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COLD WAR INTERNATIONAL HISTORY PROJECT

WORKING PAPER 101

## Operation JESUITS

### A Microhistory of Soviet State Security in Post-WWII

#### Lithuania

By Filip Kovacevic

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**Christian F. Ostermann and Charles Kraus, Series Editors**

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# Operation JESUITS: A Microhistory of Soviet State Security in Post-WWII Lithuania

Filip Kovacevic

This paper is based on my archival research of Soviet state security documents from the Lithuanian Special Archives, housed in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. I chronicle a previously unpublicized operation by the Soviet Lithuanian state security service targeting a Jesuit priest in Berlin and his contacts in Lithuania between 1945 and 1954. Using a microhistorical approach, I examine this operation in meticulous detail to provide insights into how Soviet state security functioned in the immediate post-WWII period and the first decade of the Cold War. This method highlights both the sources and methods of Soviet state security, as well as its biases and stereotypes regarding the West and the Catholic Church.

## A Note on Methodology

In this paper, I employ a methodological approach known as microhistory. Historian Thomas V. Cohen, one of the leading microhistorians today, describes microhistory as an approach that “looks very hard at past small things and contrives to

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tell their story well.”<sup>1</sup> The rationale for this approach is to provide as complete an account as possible of an event or process, leading to a deeper understanding of what transpired. The reader is immersed in the event, experiencing its full complexity. However, this focus on completeness is not an end in itself. Microhistory seeks to demonstrate how small events influence, shape, and sometimes even determine larger historical developments. As Cohen explains, “an advantage of microhistory is in its showing, often subtly, how movements, developments, swings in values, shifts in institutions, changes in culture and intellectual climate...might intersect and interact on one small spot.”<sup>2</sup> In this paper, this approach involves demonstrating what can be learned from a meticulously detailed account of a previously unknown long-term state security operation. Specifically, it reveals insights into the evolving institutional structures, methods, and values of Soviet state security as it adapted to the transition from the World War II operational environment to that of the early Cold War.

## Berlin, 1945

Resembling many fictional spy stories set in the immediate post-WWII period, Operation JESUITS began in Berlin in the summer of 1945.<sup>3</sup> A team of officers and agents from the First Department of the People’s Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) of the

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas V. Cohen. *Roman Tales: A Reader’s Guide to the Art of Microhistory*. London & New York: Routledge, 2019, p. 1. For a dynamic discussion of recent trends in microhistory, see Thomas Robisheaux, ed. “Microhistory Today: A Roundtable Discussion,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 47:1 (January 2017), pp. 7-52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup> *Operation Jesuits [Агентурное дело “Иезуиты”]*. Fond K-1, Inv. 45, File 98, pp. 1-358. *Lietuvos TSR Valstybės Saugumo Komitetas [Lithuanian KGB] Selected Records*, Hoover Institution. For the sake of clarity, the titles of documents in the footnotes will be in English translation.

Lithuanian SSR—the foreign intelligence branch of Soviet Lithuanian state security—was dispatched from Lithuania to Berlin. Their mission was to locate prominent Lithuanian refugees, track their whereabouts, and monitor their activities.<sup>4</sup> Among those under surveillance was a Jesuit priest, Jonas Kipp (Kippas in Lithuanian spelling), born in the German town of Raesfeld in 1884. The Lithuanian NKGB suspected him of collaborating with the Abwehr, Germany’s military intelligence agency, in the decades leading up to the first Soviet takeover of Lithuania in 1940.<sup>5</sup> For example, in a letter dated September 19, 1945, Lieutenant General Ivan Tkachenko, head of the Lithuanian NKGB, identified Kipp as “an agent of German intelligence” in correspondence with Colonel Vasily Vorontsov, head of the Kaunas Municipal Branch of the NKGB.<sup>6</sup>

Although the Lithuanian NKGB (still a part of the Lithuanian NKVD in 1940) suspected Kipp of being an agent of the Abwehr, Kipp was not arrested but was forced to return (“repatriate”) to Germany in March 1941. Yet, four years later, in the summer

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<sup>4</sup> Note that this was the operational group of the NKGB rather than the SMERSH, the Soviet military counterintelligence service, which, in its very name, contained the injunction to hunt down and capture the enemies of the Soviet regime. The NKGB and the SMERSH had the same tasks in Berlin but the NKGB focused more on the civilians, such as the Jesuit priests, for instance. On the history of the SMERSH, see Vadim J. Birstein. *SMERSH: Stalin’s Secret Weapon*. London: Biteback Publishing, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Captain Konin, “Summary Memorandum,” *Operation JESUITS*, December 28, 1953, p. 340. The documents which explicitly refer to Kipp as an agent of the Abwehr do not provide any evidence apart from claiming that he was a close friend of the then-German ambassador in Lithuania.

<sup>6</sup> Lieutenant General Ivan Tkachenko, “Letter to Colonel Vorontsov,” *Operation JESUITS*, September 19, 1945, p. 23. For more information on Tkachenko, see “Biography of Ivan Tkachenko” in Nikita V. Petrov. *Кто руководил органами госбезопасности, 1941-1954: Справочник [Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954: A Reference Guide]*. Moscow: Memorial, 2010, pp. 846-847.

The Russian historian Nikita Petrov wrote that Major General Dmitry Efimov became the acting head of the Lithuanian NKGB in August 1945 after the resignation of General Aleksandras Gudaitis-Guzevičius. However, Operation JESUITS documents tell a different story. They reveal that in September 1945, it was Tkachenko, not Efimov, who was in charge of the Lithuanian NKGB. The earliest letter signed by Efimov as the acting head related to Operation JESUITS is from November 1945. For more information on Efimov, see “Biography of Dmitry Efimov” in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, pp. 368-369.

of 1945, when the Soviet sphere of control in Eastern Europe had greatly expanded as the outcome of WWII and now included the wide swaths of German territory, the Lithuanian NKGB changed its mind and began viewing Kipp's presence and activities in Berlin as a potential security threat to the Soviet Union. The order was issued to find him and put him under surveillance.<sup>7</sup>

Henceforth, locating Kipp was a priority requirement for the NKGB officers and agents in Berlin.<sup>8</sup> One of the NKGB agents, codenamed SEVENTH, turned out to be the most effective in the search.<sup>9</sup> From the reports SEVENTH wrote for his handlers, it is evident that he was originally from Lithuania. However, he did not speak Russian, and, in his initial reports, he used German, rather than Lithuanian, as a language of communication with his NKGB handlers. This indicates that he was probably a member of the ethnic German community in Lithuania.

In a report to his handler, Lt. Colonel Aleksandr Slavin,<sup>10</sup> deputy head of the First Department of the Lithuanian NKGB, dated July 16, 1945, SEVENTH wrote that he obtained Kipp's address by using a simple ruse at a Jesuit hospital in Berlin.<sup>11</sup> Having

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<sup>7</sup> In 1940, the NKVD opened an operational file on Kipp - *Дело-формуляр No. 283*. I did not find this file in the Operation JESUITS folder. The file is mentioned by Captain Shcherbakov in "Resolution," *Operation JESUITS*, July 16, 1948, p. 1h.

<sup>8</sup> It is unclear how many officers and agents made up the Lithuanian NKGB operational group. The documents are silent, but my educated guess is that they were no more than a handful.

<sup>9</sup> His real name and identity, unfortunately, still remain a mystery. They are not revealed in the Operation JESUITS folder.

<sup>10</sup> There is no publicly available biography of Aleksandr Slavin at this time. Slavin's name is not found in Petrov's *Those Who Led State Security, 1941-1954*. Oleg Mozokhin's database of the Soviet security personnel provides just a brief mention, "The First Department of the Lithuanian NKGB," [www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr\\_org/respublik/litva/structure/1.html](http://www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr_org/respublik/litva/structure/1.html). Accessed on December 29, 2023.

<sup>11</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, July 16, 1945, p. 7. This and other early reports by SEVENTH were written in German and translated into Russian by a (female) translator named Redrukhina. They were checked for authenticity and signed by Major Sychev, head of a section of the First Department of the NKGB, before being delivered to Lt. Colonel Slavin.



introduced himself as a Lithuanian refugee who left Lithuania with the retreating German army, SEVENTH was able to make a friendly acquaintance with a Jesuit priest named Reitmeister who worked at the hospital. Reitmeister told SEVENTH that he was well acquainted with Kipp because he had also lived in Lithuania and was “repatriated” to Germany together with Kipp. Not losing any time, SEVENTH knocked at Kipp’s door the very next day.

SEVENTH described his first visit to Kipp in the report he filed on July 17, 1945.<sup>12</sup> This was to be just the first of several meetings he had with Kipp which meant that he had left a very positive impression on the latter. During the first meeting, Kipp complained that he was mistreated by the Soviet soldiers in Berlin and claimed this to be the main reason why he moved out of the Soviet-controlled sector. He asked SEVENTH to find him a person of confidence who could take a letter from him to his friends in Lithuania. This request was recognized by Lt. Colonel Slavin as an opportunity to dangle somebody from the NKGB to Kipp and take control of the channel of communication between him and his Lithuanian contacts. In the letter from Lt. General Tkachenko to Colonel Vorontsov mentioned previously, this particular NKGB method was referred to as “a combination.”<sup>13</sup> The KGB counterintelligence lexicon published in the 1970s defined combination as “an operational method based on exerting influence

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<sup>12</sup> SEVENTH, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, July 17, 1945, p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Tkachenko, “Letter to Colonel Vorontsov,” p. 23.

covertly on the enemy and his contacts with the aim of inducing him to act in circumstances which help to solve counter-intelligence tasks.”<sup>14</sup>

The archival documents do not show how and why Slavin decided to select Lieutenant Pumputis, who had the position of an investigator in the Soviet Lithuanian NKGB unit in Berlin, for the role of a dangle. It is curious that an active NKGB officer rather than an agent would be picked for such a role which could conceivably keep him away from other tasks for a long time. Perhaps this meant that the NKGB agents were not trusted enough or that they were all engaged in other operations.

In a report to Slavin dated August 4, 1945, Pumputis described his meeting with Kipp.<sup>15</sup> SEVENTH had accompanied him to the meeting and made the introductions. Kipp said to Pumputis, who introduced himself as a Lithuanian refugee eager to return to Lithuania, that he feared to go back because he expected the “NKVD” to arrest him and deport him to Siberia. Kipp’s judgment on this score was accurate. The NKGB would definitely have liked to lay its hands on him on the territory of the Soviet Union.<sup>16</sup> However, at least at this point of time, Slavin appeared not to have wanted to employ any forceful methods, such as kidnapping or assassination, and he limited the NKGB activities to monitoring and agent “cultivation” [*разработка*] in Berlin.

Kipp gave Pumputis a letter to deliver to his friend, a female dentist named Zofia Čerkeliunene who lived in Kaunas, and told him that if she could not be found, he should

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<sup>14</sup> Vasily Mitrokhin, ed. *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer’s Handbook*. London: Frank Cass, 2002, p. 226.

<sup>15</sup> Pumputis, “Report,” *Operation Jesuits*, August 4, 1945, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> The arrests involving state security matters were the jurisdictions of the NKGB, not the NKVD as Kipp had thought. He probably remembered the days of the all-encompassing NKVD in the 1930s.

take the letter to the Jesuit church in the Town Hall Square.<sup>17</sup> To emphasize the seriousness of his ongoing confrontation with the Soviets, Kipp also asked Pumputis to tell Čerkeliunene that he had almost been shot by the Soviet soldiers in Berlin. Moreover, he instructed him to write her address on a different piece of paper for the sake of secrecy and to be very careful that the letter did not end up in the hands of the “NKVD.” This was bitterly ironic considering that, unwittingly, Kipp himself was delivering the incriminating letter to the “NKVD.” The acting abilities of Pumputis and SEVENTH must have been great, considering that they stayed in their roles even when faced with such a glaring display of Kipp’s naivete. Whether they had a good laugh at Kipp's expense afterwards is not indicated in Pumputis’s report. However, the most difficult part for Pumputis still lay ahead. He had to get ready to meet the dentist in Kaunas.

Taking into consideration the proliferation of various activities concerning Kipp’s case, the person in charge, Lt. Colonel Slavin, felt compelled to bring all the main elements together in the form of an official information summary [*справка*] on August 29, 1945. In this summary, he referred to Kipp as Kipas (with one ‘p’) which means that the NKGB was still unsure whether to use the German or Lithuanian spelling of Kipp’s last name in the official documents. From the agent field reports, it is clear that Kipp himself used the German spelling.<sup>18</sup> Slavin’s summary was then submitted to the NKGB

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<sup>17</sup> This is a reference to the Church of St. Francis Xavier in Kaunas built in the early 18th century. The church had been seized by the Soviet regime but was returned to the Jesuits in 1989 and renovated in the 1990s.

<sup>18</sup> That will also be the case in this paper.

leadership in Vilnius. In fact, there is no doubt that Lt. General Tkachenko's September 19 letter to Colonel Vorontsov was based on it since it repeated some of the same information.

## Kaunas, 1945

As instructed by both Kipp and the NKGB, Pumputis went to the residence of the dentist Čerkeliunene in Kaunas. He visited her two times and submitted two hand-written reports to Slavin, the first on September 3, and the second three days later.<sup>19</sup> In the first report, Pumputis wrote that Čerkeliunene was glad to see him but had little time for conversation because she was busy with her dental patients. However, she did use this opportunity to tell him that the Soviet rule in Lithuania was catastrophic - "only arrests and terror," as she described it.<sup>20</sup> She also said that her husband Antanas Čerkeliunas had been arrested by the "NKVD" but was released without being charged. Nonetheless, he was fired from his job in the People's Commissariat for Forest Industry. Čerkeliunene gave Pumputis some pocket money (125 rubles)<sup>21</sup> and asked him to come the next day when she would have more time to talk. In addition, she expressed a desire to send a letter and some "food products" to Kipp. This was precisely what the NKGB wanted to hear because it would enable them to control both ends of the clandestine

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<sup>19</sup> Pumputis, "Report," *Operation Jesuits*, September 3, 1945, pp. 13-14; Pumputis, "Report," *Operation Jesuits*, September 6, 1945, pp. 15-18. Pumputis's reports were not typed probably because they were written in Russian and did not have to be translated. However, it should be noted that his hand-writing was not particularly legible.

<sup>20</sup> Pumputis, "Report," September 3, 1945, p. 13.

<sup>21</sup> This will become very significant later on as Pumputis will be instructed to use the excuse of returning the money to Čerkeliunene to rekindle the relations with her.

correspondence. It was already very clear to the NKGB that the Čerkeliunene-Kipp correspondence would have a strongly anti-Soviet orientation.

On his second visit to Čerkeliunene, Pumputis met her husband Čerkeliunas and heard his opinion on the political situation in Lithuania.<sup>22</sup> Čerkeliunas was as critical of the Soviet government presence in Lithuania as his wife. He said to Pumputis that “if, in 1941, only the kulaks [wealthy peasants] were dissatisfied with the Soviet regime, now *all the people are united* in their dissatisfaction with the Soviets [emphasis mine].”<sup>23</sup> He mentioned his own case, explaining how he was arrested without a legitimate justification and, even though he was released, he still lost his state job. He also said that the military age men in the Lithuanian countryside had begun setting up armed groups to fight against the Soviet regime and that the Soviets were retaliating by deporting their family members to Siberia. Interestingly, Čerkeliunas mentioned a rumor that must have been making rounds at the time providing (false) hope to the Lithuanian underground resistance. The rumor was about the imminent arrival to Lithuania of an “Anglo-American commission” which was supposed to help the re-establishment of an independent Lithuania. This rumor was far from accurate but it seemed to have alarmed the NKGB leadership because it was given space in Lt. General Tkachenko’s September 19 letter to Colonel Vorontsov.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Pamputis, “Report,” September 6, 1945, p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Tkachenko, “Letter to Vorontsov,” September 19, 1945, p. 23 reverse.

During this visit, Čerkeliunene gave Pumputis a letter to deliver to Kipp in Berlin. This letter was written in Lithuanian and was translated by Pumputis for the NKGB.<sup>25</sup> Reflecting the extreme caution exercised by Čerkeliunene and her husband - they had also advised Pumputis to be careful and to move to another, more “secure” region of Lithuania with less pervasive Soviet surveillance - , the letter only contained information on family matters and nothing that could be determined to be politically incriminating. Importantly, the letter mentioned that Čerkeliunene learned of the fate of her only son Kestutis who had left Lithuania with the German troops in 1944. She was glad to tell Kipp that Kestutis was alive but was concerned that he was still held captive in a camp by the Western allies.<sup>26</sup>

## Vilnius, 1945

Lt. General Tkachenko used Pumputis’s and SEVENTH’s reports to compose his September 19 letter to Colonel Vorontsov which instructed the Kaunas Municipal Branch of the NKGB to open a counterintelligence case against the dentist Čerkeliunene and her husband.<sup>27</sup> Tkachenko asked that both of them be placed under “active cultivation” by using “qualified and trusted” agents. He also demanded of Vorontsov and his subordinates “utmost secrecy” in order for the “combination” with Kipp to be sustained without a hitch. However, by the time Vorontsov could send a response back to Vilnius, there was a change in the leadership of the Lithuanian NKGB. Tkachenko was

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<sup>25</sup> This indicates that Pumputis was fluent in three languages: Lithuanian, German, and Russian.

<sup>26</sup> The whereabouts of Kestutis Čerkeliunas after the winding down of Operation JESUITS in 1954 are beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>27</sup> Tkachenko, “Letter to Vorontsov,” September 19, 1945, pp. 23-23 reverse.

replaced by Major General Dmitry Efimov who became an Acting People's Commissar for State Security some time in the fall of 1945, and then was appointed to that position in January 1946.

The first appearance of Efimov in the Operation JESUITS folder is dated November 26, 1945. On that day, he sent a top secret note to Vorontsov in Kaunas via the "scrambled HF (VCh) telephone system,"<sup>28</sup> asking him for an update on the "activities of Čerkeliunene and her husband" and giving him three days to provide it.<sup>29</sup> However, it appears that no information from Kaunas reached Efimov because he sent a similar note on January 31, 1946 and warned that this was the third time he had asked for the same thing.<sup>30</sup> This could be interpreted to mean that the Kaunas NKGB branch was seriously disorganized at that time and did not do a good job of following the orders and instructions from the NKGB leadership in Vilnius. However, in his response to Efimov's note, a Kaunas NKGB officer Pavel Odintsov replied that the Kaunas branch had responded almost immediately on November 28, 1945, implying that it was not their fault that the reply did not reach Efimov.<sup>31</sup> In other words, it was likely that the Vilnius NKGB headquarters itself faced problems in processing the information they had received from the various municipal NKGB branches across Lithuania and in providing it to the leadership in a timely manner. As we will see, the issue of the suboptimal

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<sup>28</sup> On the use of this communication system by Soviet state security, see H.G.W. Davie, "Patterns of War: A Re-Interpretation of the Chronology of the German-Soviet War 1941–1945," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 36:2, p. 149.

<sup>29</sup> Efimov, "VCh note," November 26, 1945, p. 24.

<sup>30</sup> Efimov, "VCh Note," *Operation JESUITS*, January 31, 1946, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> This reply from Kaunas dated November 28, 1945 is not found in the Operation JESUITS folder. Odintsov, "Reply," *Operation JESUITS*, February 1, 1946, p. 28.

communication between the center and the periphery will recur in the course of Operation JESUITS.

When Odintsov's reply finally reached Efimov, he could hardly have been pleased with what he read. Odintsov reported that they had a great deal of trouble finding suitable agents to spy on the Čerkeliūnas couple.<sup>32</sup> They also had no luck in recruiting anybody from the remaining Catholic clergy in Kaunas. Moreover, the fact that Odintsov misspelled the last name of the couple, repeatedly referring to them as Čerkomonas, put a large question mark on the Kaunas NKGB branch's overall competence.

One is tempted to compare this to Lt. Colonel Slavin's work and the deft execution of the assignments by his officers and agents from the First Department of the Lithuanian NKGB, such as Pumputis, SEVENTH, and others. While Pumputis was able to gain the trust of Čerkeliūnė on his very first visit (and the same can be said about SEVENTH and Kipp), the Kaunas NKGB branch, by their own admission, was unable to recruit anybody to build on Pumputis's accomplishments for months. It is true that one of the factors for such a poor performance might have been the hostile attitude of the local Lithuanian population toward the NKGB in Kaunas. It is very difficult to recruit agents in the communities where, if discovered, they would be heavily ostracized. Still, based on the way that Operation JESUITS was unfolding in the early 1946, it seems reasonable to conclude that the foreign intelligence branch of the Lithuanian NKGB was performing much better than its counterintelligence counterpart.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



## Berlin, 1946

While the Vilnius and Kaunas NKGB personnel engaged in the not very productive exchange of notes and telegrams, the Lithuanian NKGB's foreign intelligence undercover work in Berlin continued. A NKGB agent ALEKSANDR (appearing in the Operation JESUITS folder just once) reported on January 17, 1946 that SEVENTH had met with Kipp again and that they had a very important conversation.<sup>33</sup> During this conversation, Kipp expressed a great deal of enthusiasm about receiving information from Lithuania through SEVENTH's assistance. The ability of SEVENTH to sustain Kipp's trust over time must have been a key factor in Lt. Colonel Slavin's decision to use him as a courier between Kipp and the Čerkeliunas couple in Kaunas. Slavin was likely dismayed by the Kaunas NKGB branch's incapacity to recruit agents to infiltrate the Čerkeliunas household (evidently, not even as dental patients) and therefore an outsider like SEVENTH seemed like the best possible choice.

## Kaunas, 1946

SEVENTH appeared in Kaunas sometime in February 1946. His report about the meeting with the dentist Čerkeliunene was dated March 2, 1946.<sup>34</sup> In this report, translated from Lithuanian, SEVENTH stated that he initially met with Čerkeliunene on February 21, 1946. When he told Čerkeliunene that he brought her a letter from Kipp, she gave him a very warm welcome. SEVENTH also told her that Kipp mentioned his

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<sup>33</sup> ALEKSANDR, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, January 17, 1946, p. 26.

<sup>34</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, March 2, 1946, p. 29.

Jesuit colleague Gruodis whom he had wanted her to contact and, if possible, arrange his meeting with SEVENTH. Čerkeliunene agreed to do so and they scheduled another meeting at her apartment two days later, on February 23. On that day, SEVENTH met with Gruodis, and the fact of their meeting turned Gruodis into yet another suspect to those already kept under surveillance by the NKGB. From that day on, the Operation JESUITS folder would also include the account of Gruodis's activities in addition to the activities of the three original suspects, Kipp and the Čerkeliunas couple.

SEVENTH described Gruodis as an erudite conversationalist, well-informed about political matters and international affairs, but could not establish whether or not he was actively involved in the anti-Soviet activities.<sup>35</sup> For instance, when asked directly, Gruodis stated that he was against the armed rebellion of Lithuanians against the Soviet regime, believing that such actions would bring nothing good to Lithuania. In addition, Gruodis said that, in his daily life, he kept his distance from any political engagements and was “only concerned with God.”<sup>36</sup> However, at the same time, both he and Čerkeliunene recounted to SEVENTH the grim stories of mass arrests and civilian deportations taking place in Kaunas and other places in Lithuania. They asked him to report to Kipp everything he had heard from them, so that both the Lithuanian refugees in Germany and other people in the West could find out what was really going on. SEVENTH also reported that during his visit, a deputy of the Kaunas Catholic bishop briefly appeared (he did not know his name) and asked him on behalf of the bishop how

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p. 31.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 30.

Kipp was doing and “whether there would be a war.”<sup>37</sup> This was a reference to the potential war between the Soviets and the Western Allies and it revealed how strong the anxiety about another World War was among the Catholic Church clergy at that time. Curiously, SEVENTH’s response to this question was not included in his report. According to him, since this initial meeting with Gruodis on February 23, he visited Čerkeliunene several more times but did not obtain any additional substantive information. SEVENTH’s handler in Kaunas, Senior Lieutenant Frantskevičius, who translated his report into Russian, instructed him to continue his visits and to try to gain even more intimate trust of both Čerkeliunene and Gruodis.<sup>38</sup>

Frantskevičius also translated Kipp’s letter to Čerkeliunene and Gruodis delivered by SEVENTH.<sup>39</sup> The letter mostly consisted of Kipp informing them of the fates of their mutual friends and acquaintances, some of whom had been killed during the last year of the war while others had fled further west. Kipp also told them that he recently got a teaching position at a high school established by the U.S. administrative authorities in Berlin where he was teaching Bible studies and English language.<sup>40</sup> This information was probably what led the NKGB (and its successor, the MGB)<sup>41</sup> to suspect that Kipp, formerly suspected of being an agent of the Abwehr, had switched his allegiances and had begun cooperating with U.S. intelligence. Kipp ended his letter with the sentimental

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, p. 31. There is no publicly available biography of Frantskevičius at this time.

<sup>39</sup> Kipp, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, March 13, 1946 (Russian translation), p. 32.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>41</sup> The People’s Commissariat for State Security (NKGB) was renamed the Ministry of State Security (MGB) in March 1946.

phrase that he has been praying every day “for you all and for the Homeland.”<sup>42</sup> The word “Homeland” most likely referred to Lithuania, meaning that Kipp had identified with the fate of the Lithuanian people, though he was an ethnic German born in Germany.

On May 3, 1946, a hand-written note was sent by the deputy head of the Kaunas MGB branch, Lieutenant Colonel Todesas, to the head of the First Department of the Lithuanian MGB, Colonel Mikhail Rozanov, asking for a confirmation that “a Jesuit monk Ionas Kipas [note the Russianized Lithuanian spelling]” was still being cultivated [разрабатывается]<sup>43</sup> by Rozanov’s Department and, if that was the case, offering to supply additional investigation materials.<sup>44</sup> This kind of inquiry points to the persisting deficiencies in the communication and operational coordination between the municipal counterintelligence and foreign intelligence departments of the Lithuanian MGB. It appears that the First Department (the foreign intelligence department) did not keep the municipal branches well-informed of its operational activities, sources, and methods. Potentially, this could have led to operational failures considering that the municipal branches might not have been able to provide timely information on the suspects within Lithuania. However, in this particular case, Rozanov seemed to have acted quickly to get Todesas on board. In a typed (undated) note, he confirmed that

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<sup>42</sup> Kipp, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, p. 34.

<sup>43</sup> Razrabotka [разработка] is one of the words in the lexicon of Soviet state security that does not have an equivalent in English. *The KGB Lexicon* describes razrabotka as “a form of operational activity, carried out against particular individuals (or groups) suspected of involvement in the preparation or commission of crimes against the state, the aim of which is to uncover the criminal activity of the people under cultivation and to devise measures to put a stop to it,” Mitrokhin, *KGB Lexicon*, p. 348.

<sup>44</sup> Todesas, “Note,” *Operation JESUITS*, May 3, 1946, p. 35. There is no publicly available biography of Todesas at this time.

“Kipas” was still under cultivation and requested the additional materials that Todesas had mentioned.<sup>45</sup>

## Berlin, 1946

By this time, SEVENTH was back in Berlin and was meeting with Kipp again. His report dated June 3, 1946 stated that he had met with Kipp two days previously and brought him the package and the letter sent by Čerkeliunene.<sup>46</sup> SEVENTH wrote that Kipp welcomed him very warmly (as he always did) and even joked that he had thought SEVENTH ended up in Siberia considering how long it had been since their last meeting. When Kipp asked him about the state of affairs in Lithuania, SEVENTH decided to feed him blatant disinformation about the situation.<sup>47</sup> SEVENTH said that there were no mass arrests or mass deportations and that those arrested were criminals who “would be arrested by any government.”<sup>48</sup> He also minimized and mischaracterized the activities of the Lithuanian rebels, claiming that those who were still active - and, according to him, there were not very many of those left - were interested only in robbery and theft. In this way, SEVENTH sought to confuse Kipp, hoping that he would share these fabricated facts with his friends and acquaintances among the Lithuanian refugees in Berlin and beyond.

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<sup>45</sup> Rozanov, “Note,” *Operation JESUITS*, undated, p. 37. There is no publicly available biography of Rozanov at this time.

<sup>46</sup> SEVENTH, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, June 3, 1946, p. 38.

<sup>47</sup> It is unclear whether he did so under the instruction of his handlers. This decision would later become a point of irritation for those overseeing the operation.

<sup>48</sup> SEVENTH, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, June 3, 1946, p. 38.

However, when Kipp had done that, it did not have the kind of impact that SEVENTH intended, as he recounted in his next report on July 5, 1946.<sup>49</sup> He wrote that, at a meeting at Kipp's apartment in the U.S. controlled sector of Berlin on July 2, 1946, Kipp told him that when he served the mass at the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) camp in the Berlin suburb of Zehlendorf, he relayed the information received from SEVENTH about the situation in Lithuania to the Lithuanian refugees assembled there (about 40 people). Kipp told the group that the Soviet regime treated the Lithuanians much better than during 1940-1941 and that those Lithuanians who did not collaborate with the German troops could return without any fear for their safety.<sup>50</sup> However, according to Kipp, his statements were met with disbelief and hostility by some of the refugees. They questioned the credibility of SEVENTH's account and told Kipp that the information they had received from other sources painted a very different picture.<sup>51</sup> According to these sources, the Lithuanians were being persecuted and deported in large numbers and the overall situation in the country was difficult and very tense. Though some refugees also mentioned the rumors that Lithuanian peasants were being replaced on mass scale by Russian peasants with fake Lithuanian names and that in Vilnius and Kaunas, there were no longer any Lithuanians left, which pointed to the presence of disinformation in the opposite direction, the general information they had more accurately reflected the situation on the ground than what SEVENTH had conveyed to Kipp. This was something that

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<sup>49</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, July 5, 1946, p. 39.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 39-1.

SEVENTH's handlers had now to take into consideration in order to keep Kipp from beginning to develop doubts in SEVENTH's reporting. Faced with these conflicting accounts and already very distrustful of the Soviets, Kipp could easily begin to lose trust in SEVENTH and the fate of the entire operation would hang in the balance.

It is likely that this was what SEVENTH's new Berlin handler, Senior Lieutenant of the MGB codenamed VITOLD<sup>52</sup> sought to avoid when he asked the headquarters in Vilnius to provide him with answers to Kipp's queries that SEVENTH could share with Kipp during their subsequent meetings.<sup>53</sup> VITOLD also instructed SEVENTH to tell Kipp that he would be able to locate a trusted individual who could clandestinely deliver Kipp's letters to his contacts in Lithuania. He might also have told him not to visit Kipp too often in order not to appear suspiciously overeager to learn about Kipp's day-to-day activities.

And, indeed, the next time SEVENTH visited Kipp was more than two and a half months later, on September 20, 1946. According to SEVENTH's report, not only did Kipp not show any suspicion toward him, but he actually reproached SEVENTH for not visiting sooner.<sup>54</sup> He told SEVENTH that he was no longer engaged at the UNRRA camp in Zehlendorf, perhaps because by that time, all Lithuanians had been evacuated from the camp and taken further west. This meant that Kipp ceased to be a significant information source for the situation at the camp. However, according to SEVENTH, Kipp

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<sup>52</sup> Signing a report with a codename rather than a real name might indicate that this officer operated in Berlin as an illegal.

<sup>53</sup> VITOLD, "Note, *Operation JESUITS*, July 1946, p. 40. While working with VITOLD, SEVENTH no longer provided his reports in German but in Lithuanian. They were translated into Russian by VITOLD and sent to Colonel Slavin in Vilnius.

<sup>54</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, September 25, 1946, p. 42.

remained very interested in finding an individual to take his letters to Lithuania and, once again, he asked SEVENTH to help him do so. But, having received no instruction on that score from VITOLD, SEVENTH could only make an empty promise.

## Vilnius, 1946

At this point, the question might arise as to why the MGB delayed in getting SEVENTH, or another agent or officer, to take Kipp's letters to Lithuania. Why did they not engage Lieutenant Pumputis who played that role so successfully a year earlier? Did this have something to do with the absence of a smooth relationship between the Lithuanian MGB foreign intelligence and counterintelligence departments? Was the leadership of the Kaunas MGB branch insisting to have their own personnel involved considering that the action was to take place in Kaunas? At an earlier point, the Kaunas MGB branch complained of their inability to find a suitable agent, so SEVENTH, an agent of the foreign intelligence department recruited to operate abroad, returned to Lithuania as Kipp's courier? Did anything change in that respect by the fall of 1946?

The documents in the Operation JESUITS folder indicate that this time period - the fall of 1946 - was particularly busy regarding the course of the operation. The First Department of the MGB appears to have decided to expand the operation to include the investigation of the entire Jesuit order in Lithuania. On November 14, 1946, a Vilnius-based agent codenamed BORIS provided Major Sukhoprudsky, the deputy head of a section of the First Department, with a report chronicling the history of the Jesuit activities in Lithuania from their first appearance in the 17th century to the outbreak of



WWII, though most of the report focused on the period between the two world wars.<sup>55</sup> Two weeks later, on November 29, 1946, the First Department received from the Kaunas MGB branch a detailed investigative report titled “The Congregation of the Order of Jesuits” compiled by the Kaunas branch in March 1945 and signed by Captain Shustarev, the head of the Section “O.”<sup>56</sup> This report discussed the activities of the Jesuits in the independent state of Lithuania, including the alleged internal tensions and conflicts between the ethnically German Jesuits led by Kipp and the native Lithuanian Jesuits led by Benediktas Andrushka.<sup>57</sup> Kipp was described in the report as having been very close to the former Lithuanian president Antanas Smetona and his son who had graduated from a Jesuit high school in Kaunas.<sup>58</sup> Kipp’s ties to the German embassy in Kaunas were also mentioned. Moreover, the report highlighted the biography of Stanislav Gruodis, describing him as a former veterinarian in the Russian imperial army who in later life became a Jesuit priest. According to the report, Gruodis, a distinguished professor of moral theology, became a leadership figure among the Jesuits in Kaunas in 1945 when he was appointed to the position of the rector of the Kaunas Spiritual Seminary.<sup>59</sup> As an appendix to the report, the Kaunas MGB branch attached a statement of their agent codenamed BERZHINIS who characterized Gruodis as “reserved [in behavior] but popular” among the Catholics in Kaunas and concluded that he was either

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<sup>55</sup> BORIS, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, November 14, 1946, p. 44.

<sup>56</sup> The sections or departments “O” of the MGB were responsible for the counterintelligence activities against churches and religious organizations.

<sup>57</sup> Shustarev, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, November 29, 1946, pp. 54-56.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

“a clever fox, or an old man losing his mind, considering that he steered all his conversations to religious matters.”<sup>60</sup>

At around the same time, in mid-October 1946, a lengthy information summary [справка] describing the entire case in great detail was prepared by the First Department of the Lithuanian MGB.<sup>61</sup> Unlike Lt. Colonel Slavin’s initial information summary from August 1945, this summary was not signed by any particular officer. In addition, it contained editorial corrections made by hand which meant that it was probably a rough draft rather than a final version. However, no other version of the same material was found in the Operation JESUITS folder. New information about Kipp included in this information summary revealed that the independent Lithuania’s counterintelligence service, whose files were later seized by the NKGB, also had an interest in Kipp and his close relations with the German ambassador in Lithuania in the interwar period.<sup>62</sup> The information summary also offered updated information on the other suspects. For example, it was reported that Čerkeliunene’s husband had found a new job and was now working as a technician at the State Construction Company No. 1 in Kaunas.<sup>63</sup> It also resolved the ‘riddle’ as to why Pumputis was no longer involved in the operation. After his return from Berlin, he got the position of an operational officer at the MGB municipal branch in the town of Utena in north-east Lithuania.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> BERZHINIS, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, May 19, 1945, pp. 59-60. BERZHINIS described the main strategic aim of the Jesuits to expand their activities into the Soviet Union after the collapse of the Soviet regime.

<sup>61</sup> “Information on the Agent Network File JESUITS,” *Operation JESUITS*, October 15, 1946, pp. 62-70.

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

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65

This informational summary was followed by a set of critical remarks by the new head of the First Department of the Lithuanian MGB, Colonel Nikolai Filimonov.<sup>65</sup> Filimonov took issue with the way that the operation had been conducted, faulting both the officers and the agents for their “poor” and “low-skilled” planning and the subsequent lack of results. He then offered a detailed plan on how to revitalize the operation and make it more successful.<sup>66</sup> The plan hinged on the return of Pumputis as an active protagonist. He was to appear at Čerkeliunene’s apartment again under the pretext of returning the money (150 rubles) she had given him during their first meeting. Then he was to lead the conversation to the subject of Čerkeliunene’s re-starting her correspondence with Kipp. If this worked out, he was to suggest to Čerkeliunene to rely on a trusted individual (in reality, an undercover MGB agent codenamed LEONAS) to act as a courier. Pumputis was to introduce LEONAS to Čerkeliunene when she prepared a letter for Kipp and thus re-establish the MGB control of their clandestine correspondence once again. Filimonov’s plan was approved by the deputy minister of the Lithuanian MGB, Colonel Sergei Litkens on November 29, 1946.<sup>67</sup> It went into action almost immediately.

## Kaunas, 1946

Pamputis rang at Čerkeliunene’s door in Kaunas on December 4, 1946. According to his report dated December 6, 1946, she did not recognize him at first glance but

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<sup>65</sup> Filimonov, “Remarks,” *Operation JESUITS*, undated, p. 71. There is no publicly available biography of Filimonov at this time.

<sup>66</sup> Filimonov’s plan, pp. 72-75.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72. There is no publicly available biography of Litkens at this time.

when he reminded her of their meetings a year earlier, she said she was glad to see him again.<sup>68</sup> Without much prompting, she recounted to him her intermittent correspondence with Kipp and told him that she did not receive any reply to her latest letter to him. The letter she referred to was delivered to Kipp by SEVENTH in June 1946 but, as shown above, the MGB had delayed in finding an adequate courier for Kipp's response. As instructed by Filimonov, Pumputis offered to introduce Čerkeliunene to an individual who could deliver another letter of hers to Kipp. Čerkeliunene reacted positively to meeting this individual, but she cautioned that she would first like to see the confirmation that Kipp was still living at the same address in Berlin before resuming correspondence. Evidently, she was looking for more assurance that Pumputis could indeed deliver on his promise.

According to Pumputis, Čerkeliunene's anti-Soviet attitude did not lose any of its intensity since their last meeting in the fall of 1945. She spoke passionately about the desire of Lithuanians to "live freely" and about her expectation that the U.S. would do more to support the cause of Lithuanian independence.<sup>69</sup> She noted that a former Lithuanian ambassador to the U.S. was present at the meeting of foreign ambassadors at the White House which, in her opinion, implied the continued U.S. support for independent statehood. Čerkeliunene's standpoint can be taken as a strong indication that although more than two years had passed since the Soviet Union re-took control

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<sup>68</sup> Pumputis, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, December 6, 1946, pp. 75-77.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.

over Lithuania, the Soviet regime was badly failing in its efforts to gain the support of the Lithuanian middle class.

Pumputis concluded his report by stating that he went to visit Čerkeliunene once again on December 6 in order to introduce her to the potential courier of her correspondence to Kipp, an undercover MGB agent LEONAS. His very brief description of that visit, which ended in failure to accomplish the intended goal of getting the letter, was complemented by the report by LEONAS dated December 7, 1946.<sup>70</sup> LEONAS wrote that, in his opinion, Čerkeliunene did not give him a letter for Kipp because she was afraid of getting deceived. She confided to him and Pumputis that she had wasted 6,000 rubles by giving them to a man who had promised to deliver her letters to her son in Germany. While this did sound plausible, it seems difficult to ascertain whether this really was Čerkeliunene's true motive. Perhaps, deep down in her soul, she suspected that Pumputis and LEONAS worked for the MGB. Yet, LEONAS was optimistic that if they could get her a current note from Kipp, thus confirming their bona fides, Čerkeliunene would begin trusting them right away. Based on how things played out later, he was right about her way of thinking.

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<sup>70</sup> LEONAS, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, December 7, 1946, p. 78. LEONAS referred to Pumputis as Kavalaukas which meant that he did not know Pumputis's real identity. This reflects the MGB tactic of limiting their agents' knowledge only to the information they needed to know for their mission. Kavalaukas was also the name Pumputis used with Čerkeliunene.

## Berlin, 1947

Since there was no letter to deliver to Kipp, LEONAS did not travel to Germany and was promptly taken out of the operation.<sup>71</sup> However, a new handler appeared in SEVENTH's life (by strange coincidence, his codename LEONID was the Russianized version of LEONAS) and received his report in Berlin on February 3, 1947.<sup>72</sup> In this report, SEVENTH described his visit to Kipp which took place two weeks earlier, on January 24. At that time, Kipp lamented to SEVENTH how difficult life had become for the remaining Lithuanian refugees in Berlin. He also unexpectedly revealed that he had in his possession an official letter from the Pope Pius XII's secretary written in Italian and addressed to the Archbishop of Riga [Antonijs Springovičs].<sup>73</sup> The letter concerned the Pope's nominations for the bishop posts in Latvia and was sent to Kipp to try to transmit it to Latvia's capital Riga via his Jesuit contacts in Lithuania, such as Gruodis. Reporting on Kipp's Vatican letter, SEVENTH requested from his handlers to permit him to deliver the letter personally, stating that this would raise his status and authority in the Catholic circles in Lithuania and enable him to do a better job as an agent.<sup>74</sup> This turned out to be that rare instance in the MGB handler-agent relations in which the agent himself asked for an assignment. SEVENTH thus demonstrated a certain degree of personal agency

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<sup>71</sup> This was revealed in a MGB report at a later date. See Slobodskikh, "Summary Information," *Operation JESUITS*, July 1948, p. 153.

<sup>72</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, February 3, 1947, pp. 79-81. LEONID was an ethnic Lithuanian just like SEVENTH since he received SEVENTH's reports in Lithuanian and passed them on for translation into Russian.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80. For a brief biography of Antonijs Springovičs, see "Biography of Antonijs Springovičs," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonijs\\_Springovi%C4%8Ds](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antonijs_Springovi%C4%8Ds). Accessed January 2, 2024.

<sup>74</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, February 3, 1947, p. 80. There is no publicly available biography of Sukhoprudsky at this time.

that the MGB agents were typically thought not to have, especially in light of the fact that his request was quickly approved and that he returned to Lithuania in early February 1947. However, as we will see, this turned out to be a big mistake on his part. It would be years before he saw Berlin again.

## Vilnius, 1947

Having arrived in Vilnius, SEVENTH submitted a report on February 8, 1947, to Major Sukhoprudsky, a deputy section chief of the First Department of the Lithuanian MGB, who appears to have become the main point person for the operation at this time.<sup>75</sup> This report was an expanded version of the report SEVENTH presented to LEONID in Berlin. For instance, SEVENTH stated that he had agreed on a coded communication with Kipp regarding the delivery of the Vatican letter, something that he did not mention earlier.<sup>76</sup> Thus, in the case of a successful delivery, he was to send a letter to the address given to him by Kipp stating: “Our old father is healthy,” and, in the case of a failure, “Our old father is ill.”

In addition, Kipp gave SEVENTH a short note for Čerkeliunene, which Sukhoprudsky had translated into Russian.<sup>77</sup> This note only contained information about their mutual friends and acquaintances. The first sentence mentioned Čerkeliunene’s son Kestutis, describing him as “married, happy, writing [to Kipp] often that he was studying, active in sports, and getting ready to move to A. [America?].”<sup>78</sup> No doubt,

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<sup>75</sup> SEVENTH, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, February 8, 1947, pp. 88-88reverse.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88reverse.

<sup>77</sup> Kipp, “Note,” *Operation JESUITS*, January 1947, p. 89.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

Čerkeliunene would be immensely happy to receive such a note and very grateful to SEVENTH for delivering it. Considering that Filimonov's plan had failed to revitalize the operation, the First Department would now get a second chance.

At this particular time, the First Department itself was undergoing the change in leadership. Colonel Filimonov was replaced by Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Vaupshasov in December 1946. Vaupshasov was a veteran covert Soviet military intelligence operative, involved in many Soviet covert operations in the pre-WWII period, including those during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>79</sup> In 1944, he was decorated as the Hero of the Soviet Union for his leadership of the partisan units in Belarus. As an ethnic Lithuanian (his original last name was Vaupshas), he was selected for a leadership operational position in the Lithuanian MGB in the fall of 1946 and it was expected that, based on his decades-long experience, he would raise the quality and efficiency of the Lithuanian foreign intelligence operations to a higher level. His first appearance in the Operation JESUITS folder can be dated to December 25, 1946.<sup>80</sup>

## Moscow, 1947

While SEVENTH traveled directly from Berlin to Vilnius, the documents show that the Vatican letter for the Archbishop of Riga given to him by Kipp was first sent to

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<sup>79</sup> For a biography of Vaupshasov, see "Biography of Stanislav Vaupshasov," [www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/personnel/2017/vaupshasov\\_s\\_a.html](http://www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/personnel/2017/vaupshasov_s_a.html). Accessed on December 27, 2023. After his retirement from the Soviet state security service in 1954, Vaupshasov turned to writing about his Chekist and WWII experiences. He was the author of several autobiographical books, including *На тревожных перекрестках: Записки чекиста* [*On the Alarming Crossroads: Notes of a Chekist*]. Moscow: Politizdat, 1971, *На разгневанной земле* [*On the Angry Earth*]. Minsk: Belarus, 1965, and *Партизанская хроника* [*The Partisan Chronicle*]. Minsk: Belarus, 1971.

<sup>80</sup> Vaupshasov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, December 25, 1946, p. 85.



Moscow. Since the letter appeared potentially very significant for interstate relations, the MGB personnel in Berlin wanted to get it as quickly as possible to the leadership of Soviet intelligence at the Lubyanka headquarters. This can be seen from the letter to the minister of the Lithuanian MGB, General Efimov, by the deputy head of the First Chief Directorate of the Soviet MGB, a long-time pre-WWII Soviet intelligence officer in the U.S., Major General Gaik Ovakimian, dated March 11, 1947.<sup>81</sup> Ovakimian informed Efimov that the Vatican letter was received in Moscow and was being analyzed by the Department "O" of the MGB responsible for the counterintelligence oversight of religious matters. It was their assessment that would determine whether the letter would end up being delivered to Gruodis in Kaunas. According to the Russian translation provided by Ovakimian, the letter, dated July 21, 1946, informed the Archbishop of Riga Springovičs of the Pope's selections for bishop posts in Latvia and appeared to contain no secret information.<sup>82</sup> In addition, Ovakimian warned Efimov that the performance of SEVENTH as an agent was being investigated and cautioned on his future employment in the operation before the completion of the investigation. The fact that the central institutions of Soviet intelligence stepped in to assess an agent of a peripheral branch illustrates the extent to which they strove to micromanage and assert control over the periphery-based foreign intelligence operations at that time.

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<sup>81</sup> Ovakimian, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, March 11, 1947, p. 90. Ovakimian was arrested by the FBI in May 1941 and charged with espionage. He was allowed to leave the U.S. in July 1941 by the special permission of the U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. For a biography of Ovakimian, see "Biography of Gaik Ovakimian" in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, pp. 651-652.

<sup>82</sup> "The Vatican Letter in Russian Translation," pp. 94-96.

## Vilnius, 1947

When Ovakimian's letter reached the Lithuanian MGB in Vilnius, the deputy minister of the MGB, Colonel Litkens made a handwritten remark on it which he addressed to Lt. Colonel Vaupshasov.<sup>83</sup> Litkens wrote that, in his opinion, the Vatican letter should be delivered to Gruodis as soon as possible and asked Vaupshasov to provide him with a detailed plan containing well-defined steps to jumpstart the lagging operation. When the coded telegram from the Lubyanka's Department "O" approving the delivery of the letter came on March 20, 1946, Vaupshasov had a plan ready for Litkens's approval.<sup>84</sup>

Vaupshasov's plan, submitted on March 29, 1947 and approved by Litkens on April 2, 1947, contained both the summary of the operation and a list of ten activities to undertake in the immediate future.<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, Vaupshasov's description of Kipp's activities presented him as an informal leader of the anti-Soviet Lithuanian immigrants in Berlin which was an exaggeration of the real state of affairs. Vaupshasov probably characterized Kipp in this way in order to provide a stronger justification for the operation's continuation to his superiors who might have begun to doubt its utility. To that effect, he included a harshly-worded critique of the Berlin operational group of the Lithuanian NKGB/MGB stating that they had acted in "a non-systematic and overly passive manner" in their cultivation of Kipp, implying that he would do a much better

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<sup>83</sup> Ovakimian, "Letter," p. 90.

<sup>84</sup> "Coded Telegram," *Operation JESUITS*, March 20, 1947, p. 104.

<sup>85</sup> Vaupshasov, "Plan," *Operation JESUITS*, March 29, 1947, pp. 97-99.

job from then on.<sup>86</sup> His plan called for an immediate expansion of the number of agents involved in the operation by adding one or two additional agents from the Kaunas MGB branch and also sending an officer of the First Department named Vitkavičius from Vilnius to Kaunas to assist the operation under a non-official cover.

However, Vaupshasov continued to rely on SEVENTH both for re-establishing the contact with Čerkeliunene and Gruodis by delivering Kipp's letters, including the Vatican letter, and for collecting the anti-Soviet information from them ostensibly to report back to Kipp in Berlin. This went against Ovakimian's instruction to refrain from using SEVENTH before the completion of the investigation of his behavior conducted by the First Chief Directorate in Moscow. Not even the subsequent letter by Colonel Aleksandr Volkov, deputy head of the First Chief Directorate, instructing General Efimov, the minister of the Lithuanian MGB, to remove SEVENTH from the operation due to the assessment of his suspicious behavior made Vaupshasov change his mind.<sup>87</sup> Vaupshasov must have had Litkens's support for pursuing this course of action, but it still represented a curious and potentially dangerous case of insubordination. Apparently, not even such an experienced undercover operative like Vaupshasov could envision continuing the operation without SEVENTH. He must have thought that the eventual positive results would prove that his continued trust in SEVENTH was justified. There is no doubt that Vaupshasov eagerly awaited SEVENTH's report of the meetings with

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

<sup>87</sup> Volkov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, February 14, 1947, pp. 101-103. For a biography of Volkov, see "Biography of Aleksandr Volkov" in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, p. 257.

Čerkeliunene and Gruodis because the documents show that he was the one who personally received that report rather than his subordinate, the point man for the operation, Major Sukhoprudsky.

## Kaunas, 1947

SEVENTH's report was dated March 31, 1947, but it must have been written sometime after that because it also included the description of his meeting with Gruodis on April 2, 1947.<sup>88</sup> SEVENTH wrote that Čerkeliunene was glad to see him and thanked God that he was alive. She was happy to receive the letter from Kipp mentioning her son's recent marriage but she told SEVENTH that she had already been informed about that from other sources. Overall, she appeared cautious and did not want to talk about political matters. However, she did say that the economic situation in Lithuania was getting worse and that "only God knew how it would all end."<sup>89</sup> She also said that Gruodis was not easy to contact, that he was not out and about much anymore, but that she would try to arrange a meeting at her apartment on April 2. She was true to her word and, at 4 PM on April 2, Gruodis knocked on her door.

According to SEVENTH, Gruodis inquired about Kipp and his other friends and acquaintances from Kaunas who now lived in Germany. Just like Čerkeliunene, he did not want to talk about politics but he did mention the arrests of priests and the closing down of Catholic seminaries taking place at that time.<sup>90</sup> When SEVENTH (as instructed

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<sup>88</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, March 31, 1947, pp. 105-108.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

by Vaupshasov) asked Gruodis to write a report on the present situation in order to deliver it to Kipp in Berlin, he refused. He said that doing something like that would be “very dangerous” given the Soviet regime’s repressive activities.<sup>91</sup> Not even SEVENTH’s claim that unless something was written down, it would be difficult for it to be taken seriously and published in the West, made him change his mind. In other words, no matter what tactic of persuasion he tried, SEVENTH could not get Gruodis to agree to write a report, which would (unwittingly) implicate him in espionage. Evidently, the trust that Vaupshasov had in SEVENTH’s abilities as an agent was a bit misplaced. It was clear that, at least at this stage of the “cultivation” of Gruodis, SEVENTH failed to accomplish anything significant.

## Riga, 1947

During this meeting, SEVENTH also gave Gruodis the Vatican letter and asked him to use his channels to deliver it to the Archbishop of Riga, Antonijs Springovičs. Gruodis agreed to do so and then apparently did absolutely nothing. Two weeks after Gruodis took the Vatican letter, the minister of the Lithuanian MGB, General Efimov, received a concerned letter from the deputy minister of the Latvian MGB, Colonel Janis Vevers, inquiring about its status.<sup>92</sup> Vevers, who in 1954 rose to the position of the head of the Latvian KGB, wrote that, to their surprise, neither the Latvian MGB officers nor their agents in Riga saw Springovičs receiving any letters. The question to be answered

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>92</sup> Vevers, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, April 18, 1947, p. 114. For a biography of Vevers, see “Biography of Ian Vevers” in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, pp. 245-246.

was whether Gruodis tried to pass on the letter to Springovičs at all, or just kept it to himself out of fear of getting discovered by the MGB. If the latter were true, then that could be seen as yet another erroneous step by SEVENTH and his handlers. They had lost the control of a valuable letter and received nothing in return.

## Moscow, 1947

The implications of this failure must have been clear to Efimov and his deputy Litkens, since they seemed to have decided to delay replying to Vevers. As a result, he must have written directly to the leadership of the MGB's Department "O" in Moscow. On May 28, 1947, the deputy head of the Department "O," Colonel Polyansky, and the head of Department "O"'s Fourth Section, Major Okhrimenko, jointly signed a letter to Litkens, referring to the Vatican letter and instructing him to have SEVENTH ask Gruodis during their next meeting whether he had sent the Vatican letter to Springovičs and, if so, when.<sup>93</sup> Embarrassingly for the Lithuanian MGB, what should have been a simple agent activity turned out impossible to carry out. By this time, as SEVENTH's reports during April and May 1947 to his handler codenamed VIKTOR<sup>94</sup> demonstrated, he had lost all direct contact with Gruodis. Gruodis refused to meet with him, justifying it by the fear of getting arrested by the MGB.

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<sup>93</sup> Polyansky and Okhrimenko, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, May 28, 1947, p. 120.

<sup>94</sup> VIKTOR might have been the codename of Vitkavičius, an officer of the First Department of the Lithuanian MGB mentioned in Vaupshasov's plan, who was sent from Vilnius to Kaunas to assist the operation.

## Kaunas, 1947

That the matters were going downhill was already evident from SEVENTH's report on April 14, 1947, when he met with Gruodis for the second time.<sup>95</sup> Gruodis appeared at the meeting visibly stressed out and resolutely said 'No' to any discussion of political matters. He once again refused to put anything in writing for Kipp, or to get anyone else involved. According to SEVENTH, Gruodis was only interested in hearing when SEVENTH would return to Germany. Yet, on this question, SEVENTH could not give him a clear answer, considering that even he himself did not know. After a while, Gruodis left, brooding and unhappy. The meeting yielded nothing of value to the MGB. Afterward, SEVENTH's handler VIKTOR criticized SEVENTH's performance and asked him not to contact Čerkeliunene or Gruodis again until he received further instructions from his superiors in Vilnius. However, when those instructions came, they changed nothing substantial. SEVENTH was told to resume visiting Čerkeliunene and share with her the Lithuanian emigre newspapers from Germany, hoping that Gruodis would eventually change his mind. These visits unexpectedly netted him an additional benefit: Čerkeliunene fixed his teeth.<sup>96</sup> She must have been a very popular dentist in Kaunas considering that SEVENTH always found her busy with her patients.

Towards the end of May, SEVENTH told Čerkeliunene that he was getting ready to go back to Germany. He asked her to let Gruodis know and, on his behalf, request a written report for Kipp once again. But Gruodis did not budge. As SEVENTH wrote in his

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<sup>95</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, April 14, 1947, p. 110.

<sup>96</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, April 29, 1947, pp. 122-124.

report dated May 27, 1947, Gruodis asked Čerkeliunene to convey the following statement to him: “If Kipp [Kippas] trusts these people [SEVENTH], he should also trust the spoken information that they are giving him. At this moment, sending anything in writing is very dangerous.”<sup>97</sup> Čerkeliunene also said that Gruodis warned her not to send anything in writing either. However, Gruodis did allow her to share the information about the cases of the arrested Catholic priests that he was aware of. According to his count, there were about 60 such cases in Lithuania at that time. In addition, Čerkeliunene gave SEVENTH two personal letters, one for Kipp and one for her son. SEVENTH asked her specifically to write to Kipp that he delivered the Vatican letter to Gruodis.<sup>98</sup> He knew that he needed this statement for his *bona fides* upon his return.

Concluding his report, SEVENTH stated that, in his opinion, neither Čerkeliunene nor Gruodis suspected that he was an agent of the MGB.<sup>99</sup> While he had an obvious, self-serving rationale to state something like this, the objective analysis of his dealings with Gruodis indicates that the things were much more complicated. For instance, Gruodis explicitly refused to meet with him, so he must have suspected that something was not right. As already pointed out, this became a big problem for the Lithuanian MGB leadership because they lost an easy way of ascertaining what happened with the Vatican letter. Litkens, the deputy minister of the Lithuanian MGB, had to admit as much in his letter to Vevers, his counterpart in Latvia, when he finally replied after the

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<sup>97</sup> SEVENTH, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, May 27, 1947, p. 117. As can easily be seen from the context, Gruodis was right on the mark.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 118.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 119.



intervention by the Department “O” from Moscow.<sup>100</sup> The only thing Litkens could promise Vevers was that from that time forward, he would keep him regularly informed of how the operation was proceeding. Generally speaking, it seems that the problems in operational coordination, and sometimes even in timely communication, which, as we have seen, existed between the central and peripheral branches of the MGB in Lithuania also existed at the horizontal level of the MGBs of Soviet Republics.

The obvious failures of SEVENTH to establish a working relationship with Gruodis seemed to have compelled the Kaunas MGB Department to activate its own agent with a curious codename PUCHINI, resembling the last name of the famous Italian composer Giacomo Puccini. The new head of the Kaunas Department, Colonel Rudenko, and the already mentioned head of its Section “O”, Captain Shusterev, sent a letter to the First Department in Vilnius on July 14, 1947, which included PUCHINI’s report.<sup>101</sup> In his report, PUCHINI stated that he had visited Gruodis at his Jesuit residence in early July 1947 and found him “very much under stress” and communicating with difficulty. He was not able to learn anything about the causes of Gruodis’s agitation, but he was sure it was not due to the material wants, considering that he noticed that Gruodis and other Jesuits were well-supplied with food and other basic necessities. And if it was not the worries about the material aspects of life that were plaguing Gruodis’s mind, what made him so stressed out? Did he perhaps feel guilty about his unwillingness to send Kipp

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<sup>100</sup> Litkens, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, undated, p. 121.

<sup>101</sup> Rudenko and Shusterev, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, July 14, 1947, pp. 133-134. The letter was addressed to Colonel Filimonov as the head of the First Department. However, as already pointed out, he had been replaced by Vaupshasov six months previously. This seems to be another example of the lack of timely communication and information sharing between the central and peripheral branches of the Lithuanian MGB.

anything in writing about the political situation in Lithuania? Or perhaps his stress reflected his persisting fear that he would get arrested by the MGB? The answers to these questions, so important to the MGB in order to determine how to proceed with Gruodis, remained out of reach of the MGB agents. Neither Vaupshasov nor Litkens could have been satisfied with how Operation JESUITS was unfolding.

## Vilnius, 1947-1948

Another effect of the perceived failure of the First Department seemed to have been a more direct involvement of the Second Department of the Lithuanian MGB (counterintelligence) in the operation. The first document in the file evidencing the activities of the First Section of the Second Department was dated September 5, 1947. It was a report by one of their agents codenamed PRANAS regarding the biographical information about Čerkeliunene's husband, Antanas.<sup>102</sup> While Antanas Čerkeliunas played only a minor role in SEVENTH's reports and the decision-making of the First Department, since he appeared to have no close connection to the Jesuits, the Second Department saw him, too, as a potentially prominent anti-Soviet activist in Kaunas. At this point of time, in mid-1947, the Second Department seemed not to have had access to the reports of the First Department, so they appeared to have begun their own investigation from scratch, using their agents, such as PRANAS. In his report, PRANAS stated that he had known Čerkeliunas since 1922 and that he was aware of all the turns of his personal and professional life. According to PRANAS, Čerkeliunas was an engineer

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<sup>102</sup> PRANAS, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, September 5, 1947, p. 135.

who worked most of his life in forest industry management and continued to do so even under the German occupation. His brother was a diplomat in the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs who, in the pre-WWII period, was posted to Moscow, but PRANAS was unaware of his later fate. PRANAS confirmed the very close association of Čerkeliunene with the Jesuits and mentioned that once when he was visiting the couple at their apartment in Kaunas, he met a Catholic nun there.

Upon receiving the report, PRANAS's handler, Major Zausaev, the head of the First Section of the Second Department, instructed him to travel to Kaunas and re-establish friendly relations with Čerkeliunas.<sup>103</sup> It appears that with SEVENTH evidently discredited by Gruodis, even if not by Čerkeliunene, the MGB had no choice but to introduce another agent into the Čerkeliunas household hoping to gather and document more incriminating evidence of their anti-Soviet statements and deeds. It is unclear whether PRANAS's long-time relationship with Čerkeliunas was the reason why he was recruited by the Second Department, or he had already been recruited for other reasons and then was asked to inform on Čerkeliunas given their past "friendship."

From the documents in the Operation JESUITS folder, it appears that at the time when Zausaev questioned PRANAS on Čerkeliunas, the chief responsibility for the operation was shifted from the First Department to the Second Department by the Lithuanian MGB leadership. The proof that this transition had taken place is found in the lengthy "special communication" to General Yevgeny Pitovranov, the head of the Second Chief Directorate (counterintelligence) in Moscow, signed by the deputy

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 136. There is no publicly available biography of Zausaev at this time.

minister of the Lithuanian MGB Litkens and dated August 6, 1948.<sup>104</sup> This document presented a detailed summary of the operation from the beginning (the summer of 1945 when SEVENTH located Kipp in Berlin) and offered clues as to what happened in the period between SEVENTH's last meeting with Čerkeliunene at the end of May 1947 and the time of writing. For instance, Litkens revealed that SEVENTH never made it back to Berlin. According to the document, he was badly hurt in an automobile accident, breaking both of his legs, and then spent a long recovery time in a hospital.<sup>105</sup> While this is clearly shocking, the likelihood that this "accident" was not really accidental is very high given the documented brutal behavior of the MGB at that time. As we have seen so far, SEVENTH had failed to execute the tasks assigned to him by his MGB handlers in a satisfactory manner and might have been taken out for punishment. Perceived as "a man who knew too much," perhaps a decision was made to eliminate him physically. Yet, when he did not die on the spot, he was apparently allowed to recover in order to be used again in a way that could keep Operation JESUITS going. He was asked to write two letters, one to Kipp, and the other to Čerkeliunene, briefly explaining what had happened to him, and asking them to trust and rely on the person who delivered them the letter.<sup>106</sup> However, the MGB determined that this would not be the same person in both cases.

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<sup>104</sup> Litkens, "Special Communication," *Operation Jesuits*, August 6, 1948, pp. 138-142.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141. Interestingly, some previous (MGB) reader of the document underlined the sentence about SEVENTH's accident. It is the only underlined sentence in the whole document.

<sup>106</sup> SEVENTH, "Letter to Kipp," *Operation JESUITS*, undated, pp. 174-176, and SEVENTH, "Letter to Čerkeliunene," *Operation Jesuits*, undated, p. 177. The letters revealed that the last name SEVENTH used in his interactions with Kipp and Čerkeliunene was Tomkus. They also imply that his injuries were so severe that he thought he would never walk again.

The person selected to deliver SEVENTH's letter to Kipp was the MGB agent codenamed KUZMA. His detailed biography as well as an elaborate plan for his activities in Germany were sent to Pitovranov together with Litkens's "special communication" in August 1948. KUZMA (born in 1911) was described as a former wealthy peasant ("kulak") who joined an anti-Soviet Lithuanian armed group in 1941 and was employed as a local policeman and security officer during the German occupation of Lithuania.<sup>107</sup> After the Soviet re-taking of Lithuania in 1944, KUZMA went into hiding but, over time - for the unstated reasons, but they probably included his desire to free his wife and two children from the exile in the Molotov [Perm] region - began to collaborate with the MGB, leading to his explicit recruitment in April 1947. Since that time, he was used by the MGB as a particularly brutal penetration agent in their targeting of the armed anti-Soviet Lithuanian resistance. According to the biography, he personally killed four of his former "partisan" comrades and enabled the ambush and elimination of three more.<sup>108</sup> At the same time, he was able to keep up his public reputation as one of the leaders of the local anti-Soviet resistance and commanded an armed group consisting of four people. All this earned him the trust of the Lithuanian MGB and led to his being selected for a counterintelligence assignment abroad by his handlers at the Second Department.

The Second Department's plan for KUZMA was very ambitious. Reviving the Jesuit connection via SEVENTH's letter to Kipp represented only one component of his assignment. His chief mission was to infiltrate the Lithuanian Committee, the prominent

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<sup>107</sup> KUZMA, "Biography," *Operation JESUITS*, July 1948, p. 178.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

Lithuanian emigre organization in the U.S.-controlled sector of Germany at that time, as well as to dangle himself for recruitment to the U.S. intelligence services.<sup>109</sup> Two of his close family members (his brother and uncle), implicated in the collaboration with the Germans during the war, found refuge in Germany and were actively involved in the emigre activities.<sup>110</sup> KUZMA was to try to use them and their contacts to establish himself as a liaison between the Lithuanian emigre organizations and the armed anti-Soviet resistance in Lithuania. He was to gather the information on the policies, the decision-making personalities, and the money and weapons flows, endeavoring to direct most of the latter to his own underground group run by the MGB. Regarding Kipp specifically, KUZMA was to try to get his letter of recommendation for potentially meeting with his Kipp's contacts in Kaunas.

KUZMA's mission was timed by his MGB handlers to last one month and he was to enter Germany with fictitious identity documents, produced by the Kaliningrad MGB branch, as an ethnic German from Lithuania seeking repatriation.<sup>111</sup> The plan also included several options for his departure from Germany which were to be selected depending on the circumstances.

In addition, the Second Department's plan included a separate section describing another component of the operation, which centered on the Kaunas residents, Čerkeliunene and Gruodis. The plan envisioned the delivery of SEVENTH's letter to Čerkeliunene by MGB agent LEONAS.<sup>112</sup> He was already known to her from an earlier,

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<sup>109</sup> KUZMA, "Operational Plan," *Operation JESUITS*, July 1948, pp. 167-168.

<sup>110</sup> KUZMA, "Biography," pp. 180-181.

<sup>111</sup> KUZMA, "Operational Plan," pp. 167-168.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

failed attempt to re-establish the correspondence with Kipp under the MGB control which took place in December 1946. However, this time, with SEVENTH's letter in hand, the MGB hoped that LEONAS would be more effective.

The authorship of the plan belonged to Captain Shcherbakov, the deputy head of the Second Section of the Second Department, responsible for targeting the Lithuanian emigres and their contacts.<sup>113</sup> Before being sent to Litkens, the plan was approved by Shcherbakov's immediate supervisor, the head of the Second Section, Major Belov, and the new head of the Second Department, Lieutenant Colonel Slobodskikh.<sup>114</sup>

At the same time, in mid-July 1948, Shcherbakov issued an official resolution on the opening of the case against Kipp, Čerkeliunene, Čerkeliunas, and Gruodis alleging that four of them had been conspiring to engage in espionage on behalf of the United States.<sup>115</sup> Yet, the documents from the *Operation JESUITS* folder I have discussed demonstrate that these charges made by Shcherbakov did not have any grounding in reality. The Čerkeliunas couple and Gruodis did not even have any kind of contact with Kipp since March 1947, let alone engage in an anti-Soviet conspiracy controlled by a foreign power. And while Kipp had dealings with the representatives of the U.S. government in Berlin (by working in an U.S.-sponsored school, for instance), there was not a single line in SEVENTH's reports hinting that these dealings involved intelligence

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.; Kuzma, "Biography," p. 182.

<sup>114</sup> There are no publicly available biographies of Shcherbakov, Belov, and Slobodskikh at this time. Slobodskikh is briefly mentioned as one of the heads of the Second Department in Oleg Mozokhin's database, "The Second Department of the Lithuanian NKGB," [www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr\\_org/respublik/litva/structure/2.html](http://www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr_org/respublik/litva/structure/2.html). Accessed on January 25, 2024.

<sup>115</sup> Shcherbakov, "Resolution," *Operation JESUITS*, July 1948, p. 1h.

matters. In a word, the case against these four individuals was a classic MGB fabrication inspired by the radical turn in the geopolitical situation in Germany and Central Europe at that time that fed off Stalin's belief that the U.S. had become the main mortal enemy of the Soviet Union.<sup>116</sup>

Shcherbakov codenamed the case against Kipp et al. Operation JESUITS [*Агентурное дело но. 720 кличка Иезуиты*],<sup>117</sup> but did not make any references to the operation that already existed under the same name, initiated by Slavin and the First Department of the NKGB in the summer of 1945. While most reports from that initial operation appeared to have been incorporated in the Operation JESUITS folder, the resolution that officially opened it (the equivalent of Shcherbakov's resolution) was not found. In my assessment, this is not surprising. As I see it, the "first" Operation JESUITS obtained practically no results, and in order to hide the embarrassment of failure, was quietly abandoned with as few traces left as possible. Eerily, this also seemed to have applied to the people who were involved in it, SEVENTH being the most prominent.

Thus, the Second Department (counterintelligence) replaced the First Department (foreign intelligence) as the main institutional force behind Operation JESUITS. However, it seems that not all Departments of the Lithuanian MGB were made aware of this at the time. As an illustration, on October 12, 1948, the head of the Department "O," Lieutenant Colonel Shliapnikov wrote to the head of the First

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<sup>116</sup> For an excellent discussion of Stalin's post-WWII approach to the U.S. based on the declassified Russian archives, see Jonathan Brent and Vladimir P. Naumov. *Stalin's Last Crime: The Plot Against the Jewish Doctors, 1948-1953*. New York: Harper, 2003.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*; See also the cover page of the Operation JESUITS folder.



Department Vaupshasov asking for an example of Kipp's handwriting.<sup>118</sup> Vaupshasov officially forwarded his letter to Slobodskikh, the head of the Second Department, stating that he was sending it to him "considering that, according to the instruction of the deputy minister of the Lithuanian MGB Colonel Comrade Litkens, the operation has been transferred to you."<sup>119</sup> This sounds like a rather cold bureaucratic formulation, demonstrating that perhaps Vaupshasov was not very happy about losing the control of Operation JESUITS. However, as we will see, although the Second Department ran it for several years, when all was said and done, the ultimate outcome for the Lithuanian MGB, in light of its goals and priorities, was not much better than when Operation JESUITS was run by the First Department.

## Moscow, 1948

The head of the Second Chief Directorate of the MGB, General Pitovranov, delayed giving his written approval to the Second Department's plan submitted to him in August 1948, so Lt. Colonel Slobodskikh and Major Belov dispatched the MGB counterintelligence equivalent of a gentle reminder to one of his deputies, Colonel Semen Kholevo, the head of the 2-B Department of the Second Chief Directorate (overseeing infiltration operations against the United States), on September 28, 1948.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Shliapnikov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, October 12, 1948, p. 191.

<sup>119</sup> Vaupshasov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, October 16, 1948, p. 190.

<sup>120</sup> Slobodskikh and Belov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, September 28, 1948, p. 183. For Kholevo's biography, see "A Biography of Semen Kholevo" in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, p. 891.

Kholevo's reply was not included in the operation JESUITS folder and it is unclear whether he replied at all.

## Kaunas, 1949

In the months that followed the submission of the plan to Pitovranov, the Second Department was kept abreast of the goings-on in the Čerkeliunis household through the reports of Čerkeliunis's turncoat friend, agent PRANAS, which he delivered to his handler, Major Zausaev. On January 29, 1949, PRANAS, who lived in Vilnius, reported that at the end of December 1948, when he visited Čerkeliunis in Kaunas, the latter told him that his health was not very good and that he was spending a lot of time away from home, in another apartment where most of his books were located and "there, among old books, he tried to forget everything."<sup>121</sup> To PRANAS's direct question about news from his family and friends in the West, Čerkeliunis replied that he had none.

Less than a month later, on February 17, 1949, PRANAS submitted a much longer and more revealing report based upon another visit to the Čerkeliunis couple.<sup>122</sup> He noted their explicit expressions of psychological suffering and anger over the political situation in the Soviet Union, especially regarding the repression of religious freedom. According to PRANAS, they said to him that "many churches have been closed down and many priests arrested. In the [Soviet] Constitution, freedom of conscience is guaranteed. However, in reality, there is no freedom of conscience and never will be [in

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<sup>121</sup> PRANAS, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, January 29, 1949, p. 184.

<sup>122</sup> PRANAS, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, February 17, 1949, pp. 185-187.

this kind of the system].”<sup>123</sup> They also expressed their pained surprise that anybody in the West could express sympathies for communism: “It is difficult to understand how there could be Communists in Great Britain and the U.S. All those who want a communist system should be transported to the Soviet Union. Then they would see what kind of paradise we have here.”<sup>124</sup> At the same time, they were happy that their son Kestutis was in the West “where he is able to live freely and enjoy his youth” and contrasted his situation with the situation of the young people in Lithuania “who must suffer in prisons and [internal] exile.”<sup>125</sup> In addition, Čerkeliunis told PRANAS that the Lithuanian MGB had also rumped up repressive measures and arrests in the Jewish community in Kaunas, accusing them of “Zionism,” and that one of his Jewish friends had confided to him that they were all afraid for their lives.<sup>126</sup> Evidently, the anti-Semitic turn in the MGB policies, which would culminate in the so-called Doctors’ Plot in the early 1950s, was gaining in prominence all across the Soviet Union at that time.<sup>127</sup>

Čerkeliunene recounted to PRANAS her daily struggles and challenges to keep the dental practice open.<sup>128</sup> She detailed the corruption of Soviet inspection officials whose teeth she had to fix free of charge, including putting in gold crowns, in order to get their positive evaluation. She also said that she had lost a lot of her regular, long-time clients to arrest and exile as she was the preferred dentist of the Kaunas Catholic

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., pp. 185-186.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 186.

<sup>127</sup> See Brent and Naumov. *Stalin’s Last Crime*.

<sup>128</sup> PRANAS, “Report,” p. 186.

clergy. As to the key issue of interest to the Lithuanian MGB, the Čerkeliunis couple's clandestine contacts and correspondence with the West, PRANAS learned nothing new. Both the husband and the wife were adamant that because of the severe penalties if caught, they neither sent nor received any letters from the West.

## Vilnius, 1949

PRANAS's handlers at the Second Department appeared not to have been happy with this report, perhaps finding it not incriminating enough, and so they gave him a two-page instruction/assignment for another visit to the Čerkeliunis household in April 1949.<sup>129</sup> They asked PRANAS to focus on finding out whether and, if so, how they corresponded with their son Kestutis and whether they kept in touch with the Jesuit priests both in Lithuania and beyond. There is no report by PRANAS regarding the April 1949 visit in the Operation JESUITS folder. Either the visit did not take place, or the outcome was so meager as to not be worth being officially reported.

Seeing that the Čerkeliunis couple acted as an impenetrable fortress to the Second Department penetration efforts, Captain Shcherbakov, with the approval of his supervisors, Major Belov and Lt. Colonel Slobodskikh, devised a new plan in August 1949 designed to entrap them in engaging in correspondence with the West.<sup>130</sup> This plan,

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<sup>129</sup> PRANAS, "Assignment," *Operation JESUITS*, April 1949, pp. 188-189.

<sup>130</sup> BARZHAS, "Plan," *Operation JESUITS*, August 26, 1949, pp. 192-196.

approved by the new minister of the Lithuanian MGB, Major General Petr Kapralov on August 30, 1949, envisioned the introduction of a new agent into the mix.<sup>131</sup>

Agent codenamed BARZHAS was described as a former major of the independent Lithuania's army who lived in a semi-illegal status as a church organ player in the small town of Andrioniškis.<sup>132</sup> He was tasked to travel to Kaunas to meet with Čerkeliunene and introduce himself as a contact of the Lithuanian anti-Soviet partisan underground and an associate of agent SEVENTH. BARZHAS was to tell her that SEVENTH was arrested by the MGB at the end of 1948 before he was able to travel to Berlin and deliver her letters and packages for Kipp. He was to assure Čerkeliunene that she was not in any danger because SEVENTH had been able to hide the letters and packages before his arrest and that they were "safely" in the hands of the Lithuanian partisans. BARZHAS was then to request from Čerkeliunene to arrange a meeting between him and Gruodis. He was also to ask her to share any contacts she might have in Germany and provide a letter of recommendation for a courier who was to be sent to Berlin on behalf of the partisans.

The fact that Čerkeliunene was to be informed about SEVENTH's fate by BARZHAS and told that he was arrested by the MGB rather than that he was severely hurt in a car accident represented a major revision of the Second Department's plan submitted to the head of the Second Chief Directorate Pitovranov a year earlier. It also

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<sup>131</sup> Kapralov became the head of the Lithuanian MGB on April 21, 1949. He held this post until March 31, 1952. For Kapralov's biography, see "Biography of Petr Kapralov" in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, pp. 440-441.

<sup>132</sup> BARZHAS, "Plan," p. 194.

meant that the letter SEVENTH wrote for her was never delivered. This may have been done to remove any possibility of Čerkeliunene seeking any future contact with SEVENTH on her own initiative. It also literally reflected what happened to him in reality. Shcherbakov's new plan included the information that SEVENTH was arrested for a theft in Kaunas in 1949 and sentenced to ten years in the Siberian labor camp.<sup>133</sup> Evidently, the MGB was particularly brutal toward the agents it assessed as failures.

## Kaunas, 1949

BARZHAS's report on his visit to Čerkeliunene was received by the Second Department's point man for Operation JESUITS, formerly Captain, now promoted to Major, Shcherbakov on October 30, 1949.<sup>134</sup> The visit took place more than a month earlier, on September 28, and was a total failure from the perspective of the Second Department's plan. Though BARZHAS performed his role well and acted as instructed by his handlers, Čerkeliunene's reaction was drastically negative. Most strikingly, she denied having any communication with Kipp after the end of the German occupation of Lithuania in 1944. She rejected as mistaken BARZHAS's statement that he was informed of her correspondence with Kipp in the post-war period. And when BARZHAS asked her about arranging a meeting with Gruodis, Čerkeliunene replied that he was forced to leave Kaunas and that she had no idea where he was. Ultimately, she said to BARZHAS that she was sorry but that she could not be of any assistance to him, implying that she did not want to see him again. As a result, in his summary at the end of the report,

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> BARZHAS, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, October 30, 1949, pp. 197-198.

Major Shcherbakov had no choice but to conclude that “the visit did not bring about the expected outcome.”<sup>135</sup> That he was not in the greatest of moods when he was writing that sentence is perhaps revealed by the fact that he made a typo in the word “expected.”

## Moscow, 1950

Unfortunately for the Second Department, it turned out that the information about the embarrassing lack of success in Operation JESUITS could not be confined to Lithuania but had to be reported to the MGB counterintelligence leadership in Moscow. In February 1950, Colonel Andrei Leonov, deputy minister of the Lithuanian MGB, received a letter from Colonel Fedor Shubniakov, deputy head of the Second Chief Directorate, requesting the up-to-date materials about the operation with the special emphasis on the opportunities to use the persons involved in order to “take control of the illegal channels of communication between the American intelligence and their contacts in the Soviet Union.”<sup>136</sup> Catching U.S. spies was the top priority of the MGB counterintelligence and, apparently, Shubniakov was under an impression (created by the Lithuanian MGB reports) that Čerkeliunene, whom he mentioned by name, was a U.S. spy and that her correspondence with Kipp was a means used by the U.S. to subvert the Soviet government.

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>136</sup> Shubniakov, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, February 6, 1950, p. 200. For Shubniakov’s biography, see “Biography of Fedor Shubniakov” in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, pp. 943-944.

## Vilnius, 1950

The documents in the Operation JESUITS folder show that rather than replying to Shubniakov, Leonov officially forwarded his letter to Slobodskikh, the head of the Second Department, and let him deal with it.<sup>137</sup> Nine days later, on February 25, 1950, another deputy minister of the Lithuanian MGB, Lieutenant Colonel Leonardas Martavičius wrote to Shubniakov that the most up-to-date information on Operation JESUITS was contained in the materials sent to the head of the Second Chief Directorate, General Pitovranov, in August 1948.<sup>138</sup> However, the plan mentioned by Martavičius was the Second Department's original plan, and not the new plan involving agent BARZHAS whose devastating failure the Second Department had evidently decided to hide from the central authorities in Moscow. Still, Martavičius could not but admit that "the new information worthy of operational significance regarding the cultivation of those involved in Operation JESUITS had so far not been obtained."<sup>139</sup> In other words, although a year and half had passed, there was no movement forward concerning the "suspected American spies." In a different time and place, this kind of reply could have cost Martavičius and his subordinates their state security career and perhaps even their freedom and life. Though their reaction was not documented in the Operation JESUITS

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<sup>137</sup> Leonov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, February 16, 1950, p. 199. There is no publicly available biography of Leonov at this time. He is briefly mentioned in Oleg Mozokhin's database, "The Leadership of the Lithuanian NKGB-MGB," [www.shieldandword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr\\_org/respublik/litva.html](http://www.shieldandword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr_org/respublik/litva.html). Accessed on January 25, 2024.

<sup>138</sup> Martavičius, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, February 25, 1950, p. 201. For Martavičius's biography, see "Biography of Leonardas Martavičius," [www.shieldandword.mozohin.ru/personnel/2021/martavicius\\_l\\_v.html](http://www.shieldandword.mozohin.ru/personnel/2021/martavicius_l_v.html). Accessed on January 8, 2024.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.



folder, it is not hard to imagine how Shubniakov and his chief Pitovranov must have been displeased, if not angered, by this outcome.

## Vilnius, 1951

However, Martavičius who had, evidently, taken the oversight of Operation JESUITS from Litkens by February 1950, was not willing to give up. He decided that making yet another institutional change was called for and he removed the operation from the purview of the Second Department and gave it back to the First Department. The Lithuanian MGB foreign intelligence thus got a second chance.

On February 15, 1951, almost a whole year after the letter exchange he had with Moscow, Martavičius approved a new plan devised by the First Department.<sup>140</sup> This plan was put together by a new head of the First Section of the First Department, Lieutenant Colonel Shvets, and received approval from Colonel Filimonov who had replaced Vaupshasov at the helm of the First Department in 1949. Demonstrating that the Second Department was also kept informed about the new approach, the plan was also signed by Lieutenant Colonel (formerly Major) Belov, the deputy head of the Second Department.

The most surprising aspect of Shvets's plan was the return of agent SEVENTH. Evidently, the Lithuanian MGB decided that he was the only person they had under

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<sup>140</sup> Shvets, "Plan," *Operation JESUITS*, February 15, 1951, pp. 202-204. Shvets appeared not to have been a very careful reader of the previous reports and he made two chronological mistakes. First, he wrote that the meeting between SEVENTH and Gruodis during which the former gave the Vatican letter to the latter took place in May 1947 whereas the meeting took place in March 1947. Secondly, according to Shvets, Čerkeliunene learned from BARZHAS that SEVENTH was arrested in the summer of 1950, however, their meeting took place in September 1949. Neither of these mistakes had any significance for the gist of his plan. Also, there is no publicly available biography of Shvets at this time.

control who could potentially still be trusted by Čerkeliunene. Hence, they brought SEVENTH back to Lithuania from an unnamed prison camp, implicitly revealing that the criminal charges against him were completely made up. And despite all their brutal treatment of him, perhaps out of fear, or out of hope for a better life, SEVENTH agreed to play along.

Shvets instructed SEVENTH to knock at Čerkeliunene's door unannounced, counting on the effect of a pleasant surprise to neutralize her potential suspicions.<sup>141</sup> To explain his four year absence, SEVENTH was to tell her about the car accident which prevented him from traveling to Berlin, his long road to recovery, his arrest and prison sentence, explained as the case of a mistaken identity, and his later difficulties of getting a job, all of which made it impossible for him to come to see her earlier. Depending on her reaction, he was to bring out and return to her the letters and photos she had given him for Kipp. He was then to share with Čerkeliunene that his current job as a translator for a group of Lithuanian Germans being "repatriated" to Germany would soon enable him to travel to Berlin and to ask her to update her letters to Kipp and convey to him whatever was on her heart at this time. Hoping that SEVENTH's explanations would sound convincing enough for Čerkeliunene, Shvets had him transported to Kaunas and directed to the address he was already very familiar with: Poshkos Street, Number 14.

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

## Kaunas, 1951

Shvets might have had a lucky hand, or SEVENTH might have played the performance of his life (he knew that a failure would mean a return to prison or worse), or Čerkeliunene might have gotten tired of all-pervading suspicion and pessimism and yearned to believe in the goodness of man, or perhaps all those things combined, contributed to an outcome that the MGB had striven to obtain for years. Not only was Čerkeliunene very glad to see SEVENTH and reacted positively to everything he said, but she became very emotional and tears came to her eyes when she saw her old letters and photos. She told SEVENTH “you are a very nice, God-fearing man, I believe in everything you say.”<sup>142</sup> It was then very easy to persuade her to write a new letter to Kipp, providing SEVENTH with a much needed bona fide for visiting Kipp in Berlin and enabling him to position himself as Kipp’s trusted channel of communication with his Lithuanian contacts.

Afraid of ruining his success, SEVENTH did not insist on any particular political themes and so Čerkeliunene wrote to Kipp about personal matters, for instance, asking Kipp to say hello to her son Kestutis.<sup>143</sup> She also mentioned that due to the deaths, arrests, and repression, there were no Jesuit priests left in Kaunas. Perhaps this was a hint to Kipp not to try to re-establish contact with the Catholic clergy in Lithuania. However, the Lithuanian MGB did not seem to mind. After four years of delay, SEVENTH was now firmly set on his path to Berlin.

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<sup>142</sup> SEVENTH, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, February 21, 1951, p. 207.

<sup>143</sup> Čerkeliunene, “Letter,” Russian translation, *Operation JESUITS*, February 16, 1951, p. 209.

## Vilnius, 1951

Although he clearly pulled a victory out of the ashes of defeat for the Lithuanian MGB, and the First Department in particular, SEVENTH was still kept under very close surveillance. Preparing for his trip to Berlin, he received a lengthy instruction from Shvets on how to approach Kipp, what to say, and how to say it.<sup>144</sup> He was to come to Kipp's apartment unannounced - after making sure there was no surveillance - under the pretext of delivering a letter from Čerkeliunene. Depending on Kipp's reaction, he was to tell him that he had been able to get repatriated to Germany as a Baltic German and had made his residence in Frankfurt on the Oder (a town in East Germany, on the border with Poland). He was to voice strong anti-Soviet sentiments but also to admit "as if reluctantly" the existence of the positives, such as the increase in Lithuania's industrial production and a higher standard of living, thus softening Kipp for the subsequent Lithuanian MGB disinformation. SEVENTH was also to minimize as much as possible the information about the repression of Catholic clergy in Lithuania, claiming that what he was relaying was just that which he heard from Čerkeliunene. However, he was to confirm that, as she had written in her letter, there were no more Jesuit priests left in Kaunas. Moreover, he was to ask Kipp to help him get to know other Lithuanian emigres in Berlin and, most importantly, promise him that he would be able to provide him and others with a trusted and secure channel of communication with Lithuania.

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<sup>144</sup> Shvets, "Instructions," *Operation JESUITS*, June 1951, pp. 210-214.

Overall, the instructions that Shvets had given to SEVENTH did not differ much from those he had been familiar with from the very beginning of the operation in the summer of 1945. The Lithuanian MGB's main goal had stayed one and the same: establishing covert control over the "illegal" channels of communication between the Lithuanian emigres and their contacts, relatives and friends in Lithuania.

What was different this time, however, was that SEVENTH was allowed by the Lithuanian MGB to get a permanent residence in East Germany and was provided with a cover job as a railroad worker on the train lines that connected East Germany with Poland and Lithuania. In this way, as the head of the First Department, Colonel Filimonov informed his counterpart at the Second Department, Colonel Slobodskikh, on October 3, 1951, SEVENTH was given a credible platform to claim to Kipp and other Lithuanian emigres that he could get their letters and even people across the borders into Lithuania.<sup>145</sup> This communication between Filimonov and Slobodskikh shows that since the re-taking of the operation by the First Department, and in contrast to the past practices that seemed to have been more confrontational, a clear effort was made to keep the Second Department informed about the progress of the operation, and request its involvement, if necessary. Thus, in the same letter, Filimonov asked Slobodskikh to select an agent of the Second Department working in the Lithuanian railroad system in order to use him as SEVENTH's alleged contact for taking the emigre

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<sup>145</sup> Filimonov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, October 3, 1951, pp. 241-242.

correspondence into Lithuania.<sup>146</sup> Filimonov also asked Slobodskikh to set up a fake group of Jesuits or Jesuit-trained individuals in Kaunas who could be used to manipulate Kipp's views about the position of the Catholic clergy in Lithuania. Clearly, he felt very confident about the way Operation JESUITS was going and was already thinking of how to expand it and make it more sustainable over time.

## Kaunas, 1951

Slobodskikh also mobilized for action from his end. On October 29, 1951, he sent a letter to Lieutenant Colonel Chernikov, the head of the Second Department at the Kaunas MGB branch, asking for detailed information on the relatives and friends of the Lithuanian emigres whom SEVENTH had mentioned in his reports.<sup>147</sup> Chernikov could not find any incriminating information and he said so in his reply on November 20, 1951.<sup>148</sup> However, as an indication that the lines of communication between the peripheral and central units of the Lithuanian MGB had not much improved over the years and were still far from smooth and efficient (an issue that, as I have shown, had plagued the Lithuanian MGB since the mid-1940s), Slobodskikh remained unaware of Chernikov's response and repeated his request on November 23, 1951, urging him to respond as soon as possible.<sup>149</sup> In what seemed like a snub at the central authorities, Chernikov replied that he had already sent his reply on November 20 and did not

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 241.

<sup>147</sup> Slobodskikh, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, October 29, 1951, p. 250.

<sup>148</sup> Chernikov, "Reply," *Operation JESUITS*, November 20, 1951, p. 269. There is no publicly available biography of Chernikov at this time.

<sup>149</sup> Slobodskikh, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, November 23, 1951, p. 274.

include it again in this follow-up letter.<sup>150</sup> Obviously, the relations between the center and the periphery within the Lithuanian MGB were not without occasional tensions.

## Moscow, 1950-1951

However, there was also something else that, generally speaking, appeared to have revitalized the enthusiasm of the First and Second Departments for Operation JESUITS. The top officers involved, such as Filimonov and Slobodskikh, started to believe that the idea that the Soviet state security leadership emphasized at that time - that the U.S. was the “main enemy” - finally received its confirmation in the course of the operation: the newly received SEVENTH’s reports from Berlin included references to Kipp’s alleged involvement with the U.S. intelligence personnel in Germany.

Moreover, Kipp’s correspondence with other Lithuanian emigres within Germany was intercepted and sent to the Lithuanian MGB by the head of the First Directorate of the Soviet MGB, Major General Georgi Utekhin, on January 16, 1950.<sup>151</sup> Kipp’s letters chronicled his contacts with the U.S. authorities, which the MGB, not surprisingly, found far from innocuous.<sup>152</sup> For instance, Kipp wrote that he was teaching at the recently established Free University of Berlin, set up by the U.S. as an educational counterweight to the Soviet-dominated University of Berlin in the Berlin suburb of Dahlem, “just a few minutes walk” from his house.<sup>153</sup> He also mentioned that an old personal friend of his, a

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<sup>150</sup> Chernikov, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, November 30, 1951, p. 275.

<sup>151</sup> For a biography of Utekhin, see “Biography of Georgi Utekhin” in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, pp. 863-864.

<sup>152</sup> Utekhin, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, January 16, 1950, pp. 217-219. Utekhin did not mention how the letters were obtained.

<sup>153</sup> Kipp, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, December 1948, p. 223. Kipp’s address at that time was Gosslerstrasse 16, Dahlem.

former employee of the U.S. Embassy in Lithuania, now worked for the U.S. Embassy in Germany and that they would meet quite frequently.<sup>154</sup> Kipp did not reveal the identity of this U.S. official, which must have tantalized the Lithuanian MGB leadership. To them, this person represented the “hidden hand” of the U.S. espionage: he was that long-sought U.S. spymaster, once upon the time based in Lithuania, and now, evidently, financing and supervising the anti-Soviet activities of the Lithuanian emigres in Germany.

## Vilnius, 1951

As a result, the Operation JESUITS folder, which up to the early 1950s included only the documents directly dealing with Kipp or his contacts in Lithuania, was expanded to include the reports of the Second Department’s agents with the inside knowledge of the diplomatic personnel of the former U.S. Consulate and, later, the U.S. Embassy in Lithuania. The reports of agents NIVEL, dated May 14, 1949,<sup>155</sup> and LABANAUSKAS, dated June 6, 1949,<sup>156</sup> provided a detailed account of the work of two local Consulate employees, [Vladimir] Kublitsky and [Joseph] Shapiro, and their alleged handler, the U.S. Vice-Consul [Basil F.] Macgowan.<sup>157</sup> These two reports were accompanied by a handwritten excerpt from a report by a pre-WWII NKVD agent RON dated August 16, 1940,

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<sup>154</sup> Kipp, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, undated, 1948, p. 221.

<sup>155</sup> NIVEL, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, May 14, 1949, pp. 243-244. NIVEL’s handler was the already mentioned Lt. Colonel Belov, the head of the Second Section of the Second Department.

<sup>156</sup> LABANAUSKAS, “Report,” *Operation JESUITS*, June 6, 1949, pp. 245-247. LABANAUSKAS’s handler was Slobodskikh, the head of the Second Department. That shows that he had a higher agent status than NIVEL.

<sup>157</sup> I am grateful to Mallory Needleman for the information regarding the personnel of the U.S. Consulate in Kaunas as well as for the information on the post-WWII career of Vladimir Kublitsky.



the period of the initial Soviet takeover of Lithuania.<sup>158</sup> There was also an undated note alleging that Vladimir Kublitsky, identified as an officer of the Lithuanian military intelligence and its main contact with German intelligence, was recruited by Soviet intelligence in 1926 but was soon dropped because he revealed his recruitment to the Lithuanian side.<sup>159</sup> Perhaps, at that particular time, Kublitsky played the role of a double agent for the Lithuanians and was able to fool Soviet intelligence for a short while.<sup>160</sup> Was he Kipp's enigmatic U.S. Embassy friend who showed up in post-war Berlin? Or was this person someone else?

This burning question remained unresolved for the time being. Evidently, there were other, even more pressing, institutional issues with the Lithuanian MGB. In the summer of 1951, Filimonov appeared to have doubts in the capacities of the Second Department to set up a fake group of Lithuanian Jesuits seeking to establish a clandestine contact with the Vatican that he wanted to dangle to Kipp. On July 18, 1951, he sent a letter to the minister of the Lithuanian MGB, Major General Kapralov, asking him to transfer the counterintelligence component of Operation JESUITS from the Second Department to the Fifth Department.<sup>161</sup> Filimonov argued that the Fifth Department, which, a year earlier, incorporated the clergy-focused Department "O", had a much better potential to be effective in providing him what he needed. It had a

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<sup>158</sup> RON, "Excerpt from Report," *Operation JESUITS*, August 16, 1940, pp. 248-249.

<sup>159</sup> "Undated Note," *Operation JESUITS*, p. 251.

<sup>160</sup> *The American Foreign Service Journal* in May 1933 printed a photograph of the personnel of the U.S. Legation-Consulate in Kaunas, Lithuania in December 1931 which included Macgowan, Shapiro, and Kublitsky. See Hugh S. Fullerton, "Lietuvos Respublikos," *The American Foreign Service Journal*, 10:5 (May 1933), 170. Fullerton was a U.S. Consul in Kaunas from 1928 to 1932.

<sup>161</sup> Filimonov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, July 18, 1951, p. 267.

lot of expertise on religious matters and was, in contrast to the Second Department, successful in recruiting new agents among the Catholic clerical circles in Lithuania.

However, Kapralov seemed not to have responded to Filimonov's request, or given the green light for the transfer, by October 1951. Faced with the possibility of losing a potentially important operational angle, Filimonov seemed to have felt that he had no choice but to approach Slobodskikh, the head of the Second Department, about setting up the fake Jesuit group, as already noted above. While not addressing the issue of the fake group, Slobodskikh soon wrote back to Filimonov with what he must have thought was sensational news: the American mentioned by Kipp was likely none other than Kublitsky.<sup>162</sup>

## Moscow, 1951

At that particular time, the Lithuanian MGB must have decided that their work on Operation JESUITS had reached such a high level of prominence that the top MGB officials in Moscow would be glad to hear about it. In November 1951, Kapralov sent a detailed 6-page report, describing the major personalities and chronicling the major events of the operation, to the deputy minister of the Soviet MGB, Lieutenant General

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<sup>162</sup> Slobodskikh, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, November 22, 1951, p. 273. There is independent confirmation of Kublitsky's post-WWII work in Berlin as a member of the U.S. military intelligence service. The 1957 U.S. Army Berlin Command Organizational Chart lists a "Mr. V. Kublitzky" as a liaison officer in the Provost Marshal Division. See "The Berlin Command Organizational Chart and Directory of Key Personnel," [http://www.theberlinobserver.com/BBde/BBde1957\\_C\\_of\\_Comd.pdf](http://www.theberlinobserver.com/BBde/BBde1957_C_of_Comd.pdf). Accessed on January 22, 2024. In addition, the August 1960 issue of *The Military Police Journal* reports on an award ceremony held in Berlin in 1960 in which "Mr. Kublitzky," described as the chief liaison officer in the Provost Marshal Division, received "an outstanding employee rating." See "Berlin Provost Marshal Lauds Civilian's Service," *The Military Police Journal* 10:12 (August 1960), 37.

Lavrenti Tsanava.<sup>163</sup> He titled the report in the way that he knew would attract Tsanava's attention and win his approbation - "On the Implemented Measures to Dangle Agent SEVENTH to American Intelligence."<sup>164</sup> That was exactly what Tsanava wanted to hear: how Soviet intelligence was winning the spy war against its "main enemy." Kapralov reported on the expansion of SEVENTH's contacts among the Lithuanian emigres in Berlin, such as, for instance, Alexander Vazelis, described as a former officer of the Lithuanian military counterintelligence.<sup>165</sup> It was Vazelis, an acquaintance of Kipp from his days in Kaunas, who connected SEVENTH with the representatives of the military branch of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (VLIK), an anti-Soviet Lithuanian emigre organization, Leonas Prapuolenis and Algirdas Gvozdauskas.<sup>166</sup> The Lithuanian MGB believed that these two also worked for the U.S. intelligence and, in its internal correspondence, described them as American agents. Moreover, Gvozdauskas was reported to be a fake name of Alfred Holborn, a Lithuanian-born American citizen.<sup>167</sup> And, in another unexpected twist, Prapuolenis was alleged to be Čerkeliunene's nephew.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> For a biography of Tsanava, see "Biography of Lavrenti Tsanava" in N. V. Petrov and K. V. Skorkin. *Kmo руководил НКВД, 1934-1941: Справочник [Those Who Led the NKVD, 1934-1941: A Reference Guide]*. Moscow: Memorial, 1999, pp. 516-517.

<sup>164</sup> Kapralov, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, November 1951, pp. 288-293.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 292.

<sup>166</sup> For more information on the VLIK, see "The Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania," [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme\\_Committee\\_for\\_the\\_Liberation\\_of\\_Lithuania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supreme_Committee_for_the_Liberation_of_Lithuania). Accessed on February 1, 2024.

<sup>167</sup> Kondakov, "Information," *Operation JESUITS*, May 1, 1952, p. 309.

<sup>168</sup> Filimonov, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, May 5, 1952, p. 301.

## Berlin, 1951-1952

This allegation was included in Filimonov's letter to Slobodskikh dated May 5, 1952 and came from a lengthy report submitted by SEVENTH in March 1952 and attached to the letter. SEVENTH claimed that he had a lot of success in his efforts to become a trusted contact of the VLIK operatives Prapuolenis and Gvozdauskas. In great detail, he described their meetings on March 15 and March 16 in a restaurant and a hotel in Berlin. He reported how they asked him probing questions, such as whether he was aware that the "Bolsheviks sent their agents among the repatriated Germans" and how he coolly replied that he was not, but that "perhaps they did."<sup>169</sup> He also feigned surprise when Prapuolenis admitted to him that they wanted to use his job as a railroad worker to get information from Lithuania. He described how he replied in a joking manner: "Don't you have any other contacts?" And how Prapuolenis said in a serious voice: "We do but they are passive. We need a contact who would provide us with regular and accurate information."<sup>170</sup> Reading this, Filimonov and his superiors in the Lithuanian MGB must have been rubbing his hands with glee. This was precisely what they had hoped to accomplish from the beginning of Operation JESUITS in the summer of 1945. Now, after almost seven years of the dramatic ups and downs, operational ebbs and flows, and institutional ping-pong, the goal of a trust-based infiltration finally seemed within reach.

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<sup>169</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, March 17, 1952, p. 307.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 303.

At the same time, SEVENTH also reported that Prapuolenis and Gvozdauskas asked him whether he knew any dependable people who could serve as their clandestine contacts and who could, if need be, help to smuggle a person into Lithuania. When SEVENTH asked for more time to think (as he had not received any instructions from his MGB handlers on this matter), Prapuolenis added that they would be especially interested in doctors and nurses in Marijampole, Kaunas, and Vilnius.<sup>171</sup> This specific request was highlighted by Filimonov in his letter to Slobodskikh as another potential point of entry for the MGB. He asked Slobodskikh whether the Second Department had any trusted agents among doctors and nurses who could be used as dangles for the VLIK.<sup>172</sup> The idea of setting up a fake Jesuit group seemed to have been abandoned by this time, perhaps because the task proved too difficult to carry out. Slobodskikh was now to look for the MGB-friendly Lithuanian medical personnel. The VLIK apparently trusted them more than they did the clergy.

When Prapuolenis and Gvozdauskas offered to pay SEVENTH for his covert help, giving him 500 East German marks (SEVENTH had told them that his monthly salary was 300 East German marks), he refused to take the money, saying that he had not done anything for them yet.<sup>173</sup> He told them that he would keep them informed on how his job as a railroad worker in Frankfurt on the Oder was working out in light of their requests. After SEVENTH said goodbye to Prapuolenis and Gvozdauskas, Vazelis, who

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., pp. 304-305.

<sup>172</sup> Filimonov's letter to Slobodskikh, May 5, 1952, p. 301.

<sup>173</sup> SEVENTH's report, March 17, 1952, p. 306.

was not present at their meetings, saw him off at the train station. He seemed to have been tasked by the VLIK to keep an eye on SEVENTH, perhaps because of his counterintelligence training in the Lithuanian military.

Vazelis did seem to try to gain SEVENTH's trust by confidential revelations (a frequent counterintelligence technique). On one occasion, commenting on Kipp's attitude toward the Lithuanian emigres, Vazelis said that Kipp was "such a naive person who trusted everybody."<sup>174</sup> He implied that while Kipp could easily be deceived by an undercover Soviet agent, this could never happen to him. Yet, despite all his counterintelligence wisdom, we know that Vazelis also fell into the trap devised by the Lithuanian MGB and brought into life by SEVENTH. In contrast to his mid-1940s work, in the early 1950s, SEVENTH seemed to have really succeeded in infiltrating the Lithuanian emigre community in Berlin. Perhaps it was his dramatic trials and tribulations in Lithuania, including a severe injury and a term in prison, that made him into a more effective agent. Or perhaps it was just because this time he was aware that his failure would lead to a guaranteed and, most likely, one-way trip to the Gulag.

Interestingly, it was also Vazelis who confirmed to SEVENTH that Kublitsky, using the Lithuanized version of his last name Kublitskas, was employed by U.S. intelligence in Berlin, mentioning specifically the CIC (U.S. Army Counterintelligence Corps). According to SEVENTH, Vazelis told him that in order to keep his clandestine intelligence contacts with Kublitsky secret, he had asked him not to appear at his apartment dressed in the

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<sup>174</sup> SEVENTH's report, July 20, 1951, p. 313-2.

CIC uniform.<sup>175</sup> This explicit connection to U.S. intelligence was what made the Lithuanian MGB so enthusiastic and eager to share SEVENTH's successes with their higher-ups in Moscow.

Due to the increased importance of SEVENTH's clandestine activities in East Germany, he also seemed to have been monitored by the officers of the First Chief Directorate based there. On May 2, 1952, the new head of the Lithuanian MGB, Major General Petr Kondakov, wrote to his subordinates, including Filimonov, that the deputy head of the First Chief Directorate, Colonel Sergei Fedoseev informed him that SEVENTH had another meeting with Kipp and Vazelis in April 1952.<sup>176</sup> At that time, SEVENTH told his contacts that his job on the railroad would occasionally take him to Brest, a city in Soviet Belarus. This made Vazelis and Kipp very happy and they immediately began planning how to take advantage of that. Vazelis told SEVENTH that he would network with Prapuolenis and Gvozdauskas and have letters for their contacts in Lithuania ready for his next trip. Kipp, on his part, wondered whether there was a priest or a church in Brest through which he could establish a contact with Čerkeliunene.<sup>177</sup>

## Vilnius, 1953

It appears that Kipp had his wish to reconnect with Čerkeliunene granted by the Lithuanian MGB almost one year later, in the spring of 1953 (at this particular time,

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<sup>175</sup> SEVENTH, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, December 5, 1951, p. 316. Independent sources confirm that Kublitzky was indeed employed by the CIC. See ft. 163 above.

<sup>176</sup> Kondakov, "Letter," May 2, 1952, p. 309. For Kondakov's biography, see "Biography of Petr Kondakov," [www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/personnel/kondakov\\_p\\_p.html](http://www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/personnel/kondakov_p_p.html). Accessed on January 19, 2024. For Fedoseev's biography, see "Biography of Sergei Fedoseev," [www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/personnel/fedoseev\\_s\\_m.html](http://www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/personnel/fedoseev_s_m.html). Accessed on January 19, 2024.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

shortly after Stalin's death, the MGB was re-named the MVD - the Ministry of Internal Affairs).<sup>178</sup> In the summary memorandum dated May 8, 1953, Lt. Colonel Shvets, who, in the meantime, had been promoted to the position of the head of a section in the Second Department of the MVD, wrote that SEVENTH met with an agent of the Second Department codenamed DEMBOVSKY in Brest on April 26, 1953. It was during this meeting that SEVENTH gave DEMBOVSKY Kipp's letter for Čerkeliunene.<sup>179</sup> This letter was about one paragraph long and concerned everyday family matters.<sup>180</sup> Kipp informed Čerkeliunene that her son Kestitus and his wife and son (her grandson) were doing well and he inquired about the fate of his fellow Jesuits whom he had known in Kaunas. In his commentary, Shvets indicated that the MVD could not find any traces of secret writing in Kipp's letter.

## Kaunas, 1953

DEMBOVSKY traveled to Kaunas and knocked at Čerkeliunene's door on May 6, 1953. Čerkeliunene, whom DEMBOVSKY in his report to Shvets described as a "plump elderly woman about 60-65 years old," met him with a lot of suspicion and he had to play the role of a dental patient in order to be able to communicate to her that he had a letter from Kipp.<sup>181</sup> After hearing that, Čerkeliunene told DEMBOVSKY to return to her

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<sup>178</sup> It is much less known that the MVD also reversed the numbering of the intelligence and counterintelligence branches of the former MGB. Thus, the First Department of the MGB (foreign intelligence) was renamed the Second Department of the MVD and the Second Department of the MGB (counterintelligence) became the First Department of the MVD. This meant, for instance, that, as indicated in the text above, Lt. Colonel Shvets was now working in the Second Department.

<sup>179</sup> Shvets, "Summary memorandum," *Operation JESUITS*, May 8, 1953, p. 323.

<sup>180</sup> Kipp, "Letter," *Operation JESUITS*, April 1953, p. 324.

<sup>181</sup> DEMBOVSKY, "Report," *Operation JESUITS*, May 8, 1953, pp. 318-320.



apartment after her working hours and, when they met again later that evening, treated him with tea and cookies. She shared with DEMBOVSKY the news that her husband had recently died [Čerkeliunas passed away on Good Friday 1953 - April 3, 1953].<sup>182</sup> She also told him that she had a communication channel with her son “through Poland” but did not want to elaborate any further. At 10 minutes to 10 PM, she invited DEMBOVSKY to another room to listen to the *Voice of America* broadcast in Lithuanian language. After the broadcast, which had expressed the hope that Lithuania would someday be independent again, Čerkeliunene commented: “Maybe God will indeed make the independence possible.”<sup>183</sup> Thus, it appears that, even after almost a decade of both direct and indirect repressive Soviet policies in Lithuania, the commitment to its independence among the middle class Lithuanian professionals, such as Čerkeliunene and her husband, was still very vibrant. In other words, the MVD could intercept and control the clandestine channels of communications of the middle class Lithuanians with their friends and relatives in the West, but it could not, as Operation JESUITS has shown, modify or lessen, let alone root out, their national loyalties.

Čerkeliunene readily agreed to write a letter to Kipp and, while DEMBOVSKY waited, she wrote down several paragraphs, mostly about family matters.<sup>184</sup> She informed Kipp of her husband’s death, telling him to pass on the sad news to her son Kestutis. She also wrote that all his “relatives,” the codeword for other Jesuit priests, as

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<sup>182</sup> Čerkeliunene, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, May 6, 1953, p. 322. On the other hand, an official MGB letter asserts that Čerkeliunas died on April 4, 1953. Lapin, “Letter,” *Operation JESUITS*, April 20, 1953, p. 326.

<sup>183</sup> DEMBOVSKY, “Report,” p. 321.

<sup>184</sup> Čerkeliunene, “Letter,” p. 322.

Shvets pointed out in his summary memorandum, were either dead, or moved far away (implying the imprisonment in a labor camp, according to Shvets), and that there was nobody left. In conclusion, she told Kipp that he was always in her daily prayers and that she hoped they would meet again someday. The ending of the letter sounded as if she were taking leave of him forever.

Čerkeliunene's letter was promptly translated into Russian and attached to Shvets's summary memorandum. The fact that the MVD leadership let Čerkeliunene's observation about the absence of Jesuits in Kaunas be conveyed to Kipp meant that they had given up on the idea of setting up a fake Jesuit group. The Jesuits were evidently no longer significant to them as a target group to be exploited for their purposes, at least not through the means of the correspondence between Kipp and Čerkeliunene. That was a very important indication that Operation JESUITS itself was slowly but surely being wound down.

## Vilnius, 1953

And, indeed, on December 9, 1953, Captain Konin, an officer of the First Section of the First Department of the Lithuanian MVD, wrote a resolution in which he stated that after examining all the documents in the Operation JESUITS folder, he had come to the conclusion that the operation should be terminated and the documents sent to the archives of the First Special Department.<sup>185</sup> He also stated that the MVD would continue the surveillance of the main suspects - Kipp, Čerkeliunene, and Gruodis (the fourth

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<sup>185</sup> Konin, "Resolution," *Operation JESUITS*, December 9, 1953, pp. 345-346.

suspect Čerkeliunas having died) - but would split their cases into individual files.<sup>186</sup> This meant that the MVD concluded that the suspects' mutual association was no longer considered a threat to the state security of the Soviet Union. However, in the case of Kipp, Konin proposed that the search file be opened which meant that his espionage activities against the Soviet Union were now being considered as having been proven. Konin's resolution was signed by his superiors, the head of the First Section, Lieutenant Colonel Iakovlev and the deputy head of the First Department, Colonel Kostikov.<sup>187</sup> It was approved the next day by the deputy head of the Lithuanian MVD, Colonel Iakov Sinitsyn.<sup>188</sup>

Reflecting the typical Soviet state security practices at the time, in order to prepare the operation folder for the archive, Konin wrote an 11-page memorandum, chronicling the most important events of Operation JESUITS from the summer of 1945 to the fall of 1953.<sup>189</sup> Konin also provided a shorter information summary of the operation and dated it two days later.<sup>190</sup> Both documents were approved by Konin's immediate supervisor, Lieutenant Colonel Yakovlev. It is interesting that at this termination point, there was no further involvement of any higher level MVD officers, such as Filimonov or Slobodskikh, who had played a significant role in the development of the operation in the past. This can be taken as yet another indication that Operation JESUITS was not as successful as Soviet state security had hoped it would be. While it is

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<sup>186</sup> I was not able to locate these individual files during my research at the Hoover Institution.

<sup>187</sup> There are no publicly available biographies of either Iakovlev or Kostikov at this time.

<sup>188</sup> Konin, "Resolution," p. 345. For a biography of Sinitsyn, see "Biography of Iakov Sinitsyn" in Nikita V. Petrov. *Those Who Led Soviet State Security, 1941-1954*, pp. 794-795.

<sup>189</sup> Konin, "Memorandum," *Operation JESUITS*, December 26, 1953, pp. 329-339.

<sup>190</sup> Konin, "Information Summary," *Operation JESUITS*, December 28, 1953, pp. 340-344.

true that SEVENTH's association with the Lithuanian emigres linked to the U.S. intelligence service in Germany might have still looked promising at this point of time in the late 1953 and early 1954, the MVD must have decided that the operational attempts to intercept their letters and lines of communication would no longer need to rely very much on Kipp, Čerkeliunene, or Gruodas. For instance, although Gruodas was mentioned by Konin as still being one of the main suspects, it was a long time since he had any contact with anybody outside the Lithuanian village to which he was exiled by the MVD and where he was kept under permanent surveillance.<sup>191</sup>

The handwritten note by Lieutenant Pokaznikov dated February 25, 1954, indicated that the creation of individual files on Kipp, Čerkeliunene, and Gruodas derived from the Operation JESUITS folder was completed.<sup>192</sup> According to Pokaznikov, Kipp's file was sent to the Second Department of the Lithuanian MVD (the foreign intelligence branch), while the files on Čerkeliunene and Gruodas were sent to the municipal MVD branches in their places of residence, Kaunas and Jurbarkas. The First Special Department of the Lithuanian MVD in charge of the archives confirmed the receipt of the Operation JESUITS folder in February 1954.<sup>193</sup>

However, this was not the end of the interest of Soviet state security in Operation JESUITS. The internal struggles within the Soviet Communist leadership that followed Stalin's death and resulted in the arrest and execution of the MVD head Lavrenty Beria and his closest associates in December 1953 affected how the new

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<sup>191</sup> Konin, "Memorandum," p. 339.

<sup>192</sup> Pokaznikov, "Note," *Operation JESUITS*, February 25, 1954, p. 347.

<sup>193</sup> The First Special Department, "Note," *Operation JESUITS*, February 1954, p. 348.

incarnation of the Soviet state security system - the Committee for State Security (KGB) established in March 1954 - perceived the decisions made by its MVD predecessor. The KGB issued executive order No. 00511 on August 12, 1954 which, evidently, required the re-assessment of all major cases and operations of the MVD.<sup>194</sup> The turn for the re-assessment of Operation JESUITS came in April 1956 when the officers of the Fourth Directorate of the Lithuanian KGB in charge of policing domestic political dissent requested the Operation JESUITS files of the main suspects - Kipp, the Čerkeliunas couple, and Gruodis - from the Lithuanian KGB Documentary-Archival Department.<sup>195</sup> The files were reviewed by Senior Lieutenant Draškinas, an officer of the First Section of the Third Department of the Fourth Directorate. In a handwritten resolution dated June 15, 1956, Draškinas concluded that the files still had operational significance and recommended their permanent safekeeping in the archives of the Lithuanian KGB.<sup>196</sup> The resolution was approved by the head of the Fourth Directorate, Colonel Babintsev.<sup>197</sup> Rather than being destroyed, the operation's folder was to be filed away in the archives for good.

Twenty years later, on December 18, 1976, one more KGB document was added to the folder. This was the statutory decision based on the KGB executive order No.

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<sup>194</sup> The text of this executive order appears not to have been publicly released at this time. However, its meaning can be inferred from the printed form for the re-assessment of Operation JESUITS. Draškinas, "Resolution," *Operation JESUITS*, June 15, 1956, p. 353.

<sup>195</sup> "Requests to the Documentary-Archival Department of the Lithuanian KGB," *Operation JESUITS*, April 19, 1956, pp. 349-352.

<sup>196</sup> Draškinas, "Resolution," p. 353 reverse.

<sup>197</sup> There is no publicly available biography of Babintsev at this time. An officer named V. Babintsev is mentioned as the head of the MGB Inspection Group in March 1953 in Oleg Mozokhin's database. See "The Inspection Group," [www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr\\_org/respublik/litva/structure/inspection.html](http://www.shieldandsword.mozohin.ru/nkgb4353/terr_org/respublik/litva/structure/inspection.html). Accessed on February 1, 2024.

00346 from November 18, 1961 stating that a legally necessary amount of time having elapsed, the four protagonists of Operation JESUITS were to be removed from the operational accounting of the KGB. It is safe to assume that by this time not only Čerkeliunas, but also the other three were dead. Operation JESUITS may have started with the anticipation of a bang, but it vanished into oblivion with a less than a whimper.

## Conclusion

This paper has taken a microhistorical approach to the study of an operation of Soviet state security in post-WWII Lithuania. It endeavored to describe the operation in all its complexity in order to enable the reader to get the sense of the changing operating procedures, institutional practices, legal norms, and center-periphery relations as Soviet state security went through several incarnations (NKGB-MGB-MVD-KGB) in the course of less than a decade after the end of WWII. While Operation JESUITS did not have any major operational significance, this paper has shown that it involved the hitherto unknown engagements of at least half a dozen high-level Soviet state security officials, which have now been documented publicly for the first time. The operation's torturous ups and downs, its meager successes and prominent failures, its institutional entanglements and brutal interventions into the private sphere, all in their own different way, point to the ultimate powerlessness of Soviet state security to contain and thwart the national aspirations of the ordinary Lithuanian citizens. In other words, already in the early 1950s, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a foregone conclusion.