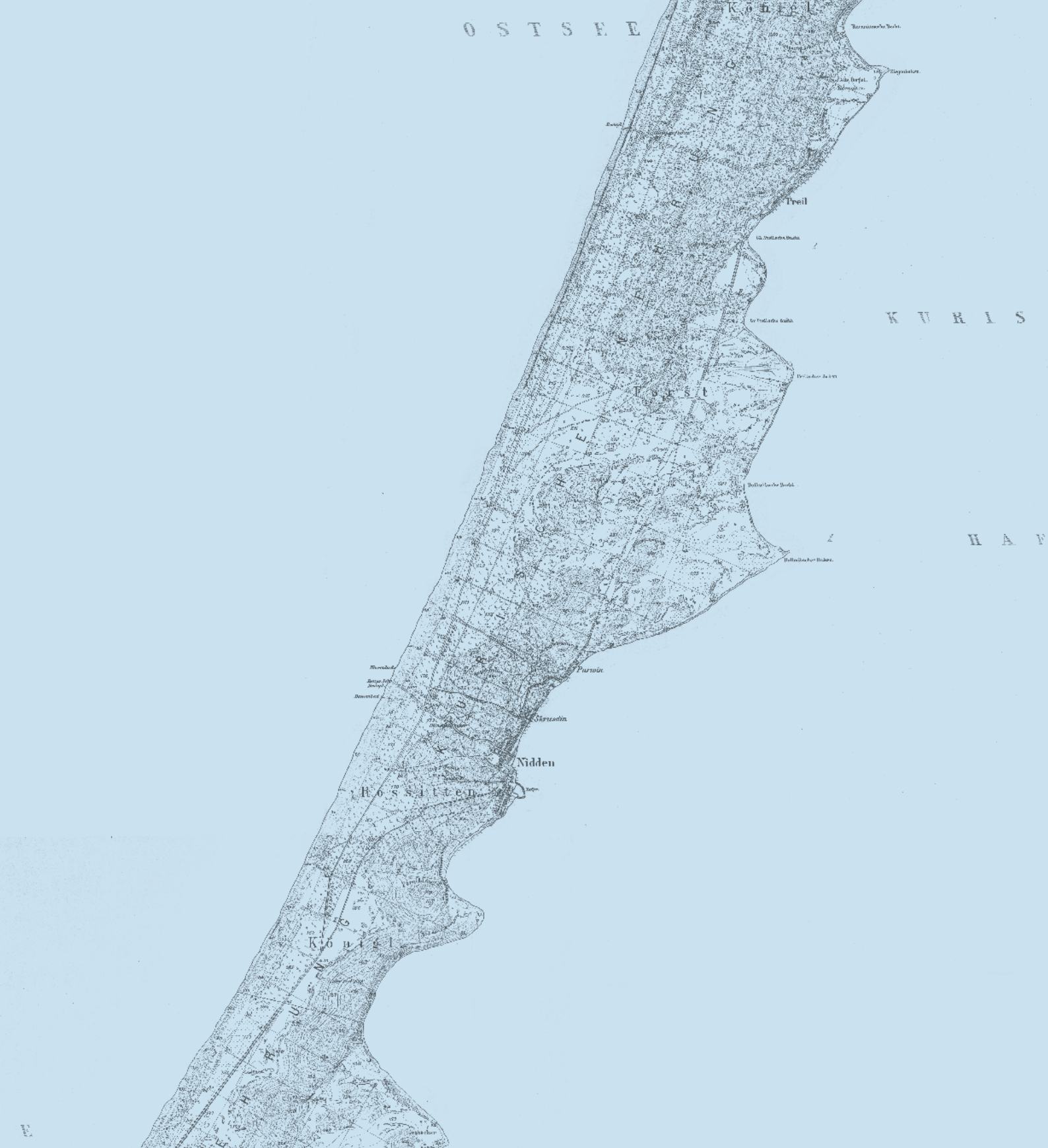
Migrants and Refugees on the Curc

Since the times of the Prussian philosopher and naturalist Wilhelm von Humboldt, the Curonian Spit has been called a woodland paradise, the gem of the kingdom of dunes, and a wonder of nature. The Berlin journalist Otto Glagau was the first to describe it as 'the East Prussian Sahara' in 1868. It was subsequently called 'the Northern Sahara'. In 1923 it became the 'Lithuanian Sahara' to the Lithuanian publicist Juozas Pronskus. And in 1932, Petras Babickas, another Lithuanian journalist and traveller, described it as 'the Lithuanian amber coast'. For most authors, the spit was valuable primarily because of its beautiful landscape. But why do we call it 'Curonian'? Who were, and are, its inhabitants? What are the stories surrounding the settlement of the peninsula? We are invited here to reconsider the prevailing images, and see the peninsula as a place of constant migration, an area that was almost completely depopulated as a consequence of the Second World War, and the resettlement of which was exceptional in the postwar Lithuanian context.

Detail from several combined 1:25,000 scale topographical maps made in 1910 on the basis of a topographical photograph, and published in 1912 by the Royal Prussian Land Survey (Königlich Preußische Landesaufnahme). Courtesy of the Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology, Klaipėda University. >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Klaipėda University
Institute of Baltic Region
History and Archaeology

Vasilijus
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Migrants and Refugees on the Curonian Spit: Resettlement in the Mid-20th Century

A research study

Vilnius, 2019

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Introduction

The subject of migration can hardly be counted as being of minor importance today. The frequent changes of place of residence that we can observe in today's mobile society contribute towards this as much as people fleeing or being forced from their homes as a result of social or economic problems or armed conflict. In 2014, UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, announced that the world was witnessing the highest level of forced displacement since the Second World War, with the highest number of uprooted people on all continents simultaneously. The challenges of forced displacement, long forgotten by most Europeans, were brought to the fore on the Old Continent by the 'migrant crisis'. This is also a good time to look back at how Europeans managed to resolve similar crises in the past.

Unlike the focus put on the topic of migration by the general public, studies by historians looking at mass displacement may only partly be considered an occasional phenomenon. The experience of the Second World War was an important factor giving an impetus to these studies. Their further development, however, covered a far broader experience, and not only that of Europeans. Today there are dozens of scholarly journals and research institutions working on the history of migration.

In Lithuania, however, migration history is a relatively recent research topic, which did not receive scholarly attention for a long time after the Second World War. In fact, emigration by Lithuanians to North America in the late 19th and early 20th century was the only theme that attracted the interest of historians. Other forms of migration (primarily forced) became an object of interest to researchers only from around 1988. The flight of inhabitants of Lithuania in 1944 and 1945 from the returning Red Army, life in displaced persons camps in Germany, and deportations from Lithuania to Siberia in the late 1940s and early 1950s, belonged to the 'blank spots' about which the general public wanted to know the most but was given the least. Historians began publishing information about migration processes that took place

in Lithuania during and after the Second World War in the light of this interest. It was only later that scholars began focusing on mass migration relating to the First World War and the 'first postwar period'. In addition, between 1988 and 1991, researchers began looking at the history of migration in Lithuania's two 'border' territories, the Vilnius and Klaipėda regions, which were, in principle, repopulated in the years after the Second World War.

In a sense, this study extends the existing research into these two areas of study, focusing on the Second World War and the postwar period, and on a specific part of the Klaipėda region (Memel Territory, Memelgebiet, Klaipėdos kraštas). However, these areas are pursued in slightly different directions. Firstly, studies on the migration of the Lithuanian population (forced displacement is no exception) are usually conducted on a macro level.[1] This study focuses on migration processes that took place in a small area called the Curonian Spit, a peninsula split between Russia and Lithuania separating the Curonian Lagoon from the Baltic Sea, focusing largely on its Lithuanian section. It deals with a small community of people,[2] and in order to analyse it, a macro analysis has to be combined with a micro perspective. I hope that this combination of viewpoints will allow the reader to understand better the transformations described in the study. Secondly, unlike most studies on migration published in Lithuania in recent decades, this study offers a glimpse not only of processes that occurred during the Second World War and the postwar years, but also of earlier population mobility processes. It aims to show that migration (including forced displacement) was almost a constant part of the history of the Curonian Spit. It is by no means an attempt to trivialise the migration experiences of residents of the Curonian Spit in the mid-20th century, but rather an attempt to put them in a broader context, by shedding light on the history of the settlement process on the Curonian Spit, marked by turning points and continuity.

This study is not the first to examine migration on the Curonian Spit. Human migration to and on the peninsula that took place in the Early Modern and contemporary periods is discussed by most authors who write about the Curonian Spit. In the period before the Second World War, the subject was studied most com-

1 Cf. articles in a recent publication on migration processes in the 20th century in Lithuania: Balkelis, Davoliūtė 2016.

2 The current 3,000 residents whose declared place of residence is the Neringa municipality is an all-time historical high.

prehensively by Kurt Forstreuter and Friedrich Mager.[3] Forstreuter analysed the emergence of settlements on the peninsula and the ethnic origins of its population, while Mager examined in detail the development of the landscape, the history of the villages and their relocation from one place to another due to the shifting sands, and the activities of the inhabitants of the spit. The analysis of post-Second World War migration presented in this study would not have been possible without the prior work of Arūnė Liucija Arbušauskaitė. The articles she published between 1993 and 2000 in Lithuania and Germany focus mostly on the arrival of new settlers on the Curonian Spit after the Second World War, and on the postwar deportations of local inhabitants from the peninsula. Moreover, she was the first person to sum up the data from an unofficial population census conducted on the Lithuanian part of the spit in 1956 by ethnographers from the Institute of History (Vilnius).[4] This study inevitably revisits some of the issues that were first discussed by Arbušauskaitė, but the picture she provided is considerably supplemented, and even clarified in some cases. For example, she provides a very detailed overview of the settlement process on the Curonian Spit after 1951, but pays very little attention to the planned settlement process in the region during the period 1945 to 1947. Her work also sheds relatively little light on the fate of prewar residents during and after the Second World War.

The study consists of three chapters. The first, covering a rather long period up to 1945, should be seen as an introduction. The second is devoted to migration processes of the prewar residents of the northern section. The third is devoted to postwar settlers. Despite the fact that the main subjects of the book are Second World War and postwar refugees and new settlers, the decision was made to limit the treatment of the post-Second World War period. The book deals with changes that took place prior to 1961, when the municipality of Neringa was established. This can be explained by the fact that the period between 1944 and 1961 was characterised by the most extensive population changes, and after 1961 the settlement of the northern section of the peninsula was determined by completely different factors. Settlement in Neringa after 1961 is yet to receive attention from historians.

3 Forstreuter 1931; Mager 1938.

4 The most significant works on this topic are Arbušauskaitė 1993 (an earlier version of 1995b); 1994; 1995a; 1995b; 2000.

Chapter I

Migration before the mid-20th century

The border

Today it is difficult to picture in our minds the migration processes on the Curonian Spit prior to the mid-20th century. This is primarily because those who want to travel along the entire Curonian Spit must have a Russian visa, and there are virtually no transport links between the two parts of the Curonian Lagoon. Due to the deterioration of the region's geopolitical situation in 2014, the border across the Curonian Lagoon and the Curonian Spit has become an impenetrable barrier to many: those who travel in the Lithuanian part of the Curonian Spit (which is in the European Union and the Schengen Area) usually avoid entering Russia. Only those who are travelling to the Russian-controlled Kaliningrad Oblast visit both parts of the peninsula, the southern section belonging to Russia, and the northern one to Lithuania.

However, the state border first came into existence only in 1920. Until then, the whole Curonian Spit and the Curonian Lagoon belonged to Prussia, which became part of the German Empire in 1871. It was not until the Treaty of Versailles came into force after the First World War that the northern part of the Curonian Spit and the Curonian Lagoon, along with the East Prussian territory to the north of the Nemunas–Rusnė (Memel–Russ) rivers, was separated from Germany. The southern part remained under the control of East Prussia, while the north became the most unique part of a new political entity, the Territory of Memel.[1] In the period from 1920 to 1923, the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory was administered temporarily by France, on behalf of the Entente powers, and in 1923 it became an autonomous region of the Republic of Lithuania. In 1939, it was integrated into Nazi Germany, following an ultimatum from Adolf Hitler, but in 1944–1945 it again became the westernmost area of Lithuania. By that time, however, Lithuania had been reincorporated into the Soviet Union. So after the Second World War, the border on the Curonian Spit was a notional barrier between two parts of the Soviet Union, the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, and the Kaliningrad Oblast of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, which emerged in 1946 in the north of East Prussia. Not until 1991 did it regain the status of a state border, this time between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Lithuania.

1 For more information on the history of the region, see Safronovas 2016.

< Traffic at the harbour in Nidden (Nida). Photograph from the 1930s. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, P-33840.

The geopolitical changes that occurred in the East Baltic region in the 20th century were also felt on the Curonian Spit. The peninsula was divided into two parts. The ruling authorities of the northern part changed five times. The photograph shows the removal of 'signs of Lithuanian governance' (mandatory public information in two languages) in March 1939 after the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory was annexed by Nazi Germany. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka*, AdM collection, F-II3(61).

NIDA
NIDDEN

The German-Lithuanian border on the Curonian Spit was not difficult to cross during the interwar period. Just like today, passports were checked at the mid-point on the road running down the spit, and also at the port in Nidden (Nida). Photographs by Haro Schumacher, 1930s. *Bildarchiv des Herder-Instituts*, 6a2696, 6a2667.

The emergence of the border running across the middle of the Curonian Spit in 1920 was not accidental. There had been an administrative boundary crossing Nidden (Nida) and Grabscher Haken (Cape Grobštas, Grobšto ragas, Mys Vostochnyj) dating back to the Middle Ages. At the beginning, it separated lands controlled by two officers of the Teutonic Order: the commander in Memel (Klaipėda), and the marshal in Königsberg (present-day Kaliningrad). The border was first accurately delineated in 1537,[2] and in the 16th century it became a boundary between two administrative units of the Duchy of Prussia: Rossitten (present-day Rybachij) area (Kammeramt) of the Schaaken (present-day Nekrasovo) District, and the Memel District (Hauptamt). It finally served as a line separating the districts (Kreis) of Fischhausen (present-day Primorsk) and Memel that were established in Prussia in the early 19th century. However, in the 20th century this boundary came to separate two states. Even during the interwar period, when the Memel Territory belonged to Lithuania, travellers from Königsberg and other areas of East Prussia could easily enter Nida (Nidden), which was on the Lithuanian side of the border. They just had to obtain a visa on board a steamship, on payment of a fee.

Transit, travellers, and rooted settlers

The fact that there was no state border running across the middle of the Curonian Spit before the 20th century is one reason why totally different migration routes existed on the peninsula. For hundreds of years, the Curonian Spit served more as a link than as a barrier between separate districts. Another factor explaining the different migration routes is the old road network. Today, there are totally different transport systems.

After the Teutonic Order had taken over the area inhabited by the Old Prussians in the 13th century, and after the Knights of the Sword, who ruled present-day Latvia and Estonia, merged with the Order in 1237, the Curonian Spit occupied an area between two of the Order's castles, Memelburg (1252) and Königsberg (1255). Previously used as a transport link between the Baltic pagan tribes that lived in Sambia and Samogitia, it now

2 Forstreuter 1931: 49.

served as a link between the lands of the Order in Prussia and Livonia. During this period, it became the shortest and safest land route from Livonia to the rest of Europe.

The main road (originally a gravel road) on the Curonian Spit today was only built in the early 20th century. Before that, the road from Cranz (present-day Zelenogradsk) to Rossitten ran along the lagoon, and from Rossitten to Sandkrug (Smiltynė) beside the sea. In some sections north of Karwaiten it ran directly along the beach. For several hundred years, the spit served as an artery leading from Reval (Tallinn), Narva, Dorpat (Tartu), Riga, and, from the early 18th century, from the Russian capital St Petersburg, to Königsberg, Elbing (Elbląg) and Danzig (Gdańsk), and on to other Central and West European cities. For some time, the road was used by the Hanseatic League,[3] and in the first half of the 17th century, following the emergence of a regular postal service in the region, the old road became a post 'service' route, which played an increasingly important role.[4] For almost two centuries, it was used to send mail and exchange information. It was also used by merchants, intellectuals, noblemen and European monarchs. In 1831–1833, after the Šiauliai–Tilsit (present-day Sovetsk) road was granted the status of a post road, the road that ran along the Curonian Spit began to serve local needs only. So the Curonian Spit was a transport link for a long period of time.

The transit function that the peninsula served until the 20th century explains many things. First, transport had a direct impact on the development of the settlements and their positioning on the spit. Settlements were established as stops along the road for travellers (offering them, for example, inns, post offices, fresh horses, and standby posts), and some residents of the spit were always involved in accommodating travellers and carrying items. At the turn of the 15th century, it seems that only the southern section was used. The first ever inns recorded on the spit were founded along this section, in Sarkau (present-day Lesnoj, first mentioned in 1408[5]), and in Rossitten (1389). Moreover, due to the conflict between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Teutonic Order, the southern section of the road was only used during the winter. After reaching Rossitten, travellers would take the route across the frozen Curonian Lagoon to Windenburger Ecke (Cape Ventė, Ventės ragas), where the Teutonic

3 Cf. Bruns, Weczerka 1962: Karten A, B, VII, VIII, 41.

4 For more information on this evolution, see Safronovas 2013: 13–14, 229–231.

5 The dates here are based on: Ziesemer 1968: 310, 311, 313; Forstreuter 1931: 49, 56.

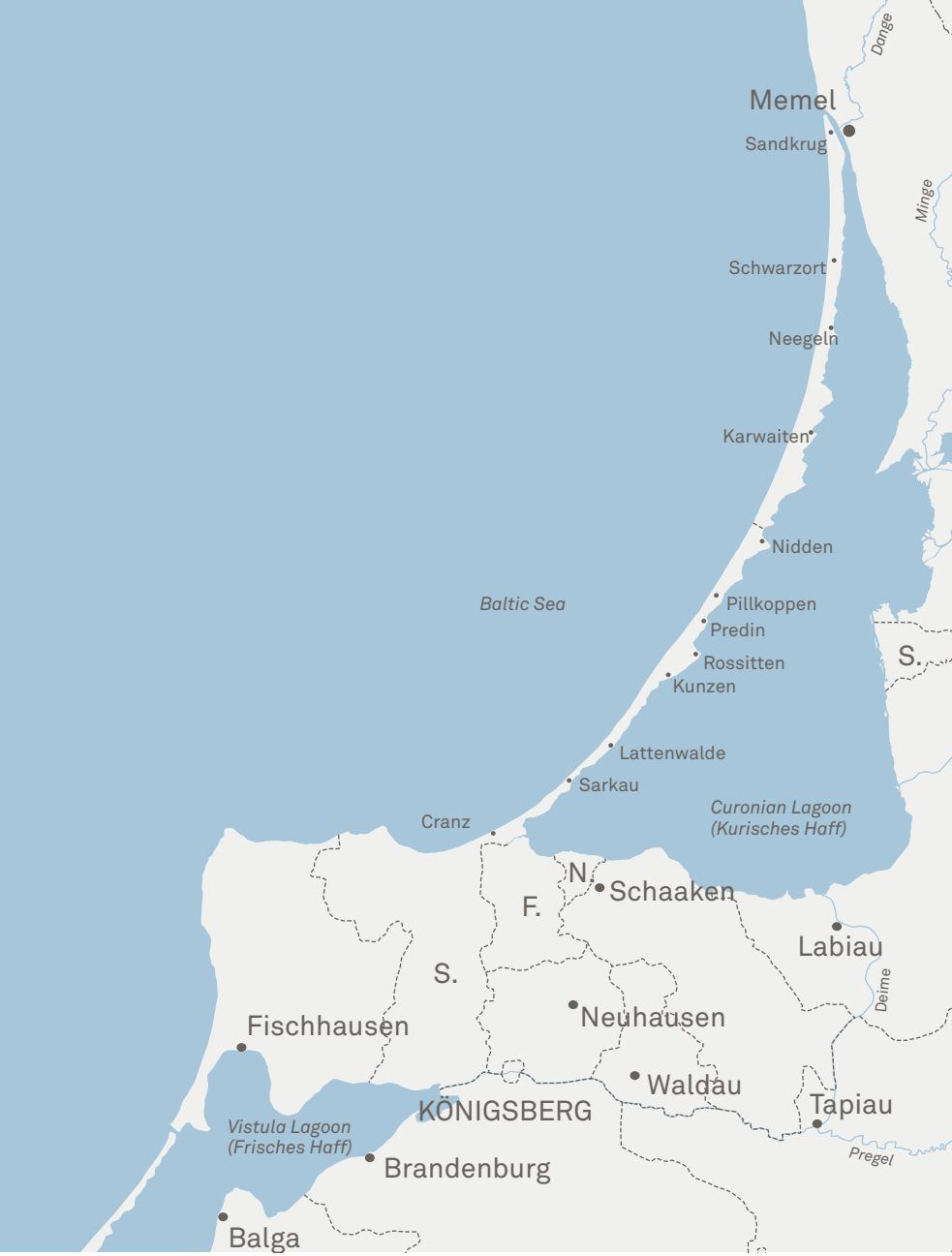
Order's Windenburg castle was.[6] However, records show that after the Treaty of Melno (1422), inns situated at an equal distance from each other also existed, in Nidden (first mentioned in 1437), Neegeln (1447), Nimmersatt and Vitte on the outskirts of Memel (both first mentioned in 1434). It is believed that there was also an inn called Treyeros in the 15th century, in the village later known as Karwaiten (first mentioned in 1509), and another called Sandkrug (literally Sand Inn), just opposite Memel, where travellers waited to be ferried across the lagoon to Memel, just like today. The network of inns that emerged on the Curonian Spit in the 15th and 16th centuries is evidence of the beginning of greater use of the land route.

Transport along the Curonian Spit between Prussia and Livonia in the Medieval period explains another important thing: the formation of the unique composition of the population on the peninsula. The main direction of coastal migration along the north-south axis is one of the reasons for the emergence of settlers on the spit from Curonia (today Kurzeme in Latvia and western Lithuania). This was the first wave of settlement that is clearly recorded in written sources.[7] Records about it date back to the beginning of the 15th century. At that time, peasants from Curonia moved southwards, settling around Memel, along the Baltic Sea and the Curonian Lagoon, which had been abandoned after wars. This trend continued throughout the first half of the 15th century.[8] Records show that there were several other waves of peasant migration from Curonia in the 17th century.[9] During these waves, peasants from Curonia who moved south along the coast reached the Sambian Peninsula in the present-day Kaliningrad Oblast, where the geographical name Groß Kuhren (Great Curonians) was mentioned in 1400.[10] Many of these migrants settled on the Curonian Spit, especially in the southern part around Sarkau and Rossitten, the only areas where the land could be ploughed or grazed. However, a considerable number also ended up on the northern section of the spit, which was governed from Memel, and where fishing was the only livelihood. They called themselves Kursenieki, or Curonians. Prussian Lithuanians who lived on the other side of the Curonian Lagoon called them Kopininkai[11] (meaning 'those who live in the dunes').

6 Cf. Hirsch, Töppen, Strehlke 1863: 665; Forstreuter 1931: 48.

7 There is not yet enough data to answer the question who were the first inhabitants of the Curonian Spit. Most information available to us about the earliest people on the peninsula is due to the fact that the wind has uncovered various finds on ground that was once covered by sand, and these finds have attracted interest from researchers for almost two centuries since the 18th century. Analyses of finds from the sites of Nida (Nidden) and Alksnynė (Erlenhorst) show that during the Sub-Neolithic and Neolithic periods, the Curonian Spit was inhabited by people linked to Rzucewo (Bay Coast) culture. They were scattered along the southeast shore of the Baltic Sea. Finds in these ancient settlements are dated c. 3500–2500 BC. Most later finds are from the Viking Age. Thus, the history of settlement on the Curonian Spit covers a 'blank' period spanning over 3,000 years. During the interwar years, some researchers (Mortensen 1924: 181) claimed that nobody lived on the spit prior to the arrival of the Teutonic Order. However, individual archaeological finds from the early

The road along the Curonian Spit was still known as ‘the post road’ in the early 1900s. Photograph from the 1920s–1930s. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka*, AdM collection, F–II2(14).



The political and administrative division of the Curonian Spit and the lagoon area around 1650. The map shows the boundaries between Prussian districts (Hauptamt), their centres, and the villages along the Curonian Spit at that time. F. belongs to Hauptamt Fischhausen, N. to Hauptamt Neuhausen, R. to Hauptamt Ragnit, S. to Hauptamt Schaaken. Map by Vasilijus Safronovas.

Commonwealth of the Two Nations
(Grand Duchy of Lithuania)
Russ
Gilge
Tilsit
Memel
Ragnit
Szeszuppe
Inster
R.
Insterburg
Pissa
Angerapp

These migrants who moved in several waves from present-day western Latvia to the Curonian Spit were not the only ones to settle on the peninsula. In general, they belonged to the lower class of the rather strictly stratified society of that time. The upper class on the Curonian Spit was comprised of German speakers. These included the Order's knights and innkeepers, and later on burgraves (in Rossitten), foresters and other officials, as well as postmasters, and even later fishermen. The routes that contributed to their emergence on the Curonian Spit still require comprehensive analysis. In the 15th, and especially the 16th century, increased contacts between Prussia and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were accompanied by an increase in coastal migration along an east-west axis. This could be a possible explanation as to why Lithuanian-speaking people also moved to the Curonian Spit from areas on the other side of the Curonian Lagoon during the Early Modern Period.[12] It appears that this direction of migration, which requires a deeper analysis in order to understand it better, did not emerge as a one-off or temporary phenomenon.

Adalbert Bezzenberger, who once tried to identify the origins of the surnames of residents of the Curonian Spit recorded in the 1569 Schaaken Bailiwick (Vogtei) visitation of churches, estimated that there were 39 to 45 surnames of German origin, and 52 to 58 surnames of non-German origin (Lithuanian, Latvian, Old Prussian and mixed).[13] It should be added, however, that this visitation only covered the southern section of the peninsula, extending up to, and including, Karwaiten. The northern section was apparently more homogeneous. This is evidenced by a similar, but later, estimation by Eugen Lotto, the priest at Schwarzort (Juodkrantė), based on data from the parish of Karwaiten: in the late 18th century, only a fifth of residents in the parish were German speakers. Fr Lotto attributed the remaining residents to Curonians and Lithuanians.[14] Nonetheless, it is clear that the migration processes that started at the turn of the 15th century contributed to a mixing of populations and the emergence of stratification on the Curonian Spit, based on people's social status and cultural backgrounds. This was a common phenomenon in East Central Europe during the Early Modern Period. Despite the fact that social barriers started to come down in the 19th century, and

period of the rule of the Teutonic Order have been found near Preila (Preil), Morskoe (Pillkoppen) and Rybachij (Rossitten); a large number have also been found in the burial sites of Stangenwalde and Lattenwalde. The finds dated to between the 13th and the 15th century from the Stangenwalde burial site near Rossitten, surveyed in the second half of the 19th century, provide evidence that the culture brought by the Teutonic Order interacted with the traditions of the local community. Cf. Hollack 1908: 80–85; Engel 1931a; Engel 1931b: esp. 86; Rimantienė 1989; Rimantienė 1999; Piličiauskas 2013; Piličiauskas 2016, esp. 36–37; also Hergheligiu 2018.

8 Cf. Diederichs 1883: 49–52, Bezzenberger 1889: 269–272; Forstreuter 1931: 53–55.

9 Seraphim 1892.

10 Mortensen 1923: 297.

11 Unlike the Latin name for the peninsula *Neria Curoniensis*, which can be traced back to 1283 in historical records, or the German name *Kewrische Nerie*, which first appeared in 1497, it was only after 1917 that the Lithuanian forms *Nėrija*, *Neringa*, and subsequently *Nerija*, became widespread

despite the growing influence of the German language and culture, cultural diversity remained a characteristic feature of the Curonian Spit up to the mid-20th century. This does not mean, however, that settling in one location became the prevalent trend on the peninsula.

People driven out by nature

Over time, the Curonian Spit has seen both external and internal migration. Of all the factors that encouraged residents to move from one location to another on the peninsula, the most important was shifting sands. The forested landscape of the Curonian Spit as we know it today emerged rather late, and largely as a result of human activity. Several centuries ago, everything looked different. 'A spit of sand', a site which was once densely inhabited by falcons but now is barely home to fieldfares, and 'three miles of pure sand stretching all the way from Nidden to Schwarzort', was how travellers who set out on the rather unpleasant day's journey from Königsberg to Memel along the Curonian Spit in the late 18th century described the landscape of the peninsula[15] (an alternative route involved sailing across the Curonian Lagoon, but it was risky and could take longer than planned due to the weather).

As is evidenced by written records, wind-blown shifting sands were a threat to local homesteads and pastures, and over time, they forced residents to leave their homes and move from one place to another, a process that has been observed since as early as the 16th century.[16] However, the impact of shifting sands could have emerged earlier: the 16th century stands out in this regard only because there was a considerable increase in the number of written records about the Curonian Spit in this period. It seems that during the 17th century, groves of trees still served as a natural defence against moving sand for most of the homesteads that were located in clusters on the Curonian Spit. However, Lattenwalde and Predin, two settlements that emerged just after 1650, were buried in sand over a period of 60 to 100 years.[17] At the turn of the 19th century, small pine forests in the northern part of the Curonian Spit were only found at Schwarzort and Nidden. Their residents managed

in Lithuanian writing. Lithuanians who lived on both shores of the Curonian Lagoon referred to the peninsula as *kopai* or *kopos* (sand dunes), and frequently *pajūriai* or *randavos* (coast), and to its residents as *kopininkai* (Diederichs 1885: 10 et al.; Gerullis, Stangas 1933: 84, 99; Mažiulis 1960: 301–302). The early use of the name Curonian to designate the peninsula shows that in the Medieval period it was understood as a piece of land related to Curonia. Cf. also Kiseliūnaitė, Simutytė 2005: 17–19; Mažiulis 1960.

12 This is evidenced not only by the use of the addition to names of the words Litau (Lithuanian) and Samait (Samogitian) to refer to some residents of the Curonian Spit in the 16th century, as noted by Forstreuter (1931: 58), but also by Dainius Elertas' attempts to identify hypothetical family links between taxpayers who lived on the Curonian Spit and on the opposite shore of the Curonian Lagoon in the first half of the 16th century (Elertas 2014: esp. 32). For more information on the extensive migration processes that took place in the region of the Curonian Lagoon in the 16th century, see also Gierszewski 2013.

13 Bezzenberger 1889: 257–260.

to protect themselves against moving sand, although today these villages are not in their original locations. People kept moving their homesteads to safer locations. The oldest site for Nidden was near Grabscher Haken (Cape Grobštas, Grobšto ragas, Mys Vostochnyj), in the present-day Kaliningrad Oblast, and the last relocation by some Nidden residents took place in the early 19th century, at the time when Skursdin (Skruzdynė) was founded. Karwaiten and Neegeln have a rather different history, however. The only testimony to the existence of Neegeln (Nagliai), which was relocated three times, is a sand dune named after the village, and Negelnscher Haken (Cape Nagliai), a promontory south of Schwarzort (Juodkrantė) extending into the Curonian Lagoon. During the period 1836 to 1845, this village that had existed for four hundred years was completely buried under sand. Former residents of Neegeln went on to establish Perwelk (Pervalka), Preil (Preila) and Purwin (Purvynė). The village of Karwaiten (Karvaičiai), situated between Perwelk and Preil, which after 1739 happened to be the centre of the parish of the northern part of the Curonian Spit, was also buried by sand several times in different places. Between 1781 and 1798, all the residents, including the priest, the teacher and the innkeeper, gradually moved away from Karwaiten. This is described in the elegy 'The Sunken Village' (1797) by the Königsberg professor Ludwig Rhesa, who was born in Karwaiten. In 1794–1795, the church at Karwaiten was relocated to south of Schwarzort (now a part of Juodkrantė), bringing together some of the remaining Karwaiten residents.

It was not until the 19th century that any systematic attempts were made to control the natural environment, by protecting the dune ridge and by planting restraining vegetation. Efforts to prevent the movement of sand dunes in the northern part of the peninsula in the second half of the 19th century and in the early 20th century were primarily focused on Preil and Perwelk, which were under the most immediate threat, and on the strip of land between Süderspitze (Kopgalis) and Schwarzort, where the strait into the lagoon and the port of Memel were most likely to be affected by sand.

14 Forstreuter 1931: 59–60, first published in *Memeler Dampfboot* (hereafter *MD*), 6 and 19 March 1908.

15 Cf. Wraxall 1775: 314–316; Bernoulli 1779: 200; Nanke 1800: 64.

16 Forstreuter 1931: 46.

17 Cf. Mager 1938: 145–151.

Location changes of surviving villages and villages buried by sand on the Curonian Spit. Map by Vasilijus Safronovas, based on research by Friedrich Mager (1938).

Residents of the Curonian Spit have tried to survive in the harsh environmental conditions for hundreds of years. Apart from the threat of being buried by sand, fishermen's homesteads also faced potential damage from ice floes and the waters of the lagoon. This picture by the Tilsit (present-day Sovetsk) photographer Robert Minzloff shows a homestead in Preil (Preila) flooded by the waters of the lagoon, 1900. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka*, AdM collection, F-II4(2).

Skrusdin (Skruzdynė), a settlement to the north of the oldest part of the village of Nidden (Nida), was inhabited by residents who wanted to escape the wind-blown sand. The first recorded reference to Skrusdin is believed to date from 1828. Photograph from the 1920s–1930s. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka*, AdM collection, F-II3(68).

Having moved to its current location in 1725, Nidden (Nida) survived in this area for several centuries, thanks largely to the forest surrounding it, which served as a natural barrier. This aerial photograph by Paul Isenfels shows the situation in around 1940. *Bildarchiv des Herder-Instituts*, 178162. ›

< The port at Nidden (Nida) and the fishing fleet in the 1930s. Photograph by Vytautas Augustinas. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, P-33837.

The Froese family in Nidden (Nida). Photograph from the 1920s. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka*, AdM collection, F-II3(24).

A fisherman's wedding in Nidden (Nida). Photograph from the 1930s. *Bildarchiv des Herder-Instituts*, 6c389.

RUHT IN GOTT
JOHANN
FRISCHMANN
* 24. OKT. 1847
† 4. FEBR. 1929

Signs of a bygone life for families who lived on the Curonian Spit for several centuries: wooden grave markers for Johann Frischmann (1847–1929) and Michel F(o)ege (1887), buried in the cemetery, and the Blode Hotel signboard. Photographs by Haro Schumacher, 1930s–1940s. *Bildarchiv des Herder-Instituts*, 2a217, 2a305, 263111.

‘Fishermen’s world’ in Schwarzort (Juodkrantė) before the Second World War. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka*, AdM collection, F-II2(5).

The community of the 'period of stability'

The struggle against shifting sand, which involved the use of scientific methods and extensive observations as early as the mid-19th century, yielded tangible results. Sand dunes were stabilised and planted with forests. Neegeln was the last village on the Curonian Spit to be buried in sand. For almost a century, fishermen led a settled life on the peninsula. There was still some internal migration from one village to another, which was prompted largely by marriage or economic interests. This situation led to the formation of a rather isolated community of fishermen, which saw a slow and small influx of newcomers from the outside world.

Well before the mid-19th century, attempts by residents to seek a safer location to protect themselves against the threat of shifting sands meant that members of the same family were scattered across several different villages. Based on records from the 16th and 17th centuries, the surname, or more precisely, an addition to the name Kuhr used in some locations on the Curonian Spit,[18] did not necessarily denote members of the same family, but probably referred to their 'Curonian' background. The fact that a reference to a member of the Blode family is made in 1664 with respect to the village of Predin, which was later buried in sand, and that there were already several bearers of the surname Blode in records from 1730 in the nearby village of Pillkoppen (present-day Morskoe),[19] is not a valid argument, given that most of the residents of Predin moved to Pillkoppen.[20] During the 19th century, however, apart from Pillkoppen, the surname Blode spread to Rossitten and Nidden. The later example of Neegeln is even more revealing: the bearers of at least three surnames (Labrenz, Pinkis and Radmacher) from the 1820 list of parcel owners in Neegeln were recorded in 1843 as having moved to Preil.[21] However, other former residents of Neegeln (Detzkait, Foege, Kakies and Radmacher) resided not only in Preila (Preil), but also in Pervalka (Perwelk), Juodkrantė (Schwarzort), and Nida (Nidden) in the mid-20th century.

This leads us to another factor. The mixing of several dozen families on the Curonian Spit also occurred as a result of the fact that challenges such as shifting sands

18 In the 1569 Schaaken Bailiwick (Vogtei) visitation, a reference is found to Michael Kuhr in Nida; records from 1658 contain a reference to four Kur men in Predin who were half-fishermen; among them, Christoff Kuhr and Hednich Kuhr were mentioned in 1664; in the Kunzen church book of 1727, a reference is made to Georg Kuhr in Kunzen, Christoph Kuhr in Pillkoppen, and Hans Christian Kuhr in Sarkau. One man called Kur who was recorded among the holders of the Sandkrug was rather an exceptional case, as innkeepers were usually German speakers. Cf. Bezzenberger 1889: 205, 206, 258; Forstreuter 1931: 50, 55–56.

19 Bezzenberger 1889: 205, 206.

20 Cf. Mager 1938: 151.

21 Cf. Fuchs 1969: 257; Fuchs 1970: 107.

and disease (an outbreak of plague ravaged the entire region in the early 18th century, and in the mid-18th century cholera killed the entire village of Alt Neegeln) were no longer a critical threat to the population. In the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, this absence of challenges became a factor stabilising and binding communities. The stabilisation was also a result of the fact that during this period, marriages often formed new family units from members of two families from different villages (in contrast to the earlier period, spouses from different shores of the Curonian Lagoon became a rare phenomenon). For example, the first-known member of the Engelinas (Engelin, Engelien) family moved to Nidden in 1729 from the village of Minge to work as a servant for the keeper of the post house and the inn.[22] By 1780, this surname could be found in Schwarzort and Nidden.[23] The surname Pipis (Pippis, Pipp) is found in records from the Curonian Spit from the mid-17th century. By the late 18th century, it was mentioned in Karwaiten-Schwarzort, and in 1820 it was also mentioned in Neegeln.[24] The 1846 Schwarzort church book contains records about the first marriage between new settlers of Preil, the 'local' resident Dorothea Sakuth and the Nidden resident Michael Gulbis.[25] The surname Sakutis (Sakuth) was already known on the Curonian Spit by the mid-17th century, and in the late 18th century it was mentioned in Karwaiten-Schwarzort.[26] After more than a hundred years, bearers of this surname lived in Preil, Schwarzort and Nidden. Meanwhile, the surname Gulbis can only be found in Nidden in records from around 1940.[27] Members of the Weinhold (Winold, Wynhold) family, mentioned in 1664 on the Curonian Spit, can be traced to Karwaiten-Schwarzort in the late 18th century, and in around 1940 they were scattered across Preil and Nidden. The Schekahn (Tzickahn) and Froese (Friese) families were both mentioned in 1664, and can be traced in Karwaiten-Schwarzort in records from 1773 to 1801; but in 1940 they can only be found in Nidden. The Pietsch (Pycz) family, which was mentioned in Schwarzort in around 1780,[28] can be traced in Schwarzort, Nidden and Perwelk in about 1940. In 1843, there were two Bastikas (Bastick, Bastien, Bastian) families among the new settlers of Preil. A hundred years later, bearers of this surname were already scattered across

22 Strakauskaitė 2001: 45.

23 Bezzenberger 1889: 255; Fuchs 1928; Strakauskaitė 2001: 45-46.

24 Bezzenberger 1889: 262; Fuchs 1969: 257.

25 Fuchs 1930.

26 Bezzenberger 1889: 262.

27 I refer here and later to the unpublished list of residents of the northern part of the Curonian Spit that I compiled. It reflects the situation in around 1940, and was developed based on *Einwohnerbuch* 1942, Teil VII: 19–20, 21, 23, 26–27; Isenfels 1942; Pietsch 1983: 32–36, 42–43, 48, 62, 64–65.

28 Bezzenberger 1889: 255.

Schwarzort, Perwelk and Preil. By the mid-20 century, several Lauzeninkas (Lauzening, Lauzeningks, Lauzenings) families lived in Schwarzort, Preil and Nidden. Perhaps the most widely scattered families were the Engelinas, Jakaitis (Jakait, Jakeit), Labrencas (Labrenz) and Peleikis. In about 1940, members of these families were found in all four settlements of the northern part of the Curonian Spit: Schwarzort, Perwelk, Preil and Nidden. According to my estimates, in 1940 members of the 20 families mentioned above accounted for 50 per cent of the population in these four settlements.

Wartime migrants and refugees on the peninsula

Following a relatively long period of 'stability', the two world wars of the 20th century led to new external mass migration on the peninsula. The experiences of forced migration to and across the Curonian Spit that occurred during the First World War were in large part repeated after a few decades. In both cases, the following two main aspects defined the role of the spit: having Russia (later the Soviet Union) as a neighbour, and the fact that ground forces attacking from the east had to put a lot of time and effort into forcing their way across the lagoon to reach the peninsula. The peninsula itself acted as a land route: it was used as a road via which residents of Klaipėda (Memel) could escape from the advancing troops toward Königsberg, and head further into East Prussia (Germany).

In August 1914, at the beginning of the First World War, Memel and the Curonian Spit were just a few dozen kilometres from the border with the Russian Empire. However, Russian troops invaded East Prussia further to the south in mid-August, seizing Tilsit (present-day Sovetsk) on 26 August, and effectively cutting off Memel and its surroundings. For several months, this turned the Curonian Spit into the only land route from Königsberg to Memel. After several months of fighting, Russian troops were pushed out of East Prussia in February 1915. However, in mid-March 1915, Russian forces once more unexpectedly invaded the northern part of the province of East Prussia. As news of the invasion spread, the train station in Memel became crowded with people,

so residents headed for the ferry with whatever belongings they could carry. By 17 March, the villas and the Kurhaus in Sandkrug (Smiltynė) belonging to the city's wealthy class were packed with people, but the overloaded ferry and private steamships continued to ferry passengers across. Moreover, refugees who had fled to Memel from the surrounding villages also contributed to the panic. Thus, from the first day of the evacuation, refugees who had gathered in Sandkrug were directed towards Schwarzort, and even further south. Eventually, when it emerged that Russian forces had already entered Memel, the remains of the German army that were still in the city also escaped to the Curonian Spit. Meanwhile, government officials of the district (Kreis), the Landrat (chief executive) Heinrich Cranz and his deputy Ludwig Quass, who was in charge of providing for refugees, were among the last to arrive in Schwarzort.[29] Over several days, refugees filled all the villages on the spit. By 19 March, they had reached Nidden, and some of them fled even further: to Königsberg, via the land route, or to East Prussian villages via the lagoon. Throughout this journey, people could not always use transport, and had to walk long distances on foot, with temperatures falling to minus 12 degrees Celsius during the night. Although written sources provide various figures, the total number of people who fled to or across the Curonian Spit during that period definitely exceeded 10,000. This means that the number of refugees who fled to the peninsula's villages from the northern part of the Memel District (Kreis) was almost four times the number of residents of all the villages put together.[30] By 21 March, German troops had regained control of Memel, but some refugees could not return to their homes for another three weeks or more because of transport problems.[31]

This spontaneous evacuation, which disrupted life on the peninsula for at least several weeks, was not the only experience of forced migration associated with the First World War. We know that a camp for French prisoners of war was established south of Nidden. It was closed in September 1916.[32] Nationals of other countries involved in the war were also taken prisoner and sent to the Curonian Spit to undertake forced labour. They were spread across different households: for example, two Russian prisoners of war lived in the Detzkeit household

29 Cf. *MD*, 1959, Nr. 20, 281.

30 In 1910, the total population of all the villages from Sarkau in the south to Süderspitze in the north numbered 2,910.

31 According to Altenberg 1916: 26; Hoffmann 1916: 35–41; Meyer 1916: 48–58; Reidys 1916: 78–80; Sembritzki 1918: 390–394.

32 Sembritzki 1918: 311, 330.

in Preil.[33] Some forced migrants who arrived on the Curonian Spit from other countries during the war in unclear circumstances stayed to live there after the war. Among them was Lazar Bezrukov, who arrived in Nidden in 1914 when he was 11 years old.[34]

During the Second World War, the residents of the Curonian Spit were again subjected to the experience of forced migration, but this time the processes occurred on a different scale, and in reverse order. The peninsula saw the arrival of prisoners of war at the beginning. Among them was Paul Dousset, a French soldier who was taken prisoner by the Germans in 1940, and in August was sent to do forced labour in the household of Wilhelm Bastik in Perwelk.[35] Later, when the Eastern Front began rapidly approaching East Prussia in the summer of 1944, the peninsula was again swamped by refugees from the other side of the lagoon. On 28 July, the navy (Kriegsmarine) started preparing to evacuate people from Memel, virtually at their own initiative: the following day, 6,000 members of the Hitler Youth (Hitlerjugend), who were there to dig a line of trenches behind the old German border, were evacuated on ships. Meanwhile, civilians were ordered to pack their belongings in 24 hours, and to leave on the following day, 30 July. Civilians were transported from Memel mostly by sea: for over a week, ten ships were used to carry more than 50,000 people (mostly women, children and the elderly) to Pillau (present-day Baltijsk), Gotenhafen (Gdynia), and Danzig. Trains were also provided to evacuate the civilian population. Ships and trains were unsuitable for evacuating residents of the countryside, who often used horse-drawn transport and carried bulkier possessions. Their goal was to reach the inland regions of East Prussia, and then shelter temporarily on farmers' properties. Country people had to flee on their own as far as the Queen Louise Bridge in Tilsit, or the Peter Bridge in Russ (Rusnė). In addition, ferries and inland waterway vessels were used to ship a substantial number of rural and urban residents to the Curonian Spit, where they continued south, just as people had 29 years earlier.

Some residents of the Memel Territory did not flee during the first wave of evacuation. Around 3,000 deliberately stayed behind in Memel. When the front line stabilised between Kaunas and Šiauliai, some peasants

33 Fuchs 1930.

34 Interview with Marija Bezrukova-Kairienė, recorded in 1993 and transcribed by Dalia Kiseliūnaitė in 2016. *Kuršių nerijos kuršininkų kalbos ir etninės kultūros archyvas* (*Archive of the Language and Ethnic Culture of the Curonian Spit*, hereafter *KNKKA*).

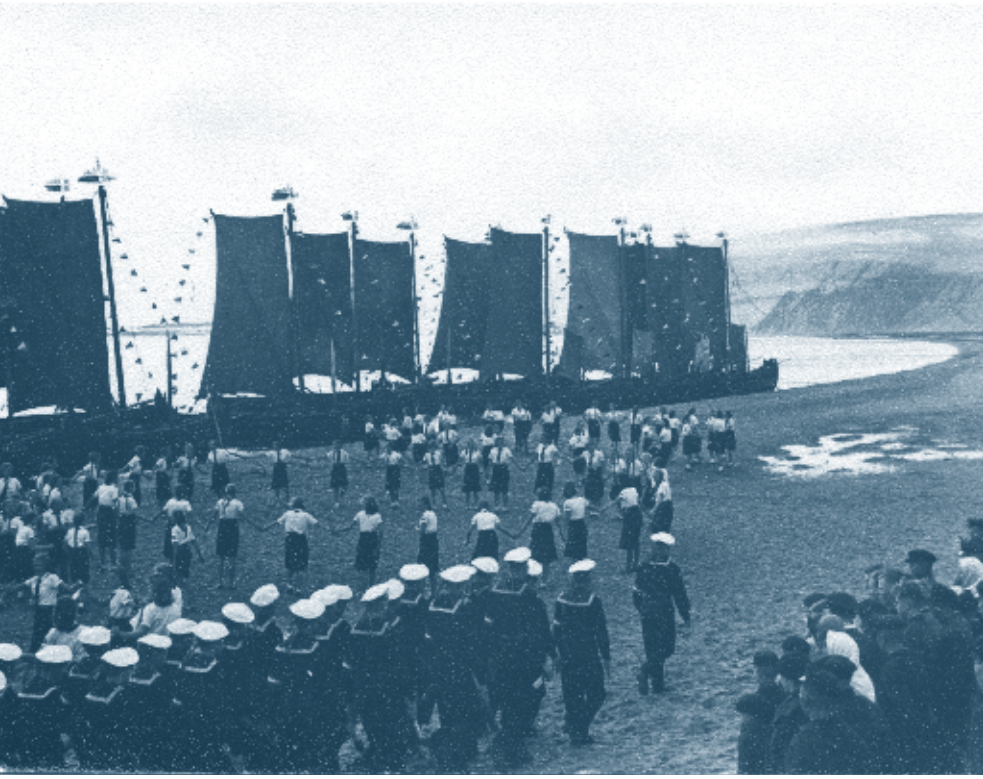
35 Cf. *MD*, 1964, Nr. 20, S. 270.

were ordered to return home a couple of weeks after the evacuation to help with the harvest. Family members would also usually join them. Some city residents also returned. Most of them had to flee in the second wave of evacuation of the Memel region, which began on 7 October. However, there was a delay in giving the evacuation order, and the evacuation itself was poorly organised. Troops and civilians moving simultaneously created congestion on the roads. Sea and inland waterway vessels were provided to evacuate the civilians left behind in Memel. However, reconnaissance flights by Soviet naval forces and aerial bombings of the city created extreme fear and panic. Residents of the southern part of the Memel Territory were able to flee to East Prussia (it should be mentioned, however, that the Peter Bridge leading to the island of Russ was blown up too early). However, for most residents of the northern part of the Memel Territory, the 5th Guards Tank Army, which invaded the Heydekrug (Šilutė) District (Kreis) on 9 October, cut off all escape routes. Some residents were able to flee to the Curonian Spit across the lagoon, some were captured by the Red Army, and others returned to Memel and were evacuated from the region after the Red Army surrounded the city on three sides, a siege which continued for three and a half months.[36] For most evacuees from the Memel Territory who were transported across the lagoon, the Curonian Spit again acted as an escape route to inland regions of East Prussia during this evacuation. Leo Hahn, who was evacuated from Memel on 26 January 1945 with the army, was one of the last to join them.[37]

It is worth highlighting one crucial difference from the First World War: unlike the situation 30 years earlier, this time the evacuation included the residents of the Curonian Spit themselves. They too were displaced. This topic will be discussed in the next chapter.

36 According to Jenett 1952; *MD*, 1984, Nr. 10, S. 145, 148–149; Schön 1985: 9, 32, Juška 1998: 145–147; Hermann 2000: 76–77; Merten 2006: 527–549.

37 *MD*, 1959, Nr. 12, S. 170.



Signs of the Nazification and militarisation of society on the Curonian Spit. A dance group representing the National Socialist Women's League (NS-Frauenschaft) and the League of German Girls (BDM), and a naval parade in Nidden. Photograph from around 1939. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka*, AdM collection, F-II3(35).

These steamers that used to make regular trips on the Curonian Lagoon during the interwar period were also used to evacuate residents from Memel (Klaipėda) and the surrounding area in 1944. This 1938 photograph shows another function they served: taking people to particular locations on the Curonian Spit. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka,* AdM collection,F-II4(15). ›

ROSSITTEN

Chapter II

Prewar residents dispersed by the Second World War

As is shown by witnesses' accounts, despite the fact that 40 soldiers were deployed at Nidden in November 1943 to guard the coastline, in the summer of 1944 the Curonian Spit was experiencing a normal holiday season. In July, however, holidaymakers quickly abandoned the region. By the end of the month, the tension had escalated, as the evacuation of the Memel Territory began, and ships full of refugees headed for Cranzbeek (the former Curonian Lagoon port near Cranz). The roads of the Curonian Spit, which were previously only used by a doctor for regular car trips, were now being used by heavy-duty military vehicles and fleeing refugees. At that time, the first residents of the Curonian Spit also fled the approaching front line to inland areas of Germany. After reaching the Sambian Peninsula, they were transported by train to Saxony.

The progression of the Eastern Front was halted in mid-August, and most evacuees began looking for ways to return home, as they thought they had been transported 'for no good reason'. Meanwhile, those who remained on the Curonian Spit were feeling anxious about the planes flying over the peninsula, and the bombing of Königsberg on the nights of 26/27 and 29/30 August: the noise of the explosions could even be heard in Nidden.[1] Eventually, after the front line was breached on 5 October, residents of the Curonian Spit (mainly women, children and the elderly) were ordered to evacuate, and had

1 Here according to Strakauskaitė 2009: 155; Nausėda, Gerulaitienė 2013: 291, 294, 296, 298.

< This picture illustrates the impact the war had on one family. It shows Christel Sakuth (left), who was born in Nidden (Nida) in 1938, with her great aunt Anna Marie, née Sakuth (1891–1950), and great uncle Friedrich Pietsch (1878–1954). Between the couple sits their son, who was serving in the German navy (Kriegsmarine) at the time, and had returned home on leave. Christel's father was also called up into the army, and was killed in the war. Her mother, like many other young women from Nidden, had to work in a munitions factory in Preussisch Eylau (present-day Bagrationovsk) during the war, and afterwards ended up in West Germany. Christel and her great aunt's family fled to Cranz in the winter of 1944–1945. From there, they were sent to work on the other shore of the Curonian Lagoon, after the Red Army blocked their way. Finally, Pietschs and their great niece fled by boat back to Nidden, becoming some of the first civilians to return there in the spring of 1945. Photograph from 1942. Personal papers of Christel Tepperis (*Neringos muziejai*).

The road built in the early 20th century along the Curonian Spit was only surfaced around 1960. Before that, it was a gravel road, and unsuitable for heavy vehicles. Photograph by Haro Schumacher, 1930s–1940s. *Bildarchiv des Herder-Instituts*, 262068.

The main directions of the evacuation and retreat of residents of the Curonian Spit to Germany in 1944 and 1945. Map by Vasilijus Safronovas.

virtually no time to pack their belongings. They joined the civilian evacuees who had been transported on vessels from Memel, and continued across the lagoon to the Sambian Peninsula.

By October 1944, the Curonian Spit was the only land route by which the German forces maintained contact with the Memel bridgehead, which was surrounded on three sides. The supply and rear units for the forces that had remained in Memel, and the ammunition reserves, were kept in the resort town of Cranz, which had a rail link to Königsberg. The Wehrmacht destroyed a large number of properties as they progressed along the dirt roads of the Curonian Spit, converting fishermen's villages for military use. For example, in order to set up a supply warehouse, the troops blew up the home of the fisherman Fritz Pietsch the Third.[2] A line of defence was set up on the stretch of land running along the Curonian Lagoon from Memel to Perwelk. Concrete pill boxes were built every 200 to 250 metres. Anti-tank ditches were dug on the roads leading to Preil and Nidden. Landmines were laid on roads and in forest clearings.[3] After the peninsula became an area of military operations, it filled with units of the Wehrmacht. The troops only withdrew in late January and early February 1945, along with the forces from the Memel bridgehead, which retreated along the Curonian Spit to the Königsberg area during that period. There is no single date marking the departure of the last civilians: according to some accounts, the military leadership ordered the remaining civilians to leave Schwarzort on 13 November.[4] Others, including Fritz Bastick from Preil, were only evacuated to Cranz on 12 January. Wilhelm Kubillus was also evacuated from Preil to Neukuhren (present-day Pionerskij) in January. However, Mikas Kvauka claimed that he was evacuated to Neukuhren only at the end of January, when the German troops were retreating.[5]

Most civilians who were evacuated from the Curonian Spit on ships were only taken to the resort town of Cranz on the Sambian Peninsula. Beyond that point, everyone was left to their own devices to find a way to go on. Stories of those who spent longer periods on the Curonian Spit often differ, but a common thread binds them all: everyone had to find their own way to escape. Up to the last moment, a large number of the residents of the

2 *MD,* 1959, Nr. 8, S. 110.

3 Cf. Ochishhenie kosy Kurishe-Nerung ot protivnika chastyami 344 SRKD, 19 February 1945. *Central'nyj arkhiv Ministerstva Oborony* (*Central Archives of the Ministry of Defence*, hereafter *CAMO*), f. 1662, op. 1, d. 32, l. 11, 13.

4 Strakauskaitė 2009: 155.

5 Arbušauskaitė 2000: 485–486; Mikas Kvauka Predsedatelyu Klajpedskogo gorispolkoma, 20 March 1949. *Neringos muziejai (Neringa Museums)*, NIMGEK 3314.

peninsula hoped they could return, and did not intend to flee further inland, but stayed in East Prussia for some time. Those who accepted mass evacuation ended up in Saxony and Pomerania: until mid-January 1945, when the Red Army launched its offensive along the entire front and crossed the River Vistula, it was still rather easy to reach central Germany. The situation changed radically after 25 January. As the Red Army reached the shore of the Vistula Lagoon south of Königsberg, civilians from across East Prussia who had gathered on the Sambian Peninsula had only two ways to flee: to wait in Pillau (present-day Baltijsk) for sea transport, or to reach Danzig (Gdańsk) and Gotenhafen (Gdynia) by crossing the frozen Vistula Lagoon and the Vistula Spit. The last civilians to be evacuated in time from the ports at Gotenhafen and Pillau (occupied by the Red Army on 28 March and 25 April) were shipped to Denmark, where they were dispersed across towns. Among them were Pinkis, Kalniškis and Sakutis, fishermen from the Curonian Spit. They had arrived in Pillau much earlier than other refugees, because they had been transported there to build fortifications as the front line was approaching.[6]

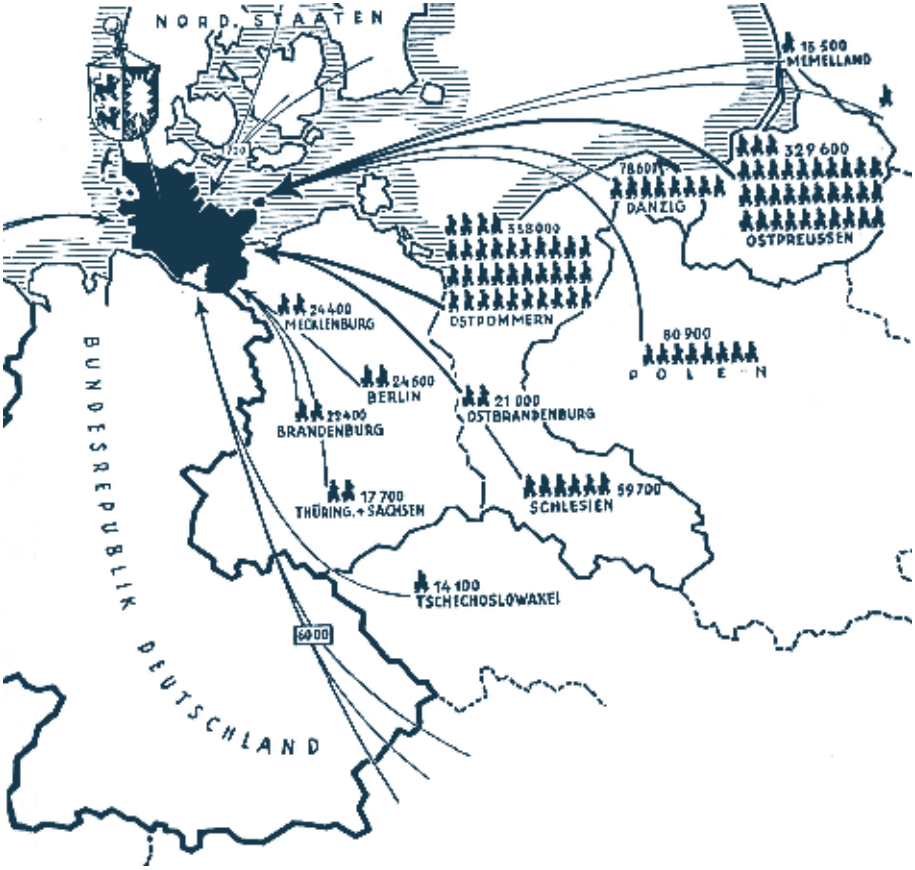
However, unlike those who managed to reach inland parts of Germany, there were some who failed to reach ports from which civilians were evacuated by ship, so they remained somewhere between their homes and inland parts of Germany. The Red Army, which was advancing more quickly, caught up with them, so they could no longer flee further west. There were some residents of the Curonian Spit who chose not to go any further. They tried to find a way to return home when the opportunity arose. Encounters between civilians and the Red Army would usually end unpredictably. However, neither were those who were able to reach inland parts of Germany necessarily saved. Louis Nickeleit, the postman at Schwarzort, died on arriving in Saxony, leaving a wife and three daughters.[7] The Schwarzort resident Johann Resas, who settled near Lübeck with his family, died after being hit by a military truck in the autumn of 1945. His two daughters almost died on board the ship the *Wilhelm Gustloff* which was sunk on 30 January 1945 in the Baltic Sea.[8] The Schwarzort schoolmaster (from 1934 to 1941) Herbert Schwarz and his family were also among those who survived the disaster.[9]

6 Petkus 1946.

7 *MD*, 1959, Nr. 18, S. 252.

8 Strakauskaitė 2009: 156.

9 *MD*, 1985, Nr. 1, S. 8–10.



This schematic map shows the flow of refugees at the end of the Second World War and in the postwar period into the northernmost German state of Schleswig-Holstein. From the cover of the publication by Wilhelm Tetzlaff *Die Flüchtlinge in Schleswig-Holstein: die Ergebnisse der Flüchtlingssondererhebung des Landesozialministers Schleswig-Holsteins* (Kiel, 1950).

After the death of her husband Hermann (1862–1934), Emma Blode (1869–1945) ran their hotel in Nidden, which was famous for attracting artists. In the photograph she can be seen with her staff in the 1930s. Emma died during the evacuation in Zoppot (Sopot), near Danzig (Gdańsk). *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka,* AdM collection, F-II3(54).

Many evacuees died while fleeing, due to hunger, disease or the cold. Among them were Louis Stellmacher (who was born in 1857), the owner of the Kurischer Hof hotel in Schwarzort, and his daughter.[10] Margarete Hessler, the daughter of Emil Bolz, the former owner of the Hotel Waldfrieden, also in Schwarzort, died on 19 September 1945 in Königsberg.[11] She was clearly unable to join the other refugees in time to flee the Sambian Peninsula. Reinhard Block, a baker from Nidden, and his wife (née Jakeit) also died while fleeing.[12] These are just a few examples of individuals evacuated from their homeland who never reached their destinations.

The continuity of the old community of the Curonian Spit was threatened not so much by the evacuation, but rather by the dispersion of families that had lived as close-knit units for a long period of time. Even members of the same family who had previously lived in the same household were separated from each other. Cases where families were unjustifiably separated at the end of the war were particularly painful. For example, after reaching the town of Cranz, Werner Sakuth was separated from his family who were fleeing from the Curonian Spit, because he was 16 years old and was considered fit for 'military service'.[13] During the postwar period, members of the same family were often unable find information about their close relatives for years. Therefore, the first thing survivors did was to search for members of their family and more distant relatives. Civilian evacuees tried to find their husbands, sons and fathers who had been drafted into the Wehrmacht, and vice versa. Evacuees tried to reunite with each other. The Red Cross offered the most assistance for those who were trying to locate members of their family. Paul Sakuth, the son of Martin Sakuth the hotel owner, who settled in the Flensburg District (Kreis) was still trying to locate his mother and sister in 1953. He received the last information about his mother Emma (who was born in 1863) from a hospital in Gotenhafen in March 1945.[14] Nidden residents who were former members of the Volkssturm were still included in Red Cross lists of missing persons in 1960: Michael Naujoks, born in 1925 (last heard of near Pillkallen, present-day Dobrovolsk, in November 1944); the fisherman Johann Purwin, born in 1898 (last heard of near Neukuhren in February 1945); the fisherman Martin

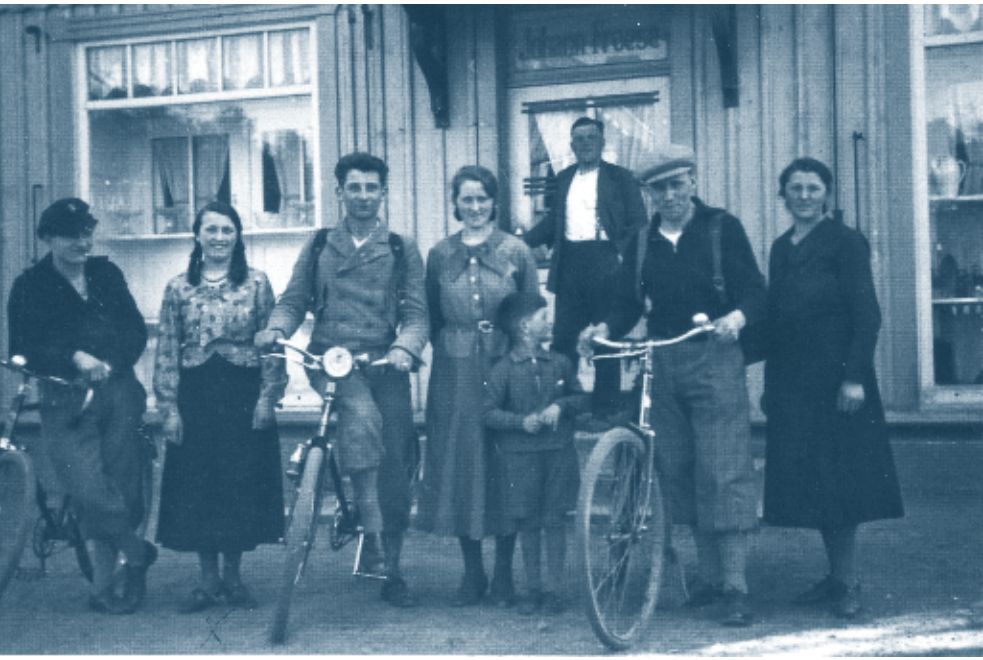
10 Cf. *Memeler Rundbief*, 1949, Nr. 11, S. 5.

11 *Memeler Rundbief*, 1949, Nr. 12, S. 5.

12 *MD*, 1950, Nr. 2, [S. 6].

13 Interview with Martin Sakuth and Werner Sakuth, 2006, recorded by Janīna Kursīte, Evaldas Švageris and Dalia Kiseliūnaitė, transcribed by Dalia Kiseliūnaitė. KNKKA.

14 *Das Ostpreußenblatt*, 1953, Nr. 26, S. 8.



At Johann Froese's shop in Nidden (Nida). Second from left, Froese's daughter Eva; fourth and seventh from left, the Sakuth sisters, sales girls in the shop, 1937. Personal papers of Christel Tepperis (*Neringos muziejai*).

Schekahn, born in 1891 (last heard of in Königsberg in April 1945); the fisherman Wilhelm Schekahn, born in 1895 (last heard of in Laptau, present-day Muromskoe, in the Samland District (Kreis), in April 1945); the student Gerhard Weinhold, born in 1927 (last heard of in Brandenburg in March 1945).[15]

Former residents of the Curonian Spit dispersed in Germany

There is not enough information available about the fates of most prewar residents of the Curonian Spit to make it possible to provide an exact percentage of those who ended up in Germany during the postwar years. There is no single story that we could tell about the experiences of most Curonian Spit residents who arrived in the future East or West Germany, and who tried to make a new life in a new environment. We can only identify certain trends.

Of the areas of present-day Germany that are mentioned in accounts of the evacuation, Saxony is referred to rather frequently: a substantial number of residents of Schwarzort ended up there. Those who were evacuated by ship during the last months and disembarked in Denmark were dispersed across villages and supplied with provisions by the army. After Germany surrendered, they were transferred to special camps for refugees supervised by British and Danish troops. Those who had small children were the first to be released from these camps, where living conditions were very bad, and allowed to go to Germany. However, some refugees remained in these camps until 1949. Some even died in Denmark.[16] Among them was the wife of Richard Pietsch, who had come to Denmark with refugees from Pillau.[17] The Nidden resident Hedwig Engelin (née Radmacher), who also fled Pillau, had to stay in a Danish camp for two years.[18] There is some uncertainty about the specific circumstances under which residents of the Curonian Spit ended up in Denmark. Take, for instance, the family of Johann Froese from Nidden. During the prewar period, Froese had served as a 'beach commissioner', an official in charge of the resort infrastructure. He operated a shop from the porch of his house, and all his family worked in it.

15 According to *MD*, 1960, Nr. 21, S. 294–295; Nr. 22, S. 305–306; Nr. 23, S. 317.

16 Cf. *MD*, 1958, Nr. 6, S. 218; 1959, Nr. 2, S. 21; 1964, Nr. 17, S. 226; 1967, Nr. 22, S. 293; 1975, Nr. 5, S. 102.

17 The Nidden (Nida) resident Richard Pietsch (1915–2007), later known as 'the last Curonian', who was reburied by his son in Nida in 2008, was in charge of organising leisure activities for the Hitler Youth during the Second World War, and later became head of workshops for people disabled in the war in Weissenburg, Masuren. He married in 1944. He took his daughter, born prior to the day of the evacuation, from East Prussia, as he fled through Pillau during the winter. Pietsch later wrote a book about the life of fishermen on the Curonian Spit (1983), and authored a Curonian language dictionary. Cf. Lorenz-Rogler 2003.

18 Interview recorded in 1980 in Germany by Austris Grasis, transcribed by Dalia Kiseliūnaitė in 2015. *KNKKA*.

He had bought several boats from the Nidden Fishermen's Union, including the *Hert*, which he used first to flee to Pillau, and then to Denmark via the island of Bornholm. It is not clear whether the fact that his family arrived in Denmark separately from other refugees helped them avoid being put in a refugee camp. After the war, the family settled on the outskirts of Hamburg.[19]

Most former leaders and authorities from the Nidden and Schwarzort communities ended up in the West German occupied zones. Richard Trotzky (1906–1981), the last Bürgermeister of Nidden, since 1939, died in Bavaria. Heinrich Pietsch (1896–1955), who was the head of the Schwarzort community during the war and represented the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei) as a local party chief (Ortsgruppenleiter) in the northern part of the Curonian Spit, ended up in Hamburg after the war, while most of his relatives remained in the Soviet-occupied zone in Mecklenburg.[20] Martin Kerschies, the last priest at Schwarzort, lived in Steinhagen (Westphalia) after the war. Waldemar Küther (1911–1985), who served as a priest in Nidden between 1943 and 1944, became the priest in Cappel, a borough of Marburg in Hessen. The last schoolmasters of the prewar period, Herbert Schwarz (1909–1986) in Schwarzort, and Richard Schwellnus (1912–?) in Nidden, were both drafted into the German army in 1941–1942. They also survived the war, and their last resting place is West Germany: one died in Lower Saxony, and the other in Schleswig-Holstein. Fritz Resas (1890–1986), who was Pietsch's predecessor as Bürgermeister of Schwarzort, serving between 1930 and 1938, is perhaps the only exception to this trend: he was held as a prisoner of war by the USSR for two years, and after he was released he settled in Saxony in the Soviet-occupied zone.[21]

The majority of Curonian Spit fishermen who became refugees stayed in the Soviet-occupied zone (from 1949 the German Democratic Republic). It should be added that they were mainly fishermen from Schwarzort; most of those from Nidden did return home after the war. Over time, Mecklenburg became home to probably the highest number of fishermen who had fled from Schwarzort and other Curonian Spit settlements.[22] It was not without reason that so many ended up in

19 Cf. *MD*, 1961, Nr. 24, S. 341; 1988, Nr. 3, S. 39.

20 *MD*, 1953, Nr. 8, [S. 8]; 1981, Nr. 5, S. 75.

21 *MD*, 1960, Nr. 15, S. 206.

22 The following Schwarzort fishermen and their families were mentioned in the press: Fritz Gutowski, Johann Lauzening, Fritz Peleikis, Fritz Pietsch, Fritz Pietsch the Second, Gottfried Pietsch, Michel Pietsch, Hans Resas, Michel Schillbach; and the Nidden fisherman Johann Sakuth and his father: *MD*, 1957, Nr. 14, S. 187; 1960, Nr. 4, S. 45.

Mecklenburg, especially on the island of Rügen: new settlers received parcels of land there in the postwar years, and those who settled in coastal regions had the opportunity to continue fishing, as they had before they left their homeland. Most refugees took advantage of these opportunities, instead of staying in Saxony, which was rather far from the sea. It should be added, however, that new settlers who moved to Mecklenburg were often disappointed with the harsh conditions. For this reason, Martin and Werner Sakuth and their father, once they were reunited after the war and ended up on the island of Rügen, deliberately set out on a windy and rainy day in their fishing boat, and fled to Sweden, where they were granted political asylum.[23] But some former fishermen from Schwarzort were not tempted by the opportunities to settle in Mecklenburg, or were not offered the chance, and remained in Saxony. Among them was Gottfried Peleikis, who died in Leipzig after the war, and the aforementioned Fritz Resas.[24]

It should be noted that the fishermen of the Curonian Spit who reached the future West Germany after the war also looked for a new place to live close to the sea. Most of these started a new life in the British zone. Among them were the aforementioned Johann Resas and his family, who settled in Lübeck after the war, Fritz Engelin in Kiel, and Julius Pietsch in Schleswig-Holstein. All were formerly fishermen in Schwarzort.[25]

However, fishermen were not the only ones who engaged in their former occupation in their new place of residence. Erich May and his wife Elisabeth (née Steppat), who ran the Hotel Flora in Schwarzort before the war, celebrated their wedding anniversary in November 1949 in Benthe, near Hannover, where they opened the Berggasthof Benthe hotel. After a couple of years, they relocated to the nearby resort town of Bad Nenndorf, where they opened the Hotel Lindenhof.[26]

Nevertheless, not all forced migrants had the opportunity to pursue their profession from before the war in their new home. The fisherman Martin Labrenz (1870–1859) from Perwelk, who moved into the house of his daughter Martha Peleikis in Offenburg, Baden, felt like 'a fisherman on dry land'.[27] The fisherman Hans Sakuth from Schwarzort also ended up inland after the war, although not far from the sea, in the forest of Lünenburg.[28]

23 Interview with Martin Sakuth and Werner Sakuth recorded by Janīna Kursīte, Evaldas Švageris and Dalia Kiseliūnaitė in 2006, deciphered by Dalia Kiseliūnaitė. *KNKKA*.

24 Cf. *MD*, 1957, Nr. 14, S. 187.

25 Ibid. Cf. Braun 1991, describing the lives of fishermen who moved from former eastern territories of Germany to Schleswig-Holstein. Among them was Kurt Sakuth, who opened a shipyard in 1950 in Heiligenhafen, at first rented. Before the war, Sakuth had had a shipyard in Pillau (present-day Baltijsk); his father was Bürgermeister of Pillkoppen (present-day Morskoe) for 25 years, and his uncle lived in Nidden (Tidick 1962).

26 *Memeler Rundbief*, 1949, Nr. 11, S. 5; MD, 1960, Nr. 2, S. 27; 1961, Nr. 2, S. 27.

27 Cf. *MD*, 1958, Nr. 7, S. 99; 1959, Nr. 5, S. 68.

28 *MD*, 1957, Nr. 14, S. 187.

Also, not all displaced persons were able or had time (due to old age) to settle down in in their new place of residence. For example, the Nidden residents Adam and Dora Barkait died shortly after arriving near the island of Rügen in Mecklenburg. The life of the Schwarzort resident Marie Gutowski (née Engelin) also ended shortly after landing on Rügen. The Nidden resident Marie Jakeit (née Kairies) died in 1947 in Klausdorf near Kiel.[29] These are just a few examples showing that some refugees from the Curonian Spit who survived the long journey from their war-torn home were not destined to find happiness in their place of resettlement.

Given the complexity of the postwar situation, displaced persons who managed to be reunited with their families were probably the luckiest. There were numerous factors that prevented people from reuniting. One of the most common factors was the lack of information. It took a long time for Wehrmacht war veterans, and those who had been taken prisoner, to return home (some never did), and women and children and the elderly who fled to Germany from the Curonian Spit had little or no information about them. There were also different stories. After former Wehrmacht soldiers returned to the occupied zones of Germany, it emerged that their families had remained in their homeland, or had been dispersed in the forced evacuation. People's efforts to reunite with families that had been split up during the war remained one of the main driving forces for further migration of former residents of the Curonian Spit in the 1950s. But we will return to this issue at the end of the second chapter.

Those who returned home

Did all the residents of the northern part of the Curonian Spit become refugees at the end of the war? To answer this question, two factors should be considered. First, the forced evacuation from the former Memel Territory that took place in October 1944 was accompanied by ultimatums and physical threats. Second, as was mentioned previously, the Curonian Spit was behind the front line in the autumn of 1944, and the presence of civilians in the region was not wanted. In the light of this, there are doubts as to whether there were actually people who, as

29 Cf. *Memeler Rundbief*, 1949, Nr. 11, [S. 5]; *MD*, 1950, Nr. 3, [S. 7]; 1950, Nr. 6, [S. 5].

Arbušauskaitė claims, sought temporary shelter in 'sand dunes and forests'.[30] Of course, some residents resisted the evacuation order for a long time, or complied only formally, evacuating to locations from which they could easily return home. For example, it was relatively easy to travel back from the Sambian Peninsula. One of the first civilian families came back to Nidden after crossing the Curonian Lagoon from the other side, where they lived for some time on the property of some East Prussian farmers.[31] During the last days of the military action, some civilians who tried to flee from the mainland across the frozen Curonian Lagoon were 'trapped' on the Curonian Spit. They included Marta Stančiūtė (Martha Stanschus), from Saugos (Saugen). She could not go any further because the Red Army was advancing more quickly, and she had to stay in Nida (Nidden), where she buried her mother after the war.[32] After the front line moved on and the war ended, they all became the first civilian residents of the northern part of the peninsula.

In July and August 1945, a group of five specialists from the USSR People's Commissariat of the Fishing Industry inspected all areas of the Curonian Spit, and concluded that 'six elderly families of former fishermen' lived in Juodkrantė (Schwarzort), and 'seven families of former fishermen' (elderly and children) lived in Pervalka (Perwelk). There were no residents in Preila (Preil), and there were 'ten German families of former fishermen' in Nida (Nidden).[33] This survey was carried out well after the end of the hostilities; by that time some of the evacuated residents had already returned home. Nonetheless, the data shows quite clearly that at least 95 per cent of the population abandoned the four settlements on the Curonian Spit for an extended period of time.

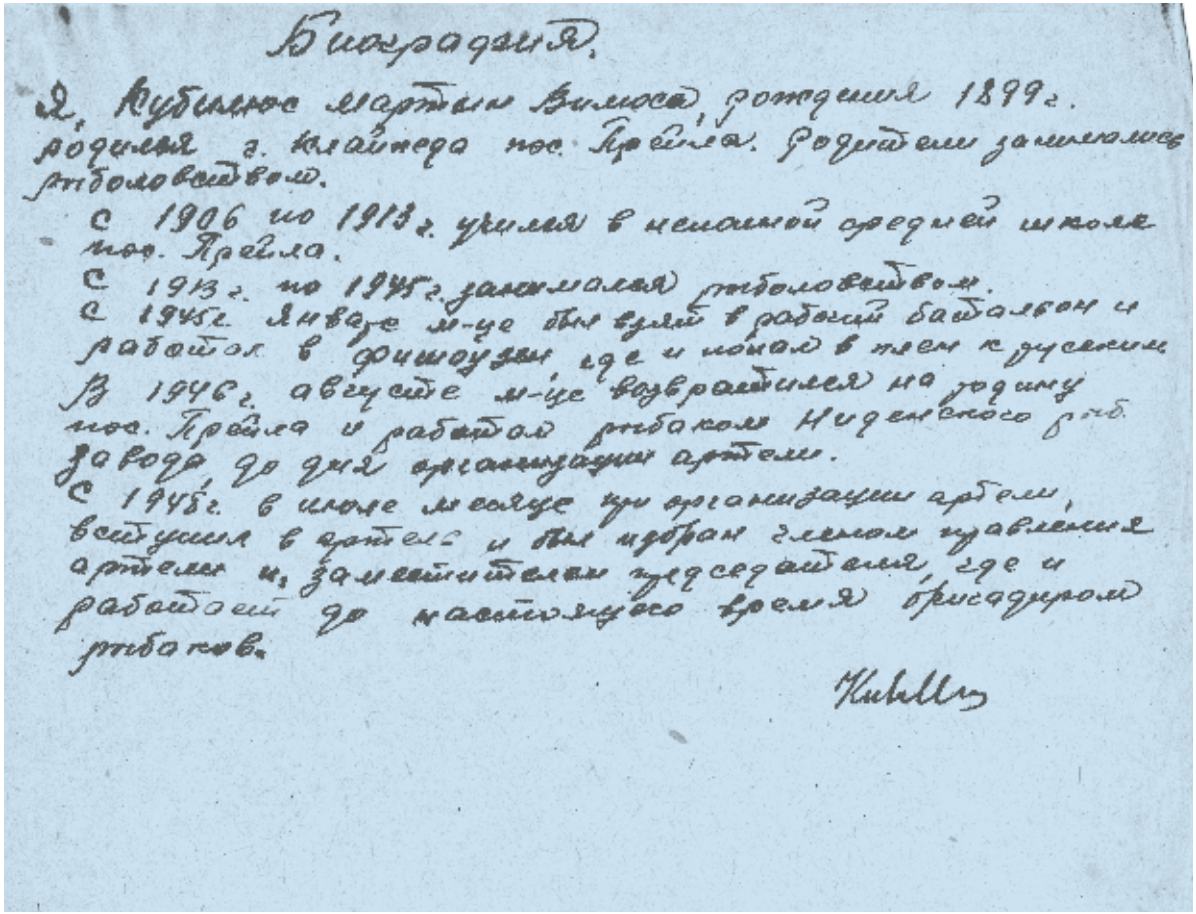
Some of them, driven by a longing for the environment they were used to, or because of the property they had left behind, quickly began seeking opportunities to return home. Others were more hesitant, but made the decision after it emerged that the army of the USSR had reached the River Elbe and was not going to withdraw. Some former residents of the spit were forcibly returned home by the Red Army as soon as it learned where their place of birth was, without being given any other options. In 1945, those who had been in the former eastern territories of Germany (East and West Prussia, Pomerania,

30 Cf. Arbušauskaitė 1995b: 373.

31 Cf. Peleikis-Gleikina 2013: 42.

32 *MD*, 1958, Nr. 14, S. 190, also S. 192.

33 [Otchet brigady Narkomrybproma] Narodnomu komissaru rybnoj promyshlennosti Soyuza SSR, 28 August 1945. *Lietuvos ypatingasis archyvas (Lithuanian Special Archives,* hereafter *LYA*), f. 1771, ap. 8, b. 349, l. 45, 46, 48.



Биография.

Я, Кубилюс Мартын Вилюса, рождения 1899 г. родился г. Клайпеда пос. Прейла. Родители занимались рыболовством.

С 1906 по 1913 г. учился в неполной средней школе пос. Прейла.

С 1913 г. по 1945 г. занимался рыболовством.

С 1945 г. Январе м-це был взят в рабочий батальон и работал в Фишоузен, где и попал в плен к русским.

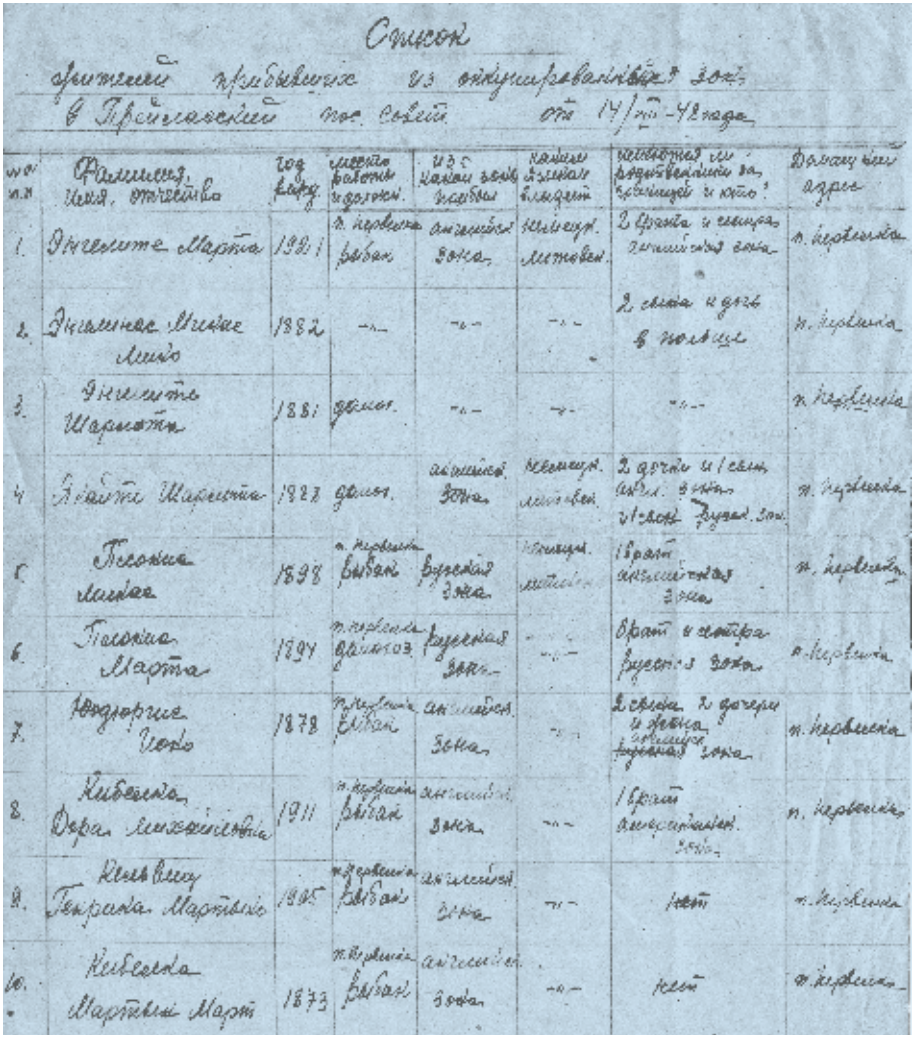
В 1946 г. августе м-це возвратился на родину пос. Прейла и работал рыбаком Ниденского рыб. завода до дня организации артели.

С 1948 г. в июле месяце при организации артели, вступил в артель и был избран членом правления артели и заместителем председателя, где и работает до настоящего время бригадиром рыбаков.

Kubillus

This short CV from around 1948–1950, handwritten in Russian, is an account by the prewar resident Martin Kubillus, and signed by him, in which he states that he worked as a fisherman on the Curonian Spit until January 1945, when he was sent off to join a labour battalion. He was taken prisoner near Fischhausen (present-day Primorsk) by the Soviet army, and returned home in August 1946. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3308.

Not all the former residents of the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory who moved to the peninsula during the postwar period were originally from the Curonian Spit, and not all of them were fishermen. Berta Engelinienė, who was born in the Heydekrug (Šilutė) District (Kreis) and had lived in the Tilsit (present-day Sovetsk) District prior to the 1944 evacuation, moved to her husband's home on the Curonian Spit in 1948. This is a job application she put in for the position of cleaner at Preila primary school, approved by the chairman of the Preila Executive Committee, 1951. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3352.



Список
жителей прибывших из оккупированных зон
в Прейлаский пос. совет от 14/III-48 года

№ п.п.	Фамилия, имя, отчество	год рожд.	место работы и должн.	из какой зоны прибыл	какими языками владеет	имеются ли родственники за границей и кто?	Домашний адрес
1.	Энгелите Марта	1921	п. Первенка рыбак	английск. зона	немецк. литовск.	2 брата и сестра английская зона	п. Первенка
2.	Энгелинас Микас Мико	1882	-"-	-"-	-"-	2 сына и дочь в польше	п. Первенка
3.	Энгелите Шарлота	1881	домох.	-"-	-"-	-"-	п. Первенка
4	Якайте Шарлота	1888	домох.	английск. зона	немецк. литовск.	2 дочки и 1 сын англ. зона и 1 сын русск. зона	п. Первенка
5.	Пеокиа Микас	1898	п. Первенка рыбак	русская зона	немецк. литовск.	1 брат английская зона	п. Первенка
6.	Пеокиа Марта	1894	п. Первенка домохоз.	русская зона	-"-	брат и сестра русская зона	п. Первенка
7.	Юдюргис Иоко	1878	п. Первенка рыбак	английск. зона	-"-	2 сына 2 дочери и жена английск. ~~русская~~ зона	п. Первенка
8.	Кибелка Дора Михайловна	1911	п. Первенка рыбак	английск. зона	-"-	1 брат американск. зона	п. Первенка
9.	Кельвиц Генрика Мартыно	1905	п. Первенка рыбак	английск. зона	-"-	нет	п. Первенка
10.	Кибелка Мартын Март	1873	п. Первенка рыбак	английск. зона	-"-	нет	п. Первенка

A detail from the list of repatriates who moved to Pervalka and Preila from occupied zones in Germany. The list comprises 34 people, 15 of whom came from the British occupation zone in Germany, 18 from the Soviet zone, and one (Fritz Labrenz) was a prisoner of war in Norway. The list also shows what they knew about relatives of theirs who were still abroad at the time, 1948. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3282.

Posen, Silesia) when they found themselves facing the Red Army were most likely to be returned the Soviet Union. It should be added, however, that in some cases their return took rather a long time, because those who were sent back in an organised manner had to pass through verification-filtration camps and repatriate acceptance and distribution points of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). However, this wave of returnees subsided in the spring of 1946. Thus, the prewar residents who returned to the Curonian Spit during the first year after the war were largely those who had not gone beyond Mecklenburg, Pomerania, Saxony or Silesia, or who were trapped in the former East or West Prussia.

The second wave of returnees to the northern settlements of the Curonian Spit, based on surviving archival records, was in 1948. A small number of repatriates who joined this wave included some who returned from the Soviet-occupied zone in Germany. However, repatriates from the British zone, which incorporated Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein, accounted for most of those who returned in 1948. An important distinction to make is that they returned to the Curonian Spit as officially repatriated Soviet citizens, having obtained the right to USSR citizenship under the decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR of 16 December 1947.[34] This right was not automatically given to returnees of the first wave. Records contain 37 documented names of residents of the Curonian Spit who were included in the lists of those who were sent, in several phases, from the 312th USSR repatriate citizen camp (in Grodno, Belarus) to Klaipėda in April to June 1948.[35] Another seven surnames (of heads of families) were included in other documents listing repatriates.[36] If we add a speculative number of family members to the latterfigures, it can be concluded that around 50 to 60 former prewar residents returned to the northern part of the Curonian Spit in 1948. An unofficial census taken in 1956 in these settlements counted 188 prewar residents and their children, of whom 31 were born after 1945.[37] This means that the total number of short-term refugees who returned in 1945 to 1948 was likely to amount to 200, if we include those who had died or who been deported before 1956. Based on this data,

34 Ukaz Prezidiuma Verkhovnogo Soveta SSSR *O poryadke priobreteniya grazhdanstva SSSR licami litovskoj nacional'nosti, korennymi zhitelyami goroda Klajpeda, Klajpedskogo, Shilutskogo i Pagegskogo uezdov Litovskoj SSR*, 16 December 1947. In Mandel'shtam 1956: 71–72.

35 There were five people from the Curonian Spit in the batch sent in April 1948; 11 in the 10 May batch; 12 in the 2 June batch; and nine people in another June batch; a total of 37 people from the Curonian Spit: Spisok repatriirovannykh sovetskikh grazhdan, otpravlennykh k mestu zhitel'stva 1-go marshruta, 9 April 1948. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas* (*Lithuanian Central State Archives*, hereafter *LCVA*), f. R-283, ap. 6, b. 3, l. 4–6; Spisok repatriirovannykh sovetskikh grazhdan, ubyvayushhikh na postoyannoe mesto zhitel'stva pervym marshrutom, 2 June 1948. *Ibid*., b. 5, l. 8–9ap; Spisok repatriirovannykh sovetskikh grazhdan, ubyvayushhikh na postoyannoe mesto zhitel'stva marshrutom, 10 May 1948. *Ibid*., l. 10–12; Spisok repatriirovannykh sovetskikh grazhdan, ubyvayushhikh na postoyannoe mesto zhitel'stva

we can conclude that around 140 to 150 people returned home in the early period between 1945 and 1946.

Those who returned to the Curonian Spit during the postwar years included not only displaced persons, but also former Wehrmacht soldiers. Examples include Hans Sakuth, who reached Nida in the autumn of 1945, after spending a short period as a prisoner of war,[38] and Fritz Peleikis, who, after being demobilised from the Wehrmacht, worked in the press in Saxony, and was repatriated to the Curonian Spit in 1948 from the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany.[39]

Some returnees reached their homeland only to die there. For instance, Else Peleikis and Marie Pietsch (née Sakuth) died in Nida in 1945 shortly after returning.[40] Anna Wiesel (née Schmidt), another Nida repatriate, experienced a similar fate: she died in 1948, after returning to Nida from Saxony.[41]

Living conditions during the first postwar years

The total population of Nida (Nidden), Preila (Preil), Pervalka (Perwelk) and Juodkrantė (Schwarzort) on the eve of the Second World War was 1,520.[42] The estimates above show that only about 13 per cent of the prewar residents returned between 1945 and 1948. How can we account for this small number? Of course, a substantial number of residents lost their lives during the war and the evacuation. Others, such as those who were held as prisoners of war, had no opportunity to return home. Some did not wish to return until they could be reunited with their families who were dispersed by the war. By the time families were reunited, the most difficult stage of starting a new life in a new location was already over. In the period 1947 to 1949, people began to get a clearer view of the political and economic situation in Germany. Another issue that contributed to this was the fact that refugees were affected by uncertainty, rumours and witnesses' accounts, as well as by their own experiences from encounters with the Red Army. For most refugees, this was a reason to mistrust the USSR, which by that time had already taken their homes. They did not see their future here, and they were even concerned about their safety if they returned.

marshrutom, 9 May 1948. *Ibid*., l. 13–14; Spisok ubyvayushhikh repatriirovannykh sovetskikh grazhdan iz 312 lagerya na postoyannoe mesto zhitel'stva pervym marshrutom, June 1948. *Ibid.*, l. 22–25.

36 Grįžusių repatrijuotų piliečių į Tarybų Lietuvą 1948 m. ir iš jų gautų laiškų sąrašas, [undated]. *LCVA*, f. R-283, ap. 6, b. 2, l. 1-3.

37 Kuršių neringos gyventojų surašymo duomenys (Nida, Preila, Pervalka, Juodkrantė), 1956. *Lietuvos istorijos institutas, Archeologijos-etnografijos sektorius* (*Lithuanian Institute of History, Department of Archaeology and Ethnography*), nr. 58. Arbušauskaitė (1995a, 1995b) previously published different figures. I obtained the figures in this study after reestimating and reanalysing all the data from the 1956 census conducted by the ethnographic expedition of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Lithuanian SSR.

Although in March 1946, Winston Churchill stated that an 'iron curtain' had come down across Europe, minimal communication was still maintained between 'the West' and the part of the continent that was under the USSR. The sporadic pieces of news that reached people from behind the 'curtain' were not positive. For example, the following item was published at the end of 1949 in a Memel region expatriate newspaper: 'This is the message we have received from Nidden: "Do not come. Wait. A storm is brewing. These are tough times for us. Everyone capable of working has to engage in fishing, whether they are 13 or 70 years old, male or female. Apart from that, nothing special happens here, it is just that our survival depends on the fish we catch. The way to the coast is blocked."' [43]

Of course, those who hesitated about returning to their homeland were put off by information like this. We have no reason to doubt that this message was sent from the Curonian Spit, since the conditions faced by prewar residents in their homeland during that period were very difficult. Let us look at them briefly.

The first government on the Curonian Spit was a military government, and local residents had the least say in its decision making. The vanguard of the Red Army landed on the peninsula near Klaipėda (Memel) on 29 January 1945.[44] Of all the military units, the last to force their way across the lagoon were three regiments (Nos 1154, 1152 and 1156) of the 344th Rifle Division of the 4th Shock Army of the 1st Baltic Front. By noon on 5 February, the last two, pursuing the retreating Wehrmacht forces, had gone the length of the entire Curonian Spit down to Cranz, which by that time had been already occupied by forces of the 3rd Belorussian Front. Juodkrantė (Schwarzort) and Pervalka (Perwelk) were occupied on 31 January, followed by Preila (Preil) and Nida (Nidden, 1 February), Rossitten (3 February), and Sarkau (4 February). When the entire peninsula was in the hands of the Red Army, the commander ordered the regiments of the division to guard the coast. On 12–14 February, the regiments were withdrawn from the peninsula, and replaced by two regiments of the 70th Rifle Division: No 68 was deployed in the northern part, and No 252 was deployed in the southern part of the Curonian Spit. These units also carried out the order to guard the Baltic coast. For this purpose,

38 *MD*, 1959, Nr. 14, S. 191.

39 Frico Peleikio gyvenimo aprašymas, around 1948–1950. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3330.

40 *MD*, 1950, Nr. 2, [S. 6]. Cf. also Peleikis-Gleikina 2013: 42.

41 *MD*, 1950, Nr. 6, [S. 5].

42 Estimates based on Statistisches Reichsamt 1941: 47. A census was taken in Germany in March in 1939, but it did not include the Memel Territory. Data about the settlements in the northern part of the Curonian Spit was obtained after German statisticians recalculated the data from the records of the 1925 census of the Memel Territory.

43 *Memeler Rundbief*, 1949, Nr. 11, S. 4.

44 For more information on the occupation of Klaipėda, see Safronovas 2009.

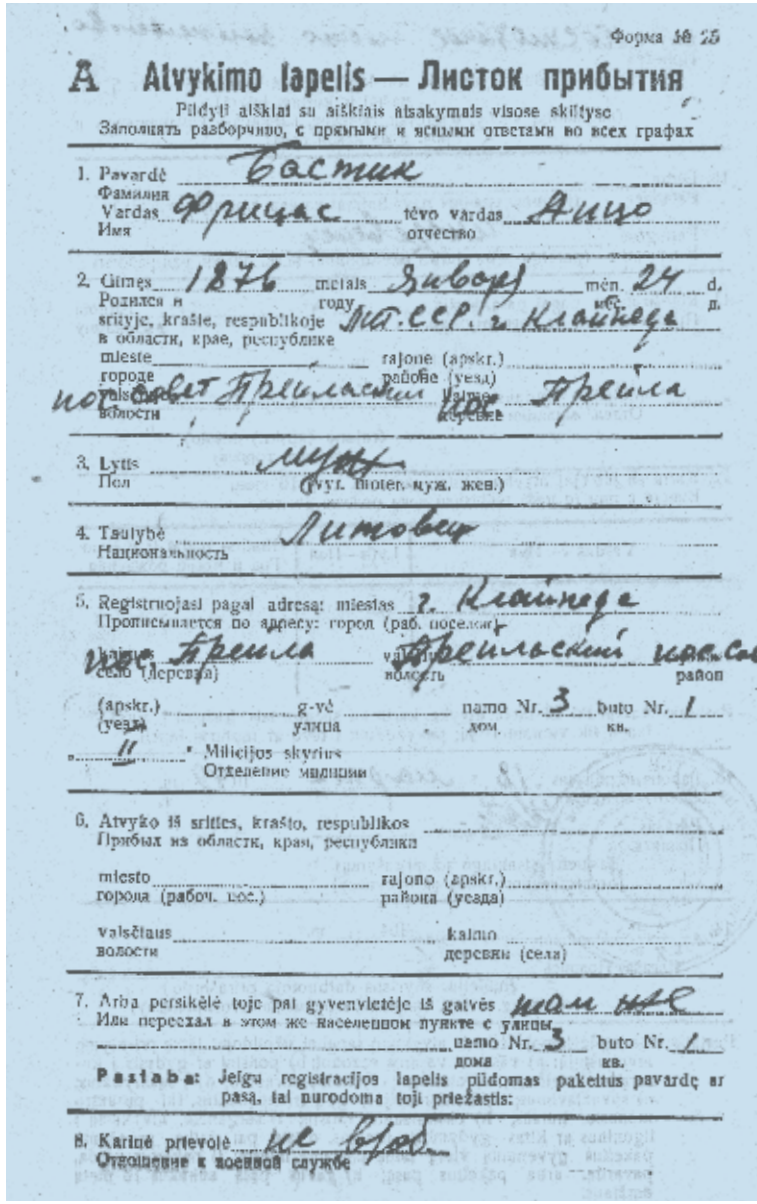
cordons were formed in Juodkrantė, Nida, Rossitten and Sarkau. The division was withdrawn on 27–28 February. A few days later, it was replaced by the 32nd Rifle Division, which took over guarding the stretch of land from Pape in Latvia to Sarkau on the Curonian Spit. The division was charged with guarding the Baltic coast and the spit, aerodromes, and torpedo boat bases of the Baltic fleet. At the beginning of March, nine cordons were formed along the entire stretch of land. Each cordon consisted of a rifle company supported by machine-guns, mortars and air defence. On 6 May, the Curonian Spit was handed over to the 159th Army Reserve Rifle Regiment, and later the 17th Regiment of the 32nd Division was again deployed in Nida for a couple of weeks from 12 May to 30 May.[45] In addition to the Red Army, by early February, the Curonian Spit saw the arrival of the 23rd NKVD Border Guard Platoon (military unit No 2114), which set up cordons and commandant's offices.[46] The Nida lighthouse, along with the keeper's house and outbuildings, were 'occupied' by the South Baltic Fleet (known as the 4th Fleet in 1947–1955).[47] A reference to an anti-aircraft unit stationed in Juodkrantė is also found in records from the late 1940s and 1950s.[48]

Mine-clearing activities and soldiers guarding the coastline and the border region during the period made it very difficult for civilians to get to the Curonian Spit in the first postwar months. There were no significant changes in the overall situation following the withdrawal of regular army units, for border guards remained deployed on the peninsula. The soldiers of the 23rd Border Guard Platoon had seized many houses in all the settlements, and were in no hurry to give them back to civilians or the civil administration. Troops who found accommodation in summer houses had no way of keeping themselves warm other than by cutting down trees in the nearby forest or dismantling the wooden outbuildings. Even in February 1948 in Nida, it was stated that the border cordon and commandant's offices were responsible for the destruction of the greatest amount of properties, and that the Aerial Observation, Notification and Communications (VNOS) Post was heated virtually by dismantling abandoned houses.[49] For reasons that are not clear, civilians were not permitted to reenter Preila until 1947,[50] so its prewar residents who returned after

45 Cf. Zhurnal boevykh dejstvij 344 SRKD za yanvar' mesyac 1945 g., 5 February 1945. *CAMO*, f. 859, op. 1, d. 185, l. 11–12; Zhurnal boevykh dejstvij 344 SRKD za fevral' mesyac 1945 g., 8 March 1945. *CAMO*, f. 1662, op. 1, d. 31, l. 2–7; Zhurnal boevykh dejstvij 70 strelkovoj Verkhnedneprovskoj ordena Suvorova divizii za fevral'–mart mesyac 1945 g., 28 April 1945. *CAMO*, f. 1204, op. 1, d. 43, l. 1, 3–4; Zhurnal boevykh dejstvij 32 strelkovoj Verkhnedneprovskoj Krasnoznamennoj ordena Suvorova divizii za mart mesyac 1945 g., 4 April 1945. *CAMO*, f. 859, op. 1, d. 181, l. 17–18; Zhurnal boevykh dejstvij 32 strelkovoj Verkhnedneprovskoj Krasnoznamennoj ordena Suvorova divizii za maj m-c 1945 goda, 28 June 1945. *CAMO*, f. 1117, op. 1, d. 8, l. 153–155, 157–158.

46 Starkauskas 1998: 43–55. The Border Army was under the control of the NKVD (which in 1946 became the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or MVD) until 1957. It was later placed under the control of the Committee for State Security (KGB).

47 Komanduyushhij 4 voenno-morskim flotom Predsedatelyu Soveta Ministrov Litovskoj SSR,



Форма № 25

A Atvykimo lapelis — Листок прибытия

Pildyti aiškiai su aiškiais atsakymais visose skiltyse
Заполнять разборчиво, с прямыми и ясными ответами во всех графах

1. Pavardė / Фамилия: Бастик
Vardas / Имя: Фрицас — tėvo vardas / отчество: Анцо

2. Gimęs / Родился и: 1876 — metais / году: Январь — mėn. / мес.: 24 — d. / д.
srityje, krašte, respublikoje / в области, крае, республике: Лит. ССР. г. Клайпеда
mieste / городе: — rajone (apskr.) / районе (уезд): —
valsčiaus / волости: по совет Прейлаский — kaime / деревне: Прейла

3. Lytis / Пол: муж. (vyr. moter. муж. жен.)

4. Tautybė / Национальность: Литовец

5. Registruojasi pagal adresą: miestas / Прописывается по адресу: город (раб. поселок): г. Клайпеда
kaimas / село (деревня): Прейла — valsčiaus / волость: Прейльский пос. сов. — район
(apskr.) / (уезд): — g-vė / улица: — namo Nr. / дом: 3 — buto Nr. / кв.: 1
„11" Milicijos skyrius / Отделение милиции

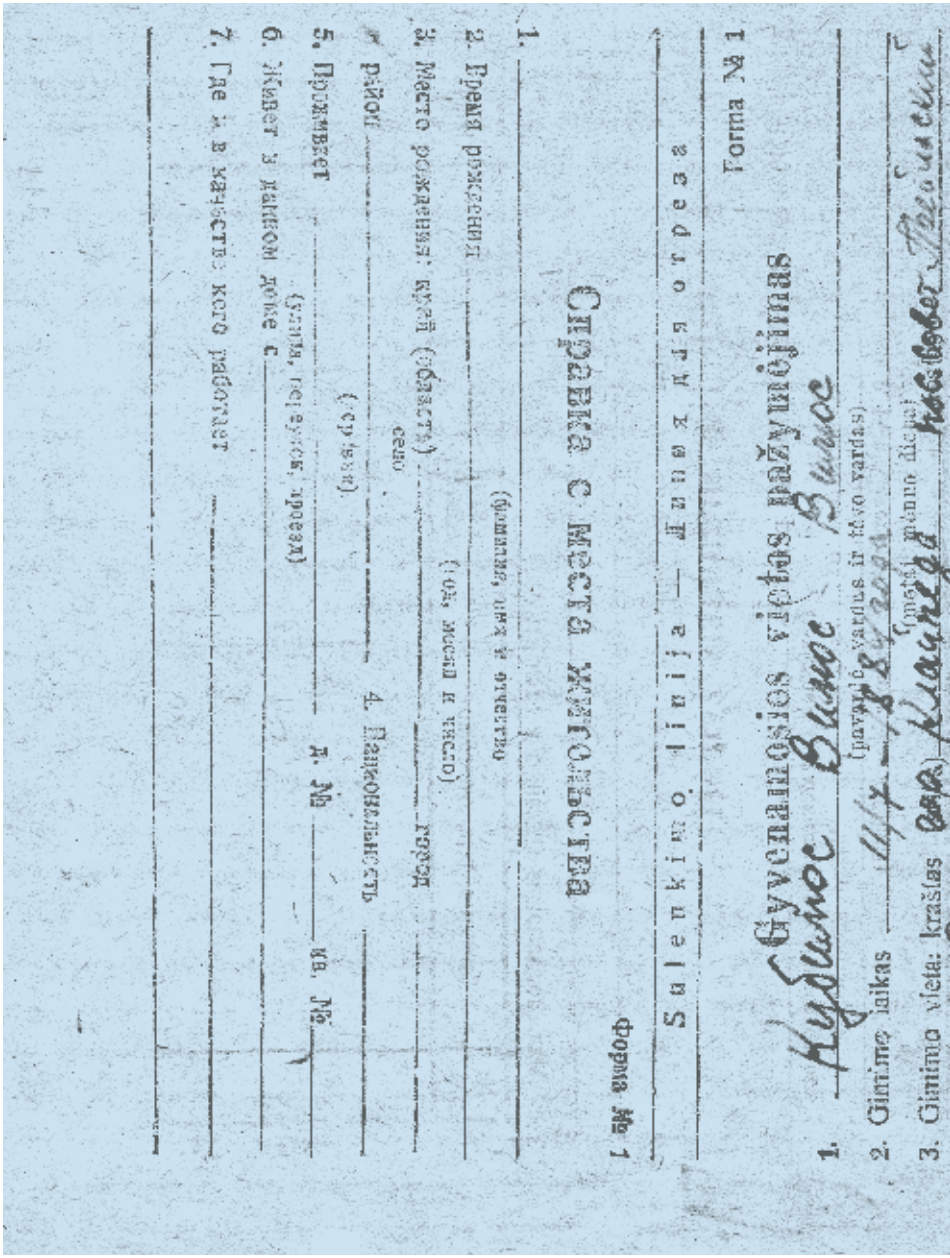
6. Atvyko iš srities, krašto, respublikos / Прибыл из области, края, республики
miesto / города (рабоч. пос.): — rajono (apskr.) / района (уезда):
valsčiaus / волости: — kaimo / деревни (села):

7. Arba persikėlė toje pai gyvenvietėje iš gatvės / Или переехал в этом же населенном пункте с улицы: там же
namo / дома Nr. 3 — buto / кв. Nr. 1

Pastaba: Jeigu registracijos lapelis pildomas pakeitus pavardę ar pasą, tai nurodoma toji priežastis:

8. Karinė prievolė / Отношение к военной службе: не вроб.

A 1949 note issued on his arrival in the restricted coastal border zone to the prewar resident Fritz Bastick, who was born in 1876 in 'Klaipėda City of the Lithuanian SSR', as indicated on the document. It was also proof that the prewar resident was registered with the *militsiya* as a resident of the settlement of Preila. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3265.



Форма № 1

Сиравка с места жительства

Sulenkimo linija — Дипл. и др. отрезка

Forma № 1

Gyvenamosios vietos pažymėjimas

1. Кубилос Вилос Вилос
(pavardė vardus ir tėvo vardas)
2. Gimimo laikas 11/X 1884 года
(metai mėnuo diena)
3. Gimimo vieta: krašias сар. Клаунеда нос. совет Преображенск

1. _____ (фамилия, имя и отчество)
2. Время рождения _____ (год, месяц и число)
3. Место рождения: край (область) _____ город _____ село _____ (сельсовет)
4. Национальность _____
5. Проживает _____ (улица, переулок, проезд) д. № _____ кв. № _____
6. Живет в данном доме с _____
7. Где и в качестве кого работает _____

Documents for residence on the coastal border strip: The prewar resident Wilhelm Kubillus, who was born in 1884, was issued with proof of residence in 1949, confirming that he had lived in Preila from December 1947. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3252.

~~nos~~ Прейла Лит. ССР kaimas 4. Tautybė Литовец

5. Gyvena пос. Прейла № 26 buto № 26 I
(gatvė, pravažiavimas)

6. Šiuose namuose gyvena nuo с декабря 1947 года

7. Kur ir kuo dirba бригадир рыбацкой бригады

8. Asmenys įrašyti į pasą:

Eilės №	Pavardė, vardas, tėvo vardas	Gimimo metai, mėnuo ir diena	Giminystės laipsnis	Pastaba

Pažymėjimas išduotas 19 m. mėn. d. №

(Pažymėjimą išdavusio asmens pareigos, pavardė ir parašas)

Pasą serijos № terminui

1949 m. марта mėn. 10 d.

gavau [signature]
(pasą gavusio parašas)

Zonų Deputatų Taryba LTSR Prejios Gyvenviečių Tarybos Pasiūrano vieta

the war were forced to find accommodation elsewhere. After the Council of Ministers passed a resolution in 1946 to include the Curonian Spit in the restricted coastal border strip, the rights of the border guards were established, and the freedom of civilians was restricted across the entire peninsula.[51] The spit was placed under specific regulations which had already been applied in practice since 1945, allowing local residents to move freely within the coastal strip only if they were registered with the local authorities in the relevant settlements, and only if their passports contained a special stamp. Others were allowed on to or to live on the Curonian Spit provided they had documentary proof of the reason for entry, as well as special permission issued by the *militsiya*. This also applied to all people who travelled to the Curonian Spit on passenger ferries. Business establishments and institutions on the spit were not permitted to hire people who did not have this permission. All vessels had to be registered, not only with the local authorities, but also with the nearest border unit. Berthing or keeping a vessel was only allowed in designated and enclosed areas with an officer on duty round the clock. The regulations prohibited taking photographs or filming, and keeping or breeding carrier pigeons on the border strip.[52] Thus, finding ways of coexisting with the border guards became crucial for civilians and every civilian organisation in the first postwar years. The situation of the prewar residents was only different in that they were the first to face the military government, as they were the first returnees in their villages.

In theory, civilian authorities had to start operating in 1945 in the section of the peninsula that became part of the Lithuanian SSR. The Nida and Juodkrantė rural districts (sing. valsčius) of the Klaipėda District (apskritis) were incorporated into the Lithuanian SSR administrative division system with the decisions of 9 February and 8 June of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist (Bolshevik) Party (LKP(b) CK).[53] However, it was not until June 1946 that the Executive Committee of the Nida rural district actually started functioning, followed by the Juodkrantė Executive Committee in the spring of 1947.[54] After the Juodkrantė, Preila and Nida 'resorts' became part of Klaipėda city on 12 February 1947,[55] formal elections to local soviets were organised,

8 September 1947. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 13, b. 118, l. 54–56; Zam. Predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov Litovskoj SSR Predsedatelyu Klajpedskogo uezdnogo ispolkoma, 6 October 1947. *Ibid.*, l. 58.

48 Balsevičienė 2014: 11.

49 Protokol № 1 zasedaniya Nidenskogo poselkovogo soveta deputatov tr-sya, 21 February 1948. *Klaipėdos regioninis valstybės archyvas* (*Klaipėda Regional State Archives*, hereafter *KLAA*), f. 861, ap. 1, b. 2, l. 2–2 ap.

50 Arbušauskaitė 1998: 93.

51 Postanovlenie Soveta Ministrov Litovskoj SSR № 569-s *O zapretnoj pogranichnoj zone i beregovoj pogranichnoj polose v predelakh Litovskoj SSR*, 20 September 1946. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 11, b. 28, l. 213–220.

52 Ibid., l. 216–220.

53 Protokol № 30 zasedaniya Byuro Central'nogo Komiteta KP(b) Litvy, 9 February 1945. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 8, b. 35, l. 13; Protokol № 42 zasedaniya Byuro Central'nogo Komiteta KP(b) Litvy, 8 June 1945. *Ibid*., b. 71, l. 20.

and in early 1948 an executive power was formed in all three settlements (the settlement of Preila also formally incorporated Pervalka). However, even after the emergence of civilian authorities, the prewar residents of the peninsula were not involved in them: only newcomers were included in the composition of rural district soviets, and later on in settlement soviets. One exception was the Preila Soviet, which saw a minimal influx of newcomers in the early postwar years, and for a period of time its soviet included two prewar residents of the spit, Martin Kubillus and Fritz Peleikis.[56] However, they could hardly view their involvement in the local soviets as being effective, for these soviets had virtually no decision-making powers. They exercised direct supervisory authority over the educational institutions, libraries, reading houses and medical posts of the settlements, and at the same time a very wide-ranging yet poorly defined 'control' over enterprises, institutions and organisations. The local soviets could not tackle more serious issues without consulting the authorities in Klaipėda, and their 'control' was often limited to allocating tasks, which were not necessarily obeyed. These soviets were not capable of addressing the problems faced by prewar residents, whose main concern, it seems, was the recognition of their ownership rights to immovable property. Houses in all four settlements had suffered only minor war damage: in 1945, most of them simply required some light repairs. However, by that time, all the houses had become 'state property'. In the first postwar years, some were appropriated by troops, whereas others passed into the hands of the People's Commissariat of the Fishing Industry in November 1945.[57] A handful were handed over to the soviets of the settlements; but in Nida, for instance, some of these remaining properties also included houses appropriated by troops. It often happened that prewar residents who returned from locations to which they had been evacuated found their homes occupied, or it emerged that according to the resolutions of the new government the homes they used to own (and which sometimes they had built with their own hands) no longer belonged to them. Prewar residents had to find other places to live, or they were left with no choice but to occupy houses that had belonged to people they had known in the past, or to depend on the government.

54 Nidos valsčiaus vykdomojo komiteto pirmininko ataskaitinis pranešimas, 1 March 1947. *KLAA*, f. 13, ap. 1, b. 71, l. 1; Klaipėdos apskr. vykdomojo komiteto posėdžio protokolas nr. 14, 26 May 1947. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 4A, b. 152, l. 118, 120–121.

55 Lietuvos TSR Aukščiausiosios Tarybos Prezidiumo įsakas *Dėl Nidos, Preilos ir Juodkrantės vasarviečių priskyrimo Klaipėdos miesto darbo žmonių deputatų Tarybos priklausomybėn*, 12 November 1947. *Lietuvos Tarybų Socialistinės Respublikos Aukščiausiosios Tarybos Žinios*, 1947, nr. 36–37 (91–92), p. 12.

56 Protokol № 1 zasedaniya Prejlaskago pos. soveta, 7 January 1951. *KLAA*, f. 862, ap. 1, b. 7, l. 1 ap – 2.

57 After the stock-taking conducted between 4 and 10 October by the Klaipėda District (apskritis) Executive Committee and the People's Commissariat of the Fishing Industry, the residential and non-residential properties (including all the assets contained in them) were allocated to set up a fishing enterprise or to accommodate fishermen. They included 80 properties in Nida, 41 in Preila,

By September 1947, the Nida Rural District Soviet had already received a number of complaints from residents of Pervalka and Nida requesting permission to move into houses they had previously personally owned.[58] After half a year, the same issue was addressed by the Preila Executive Committee.[59] However, since during the war the residents had lost the documents proving their ownership of the properties, the only course of action that the local authorities could suggest was to take the matter to court. In 1948, the most tenacious prewar residents who valued their property made a complaint to the 'People's Court'. This perseverance was the likely reason for the deportation to Siberia of several of the most active prewar residents, as they were condemned as kulaks (see pp. 88-91).

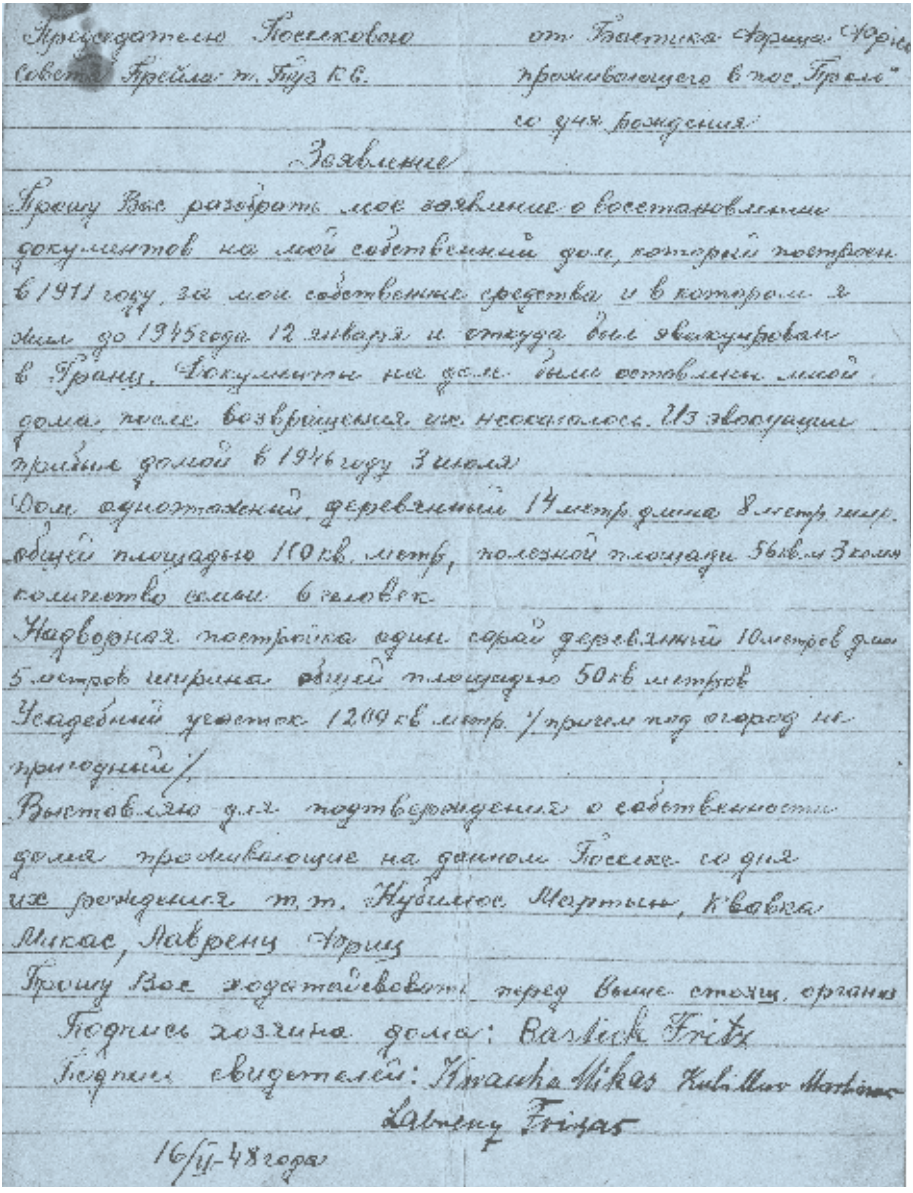
However, the new order and the new government were not the only issues that caused trouble for the prewar residents of the peninsula. The provision of food products to residents of the Curonian Spit, based on the departmental distribution of economic sectors, was the responsibility of a cooperative of fishermen-consumers. By the summer of 1947, it had already opened grocery stores in Nida, Preila and Juodkrantė. However, the range of products on offer was so limited that residents of the peninsula chose to travel to Klaipėda to shop for food, and this problem existed throughout the 1950s. Since the regular carriage of passengers to Klaipėda by scheduled freight service was only launched in February 1948, and there was an acute shortage of water transport, residents had to be very resourceful. Due to the critical shortage of food products, as well as the fact that fishing was the main source of income for many of them before the war, the prewar residents depended not only on fish, but also on professional skills that were passed down the generations, which allowed them to catch fish in all seasons. However, the 'state' began increasingly to interfere, telling fishermen when and how to fish, and what to do with the catch, gradually making sure that the 'state' became the sole economic contact for them, and making them pursue their trade only through 'state' enterprises or institutions. The most important of them in the first postwar years was a fish enterprise established in the autumn of 1945 in Nida as a branch of the Klaipėda Fish Factory. Through contracts with fishermen, this

32 in Pervalka, and 55 in Juodkrantė: Postanovlenie SNK Litovskoj SSR № 681 *O peredache Narkomrybpromu stroenij i imushhestv dlya organizacii ryb-zavodov i rybopriem-nykh punktov*, 22 November 1945. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 1, b. 38, l. 137. In 1946, people's commissariats were transformed into ministries.

58 Protokol № 13 zasedaniya Nidenskogo volostnogo ispolnitel'nogo komiteta, 24 September 1947. *KLAA*, f. 13, ap. 1, b. 72, l. [28ap], Vypiska iz resheniya Nidenskogo volostnogo ispolnitel'nogo komiteta, 24 September 1947. *Ibid.*, l. [30].

59 Protokol № 2 zasedaniya ispolkoma Prejl'skogo poselkovogo soveta deputatov trudyashhikhsya, 3 March 1948. *KLAA*, f. 862, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 2 ap.

The children of prewar residents of the Curonian Spit learned to be fishermen from early childhood. This is evident from a photograph taken before the Second World War depicting a man and two small children making fishing nets. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, P-33849.



Председателю Поселкового Совета Прейла т. Туз К.С.

от Бастика Фрица Фрица проживающего в пос. „Прель" со дня рождения

Заявление

Прошу Вас разобрать мое заявление о восстановлении документов на мой собственный дом, который построен в 1911 году, за мои собственные средства и в котором я жил до 1945 года 12 января и откуда был эвакуирован в Гранц. Документы на дом были оставлены мной дома, после возвращения их неоказалось. Из эвакуации прибыл домой в 1946 году 3 июля

Дом одноэтажный деревянный 14 метр. длина 8 метр. шир. общей площадью 110 кв. метр, полезной площади 56 кв. м 3 комн количество семьи 6 человек

Надворная постройка один сарай деревянный 10 метров длин 5 метров ширина общей площадью 50 кв метров

Усадебный участок 1200 кв метр. /причем под огород не пригодный/

Выставляю для подтверждения о собственности дома проживающие на данном Поселке со дня их рождения т.т. Кубилюс Мартын, Квавка Микас, Лавренц Фриц

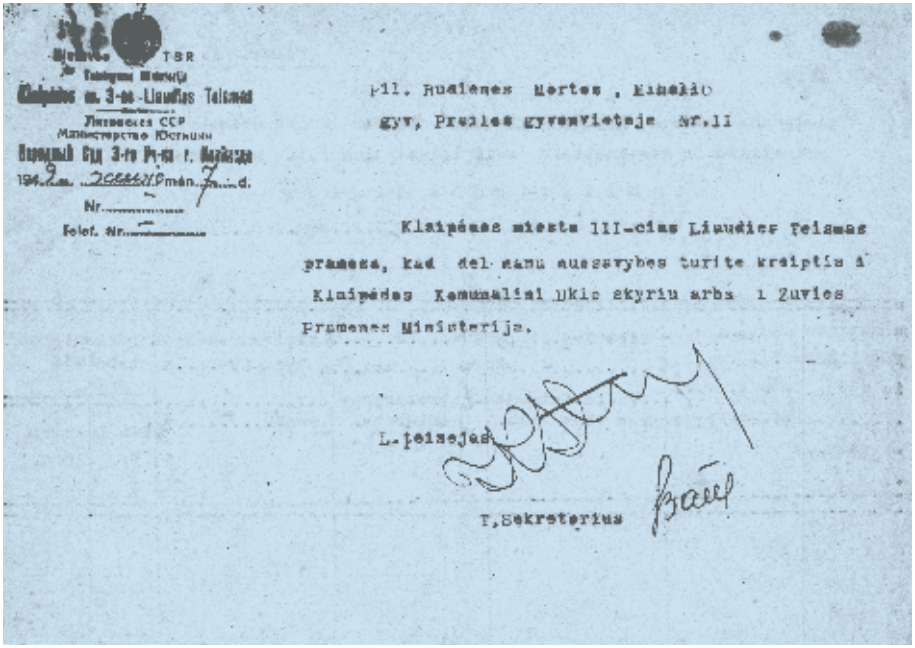
Прошу Вас ходатайствовать перед выше стоящ. органов

Подпись хозяина дома: Bastick Fritz

Подпись свидетелей: Kwanha Mikas Kubillus Martinas Lawrenz Frizas

16/II-48 года

An application made on 16 February 1948 by the prewar Preila resident Fritz Bastikas, addressed to the Preila Settlement Soviet, requesting assistance regarding the return of his property. The reverse side of the document contains the following text in Russian, handwritten by Kuzma Tuz, chairman of the Executive Committee: 'Due to the lack of documents, titular ownership of the property can only be restored by the People's Court.' *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3298.



Klaipėdos m. 3-os Liaudies Teismas
Литовская ССР
Министерство Юстиции
Народный Суд 3-го Р-на г. Клайпеда
1949 г. 7 мая 7 д.
Nr.
Telef. Nr.

Pil. Rudienes Mortos, Mihelio
gyv, Proiles gyvenvietoje Nr.11

Klaipėdos miesto III-cias Liaudies Teismas
pramesa, kad del manu nuosavybes turite kreiptis i
Klaipėdos Komunalini Ukio skyriu arba i Zuvies
Pramenes Ministerija.

L.teisejas

T.Sekretorius

Notification of 7 January 1949 from the 3rd People's Court of Klaipėda City to the prewar resident Morta Rudienė, in response to her complaint regarding the return of her property. It is clear from the document that the court, which was expected to apply justice with regard to prewar residents, did not even examine the merits of the claim. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3296.

The buildings of the Nida Fish Enterprise, 1958. Personal papers of Christel Tepperis (*Neringos muziejai*).

enterprise promoted the creation of 'state fishing' brigades that would undertake to catch a certain pre-planned quantity of fish for the enterprise. By September 1946, the enterprise had already entered into contracts with 72 fishermen, including 12 who only worked 'for the state'.[60] In the late 1940s, these brigades mostly included prewar residents. For fishermen in the postwar conditions, this was a way to reside legally in homes that had passed into the hands of the People's Commissariat of the Fishing Industry (these homes were de facto controlled by the enterprise), to use the 'fishing enterprise's fleet' (which was actually composed of old ships that were abandoned by evacuees and which had been raised from the bottom of the lagoon), and to receive a certain level of remuneration for their catch. Fishermen simply had to learn to fish 'according to plan', and to deliver the catch to collection points, which were established in Nida, Preila, Pervalka and Juodkrantė in 1945. However, the enterprise often lacked funds to pay the fishermen; there was also a shortage of equipment, special clothes and vessels. Moreover, fishermen would either exceed or fail to reach the target 'plan'. Since food was scarce, they would simply take a portion of the catch for themselves.[61] But, most importantly, those who before the war proudly called themselves fishermen, or 'fishing entrepreneurs' (*Firscherwirt*), by that time were gradually becoming hired hands, supervised by the heads of the fishing zones appointed by the Nida Fish Enterprise, who were not very knowledgeable about the specifics of fishing in the Curonian Lagoon, and by the directors of the fishing enterprise, who did a poor job and who were constantly changing (both positions were filled by incomers).

60 Meropriyatiya Ministerstva rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR po obespecheniyu vypolneni[ya] godovogo plana, 26 September 1946. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 9, b. 478, l. 81.

61 Cf. Protokol № 7 zasedaniya Nidenskogo volostnogo ispolnitel›nogo komiteta, 3 April 1947. *KLAA*, f. 13, ap. 1, b. 72, l. [11–12 ap]; Protokol № 9 zasedaniya Nidenskogo volostnogo ispolnitel'nogo komiteta, 13 June 1947. *Ibid*., l. [16–18].

62 Protokol № 1 obshhego sobraniya rybakov, rybachek Nidenskogo r. uchastka, poselok Nida, 12 June 1948. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 1–2; Protokol № 18 zasedaniya ispolnitel›nogo komiteta gor. Klajpeda, 13 July 1948. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 4A, b. 260, l. 233, 245.

63 Klaipėdos žvejų kolektyvinio ūkio „Pasienietis" narių ir jų šeimų apskaitos knyga, 1948–1954. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 2, b. 2.

Inclusion and exclusion of prewar residents

The year 1948 brought major changes to the lives of prewar fishermen on the Curonian Spit. On 12 June, the Pasienietis (Pogranichnik, Border Guard) Fishermen's Kolkhoz was founded in Nida, and it was officially registered on 13 July.[62] The kolkhoz's founders were 35 fishermen, of whom only three were incomers, while the rest were prewar residents.[63] The prewar resident

Albertas Kalvis was appointed (formally elected) chairman of the board of the kolkhoz. One more fishermen's kolkhoz (collective farm), called Baltijos Aušra (Baltijskaya zarya, Baltic Dawn), was established at that time in Preila, in the context of the collectivisation process taking place in Lithuania during that period. Martin Kubillus, another prewar resident, became the chairman of its board.[64] Organising themselves into kolkhozes probably did not seem a very bad thing for prewar residents: judging from the further actions of the Pasienietis Kolkhoz, it was hoped that the collectivisation of production facilities and output would give them more control and a collective voice, as well as enabling them to achieve more when they approached the authorities. After completing the stocktaking of all the fishing equipment and assets held by members of the kolkhoz, and after all these assets were handed over to the kolkhoz, its members first contacted the Executive Committee of Klaipėda city regarding the formal transfer to the kolkhoz of the right to use the buildings in which members of the kolkhoz were residing.[65] Soon afterwards, complaints were made against the director of the Nida Fish Enterprise, due to his refusal to hand over buildings intended to accommodate the kolkhoz's office, warehouses and fishing net production workshops, and due to the fact that the enterprise was denying the kolkhoz access to the promised vessels.[66] In 1948, the chairman of the board of the Pasienietis Kolkhoz, facilitated by the Klaipėda Executive Committee, obtained credit for acquiring horses: there had long been a dire need for horses in order to reach more distant parts of the frozen lagoon.[67] In the summer of 1949, after noticing 11 'abandoned and decaying' ocean-going vessels washed ashore in the Primorsk Rayon of the Kaliningrad Oblast, the members of the kolkhoz took steps to acquire these boats.[68] All this active involvement, of course, demonstrates that some prewar residents of the Curonian Spit considered the kolkhoz to be a tool to help them address problems that had been ignored for too long, at the same time as allowing them to act according to how the system required them to.

However, it soon emerged that very few issues were dealt with as expected. The question of house ownership remained unsolved: formally, the houses still belonged to

64 *Raudonasis švyturys* (hereafter *RŠ*), 24 June 1948, nr. 148 (668), p. 2.

65 Protokol № 7 zasedaniya pravleniya rybackoj arteli «Pogranichnik», 27 August 1948. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 5.

66 Ryboloveckaya artel' «Pasenetis» Ministru rybnoj promyshlennosti Lit. SSR, October 1948. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 7, l. 1.

67 „Pasieniečio" žvejų artelės valdybos pirmininkas Klaipėdos miesto vykd. komiteto pirmininkui, [October 1948]. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 1, l. 15.

68 Protokol № 12 zasedaniya Nidenskogo poselkovogo soveta, 17 June 1949. *KLAA*, f. 861, ap. 1, b. 3, l. 6–6 ap.

the Nida Fish Enterprise, but in practice they were in the possession of the kolkhoz. Issues concerning the availability of supplies for fishermen were also not solved as quickly as expected. Despite the changeover in 1950, the board of Pasienietis, led by a new chairman, Martinas Rešpilis, was still only composed of prewar residents; but after 1952, the board was chaired by incomers (the chairman of Baltijos Aušra had already been replaced by a newcomer in 1948). Candidates for the position of kolkhoz manager were usually proposed by the Klaipėda Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania, and they took charge of the kolkhoz on the same day they were 'elected'. In the 1952 general meeting of Baltijos Aušra, one kolkhoz member said they 'would like to elect a chairman from among themselves', but a representative of the Party Committee replied bluntly: 'A drunk has no business talking here.'[69] Thus, it was clear that any form of self-governance in kolkhoz management was only an illusion. Moreover, a Motorised Fishing Station was established in Nida in 1952. Formally, they had to provide fishing equipment and vessels to fishermen, and carry out repairs to vessels and nets. However, the station had to take over all fishing equipment from kolkhozes (although it was required to pay for it over ten years), but the following year, both kolkhozes complained that the station was failing to carry out the functions it was meant to.[70] In 1954, the Nida station was liquidated, and a new one started operating in Juodkrantė.

Prewar residents of the Curonian Spit had some say in the decision making in fishermen's kolkhozes. Even after 1952, despite the fact that only the Party's people remained in kolkhoz management, prewar residents were often put in charge of fishermen's brigades. In 1956, a third fishermen's kolkhoz called Neringa was established in Preila, after it broke off from Baltijos Aušra in Juodkrantė, and the previously mentioned prewar resident Martin Kubillus was even temporarily put in charge of it from 1956 to 1957. However, prewar residents had hardly any opportunities to participate in addressing the critical postwar problems that had been ignored for years. Meanwhile, fishing was hampered by a shortage of equipment, and became increasingly bureaucratised and restricted. Fishermen were required to step up their fishing activities in the Baltic Sea from the late 1940s, but

69 Visuotino narių susirinkimo Preilos žvejų kolūkio „Baltijos aušra" protokolas, [second half of 1952]. *KLAA*, f. 264, ap. 1, b. 2, l. 37-38 ap.

70 Nidos žvejų artelės „Pasienietis" valdybos posėdžio protokolas nr. 2, [February 1953]. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 17, l. 27; Preilos žvejų kolūkio „Baltijos aušra" visuotinio susirinkimo protokolas Nr. 1, 20 February 1953. *KLAA*, f. 264, ap. 1, b. 2, l. 44.

Vilis Vyselis, who lived on the spit before the war, delivers the catch after a successful fishing trip with the Pasienietis Kolkhoz. The Nida Fish Enterprise employee Raisa Rybrova, who took delivery of the fish, had moved to the Curonian Spit in 1946 from Astrakhan' by the Caspian Sea. Photograph by V. Rupšlaukis, 1958. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, 0-010421.

Vilius Kalvis and Mikas Pugelis, two prewar residents of the spit, who became fishermen with the Pasienietis Kolkhoz in Nida after the war, fish for eels. Photograph by V. Rupšlaukis, 1958. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, 0-010440.

The prewar Nidden fisherman Jonas Pinkis delivers his catch to the Nida Fish Enterprise employee Mironenko, who was in charge of taking delivery of fish, 1953. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, 0-004622.

Loading a catch of eels on to a boat of the Nida Fish Enterprise. Photograph by Ilja Fišeris, 1958. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, 0-026172.

they lacked the necessary fishing vessels, and they had to get a permit from border guards every time they went fishing in the sea.[71] If they accidentally lost this permit, they could not fish until a new one was issued.[72]

Besides the border guards, environmental officials were regarded by prewar fishermen as another threat to their livelihoods in the 1950s. Because some species of fish were declared endangered, officials began to limit fishing in the lagoon. In 1958, '12 old fishermen who had been fishing in the Curonian Lagoon and occasionally in the Baltic Sea their whole life' raised this issue in a letter addressed directly to Motiejus Šumauskas, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR. In their letter, they explained that the limitations imposed by the Nature Protection Committee were not in line with their long-held practice. They also claimed that while the Lithuanian side was trying to protect fish, the fishermen of the Kaliningrad Oblast were catching these fish. Finally, they stated that: 'The fishermen's kolkhozes on the eastern shore of the Curonian Lagoon have a better livelihood, as they have homestead land and ancillary agricultural holdings. But the fishermen's kolkhozes of the Curonian Spit do not have these opportunities, homestead land or ancillary agricultural holdings. Thus, strict limitations on fishing in the Curonian Lagoon may make our fishermen, who cannot always go fishing in the sea due to storms, face very difficult living conditions.'[73]

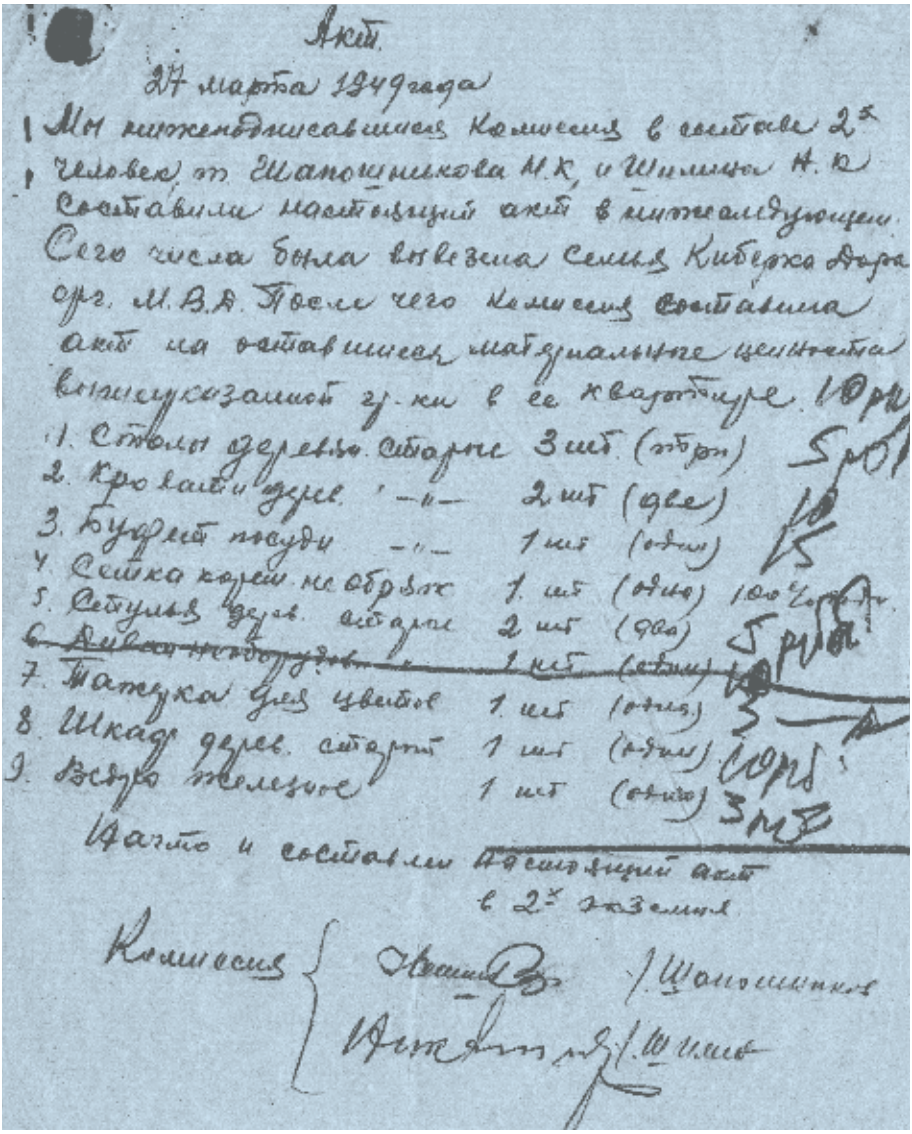
All this was further undermined by the irrational and unexplained (as prewar residents believed) actions of the new government, which sometimes adversely affected them personally. As was previously mentioned, by the end of March 1949, the small community of prewar residents of the Curonian Spit had been affected by deportations to Siberia. To comply with the deportation 'plan' of Operation Priboj that shook Lithuania, the city of Klaipėda had to fulfil its 'quota'. For this reason, an order was issued to deport six families from the Curonian Spit. This decision affected members of the Pasienietis Kolkhoz, including the family of the brother of the chairman of the board. Thus, the chairman Albertas Kalvis himself, and his family, spontaneously chose to join them 'voluntarily'. At some point, however, this decision was cancelled, which probably happened because the director of the Nida Fish Enterprise intervened.[74] All seven

71 Nidos žvejų artelės „Pasienietis" valdybos posėdžio protokolas Nr. 8, 12 April 1952. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 17, l. 16 ap.

72 Nidos žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" valdybos pirmininko Rešpilio Martyno visumos narių susirinkimui ataskaitinis pranešimas, 3 February 1952. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 27, l. 6.

73 Pareiškimas Lietuvos Ministrų Tarybos pirmininkui, [1958]. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 86, l. 11-12.

74 Arbušauskaitė 2000: 481.



Акт.

27 марта 1949 года

Мы нижеподписавшиеся Комиссия в составе 2х человек т. Шапошникова Н.К. и Шилина Н.К. составили настоящий акт в нижеследующем. Сего числа была вывезена семья Киберка Дора орг. М.В.Д. После чего Комиссия составила акт на оставшиеся материальные ценности вышеуказанной гр-ки в ее квартире. 10 рб

1. Столы деревян. старые 3 шт. (три) 5 рб
2. Кровати дерев. —"— 2 шт (две) 10
3. Буфет посуды —"— 1 шт (один) 15
4. Сетка корем. не обряж. 1 шт (одна) 100 [illegible]
5. Стулья дерев. старые 2 шт (два) 5 рб
~~6. Диван необорудов. 1 шт (один)~~
7. Тажерка для цветов 1 шт (одна) 3
8. Шкаф дерев. старый 1 шт (один) 10 рб
9. Ведро железное 1 шт (одно) 3 мг

Начто и составлен настоящий акт в 2х экземпл.

Комиссия { [illegible] / Шапошников
[illegible] / Шилин

A record made on 27 March 1949 of the property of the Kibelka family, who had been deported to Siberia. The property was found in Dora Kibelka's house. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3283.

The Church served an important community-building function in the lives of local residents before the Second World War. In this photograph, residents of Nidden (Nida) are seen leaving after a church service, 1930s. *Klaipėdos apskrities viešoji Ievos Simonaitytės biblioteka*, AdM collection, F-II3(62).

families remained on the Curonian Spit. However, the deportations still affected Gertrud Blode, the widow of Gustav Blode, the owner of the Königin Luise Hotel, who had died in 1928. She allegedly met the criterion of 'kulak' simply because before the war she had owned a hotel accommodating nearly 100 people, ten hectares of land, four horses, three cows, and a ship with an engine, and had employed 30 people.[75] The families of Fritz Bastick, Martin Kibelka, Mikas Kvauka and Fritz Labrentz were also deported to Siberia in 1949. They were formally accused of being former members of the NSDAP, secretly organising Nazi gatherings, and opposing the Soviet government.[76] Among the prewar residents who had returned after the war only to be deported to Siberia in 1949 were Wilhelm Kubillus' family.[77] He was the eldest brother of the aforementioned Martin Kubillus. Most of these people had simply sought recognition of their rights to property they had previously owned.

Prewar residents could also not understand the new government's reasons for not allowing people to go to church services. In Juodkrantė, where only a small community of prewar residents remained, it seems the church was no longer used for its purpose after the war. The fishermen's kolkhoz used the building as a warehouse. In 1954, the Klaipėda Executive Committee decided to give it to the Herring Fishing Department, which intended to set up a club in it. This never materialised, however, and in 1956 the building was transferred to the Baltijos Aušra Kolkhoz to set up a club.[78] Meanwhile, Nida was home to a larger prewar population, which ensured greater continuity of the religious tradition. During the postwar years, a woman called Schekahn continued to serve devotedly as bell-ringer, a position she had held before the war. After her death in 1946, she was succeeded by Hans Sakuth. Every Sunday, he would come to the church to ring the bells, and after 1953 prewar residents would occasionally attend church to worship.[79] However, on 19 May 1955, following a proposal by the Pasienietis Kolkhoz, the Executive Committee of the Nida settlement passed the decision that the allegedly 'abandoned and decrepit church building' should be handed over to the Pasienietis Kolkhoz. This obliged the kolkhoz to use the building to store fishermen's assets (*dlya khraneniya rybackogo imushhestva*). The Klaipėda

75 Ibid.; Arbušauskaitė 1995b: 382.

76 Arbušauskaitė 2000: 481–487.

77 *MD*, 1969, Nr. 8, S. 109.

78 Klaipėdos m. vykdomojo komiteto sprendimas nr. 134 *Dėl perdavimo liuteronų maldos namų, esančių Juodkrantės gyvenvietėje, žvejų kolūkio „Baltijos Aušra" balansan*, 19 March 1956. *KLAA*, f. 104, ap. 1, b. 257, l. 267.

79 Hak 1959.

Executive Committee approved this decision.[80] On 12 August, churchgoers found their house of worship had had its windows broken, the pews were gone, the organ was damaged, and the altar painting had been slashed with a knife. Four days later, 39 residents of Nida submitted a complaint to the authorities. They opened up the locked church, and worship continued. But a week later, they found the church bell had been broken as a result of being thrown from a height of 12 metres.[81] Meanwhile, the Pasienietis Kolkhoz was in talks with the Agricultural Construction Design Institute regarding the conversion of the '*Kirche*' to accommodate a club.[82] Believers did not lose hope, and made several visits to Vilnius, until they finally registered the Nida parish, and obtained a decision to have the building handed over to it. Through donations by locals, the building was repaired, and a new altar painting was made; the church began holding services in the German language.[83]

Of course, few of these problems came to light or appeared outside the realm of correspondence. The prewar fishermen of the Curonian Spit were shown and described in a variety of propaganda publications. In the early postwar period, close-up photographs of them accompanied stories about the Curonian Spit in the Lithuanian press. With the first wave of holidaymakers to Nida and Juodkrantė, a special guidebook to the spit was prepared in 1957,[84] followed by a documentary by Leonas Tautrimas, which was part of a series of films entitled 'Explore our Country'. The book and the film portrayed the peninsula's prewar fishermen not only as members of the fishing industry, but primarily as symbols of the Lithuanian fishing trade, and at the same time as symbols of the continuity of the Lithuanian tradition on the Curonian Spit. However, not a word about the problems and concerns faced by the fishermen appeared in the press. Meanwhile, the changes, if any, that locals managed to bring about through their approaches to the authorities were very short-lived, and only rarely did they improve their conditions.

80 Reshenie zasedaniya ispolkoma Nidenskogo poselkovogo soveta, 19 May 1955. *KLAA*, f. 861, ap. 1, b. 17, l. 3; Reshenie № 240 ispolnitel'nogo komiteta gor. Klajpeda *O peredachi na balans arteli «Passenetis» kostela v poselke Nida*, 3 June 1955. KLAA, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 53, l. 1.

81 Hak 1959.

82 Žemės ūkio statybos projekto institutas „Litgiproselstroj" LTSR žvejų kolūkių sąjungos pirmininkui, žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" pirmininkui, 1 September 1955. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 53, l. 5.

83 Hak 1959: 154; Klumbys 1993: 71–72. The church in Nida was closed again in 1963. It was returned for worship (first by Catholics) in December 1988 (Juška 1997: 305–306).

84 Mešys 1957.

Leaving for Germany

In the late 1950s, the increasing disregard for residents of the Curonian Spit and their prewar way of life caused them to consider the possibility of leaving the USSR. An opportunity arose in the summer of 1955, when the USSR made a suggestion to establish diplomatic relations with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), which West Germany used to address the issue of Germans who had remained on Soviet territory. The millions of Germans who were expelled from Central and Eastern Europe (pl. *Vertriebene*) were a solid organised force that the FRG government, created in 1949, had to reckon with. As has been mentioned previously, reuniting families remained an important issue for many years after the war, and displaces persons frequently raised concerns about the fates of their relatives who had stayed in the USSR. Moreover, during the first years of the existence of the FRG, there was much public interest in repatriating former Wehrmacht soldiers who had been taken prisoner of war and remained in the USSR as a result. Thus, the Christian Democratic Union of Germany (Christlich Demokratische Union, CDU) headed by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, which was in power at the time, faced constant pressure to address the issue of individuals who had remained in the USSR returning to Germany, and had to take up the matter as soon as the occasion arose.

The provisions of the Law for the Regulation of Questions of Citizenship passed by the Bundestag on 22 February 1955 provided a basis for Germany even to repatriate residents of the USSR who had acquired Soviet citizenship after 1945. Under this law, the right to German citizenship was recognised for six groups of Germans from Central and Eastern Europe who had acquired German citizenship between 1938 and 1943, including residents of the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory who had become citizens of Germany on the basis of an agreement on 8 July 1939 between Lithuania and the German Reich on the citizenship of residents of the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory.[85] Thus, all residents who resided permanently in the region on 8 July 1939, and had not chosen Lithuanian citizenship by 31 December 1939, were regarded by the FRG as potential citizens[86] (only a relatively small number of these had chosen Lithuanian

85 Gesetz zur Regelung von Fragen der Staatsangehörigkeit, 22 February 1955. *Bundesgesetzblatt*, Teil I, 1955, Nr. 6, S. 65–68.

86 Cf. Sutartis tarp Lietuvos Respublikos ir Vokietijos Reicho dėl Klaipėdiškių pilietybės, 7/8 July 1939. *Vyriausybės Žinios*, 1939, nr. 676, p. 695–697.

citizenship, 585 in all[87]). Consequently, when raising the issue of their departure from the USSR, the government of the FRG treated this as the return of its citizens, that is, repatriation, although for the USSR the issue was simply Germany's claim over Soviet citizens.

Without elaborating on the details of the negotiations that started in July 1957 in Moscow, it should be stated that Germany was able to negotiate a favourable resolution in the talks regarding the return of its former citizens. This was announced on 8 April 1958 in a press release from the negotiating delegations. Meanwhile, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR had already adopted the relevant decree on 7 January. The decree and its implementing acts stated that *Altreichsdeutsche* (Germans of the former empire) who still lived in the USSR, including people who were born in East Prussia or in the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory, and who had held German citizenship on 21 June 1941, as well as their spouses and children who had acquired German citizenship before this date, except for individuals of non-German nationality who had moved to the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory after 1918, could choose whether to move to the FRG or the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Their applications to leave were considered on a case-by-case basis. These individuals lost their USSR citizenship from the day of their departure from the USSR, if they did not express the wish to retain it.

Some residents had moved from the former Memel (Klaipėda) Territory to Germany even before the agreement between Germany and the USSR. However, the agreement greatly accelerated the process: from 1958 to 1 January 1960, as many as 6,156 applications to leave the country were approved for individuals who were born in the former Memel (Klaipėda) Territory. Of these, 453 moved to the GDR, and 5,703 to the FRG.[88] How did all this affect the continuity of life on the Curonian Spit for its prewar residents?

According to an unofficial census of the population of the northern part of the Curonian Spit taken in 1956 by staff of the Institute of History of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, there were 188 prewar residents of the Curonian Spit and their children in four settlements, of whom 99 lived in Nida, 45 in Pervalka, 34 in Preila, and ten in Juodkrantė. Altogether, these individuals accounted

87 Arbušauskaitė 2001: 33.

88 Dokladnaya zapiska ministra vnutrennikh del Litovskoj SSR Predsedatelyu Soveta Ministrov Litovskoj SSR, 31 October 1960. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 13, b. 693, l. 4. Report data first published by Arbušauskaitė (1998: 96).

for 13 per cent of the population of all four settlements. At 43 per cent, the highest proportion lived in Pervalka; they amounted to 18 per cent of the population in Preila; 17 per cent in Nida; and just 2 per cent in Juodkrantė. Almost half of the prewar residents (86 out of 188) were born during the Kaiserreich period; thus, by 1956 they were already 38 years old or older. Of them, 38 individuals were over the age of 60. The two oldest men were Nida residents born in 1870. Nonetheless, there was also a relatively high number of young people among the prewar residents: 88 were still under 26. Thus, it was not only a community of 'old fishermen'. The prewar residents had the potential to regenerate, even more so when there were virtually equal proportions of men (95) and women (93), and included a majority of individuals under 35 years of age in both groups (51 and 49 respectively).

There is no data available about the exact number of people that the community lost as a result of the 1958 agreement between Germany and the USSR.[89] But one thing remains clear: if by that period prewar residents still made up a substantial part of the population, and in Pervalka they accounted for nearly half the residents, only a handful of families remained on the Curonian Spit after the wave of migration to Germany that started in 1958.

There were many reasons for their decision to leave for Germany (see pages 68-92 for details), and yet the most important one was their desire to be reunited with their families, which had been divided during the war and the postwar years. Other reasons can be summarised briefly as follows: property, including residential buildings, seized or lost; the ambiguous and unacceptable form of governance and economic relations imposed by the new government; the border regime restrictions introduced immediately after the war, and the subsequent limitations on fishing; abject poverty and poor provisioning; the increasing role played by incomers in settlements on the Curonian Spit, and their disregard for prewar residents and their traditions; and the reduced size of the prewar community, which, among other things, made it more difficult to regenerate the community without intermarrying with the newcomers.

There are many stories of residents moving to live in Germany. Those who had submitted applications to leave the country, and who subsequently had their

89 Arbušauskaitė believes (1995b: 397, 398) that 'nearly everyone' left, and, according to her, only 12 prewar residents lived in the municipality of Neringa in 1993.

The Nidden resident Mikas Engelynas (1882–1972) was one of the few inhabitants of the prewar settlement who did not join the wave of emigration to Germany that started in 1958. Photograph by Bernardas Aleknavičius, 1967. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, 1-15365.

applications approved, then had to decide what to do with their property, and clear up any outstanding obligations. It was rare for a prewar resident to personally own a house on the Curonian Spit. But those who did would also need to find a buyer. In March 1959, The Pasienietis Kolkhoz was granted permission to purchase residential and non-residential buildings from the fishermen-kolkhozniks who were preparing to leave Nida.[90] Fishermen usually had to terminate their employment with the kolkhoz, withdraw their member's contribution, and if they rented their home, they had to move out of the house owned by the kolkhoz. For instance, in February 1959, the Pasienietis Kolkhoz approved the application from the aforementioned Hans Sakuth, who was an active supporter of the Nida church. In December, it approved the application of Wilhelm Kalvis, and in March 1960 the application of Maria Jakait.[91] After arriving in Germany, the prewar residents of the Curonian Spit first went to special camps, which were usually in Friedland, Lower Saxony (near Göttingen). From there, they would generally move to where their families lived. After 1960, prewar residents of the Klaipėda/Memel region were required to provide evidence that members of their family were waiting for them in Germany; this became a mandatory condition. For example, Martin and Marta Radmacher from Nida moved to Westphalia (FRG) to be reunited with their son Martin in late December 1958.[92] In early January 1959, Dorothea Juodjurgis from Pervalka also moved to Westphalia to be reunited with her son.[93]

It is interesting to note that some incomers who were married to prewar residents also decided to leave the country, such as the forest worker Vytautas Laurinavičius, who had moved to Nida with his parents from the Kavarskas Rayon in 1954. In Nida, he married Eva Wehleit, the daughter of prewar residents, and in 1960 he moved to Germany with his wife.[94] However, sometimes families were separated: some members of a family of prewar residents moved to Germany, whereas others declined to leave and stayed on the Curonian Spit.

The 1958 agreement also opened up opportunities for those who had been deported to Siberia to move to Germany. The fisherman Wilhelm Kubillus had spent ten years in exile in the Krasnoyarsk Krai, after being deported in 1949. Having lost two of his sons, who were killed

90 Vidaus vandenų eksploatacijos valdyba žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" pirmininkui, 21 March 1959. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 93, l. 15.

91 Žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" valdybos ir įgaliotinių susirinkimo protokolas nr. 11, 24 December 1959. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 87, l. 24; l. 13–14; Žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" valdybos ir įgaliotinių susirinkimo protokolas nr. 3, 24 March 1960. *Ibid*., l. 17–17 ap.

92 *MD*, 1959, Nr. 4, S. 42.

93 *MD*, 1959, Nr. 16, S. 215.

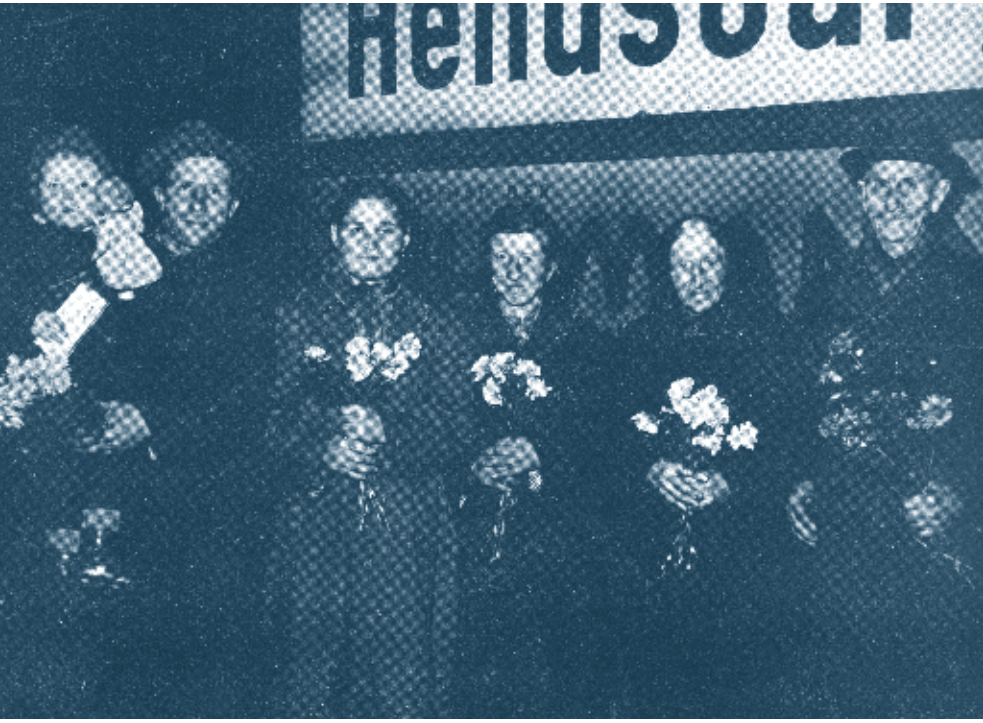
94 *MD*, 1960, Nr. 13, S. 171.

in Russia during the Second World War, he survived exile thanks to his resilience. In 1958, he moved to Germany with his wife, their daughter and their son Herbert, as well as the son's wife Tat'yana, whom he had met in exile, and their three-year-old daughter.[95] The Blode family, that is, the widow Gertrud and her son Gert, who had been exiled from Nida to Siberia in 1949, also moved to Germany in 1958.[96]

The period of greatest migration from the USSR was between 1958 and 1960. However, people also migrated in later years, as well. This was a major upheaval in the history of Curonian Spit families, which had developed continuously for several centuries.

95 *MD*, 1958, Nr. 23, S. 325; 1969, Nr. 8, S. 109.

96 *MD*, 1959, Nr. 3, S. 30.



Wilhelm Kubillus (right), with his wife and daughter, son Herbert (left), and his son's wife Tat'yana and daughter, arriving in Germany after returning from exile to Siberia, seen here at Rendsburg railway station, 1959. Photograph from *Memeler Dampfboot*, 1959, Nr. 23, S. 325.

For most people who left during or after the Second World War, the Curonian Spit became a site of memory. This remained so for several decades until 1987, when foreign citizens were again allowed on to the Lithuanian part of the spit. What survived in the memory was images of dunes and the landscapes, as is shown in this picture from the 1930s. Photograph by Vytautas Augustinas. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, P-33792. >

Chapter III

New postwar residents on the Curonian Spit

Not only the Curonian Spit, but also the entire Memel (Klaipėda) Territory was abandoned during the Second World War. Residents were evacuated from in front of the advancing Red Army to inland parts of Germany in 1944 and 1945 to such an extent that Klaipėda (Memel), which had had about 50,000 residents before the war, was almost entirely depopulated, with only 28 civilians left. Shortly after the Red Army occupied Klaipėda (Memel) on 28 January 1945, decisions had to be made about what to do with the area, which had lost its population. Like any other region of Lithuania, the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory did not see the active repatriation of those who had fled from the approaching Red Army along with the German troops: by late August 1945, only 914 official repatriates had returned to the western part of Lithuania.[1] While this number had reached 4,085 by late 1946,[2] the numbers of returnees were still low, given that in 1941 the Memel Territory had had a population of 134,000. Thus, repopulating the abandoned area with newcomers by voluntary resettlement seemed to be the only solution.

On 12 June 1945, on a proposition from Vilnius, the USSR Council of People's Commissars passed a resolution whereby the administrations of ten Lithuanian counties were required to resettle 9,600 peasant households in the former Memel (Klaipėda) Territory, in one month (!), by 15 July. The local administration received an order to grant plots of land of up to 15 hectares to settlers, and to transfer residential and non-residential buildings to their ownership free of charge. Settlers' families each received 2,500 roubles in financial assistance; all their debts owed to the state were written off; they were awarded tax relief for two years, and they also had an opportunity to apply for a bank loan.[3] We can state that this marked a new beginning in the resettlement of the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory.

However, the settlement of the Curonian Spit was dealt with separately after the war. Newcomers to the

1 Svodnye svedeniya o kolichestve grazhdan SSSR, nasil'stvenno uvedennykh fashistskimi zakhvatchikami v period vremennoj okkupacii oblastej iz Litovskoj SSR i vozvrativshikhsya na rodinu, po sostoyaniyu s 1 marta po 1 sentyabrya 1945 g. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 13, b. 45, l. 59.

2 Svedeniya o kolichestve grazhdan SSSR, nasil'stvenno uvedennykh fashistskimi zakhvatchikami v period vremennoj okkupacii oblastej, iz Litovskoj SSR i vozvrativshikhsya na rodinu po sostoyaniyu na 1 yanvarya 1947 g. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 13, b. 76, l. 170.

3 Protokol № 44 zasedaniya Byuro Central'nogo Komiteta KP(b) Litvy, 16 July 1945. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 8. b. 77, l. 8–11, 41.

< Prewar residents of Nidden (Nida) were included in the activities of the newcomers who determined the new rhythm of life in the settlement: amateur artists after a concert for voters in elections to the local soviets, 1959. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 1313.

Memel (Klaipėda) Territory were supposed to contribute to the development of agriculture, which was virtually non-existent on the Curonian Spit. Some incomers moved to the continental part of the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory without any prompting from the government, but they could not enter the peninsula at will: the spit was declared a special-regime territory (see pages 70-74 for details). Besides, reaching it was difficult in the first postwar years: since there were no regular ferry services on the Curonian Lagoon, the transfer of people or cargo to the other side was occasional, or done by advance arrangement. These factors shaped the specific pattern of settlement on the Curonian Spit during the postwar years, compared to the rest of the Memel (Klaipėda) Territory. Firstly, populating the peninsula with newcomers was a much more controlled process, with virtually no room for spontaneous action. Secondly, from the very beginning, this settlement process was linked to a single economic sector, namely, the fishing industry, in an attempt to pursue plans for its development.

The arrival of newcomers on the spit to work in the fishing industry took place in two stages: the first wave began in the second half of 1945, and ended in about 1947. The second wave occurred in the period from 1951 to 1957. They differed in terms of size, organisational effort, region of origin of newcomers, the specific enterprises they were meant to work in, and the way they were provided for at their destination. These are sufficient reasons to discuss these two waves separately.

The first wave of resettlement

The main decision that determined the development of the Curonian Spit for decades to come was made by the government of the USSR in Moscow on 15 June 1945. This was a programme for the restoration and further development of the fishing industry of the Lithuanian SSR, which, among other things, provided for the construction of two fish processing enterprises on the spit, and setting up fish collection points by the end of 1945 in Juodkrantė (Schwarzort), Pervalka (Perwelk), Nida (Nidden), Pilkoppen, Rossitten and Sarkau. Since labour was required in order to implement this decision, the People's

Commissar of the Fish Industry of the Lithuanian SSR was ordered to: a) to recruit, in an organised manner, 300 workers to restore and build fishing industry enterprises in the period from June to October; and b) to relocate, by the end of 1945, 200 fishermen's families to the Curonian Spit from areas of central Lithuania.[4] The latter clause in the decision was not a whim of Moscow: by the late spring, Vilnius had already made a decision regarding the relocation to the Baltic coast of 200 fishing families, but had not initially specified exactly where they had to be relocated to.[5] After a while, on 23 July, the Lithuanian government approved an action plan for the aforementioned decision of the Soviet government. Among other points, the joint decision by the Lithuanian SSR Council of People's Commissars and of the LKP(b) CK stated that two fish-processing enterprises had to be constructed, and eight fish collection points had to be set up on the Curonian Spit; all the commercial fleet and the fishing equipment had to be repaired using fishermen's labour; 200 families had to be relocated to the Curonian Spit from the republic of Lithuania; 300 workers had to be recruited for the fishing industry; and a Lithuanian fishermen's association had to be established.[6]

The clauses that provided for the relocation of labour and fishermen were the most difficult to implement. By July 1945, the head of the Labour Force Accounting and Redistribution Bureau under the Council of People's Commissars of the Lithuanian SSR had already approved a plan for relocating families, based on which the relocation was to be implemented as follows: 160 fishermen were to be relocated from lake districts, namely 60 from the Zarasai District (apskritis), 60 from the Utena District, and 40 from the Alytus District; another 40 fishermen were to be recruited from Nemunas fishermen who had employment relations with the Small Scale Fishery Trust, that is, 20 fishermen from the Kaunas District, and 20 from the Šakiai District.[7] However, the number 200 was unwarranted. After the brigade of the USSR People's Commissariat of the Fishing Industry visited the Curonian Spit and assessed the situation in the summer of 1945, it recommended the relocation of a much smaller number of families: 25 to 30 to Juodkrantė (Schwarzort), 15 to Pervalka (Perwelk), 12 to Preila (Preil), 45 to Nida (Nidden), 25 to Pillkoppen,

4 Prikaz po Narodnomu komissariatu rybnoj promyshlennosti SSSR № 215 *O meropriyatiyakh po vosstanovleniyu i razvitiyu rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR*, 20 June 1945. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 8, b. 349, l. 24–25.

5 Postanovlenie SNK Litovskoj SSR i CK KP(b) Litvy № 46 *O meropriyatiyakh po razvitiyu rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR*, 3 April 1945. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 1, b. 21, l. 74-76.

6 Spravka o vypolnenii postanovleniya SNK SSSR № 1422 ot 15 iyunya 1945 g. i postanovleniya SNK Litovskoj SSR i CK KP(b) Litvy № 145-s ot 23 iyulya 1945 g. *O meropriyatiyakh po vosstanovleniyu i razvitiyu rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR*, 20 September 1945. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 8, b. 349, l. 2-4.

7 Plan pereseleniya semejstv rybakov v Klajpedu, 10 July 1945. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 8, b. 349, l. 36.

8 [Otchet brigady Narkomrybproma] Narodnomu komissaru rybnoj promyshlennosti Soyuza SSR, 28 August 1945. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 8, b. 349, l. 45, 47, 48, 49.

25 to Rossitten, and 12 to Sarkau. That made, in total, 154 families, or three quarters of the original figure.[8] But this was not achieved either. The following reasons were given in internal correspondence documents: the areas for recruiting fishermen and labour were improperly identified; it took nearly all of 1945 to transfer fishermen's settlements to the People's Commissariat of the Fishing Industry, and to establish fish collection points; following the handover of the houses in Nida, Pervalka, Preila and Juodkrantė, not only were they not repaired, but they were also further destroyed, and the movable property that was found in them was appropriated; border guards imposed restrictions on those who were allowed to live in the border zone; the recruitment process was allegedly poorly organised, because it only took place in railway stations; a standard recruitment draft contract had to be prepared, etc. At first, the blame was laid on the Labour Force Accounting and Redistribution Bureau, which allegedly failed to comply with the order to properly explain the essence of the matter to fishermen. The management of the Klaipėda Fish Factory was also later blamed for this, as it allegedly failed to create proper conditions for newcomers in their place of settlement. In the summer of 1946, the Ministry of the Fishing Industry began independently organising the relocation of residents, at the same time letting Moscow know that the recruitment efforts in the republic would not be successful. After some initial opposition, the government of the USSR was eventually seemingly convinced that the 1945 decision could only be implemented if Moscow permitted the labour recruitment area to be extended beyond the borders of the Lithuanian SSR.[9] This just allowed them to meet the initial developmental needs of the fishing industry on the Curonian Spit.

Nearly all the newcomers recruited to the spit were 'assigned' to the Nida Fish Enterprise, which owned all the fish collection points in the settlements on the peninsula. Among them were fishermen, mechanics, engine-minders and other kinds of workers. The enterprise had the highest demand for fishermen, but the labour force it received did not always meet this demand. For example, the Ministry of the Fishing Industry, while pushing to intensify sea fishing, issued an order to concentrate these efforts firstly in Juodkrantė. However,

9 According to: Dokladnaya zapiska o khode vypolneniya postanovleniya CK KP(b) Litvy i Sovnarkoma Lit. SSR ot 23.VII.1945 g. i postanovleniya Sovnarkoma Soyuza SSR ot 15.VI.1945 g. *O meropriyatiyakh po razvitiyu rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR*, [late December 1945]. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 8, b. 349, l. 88–91; Spravka o vypolnenii postanovleniya SNK SSSR № 1422 ot 15 iyunya 1945 g. i postanovleniya SNK Litovskoj SSR i CK KP(b) Litvy № 145-s ot 23 iyulya 1945 g. *O meropriyatiyakh po vosstanovleniyu i razvitiyu rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR*, 20 February 1946. *Ibid*., l. 2–5; Spravka o rabote rybnoj promyshlennosti v I kvartale 1946 g. (na 25 marta), 30 March 1946. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 9, b. 478, l. 26–29; Spravka o vypolnenii postanovleniya SNK SSSR № 1422 ot 15 iyunya 1945 goda *O meropriyatiyakh po vosstanovleniyu i razvitiyu rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR po sostoyaniyu na 1 iyunya 1946 goda*, 7 June 1946. *Ibid*., l. 43–46; Zam. ministra rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR Ministru rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR, 28 August 1946. *Ibid.*, l. 65-68.

the fishing enterprise decided to transfer some settlers from Pervalka and Juodkrantė to Preila, where civilians finally appeared in early April 1947 as a result of this relocation. The explanation for why the ministry's instruction was not complied with was as follows: 'Out of all recruited fishermen who have been settled in Preila, there is not a single true fisherman from internal waters or other types of waters of the republic. These are random people who have not seen water. They are unable to control boats. They are poorly dressed and bare-footed, and they ended up accidentally in the Lithuanian SSR, having arrived from Belarus, Novgorod and other regions of the USSR. They include technicians, mechanics, drivers and other specialists, but no fishermen.' These fishermen, 'if they can even be called that', were 'weak and exhausted'.[10] Thus, settlers came from various backgrounds.

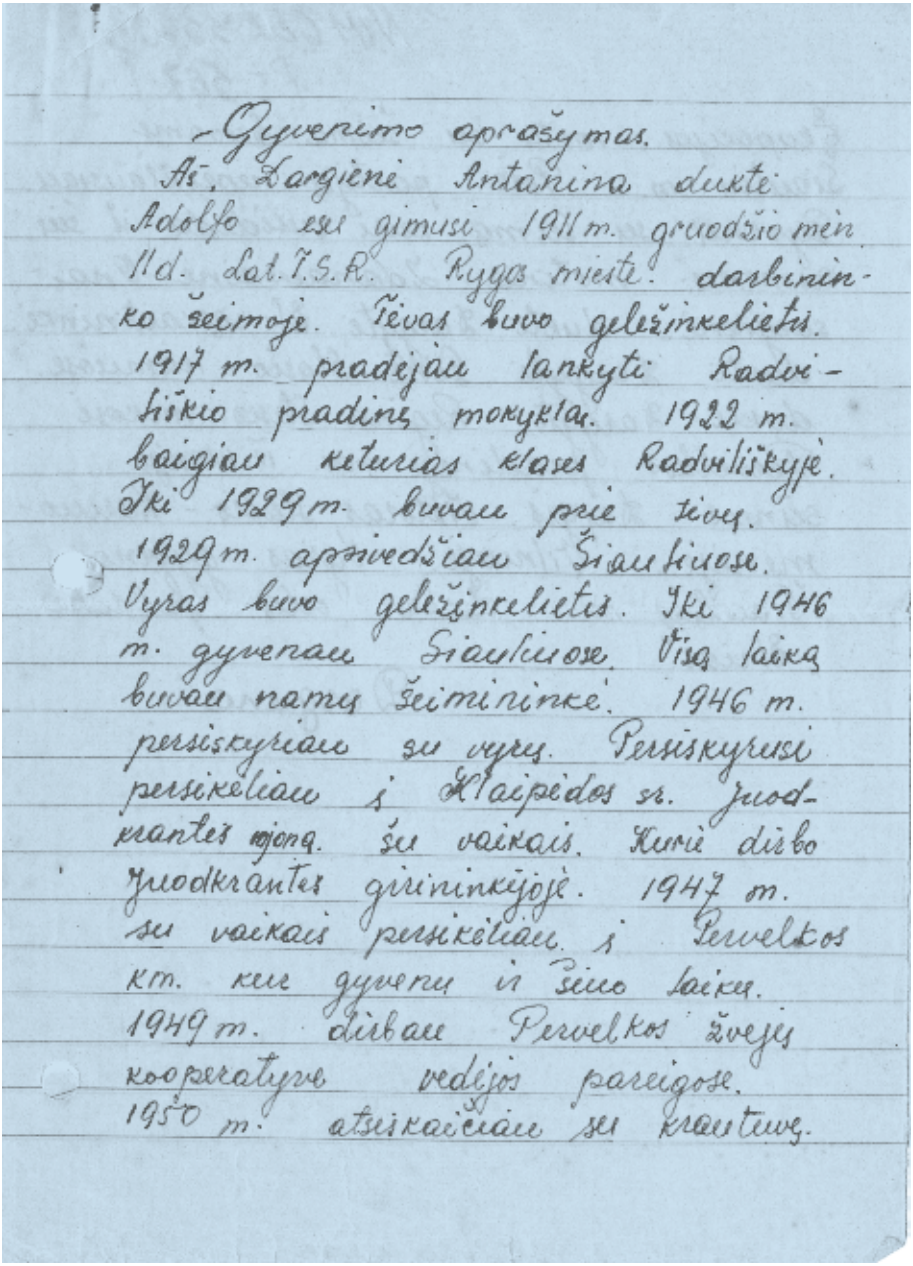
The following is a rather typical example of settlers in the first postwar years. Antanina Dargienė and Ona Zdanauskienė were mentioned in the July 1946 issue of the daily newspaper *Tiesa.* According to publication, they 'arrived from Klaipėda at the fish collection point in Juodkrantė', and moved into 'beautiful houses surrounded by white flowers'.[11] In reality, Antanina and her mother Ona, whom the publication wrote about, were members of the same family, who moved into a single-storey building without basic amenities. Antanina worked in the garden by their house, her 15-year-old son found a job as a woodman, and her daughter worked as a cashier. Only her mother found a job related to fishing, as a warehouse keeper at a fish collection point. This was a rather typical example of a settler family. Antanina Dargienė was born in Riga, and had lived in Šiauliai, Radviliškis and Klaipėda in the postwar years, before arriving on the Curonian Spit without her husband, but with her four children and her mother.[12]

The Persiyanovs, a Russian family from Lithuania, were among the first settler fishermen in Nida. The brothers Aksentij and Prokopij, and their cousin (?) Ivan, were originally from the Suwałki area, which had belonged to Poland between 1920 and 1939. After Germany occupied the Suwałki area in October 1939, Old Believers (of the Eastern Orthodox old rite) were resettled in the Lithuanian SSR after some time. This was

10 Otchet o prodelannoj rabote v komandirovke na Nidenskom rybozavode v period s 30/III po 23/IV-47 g. st. inzhinera Minrybproma Litovskoj SSR Bogdanova Z. P., 4 May 1947. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 10, b. 666, l. 50 ap – 51.

11 Petkus 1946.

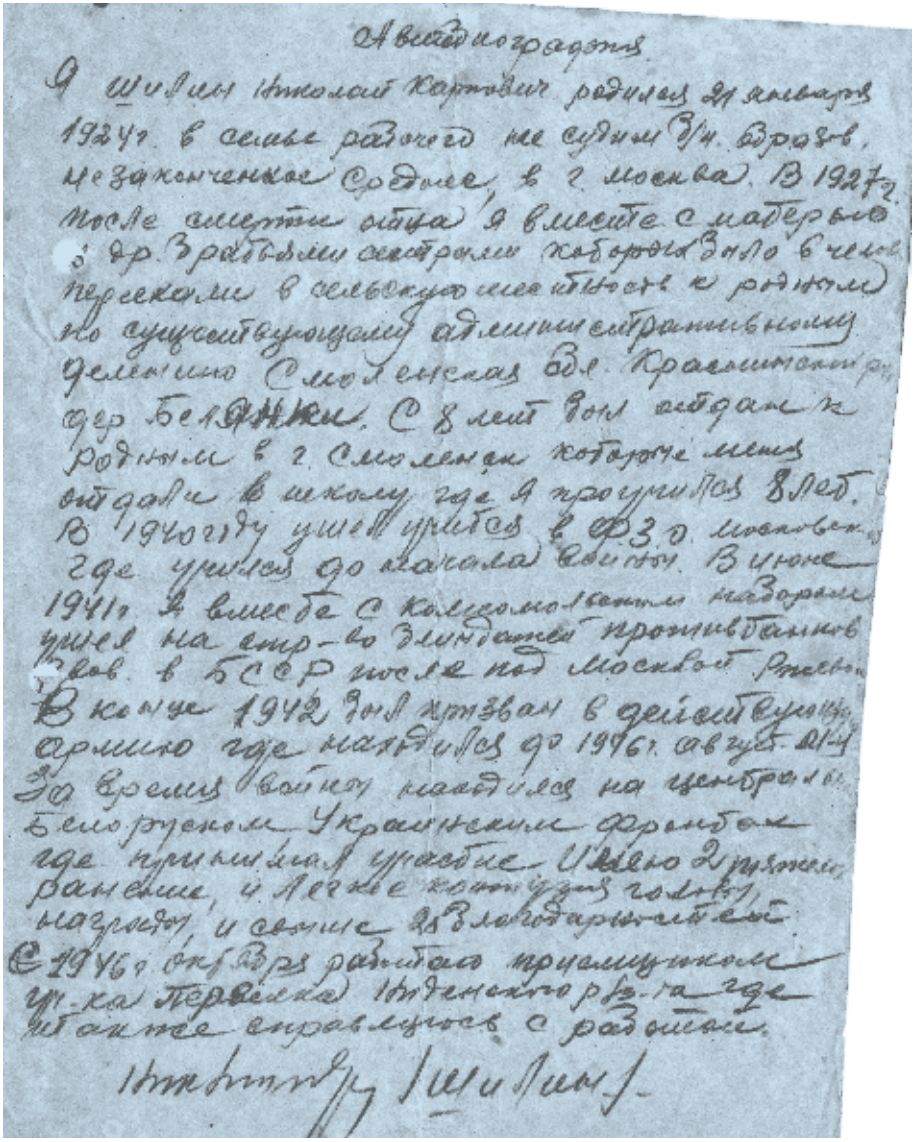
12 Cf. Balsevičienė 2008: 12–13.



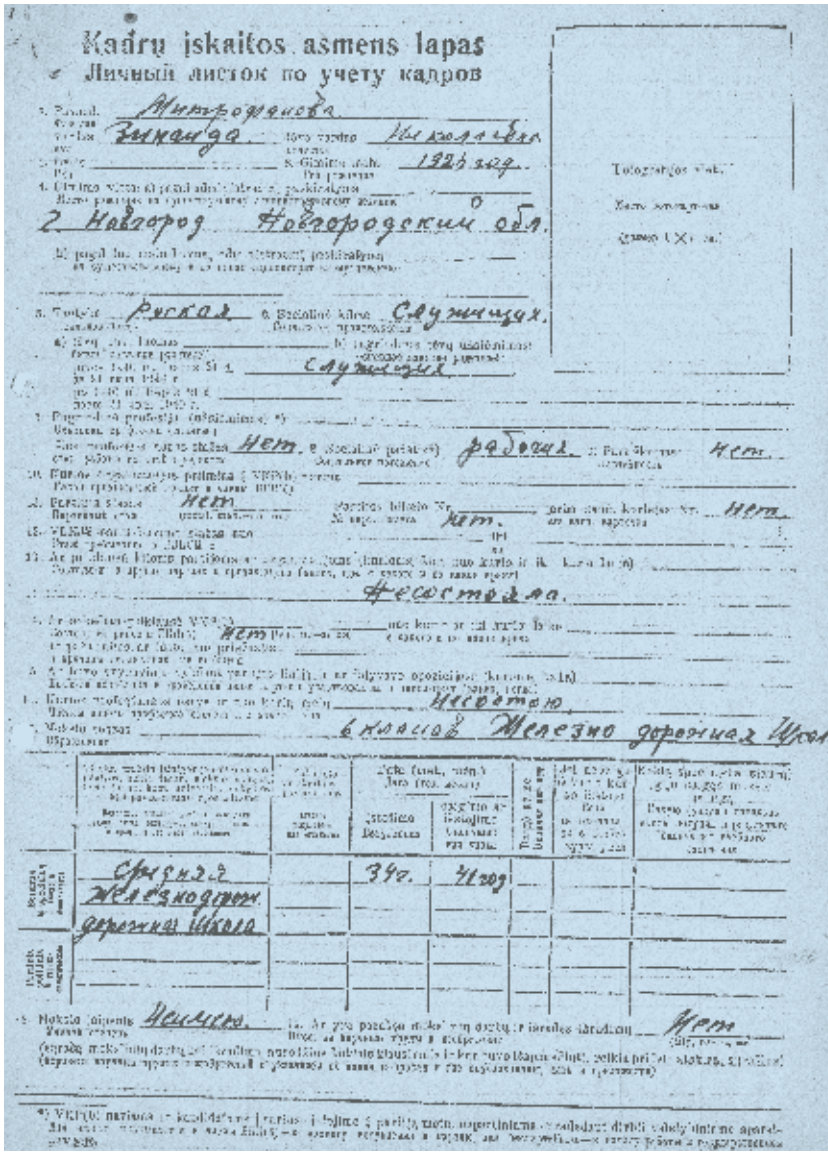
Gyvenimo aprašymas.

Aš, Dargienė Antanina duktė Adolfo esu gimusi 1911 m. gruodžio mėn. 11 d. Lat. T.S.R. Rygos mieste. darbininko šeimoje. Tėvas buvo geležinkelietis. 1917 m. pradėjau lankyti Radviliškio pradinę mokyklą. 1922 m. baigiau keturias klases Radviliškyje. Iki 1929 m. buvau prie tėvų. 1929 m. apsivedžiau Šiauliuose. Vyras buvo geležinkelietis. Iki 1946 m. gyvenau Šiauliuose. Visą laiką buvau namų šeimininkė. 1946 m. persiskyriau su vyru. Persiskyrusi persikėliau į Klaipėdos sr. Juodkrantės apylg. su vaikais. Kurį dirbo Juodkrantės girininkijoje. 1947 m. su vaikais persikėliau į Pervelkos km. kur gyvenu ir šiuo laiku. 1949 m. dirbau Pervelkos žvejų kooperatyve vedėjos pareigose. 1950 m. atsiskaičiau su kraštu.

A detail from the CV of Antanina Dargienė, one of the first newcomers in Juodkrantė. The document explains the circumstances that led to her move to the Curonian Spit around 1950. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3323.



The handwritten CV of Nikolaj Shilin (born in 1924) from around 1946–1948. He was separated from his family as a child after losing his father. He served in the Soviet army from 1942, and moved to the Curonian Spit in October 1946 shortly after being demobilised. Shilin worked at the Nida Fish Enterprise taking delivery of fish at Pervalka. As is evidenced by other documents, he later became deputy chairman of the Preila Executive Committee, and in 1956 he served for some time as head of the Nida Fish Enterprise. *Neringos muziejai*, no inventory number.



Kadrų įskaitos asmens lapas

Личный листок по учету кадров

Митрофанова

Зинаида

Николаевна

1924 год

г. Новгород Новгородский обл.

Руская

Служащих

Служащих

Нет

рабочих

Нет

Нет

Нет

Несостояла

Нет

Несостою

6 классов Железно дорожная Школа

Средняя Железнодорож. дорожная Школа

34г.

41 год

Нет

The staff report sheet of Zinaida Mitrofanova provides evidence that not all postwar newcomers who moved to the Curonian Spit were involved in fishing. Born in Novgorod, she was sent to do forced labour in the Ostarbeiter camp in Latvia from 1942 to 1945 constructing roads. She returned home after the war. However, she ended up on the Curonian Spit in 1947, where she worked as a postwoman and a warder, and finally became head of the Preila Hut-Reading Facility. Detail from a 1951 document. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 3354.

stipulated by an agreement signed between the USSR and Germany on 10 January 1941 on the exchange of residents. During the postwar period, many Old Believers, risking being mistaken for 'Russian colonists', moved to Klaipėda and its area, where the postwar armed resistance to the Soviet occupation and the sovietisation of Lithuania was virtually non-existent. Separated families would sometimes reunite there. For example, Ivan Persiyanov moved from Biržai to Nida in 1945, while the brothers Aksentij and Prokopij also moved there from the Lazdijai District (apskritis) in April 1946.[13] All three had large families, and coexisted peacefully with the prewar residents. In 1948, they were the only incomers who worked for the Pasienietis Kolkhoz in Nida, which was largely established by prewar residents.[14] It should be added, however, that despite being a member of the board of Pasienietis, Prokopij suddenly left the kolkhoz in 1954, and joined the Rybachij Kolkhoz.[15]

Only a few newcomers arrived in the region throughout 1945. There were some from Lithuania. For example, by February 1946, as part of the plan for the relocation of fishermen to the Curonian Spit, 14 families from other areas of Lithuania had relocated there.[16]

However, the flow of settlers from 1945 to 1947 was dominated by migrants from other regions of the USSR, mostly from the Novgorod, Pskov, Astrakhan and Vitebsk oblasts, as well as from Siberia, Kamchatka, Central Asia, Tajikistan, and other regions. Settlers from the Russian SFSR accounted for most of the newcomers. As was stated in the previously quoted document, these often included itinerant migrants, who went from one place to another during and after the war. Many of them moved to the Curonian Spit after first living in Klaipėda. However, this flow of newcomers also included professional fishermen. For example, Ivan Kondrashkin and Piotr Petrukhin from Astrakhan were among the first newcomers in Juodkrantė. Some of them introduced new fishing methods that were previously unheard of in the area.[17] Most of the newcomers in this wave settled in Nida and Juodkrantė; after 1947, they also settled in Preila, as was mentioned previously.

It should be added, however, that fishermen and other workers needed by the Nida Fish Enterprise were not the only ones to move to Nida during this period.

13 For the brothers' background and arrival date, see Gediminas 1946.

14 Klaipėdos žvejų kolektyvinio ūkio „Pasienietis" narių ir jų šeimų apskaitos knyga, 1948–1954. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 2, b. 2, l. 4-4 ap.

15 Nidos žvejų artelės „Pasienietis" valdybos posėdžio protokolas nr. 8, 15 April 1954. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 37, l. 4.

16 Spravka o vypolnenii postanovleniya SNK SSSR № 1422 ot 15 iyunya 1945 g. i postanovleniya SNK Litovskoj SSR i CK KP(b) Litvy № 145-s ot 23 iyulya 1945 g. *O meropriyatiyakh po vosstanovleniyu i razvitiyu rybnoj promyshlennosti Litovskoj SSR*, 20 February 1946. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 8, b. 349, l. 3.

17 Cf. Balsevičienė 2008: 46, 54; Balsevičienė 2014: 6, 12.

Among the newcomers were also workers in the forest districts of Juodkrantė and Nida, and employees of the hydrometeorological station (established in 1946). Other specialists included staff at health care, educational and 'cultural education' institutions, and a handful of representatives of the local nomenklatura: heads of rural districts, and later chairmen of executive committees of settlements, and a director of the fish enterprise. During the first postwar years, they would only stay on the Curonian Spit for a couple of years, before being relocated elsewhere. For example, the Nida Fish Enterprise changed its director at least eight times during the first decade of its existence. It was also typical that most newcomers who only stayed on the Curonian Spit for a few years were not Lithuanians either. For example, not a single Lithuanian was present at the first meeting of the Nida Settlement Soviet, held in 1948. The situation in Juodkrantė was similar. The first time a Lithuanian was appointed chairman of the Nida Executive Committee was in 1953. In Preila and Juodkrantė, the first Lithuanians occupied the position in 1953 and 1955 respectively.

The arrival of settlers on the Curonian Spit continued in 1948 and later, but the volumes were considerably lower compared to the influx that had taken place in 1946 and 1947. For several years, the Curonian Spit saw only sporadic arrivals of newcomers.

The second wave of resettlement

The first settlers of the second wave, which was far greater than that of 1945–1947, arrived in late 1951. Why did they come to the Curonian Spit? The reason was the same as before, that is, to work in the fishing industry. However, unlike during the first postwar years, the intention now was to develop fishermen's kolkhozes, rather than the Nida Fish Enterprise (and simultaneously the Klaipėda Fish Factory). As was mentioned previously, two kolkhozes were established in 1948: Pasienietis, comprising the fishermen of Nida, and Baltijos Aušra, made up of the fishermen of Juodkrantė, Pervalka and Preila. However, these kolkhozes were unable to achieve what was expected of them, for various reasons. On 22 May 1951, the USSR Council of Ministers passed a resolution

in which it criticised the unsatisfactory situation in the fishing industry of the Lithuanian SSR. Lithuania, in turn, initiated an urgent improvement of the situation. In 1951, the Council of Ministers increased all planned tasks for the fishing industry, and provided for specific measures to achieve them. These measures included preparatory steps to establish a motorised fishing station in Nida (it was hoped that founding the station would automatically eliminate the main obstacle to fishing in the Baltic Sea, the shortage of vessels), taking action to raise the standard of living of residents of the Curonian Spit, and strengthening the fishermen's kolkhozes on the peninsula by taking on more fishermen. Concerning the last, the Resettlement Department under the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR was obliged to relocate 200 fishermen-kolkhoznik families to the Curonian Spit on a voluntary basis by the end of 1951. Residential buildings had to be prepared to accommodate them.[18]

Just as in 1945, the time given to relocate newcomers was unrealistic. It was only on 16 October that the Council of Ministers passed a resolution setting out in detail how to implement the measures stipulated on 30 May. The executive committees of the Vilnius and Kaunas oblasts had to announce selection procedures for relocating fishermen to rayons and rural districts. Fishing families who were willing to relocate had to be found and selected within five days of the date of the announcement, and delegates had to be sent to the Curonian Spit to inspect the living conditions. The head of a family that subsequently decided to resettle, or its members who were fit for work, could be sent to the Curonian Spit to repair or construct houses intended for them, and set up their household in the new place of residence. The Executive Committee of the Klaipėda Oblast had to specify the number of vacant houses available for occupancy, to foresee which houses and outbuildings could be used as construction material for construction work in host locations, to ensure that technical documentation was prepared, etc. Repairs to houses intended for the fishermen to be resettled in had to be carried out at the expense of the fishermen's kolkhoz. Specific tasks were also formulated for other departments. Moreover, detailed information was provided identifying the locations from which '200 fishermen-kolkhoznik

18 Lietuvos TSR Ministrų Tarybos ir Lietuvos KP(b) Centro Komiteto nutarimas nr. 450 *Dėl priemonių, užtikrinančių TSRS Ministrų Tarybos 1951 m. gegužės 22 d. nutarimo nr. 1719 „Dėl žuvies sugavimo ir žuvies konservų gamybos padidinimo Lietuvos TS Respublikoje" įvykdymą*, 30 May 1951. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 1, b. 222, l. 405–422.

families' were to be resettled: 120 families were to be relocated from the Varėna, Daugai, Druskininkai, Zarasai, Molėtai, Pabradė and Švenčionėliai rayons of the Vilnius Oblast, of whom 65 families were to settle in Nida, 45 in Juodkrantė, and ten in Preila. Eighty families were to come from the Veisiejai, Vilijampolė, Vilkija, Panemunė, Simnas, Šakiai and Jurbarkas rayons of the Kaunas Oblast, of whom five were to be sent to Pervalka, and the rest to Rusnė and Kintai on the mainland. This way, the plan for resettling new fishermen on the Curonian Spit itself was actually reduced to 125 families.[19]

Unlike the resettlement in 1945, the relocation of people was organised more efficiently this time. The number of those who were willing to settle was far higher than in 1945. Not only was this because of the more widely disseminated information (numerous complaints were made in 1945 and 1946 that people in different parts of Lithuania had no knowledge about the recruitment taking place[20]), but also because migration took place between kolkhozes: recruiters from kolkhozes located around the lagoon made visits to kolkhozes to talk to people personally. Those who were tempted to resettle were usually motivated by several factors, including the efforts by recruiters and the incentive package for settlers;[21] for by that time, collectivisation had already been implemented in Lithuania, and living conditions had deteriorated seriously in many parts of the country, so the opportunity to benefit from the incentives looked attractive. In later years (from 1953 onwards), an additional but equally important factor was invitations from relatives and acquaintances who had relocated in 1951 and 1952, and had already started to build a new life in the new location.[22]

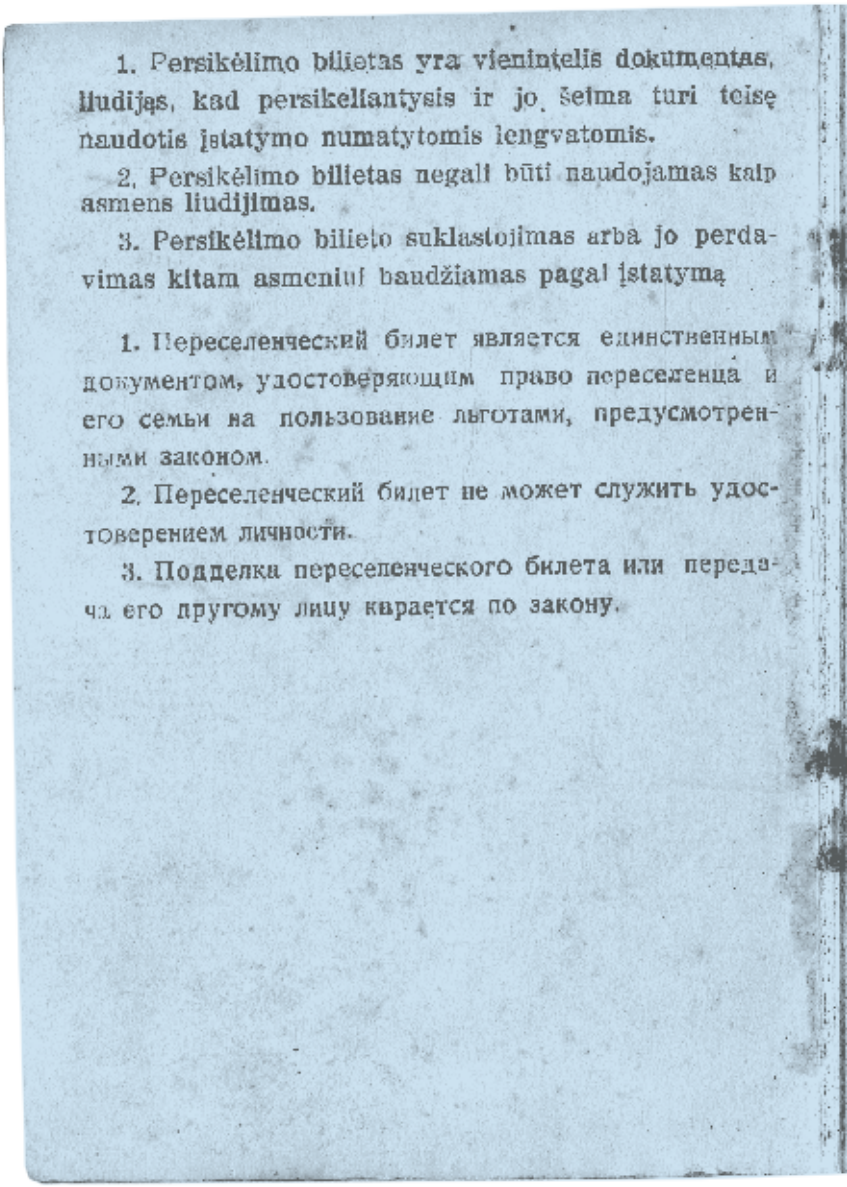
The legal basis for relocating to a fishermen's kolkhoz was the declaration of willingness by the individual to resettle, and a special settler's ticket (called a *pereselencheskij bilet*), which allowed an individual and his family to use the incentives stipulated in the resolution of 28 February 1951 of the USSR Council of Ministers, as well as admission to one of the kolkhozes on the Curonian Spit, which, at least theoretically, had to be almost automatic. The last concern was the preparation of residential buildings to be occupied in the new place of residence. There are accounts of newcomers who,

19 Lietuvos TSR Ministrų Tarybos nutarimas nr. 895 *Dėl priemonių, užtikrinančių žvejų perkėlimo plano įvykdymą 1951 metais*, 16 October 1951. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 1, b. 231, l. 329–336.

20 Cf. Pumputis 1946: 4.

21 Cf. Balsevičienė 2014: 46, 67, 80, 87.

22 Cf. Balsevičienė 2014: 15, 37, 43, 110.



1. Persikėlimo bilietas yra vienintelis dokumentas, liudijąs, kad persikeliantysis ir jo šeima turi teisę naudotis įstatymo numatytomis lengvatomis.

2. Persikėlimo bilietas negali būti naudojamas kaip asmens liudijimas.

3. Persikėlimo bilieto suklastojimas arba jo perdavimas kitam asmeniui baudžiamas pagal įstatymą.

1. Переселенческий билет является единственным документом, удостоверяющим право переселенца и его семьи на пользование льготами, предусмотренными законом.

2. Переселенческий билет не может служить удостоверением личности.

3. Подделка переселенческого билета или передача его другому лицу карается по закону.

A settler's card, one of the most important documents of the second wave of newcomers to the Curonian Spit. It was issued to Alfonsas Mikėnas and his family. Mikėnas became a fisherman after moving to Juodkrantė from the town of Seredžius in the Vilkija Rayon, 1953. *Neringos muziejai*, NIM 2748.

LIETUVOS TSR
ЛИТОВСКАЯ ССР

Persikėlimo Valdyba prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų Tarybos
Переселенческое Управление при Совете Министров ЛССР

PERSIKĖLIMO BILIETAS
ПЕРЕСЕЛЕНЧЕСКИЙ БИЛЕТ

№ 002749

Persikėlimo ~~skyrius~~ ~~prie~~ valdybo
Настоящий билет выдан переселенческим отделом при
LTSR Žemės Ūnio ir Pavaų Ministrijos
(srities vykdomojo komitete — облисполкоме)

Edavė šį bilietą pil. Mikėnos Alfonsas Marijonas
тр. (pavardė, vardas, levo vardas)
(фамилия, имя, отчество)

Šis bilietas liudija, kad Mikėnas su šeima tikrai persikėlia ir
в том, что он с семьей действительно является переселенцем в
Klaipėdos miestą Kuršių Nerinjos
(sritis, rajonas — область, район)

ir naudojasi TSRS Ministrų Tarybos 1951 m. vasario 28 d. nutarimu Nr. 590 numatytomis lengvatomis
и пользуется льготами, предусмотренными постановлением Совета Министров СССР от 28 февраля 1951 г. № 590

Persikėlimo skyrius-valdybos
Начальник переселенческого отдела
1953 г. [illegible] 20 д.

М. П. (parašas — подпись)

after arriving, had to wait for up to a year before their new home was ready. During that period, they lived in temporary housing.[23] Residential buildings could not be prepared quickly, as kolkhozes had to use their own resources to repair them, and later on to construct new houses when vacant ones were no longer available; they had to look for labourers, and construction materials were hard to find.[24] Thus, the resettlement of fishing families, which had initially been expected to be completed by the end of 1951, went on well beyond this date: the arrival of settlers continued until 1957, when the Chief Department for Resettlement and Organised Worker Recruitment decided to end the extra credit for housing settlers.

Let us look at the process of resettling newcomers on the Curonian Spit. At the start of the resettlement process, the plan was downscaled once again, taking into account the actual conditions. During 1952, 150 fishing families were to be resettled in the Klaipėda Oblast, of whom 50 were to go to the Pasienietis Kolkhoz and 50 to the Baltijos Aušra Kolkhoz, whereas the Ernst Thälmann Kolkhoz (near Skirvytė) and the Rosa Luxemburg Kolkhoz (Ventė) in the Šilutė Rayon were to take 25 families each.[25] The first settlers arrived in 1951. However, the greatest influx started the next year. The Baltijos Aušra Kolkhoz received one settler family in 1951, 61 in 1952, 27 in 1953, and 12 in 1954.[26] The Pasienietis Kolkhoz received two families in 1951, 48 in 1952, and seven in 1954.[27] There is no data for subsequent years. In 1953, Pasienietis planned to receive no more than 25 families.[28]

In contrast to the influx of newcomers in the first postwar years, the flow of settlers that started in late 1951 included mainly people from regions of Lithuania. Those who arrived in 1951 and 1952 were mostly settlers from the Jurbarkas, Šakiai and Veisiejai rayons, the city of Klaipėda, and the Varėna, Vilkija and Telšiai rayons. Only a handful of families arrived from other areas. Newcomers instantly changed the proportion of old to new members in kolkhozes in favour of the latter. For example, by 1952, Baltijos Aušra had 43 families who had worked on the kolkhoz prior to the start of the resettlement of 1951, and 61 newcomer families.[29] However, this wave of settlers, like the first one, did not always bring exactly the kind of people that were expected. At a meeting held in May 1952, the board of Pasienietis stated that 'settlers are

23 Balsevičienė 2014: 67.

24 Cf. Protokol № 8 zasedaniya Prejlaskago pos. soveta, 29 December 1951. *KLAA*, f. 862, ap. 1, b. 7, l. 7–7 ap; Protokol № 11 zasedaniya Prejlaskago pos. soveta, 30 [March] 1952. *Ibid*., l. 22.

25 Namų paruošimo, miško medžiagos ruošos persikeliantiems statybai Klaipėdos srities Perkėlimo skyriui faktinai kolūkiuose, [1953]. *LCVA*, f. R-283, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 8, 11.

26 Klaipėdos Perkėlimo skyriaus viršininkas Perkėlimo valdybai prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų Tarybos, 17 December 1952. *LCVA*, f. R-283, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 15; Namų paruošimo, miško medžiagos ruošos persikeliantiems statybai Klaipėdos srities Perkėlimo skyriui faktinai kolūkiuose, [1953]. *Ibid*., l. 11; Žvejų kolūkio „Baltijos aušra" ataskaita apie persikėlusiųjų priėmimą ir jų ūkinį įtaisymą 1954 m. sausio mėn. 1 d., 29 December 1953. *KLAA*, f. 264, ap. 1, b. 12, l. 1; Žvejų kolūkio „Baltijos aušra" ataskaita apie persikėlusiųjų priėmimą ir jų ūkinį įtaisymą 1954 m. gruodžio mėn. 31 d., 10 January 1955. *Ibid*., l. 13.

mostly non-fishermen, and they do not know a thing about fishing.'[30] Perhaps the same reason was behind the concerns raised at the members' general meeting at Baltijos Aušra, held the same month, regarding 'the problems of coexistence' between incomers and locals. It was stated that the local fishermen should provide assistance to the newcomers, and the newcomers should refrain from making 'unreasonable requests', and instead be willing to 'accept some fishing lessons from old fishermen'.[31] It is easy to understand the dissatisfaction among old kolkhozniks: they expected the new members being admitted to the kolkhoz to make fishing more productive, and they worked hard preparing houses for them, only to be disappointed, for the newcomers did not come up to their expectations. Newcomers were often sent to work on building sites, and those who wanted to learn how to fish were engaged gradually. In some cases, however, newcomers never became kolkhozniks: they took a job somewhere else, usually with the Nida Fish Enterprise.

Just as in the previous period of resettlement of newcomers on the Curonian Spit, apart from the main wave that was oriented towards developing the fishing industry, the second period also included another wave. It included a substantial percentage of forestry workers, whose numbers on the peninsula had also increased since 1951, when foresters launched systematic large-scale work.[32] In 1949, the Ministry of Forestry of the Lithuanian SSR commissioned the Baltic Survey Office of the All-Union Trust Lesproekt to carry out a comprehensive study of the Curonian Spit, and to develop a technical plan for restoring the ridge of foredunes, stabilising sands, and planting. The project was estimated to cost nearly 5.9 million roubles, and was scheduled to be completed in 15 years. In order to implement it, it was necessary, of course, to develop the only forest district that operated on the peninsula during that period, which at that time was hardly capable of anything except protecting the forest from fire and illegal felling. In 1950, the Ministry of Forestry considered two options. It preferred to create a military forest district on the Curonian Spit, and to hand the organisation and implementation of the planned work over to it. If, however, the work was to be implemented by the ministry itself, a special forestry unit had to be established. It would have to be provided

27 Arbušauskaitė 1995b: 385; Namų paruošimo, miško medžiagos ruošos persikeliantiems statybai Klaipėdos srities Perkėlimo skyriui faktinai kolūkiuose, [1953]. *LCVA*, f. R-283, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 11; Žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" ataskaita apie persikėlusiųjų priėmimą ir jų ūkinį įtaisymą 1955 m. sausio mėn. 1 d., 10 January 1955. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 62, l. 1.

28 Arbušauskaitė 1995b: 386.

29 Klaipėdos Perkėlimo skyriaus viršininkas Perkėlimo valdybai prie Lietuvos TSR Ministrų Tarybos, 17 December 1952. *LCVA*, f. R-283, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 15, 17.

30 Žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" valdybos posėdžio protokolas nr. 10, 6 May 1952. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 17, l. 17 ap.

31 Protokolas nr. 5 visuotinio narių susirinkimo Preilos žvejų kolūkio „Baltijos aušra", 27 May 1952. *KLAA*, f. 264, ap. 1, b. 2, l. 29 ap.

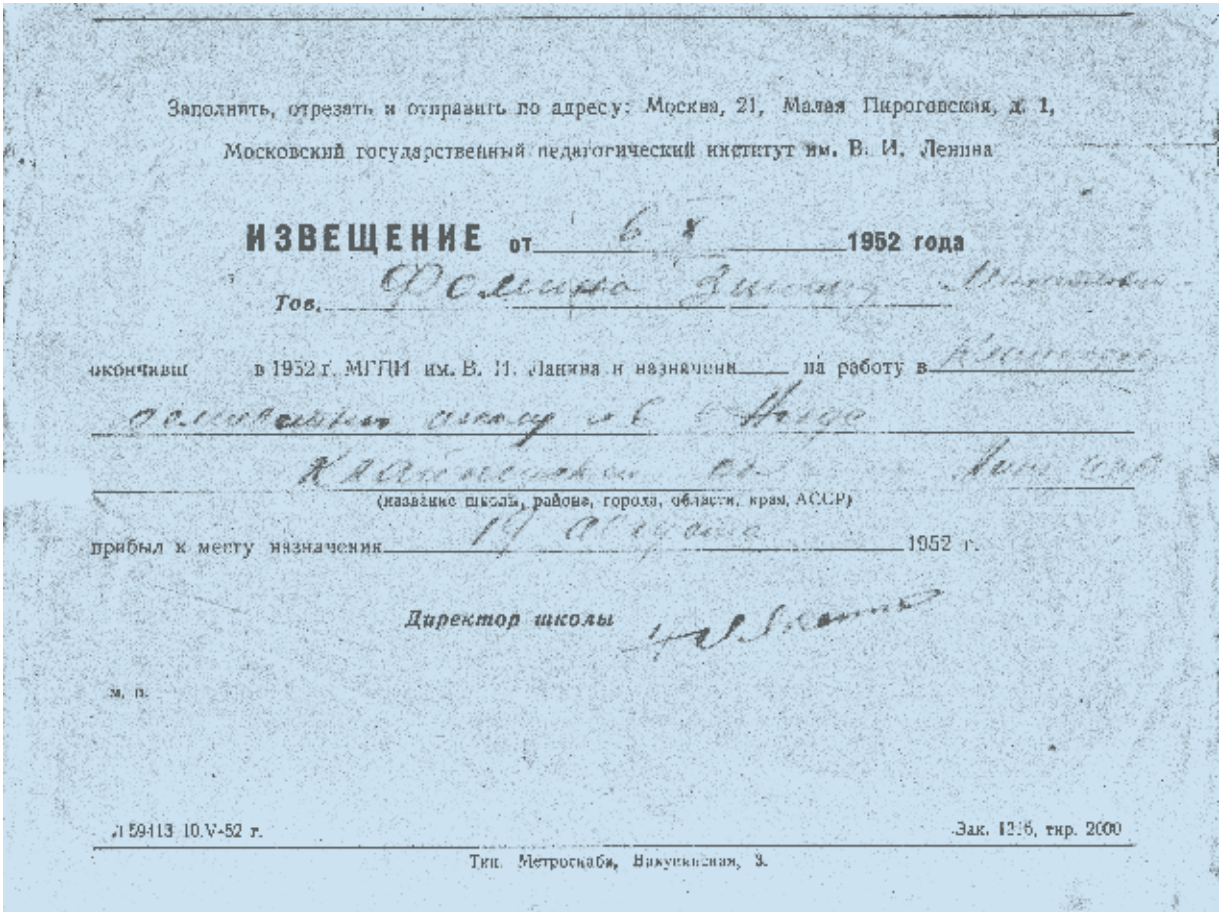
32 Daujotas 1958: 109.

with a labour force, by mobilising or recruiting people who would be given a simplified procedure for obtaining permits to enter and work on the Curonian Spit.[33] Which alternative was to be chosen probably depended on whether or not an agreement was reached with border patrols on these issues. Although in some cases border restrictions further complicated the work, in particular work related to restoring the ridge of foredunes by the sea,[34] the second option was approved. The forest district of Nida, which had existed for a short period after the war, was restored in 1954. The forest district in Juodkrantė continued to operate. After some time, another forest district emerged in Smiltynė. They all separated from Kretinga forestry unit in 1956, and merged as an autonomous forestry unit for the Curonian Spit. Not only did the forestry unit need foresters and woodmen, it also needed labourers to carry out the restoration of the foredune ridge and the stabilisation of the sand. Thus, in the 1950s, the forestry unit became another factor attracting newcomers to the Curonian Spit. However, only a relatively small number went to work in the forestry sector. In 1956, 19 adult members of families who resided permanently on the peninsula were involved in forestry (they had all arrived after 1951, except for two cases), while there were 355 adult family members who worked in the fishing industry that year.

Apart from foresters, the other newcomers included teachers, and heads and staff of various service institutions, who were often appointed by the Klaipėda City Executive Committee, for the northern part of the Curonian Spit had been administered by Klaipėda since 1947. There were some differences compared to the first wave. As was mentioned previously, during the first postwar years, most personnel only stayed a few years on the peninsula; however, in the 1950s, those who came to take up work placements stayed for longer periods, and became actively engaged in the local community life. For example, Stanislovas Valančius, a young man who was born in the Plungė Rayon, was appointed to be headmaster of the Nida school in 1954, just after graduating from the Teachers' Institute in Klaipėda. He remained in the position until 1990, although before him the headmaster had changed at least four times. Valančius was also the last chairman of the Nida Executive Committee, and

33 Cf. Ministr lesnogo khozyajstva zamestitelyam predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov Litovskoj SSR i predsedatelyu Gosudarstvennoj planovoj komissii, 31 May 1950. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 13, b. 257, l. 8–9; Ministr lesnogo khozyajstva zamestitelyu predsedatelya Soveta Ministrov Litovskoj SSR, 28 June 1950. *Ibid*., b. 260, l. 48–49.

34 The Ministry of Agriculture and Purveyance stated in 1953 that the border zone regime made it difficult for forestry workers to reach the Curonian Spit, in particular the ridge of foredunes. See: Zam. ministra sel'skogo khozyajstva i zagotovok Sovetu Ministrov Litovskoj SSR, 15 December 1953. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 13, b. 480, l. 24–25.



Заполнить, отрезать и отправить по адресу: Москва, 21, Малая Пироговская, д. 1,

Московский государственный педагогический институт им. В. И. Ленина

ИЗВЕЩЕНИЕ от 6 X 1952 года

Тов. Фомина Зинаида Михайловна

окончивш в 1952 г. МГПИ им. В. И. Ленина и назначена на работу в Клайпедской

семилетней школе в с. Нида

Клайпедской обл. Лит. ССР

(название школы, района, города, области, края, АССР)

прибыл к месту назначения 19 августа 1952 г.

Директор школы [signature]

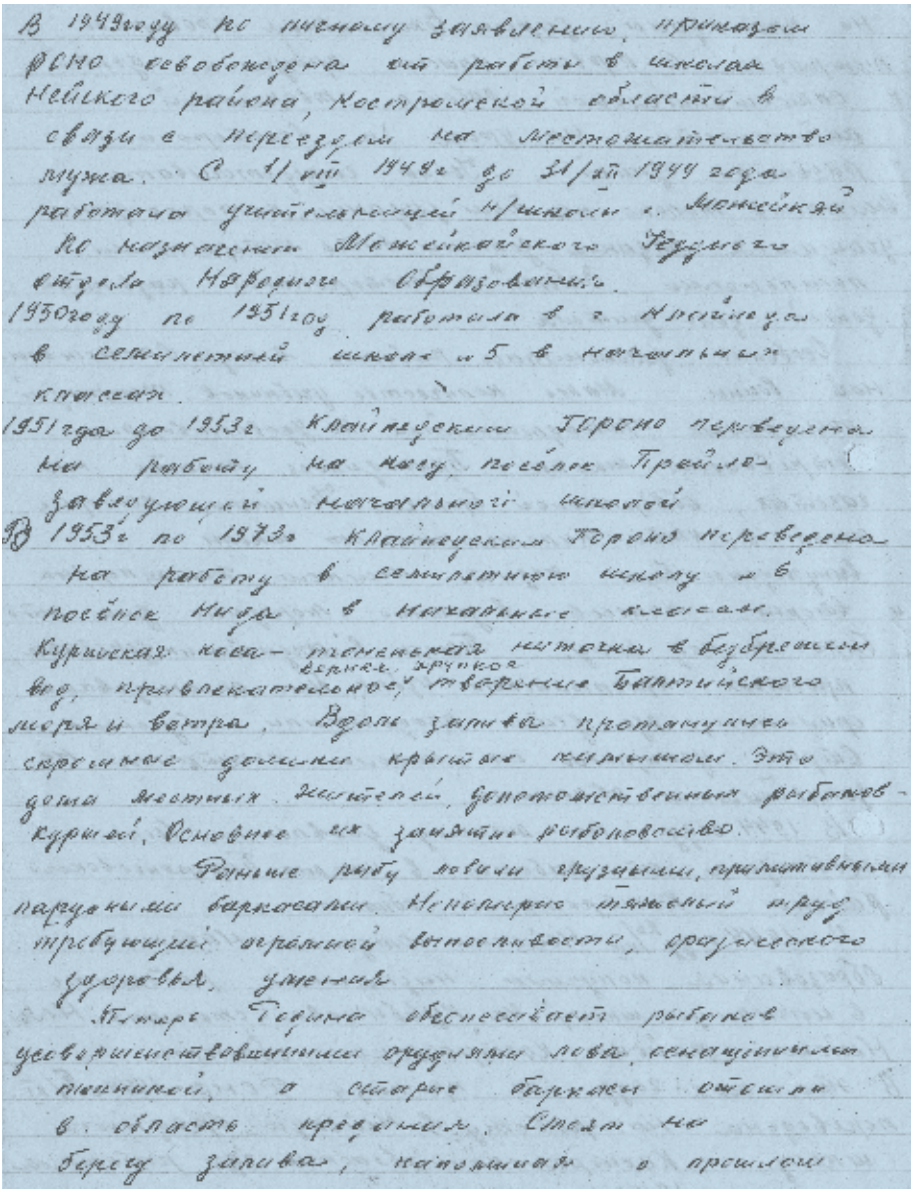
м. п.

Л 59413 10.V-52 г. Зак. 1216, тир. 2000

Тип. Метроскаба, Никулинская, 3.

A document announcing a job assignment at Nida seven-grade school, issued to Zinaida Fomina, a graduate of the Moscow State Pedagogical Institute, 6 October 1952.

Neringos muziejai, NIM 917.



В 1949 году по личному заявлению, приказом
РОНО освобождена от работы в школах
Нейского района, Костромской области в
связи с переездом на местожительство
мужа. С 1/VIII 1949 г. до 31/XII 1949 года
работала учительницей н/школы г. Можейкяй
по назначению Можейкайского Уездного
отдела Народного Образования.
1950 году по 1951 год работала в г. Клайпеда
в семилетней школе № 5 в начальных
классах.
1951 года до 1953 г. Клайпедским ГОРОНО переведена
на работу на косу, посёлок Прейло-
заведующей начальной школой.
В 1953 г. по 1973 г. Клайпедским ГОРОНО переведена
на работу в семилетнюю школу № 6
посёлок Нида в начальные классы.
Куршская коса — тоненькая ниточка в безбрежном
вод, привлекательное, верное, крупное творение Балтийского
моря и ветра. Вдоль залива протянулись
скромные домики крытые камышом. Это
дома местных жителей, допотопственных рыбаков-
куршей. Основное их занятие рыболовство.
Раньше рыбу ловили грузными, примитивными
парусными баркасами. Непомерно тяжелый труд
требующий огромной выносливости, физического
здоровья, умения.
Теперь Родина обеспечивает рыбаков
усовершенствованными орудиями лова, оснащенными
техникой, а старые баркасы отошли
в область преданий. Стоят на
берегу залива, напоминая о прошлом

A detail from the CV of Nadezhda Sakharova (married name Skeivienė) written in 1987. Born in 1916, she moved to Lithuania in 1949 after her husband was sent to work in Mažeikiai. Previously employed at schools in Mažeikiai and Klaipėda, she was sent to work at the school in Preila in 1951. She worked as a teacher at Nida from 1953 until her retirement in 1973. *Neringos muziejai*, no inventory number.

Nadezhda Skeivienė (first from right) with other teachers from the Nida school, 1953–1954. Personal papers of Natalija Gorškova (*Neringos muziejai*).

held the position from 1959 to 1961. Similarly, Antanas Raudys, who was appointed head of the school in Juodkrantė in 1954, also found his niche. He remained in the position for over two decades, and was also a member of the Juodkrantė Executive Committee. His wife Liucija worked as a teacher in the same school. Thus in the 1950s, a certain trend emerged whereby newcomers assigned to work on the Curonian Spit put down roots in its northern settlements .

Newcomers who failed to integrate and the reasons for unsuccessful integration

Migration processes on the Curonian Spit were not only in one direction during the postwar period: newcomers migrated both to and from the peninsula. This was probably influenced to a great extent by the conditions faced by newcomers on the Curonian Spit. Information put out during the postwar period to attract people painted an idyllic picture of the region. It had to convince potential settlers that they would be well taken care of. In 1946, the main Lithuanian newspaper wrote about the beautiful natural environment of the Curonian Spit, and claimed that locals caught thousands of kilograms of fish a day,[35] that food and household goods were generously supplied to settlers, and that they were also provided with housing.[36] The newspapers announced repeatedly that: 'Every fisherman's family gets a private house, along with a garden, on the picturesque Curonian Spit, and a loan of 10,000 roubles, to be repaid over a period of ten years. Moreover, they are provided with special clothes, fishing nets and other fishing equipment, and boats and motors, free of charge. Through their cooperatives, fishing villages are supplied with household goods and food products; fishermen also receive substantial bonuses for fish delivered to the [Small Scale Fishery] Trust.'[37] But on arriving, settlers would soon realise that the reality was a far cry from the paradise they had been promised. The allocation of residential buildings did not go smoothly, and the provision of fishing equipment to fishermen did not go well either. For example, the fishermen of Astrakhan' who settled in Juodkrantė in the second half of 1946 arrived to engage

35 Petkus 1946.

36 Gediminas 1946.

37 Pumputis 1946: 4. This was reiterated in principle in Jurgaitis 1946.

in fishing, but they were sent to work as roofers and to prepare the ice and reeds first. Only in February did they receive two horses, one of which was weak and sickly, so they were left without work throughout almost the whole winter, for they could not go fishing on the lagoon far from the shore in areas rich in fish without horses.[38] Border guards scared newcomers, telling them that landmines had been laid in the buildings.[39] Concerning supplies, the following could be found on the shelves of shops in that period: flour, grain, sugar, salt, matches, cigarettes, soap, some fabrics, and clothes. Until December 1947, all commodities were issued against cards and orders, just as in the rest of the USSR. However, there were shortages of all kinds of food products (meat, sausages, butter, vegetables), because the electricity supply was not constant, and the local cold storage of food products was not possible. On top of that, shopkeepers themselves had to travel to Klaipėda to fetch goods, and had to close their shops for several days. The provision of basic domestic services, or to be more precise its failure, also made residents angry. What slightly mitigated the situation was the fact that newcomers moved to the peninsula with their own livestock (prewar residents also kept horses and cows). The possession of a cow or a goat enabled people to make dairy products themselves, and poultry provided eggs and meat, staples that could not be found in local shops at that time. Sheep were kept for meat and wool. Despite the sandy soil, newcomers tried to grow potatoes and other vegetables by their newly occupied homesteads.[40]

However, in the 1950s, the foresters wanted to apply some order to this menagerie. In 1952, the Nida Soviet stated that horses, sheep, goats and even cows destroyed the trees and fouled the streets, by roaming and grazing freely, and decided to ban residents from allowing livestock to roam. The heads of business establishments and military units were ordered to stop using land to graze their horses.[41] Later, the forest district office designated special areas where people could graze livestock. In the late 1950s, an order was issued to enclose these areas. Keeping goats was banned altogether. These prohibitions caused outrage among newcomers: they claimed that the foresters themselves used the forests to graze 'even a couple of cows' each, while

38 Otchet o prodelannoj rabote v komandirovke na Nidenskom rybozavode v period s 30/III po 23/IV-47 g. st. inzhinera Minrybproma Litovskoj SSR Bogdanova Z. P., 4 May 1947. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 10, b. 666, l. 51.

39 Balsevičienė 2008: 47.

40 Cf. Gediminas 1946.

41 Reshenie sessii Nidenskogo poselkovogo soveta № 16, 27 August 1952. *KLAA*, f. 861, ap. 1, b. 8, l. 28–29.

preventing fishermen from doing so. They also claimed that the areas along the lagoon designated for grazing livestock were not suitable for the purpose, for 'animals kept on bare sand in an enclosure will die.' [42] Finally, even holidaymakers began complaining about chickens rummaging in a heap of waste in the main street in Juodkrantė.[43] The tensions that emerged from livestock issues in the 1950s continued on the peninsula into a later period.

The first application from residents for a kindergarten in Nida came in 1947, but the issue was only resolved a decade later when a resident wrote a letter directly to the Klaipėda Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania. Medical centres were established in Nida and Juodkrantė after the war, but at least one hospital with an in-patient unit and a permanent doctor were needed. For a long time, there were no public baths in Juodkrantė or Nida, so people had to find their own ways of maintaining personal hygiene. The regular carriage of passengers between Nida and Smiltynė, and ferry services between Smiltynė and Klaipėda, were started in 1948. The ferry service ran three times a day, and a cargo vessel took passengers twice a week (the timetable coincided with market days in Klaipėda). It was usually already fully loaded in Nida, so it would pass by Preila and Pervalka without taking any more passengers, and would go past Juodkrantė without stopping.

These living conditions, as well as the harsh natural environment, undoubtedly contributed to the fact that some newcomers did not stay on the peninsula for long. After arriving on the Curonian Spit, some would almost immediately turn around and go back to where they had come from, whereas others would simply run away.[44] But there were also numerous cases where newcomers left the peninsula a few years after houses had been allocated to them. No data has been found yet to show the exact number of settlers who left the peninsula. Only various pieces of information have survived: for example, in the first nine months of 1954, six settler families moved out of the region of the Pasienietis Kolkhoz.[45] To get a clearer picture, we can make a detailed comparison of lists of settlers with data from the unofficial census of 1956. Lists of those who settled on the Pasienietis Kolkhoz between 1951 and 1953 contain the surnames

42 Juodkrantės gyvenvietės darbo žmonių deputatų tarybos protokolas, 30 January 1959. *KLAA*, f. 860, ap. 1, b. 23, l. 2; Juodkrantės gyvenvietės darbo žmonių deputatų tarybos sprendimas *Apie gyvenvietės gyventojų gyvulių ganymą*, 30 January 1959. *Ibid*., l. 6.

43 Norkevičius 1961.

44 Cf. Išvykusių persikėlėlių šeimų už Klaipėdos srities ribų sąrašas 1953 m. sausio 1 dienai, [undated]. *LCVA*, f. R-283, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 5–5 ap.

45 Žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" ataskaita apie persikėlusiųjų priėmimą ir jų ūkinį įtaisymą 1954 m. spalių mėn. 1 d., [undated]. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 50, l. 1.

< This photograph shows the living conditions on the Curonian Spit during the postwar period. It records the celebration of the new school year at the Nida school with the teacher Angelė Rinkūnienė in 1959. Some pupils are barefoot. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 1189.

The medical team established in Nida in the first years after the war initially had one obstetrician and one doctor. The team was reorganised into a hospital in around 1956. In the photograph, Dr Georgij Andreev, who moved to the spit from the Krasnodar Krai, is seen examining the prewar Nidden resident Jonas Frišmanas, 1956. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, 0-006694.

of 19 heads of families[46] who no longer lived on the spit in 1956. Their origins generally coincided with the trends in the origins of the second wave of settlers: the Jurbarkas, Pabradė, Panemunė, Šakiai, Švenčionėliai, Telšiai, Veisiejai, Vilkija, and Vilnius rayons. As has been mentioned, about 75 settler families joined Pasienietis between 1951 and 1953. Thus, newcomers who failed to integrate left the peninsula, and these were not one-off cases: those who left formed a substantial percentage (at least 25 per cent) of newcomers during that period.

What did settlers bring with them?

Most newcomers who moved to the Curonian Spit stayed there for a long period of time: they had children and tried to build their lives there. Naturally, the different experiences and backgrounds of people from various parts of Lithuania and the rest of the USSR brought colour to life on the peninsula, and shaped a distinct newcomers' culture. It should be added, however, that prewar residents could not always understand this culture, and sometimes it even diverged from the norms that were being established in Soviet society at that time.

Most newcomers did not know anything about the place where they had settled. Prewar systems of meanings, through which attempts were made to perceive and describe the Curonian Spit in the German and Lithuanian national cultures,[47] had no effect on them. However, some newcomers, in particular those who had arrived to take up posts for a few years, were determined to make their environment closer to what they perceived it to be. On 28 June 1948, the Nida Soviet adopted a decision to rename its streets. Judging from the wording of the document, the members of the soviet had no idea what the streets of Nida were called until then. The following street names were approved: Sovetskaya (Soviet), Primorskaya (Coastal), Bratskaya (Brotherhood), Mariya Mel'nikajte (Marija Melnikaitė), Dzerzhinskogo (Felix Dzerzhinsky), Rybackaya (Fishermen's). Moreover, the settlement's soviet decided to request the Klaipėda City Soviet to rename the settlement of Nida itself. They suggested changing its name to Sovetskij (Soviet), so that it would be easier for newcomers to understand.[48]

46 Cf. Išvykusių persikėlėlių šeimų už Klaipėdos srities ribų sąrašas 1953 m. sausio 1 dienai, [undated]. *LCVA*, f. R-283, ap. 6, b. 20, l. 5–5 ap; [Žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" namų ir ūkinių pastatų perdavimo aktai, 19 September and 19 November 1952]. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 1, b. 30, l. 20, 22, 26; [Žvejų kolūkio „Pasienietis" namų ir ūkinių pastatų perdavimo aktai, 1 February and 6 September 1953]. *Ibid*., b. 36, l. 4, 14, 19, 21; Nidos žvejų artelės „Pasienietis" persikėlusių šeimų sąrašas, [1952]. *KLAA*, f. 262, ap. 2, b. 11, l. 6.

47 What I have in mind here are the attempts that emerged largely after the First World War in Germany and Lithuania to attach special values to the Curonian Spit, in order to suggest its belonging to a particular 'national body'. For example, in the interwar period, the mythologem of the 'Lithuanian Sahara' was used to this end in Lithuania. It circulated in the context of other meanings associated with the 'Lithuanian coast'. Some research on meanings linked to the 'German' Curonian Spit that circulated in the German national culture has been done by Žytyniec 2011.

48 Protokol № 5 zasedaniya Nidenskogo poselkovogo soveta, 28 June 1948. *KLAA*, f. 861, ap. 1, b. 2, l. 22.

However, it seems that this suggestion was not approved of by Klaipėda or Vilnius. Only in 1960 were attempts made to rename the streets in Juodkrantė.[49]

Every Soviet town had to have a house of culture, and every settlement had to have a clubhouse. Thus, there were widespread attempts in the postwar years to set up clubs wherever possible. A club was established in Nida in a semi-vacant warehouse that belonged to the Nida Fish Enterprise. The enterprise's director allowed the building to be used, and newcomers themselves repaired and fitted it out. The club opened on 23 February 1949, on the 31st anniversary of the Soviet army.[50] A few years later, the Pasienietis Kolkhoz opened a separate club after acquiring premises in Nida, which accommodated 350 people, twice as many as the premises of the Nida Fish Enterprise club (150 to 200). Baltijos Aušra also set up a club in Preila, but in 1952 it was declared that the club was in a 'very dire situation'.[51] After the centre of the kolkhoz relocated to Juodkrantė, it appears that a new kolkhoz club did not open there. Residents of Juodkrantė had no choice but to make the most of the 'hut-reading room' (*izba-chital'nya*). These facilities were established in all the settlements, and they served as club, library, and 'Red spot' (premises for reading propaganda literature). The third kolkhoz, Neringa, which was founded in Preila in 1956, also had a club, where amateur artistic activities and screenings of newsreels and films took place. However, these places were not respected, even by the newcomers themselves. For example, in 1956, officials in Juodkrantė declared that people were making a noise, smoking, wandering around intoxicated, and engaging in similar bad behaviour during screenings of films in the club.[52]

Drunk and unruly people (including soldiers), swearing at each other and even getting into fights, became a common sight on the peninsula during the postwar years. In 1947 in Nida, a teahouse operated near shop No 3. It also served beer.[53] It is noteworthy that in 1959 in Preila, beer was counted as a non-alcoholic drink, like lemonade.[54] The following observation appeared in the press in 1956: 'There is a medical centre in Preila, but the paramedic has never been seen sober.'[55] In 1956, the head of shop No 9 in Juodkrantė, after learning of a comment voiced at a meeting of the Executive Committee

49 Juodkrantės gyvenvietės darbo žmonių deputatų tarybos sprendimas *Apie gerbūvio darbų eigą ir buitinį aptarnavimą*, 3 June 1960. KLAA, f. 860, ap. 1, b. 24, l. 30–31; Juodkrantės gyvenvietės darbo žmonių deputatų tarybos sprendimas *Dėl Juodkrantės DŽDT I-os sesijos sprendimo apie gatvių pavadinimų pakeitimo atšaukimą*, 20 August 1960. Ibid., l. 63.

50 Zhuravlev 1949; Puzynia 1949.

51 Protokolas nr. 5 visuotino narių susirinkimo Preilos žvejų kolūkio „Baltijos aušra", 27 May 1952. *KLAA*, f. 264, ap. 1, b. 2, l. 29 ap.

52 Juodkrantės gyvenv. DŽDT 14-os sesijos protokolas nr. 14, 28 May 1956. *KLAA*, f. 860, ap. 1, b. 10, l. 33 ap –34; Juodkrantės gyvenv. DŽDT 14-os sesijos nutarimas nr. 28, 28 May 1956. *Ibid*., l. 34 ap.

53 Cf. Zam. pred. pravl. Rybolovpotrebsoyuza predsedatelyu Litovskogo Rybolovpotrebsoyuza, 30 July 1947. *LYA*, f. 1771, ap. 10, b. 666, l. 115–115 ap, and reports on the inspection of shops in Nida, Juodkrantė and Preila of July 1947: *Ibid*., l. 116–119.

54 'Also, a shortage of non-alcoholic drinks such as beer

that 'non-stop drinking' took place in his shop, responded: 'Drinking in the shop is rare at the moment, because customers drink outside in the street.' The Executive Committee then decided to rearrange the area next to the shop, and install benches 'for customers to rest on'.[56] Later, the struggle against drinking in the Juodkrantė shop continued, with a new rule prohibiting pouring vodka into glasses and selling alcoholic drinks to on-duty soldiers and to children under 14 years of age.[57] An order to 'prohibit drinking all types of alcoholic drinks in the premises of shop No 13' was also adopted in Preila[58] But these prohibitions did little to solve the problem. When the idea was put forward to control the sale of alcohol at the snack bar in Juodkrantė, the manager complained that she would not be able to achieve her realisation plan. In addition, she said: 'If we start selling vodka in quantities of just a hundred grams, we will need someone on guard at the snack bar, for we might get a punch in the face from our regular visitors, not to mention the swearing at the snack bar attendant.'[59] In 1960, the chairman of the Juodkrantė Executive Committee complained that the main problem was still the sale of vodka, which sparked numerous arguments and fights, and there was no representative of the *militsiya* in Juodkrantė to maintain order. Instead they had 'lots of weak-willed individuals who get drunk and roll on the ground in the street'.[60]

A snapshot of settlers in 1956

The unofficial census taken in 1956 of the four settlements in the northern part of the Curonian Spit by Vacys Milius and Angelė Vyšniauskaitė, ethnographers at the Institute of History of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, is a very valuable resource in understanding the history of migration on the peninsula. After visiting all the households, but not including soldiers, the scholars made an instant snapshot of the community of both prewar residents and incomers when the first departures for Germany had not yet taken place, and when the second wave of settlers moving to the Curonian Spit had almost ended. The data in this unofficial census, which was first summarised and published by Arūnė

or lemonade is often observed.' See: Preilos gyvenvietės darbo žmonių deputatų tarybos sprendimas *Dėl gyvenvietės Darbo žmonių Deputatų Tarybos VI šaukimo II-os sesijos sprendimo vykdymo*, 30 August 1959. *KLAA*, f. 862, ap. 1, b. 29, l. 21.

55 Bakaitis 1956.

56 Juodkrantės gyvenv. DŽDT 14-os sesijos protokolas nr. 14, 28 May 1956. *KLAA*, f. 860, ap. 1, b. 10, l. 33 ap, 34; Juodkrantės gyvenv. DŽDT 14-os sesijos nutarimas nr. 28, 28 May 1956. *Ibid*., l. 35.

57 Protokol № 9 9-[ogo] zasedani[ya] komiteta Yuodkrantskogo poselkovogo soveta deputatov trudyashhixsya, 23 September 1955. *KLAA*, f. 860, ap. 1, b. 11, l. 13 ap – 14.

58 Preilos gyvenvietės vykdomojo komiteto sprendimas, 7 February 1960. *KLAA*, f. 862, ap. 1, b. 36, l. 3.

59 Juodkrantės gyvenvietės vykdomojo komiteto posėdžio protokolas nr. 10, 26 August 1960. *KLAA*, f. 860, ap. 1, b. 29, l. 47–48; Juodkrantės gyvenvietės vykdomojo komiteto sprendimas nr. 16 Apie prekybos taškų darbų ir jų pasiruošimą žiemos [s]ezonui, 26 August 1960. *Ibid*., l. 49.

60 Ibid.

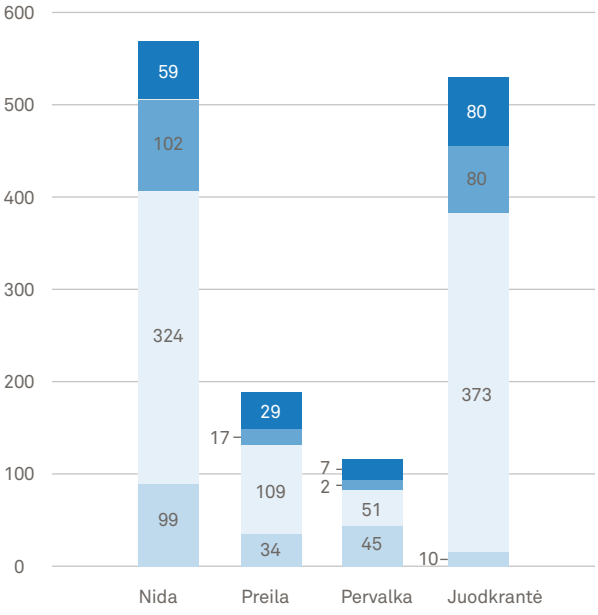
Arbušauskaitė, has been cited many times in various publications. However, this study presents figures that have been revised after revisiting and processing the information available.

Recalculated data about prewar residents has already been provided on pages 94-95, so we will focus on the incomers here. In 1956, a total of 1,421 residents were counted in Nida, Preila, Pervalka and Juodkrantė. Of these, 50 were temporarily absent, but were still counted. In addition to 188 prewar residents, there were 1,233 incomers; of these 144 were children born on the Curonian Spit after 1945. The distribution of incomers and their children born in the postwar years (in brackets) according to settlement was as follows: Juodkrantė 533 (63), Nida 485 (52), Preila 155 (23), and Pervalka 60 (six). If we exclude children who were born on the Curonian Spit in the aftermath of the Second World War, we obtain a figure of 1,089 people who arrived on the peninsula after the war and still lived there in 1956.

Of these, 857 were incomers who had arrived from Lithuania, and 201 from other locations. There is insufficient information about the rest of the residents (31). The highest number of incomers who were originally from Lithuania came from the following areas: the city of Klaipėda (136), the Veisiejai Rayon (134), the Jurbarkas Rayon (126), the Šakiai Rayon (81), the Vilkija Rayon (48), the Varėna Rayon (36), the Telšiai Rayon (24), the Klaipėda Rayon (17), the Priekulė Rayon (17), the Kuršėnai Rayon (14), the Kaunas Rayon (13), the Druskininkai Rayon (12), the Kovarskas Rayon (11), the Kretinga Rayon (11), the Skaudvilė Rayon (11), the Raseiniai Rayon (11), the Šilutė Rayon (11). There were fewer than ten people from other areas. The place of origin of 16 people was not identified. The distribution of incomers from areas outside Lithuania was the following: 132 from Russia, 28 from Belarus, 15 from Poland, 12 from Ukraine, five from Central Asia, five from Germany, and one from Tajikistan. More than ten settlers came from the following oblasts of Russia: Novgorod (18), Astrakhan' (17), Pskov (17), and the Mari Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (11).

Incomers from Lithuania made up the following proportions of the total population of incomers: Pervalka 96 per cent, Preila 87 per cent, Juodkrantė 82 per cent, and Nida 76 per cent.

The chart illustrates the distribution of prewar residents and incomers around settlements in the northern part of the Curonian Spit in 1956, and gives information on the origins of incomers.



Incomers whose origin is unknown due to a lack of data, and children born to incomer families on the Curonian Spit after 1945

Incomers from locations outside Lithuania

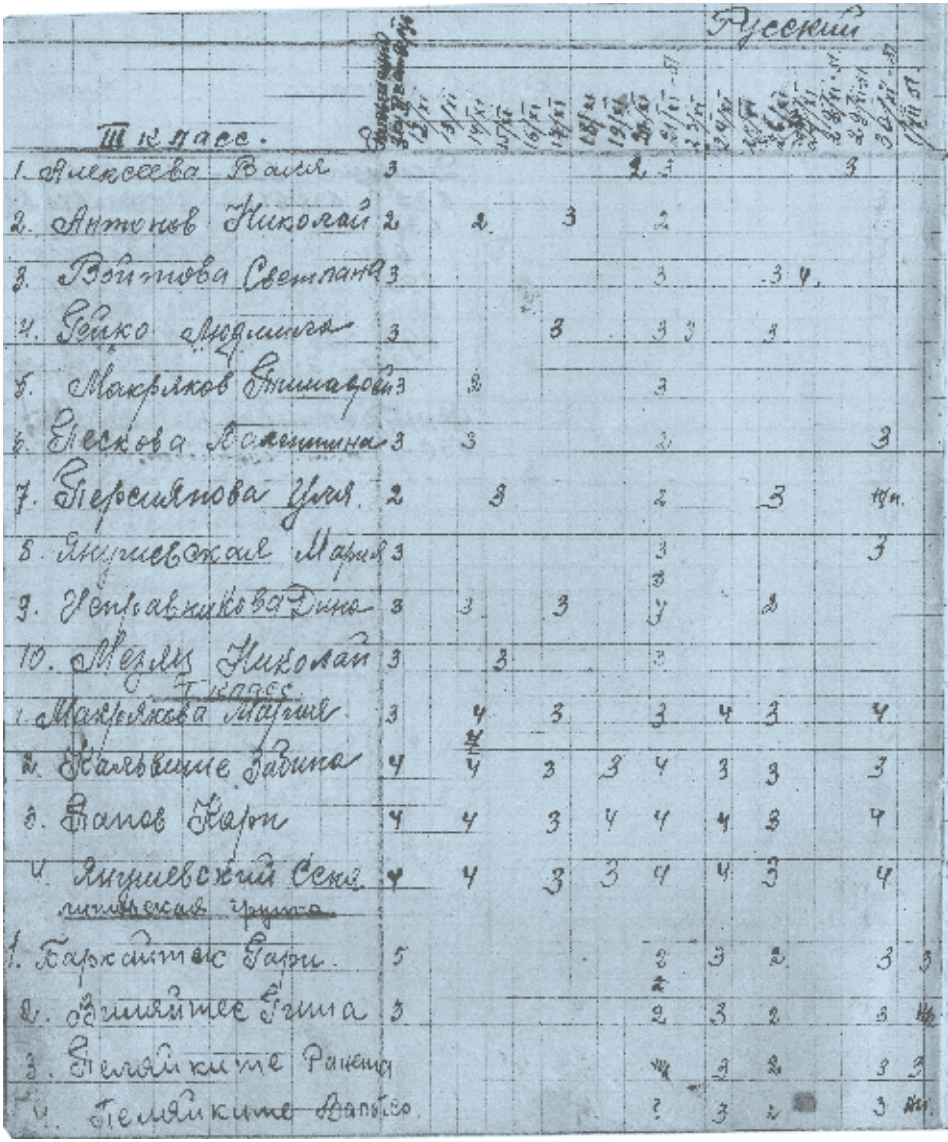
Incomers from Lithuania

The remaining prewar residents of the Curonian Spit and their children

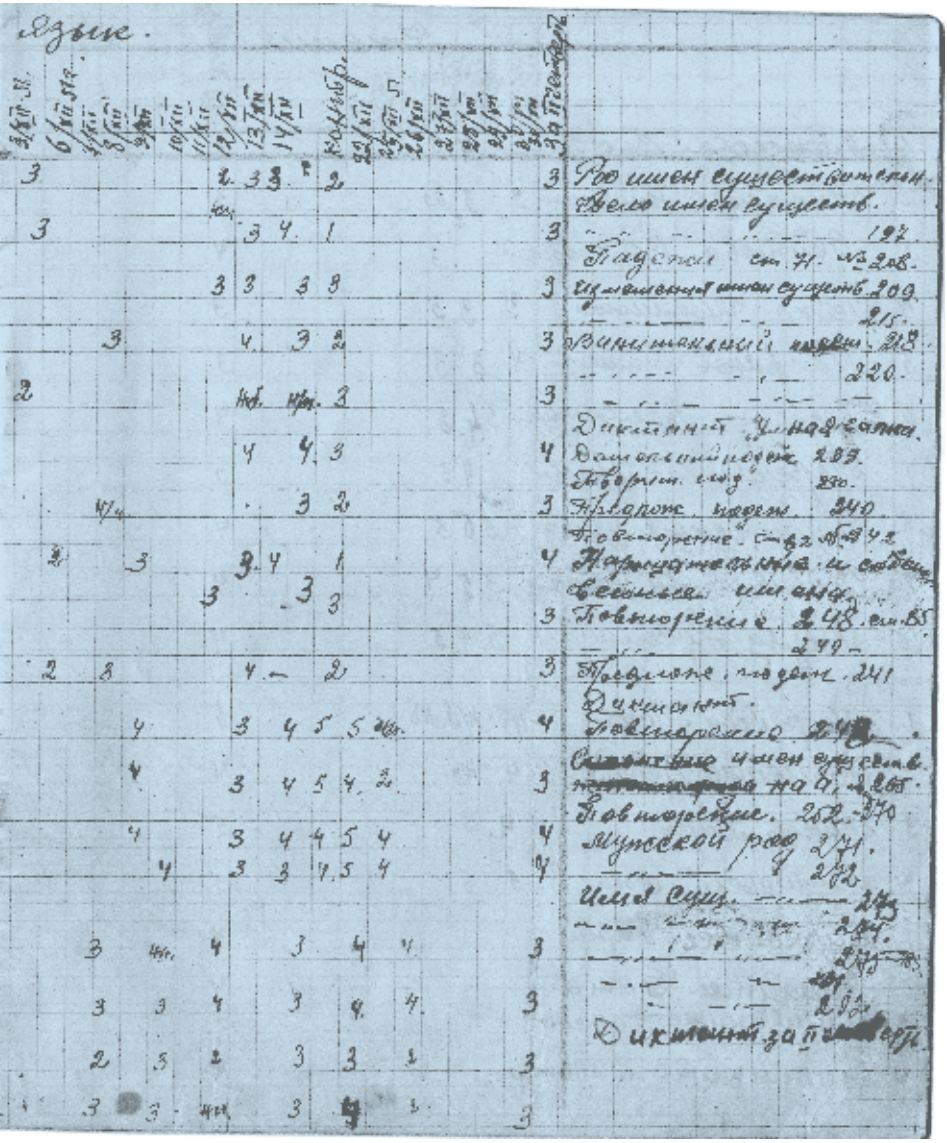
Contact between prewar residents and newcomers on the Curonian Spit: Mikas Pugelis, who was born on the spit in 1871, is seen holding Vladas Mamontovas, who was born in 1954 to a family of incomers. Two girls born in the postwar years on the Curonian Spit can be seen on the left: Vladas' older sister Svetlana (married name Giedraitienė), and Valtraud Jakait (married name Meškova), the daughter of prewar residents, 1956. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMPGEK 2194-66.

Newcomers get involved in the life of prewar residents: school trips to the former East Prussia. The first trip by Nida schoolchildren with their teacher Vytautas Rinkūnas (sixth from left) to Sovetsk (formerly Tilsit), 1957. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 1180.

< Nida schoolchildren by the ruins of Königsberg Castle in Kaliningrad, 1959. *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 1179.



Prewar residents encounter newcomers. A detail from the Nida school journal for grades 1 and 3, and for the Lithuanian-speaking group, from the end of 1951. The journal shows clearly that the pupils who attended school at that time were mainly Russian-speaking children of incomers, but included four children of prewar residents...



...Teaching in the Russian language was introduced in the school in 1946. Teaching in the Lithuanian language was introduced permanently in 1948. The page from the journal shows pupils' marks for their knowledge of the Russian language (the highest possible mark at the time was five). *Neringos muziejai*, NIMGEK 225.

The late 1950s was a period of change for the fishing community of the Curonian Spit. After the mass emigration of prewar residents from the peninsula started in 1958, kolkhozes had to find a way to make up for the losses in the labour force. As in previous years, recruitment campaigns were organised. Invitations from relatives and acquaintances still played a role in attracting newcomers. However, work placements after graduating were an increasingly common factor, giving rise to the emergence of a new class of permanent resident on the peninsula.

In early 1959, the lives of kolkhozniks were disrupted by the government's decision to eliminate motorised fishing stations. The Motorised Fishing Station for the northern part of the peninsula, which was based in Juodkrantė, had to give all its fleet and fishing equipment to the kolkhozes. The following year brought about a new change: on 13 and 14 January 1960, all three kolkhozes held general meetings, during which fishermen were 'persuaded' to organise themselves into a fishing sovkhoz (state-owned farm). The handover of assets lasted until November. In 1960, a single Neringa Fishery began operating on the peninsula, replacing three fishermen's kolkhozes: Pasienietis, Baltijos Aušra and Neringa. During this time, fishermen's lives were affected by increasing restrictions on catches on the lagoon. Foresters also began to play a more important role on the peninsula.

However, the changes went further, beyond the lives of fishermen. In the 1950s, at a time when the Curonian Spit was still experiencing an influx of newcomers, who were supposed to contribute to developing the fishing industry in Lithuania, plans were being made to change the future of the peninsula in a completely different direction. As a result of the implementation of these plans, the settlements of the Curonian Spit underwent a fundamental transformation: they were given new functions and new priorities. Two grandiose, and in part conflicting, plans were devised simultaneously: ensuring the preservation of the geological formations, forests, ecosystems and landscape on one hand; and revealing and developing the resort potential of the peninsula on the other.

Locations on the Curonian Spit had acquired the status of resort well before the Second World War. In about

1880, a high-class resort was founded in Schwarzort (Juodkrantė). Sandkrug (Smiltynė) was recognised as a resort in around 1898. Meanwhile, Nidden (Nida) acquired resort status in 1912, followed by Preil (Preila) in 1929, and Perwelk (Pervalka) in 1933. After the Second World War, the recreational potential of settlements on the Curonian Spit was not forgotten. Juodkrantė, Preila and Nida were referred to as summer resorts during the postwar years, and were recognised as urban areas with this status in 1946.[61] The same year, the Ministry of Health of the Lithuanian SSR planned to establish therapeutic resorts for children in Nida and Juodkrantė, and to set up a children's sanatorium in the premises of the former Hotel Königin Luise.[62] On 6 December 1946, the Council of Ministers formed a special governmental committee for restoration work in Nida and Juodkrantė. The committee was given 19 days to submit proposals on how to reinstate the resort potential of these settlements.[63] However, these initiatives concerning the development of summer resorts were overshadowed by the need to develop the fishing industry.

Nevertheless, it was not long before the settlements which had retained the formal status of summer resorts until 1961 welcomed holidaymakers again in the postwar period. In 1954 and 1955, Nida reemerged as a destination for tourists from Klaipėda and other parts of Lithuania.[64] Juodkrantė also prepared to accept holidaymakers in 1956. A holiday centre for the Ministry of Light Industry opened in the premises of the former Hotel Königin Luise in Nida in 1956. It served as a centre for workers from Silva, a sock factory in Kaunas. In the same year, a pioneer camp of the Ministry of the Food Industry started to operate in Juodkrantė. Each year, there were more and more cases of buildings in both settlements being allocated to government departments in Vilnius, Kaunas or Klaipėda as holiday homes or villas. They served as summer holiday destinations for employees of enterprises under these departments. Employees would be given holidays by their trade union committees. Regular travellers and holidaymakers also came during the summer months. This way, seasonal visitors emerged again, at least in Nida and Juodkrantė. It completely changed the rhythm of life that had existed before in the settlements. Most holidaymakers chose Nida, where the number of tourists

61 Lietuvos TSR Aukščiausiosios Tarybos Prezidiumo įsakas *Dėl Lietuvos TSR gyvenamųjų vietovių klasifikavimo*, 3 August 1946. Lietuvos Tarybų Socialistinės Respublikos Aukščiausiosios Tarybos Žinios, 1946, nr. 17 (36), p. 5–6.

62 *Tiesa*, 2 July 1946, nr. 152 (986); Micelmacheris 1946.

63 Lietuvos TSR Ministrų Tarybos potvarkis nr. 1139 p, 6 December 1946. *LCVA*, f. R-754, ap. 1, b. 77, l. 119.

64 Stepanauskas 1954; Įspūdžiai iš pajūrio. *Švyturys*, 1955, nr. 22 (166), p. 22.

Workers in light industry enjoying a holiday on the sand dunes at Nida. Photograph by V. Rupšlaukis, 1958. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, 0-010430.

on peak days in the holiday season in 1962 was four to five times the number of permanent residents. During the season, visitors and tourists from Klaipėda and other cities made up over 40 per cent of the total population. Those who stayed in holiday homes, villas or camping sites amounted to 30 per cent of the population.[65] In this context, changes occurred in the way the Curonian Spit was portrayed in the press: themes relating to the implementation of industrial plans or the development of the economy or fishing were gradually replaced by themes such as nature, recreation and leisure.

The Klaipėda Executive Committee permitted free entry to the Curonian Spit settlements of Juodkrantė and Nida during the holiday season of 1957.[66] When border guards and foresters started to voice their concerns that people were increasingly ignoring the regimes they had introduced or maintained, the Agricultural Construction Design Institute in Kaunas took the initiative to work out how various interests might be coordinated. In 1958, Steponas Stulginskis, an architect at the institute, prepared a district plan for the coastal zone of the Lithuanian SSR. The plan aimed to spread holidaymakers and the resort potential across the Curonian Spit as follows. Juodkrantė and Nida were to undergo limited development, so that up to 3,000 holidaymakers could be accommodated in Juodkrantė and up to 4,000 in Nida. At the same time, long-term plans were developed to construct two brand-new resorts on the peninsula: the Nagliai resort, six kilometres from Klaipėda, with the capacity to accommodate 3,000 holidaymakers; and the Agila resort, also capable of accommodating 3,000 people, situated between Juodkrantė and Nida, north of Pervalka by the Nagliai (Agila) Dune. A proposal was made to recognise all the resorts of the Curonian Spit as a state nature reserve, that is, as a republican-level national park.[67] The impact of this project remains ambiguous. Stulginskis' plan was featured in the Moscow-based magazine *Arkhitektura SSSR*,[68] and some opposition to it was expressed in the Lithuanian press.[69] Nevertheless, planning efforts on the Curonian Spit were soon taken over by other organisations. The Kaunas Branch of the Lithuanian Urban Construction Design Institute began planning settlements. Meanwhile, designers from Leningrad (St Petersburg) were working on the issue of transport links, and developed specific

65 Stauskas 1963: 6–7, 8.

66 Reshenie ispolnitel'nogo komiteta gor. Klajpeda № 241 *O svobodnom proezde na kosu Kurshyu-Neringa na osnovanii postanovleniya SM SSSR ot 26 iyulya 1946 goda № 1435-631-ss*, 10 May 1957. *KLAA*, f. 104, ap. 1, b. 281, l. 169

67 Stulginskis 1961.

68 *Arkhitektura SSSR*, 1963, № 10, s. 9.

69 Purvinas, Daujotas 1962.

plans to join the peninsula to the mainland with either a tunnel or a bridge.[70] Stulginskis was probably exaggerating somewhat in claiming that his project was a point of departure for the 1961 decision to create a separate municipality, under republican jurisdiction, on the Curonian Spit. However, one thing is clear: the establishment of a new municipality, with its centre initially planned in Juodkrantė, was actually a special way to grant exceptional status, corresponding to that of a national park, to the part of the Curonian Spit that was administered by the Lithuanian SSR, acting within a legal framework that still did not provide for the creation of such parks at that time.[71]

On 15 November 1961, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR reorganised the summer resorts of Nida, Preila and Juodkrantė, separated them from the city of Klaipėda, and created the municipality of Neringa, which was formally subject to republican jurisdiction. The decision to create an area with this legal status in the northern part of the Curonian Spit was apparently made with no clear vision of what to do with part of the peninsula that became the longest, and at the same time the smallest, municipality in Lithuania (with a permanent population of approximately 1,500 residents). Simultaneously, the resolution of the Council of Ministers of 27 September 1960 introduced a 'landscape reserve' regime on the spit. Only after these decisions did attempts intensify to find a way to maintain a balance between the preservation of the natural environment, maintaining an ecological balance on one hand, and a regime for developing resorts on the other, or in other words, for using the area as a tourist destination. These attempts had a great impact both on later migration processes and the overall development of the Curonian Spit. However, with the exception of foresters, regular community members of the Curonian Spit, who at the turn of the 1960s included a handful of prewar residents and people who had moved there after the war to work on developing the fish industry, were not involved in these attempts.

70 Cf. Yantarnyj gorod Neringa. *Sovetskaya Litva*, 18 November 1961, № 271 (5608).

71 Cf. Stulginskis 1961; Stauskas 2012: 189.

Foresters began to play an increasingly important role on the Curonian Spit in 1960, after the 'landscape reserve' regime was adopted. This photograph from around 1961 shows the managers of the autonomous forestry unit that was established on the Curonian Spit. Top row, first from right, the Juodkrantė forestry officer Jonas Stanius; middle row, first from right, the chief forester Vladislovas Vytautas Buivydas; bottom row, first from left, Nida forestry officer Ričardas Krištopavičius; bottom row, first from right, forestry unit engineer Edvardas Matiukas. Courtesy of Marius Matiukas.

After the war, 'departmental' holidaymakers played a major role in developing the resort potential of the Curonian Spit. Pictures show the occupants of a holiday house going on a trip around Nida. Photograph by V. Rupšlaukis, 1959. *Lietuvos centrinis valstybės archyvas*, 0-018378 >

Concluding remarks

When we go to the Curonian Spit as holidaymakers we usually encounter only 'service personnel' who attend to our needs, and rarely do we take an interest in the local community on the peninsula. Yet the history of its evolution in the context of postwar Lithuania is truly unique. After the Second World War, the spit was repopulated virtually from scratch. Prewar residents, who in 1956 still made up approximately 13 per cent of the population, were almost gone by 1960. Considering the situation in postwar Lithuania, the repopulation itself is not unique to the Curonian Spit; it is also a characteristic of the whole former Memel (Klaipėda) Territory. However, what made the Curonian Spit unique was the restricted border zone regime introduced in the aftermath of the Second World War, which meant that not everyone was granted entry to the peninsula. The process of the settlement of the peninsula took place in a deliberate and planned way, and was linked to specific economic sectors (mainly the fishing industry), the development of which required labour. This study has helped to shed some light on who the newcomers who later constituted the core population of the Neringa municipality were, where they came from, what caused them to move to the peninsula, and how they managed to adapt to their new life.

However, this study has also demonstrated that migration experiences shaped the community of the Curonian Spit, both in the postwar period and before. The community that lived on the peninsula prior to the Second World War had also emerged as a result of mass migration. In fact, from the Middle Ages up to the present day, the history of the peninsula has involved very few periods of settled living without human migration. The Curonian Spit as we know it today from photographs and postcards from the late 19th and early 20th centuries was shaped by resettlement on the peninsula of residents from Curonia and other locations, their

concentration in specific villages that was determined to a great extent by natural conditions, moving from one settlement to another due to matrimonial links or business interests, and relocating in an attempt to escape shifting sands or flooding. It was also due to forced migration that the history of the prewar community of the peninsula virtually came to an end during the Second World War. Not all families affected by the war were able to reunite immediately afterwards, if at all. Today, the offspring of the prewar residents of the peninsula are scattered across several continents. This study offers the most detailed account to date of the migration experience of prewar residents who lived on the Curonian Spit until about 1960, as well as the underlying reasons behind those experiences.

It is my hope that the micro perspective offered in this study in order to get an insight into the past of the Curonian Spit will lead to an understanding that the exploration of migration experiences can open up completely different ways of looking at the history of the Curonian Spit. These experiences reveal not only the links between the peninsula and western Latvia, the Curonian Lagoon region of Lithuania, and Klaipėda. They link the peninsula with the most remote corners of the world, including North America, where some of the offspring of prewar residents currently live. They also link the peninsula with Arkhangelsk on the White Sea, Astrakhan' by the Caspian Sea, and the island of Sakhalin in the Pacific Ocean, all places of origin of some of the postwar newcomers. It is paradoxical that things that appear to be stagnant and insular may turn out to be dynamic, if we change our point of view, and create links between several continents through the destinies of people.

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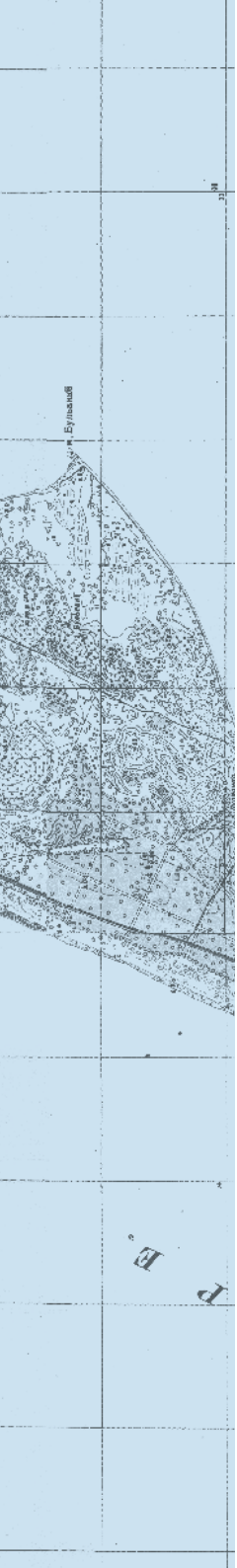

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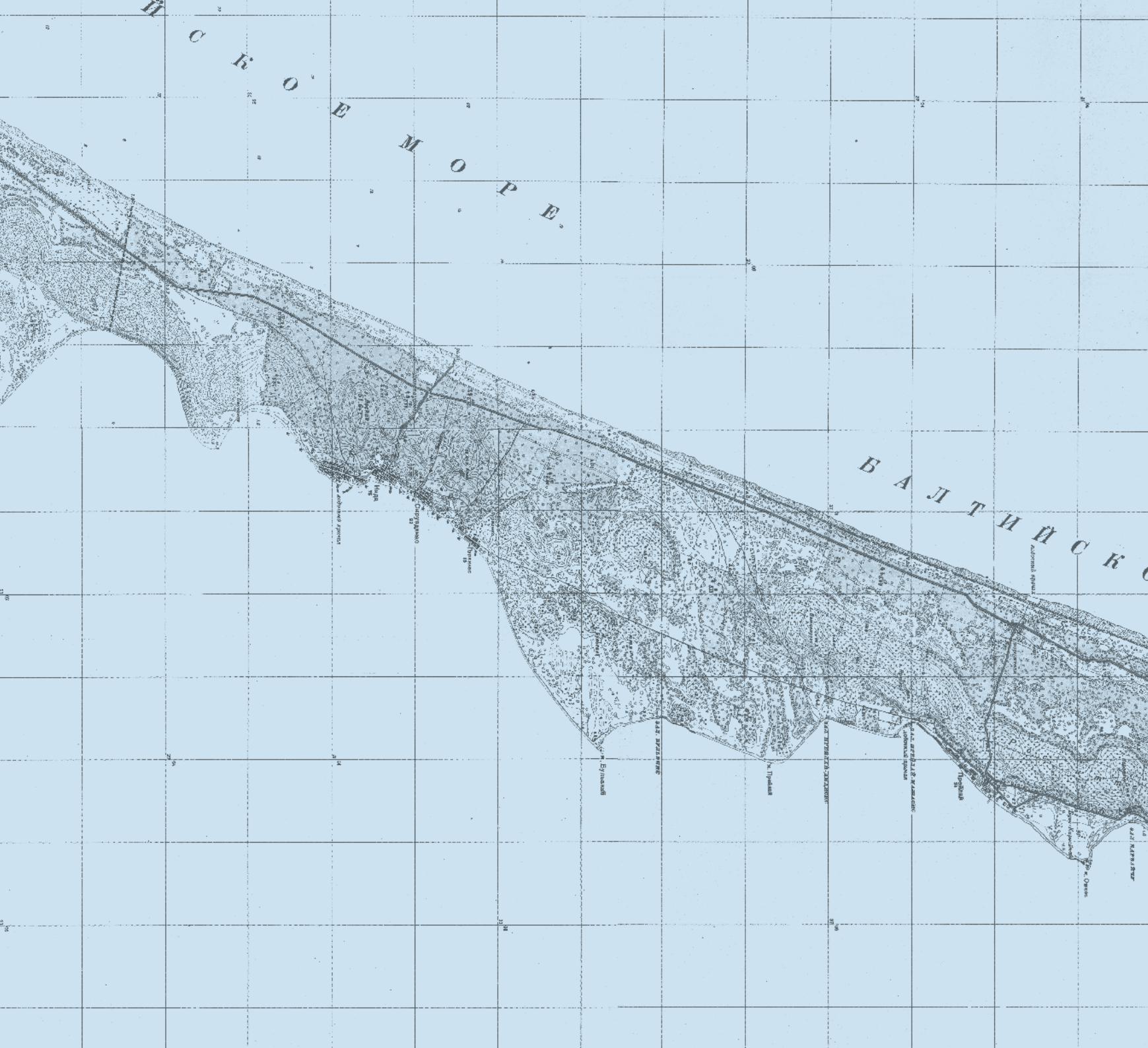

ЙСКОЕ МОРЕ
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