesis was employed in the Discussion section to integrate findings from multiple national historiographical traditions into a coherent analytical framework.

Results

Lithuanian presence in Kazakhstan stretches across roughly half a century and encompasses migration processes that could scarcely be more different from one another: voluntary peasant resettlement, coerced mass deportation, incarceration in labor camps, and post-Stalinist rehabilitation. The analysis of available sources has led to the construction of an original six-phase periodization of this process. The periodization is based on a combination of three analytical criteria: changes in central Soviet policy toward Lithuania, the organizational structure of individual deportation operations, and transformations in the legal and administrative status of Lithuanians in Kazakhstan. Each phase represents a qualitatively distinct stage in the relationship between the Soviet state and Lithuanian deportees on Kazakh territory.

Pre-deportation period: Lithuanian peasants in Kazakhstan

The story begins well before the Soviet state came into existence. Under the Stolypin agrarian reforms of 1906-1911, the imperial government encouraged landless peasants from western provinces to move east. Lithuanian families — from the Kovno, Vilna, and Suvalki gubernias — joined this migration wave. The majority ended up in the Akmola and Semipalatinsk oblasts, taking up cereal farming and livestock-keeping. Regarding their numbers, the migration records of that era lumped all western-province settlers together, making it impossible to count Lithuanians separately. What we have are stray references in regional archives and census fragments, from which a rough estimate of several hundred families can be pieced together for the territory that would later form the Kazakh SSR. It was a small community, but a distinct one — Lithuanian was spoken at home, Catholicism practiced openly, cultural customs maintained. When, decades later, a very different wave of Lithuanian arrivals reached Kazakhstan, these older settlements served as geographic landmarks and, in a certain sense, social anchors [8; 15].

First period (1940-1941): Preparations and the first mass deportation

June 1940 marked the turning point. Under the terms secretly agreed in the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Lithuania was absorbed into the Soviet Union. Sovietization followed immediately, and it was thorough. Private property — nationalized. Political parties — shut down. Civic organizations — disbanded. The NKVD began assembling lists of “unreliable” persons: former officials, military officers, members of nationalist groups, Catholic clergy, wealthy landowners, and — this part mattered — their families [1], [3].

On June 14-18, 1941, the first mass deportation took place. The date deserves attention — between this operation and the start of the German invasion of the USSR lay barely seven days. All three Baltic states were hit at once. In Lithuania, the operation swept up approximately 17,000 people. Families were separated by design. Working-age men were sent to forced labor camps in Siberia and elsewhere; women, children, and the elderly were classified as “special settlers” and put on trains bound for Siberia, the Altai, and Kazakhstan. GARF Fond R-9401 preserves the bureaucratic trail in chilling detail — district quotas, transport timetables, designated reception points [11]. The reality on the ground bore little resemblance to the tidy directives in the files. In many cases families were given no more than thirty minutes to collect their belongings before soldiers loaded them onto freight wagons. Then came weeks of travel under wretched conditions. Deaths in transit were numerous; children and old people accounted for a disproportionate share. According to NKVD operational reports, the mortality rate during transit in the June 1941 deportation

operations across the Baltic states reached several percent of the total deportee population, with conditions in freight cars — lacking adequate food, water, and sanitation — identified as the primary cause [11; 13].

Second period (1941-1944): Wartime conditions

Germany's occupation of Lithuania from mid-1941 through 1944 brought Soviet deportation operations to a halt — but only the operations. The people already deported stayed put. For them, nothing had paused. In Kazakhstan itself, the war made an already harsh situation markedly worse. The republic was at that moment taking in evacuated industrial plants from the western USSR, additional waves of deported nationalities — Volga Germans, Chechens, Ingush, Crimean Tatars, and others — plus prisoners of war. Everything was stretched thin, all at once.

Lithuanian deportees in the Karaganda, Pavlodar, and Akmola oblasts were put to compulsory labor — agriculture, construction, mining. Rations were meager. Medical care was essentially nonexistent. Leaving the settlement boundaries was prohibited. Available documentation from AP RK Fond 708 indicates that Lithuanian special settlers in Karaganda oblast received food allocations equivalent to those of other special settler categories, which fell significantly below subsistence levels, particularly during the winter months of 1942-1943 [12]. Despite these conditions, Lithuanian deportees found ways to hold their communities together. Informal gatherings took place. Catholic observances were maintained in secret. Parents made deliberate — sometimes remarkably persistent — efforts to teach their children the Lithuanian language and transmit what they could of their cultural heritage [13; 56].

Third period (1944-1947): Post-war repressions

When Soviet forces retook Lithuania in 1944, repression resumed — and on a scale that exceeded anything before the war. The returning authorities found themselves facing a serious armed insurgency: the Lithuanian partisan movement, known as the “Forest Brothers,” which would go on fighting until the early 1950s [17; 159]. The state security apparatus — first the NKVD, then the MGB — struck back with widespread arrests and forced removals. Their targets went far beyond suspected guerrilla fighters; family members, alleged sympathizers, and practically anyone who could be accused of “nationalist” leanings were swept up as well.

During these years, large numbers of Lithuanian citizens were convicted by military tribunals and sentenced to corrective labor camps across the USSR. On Kazakh territory, two camps received particularly significant Lithuanian contingents: KarLag — the Karaganda Corrective Labor Camp — and Steplag — the Steppe Camp — both in Karaganda oblast. The prisoners held there under Article 58 of the Soviet Criminal Code included intellectuals, schoolteachers, Catholic priests, former military officers, and members of various resistance networks. Some individual fates became emblematic. Archbishop Teofilius Matulionis and the monk Augustinas Dirvėla, both arrested for religious activity and alleged anti-Soviet attitudes, are now remembered as symbols of Lithuanian defiance. Their stories, preserved in church archives and postwar memorial projects, reveal how deliberately the Soviet apparatus targeted cultural and religious leadership — not incidentally, but as a calculated strategy of assimilation [21].

Fourth period (1948-1949): Mass family deportations — Operations “Vesna” and “Priboi”

The deportations of 1948-1949 marked a qualitative break with what had come before. Previous rounds of repression, for all their brutality, had at least maintained the pretense of targeting particular individuals or defined categories. In 1948-1949, that pretense was dropped. The goal now was wholesale: to uproot entire strata of Lithuanian rural society. Two operations carried out this shift.

Operation “Vesna” (Spring), carried out in May 1948, and Operation “Priboi” (Surf), executed on May 22-23, 1949, swept up kulaks and their families, relatives of active partisans, families of anyone already arrested or killed in anti-partisan sweeps, and individuals accused of aiding the resistance. “Priboi” stands alone in the scale of Lithuanian deportation history: nothing before or after matched it. According to figures compiled by the Center for the Study of Genocide and Resistance of Lithuanian Residents, somewhere between 28,000 and 33,000 people were deported in that single operation [22]. Sealed freight cars carried them east — to Siberia, the Altai, Central Asia.

In Kazakhstan, the deportees from these operations wound up mainly in Karaganda, Pavlodar, East Kazakhstan, and Kokchetav oblasts. Their legal status — “special settlers,” spetspereselentsy — meant compulsory registration with local MVD offices, strict limits on movement, and mandatory labor assignments. Housing was rudimentary: barracks, dugouts, or placement on collective farms alongside other deported nationalities. Statistical data from the published document collection “From the History of Deportations: Kazakhstan, 1939-1945” indicate that Karaganda oblast alone received several thousand special settlers of Baltic origin between 1948 and 1950; the precise disaggregation of Lithuanian nationals

from the broader “Baltic” category in Soviet records remains a methodological challenge, as Soviet statistical practice often grouped Baltic nationalities together [13; 278]. Available data suggest that mortality rates among Lithuanian deportees during the first two years of settlement in Kazakhstan ranged from five to ten percent of the newly arrived population, with children under five and elderly persons over sixty disproportionately represented among the deceased [13; 129]. Living conditions were severe: overcrowding, chronic hunger, clothing wholly unsuited to the extreme continental climate, and negligible medical provision all took their toll during the initial settlement months.

Fifth period (1950-1953): Final deportations and camp life

In the early 1950s, the armed Lithuanian resistance was, for all practical purposes, spent [17; 253]. The security services, however, did not stop. They continued running smaller operations aimed at anyone still suspected of nationalist sympathies.

Precise figures for the total number of Lithuanian deportees and prisoners in Kazakhstan during this period remain difficult to establish, primarily because Soviet administrative practice aggregated Baltic nationalities — Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians — into consolidated statistical categories rather than recording each nationality separately. This institutional practice, designed in part to obscure the scale of national-specific repression, accounts for the unavoidable imprecision in demographic estimates. The available data from archival sources and published collections point to approximately 4,000-5,000 Lithuanians who passed through some form of detention or forced settlement in the Kazakh SSR between 1941 and 1953. We treat this figure as a conservative lower bound.

Camp and settlement life ran on a single imperative: extract maximum labor under conditions of total political control. Lithuanian prisoners in Steplag and KarLag worked copper and coal mines, construction sites, and agricultural brigades. Political prisoners were nominally separated from common criminals, but their designation as “especially dangerous state criminals” frequently brought worse treatment in practice — not better. And yet communal life did not vanish. Religious services continued in secret. Educational circles were organized where circumstances allowed. Networks of mutual aid — sharing food, relaying information, providing moral support — kept people going through the worst stretches [10], [14], [16], [18].

Sixth period (1954-1956): Rehabilitation and post-deportation

March 1953 — Stalin’s death. The camps did not empty the next morning. Policy shifted, but fitfully, and with no clear direction at first. The sharpest expression of the tensions within this process was the Kengir revolt.

In May 1954, prisoners in Steplag rose up. The uprising lasted roughly forty days. It drew in inmates of multiple nationalities, but Lithuanians played a disproportionately active organizational role — a fact noted across multiple independent sources. The immediate trigger was a shooting: guards opened fire on prisoners. But deeper causes had been building for months. Conditions stayed harsh despite signals from Moscow that the worst of Stalinism was being reconsidered. Case reviews moved at an agonizing pace.

The rebels managed something remarkable. They established self-government inside the compound. They organized food distribution. They maintained internal order. They drew up a list of specific demands — sentence reviews, decent treatment, contact with outside authorities. On June 26, 1954, the authorities sent in soldiers backed by tanks. The death toll is still debated — dozens is the lower estimate, with a considerably larger number wounded. In the scholarly literature that has accumulated since, Kengir is routinely cited as among the most consequential acts of prisoner resistance in GULAG history; in Lithuania specifically, its memorial resonance runs deep [10], [15], [16], [23]. After the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956 — where Khrushchev publicly denounced Stalinist crimes — rehabilitation picked up speed. Special settlers began having their restricted status lifted. Sentences were reopened. Lithuanian deportees gradually received permission to return home, though “gradually” is the operative word. The process was neither fast nor consistent. Some people were denied outright. Others — and this is a point easy to overlook — had spent more than a decade in Kazakhstan. They had families there. Social ties. A life, however involuntary its origins. Complete legal recognition of their victimhood came, for a great many, only once Lithuania restored its independence in 1990.

One thread in this story deserves separate emphasis: the behavior of ordinary Kazakhs. Oral histories — collected from both Lithuanian and Kazakh informants — consistently describe personal kindness. Kazakh families shared food. They supplied warm clothing. They showed deportees how to manage on the steppe — where to find water, how to insulate a dwelling, what to expect from the climate. What makes this solidarity particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Kazakh people were themselves still recovering from a catastrophe: the collectivization famine of 1931-1933, which had destroyed a vast portion of the population.

Shared exposure to state-inflicted suffering, it appears, created bonds that official propaganda — which actively stoked suspicion toward “enemies of the people” — could not break [24].

Discussion

The story we have pieced together touches several ongoing debates at once — debates about the mechanics of Soviet nationality policy, about whether Baltic incorporation into the USSR should properly be called occupation, and about the legacy of Stalinist repression in the collective memory of affected peoples. None of the national scholarly traditions, taken by itself, has a complete account.

Consider Russian historiography first. The shift since the Soviet collapse has been real, but it has not settled fundamental disagreements. M.I. Semiriaga’s research on Stalinist diplomacy made a persuasive case that the Soviet approach to the Baltics was deliberate and premeditated — the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the secret protocols, the annexation that followed were not accidental but calculated [1; 79]. N.N. Platoshkin, writing about Lithuania’s later turn toward European integration, concedes the traumatic legacy of Soviet rule but questions what he sees as oversimplification in contemporary Lithuanian accounts of 1939-1940 [2]. This is a recognizable pattern in Russian scholarship more broadly: a readiness to document suffering, combined with an insistence that Soviet decisions be read against the geopolitical backdrop of the late 1930s — without, it should be said, necessarily denying the damage done to civilians.

Lithuanian scholars, naturally enough, come at the same events from a different direction entirely. Occupation, resistance, national survival — these are the organizing categories. The Genocide and Resistance Center in Vilnius has been central to this effort, not just as a documentation hub but as an institution shaping how Lithuania remembers. Anušauskas’s meticulous reconstruction of the 1940-1941 terror apparatus remains foundational [3; 56]. Lithuanian historiography as a whole stresses the illegality of the Soviet annexation under international law, the targeted elimination of cultural and intellectual elites, and the lasting demographic and psychological scars of mass deportation. From this vantage point, deportations were not punishment — they were instruments of colonial domination, designed to shatter national cohesion and accelerate cultural assimilation.

Western researchers have added yet another dimension — chiefly theoretical and comparative. Solska traced the downstream demographic consequences of Soviet-era population displacement in the Baltic states [4]. Steen helped explain why the three countries adopted such different minority-rights frameworks after 1991 [5]. Bernier developed a framework for thinking about ethnic identity as simultaneously a tool of resistance and a target of Soviet manipulation [6], [7; 81]. Statiev situated deportations within a broader counterinsurgency toolkit, showing how population removal complemented military operations against the Forest Brothers [17; 46]. Viola’s study of the special settlement system across the USSR gave the Lithuanian case essential comparative depth [18; 93]. And Rahi-Tamm’s demographic work on losses in Estonia offered methodological approaches directly transferable to Lithuanian data [22; 25].

Kazakhstani historiography brings a distinctive perspective — that of the receiving territory, an involuntary participant in Soviet deportation policies. Z.E. Kabuldinov’s study provides contextual data on the reception of deported nationalities and their integration into the Kazakh SSR’s demographic and economic structures [8; 163]. M.Ch. Kalybekova’s research details the administrative mechanisms through which deported populations were managed and exploited [9]. T. Allaniyazov and O. Naimushina’s monograph on the Kengir Uprising offers a detailed reconstruction of prisoner resistance in Steplag, highlighting the multinational character of the revolt and the significant role of Lithuanian prisoners [10; 121]. M.D. Bolat’s conference paper examines the Kengir events from a Kazakh historiographical perspective [23]. N. Dulatbekov’s publications draw attention to the human dimensions of deportation experiences in the Karaganda region [24]. In addition, it is worth paying attention to the publications of Z.G. Saktaganova, which highlight the problems of holding European prisoners in camps in Kazakhstan [25]. These Kazakhstani studies share a common emphasis: Kazakhstan bore the consequences of decisions made in Moscow, and they increasingly frame the deportation experience as a shared historical legacy connecting Kazakh and Baltic peoples.

If we now attempt to read these four bodies of scholarship as parts of one conversation — what do they, taken together, actually tell us? At the level of established fact, the convergence is substantial. Deportations happened. They ruined lives on an enormous scale. Their consequences outlasted the Soviet system itself. Where scholars part ways is on the question of framing — occupation or incorporation, security measure or ethnic cleansing, and how to apportion historical responsibility. We do not claim to resolve these debates in the present article. What we do argue is that the most productive starting point — for this specific case — is

documented human experience. We believe the voices that matter most here belong to the people themselves — the ones put on freight trains, the ones who carved out shelters on the open steppe, the ones who held secret prayer services behind barracks walls. Their experiences need to be placed inside the larger framework of Soviet totalitarian rule, but they should not be turned into footnotes for somebody else's theory.

One thing that stands out across every national tradition we surveyed is how little scholarship there is that treats the Lithuanian community in Kazakhstan as a subject in its own right. Lithuanian deportations are well documented from the perspective of the sending territory. Kazakhstani scholarship has examined the broader phenomenon of special settlement. However, the specific experiences, adaptive strategies, and cultural preservation practices of Lithuanian deportees on Kazakh soil remain understudied. This gap is compounded by the methodological difficulty of disaggregating Lithuanian deportees from aggregate "Baltic" statistical categories in Soviet records — a challenge that future archival research, including cross-referencing GARF and AP RK holdings with Lithuanian memorial databases, could begin to address. This constitutes a promising direction for future collaborative research between Kazakhstani and Lithuanian scholars.

Conclusions

We have followed the Lithuanian presence in the Kazakh SSR across the chronological range from 1940 to 1956, from the mass deportations of the Stalinist era to the post-1956 rehabilitation period, with reference also to the pre-revolutionary peasant migrations that form the historical backdrop. The analysis, built around six chronological periods defined by changes in Soviet policy, the organizational character of deportation operations, and shifts in the administrative regime governing deportees, shows that the forced transfer of Lithuanian citizens to Kazakhstan was not a single event but a sustained process — one driven by evolving political calculations: the elimination of perceived opponents, the dismantling of independent social structures, the suppression of national identity.

Our findings confirm that the Kazakh SSR received several thousand Lithuanian deportees and political prisoners between 1941 and 1953, settled primarily in the Karaganda, Pavlodar, East Kazakhstan, and Kokchetav oblasts. The imprecision of available demographic figures — a consequence of Soviet statistical practices that aggregated Baltic nationalities — constitutes a recognized limitation of the present study and points to the need for targeted archival research. These deportees lived through forced labor, movement restrictions, and cultural suppression — and yet they held on. Language survived. Catholic worship retreated into secrecy — yet it persisted. Community ties endured. The role of Lithuanian prisoners in the 1954 Kengir revolt has come to hold a particular place in this history — it is now recognized both as a landmark in the chronicle of GULAG defiance and as a shared point of reference for Lithuanian and Kazakhstani public memory.

Reading the scholarship from Russian, Lithuanian, Western, and Kazakhstani traditions side by side makes one thing clear: no single perspective captures the full complexity of what happened. Each fills gaps the others leave open — archival documentation here, demographic analysis there, survivor testimony, theoretical tools. The picture becomes whole only when these traditions speak to one another.

On a practical level, this research underscores an overdue necessity: updating domestic history textbooks. Many still reproduce Soviet-era accounts of deportation without incorporating the substantial body of new evidence that has come out of declassified archives over the past thirty years. This is not a marginal concern; it bears directly on the accuracy of the historical record being handed to the next generation. The scientific contribution of this study consists in the original six-phase periodization of Lithuanian deportations to Kazakhstan, grounded in explicit methodological criteria, and the comparative analysis of multiple historiographical traditions applied to this specific case.

Contemporary memorialization efforts in both countries — monuments at former camp sites, the activities of Lithuanian cultural associations, the work of the ALZHIR Museum-Memorial Complex, research programs at the Center for the Study of Genocide and Resistance — represent a shared commitment to preserving the memory of what happened. They also function as bridges. The peoples of Kazakhstan and Lithuania share a difficult history. Understanding it more fully — through continued archival research, oral history collection, and the comparative analysis that remains to be done — is both a scholarly obligation and a form of respect for the people who lived through it.

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Қазақ КСР-дегі литвалықтар: депортация саясаты, мәжбүрлі қоныстандыру және реабилитация (1940–1956 жж.)

Мақалада 1940–1956 жылдардағы Қазақ КСР-дегі литва қоғамдастықтарының тарихи тағдыры зерделенген. Литвалықтардың қазақ жеріне келуі сталиндік депортациядан бұрын басталғанын атап өту керек, яғни XX ғасырдың басында Столыпин аграрлық реформасы кезеңінде литвалық шаруа отбасыларының белгілі бір бөлігі өз еркімен қоныс аударған болатын. Алайда мәжбүрлі кезең 1941 жылғы жаппай депортация операцияларымен басталып, 1944–1948 жылдардағы кезекті толқынмен

жалғасты. Мындаған литва азаматтары Қазақстанға тасымалданып, еңбекпен түзеу лагерьлеріне жіберілді, арнайы қоныстарға орналастырылды немесе жерімен де, адамдарымен де ешқандай байланысы жоқ шалғай аудандардағы колхоздарға жіберілді. Зерттеудің негізгі өзегі — жылдар бойғы шектеулі жүріс-тұрыс, ауыр дене еңбегі, Сталин қайтыс болғаннан кейін басталған баяу әрі біркелкі емес ақтау процесін зерделеу. Жұмыс екі негізгі мұрағат қорына, яғни Ресей Федерациясының мемлекеттік мұрағатына және Қазақстан Республикасы Президентінің мұрағатына сүйенеді. Оларға қоса жарияланған құжаттар жинақтары, аман қалғандар мен олардың ұрпақтарының жеке естеліктері, сондай-ақ Қазақстан, Ресей, Литва мен Батыс елдерінде соңғы отыз жылда жинақталған ғылыми еңбектер пайдаланылды. Аталған дереккөздерді өзара салыстыру депортацияланғандардың жалпы санын бұрынғы тұжырымдардан нақтырақ белгілеуге, олардың бағытталған облыстары мен аудандарын анықтауға, күнделікті тіршілік жағдайларын — еңбек, азық-түлікпен қамтамасыз етілуін, медициналық көмекті, жер аударылған адамдардың мәдени болмысын сақтау жолдарын егжей-тегжейлі қалпына келтіруге мүмкіндік берді. Хронологиялық құрылым алты дербес кезеңді қамтиды. Депортацияланған литвалықтар ең көп шоғырланған үш облысқа — Қарағанды, Павлодар және Шығыс Қазақстанға ерекше мән берілді. Зерттеуде литвалықтардың 1954 жылғы Кеңгір лагерлік көтерілісіне қатысуы да қарастырылып, нақты литвалықтар тарапынан бұл оқиғаның әлі жеткіліксіз зерттелгені айтылады. Алайда бүкіл мақала арқылы қарастырылатын басты мәселенің бірі — қалыптасқан тарихнамада назардан тыс қалып келген құбылыс — қарапайым қазақ отбасыларының өздерінің қиын жағдайына қарамастан мүлдем жоқшылықпен келген адамдарға өз еріктерімен аз-кем тамағын, киімін, бәпанын бөліскен таңғажайып ізгілігі. Әдіснамалық тәсіл төрт ұлттық зерттеу дәстүрін — қазақстандық, ресейлік, литвалық және батыстықты, яғни әрқайсысының өзіндік мұрағаттық базасы мен талдау тұғырнамасын біріктіреді. Қорытындылай айтсақ, кеңестік депортация тарихының осы тарауы әлі жеткіліксіз зерттелген, сақталған мұрағат қорының аз ғана бөлігі цифрландырылған және бір-бірін тікелей толықтыратын жинақтарға ие Қазақстан мен Литва академиялық мекемелері арасындағы мазмұнды ғылыми ынтымақтастықтың іс жүзінде әлі басталмағаны байқалады.

Кілт сөздер: Қазақ КСР, литвалықтар, депортация, арнайы қоныс аударушылар, мәжбүрлі көші-қон, ГУЛАГ, Қарағанды, Кеңгір көтерілісі, сталиндік репрессиялар, Балтық елдері, мемориализация, реабилитация.

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Литовцы в Казахской ССР: политика депортации, принудительное переселение и реабилитация (1940–1956 гг.)

В статье прослеживается судьба литовских общин, оказавшихся на территории Казахской ССР в 1940–1956 годах. Присутствие литовцев в казахской степи началось раньше сталинских депортаций: еще в начале XX века определенное число литовских крестьянских семей переселилось в казахские земли добровольно, в рамках столыпинской аграрной реформы. Принудительная же страница открылась депортационными операциями 1941 года и продолжилась волнами 1944–1948 годов, когда десятки тысяч граждан Литвы были этапированы в Казахстан: одни попали в исправительно-трудовые лагеря, другие оказались в спецпоселениях, третьих приписали к колхозам в глухих районах, где у них не было ни родственников, ни малейшего представления о местных условиях. Основной предмет исследования: годы ограничения в правах, изнурительный физический труд, а затем непоследовательная, растянувшаяся на годы реабилитация после смерти Сталина. Источниковую базу образуют фонды двух архивохранилищ — Государственного архива Российской Федерации и Архива Президента Республики Казахстан. Помимо них привлекались опубликованные подборки рассекреченных документов, мемуарные свидетельства депортированных и их потомков, а также научные работы казахстанских, российских, литовских и западных исследователей, накопившиеся за последние три десятилетия. Сопоставление этого корпуса источников дало возможность уточнить общую численность депортированных, определить конкретные области и районы их расселения, восстановить картину повседневного быта — от трудовых норм и продовольственного обеспечения до медицинского обслуживания и способов, которыми переселенцы пытались сохранить элементы собственной культурной идентичности. Хронологически материал распределен по шести самостоятельным периодам. Наиболее детально рассмотрены Карагандинская, Павлодарская и Восточно-Казахстанская области — именно там литовские депортированные были сосредоточены плотнее всего. Отдельный сюжет посвящен участию литовцев в Кеңгірском лагерном восстании 1954 года, которое с литовской стороны по-прежнему остается малоизученным. Однако, пожалуй, центральная тема всей статьи — это негромкое, будничное сострадание рядовых казахских семей, по собственной воле деливших с прибывшими в полной нищете людьми последнее: еду, одежду, крышу над головой, — притом что собственное их положение было далеко не благополучным. В методологическом отношении работа объединяет четыре национальные историографические традиции, каждая из которых располагает собственной архивной базой и аналитическим инструментарием. Выводы исследования подтверждают, что данный пласт советской депортационной

истории остается изученным явно недостаточно, а плодотворное международное сотрудничество — прежде всего между казахстанскими и литовскими академическими учреждениями — по-прежнему ждет своего начала.

Ключевые слова: Казахская ССР, литовцы, депортация, спецпереселенцы, принудительная миграция, ГУЛАГ, Караганда, Кенгирское восстание, сталинские репрессии, Прибалтика, мемориализация, реабилитация.

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