THE HISTORY OF LITHUANIA

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ABBREVIATIONS

SC-RS	Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas
CBN	Commonwealth of Both Nations
EU	European Union
KGB	Committee for State Security (USSR)
LCSA	Lithuanian Central State Archive
DLPL	Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania
GDL	Grand Duchy of Lithuania
Gdl	Grand Duke of Lithuania
LDS	Lithuanian Diplomatic Service
GRRCL	Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania
CDPL	Christian Democratic Party of Lithuania
CPL	Communist Party of Lithuania
LAF	Lithuanian Activist Front
LFA	Lithuanian Freedom Army
ULFF	Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters
LLL	Lithuanian Liberty League
PLC	Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth
LRMS	Lithuanian Reform Movement Sąjūdis
SDPL	Social Democratic Party of Lithuania
LSSR	Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic
PG	Provisional Government
MGB	Ministry of State Security (USSR)
NKGB	People's Commissariat for State Security (USSR)
NKVD	People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (USSR)
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
HU-LC	Homeland Union - Lithuanian Conservatives
SCLL	Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania

PREFACE

We salute the reader, as he turns the pages of our nation's extraordinary (there is no other kind) history. This small book presents a clear answer to a question which is one of the most significant, treasured and inspiring to the people of Lithuania: how did Lithuania come into being, and why is our country not an expression of chance or circumstance, but rather, a fruit ripened for centuries, a path of self-dependence paved by the lawful self-determination of its people, and a natural, merited recompense for the life of each and every Lithuanian that was lost in its name?

As you devour the contents of this book with your eyes, you will experience, first hand, the historic ordeals of our people, dramatic yet not staged, and often enlightening. By learning them, you will become living witnesses and guards of the history of Lithuania. The comprehension that a nation's future is contingent upon the nation's memory is reflected in the words of the Lithuanian educator Mikalojus Akelaitis written to the Polish writer Józef Ignacy Kraszewski in 1859: **"A nation's history must be on every citizen's lips, and the nation will be immortal."** It was precisely this knowledge that inspired Lithuanian enlighteners (Simonas Daukantas and Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis, among others) to immortalize their country's past in writing.

Abridged histories usually arise during turning points in the country's development or to mark significant events. Sometimes they are initiated by state institutions the duty of which is to ensure that the path the country has taken be perpetuated and evaluated from a broader perspective – one that is patriotic, yet impartial, sagacious, and all-encompassing. In 1936, on the initiative and under the care of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Lithuania (Vice Minister Kazimieras Masiliūnas), a group of Lithuanian historians wrote and published a comprehensive history of Lithuania which was edited by Adolfas Šapoka. This is perhaps the most well-known national history of the Lithuanian state and nation – one that has influenced generations past and present. Written during turbulent times, the goal of the publication was to look for inspiration for the Lithuanian people in the thousand-year-old history of ancient Lithuania, in the vast spaces

conquered by heroes of old, in authentic Balt culture, in the Lithuanian language, which is the most archaic in Europe and unique in its beauty, and in the activities of emigrants who were scattered around the world.

In preparation for the 1939 New York World's Fair, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania (Minister Stasys Lozoraitis) initiated and, under the direction of Magdalena Avietėnaitė, prepared a special Lithuanian exhibit which featured art, folk art and economic achievements, and presented Lithuania's most significant historical events on monumental canvases created by our most well-known artists. In this and other cases, our intellectuals, academics, and artists were encouraged to rally together and unanimously present Lithuania and its history to the entire world.

Today is perhaps the perfect occasion to continue and strengthen this beautiful diplomatic tradition. After restoring its independence on 11 March 1990 and becoming a full-fledged member of the family of democratic NATO and EU states in 2004, Lithuania, in 2013, will take on the historic responsibility of holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union – the union of free and democratic European countries. Not only is this a unique opportunity to actively contribute to the creation of a common European future; it is also a chance to strengthen international solidarity and attentiveness to the past of the continent's nations, and, of course, for us personally to once again – from today's point of view – take a look and remind the entire world what Lithuania was, is, and will be.

In preparing for the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Minister Audronius Ažubalis) appealed to the scholars at Vilnius University's Institute of International Relations and Political Science who have been studying the politics of history for many years (professors Raimundas Lopata, Alvydas Jokubaitis, Vytautas Radžvilas, and others), asking them to compile a concise, easy-to-read work of Lithuanian history based on the criteria of truth and openness. Its purpose is to unfold our country's historical path to the reader - citizens of the European Union in particular – in a clear and understandable way. The long, victorious, sometimes difficult or even tragic path which the founders of the Lithuanian state conquered by leading the nation's people through different periods and government structures, through pits of occupations and the ups and downs of restored independence – from the very first time the name of Lithuania was mentioned in one of the European chronicles in 1009 to the country's metamorphosis to a full-fledged member of the European Union in 2004.

Coordination of the book's compilation and editorship was entrusted to the writer of these lines; well-known historians who have written myriad studies were invited to be authors: the development of the ancient Lithuanian state and the

Grand Duchy of Lithuania was analysed by Prof. ALFREDAS BUMBLAUSKAS (**who wrote Chapters I and II, as well as the introduction** and the conclusion "The End or the Scattered Faces of Lithuania"); Vytautas Magnus University's Prof. ANTANAS KULAKAUSKAS wrote about the life of Lithuanians in the Russian Empire from 1795 to 1915 (**Chapter III**); the process of restoration of the modern Lithuanian state and the two decades of independence from 1918 to 1940 were examined by Prof. ALFONSAS EIDINTAS (**Chapter IV**); and Dr MINDAUGAS TAMOŠAITIS – a lecturer from the Lithuanian Pedagogical University – summarised the events from the occupations of 1940 to 2004 (**Chapters V and VI**). The book has been read and critiqued by respected philosophers and public activists. The editor was faced with the daunting task of cohering four narrative techniques and styles, planning paragraphs and the scale of the chapters, and weaving together connections and insertions so that the narration would be equally smooth, balanced in quantity, not overburdened with inessential facts, and as pleasant to the eye of the reader as possible. Due to the limited scope of this book, it was decided to forgo more detailed analysis of economic, social and cultural development. Such analysis would have no doubt been of interest and benefit to the reader, but let us consider it the sacrifice and price that the authors of this book were willing to pay so as to best bring to light the essential vortexes of Lithuania's history, the development of the Lithuanian state, its contribution to the history of the region and all of Europe, and the long-time, firm – immortal – determination of the Lithuanian people to create, protect, and foster their country.

The editor hopes for understanding and forgiveness if this historical narrative is not equally acceptable and harmonious to all of its readers, and wishes to point out that this is the first attempt since the restoration of the state in 1990 to embrace the entire span of the history of Lithuania with a general, responsible, and prudent glance from today's perspective.

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the people who initiated this publication, as well as to the members of the Editorial Board who read the initial drafts; a special thanks to Jaunius Petraitis, as well as to Dr Vytautas Žalys and Romanas Judinas. We are also very grateful to Dr Zenonas Butkus and Dr Saulius Kaubrys for critiquing this book, as well as to the many others who contributed to its compilation, illustration and selection of the necessary maps.

ALFONSAS EIDINTAS

Introduction

LITHUANIA – PART OF CENTRAL EUROPE

"Now, without doubt, the affinities of the Sanskrit are closer with the Lithuanian than with any other language on the face of the earth."

From British scholar Robert G. Latham's "Descriptive Ethology"

Geographical Centre of Europe?

If you were to draw lines on a map of Europe to connect Gibraltar with the northern part of the Ural Mountains, Scotland with the Caucasus Mountains, and the southern Greek Islands with Norway's north, almost all of them would intersect in Lithuania, where the geographical centre of Europe is located. Quite recently, the French National Geographic Institute carried out new calculations which determined that the perpendicular of the centre, dropped geographically from an altitude of 180 km, is located at 54°55'N 25°19'E – 25 km to the north of the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius. Lithuania is situated at the same geographical latitude as southern Sweden, Denmark and Scotland to its west, and at the same geographical longitude as Finland to its north and Romania, Bulgaria and Greece to its south.

Lithuania is at the crossroads between Eastern and Western Europe. The most direct route from Germany to Russia goes through Lithuania; the Germans took it on their way East, and the Russians – on their way West. Therefore it has been said: "If Switzerland is known for its high mountains, Italy – for its works of art, and Finland – for its lakes, then Lithuania should be known as the land unsafe for a small nation to live." Though Lithuania is the geographical centre of Europe (and Kaunas was a Hansa city), it is often considered a part of Eastern Europe. This is due to the country's geopolitical situation more than to its geographical one, for in the 19th and 20th centuries, Lithuania was occupied and annexed by its Eastern neighbour more than once. Nevertheless, in terms of civilization, Lithuania belongs to Central Europe – the outskirts of Western civilization. In Lithuania, as in Central European countries (Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary), there were distinct differences from Eastern Europe:

the evolvement, from as far back as the Middle Ages, of individual peasant farms rather than communities; the formation of a civil society of nobles rather than Eastern centralism and despotism; the prevalence of Western cultural orientation and Catholicism rather than Orthodoxy, even though an integration model which gave birth to the idea of localised ecclesiastical unions was found, which allows us to speak of Lithuania as a link between Latin Central Europe and Byzantium Eastern.

Origin of the Name of Lithuania and the Fate of its Concept

Lithuania's name was first mentioned in 1009, though it came about before then: the Lithuanian tribe should have become differentiated from the Eastern Balts more than ten centuries before that. Linguists have determined that the Lithuanian language became differentiated from Latvian around the 7th century. However, people who speak Lithuanian don't necessarily call themselves Lithuanians and their land – Lithuania. Thus far, the most widespread version is that the name of Lithuania is derived from the name of the Lietauka, a small river that flows into the Neris near Kernavė. It is traditionally thought that the core of the Lithuanian state was the Land of Lithuania – in the strict sense – that was between the Nemunas and Neris Rivers in early historical times. Thus the Lietauka River, a right tributary of the Neris, flowed towards the Land of Lithuania, and not necessarily in Lithuania itself. In this case, the name of the river should have been derived from that of the land, and not the other way around. These arguments challenge the widespread version, but do not explain where Lithuania's name came from. Today, scholars, based on the premise that Lithuania's name should be derived from the ethnonym "lietuvis" ("Lithuanian"), have turned their attention to place names outside of Lithuania with the roots "leit-" and "liet-". The base idea is that on the outskirts of the state of Lithuanian rulers (Vytautas, Gediminas, perhaps Mindaugas), loyal people from Lithuania should have been settled not in the territories inhabited by Lithuanians, but rather – in those inhabited by Old Russians (or Ruthenians) as well as Samogitians. These people were called "leičiai" (even now Latvians call Lithuanians "leišiai"), and perhaps "liečiai" as well. Thus, Lithuania's name should have originated from the ethnonym (related to military functions) "liečiai" or "leičiai".

Vytis from the title page of the Laurentius Transcript (1531) of the first Statute of Lithuania

In 1009, Lithuania's boundaries must have gone quite a bit farther east and south than Lithuania's current south-eastern border. It is the territory where Lithuanians lived when founding their state (in essence – present-day Lithuania) that is called the ethnic Lithuanian lands. However, a part of ethnic Lithuania is beyond the borders of present-day Lithuania. On the other hand, the ancient Samogitian territory and part of the Yotvingian, Selonian, Semigallian and Prussian territories that were to the west of the ethnic lands are now called Lithuania. And that is natural: the nucleus of the formation of the Lithuanian state was the "Lietuva Land" (the territory between the Nemunas and the Neris), but Mindaugas was quick to incorporate other Lithuanian lands into "Lietuva Land" and expand his influence in the territories of kindred tribes. It is thought that if it wasn't for the German attack and Slavic expansion, the Lithuanian state and the name of

Lithuania would have encompassed much broader lands of the Baltic tribes (if not all of them).

However, the territory inhabited by people who spoke Lithuanian and eventually also developed Lithuanian consciousness narrowed in the east and south, while the name of Lithuania, on the contrary, extended far into the east together with the borders of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and encompassed the broad lands of the East Slavs. It was namely the entire territory of this state (not just present-day Lithuania, but Belarus as well) that in time began to be called Lithuania, and which is now referred to as historical Lithuania. In the 16th–18th centuries, GDL nobles, regardless of their ethnic origin, considered themselves Lithuanians. Even the official written language of the state (which was used to write the Statutes of Lithuania and other documents), the sources of which reach back to the parent language of present-day Ukrainian and Belarusian, was called Lithuanian. The eminent 19th c. Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz became a historic Lithuanian bard, and Nobel laureate Czesław Miłosz considered himself to be the last citizen of the GDL. It is namely this tradition that is now ascribed to the so-called "Old Lithuanians", who, at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, began to face opposition from the "Young Lithuanians", who created the Republic of Lithuania a couple of decades later.

Lithuania's name became an identity for Jews as well. During the entire period of historical Lithuania, the Jews that lived here called this country "Lite", and themselves – "Litvaks". Thus, the name of Lithuania was spread by the old Lithuanian state – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Once it was abolished and partitioned to Russia, the Lithuania Governorate – later the Lithuania-Vilna Governorate and the Lithuania-Grodno Governorate – still existed until the 1831 uprising.

There was also another way of spreading Lithuania's name. In the 15th century, the wilderness that once belonged to the Yotvingians, Skalvians and Nadruvians began to be reinhabited by the descendants of these tribes, but most of all – by Lithuanians. They settled in the wilderness not only on the Lithuanian side of the border, but on the other side as well (upon establishing a border between Lithuania and the Teutonic Knights in 1422, only Užnemunė – part of the old Yotvingian territory on the left bank of the Nemunas River – went to Lithuania). In time, Lithuanians in the State of the Teutonic Order (which was later renamed the Duchy of Prussia and even later – the Kingdom of Prussia) started to be called Lietuvininkai

(Prussian Lithuanians), and their land – Prussian Lithuania or Lithuania Minor (later – seemingly in the 19th century – the rest of Lithuania began to be called Lithuania Proper). A paradox – a foreign state, yet there was quite a bit more Lithuanian written language than in Lithuania itself. It was in Lithuania Minor that the first significant piece of Lithuanian literature written in the Lithuanian language emerged – Kristijonas Donelaitis's The Seasons (c. 1750). Though Lithuania's name even was officially used in Prussia in the 18th century – the Lithuanian Chamber Department, the centre of which was in Gumbinnen (Gusev), was established – the use of the Lithuanian language in Prussia eventually tapered due to germanisation and adoption of such by Lithuanians, and after World War II, when the old population withdrew from Prussia, Lithuanian speakers disappeared altogether. Lithuania's name disappeared as well.

The history of Lithuania Proper was quite different. Upon destruction of the old Lithuanian state by Russia, the name of Lithuania fell out of official use after the suppression of the 1831 uprising – it was replaced by the term "Northwestern Krai". Lithuania's name gained new meaning. Alongside the historical concept of Lithuania (the former GDL), a modern concept, linking the name of Lithuania with the use of the Lithuanian language, gained more and more strength. This concept was used as a basis by the creators of the new Lithuanian state – the Republic of Lithuania – who aspired to incorporate Lithuania Minor into Lithuania, but who relinquished any claim to historical Lithuanian lands where the Lithuanian language was not spoken.

The modern concept of Lithuania faced a huge problem – in the beginning of the 20th century, the Lithuanian language was abandoned in favour of Polish and Belarusian, the languages of the self-identified "Tutejszy", in the south-eastern part of ethnic Lithuania. True, some nobles in the self-identified areas of Lithuania still called themselves "Litvins" or "Old Lithuanians", but the majority of them became more and more polonised, and considered Lithuania to be a part of Poland. It was precisely this concept that emerged during the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilnius in 1920, when the "Republic of Central Lithuania" was formed in the Vilnius region. Based on such a Polish conception of Lithuania, the Republic of Lithuania was called "Kaunas Lithuania", and the Samogitian dialect – the Lithuanian language. The meaning of "Central Lithuania" can only be understood by bearing in mind that the old Ruthenian GDL lands to its east are called "Minsk" or "Ruthenian" Lithuania. This three-

part conception of Lithuania, which was employed ostensibly to restore the tradition of the GDL, was just a declaration, no longer in keeping with historical reality. In fact, this was a Polish conception of Lithuania: in the 1922 election that took place by Polish decree in the territory occupied by general Lucjan Żeligowski – the so-called "Republic of Central Lithuania" with Vilnius – it was decided that it shall become a part of Poland. For their part, the Lithuanians were determined to create the state of Lithuania based on ethnic grounds and no longer laid claim to "Minsk Lithuania"; however, they could not imagine their state without the historical capital Vilnius. Furthermore, the creators of the modern state of Lithuania had pretension to the lands of Lithuania Minor. True, only part of Lithuania Minor – the Klaipėda region – was ceded by Germany at the Versailles Peace Conference (1919), but not to Lithuania. Incidentally, not all of the Klaipėda Lietuvininkai wanted to join Lithuania – some sought "free city" status, similar to that of Danzig (present-day Gdansk).

Fundamental Outlines of the History of Lithuania

Hence, the the most general model of Lithuanian history would be as follows: 3–2 thousand years before Christ, amid the prehistoric archaeological cultures of the Eastern European forest land, the Baltic culture emerged. Roman and other civilizations take notice of such from the 1st century AD. It is generally thought that it is from these prehistoric depths that cultural values such as the Lithuanian language and folklore, as well as the Lithuanian pagan religion come, though the crystallization of such is now usually attributed to the years of the formation of the state. The state – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – was created in the middle of the 13th century; its first ruler, Mindaugas, managed not only to be baptised, but also to crown himself king in 1253. Nevertheless, that remains a historical episode, even though the pagan state gradually became a regional power or empire that took hold of the vast expanses of Orthodox (the former Kievan Rus') lands. In 1387, Lithuania adopted Christianity, and Samogitia, one of its ethnic regions, became the last region in Europe to become Christianized – it was with these events that the formation of Christian Europe concluded.

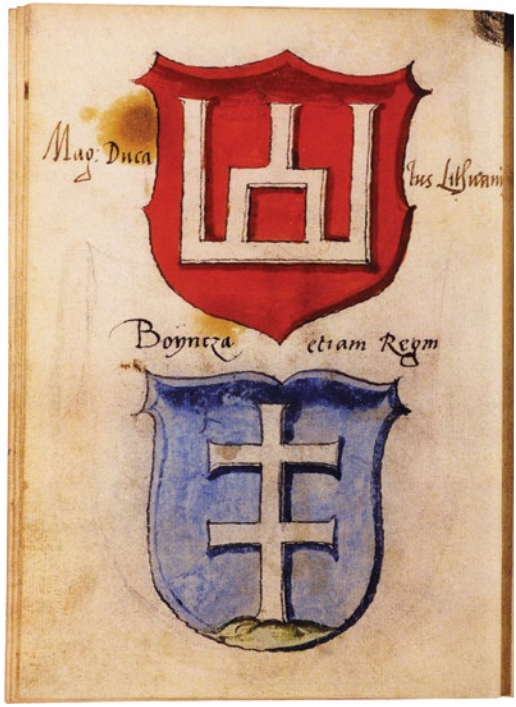
The threat of the Teutonic Order prompted the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to gradually strengthen its ties with Poland and, in the 15th–16th

GDL Coat of Arms (Stemmata Polonica, Paris), mid-16th century

centuries, to adopt Western Christian culture. In the mid-16th century, a union was formed with the Kingdom of Poland and a dualistic state – the Commonwealth of Both Nations – was established. In science, this state is generally considered to have given very significant phenomena to European and global civilization in the 17th–18th centuries, the condensed formula of which would be – bread, tolerance, democracy, constitution, Baroque. The Commonwealth of Both Nations:

- provided grain for the West (via Gdansk to Amsterdam),
- created for the West a tradition of religious tolerance and nobiliary democracy that was virtually unheard of at the time,
- was home to Vilnius, which became the sole European capital standing on the threshold of two worlds, where ten denominations lived in accord, and which was to the Jewish world the city of the Vilna Gaon and "Jerusalem of the North",
- elevated the widely influential Vilnius University, one of the oldest in Central Europe, with its distinctive traditions of missionaries, martyrs and saints, poets, rhetoricians and logicians,
- nurtured the Vilnius school of Baroque architecture, which was significant on a European scale,
- created a legal tradition which, in the 16th century, yielded the most systemised legal codes in Europe – the Statutes of Lithuania and, in 1791, together with Poland – a constitution, which became the earliest written constitution in Europe.

The Commonwealth of Both Nations was dissolved by three partitions at the end of the 18th century in which Russia, Austria and Prussia were involved. Yet even under these difficult conditions, the Vilnius school of Romanticism – the great representatives of which were Adam Mickiewicz and Juliusz Słowacki – emerged, and Vilnius University held onto its place as one of the top 100 European universities. This is an entire world of traditions of the Commonwealth of Both Nations, which never did be-



Columns of Gediminas and Cross of Jogaila
(Stemmata Polonica, Paris), mid-16th century

come a part of the culture of the Russian Empire; on the contrary – in Polish cultural tradition, its representatives established themselves as the great prophets, and that, in turn, allowed the Vilnius of their times to be called the capital of Polish culture outside the boundaries of ethnic Poland. Nevertheless, the destruction of the traditions of Vilnius, Lithuania and the Commonwealth of Both Nations meant that Russia managed to appropriate certain phenomena that surfaced from the expanses of the GDL, such as the sauna and "horilka", or "vodka". Obviously, this question has not yet been sufficiently studied, but the phenomenon of "Russian Jews" that is known around the world is easily explained – in the Russian Empire, Jews were only allowed to reside in the Pale of Settlement, which largely corresponded to the borders of the former GDL or the Commonwealth of Both Nations. The Pale was drawn by Catherine II, Empress of Russia, in 1791, who, after the partitioning of the CBN, even listed specific provinces where Jews were permitted to live. All this was none other than the

The easternmost (500 km from Vilnius) specimen of the Vilnius school of Baroque – Glaubitz's Discalced Carmelite church in Mstsislaw. Photograph by Alfredas Bumblauskas

expanse of the CBN and GDL, which means that the "Russian Jews" are GDL – Lithuanian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Polish – Jews.

In any case, it was precisely in this space that four contemporary, early modern period states were born: Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine. And some might also add... Israel, as in creating this state, the most significant roles were played by Jews from this area, who called themselves Litvaks.

After being partitioned to Russia in 1795, Lithuania restored its independence in 1918–1919 and created a state based on new democratic and national grounds – the Republic of Lithuania. Its instigators included the great Lithuanian artist, painter and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, the National Revival bard and poet Maironis, and the nation's patriarch, Jonas Basanavičius. And they were followed by a whole pleiad of modern artists, writers and architects who, over the course of two decades, managed to change the face and landscape of Lithuania. Today, young his-

One of Čiurlionis's most famous paintings – "Kings' Tale", 1909

torians list the achievements of civilization of the Republic of Lithuania very concisely: butter, ANBO planes, and basketball. What they have in mind are agricultural progress, design and manufacture of airplanes in Kaunas, and the two European championship titles won by Lithuanian men's basketball team in 1937 and 1939. It was precisely these valuable things or memories thereof that were erased by the Soviet Union, which occupied Lithuania in 1940 and then again in 1944. Even though it suffered great losses – the Lithuanian Holocaust, the mass deportations to Siberia carried out by the Soviet Union, and the 1944 emigration to the West – Lithuania still managed to rise to the longest "war after the war" – the Lithuanian partisan opposition to the USSR which lasted for nearly an entire decade after World War II (1945–1953); this is sometimes considered to be Lithuania's greatest contribution to the history of Europe in the 20th century. Yet today there are also other candidates for this role: the creators of the 1988–1990 Lithuanian Reform Movement Sąjūdis, the Baltic

Way, and Lithuanian Independence, as well as the heroes of the January Events (1991), who managed to overcome the Soviet annexation that lasted for half a century, and, under the conditions of Perestroika and the New Revival, to restore independence. Another significant fact is that in 2004, Lithuania became a member of the EU and NATO.

Milestones in the History of Lithuania

AD 97	The first account of the Aesti (Balts).
1009	St. Bruno discovers Lithuania; baptism of Nethimer, Lithuania's "king".
6 July 1253	**Mindaugas, the ruler of the newly formed Lithuanian state, is crowned king.**
1316–1341	Rule of Gediminas, who gave name to the Gediminid dynasty.
1323	Gediminas moves the capital of Lithuania from Trakai to Vilnius.
1385	**Act of Kreva. Grand Duke of Lithuania Jogaila becomes King of Poland. Beginning of Lithuania and Poland's shared history.**
1387	Christianization of Lithuania.
1392–1430	Reign of Vytautas, Lithuania's most noteworthy ruler.
1410	Battle of Grunwald. The united army of Poland and Lithuania decisively defeat the Teutonic Order, which posed a threat to the existence of both states.
1569	**Union of Lublin. Creation of a united Polish–Lithuanian state – the Commonwealth of Both Nations.**
1795	Russia, Austria and Prussia partition the Polish-Lithuanian state once and for all. The majority of Lithuania is annexed to Russia.
16 February 1918	Under German occupation, the Council of Lithuania, chaired by Jonas Basanavičius, proclaims the **restoration of an independent State of Lithuania**.
15 June 1940	In conformity with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, **the Soviet Union occupies and subsequently annexes the Republic of Lithuania**. Soon after forming a puppet government, establishment of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic is declared. **Beginning of Soviet terror and deportations.**
1941–1944	Occupation of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust in Lithuania.
1944–1953	Period of Soviet-organized repressions, deportations, mass collectivization and Lithuanian armed resistance.
1976	The Helsinki Group is formed.
3 June 1988	The Lithuanian Reform Movement Sąjūdis is founded.
11 March 1990	**The Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR declares the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence.**
2004	Lithuania becomes a member of the EU and NATO.

Chapter I

ANCIENT LITHUANIA

ANCIENT BALTS AND EMERGENCE OF THE LITHUANIAN STATE

In science, the Balts are usually considered a group of Indo-European tribes and nations who live or lived on the Baltic Sea's eastern coast and speak or spoke related languages that form a separate branch of the Indo-European language family. This branch is today represented only by the still-spoken Lithuanian and Latvian languages. The Balts and their Lithuanian and Latvian predecessors have led a settled life by the Baltic Sea for at least four thousand years. As a result, they are sometimes considered among the most settled and oldest European nations. Baltic tribes started forming at the end of the 3rd millennium BC, when Indo-European newcomers subdued and assimilated local people. The territory inhabited by the Baltic tribes stretched from the Vistula River to the Dnieper and Oka Rivers in the east in the 1st millennium AD. The Slavs' expansion started later, in the second half of the 1st millennium, and determined the assimilation of the eastern Baltic tribes. The Prussian, Yotvingian, Lithuanian and Latvian nations started forming in the early 2nd millennium, but only Lithuanian and Latvian nations emerged. The Prussians and Yotvingians were conquered and assimilated by the Teutonic Order, which later founded the state of Prussia.

The Baltic tribes' settled way of life probably determined that Baltic mythology has a number of features typical of ancient Indo-European mythology and elements of it are still found in folklore. Interest in Baltic mythology has grown. The Lithuanian language most strongly retained the ancient sound system among all still-spoken Indo-European languages, with many morphological peculiarities characteristic of extinct or currently unspoken languages such as Hittite, ancient Greek and Sanskrit. Famous French linguist Antoine Meillet (1866–1936) once said, "If one wants to know how our ancestors spoke, they have to come and hear the Lithuanian country people speaking." As Lithuania adopted Christianity relatively late, our folk culture and traditions are abundant in archaic elements pertaining to pagan times. They are also present in the customs of Christian religious holidays

such as Christmas and Easter and other. It could be asserted that pagan celebrations are just "covered" by a layer of Christian holidays. Existing ancient elements determine the peculiarity of Lithuanian folklore and folk art.

Paganism and References to Lithuania in 1009

Lithuanian paganism has generated an enormous amount of controversial statements and speculations. This has been caused by a contradiction between a myth created in the first half of the 19th century that the pagan epoch was the golden age of Lithuanians and a lack of information in historical sources. Romanticists searched for images of anthropomorphic gods, idols, script, sages and temples, thus trying to detect features characteristic of pre-Christian Rome or Greek and Roman religious systems. Their opponents considered that Lithuanians did not have a religious system, but merely deified nature. Ancient Lithuanians saw sacred expressions everywhere: in the canopy of heaven with its Sun, Moon and stars, and in earth, fire and water. Such deification of natural phenomena, particularly earth, prevented the development of cultivation of the land. Sacredness therefore gradually became concentrated in places of worship. These could be represented by a specific tree or a rock, but oak woods, grass snakes and altar mounds were presumably considered special.

To counter their critics, romanticists would look at Prussian sources dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries in which chroniclers spoke of Prussian gods. According to Simon Grunau's chronicle, the centre of the Prussian gods' cult was Rickoyoto, where an evergreen oak grew and beneath it was a temple of Prussian gods adorned with three idols portraying three Prussian gods. The most important of these was Peckols, the god of the underworld. The second was Thunder, the god of lightning and thunder, and the third was Potrimpo, the god of grain. The cult of these gods and the hierarchy of servants in the cult, Vestal Virgins were described. The story of the trinity of Prussian gods was supplemented over time with new details and illustrated with pictures. Four gods are referred to in the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle /Hypatian Codex for 1252. Lithuanian mythological geography confirms the idea and the high pantheon of Lithuanian Paganism as the "primary nucleus" with four gods. For instance, there are a number of places, hills, forests, trees and rocks named after Thunder. There are objects with the word "god" in their names, such as a stone "God's Table" and a hill called "God's Throne". There are abundant names referring

to a woodland fairy (Laumė) or a fortune (Laimė). These "primary" altar mounds had to be protected by sages (*žynys*, originating from the word žinoti ("to know") in Lithuanian), the Balts' priests (*vaidilo*s in Lithuanian) or witches (*raganos*, from the word *regėti* ("to see") in Lithuanian).

It is thought that paganism in Lithuania did not manage to establish centres intended for faith, such as temples sustained by other social classes with script and educational institutions and the social class of clergy. However, one circumstance is not taken into account: Lithuanians finally established a state in the mid-13th century.

As a rule, the conditions for the emergence of clergy and an institution that manages religious affairs are created in a state because a mechanism is in place to sustain them. The state thus needed an ideology to unite society. The rulers of other states used Christianity for this purpose. The position of our pagan rulers shows that paganism was equivalent to Christianity for them. Thus, the state had to attempt to speed up the process of transforming paganism into an institutional religion from the top. A temple referred to in sources, the sanctuary of Romuva in Nadruvia, and its Kriwe (the chief pagan priest) can be deemed an early manifestation of this process. It probably was an independent institution sustained through donations. A sage settled in the territory of the weakest tribe (Nadruvia) to maintain political balance. This is reminiscent of the amphictyony of ancient Greece, which refers to a union of two poleis in an inter-tribal territory to defend an existing sanctuary. The major cult object in Romuva was fire, with its worship reflected in the altar mounds and stones common in Lithuania.

The mythology of burning dead bodies developed in the 13th century. Rulers were burnt right up to Christianisation, with descriptions surviving in historical sources of the burning of the deceased bodies of Grand Dukes Algirdas and Kęstutis.

A lot of nations created epics, with stories about gods, semi-gods and heroes. Stories were written down later when script appeared. It might be considered that the development of the Lithuanian epic also started. Heroic songs appeared first, but very few are now known. It is recognised today that several stories written in the Lithuanian Chronicles correspond to epic narratives: these include Gediminas's dream about the foundation of Vilnius, the military campaigns of Gdl Algirdas to Moscow, and the love story of Birutė and Gdl Kęstutis (Birutė's story is also interesting because the duchess was not given a Christian name and was buried like a pagan,

Lithuanian woods from the "Litwa" series of paintings by Artur Grottger, 1864–1866

but her legend remained even when Christianity became more prevalent, and Birutė Hill in Palanga was respected as the hill of a saint). These narratives were written in the 15th–16th centuries, yet had a historical basis proved by contemporary written sources. A legend about Šventaragis should also be considered part of the forming Lithuanian epic. This story should however be distinguished from the legends invented in the 15th–16th centuries about the Lithuanians' Roman origin, relating to Palemon and his sons Kunas, Speras and Barkas.

The Balts started to separate into different groups in the 1st millennium BC. Ptolemy already recognised the Prussian tribes of the Galindians and Yotvingians (or Sudovians) in the 2nd century AD. Western chroniclers started referring to Prussians, Curonians and Semigallians in the early Middle Ages. Lithuanians who lived eastward from these tribes were naturally not included in these annals. In any case, the process of differentiation among eastern Balts took place later. Lithuanian tribes seem to have been the fastest-developing of all Baltic tribes at the end of the 1st millennium, so western missionary Bruno Boniface, who was later canonised as a saint,

Merkinė Hillfort, one of Lithuania's most beautiful hillforts. Wooden castles, some of the most significant defensive structures of the 13th–14th centuries, used to stand here. Photograph by Mangirdas Bumblauskas

came to Lithuania from Prussia in 1009. He Christianised the Lithuanian leader Nethimer here. However, the missionary was slightly later murdered by this brother. Adherence to the principle of inheritance of Nethimer's power indicates that Lithuania at least progressed to the chiefdom stage. This fact suggests that there was no major gap between Lithuania and other Western and Eastern European countries (to which Christian missions were also organised) at the time. Unfortunately, St. Bruno Boniface's mission in 1009 and the discovery of Lithuania remained a historical fragment because Lithuania is not mentioned in historical sources for nearly 200 years after these events. It is highly probable that this was because of the military campaigns launched by Yaroslav I, the Grand Prince of Kievan Rus', in the mid-11th century (Lithuanians are mentioned among the tribes paying tribute to Kievan Rus' at the start of the 12th century).

For Lithuania, the year 1009 was much more than just the year of the crime. St. Bruno Boniface discovered Lithuania and its "King" Nethimer, who converted to Christianity. This first Christianisation in Lithuania is directly related to the idea of the millennium of Christian Europe. This

idea originates from the Bible's revelation to John or Apocalypses, and missionaries used it for their motivation. A millennium is a threshold at which the day of the Last Judgment is awaited. Millenarianism emerged at the end of the 1st millennium of Christ's epoch, with Christian missions and Christianisation of new countries and their regions spreading to the future Central, Eastern and Northern Europe areas. The following chain of events bears mentioning: the Christianisation of Mieszko, the ruler of Poland (966); the Christianisation of Vladimir the Great, the ruler of Kievan Rus' (988); St. Adalbert's mission in Prussia which ended in martyrdom (997); the Christianisation of the country initiated by Olaf, the King of Norway (997); the decision taken by the Althing of Iceland to be Christianised (1000); the coronation of St. Stephen, the first real Christian on the Hungarian throne (1000); the Christianisation of Olaf, Duke of Southern Sweden (1008); and finally the Christianisation of Nethimer, the "King" of Lithuania (1009).

Lithuania thus had to wait nearly a thousand years after Tacitus's mention of the Aesti for its name to be mentioned in historical sources. Yet science was unable to find the pagan Baltic Atlantis after searching for it for a century. The Lithuanians had to form into an independent ethnic group and take a step forward under Nethimer's rule from a tribal system to a state worth visiting for missionaries.

Lithuania retained its language, mystical-sounding part-songs, sagas, fairy tales and pagan gods. The country bore a pagan face for another 400 years after Nethimer's rule, with the above-mentioned gods found in the times of Mindaugas's rule (the Christianisation of Mindaugas and the kingdom also remained merely a fragment). This appearance even survived until the times of the rule of Gdl Gediminas, who spoke more about the chief god than pagan monotheism: "we also have one god." When explaining Gediminas's dream about a howling iron wolf, pagan sage Lizdeika predicted the establishment of Vilnius and its glory. Although every single duke negotiated Christianisation, Europe of the crusades epoch did not allow independent Christianisation and effectively alienated Lithuania from Christianity. Lithuania remained an independent civilizational monad, so both Gediminas and Algirdas impolitely (from the West's perspective) called themselves kings without waiting for recognition and a crown from overseas. Only Vytautas was more polite, striving for a crown and recognition in the West.

Mindaugas Establishes the State of Lithuania. Mindaugas's Coronation in 1253

The Curonians appear to have been the most active and militant Baltic tribe in the 11th–12th centuries, with the Lithuanians' military campaigns starting at the end of the 12th century. The Lithuanians are known to have launched their first military campaign to the lands of Rus' in 1183, during which they devastated Pskov and probably Polotsk on the way. Their military campaigns later became more frequent, with one or two campaigns per year, and directed not only towards Russians but also Poland and Livonia.

Marauding campaigns demonstrated the Lithuanians' growing force, with their number of campaigns surpassing those of the wealthy Prussians and militant Curonians. This trend was seemingly driven by the tribe's large numbers of men, a particularly important factor in military campaigns. The rise of the Lithuanian tribe formed the foundations for changes in the system of governance and the soon-to-be-established state of Lithuania. Mindaugas, the future founder of the state of Lithuania, was referred to as the fourth senior duke of five in the treaty concluded between Volhynia and the Lithuanian dukes in 1219 (and also concluded because of marauding campaigns to Poland). It is clear that Lithuania was therefore still not a state in 1219, but merely a confederation of lands without a single ruler. Land was the unit of political organisation at the time, with a confederation system under which dukes of separate lands coordinated their actions and senior dukes emerged from among them.

Lithuania still did not have a chief duke in 1219, but a German chronicler referred to Mindaugas as "his Highness the King" in 1245–1246. Lithuania had therefore already been united, but when did this happen? Russian annals dating back to 1235 refer to "Mindaugas's Lithuania". This may indicate that Mindaugas had already subdued other dukes under his power. On the other hand, if Mindaugas's Lithuania existed, "Živinbudas's" and "Dausprungas's" Lithuania may also have existed. An approximate date is therefore deemed more appropriate, with the state of Lithuania established in about 1240.

Mindaugas could not overlook the following sequence of facts in uniting Lithuania: the order of the Livonian Brothers of the Sword, which was established at the mouth of the Daugava River in 1202, started gradually conquering the Livonians, Latvians, Estonians and Curonians. While

A Teutonic Knight kidnaps a child.
Painter Juliusz Kossak, 19th century

fighting against pagan Prussian tribes related to the Lithuanians, Konrad I of Masovia invited the crusading Teutonic Knights to settle down in Chelmno Land by the Vistula River in 1230. The Poles and Lithuanians paid dearly for this fatal mistake. The Order subdued the Prussians and the pope declared a crusade against the Lithuanians in 1236. Although the Samogitians withstood this military campaign at the Battle of Saulė in 1236, the pliers squeezed Lithuania, and the Livonian Brothers of the Sword became the vassal of the Teutonic Order in 1237.

The emergence of the state of Lithuania was accelerated by the German knights' aggression and by the establishment of their colonial states by the Baltic Sea. The state of Lithuania appeared primarily as a defensive measure, yet had to be based on a certain social class. This class consisted of Mindaugas's armed forces, while the establishment of a single ruler is the most distinctive external features of a state's emergence. It can be asserted from today's perspective that a nation can protect itself only by establishing a state.

Mindaugas's coronation.
Painter Adomas Varnas, 1952–1953

However, Mindaugas still had to establish his power and his situation became very threatening in 1248. His opposition consisted mainly of close relatives, namely nephews who were also assisted by the strangers in the shape of the Livonian Order and Volhynia. Mindaugas managed to overcome this obstacle not only through military campaigns but also diplomacy, using the Livonian Order's internal conflicts to attract Andreas von Stirland, Master of the Order, to his side. Thanks to him, Mindaugas and his wife Morta were Christianised and the crown was secured for Mindaugas in the spring or the early summer of 1251.

Mindaugas was Christianised in 1251 in exchange for handing over a large part of Samogitia to the Livonian Order. The main aim of his Christianisation was to acquire the crown and this aim was achieved on 6 July 1253. Mindaugas's coronation day deserves an honourable place in our calendar, as he was the first and only crowned king of Lithuania. His coronation effectively concluded the establishment of the state of Lithuania as recognised by the world at the time.

It would not suffice to consider Mindaugas merely as one of the most important meritorious personalities. He created the main piece of Lithuania's early history, comprising the state which allowed the nation to survive and later adopt the civilisation of the West. Lithuania stepped into the historical arena when Europe had already outlived the epoch of the crusades (the seventh crusade took place under Mindaugas's rule, and

the eighth and last one shortly after his death). However, Mindaugas had more tasks than the rulers of other western European countries several centuries ago. Bohemia became the Kingdom of Bohemia in the 12th century, with an independent archdiocese established only in the 14th century. Poland became a kingdom and established an independent archdiocese at the turn of the 10th–11th centuries, but in the same way as Bohemia it became a vassal of the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire instead of becoming the pope's vassal. And Mindaugas, having been coronated via a German vassal in the guise of the Livonian Order, became the emperor's rather than the pope's vassal and was immediately granted the right to an independent diocese directly subordinate to the pope. Mindaugas moreover received the king's crown for the entire dynasty, with the pope giving consent for the coronation of his son in several years' time. This was a result of Mindaugas's policy. Mindaugas shrewdly selected an assistant, Kristijonas, a brother priest of the Livonian Order. The assistant provided him with information about the Catholic Church's organisation and the pope's relations with European leaders, particularly the emperor. After bribing Andreas von Stirland, the Master of the Livonian Order, Mindaugas stated his conditions to the pope via his envoy, and these were more favourable to Lithuania than Livonia. The pope met Mindaugas's request, to the Livonian delegates' surprise. Mindaugas achieved the first international victory of Lithuanian diplomacy, protecting himself from political ties with the Holy Roman Empire. These weighty diplomatic achievements show that Mindaugas managed to expertly divert the course of events in a direction which was favourable for him. He was renowned as wise even by his enemies.

Medieval Europe is usually identified as consisting of Western Europe, but this is not entirely accurate. Western Europe was only a part of medieval Europe, which is nowadays sometimes referred to as "ancient" medieval Europe (5th–9th centuries). It is Charlemagne's empire or Europe created on the ruins of the Roman Empire stretching to the river Elbe. The "new" medieval Europe that consisted of Bohemia, Hungary, Croatia and Scandinavia and formed in the 10th–12th centuries is sometimes also distinguished. It would be logical to extend this chain into the 13th and 14th centuries and to consider the area of medieval Europe where Finns, Estonians, Latvians, Prussians and Lithuanians lived as the "newest" medieval Europe. Popes kindly accepted the Christianisation of states, which

would become the pope's or emperor's vassals in the early Middle Ages.

The new European nations were allowed to Christianise and become the emperor's vassals, but the right to independent Christianisation of the newest area of medieval Europe that included Lithuania was not recognised. Crusades were already taking place in Europe. The Finns, Estonians and Latvians lost wars and the Prussians were annihilated as a result, yet Mindaugas not only managed to establish a state, but one that became part of the European state system, although temporarily. He was the only ruler of the newest area of medieval Europe who was able to make his nation and state a historical entity.

Daumantas of Pskov – from whom Mindaugas enticed his wife – and Mindaugas's most powerful rival, Treniota, assassinated Mindaugas in 1263. Historians usually consider this act the pagans' opposition to a Christian ruler of the time. The Samogitians, who crushed the joint army of the Teutonic and Livonian Orders in the Battle of Durbe on 13 July 1260 with Treniota acting as a mediator, suggested indeed that Mindaugas reject Christianity and declare war to Livonia. Mindaugas made up his mind to wage war with the Teutonic Order. It is sometimes asserted that Mindaugas rejected Christianity as well. Pope Clement IV however called him a "fondly remembered ruler" in his bull in 1268, several years after Mindaugas's death. Mindaugas's Christianisation did not eliminate the threat posed by the Orders and, moreover, part of ethical Lithuania in the form of Samogitia was lost. Mindaugas thus had to fight for pagan Samogitia with Christian Livonia and simultaneously maintain the status of a Christian ruler in the eyes of Western forces and the pope.

The assassination of Mindaugas led to major confusion. Another three dukes who fought for power were killed in Lithuania within a few years and one was expelled. Vaišelga, the son of Mindaugas, became ruler of Lithuania when his father's supporters killed Treniota in 1264. He was the first duke known to have adopted Orthodoxy in the country's history and this marked the start of the establishment of Lithuanian dukes in the lands of Rus'. The Lithuanian duke adopted Orthodoxy and the lands – in this case Navahrudak, where Vaišelga was accommodated by his father – were annexed to the state of Lithuania. On the other hand, Vaišelga was the only duke who refused the dukedom and became a monk. He became involved in political life in 1264 and occupied Lithuania's throne after defeating Mindaugas's enemies.

Rise of the Gediminids

The following grand dukes of Lithuanian are also mentioned in historical sources from the end of the 13th century: Butigeidis, his brother Butvydas after him, and later Butvydas's son Vytenis. This lineage also constituted a new phenomenon in Lithuania's history of succession to the throne by members of the same family. Thus, a principle of succession to the throne formed which was one of the most important features of a state's stability in the Middle Ages.

This is because those wishing to accede to the throne had to prove their rights, kinship or membership of a dynasty of rulers. The most famous dynasty of rulers from Lithuania, the Gediminids, stepped into the country's history at the end of the 13th century.

The dynasty was named after its most famous representative, Vytenis's brother Gediminas (who ruled 1316–1341). Gediminas was not the first representative of this dynasty, but his historical role overshadowed those of his predecessors. Under the rule of Gdl Gediminas, the early or military monarchy formed with all its characteristic features, including a diarchy, early feudalism and early Lithuanian manors called "courts". At the time, Lithuania already had a capital and Gediminas began the tradition of succession to the throne and the origins of masonry civilisation. Under the rule of Gediminas and his son Algirdas, the system of masonry castles that consisted of Medininkai, Krewo, Lida, Trakai and the more remote castles of Grodno and Kaunas, was developed around the capital, the state's nucleus. Lithuania became the centre of the political system surrounded not only by the lands of Black Ruthenia and Polotsk, annexed under the rule of Mindaugas, but also Volhynia, Halych, Kiev and Pskov, which were subject to Lithuania's political influence. The nation thus became a participant in great political unions and a prevailing force in the region, i.e. a Great Power. Its policy was becoming the policy of the wider region or even the whole of Europe.

Gediminas's letters are deemed the most significant reflection of his policy. Although they are mostly related to the first reference to Vilnius in written sources, they show at the same time that Gediminas was developing a consistent programme aimed at making Lithuania European. They demonstrate that he had a very broad political outlook, bearing in mind the international isolation of Lithuania. Gediminas was developing an Orthodox metropolitanate, and he dared to be Christianised and establish a Catholic

Gediminas builds Vilnius Castle.
Painter Michal Elwiro Elwiro Andriolli, 1882

archdiocese. He managed to raise the interest in this ecclesiastical policy of Pope John XXII, who even at that time raised the idea of an ecclesiastical union. Gediminas sent letters to the pope that expressed his desire to be Christianised: the rulers of Lithuania wished to adopt the Catholic faith, but were forced to defend themselves from the Teutonic Knights who only cared for conquering the state rather than Christianisation. Gediminas also sent letters to German cities and monkhoods, saying he was waiting for the pope's envoys to agree on Christianisation. He invited German knights, merchants, craftsmen and peasants to come to Lithuania and settle here, promising them the same conditions for their activities as in Europe. Gediminas's push for Christianisation failed however, due to the Samogitians and the orthodox court's resistance in 1323–1324.

The rejection of Christianisation did not mean that Gediminas neglected another aim, of making Lithuania closer to Western Europe by inviting German colonists. The mysterious story of the Franciscan martyrs

Imaginary portraits of Lithuanian rulers by Italian painter Alessandro Guagnini, painted in the 16th century

Mindaugas

Gediminas

Algirdas

Vytautas

Kęstutis. Painter A. Penkowski, 1838

Birutė. Painter A. Penkowski, 1838

that constitutes the basis of one of Vilnius's most enduring legends, testifies that newcomer monks were already present at the time of Gediminas. The story about the murder of two Franciscan monks in Vilnius at the end of Gediminas's rule has been known since the 14th century, and a chapel was constructed on their burial site at the beginning of the 16th century at which a monastery of Brothers Hospitallers was later established.

Hence, Lithuania's pagan society, economy and social, political and spiritual structure acquired their most mature forms under the rule of Gediminas. The Gediminids therefore stepped into the history of Lithuania at the end of the 13th century. They represented the most prominent dynasty and, importantly, the dynasty of rulers of Lithuanian origin who ruled Lithuania until the death of Sigismund II Augustus in 1572 (after his death, Lithuania was ruled by rulers originating from elsewhere). The dynasty was named after its most famous representative, Gediminas, whose historical role overshadowed those of his predecessors. The Gediminids gave rise to the most famous grand dukes of Lithuania who played a very important historical role: Dukes Algirdas and Kęstutis, the sons of Gediminas, Algirdas's son Jogaila and Kęstutis's son Vytautas the Great, the dynasty's most famous representative (ruled 1392–1430).

Jogaila was actually more famous than Vytautas in Europe and the Jagiellonian dynasty of the Gediminids' branch emerged when he became King of Poland (1386). This branch later achieved the peak of its influence in the late 15th to early 16th century. Its representatives simultaneously sat on the Lithuanian, Polish, Czech (1471–1526) and Hungarian (1490–1506) thrones.

The rule of the Gediminids is related to the Lithuanian period considered the most glorious in the nation's historical consciousness. A particularly honourable place in our culture is given to the names of its most famous representatives, Gediminas, Algirdas and Kęstutis. The pillars of the Gediminids are among the most important symbols of the Lithuanian nation and state.

PAGAN STATE. THE CHRISTIANISATION OF LITHUANIA

All rulers of Lithuania after Mindaugas's death negotiated Christianisation along with coronation. This was determined by the war with the German Orders, with the

Teutonic Order starting aggression against Lithuania at the end of the 18th century after already conquering the Prussians. Lithuanian rulers realised that Christianisation by the Order would cost too much and thus sought new Christianisation options through Bohemia, Hungary and Poland (Orthodox Christianisation would not have solved the issue of the Orders' aggression). On the other hand, all Lithuanian rulers called themselves kings. For example, Gediminas referred to himself as *rex* in his letters to the West and Algirdas called himself *bazileus* in his letters to the Byzantine Empire. Sources from the German Orders refer to them like this, unlike references to the leaders of other tribes without a state or even dukes of the Russian lands. We would therefore venture to state that Lithuania deserves to be known as a kingdom at least until Jogaila became King of Poland in 1386, despite not having all of the West's recognition attributes. It was a peculiar, non-systemic kingdom. Moreover, Lithuania became a unique state in Europe at the time and is sometimes even considered an independent civilisation, attributed neither to Latin Western Europe nor Byzantine Eastern Europe. In fact, an individual economy, which was the basis of Western civilisation, was developing in Lithuania and was non-existent in Eastern Europe. Pagan Lithuania was also gradually turning into a force that was significant to the entire region, or a Great Power (Polish *mocarstwo*, Russian *deržava*, German *Grossmacht)* where no recognition was required, the nation's own powers were sufficient and only one step separated it from an empire.

Along with Christianisation, Gediminas, the Lithuanian ruler who titled himself *Rex Lethowye* (King of Lithuania) and intensively negotiated Christianisation, invited Western merchants and craftsmen to Lithuania in his letters to Western countries and cities. Lithuania's anti-isolation efforts produced no results for a long time and the Orders' military aggression forced Lithuania to devote all its energy to warfare. The 14th-century Lithuanian system is therefore sometimes described as a military monarchy.

Lithuania made an impact on its neighbours for the first time in the area of warfare, with a unique "Lithuanian" (or "Prussian") shield known and used from Moscow to Bohemia. The crusades against Lithuania may partially explain the nation's expansion to the lands of Kievan Rus' which were devastated by the Mongolians, and their subjugation. This was the way to accumulate resources for fighting in the West. Lithuania not only became a Great Power, but also expanded its territory from the Baltic to the Black Sea

under the rule of Gdl Algirdas (1345–1377). Lithuania thus became a two-fold country, covering the ethnical pagan Lithuanian lands and territorially-wider, more densely-populated Orthodox lands of the Old Russians. The GDL Slavic-Ruthenian nation, which was separate from Moscow's Russians and from which the modern Belarusian and Ukrainian nations later developed, gradually formed. The Lithuanians found something they did not have in these lands, in the form of an ecclesiastical system and script. Both these factors meant Orthodox culture played an important role in Lithuania's early history. As they became vicegerents in the Old Russians' lands, regional Lithuanian dukes adopted the Orthodoxy, and the forming Ruthenian script became a formal written language of the GDL. This process is slightly reminiscent of the Franks, a Germanic tribe which established a state and power structures in Gaul and adopted the local people's language and culture.

Algirdas's Great Power

The Mongolian Empire defeated Kievan Rus' in the 18th century, with Lithuania making use of this victory to subdue some of the area's lands. Black Ruthenia was annexed to Lithuania under the rule of Mindaugas, with the same happening to White Ruthenia (Polotsk in 1307, Vitebsk in 1320) and Volhynia (1340) under the rule of Vytenis and Gediminas rule. This territory together covered the whole of present Belarus and part of western Ukraine. Kiev may have been annexed under the rule of Gediminas in 1322, but historians are more inclined to consider it as being annexed by Algirdas after his victory against the Golden Horde at the Blue Waters in 1362 or 1363. Under the rule of Gediminas and Algirdas, Lithuania became a significant power in Central and Eastern Europe while expanding its state territory. Without the Mongolian invasion, the GDL may never have been able to occupy the territory of Kievan Rus'. Lithuania of the 14th century was most reminiscent of shadow empires.

Such empires are established at the border or on the periphery of collapsing empires, when subordinates, clients or accompanying allies of the collapsed empire subdue part of its territory (together with a former metropolitan area). The collapsed empire's administrative structure and cultural heritage are also usually taken over.

The Russian principalities were subject to the rule of the Golden Horde (part of the fractured Mongolian Empire) and had to constantly pay a

Map: Expansion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the 13th–15th centuries

tribute. Although Lithuania annexed quite a large area of Russian lands, both Gediminas and Algirdas had to pay a permanent tribute to the Golden Horde for the right to rule them (Gdl Vytautas stopped paying a tribute to the Mongolians). The GDL Russian lands probably constituted a condominium, i.e. the common tenure of Lithuania and the Golden Horde.

Nevertheless, the Old Russians' lands which were not annexed to the GDL also could become areas devastated by the Mongolians. The Vladimir-Suzdal region was among the strongest of these.

At the start of the 14th century, Tver and Moscow became major rivals in a fight for the *yarlik* (a privilege to collect taxes for the Golden Horde from other Russian dukes, which was granted by khans). The latter won the fight and also imposed itself on Vladimir. Algirdas, who supported Tver's last attempt to regain the lost priority from Moscow, launched as many as

three campaigns to Moscow (in 1368, 1370 and 1372), but was unable to seize the Kremlin. Algirdas's claims that "the whole of Rus' should naturally belong to Lithuanians" did not therefore become reality and Vilnius did not become the "second Kiev". However, Algirdas called himself the "Lithuanian Emperor" ("Vasilea Letvon") in a letter written to the patriarch of Constantinople in 1371, amid his campaigns to Moscow. In this way, he positioned himself higher than the dukes of Moscow, Tver and other cities and compared himself with the Byzantine Emperor. Lithuanian rulers perfectly understood not only the West's political system, but also the East's.

The Old Rus' lands were not naturally attracted by the GDL as a less severe invader and the expansion of Lithuania saw a lot, i.e. both direct conquering of lands and the spread of influence by other means, as history is unaware of "voluntary" annexation to Great Powers. There is no mention of peacefulness among Lithuanians in Byzantine sources, which instead speak of a "courageous and militant nation". Even dynastic marriages took place because of direct military pressure.

The Lithuanians were probably imperialists in the same way as others. When they occupied a foreign country, they did not apply "pressure" by changing the system at first. Their tactics are most accurately described by the following saying of Lithuanian dukes: "We do not destroy the past or introduce innovations." They maintained the old structures of duchies, which later turned into regional privileges (autonomies in modern terms). The Ukrainians have a joke that the Lithuanians were the best invaders in their history. The reason for such relations was hardly kindness and a peaceful character among Lithuanians. Lithuania could not impose its language, culture or religion on others because paganism was unable to compete with the institutions and script of Orthodoxy. The GDL is therefore sometimes called a "velvet empire". The situation in the GDL's periphery ranged between various degrees of suzerainty and hegemony. The further from the centre in Vilnius, the less the Gediminds who ruled there listened to their brothers, cousins or uncles from Vilnius, who were also the grand dukes, (the whole of Ukraine also fell into this category).

Lithuania in Areas of Orthodox Rus'

When the Lithuanian state occupied Old Russians' lands, Lithuanian dukes who became vicegerents in these areas often adopted

Orthodoxy. Dukes in these peripheral regional lands were the ancestors of prominent GDL families, including the Sanguszko, Czartoryski, Wiśniowiecki and Słucki families. Orthodoxy was adopted even by dukes who were not members of the ruling Gediminids and had patrimony in the state's nucleus, such as the dukes of Halshany. On the other hand, not all dukes of the Old Russian Rurik Dynasty were expelled from political life when Lithuania occupied the Rus' lands. Politically active Lithuanian families descended from these dukes in the GDL in later centuries.

The Lithuanians discovered masonry Orthodox churches and monasteries in Rus', as well as paintings, collections of ecclesiastical art and writings, but most importantly monks able to write. Lithuania did not have a script, while Latin script reached Lithuania later and was much more expensive and subordinates already had the Ostromir and Turov Gospels written in the 11th century. Concepts that relate to Christianity such as "kreščenije" ("Christianisation"; Lithuanian "krikštas") and "božnica" ("church"; Lithuanian "bažnyčia") therefore came to the Lithuanian language from Rus' rather than the West.

The proximity between pagan and Orthodox societies must have been most apparent in the capital, Vilnius. This factor was reflected in the history of ancient Vilnius. The "Ruthenian side", which consisted of the area of the city inhabited by Orthodox residents, must have formed there in the 14th century. While living in the state of Lithuania, they started to transform from Old Russians into a new nation of Ruthenians, who were rather different from Russians who came from the state of Moscow. Orthodox churches stood in the "Ruthenian part" of Vilnius as early as the time of Gediminas's rule. This was primarily because some wives of Lithuanian grand dukes were Orthodox, but there were Orthodox people in the ruler's court because Algirdas was tolerant of Orthodoxy as long as it did not conflict with his interests as a ruler.

The ruler's court was Orthodox: they learnt to write in Orthodox monasteries and established the ruler's chancellery. Monasteries wrote in an ecclesiastical Slavic language of Bulgarian origin and the Ruthenian language originally developed in the GDL chancellery. The Lithuanian Metrica, the Lithuanian Chronicles and the Statutes of Lithuania, which are the most significant monuments to contemporary script, were written in this language, which formed in the GDL chancellery and was an alternative to the "Bulgarian" tradition of writing. The Lithuanian political elite were

therefore the customers of Orthodox culture. The western part of the GDL between Vilnius and Lutsk was not just a business card of the duchy, where noblemen established their residencies for representation and proximity to Cracow. The major grain economy of the GDL developed at the area's Bug and Narew Rivers and these supplied Gdansk, a major European port for bread.

An intriguing question: in which Eastern European country did grain vodka originate? There is a predominant but historically-unproven thesis that Moscow was Eastern Europe's epicentre of grain economy in the 15th century.

Another aspect of the role of Lithuanians in Ruthenian society relates to the socio-economic area. The Lithuanian szlachta (nobility) and peasants who engaged in individual farming and came from a society with a clear individual allodial ownership structure, were different from the East Slavs. Communal land ownership started to emerge further to the east in the territory of the latter (in the state of Moscow and in Russia later), but a western type of farming and ownership known as "allodium" (an individual peasants' farm) spread into the Ruthenian lands that belonged to Poland and Lithuania. The following Lithuanian concepts emerged from this more advanced mode of farming and ownership: a type of scythe known as the "litovka", *dailidė* ("doilida": carpenter), *jauja* ("jevje": a barn for storing crops), *svirnas* ("sviren": granary), *kluonas* ("klunia": threshing floor), *aruodas* ("orud": granary) and *priemenė* ("primen": porch). These terms did not accidentally make their way into the Ruthenian language of the Lithuanian Metrica of the 15th–16th centuries and were used even in Ukraine. Even words relating to Lithuanian wellbeing like *kumpis* ("kompa": ham) and *skilandis* ("skilond": a type of sausage) were brought into the language.

The ancient Lithuanians did not have a script and it is hard to discern the national identity of an illiterate society. Grand dukes who made territorial claims realised the affinity of the Balts' territory, and Vytautas used common language as the basis for the Samogitians belonging to Lithuania. Besides, everyone was subordinate to dukes. Even the Crimean Karaites and Tartars, who became nations of close protection, were trusted more. Neither did Lithuania's rulers trust the nation's own skills, so they therefore invited merchants and craftsmen from abroad. Germans, Jews and Armenians established themselves in the GDL. Nearly all these communi-

ties (with the exception of the Germans) became the dukes' collective vassals, with their own faith and script.

The Christianisation of Lithuania: Was This the End of Europe's Formation?

The Teutonic Order's aggression against Lithuania achieved unprecedented scope, with three to four crusades per year in the second half of the 14th century. Lithuania's energy drained away and it was forced to seek an ally. The Treaty of Krewo concluded with Poland in 1385 was the way out. Under the treaty, Jogaila, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, became King of Poland. One of the treaty's conditions was the Christianisation of Lithuania, which Jogaila implemented after returning from Poland in 1387. Jogaila destroyed the manifestations of ancient confession, in the form of sacred woods, grass snakes and sacred fire, by introducing a new religion. However, political implications were most important. The benefit of Christianisation shortly became evident, when the pope forbade the Teutonic Order from fighting with Lithuania.

From then, the Order's aggression could not expect more effective support from the West. The union with Poland stipulated by the Treaty of Krewo enabled victory at Tannenberg and Grunwald. Through Christianisation and victory against the Order, Lithuania eliminated threats to its existence which had been posed for 200 years. The nation entered a new stage of its history, namely the epoch of "Europeanisation" or the "path to Europe".

A Polish delegation arrived at Krewo Castle on 14 August 1385. The Poles presumably had a document already prepared for the treaty. Jogaila accepted the content of the document and it was approved and entered into history under the name of the Treaty of Krewo. The terms and conditions of the Treaty were the following: Jogaila had to marry Jadwiga, the Queen of Poland, as well as promise to introduce the Catholic religion in Lithuania, regain lost Polish lands, release Polish captives and "attach" Lithuania to Poland. The word "attach" must be written in quotes because the translation of the Latin word *applicare* has been debated until now.

By concluding the Treaty of Krewo, Jogaila as an early monarch considered the entire state his property and thought that he could do whatever he wanted with Lithuania. This outlook was typical of the epoch and cannot be considered arrogant behaviour by Jogaila because it might be stated that

the treaty was concluded between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania. Unlike in Poland, where statehood with the monarch was embodied by the state council and the szlachta's parliament had already started functioning, there was no other institution apart from the grand duke which could express the will of the state of Lithuania. However, Jogaila did not renounce his rights to Lithuania as a patrimony and Lithuania did not lose its statehood, but just became a vassal for Poland. More precisely, Jogaila, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, became the vassal of Jogaila, the King of Poland. However, the major disadvantage of the Treaty of Krewo was that actual state relations were an all-determining factor rather than legal relations and this posed the greatest threat to Lithuania. At first sight, a parity of horizons for new activities appeared to exist. Duchies were distributed to the Gediminids in Poland and Polish officials who received the ruler's authorisation were sent to Lithuania, while the Lithuanian army assisted the Poles and the Poles assisted the Lithuanians. However, in the first instance assistants were controlled by Polish state institutions and in the second case this could be done only by the common ruler, but he resided in Cracow (where the monarch of the European state was acknowledged, unlike in Vilnius) and was surrounded by the Council of the Polish state. When Lithuanian officials were integrated into Polish public institutions, Lithuania started to turn into a province. The interaction determined by a personal union between the states corroded Lithuania's statehood.

Particularly fierce attacks by the Germans forced Lithuania to conclude such an unfavourable treaty. On the eve of the Treaty of Krewo's conclusion, the forces of Lithuania were draining away and the Poles therefore became its allies. After the treaty's conclusion, Lithuania's independence diminished.

Was there another path not through Poland? The past 200 years of history showed that it was impossible to do this through the German Orders. Lithuania's closest neighbour was Poland and the Treaty of Krewo opened a new page in the nation's history as it turned to Poland.

Jogaila came to Vilnius in 1387 to Christianise the Lithuanians. The noble szlachta and their families were invited to Vilnius for Christianisation and each of them was sprinkled with water. As a godfather, the ruler distributed shirts and woollen clothes to those who were not noble, and a number of people who wanted to be Christianised thus appeared more than once. The Celtic and Germanic tribes were Christianised in a similar way.

The abundance of people who wished to become Christians meant they had to be Christianised in groups by wading into the river. By introducing a new religion, Jogaila was destroying the manifestations of paganism in the form of sacred woods, grass snakes and sacred fire. A cathedral was constructed that was solemnly consecrated to the honour of St. Stanislaus, the Bishop of Cracow ("so that both equal nations had one patron and intercessor"), and its grand altar was placed where the eternal pagan flame used to burn.

Jogaila granted a privilege to the Bishop of Vilnius on 17 February 1387, under which the bishop's institution was established and provided for. This privilege was the most important act in the introduction of Christianity to Lithuania. Jogaila published a letter on 22 February in which he swore to attract all Lithuanians to his side or even force them to adopt Catholicism. Jogaila, who turned Lithuania into a Christian country, removed the major reason for political isolation. The political benefit was shortly received, as the pope forbade the Teutonic Order from fighting Lithuania in 1403. Christianisation became an important ideological foundation for the diplomatic fight between Jogaila and Vytautas on the eve of the military conflict with the Order.

The major changes which took place after Christianisation were external. Churches and institutions unknown to pagan society spread in Lithuania. There were not only new architectural monuments, "repositories" for paintings, other works of ecclesiastical art and ecclesiastical books, but also educational and literary institutions. These institutions spread new ideas in Lithuania. The concept of death and burial rites changed. The number of incineration burials typical of paganism fell significantly in the late 14th century. The ideas spread by the church of a single god, original sin and Christ's redemption affected the human consciousness. The concepts of not only compassion and charity, but also that of sin, must have been new to a person raised under paganism. This would have been particularly true of the idea that one could sin not only in what they did, but also in what they thought. The idea of love for each other, which was transformed in its own way, is reflected in the relationship between a lord and his subordinate and this is particularly applicable to the lord's responsibility for the subordinate's salvation. Thus, subordinates are told what religion they should profess. Feudal relations therefore acquired an ideological basis and the highest lord, the ruler, was granted the sanction of continuity and inheritance of power.

Lithuania is depicted walking at the end of the procession of European nations towards the cross in a fresco in the St. Pierre-le-Jeune Church in Strasbourg, early 15th century

The idea of medieval social classes can be directly associated with the concept of *tripartitio christiana* (the societal division into soldiers, clergy and working people). After all, Jogaila granted privileges during the Christianisation of Lithuania not only to the Bishop of Vilnius and the szlachta by confirming their ownership rights, but also to the residents of Vilnius by providing them with self-governance. The Christianisation of Lithuania gave birth to a class-based society.

VYTAUTAS'S EMPIRE

The rule of Vytautas, the grandson of Gediminas, in 1392–1430 was a time of epoch-making transformations. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was an illiterate country without schools, large cities and a craft workshop industry, and without heavy cavalry to act as a striking force on the battlefield in 1392. Its ruler Jogaila became King of Poland and was recognised at an international level, but the GDL in turn lost its status as a sovereign state. The fist of the Teutonic Knights still hung formidably above the Nemunas. However, as early as 1430 the GDL was as powerful as ever before because Vytautas's power was felt in the entire region ruled through imperial means.

Lithuania was declared a sovereign state in the European Congress in Lutsk in 1429 and only an accident prevented it from becoming a kingdom. The danger posed by the Teutonic Knights was averted. Crafts and trade developed rapidly in the country and a class of wealthy landlords formed who were able to arm themselves well. A large network of chancelleries functioned and the first schools appeared, while chronicles started to be written. This historical process was created not only by Vytautas, but the whole of Lithuanian society and particularly its elite. But Vytautas managed to make the best use of possibilities offered by history and built bridges for European culture.

Changes in Vytautas's Era

The significance of Vytautas's changes was already realised by his contemporaries, with their compliments and the prominence shown when they started to call him "the Great". Vytautas firstly ceased paying tribute to the Mongolians, abolished the ancient system of partial duchies, appointed vicegerents to these duchies and took the GDL's power into his hands. Lutsk passed into Vytautas's direct control in 1393, while he abolished the Duchy of Kiev in 1394 (Kiev was handed over to Skirgaila) and appointed a vicegerent in Podolia in 1395, with only the smaller duchies remaining intact. However, the most significant social changes in Vytautas's policy were related to the development of the class of knights-landlords. A large-scale distribution of peasants to the szlachta meant that the Gediminids themselves became landlords in occupied territories, while land was provided for Lithuanian newcomers that were castle dwellers. Most importantly, a loyal class of local people was created and loyal local dukes were recognised.

When the political elite moved from paganism to Christianity after the Christianisation of Lithuania in 1387, the cultural scales between the state's Catholic nucleus and the Orthodox periphery nearly achieved a balance (Orthodox people were prohibited from taking the highest state positions and the construction of Orthodox churches was forbidden in the nucleus of the state). The balance between the political influence of Lithuanians and the cultural advantage of Orthodox believers was lost, with the political elite starting to acquire the status of a cultural elite because Orthodox believers lost their civilisational advantage. However, this led to a new

Vytautas's majestic seal. Reconstruction by artist Kajetan Wincenty Kielisiński, 1841

problem of confessional dualism (paganism could not lay claim to this). The state's ethnic "Catholic" nucleus covered just 10% of the territory and encompassed only 20% of the population. The nucleus was certainly much more densely populated and nearly a half of the cavalry went to the GDL army from it (according to other interpretations over a half), yet no other European state had such a huge body of subordinates professing another confession. Cultural changes in "Vytautas's era" were therefore radical.

The ruler also turned to Orthodoxy when actively creating the network of Catholic institutions. Vytautas established a metropolitanate of GDL Orthodox believers and appointed Gregory Tsamblak to it, as one of the most prominent contemporary Orthodox theologians, after convening a congress of GDL Orthodox bishops in Navahrudak in 1415. Aside from this, the metropolitan bishop of "Kiev and the whole of Rus'" became firmly established in Vilnius when a cathedral and residence were built for him, and the bishop's jurisdiction was established on the "Ruthenian side" of Vilnius, which existed until the late 18th century. The delegation of GDL Orthodox believers headed by Tsamblak also attended the convocation of the Catholic Church in Konstanz, where they came up with the idea of an ecumeni-

cal union of churches, which was later implemented in Florence in 1439. The GDL started moving closer to the appearance of an empire under the rule of Vytautas. His reforms were radical at the time. The statement "no changes to what is ancient" is just a historical myth because the expansion of Lithuania significantly divided the territory of Kievan Rus' into two parts pertaining to Kiev and Moscow, whose histories took independent courses for several centuries.

Vytautas's centralisation policy mobilised the resources of the wider Eastern European territory. Volhynia, which Grand Duke of Lithuania Vytautas started to consider part of the patrimony, became most integrated into the life of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Volhynia generally became the area where the Gediminids' secondary branches were later established. Patrimonies were established there by the Sanguszko family (in Kovel, and later Slavuta), the Czartoryski family (Klevan), the Wiśniowiecki family (Vyshnivets) and other families who descended from these branches. The noble Radziwiłł (in Olyka) and Chodkiewicz (in Mlyniv) families who received land there did the same. Finally, the princely Ostrogski family of "Rurik" ("Ukrainian") descent from Ostroh in Volhynia, played an extremely significant role.

Many ancient empires collapsed and are remembered as the prison of nations and those that did not became melting pots of nations. Such processes also took place in the GDL, where the Polish language was a factor of particular importance. However, these processes resulted in the establishment of several modern nations (Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine) rather than large-scale Polonisation. The GDL therefore entered into history as a hub of nations rather than a prison or a melting pot. This was one of the most important distinguishing features of the GDL Empire.

The Battle of Grunwald

Although the pope prohibited the Teutonic Order from waging wars with Christianised Lithuania, Samogitia still belonged to the Order. The Order was still a strong power that posed an existential threat to the state of Lithuania. It also threatened Poland because the Litoral, Poland's only access to the sea, was still under its rule. However, these times were not as hard for Poland as for Lithuania. Vytautas therefore insisted via his agents in Poland that it was necessary to fight with the Teutonic Order,

Battle of Grunwald. Vytautas the Great is in the centre.
Painter Jan Matejko, 1878

although Jogaila was not eager to fight the Order because he could lose the Polish throne if defeated. Vytautas's efforts were fruitful.

The GDL's military forces joined the Polish army at the Vistula River at the start of July 1410. However, the castles remained unprotected after the entire army was withdrawn from Lithuania and a sudden attack by the Order at the Nemunas River might have led to disaster. Vytautas tricked the Order's chiefs by ordering the Samogitians to constantly attack the Order's castles and thus conceal the direction of attack of the joint Polish-Lithuanian army. Vytautas's plan was bold and unexpected because the Order was normally the attacking party in wars with Poland and Lithuania. And now the Teutonic Order's territory was invaded and the invaders were marching straight towards the capital with a strategic objective of confronting the entire Order's forces.

The joint Polish (50 banners) and Lithuanian (40 banners) military forces and the army of the Teutonic Order (51 banners) confronted each other in the fields at Grunwald Village on 15 July 1410.

The total number of soldiers in the Teutonic Order's army at the Battle of Grunwald was around 15,000. The size of the allied armies is unknown, but there were probably far more than 20,000–25,000, including the regiments of the Ruthenian lands.

The stances of Vytautas and Jogaila differed that morning. Vytautas wanted a decisive battle, while Jogaila was waiting for a proposal to negotiate and procrastinated for time while listening to Mass and blessing the knights. Jogaila thought the size of the allied army, the direction of the march and a threatening demonstration of power would force the Order to start negotiations and allow conditions to be dictated. Vytautas seemingly

feared this outcome most because he understood that this was not just an occasion to demonstrate power, but to achieve much more by defeating the Order's forces. This situation was vital for Lithuania because it could not achieve its aims without Poland. Vytautas therefore waited for Jogaila's order to start the battle, but this word was not uttered. Jogaila's rites made Vytautas nervous and even the Polish knights were muttering. He therefore took a risk and was first to order the Lithuanian forces to start the battle.

The chiefs of the Teutonic Order did not take long to make use of Lithuania's temporary isolation. The Order's army was arranged in three lines of wedge-shaped formations and two of these constituted the front, with one line directed at the Poles and the other at the Lithuanians. At the start of the battle, the Lithuanians were attacked by an avalanche of the stronger line that comprised the guests and mercenaries of the Order led by Grand Komtur Kuno von Lichtenstein, and the heavy cavalry. The Lithuanian army withstood this pressure for an hour and suffered huge losses. Vytautas's soldiers started to retreat as the situation became critical. In medieval battles, a powerful counterattack was usually followed by a retreat and the enemy would be briskly assaulted from the flanks. The Lithuanians could not behave like this at that point because the Poles had not yet started fighting, and the exposure of their flanks might have been considered treason.

Vytautas therefore had to wait for the Polish forces to join the fight and held the right flank of the Teutonic Knights back. This hour had to be bought with human lives. Vytautas was forced to stop banners which were retreating too fast.

Fortunately, the fight at the allies' left flank finally started at the entire front. At the last moment, the Lithuanian section of the army had a chance to play a trick by pretending to be running away. The Teutonic Knights started pursuing the enemy and broke their formation, but soon had to flee themselves from the Lithuanians, who turned around and started fighting again. However, the fleeing Teutonic Knights were intercepted by the Poles. The left flank of the Order's army was completely destroyed in this way. Meanwhile, the Poles' heavy cavalry made use of their advantage in numbers after joining the fight, and started pressing the Order's right flank. Ulrich von Jungingen, Grand Master of the Order, had no choice but to retreat with a reserve into the forest, but the Poles and Lithuanians also had a reserve, whose blows to both the Order's flanks brought the battle to an end. The army of the Teutonic Knights' was surrounded and destroyed.

Ulrich von Jungingen perished, along with the majority of the leaders, more than 200 of the Order's knights and other soldiers. This meant that losses totalled several thousand because servants died as well.

The victory at the Battle of Grunwald changed the geopolitical status of Lithuania and Poland. Although two more wars were required to recognise Samogitia as part of Lithuania, the Order's hegemony was subverted at the Battle of Grunwald. The Order no longer posed an existential threat to either Poland or Lithuania. The Battle of Grunwald entered into history as one of the largest battles of the Middle Ages. The Poles and Lithuanians shared the captives, the beards of the Order's komturs, the banners and the Order's territory. Hence, Lithuania and Poland were equal winners in the Battle of Grunwald.

Neither the Teutonic Knights nor their allies expected this defeat. The joint armed forces of Lithuania and Poland suffered great losses, with only every second person returning to Lithuania. Vytautas, who was not glorified as a military leader on the morning of 15 July 1410, was the winner of the epoch-making battle on the evening of the same day and his name is sometimes mentioned alongside those of the most famous European military leaders such as Turenne, the Marshal of France, Prince Eugene of Savoy, an Austrian military leader, Frederick II, the King of Prussia, and Alexander Suvorov, the Marshal of Russia. Comparisons of Vytautas as a warrior with Alexander of Macedon and Julius Caesar already constituted one of two major parts of Vytautas's image at the time of his contemporaries. The second one was his status as a sacred ruler.

Grunwald and Vytautas were therefore among the most important parts of the GDL's tradition and ideological legacy. Having withstood the aggression of the West for 200 years, the GDL managed to overcome a tragic existential collision, when the West had left it merely with a role as a barrier or boundary between the East and the West.

However, Vytautas knew his objective very well because he was fighting for a place in the West rather than against the West, and Lithuania became part of Europe on this basis.

Sacred Ruler

Vytautas believed that he was saved by the Blessed Virgin Mary in one of the lost battles, and a church founded by Vytautas in Kaunas right

after the battle was consecrated to her. In fact, most churches that Vytautas founded were named after the Blessed Virgin Mary. It might be stated that Vytautas started the tradition of worshipping the Blessed Virgin Mary in Lithuania, although his ecclesiastical policy in the campaign for the country's Christianisation was overshadowed by Jogaila, and his main aim was to place Lithuania on the same level as royal European countries. The Teutonic Knights prevented him from achieving this. Thus, churches and monasteries founded by Vytautas appeared after the Battle of Grunwald, while Samogitia was Christianised (1413), a Samogitian diocese was established (1417) and a wide publicity campaign about these developments was carried out in the West to present Lithuania as a Catholic country.

Moreover, attempts were made to establish a separate province of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, creating a metropolitanate or diocese of Orthodox believers in Lithuania and linking it to the Catholic Church. The pope was however very cautious about establishing archdioceses and ecclesiastical provinces, and the Council of Florence (1439) convoked shortly after Vytautas's death was unable to unite the Eastern and Western Churches. However, Vytautas's ecclesiastical policy laid the foundations for Lithuania's further Christianisation.

Samogitia was the cause of the major conflict with the Teutonic Order. The core of this conflict is best explained through an interesting story: an interesting conversation took place between Vytautas and Michael Küchmeister von Sternberg, the leader of the legation of the Teutonic Order, during negotiations in Salynas (near Kaunas) on 28 January 1413. When Küchmeister declared that Lithuania did not adhere to the terms and conditions of the Treaty of Thorn and that it had to demolish Veliuona Castle and return this land to the Order, Vytautas retorted, "You want to rob me of my parents' inheritance and take away Veliuona Castle, but a lot of people will have to perish until I give it to you." When Küchmeister responded that the Order had "solid documents and evidence" for these requirements, Vytautas became furious and told him that "the Prussians are also my inheritance and I will claim them to the Osa River because it is my parents' legacy." Vytautas also asked the marshal ironically, "and where is the legacy of the Order's parents?"

Vytautas used historical and ethical arguments to deny the Order's claims to Samogitia. In his opinion, the former documents relating to the Samogitians' inheritance lost their legal power when Lithuania became a Christian country. He deemed his patrimony nearly all the Prussian lands

spreading up to the Osa River, the right-hand tributary of the Vistula River, beyond which there was only the land of Chelmno to the south that was granted by the Masurian dukes to the Germans. Vytautas repeated the idea of former Lithuanian rulers about expanding the state throughout the entire territory of the Balts. However, he later made claims only to the whole of Samogitia up to the Nemunas River (which also meant Klaipėda) and Užnemunė (a Lithuanian region on the left bank of the Nemunas River).

Samogitia therefore remained the main reason for Vytautas's conflict with the Order, even after the Battle of Grunwald. Victory at the Battle of Grunwald was not achieved ideologically, as rumours spread that Jogaila and Vytautas had achieved a "fake" victory by using pagans and Muslim Tartars. Vytautas and Jogaila therefore started Christianising the Samogitians in 1413. Vytautas sent the previously-mentioned Orthodox delegation headed by Gregory Tsamblak to Konstanz in 1418, which had to justify striving to live in union with the Catholic Church. The ecumenical Mass by Tsamblak in the cathedral of Konstanz made such a great impression on contemporaries that it was described in detail in chronicles of the time and Lithuania, along with other European countries marching to the Cross, was portrayed in a Strasbourg fresco depicting the unity of Christian countries.

Hence, Vytautas focused his entire policy on ecclesiastical policy and the conversion of Lithuania, which is sometimes too formally concluded by historians with the so-called Christianisation of the Samogitians and without seeing Vytautas's broader programme. Vytautas's whole policy seemed focused on the image of a "sacred ruler" in the same way as St. Stephen, the King of Hungary, who acquired a higher status than the great when he became Saint Stephen several centuries ago. As Vytautas faced a truly huge task in his efforts towards conversion to both introduce Christianity in Lithuania's pagan areas and seek formulas to get along well with the Orthodox or Greek tradition, the coronation project should be viewed in the context of the Christianisation of Lithuania and Europeanisation.

Vytautas started aiming for coronation after dealing with the priorities of his policy, with the Teutonic Order waiving its claims to Samogitia for good in 1422 and the end of its threat to Lithuania. A time arrived for problems in relations between Lithuania and Poland. Vytautas started acting as an independent ruler towards the end of the 1420s. In 1427 he marched to Moscow to help Basil (Vasily) II of Moscow, his grandchild, and only

a demonstration of power sufficed in this case. His return home constituted a check of the state's eastern periphery rather than a military campaign: Pskov and Novgorod the Great were subdued in 1426 and 1428 respectively. Only the crown seemed lacking, as Vytautas had already achieved the second priority of his policy in the form of the kingdom of Lithuania.

The hegemony of Poland rather than Lithuania was becoming evident in the region, and relations with Poland became the major political problem after the Treaty of Melno. The project of Vytautas's coronation, which had already started to be implemented, was therefore also relevant on an international level because the region's more important issues could not be resolved without Lithuania.

The European Congress in Lutsk (9–29 January 1429) was intended for a meeting of Lithuanian and Polish rulers Vytautas and Jogaila with Sigismund I of Luxembourg, who was also Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, to discuss political issues in Central and Eastern Europe. The congress was also attended by the envoys of the Grand Duke of Moscow and the Duke of Tver, as well as the dukes of Ryazan, Odojev, Novgorod the Great and Pskov, the papal legate, the envoys of the Teutonic Order, of the Golden Horde, of Moldova, of the King of Denmark and of the Byzantine Emperor of Byzantium. The European Congress demonstrated the importance of the GDL and Vytautas's role in the region, entering into Lithuania's history primarily because of Vytautas's coronation plan. This plan was supported by Sigismund I and the Teutonic Order, aiming to create an equipoise for Poland in the region. Vytautas's decision to accept the crown proposed by the Emperor and a declaration that he was doing this "without asking anyone's permission" meant that he was becoming a sovereign ruler.

The European Congress in Lutsk logically completed Vytautas's complicated political path, which was foreseen at the end of the 14th century and brought him to his ultimate goal: the monarchy of Lithuania had to establish itself in the European political system. Although the goldsmiths of Nuremberg had already made crowns for Vytautas and his wife Juliana, a ceremony did not take place because the Polish Council of Lords forced Jogaila to cancel the consent given.

Vytautas repeatedly received Jogaila's consent in 1430 and merely needed the approval of the Polish nobility, but unfortunately Vytautas did not achieve this because he died on 27 October 1430. Although the entire plan was not implemented, Vytautas achieved his main political aims: the state

European Congress in Lutsk. Painter Jonas Mackevičius, 1934

of Lithuania, which was previously isolated and lagged behind, eliminated its major threats, legitimised its existence, and became a part of Europe, adapting to it and remaining there.

The Lithuania of Vytautas's era most closely resembled a state sometimes referred to as an empire today. Lithuania later weakened, so Vytautas became a myth who provided strength, inspired dignity and encouraged patriotism in times of trouble and when the mobilisation of society was required. The start of his cult dates back to his rule. Enea Silvio Piccolomini devoted the words "how great you are and how great your native land is" to Vytautas in his "Book about men famous for their lives". Vytautas's cult was particularly fostered in the 16th century, when Lithuanian society started looking for an ideological foundation against Poland's (the Jagiellonian Dynasty's) plan to create a union of the states, in which Poland would be the hegemon.

THE GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA ON ITS PATH TOWARDS THE WEST

The foundation for the approximation of Lithuanian society to Central Europe, which represented the "civilisational leap of Lithuania", was laid down under the rule of Vytautas. Lithuania needed to rapidly adopt medieval ideas that came from Western

Europe: the three-field agricultural system, the feudal system, principles of the class-based society and monarchy, workshops, the ecclesiastical system and schools, and script and its "industry".

None of the European states had to make this leap, with Lithuania managing to do it in 100 years. The studies of young Lithuanians in Cracow, and later German and Italian universities, played an important role in this process. These studies and the general adoption of European culture produced specific results at the end of the 15th and the first half of the 16th century. The first book produced in Lithuania was published abroad in 1499, and the Gothic masterpiece of St. Anne's Church was built in Vilnius in about 1500. The publication of books (by Francysk Skaryna) began in Lithuania in 1522. The Statute of Lithuania, its code of law, which exceeded the level of contemporary European codification through its systematics and Renaissance "execution" and made an impact on the law of neighbouring regions such as Livonia, Moscow and Poland, was drafted in 1529.

The first Lithuanian book was published in Lithuania 1547. At the end of the epoch, Lithuania already rapidly reacted to the challenges of reformation (the reform movement started in 1539). This shows that Lithuania became a state which was integrated into the European structure.

The nature of the epoch was determined by closer relations between Lithuania and Poland. With a few exceptions, Lithuania was ruled by the same rulers as Poland (a personal union), although the states were separate. The Jagiellonian Dynasty of Lithuanian origin, which also occupied the throne of Bohemia and Hungary at the end of the 15th and the start of the 16th century, was on the thrones of Poland and Lithuania until 1572. Hence, the eastern part of Central Europe became a "Jagiellonian Europe" in this epoch and the Jagiellonian Dynasty was a major rival to the House of Habsburg. Jagiellonian Europe started playing the role of an "advanced post of Christianity", but was not equally successful. Lithuania withstood Orthodox Moscow with the assistance of Poland and won a victory at the Battle of Orsha in 1514, while Hungary suffered a defeat in the Battle of Mohács against the Turks in 1526 and disappeared from the map of Europe. When Bohemia "disappeared" from the Jagiellonian Dynasty, only Poland and Lithuania remained from previously.

Despite cultural losses (a model for Lithuanian script had still not been developed), the GDL's society became European and integrated into Western civilisation in the 16th century.

Christianisation, St. Casimir and Gothic Architecture

The Christianisation of Lithuania (1387) and Samogitia (1413–1417) marked only a small step towards a Christian society, as only the most important pagan places of worship were destroyed. Locations of local cults were still present. Although pagan places of worship existed as an alternative to Catholic churches, they were already the result of common development with Christianity. The Church aimed to integrate pagan confessions, although Catholic saints very slowly replaced pagan gods, who still co-existed in people's consciousness for a long time.

Nevertheless, Christianity was adopted by the entire szlachta class at the start of the 16th century and reached the peasantry only in the 17th century.

The development of the worshipping tradition of St. Casimir (1458–1484), the son of Casimir, the Grand Duke of Lithuania, became the symbol of Lithuania's Christianisation. As early as at the start of the 16th century, Prince Casimir was worshipped in the Vilnius region and his cult replaced that of St. Stanislaus, the patron saint of Poland. Prince Casimir was canonised when he became famous for his miracles after his death, as it was believed that he saved Lithuania in the wars with Moscow by helping the Lithuanian army to defeat the enemy at Polotsk in 1518 and win the battle at the Daugava River in 1519. St. Casimir's cult showed that a strong religious identity formed in Lithuania that was directed towards Western Europe. St. Casimir became the most important patron of Lithuania and Vilnius, and the main saint after his canonisation (1604), while Kaziukas (a Lithuanian diminutive for Casimir) fairs are a tradition that dates back to the times of the GDL.

The Europeanisation of Lithuania cannot be imagined free from the creation of an ecclesiastical organisation. Four Catholic dioceses (Vilnius, Samogitia, Lutsk and Kiev) were founded, with monkhoods established among the already-functioning Orthodox dioceses in the GDL immediately after Christianisation. Seven monkhoods were established by the mid-16th century (the Franciscan and Bernardine orders were the most famous), with 18 monasteries, including four in Vilnius, two in Kaunas and two in Grodno. Ornate monastery churches with luxurious altars were constructed that housed a number of paintings, sculptures, frescos and organs from the end of the 15th century. Parishes were established and

churches were constructed everywhere, even in the remotest corners of diocesan centres. The network of parishes covered nearly all of Lithuania in the mid-16th century.

Gothic art is a style of European architecture and art, which emerged in the 12th century and reached its heyday in about the mid-13th century. The vertical lines of Gothic churches and towers rising into the sky symbolised humans striving to reach God. This art style had a long 150-year tradition in Europe, reaching its maturity and affecting all areas of human creative pursuits at the end of the 14th century, when the Gothic style only started to appear in Lithuania. Peculiarities of Gothic art developed that were characteristic of different European regions and are probably most evident in the architecture of sacred buildings. Buildings were built from stone in Western and Northern Europe, while bricks were the main material for construction in countries where no suitable stone was available. Two distinct Gothic regions and types therefore developed based on stone and red bricks, with Lithuania opting for the brick style.

The spread of Gothic architecture was primarily fostered by the Christianisation of the state and the programme of masonry church construction that Vytautas initiated afterwards (including the Cathedral, St. John's Church, the Franciscan Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Vilnius, the Church of St. Peter and Paul the Apostles, the Church of St. George, the Church of St. Gertrude and the Church of St. Nicholas in Kaunas).

Kaunas is the site of probably the best preserved church that Vytautas constructed. Lithuanian Gothic architecture is unique for its defensive nature: even sacred buildings had defensive towers and arrowslits, with defensive buildings mainly constructed under the rule of Vytautas. Vytautas built or reconstructed masonry castles in Vilnius, Trakai, Kaunas, Grodno, Navahrudak and Lutsk. The hall of Trakai Island Castle with its Gothic ribbed vaults shows that the Gothic style was common in defensive architecture as well.

A true revolution of the Gothic style seems to have taken place at the end of the 15th and in the first quarter of the 16th century, when the most significant monuments were constructed in Kaunas and particularly Vilnius. The Gothic style started spreading in the construction of residential buildings, reaching the provinces (such as to Kėdainiai and Zapyškis) and becoming predominant even in the architecture of Orthodox sacred

The easternmost Gothic masterpiece in Europe –
St. Anne's Church in Vilnius. Photograph by Arūnas Baltėnas

buildings. Lithuanian Gothic architecture adopted the main features of this style: high spaces (the central nave of the Bernardine Church in Vilnius) and grace (St. Anne's Church in Vilnius).

These churches were constructed by the highest-level professionals from abroad. The manifestation of the most common trends in Europeanisation was therefore evident in the architecture, with the main features "imported". Local architects were also involved in the creative process, but their buildings were far from equal to St. Anne's Church, which was constructed during the same period. The renaissance of Vilnius Lower Castle introduced new fashion trends in the mid-16th century, but the Gothic tradition adopted by local artists was still evident until the start of the 17th century.

As early as the time of Vytautas, the epicentre of Lithuanian Gothic style emerged in Vilnius, Trakai and Kaunas. The construction of castles far away from ethnic Lithuania started, in the Ruthenian lands of the GDL: these areas included Black Rus' (Grodno and Navahrudak), Podlachia (Melnik and probably Brest) and even Volhynia (Lutsk). Gothic Catholic churches ap-

peared on the boundaries of the areas with different confessions and even in the territory of Orthodox believers. Gothic architecture even became a common style in Orthodox and future Greek Catholic churches here.

Konstanty Ostrogski, who reconstructed Orthodox churches in Vilnius and Navahrudak in the Gothic style, brought this style to his patrimony, Volhynia in Ukraine. The style of Gothic Orthodox churches is also reflected in residential architecture (such as the Mir Castle near Nesvizh) and at the same time seems prevalent in the culture of the whole of Europe. Hence, the easternmost Gothic architecture is in historical Lithuania and this boundary is of European significance. Life in Moscow in the 15th–16th centuries was based on the Byzantine tradition, and even if the West influenced it, the influence was minor and no longer of the Gothic style (Italian Renaissance artists in the Kremlin at the end of the 15th century).

Script

As a class-based society was forming in the GDL and a complicated state governance system was in place, a script was urgently required at the turn of the 14th–15th centuries. Monkhoods satisfied the need for script in Western Europe at this stage of societal development, but they were lacking in Lithuania and the need for script was rapidly growing. Chancelleries became producers of cultural products, their repositories and schools of scribes. Their activities contributed greatly to the spread of script in the everyday life of the GDL szlachta and city dwellers. The Lithuanian culture of the 15th century and the start of the 16th century is sometimes described as the culture of chancelleries.

The Grand Duke's Chancellery, a permanent institution, appeared and brought together the best script teachers at the end of the 14th century. Until then, written documents were used only when dealing with other states. Diplomatic letters were written by monks, who knew Latin. The internal orders of grand dukes were announced orally. As the state's internal life became more active, its administrative structure expanded in the 15th–16th centuries and the Duke's Chancellery and its staff also grew bigger.

Scribes accompanied the Grand Duke on his trips, from which documents issued by the Grand Duke were included in the Chancellery's books upon his return. These books entered into the history of Lithuania under the title of the Lithuanian Metrica. Other monuments to GDL script, such

as the Statutes and the Chronicles, were also created in the Chancellery, and the first literary authors were scribes, such as Mykolas Lietuvis.

As the functions of the central authority expanded, the position of the GDL Chancellor (the head of the Chancellery) was established in the first half of the 15th century. He was authorised to supervise the Lithuanian Metrica. This official guarded the seals of the state and ensured that no document that contravened the state's laws was drafted in the Chancellery. A separate GDL Chancellery supervised by the Lithuanian Chancellor continued functioning even after the Union of Lublin was signed in 1569.

The Lithuanian Metrica consists of records accumulated in the Chancellery of the Grand Duke of Lithuania from the end of the 14th century until 1794 and contains all documents sent and received on behalf of the GDL. The Chancellery also stored charters of privileges both public and intended for separate GDL areas and cities, acts confirming the status of the szlachta, acts of various land management deals, inventories, wills, court rulings, and local and international correspondence in Ruthenian, Latin, German (Prussian and Livonian), Arabian and Czech and included them in the Lithuanian Metrica. The documents in the Lithuanian Metrica thus constitute the history of the GDL's policy, society, economy, law and culture, and represent the most important source of GDL history. It was taken to Moscow and has been stored there until now. The Lithuanian Metrica became a symbol of the nation's scattered or robbed heritage and a sign of the destiny of the ancient state of Lithuania.

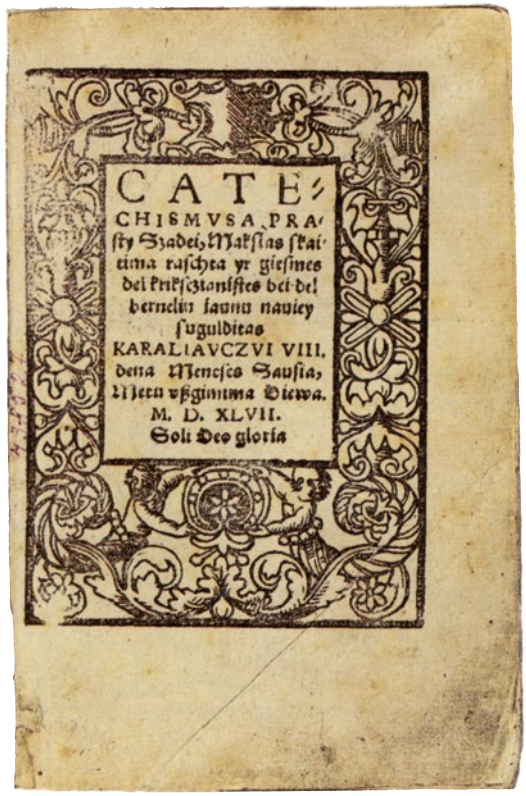
The main language of the Lithuanian Metrica and GDL script in general was Ruthenian, which was the language of the GDL's Orthodox believers (spoken by ancestors of the Belarusians and Ukrainians). This factor was predetermined by a rapid growth in the need for script under the rule of Vytautas. The Lithuanian language did not develop any script traditions, with Orthodox subordinates having had an ecclesiastical script tradition for several centuries from the times of Kievan Rus'. Orthodox monasteries in the GDL used the ecclesiastical Slavic language of Bulgarian origin, and a script tradition started to form that was different from the above-mentioned ecclesiastical language in the Chancellery of the GDL. This fact was clearly distinguished by contemporaries. Vasil Ciapinski, a Ruthenian and Belarusian publisher, even printed letters in two columns in both languages in the second half of the 16th century. The language is sometimes referred to as the "West Russian" language and sometimes as the "Old Ukrainian"

language or "Old Belarusian" language, while in Lithuania it is called the "GDL Chancellery Slavonic" language (despite the fact that it was used outside the Chancellery and the GDL, in Poland and Hungary, and most importantly was different from the language spoken by other Slavs and Poles of the GDL). It initially contained more words of "Ukrainian" origin at the start of the 15th century, and words of "Belarusian" origin later.

Contemporary Russians of Moscow clearly distinguished this language and called it "Lithuanian", as the Slavic ecclesiastical language was the only language in the state of Moscow until the 17th–18th centuries. The language of the Lithuanian Metrica is even called "old Lithuanian" today. This is a historical approach. According to philologists, script language which was predominant in the GDL chancelleries should be called "Ruthenian", and the East Slavs who lived in the GDL and the state of Poland should be referred to as the "Ruthenians". After all, half the state of ancient Kievan Rus' became part of Lithuania and Poland, and the identity of the Old Russian szlachta and dukes was affected by the processes taking place in these states from the 14th century. In the 16th century, the Ruthenians saw themselves as a completely separate nation that was different from the Russians in the state of Moscow. The East Slavs of the GDL referred to people from Russia as "Moscovites", while the Moscovites called the East Slavs of the GDL "Lithuanians". The GDL Slavs called themselves "Russians", identified themselves as a single ethnic group and regarded the Lithuanian ruler as their ruler. Hence, the Ruthenians separated from the Russians in Russia. The Ruthenians only split into two nations in the 17th century, with Ukrainians in the south and Belarusians in the north.

Lithuania's first publisher Francysk Skaryna (1490–1541), who was born into a family of merchants from Polotsk, came from an environment of Ruthenian culture. He was a graduate of Padua University who acquired a doctoral degree in medicine, and prepared and printed his psalter in Prague in 1517–1519 and 22 books of the Old Testament under the common name of the "Ruthenian Bible". He established a printing house in Vilnius in 1522.

Lithuania matured towards the first book in Lithuanian after a quarter of a century, in 1547. It was the famous "Catechism" by Martynas Mažvydas, printed while living abroad in Königsberg but dedicated to Lithuanians and Lithuania. The GDL's society was not mature enough for a book in the Lithuanian language at the time.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dena Meneses Sausia,
Metu vßgimima Diewa.
M. D. XLVII.
Soli Deo gloria

The first Lithuanian book, the Catechism, by Martynas Mažvydas. Königsberg, 1547

Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Black opened another printing house in Lithuania (Brest) in 1553, a development spurred by the Reformation. The printing house's impressive Brest Bible was published here ten years later. Radziwiłł the Black also later established a printing house in Nesvizh (1562). The Chodkiewicz family started competing with the Radziwiłłs in 1569, establishing a printing house in Zabłudów and granting custody to Ivan Fyodorov, the first publisher in Moscow, who predetermined the printing house's Orthodox nature. As Counter-Reformation started, Catholics joined book-printing activities. Mikołaj Christopher Radziwiłł the Orphan, the son of Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Black, who converted back to Catholicism, moved the Brest printing house to Vilnius in 1575 and donated it to the Jesuit University which was in the process of establishment there. Book printing became a continuous process in Lithuania.

As Western cultural ideas were adopted, society became acquainted with a chronicle-writing tradition and there was a rising need to know the country's own history. A myth about the rulers' foreign origin that was widely spread in Europe in Renaissance times was also taken over.

Very favourable conditions formed: the ancient history was unknown, but the Lithuanian and Latin languages were similar and the theory about the Roman origin of Lithuanians included in the Lithuanian Chronicles (the Bychowiec Chronicle) was developed. Legend has it that noble Romans arrived in the lands of Lithuania, while non-Latin speakers also lived there. That is all that can be learned about the local common people. Only the country's nobility were deemed the nation by the chronicle's author. The legend does not raise the issue of language either: at the time language was not the nation's major property because a political rather than ethnic Lithuanian nation existed and its main feature was the fact that it belonged to the GDL's nobility. The history of these people and their origin is told in the Lithuanian Chronicles. The theory about a Roman origin, which was intertwined with the use of the Latin "Roman" language throughout the 17th–18th centuries, was a certain sign of counterbalance for automatic Polonisation, and the adjective "palemonic" was used in literature intended for special occasions as an equivalent for the word "Lithuanian".

Vilnius University used to be called the Palemon University and Vilnius was known as "the capital of palemonic cities of Lithuania".

Another aspect of the Lithuanian szlachta society's historical identity formed through the praise of Vytautas and his rule. The first Lithuanian poem was already a true piece of Renaissance creation. The poem "A Song about the Appearance, Savagery and Hunting of the Bison" by Mikołaj Hussowczyk, published in 1523, aimed to depict Vytautas's rule as an ideal for the society of the time. These ideas are also found in the contemplations of Mykolas Lietuvis about order in the state ("About the Customs of the Tartars, Lithuanians and Moscovites", in around 1550), in which he contrasts the rigour and asceticism of customs in the era of Vytautas with society's laxity, drinking and disorder at the time. Lietuvis proposed changes to the language, in the form of an end to the use of Ruthenian and a move towards the Roman language (i.e. Latin). One circumstance was however the determining factor, with the Polish civilisation having the greatest influence on Lithuanian culture. This impact was felt in various forms: the organisation of the ecclesiastical system, studies at

Cracow University, adoption of the administrative system and economic reform. Poland was a teacher for Lithuania in the GDL. Lithuania's problem was that it often did not have the time or opportunity to reach "deeper" Europe and Europeanisation usually ended in Polonisation. This circumstance became evident during the Reformation, when the significance of still-spoken languages was recognised.

Renaissance and Reformation

People already gained a humanistic education in the court of Grand Duke Alexander at the turn of the 15th–16th centuries, but the breakthrough came when Sigismund I the Old married Bona Sforza, the Duchess of Milan, in 1519. He took Italian architects, artists and musicians to Poland and Lithuania, brought up Sigismund II Augustus in Renaissance spirit, built Vilnius Lower Castle together with him, and introduced a number of innovations from "Italian strolls" (ball dancing) to the fork, which was unknown either in Lithuania or Scandinavian countries at the time. The Lithuanian nobility gradually adopted the "Italian fashion". Renaissance books could already be found not only in the library of Sigismund II Augustus, but also in those of the szlachta and city dwellers. The concept of Latin as the genuine or native Lithuanian language was forming based on the former idea about the Roman origin of Lithuanians.

The Reformation, which Martin Luther started in 1517, is considered one of the most significant signs of the early modern period. This swept across the whole of Europe in the 16th century, dividing the Catholic Church and preconditioning a new direction in Christianity and Protestantism.

Lithuania adopted Catholicism a thousand years later than other Western European countries, but the Reformation was only 22 years late and the Lutheran Abraomas Kulvietis started it in Vilnius in 1539. Such events showed not only that Lithuania had become part of the European structure, but also the scope of Kulvietis's personality. He established a school for noble youths in Vilnius, where 60 pupils studied. He also preached sermons that criticised the Catholic Church and attracted a lot of people to his side. However, he had to emigrate to Protestant (since 1525) Prussia in 1542, where Duke Albert granted him custody. Kulvietis made use of the Reformation, which acknowledged the importance of native language in

Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Black from "Armamentarium Heroicum" by Jakob Schrenck, 1603

communication with God. He also developed a cultural programme aimed at transforming the Lithuanian language into the basis of the entire educational system, raising it to the level of the state's interests and thus developing Lithuania's intellectuals. Kulvietis tried to implement this programme while living abroad, with himself and Stanislovas Rapolionis becoming the first professors at the recently-established University of Königsberg (in 1544). The Catechism published by Martynas Mažvydas in 1547 should be considered part of their programme. Kulvietis was well aware of the problematic cultural situation: the Lithuanian nobility, who did not have the traditions of Lithuanian script and simultaneously refused the Ruthenian, chose the Polish language not only for writing, but also for communica-

tion. Lithuanian society was not prepared for appreciating the significance of the Lithuanian script and granting it official status.

The nobles, who chose Calvinism (i.e. the branch of Protestantism), which better complied with their plans to weaken the Grand Duke's power that was based on the authority of the Church and the influence of the Catholic Church in general, became involved in the Reformation in the second stage. Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Black (1515–1565), the GDL Chancellor and Voivode of Vilnius, who published the "Brest Bible" in Polish in 1563, was the most prominent figure of the Lithuanian Reformation and the most influential personality among Protestants. Nearly all nobles had already converted to the Reformation and secularised the churches they founded in the sixth and seventh decades of the 16th century. These amounted to a half of all churches. Calvinism later started to wither, but has survived until today. Evangelical reformers who live in the Biržai area are direct descendants of the Calvinist Reformation, which was led by Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Red, the cousin of Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Black, after the latter's death.

The Reformation became a new impetus for Polonisation Mikołaj Radziwiłł the Black said in 1563 that the Bible had to be translated into Polish and not any other language to make it "understandable at a grassroots level". Although the tradition of Lithuanian script was emerging, the political elite in GDL society did not see the Lithuanian cultural programme implemented and opted for the Polish version. The Lithuanian language was preserved only by the minor szlachta and most firmly by the peasantry.

Despite the losses suffered in terms of Lithuanian identity, the society became European and integrated into Western civilisation in the 16th century. The law of feudal tenure formed in ownership relations, the knight's manor (feudal tenure) and serfdom in the socio-economic structure, the szlachta class and class monarchy in the socio-political structure, workshops in the city economies, and the European educational system (cathedral schools and their trivium, colleges and universities) in education. The Christian mentality became entrenched among the social elite at least (the idea of *Antemurale Christianitatis*, an advanced post of Christianity, implied hostility to Orthodox Moscow), and the nation of the szlachta formed with its historical identity and a chronicle of its origin.

Chapter II

MARRIAGE OF THE POLISH AND LITHUANIAN STATES

As it europeanised, Lithuania became a part of Central Europe in the 17th–18th centuries. True, the northern part of Western Europe was rapidly moving towards modern society, capitalism and the Enlightenment during these centuries, while Central Europe and the southern part of Western Europe remained agrarian, feudal, clearly Catholic, and Baroque. We therefore characterise the history of Lithuania in the 17th–18th centuries in the concept of the Baroque epoch, giving it the same content as the Renaissance epoch and the Age of Enlightenment are given in Western Europe. We could consider the appearance of the Society of Jesus in Lithuania in 1569 to be the symbolic beginning of the epoch. Backed by the state, the Jesuits, who brought renewed Catholicism to Lithuania, raised the level of education in the country to a new level – they established an entire system of institutions of higher education and colleges, the pinnacle of which was Vilnius University (founded in 1579). Lithuania's ambition to be an integral part of Central Europe resulted in the creation of a strong and original school of military engineering, the most significant work of which became Kazimierz Siemienowicz's *Artis Magnae Artilleriae* (*Great Art of Artillery*, 1650). This treatise, which lays forth the theory of multistage rockets, is where we find the origins of modern artillery and even astronautics.

The Baroque influence on 17th–18th century architecture and art was also due to the Jesuits. It was only in the 17th century when "imported" Baroque – Italian in particular – was dominant; in the 18th century, the distinct Vilnius school of Baroque emerged. Johann Christoph Glaubitz, the architect credited for developing the so-called Vilnian Baroque, should without a doubt be given honourable mention in the history of European Baroque.

The agrarian nature of society and the weakness of the towns resulted in the formation of an original modification of the class monarchy system in Poland and Lithuania – a Noble Republic, or even anarchy. According

to the rule of *liberum veto*, every measure that came before the Sejm (legislature) had to be passed unanimously; this principle was in stark contrast to the absolutist systems prevalent in Western Europe, and hindered the strengthening and centralisation of the state. On the other hand, this, to the modern eye seemingly anachronistic, system allowed for a society where various ethno-religious communities were able to coexist with Catholics: Calvinists, Lutherans, Orthodox Christians and Ukrainian Greek Catholics, and even later – Old Believers from Russia, as well as Karaims, Tatars and Jews who were there from the times of Vytautas.

Lithuania's civil progress along Europe's Baroque "wayside" was hindered by the giant blows of its neighbours: under the Swedish House of Vasa (1587–1668), Lithuania and Poland were hit by the Deluge – the Russian and Swedish invasion (1654–1667), and under the Saxon dynasty (1697–1763), Lithuania became a war ground for Russia and Sweden during the Great Northern War (1700–1721). The consequence of this war was Russia's direct interference in the internal affairs of Poland and Lithuania, which ultimately led to the partitioning and eventual abolition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF BOTH NATIONS

The Union of Lublin

Lithuania and Poland's shared history began in 1386 with the marriage of Jogaila and Jadwiga. The metaphor of the "sacred marriage" is often applied to the entire process of unions, the outcome of which was the 1569 Union of Lublin, which established a joint state – the Commonwealth of Both Nations. This was an original alliance of states, which today is sometimes even considered to be a precursor of the European Union. Without the growing closeness between Poland and Lithuania and the alliance of their armies, the victory at the Battle of Grunwald would not have been, nor would the successful conclusion to the Livonian War in the 16th century have, had it not been for the Union of Lublin.

In Poland, Lithuania is traditionally considered to have been a part of Poland even prior to the Union of Lublin, and the state created by the Union of Lublin is often called the Republic of Poland rather than the Commonwealth of Both Nations. The lack of logic in the traditional Polish

historical train of thought might cause one to smile: if the union was a "sacred marriage", then who was the other party in the nuptials? Or perhaps this wasn't a union at all, but rather – just Poland's idea of a civil mission? Perhaps Poland was only interested in incorporating Lithuania? It is for this reason that the negative image of the Polish "civil mission" used to overshadow the positive side of the union in the traditional historic memory of Lithuanians. Where Lithuanians traditionally saw the erosion of Lithuania's state and culture, Poles discerned a Polish civil victory.

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania had a difficult time holding the eastern front during the Livonian War. This is also evidenced by the fact that the Vitebsk "war front" Sejm sent Elder of Samogitia Jan Hieronimowicz Chodkiewicz to Poland to ask for military assistance, together with a union. This was also demonstrated by the 1563 loss of Polotsk – Polish support was needed. In February, 1569, Lithuanian and Polish delegations started negotiations in the presence of the Polish Sejm, which had assembled in Lublin. The Lithuanians presented their own plan – a union of two states with equal rights – while the Poles sought to annex Lithuania. Unable to reach an agreement, the Lithuanian delegation left Lublin on 1 March.

Then Lithuania was hit with a terrible blow – King Sigismund II Augustus, pressured to support Poland, agreed to incorporate nearly half of the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the Voivodeships of Podlaskie and Volhynia, and later – Kiev and Podolia (Bratslav)) into the Crown of Poland. All nobles in the incorporated areas were required to swear loyalty to the Crown of Poland, and their representatives had to participate in the Polish Sejm. Those who refused to swear loyalty had their lands confiscated – Lithuania was in danger of losing its sovereignty.

Jan Hieronimowicz Chodkiewicz understood the tragic dilemma: either Lithuania was to bind itself to Poland, or Russia would conquer Lithuania. He chose the former, but tried to negotiate as favourable terms as possible. Chodkiewicz returned to the Lublin Sejm, and on 28 June 1569 agreed to the idea of a union and even a single seal – in other words, the incorporation of Lithuania into Poland. This was a brutal compromise. In addressing Sigismund II Augustus, he stated: "Bowing to your Majesty's will, we were forced to yield only with the deepest pain and sorrow. But there are no words for our grief. For we, as loyal sons of our motherland, are obliged to look after her welfare as far as we are able. If we are unable to defend her now, it is because we are forced to concede to obstacles, fate and time."

Mid-18th century map of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth which also shows the borders of the GDL (Royal Castle in Warsaw)

After these words, the Lithuanians fell weeping to their knees before the king; this even brought the Poles to tears. It seems that Chodkiewicz's tears were also an expression of diplomacy. By playing with ambiguities during the negotiation process, the Elder of Samogitia managed to narrow the question of the union down to the matter of seals: whether the king's documents would be stamped only with the Polish seal (which would mean that Lithuania had been annexed and at best had become an autonomous

province of Poland), or with the Lithuanian seal as well. As if agreeing with the Polish opinion that there should be one common seal, he concurrently asked that the seals of Lithuania not be annulled. This was an obvious contradiction. By protecting the seals of the GDL, Chodkiewicz succeeded in ensuring that specific issues concerning the establishment of Polish-Lithuanian relations and even the formation of a union be settled not at the Lublin Sejm, but later, which thereby left the possibility of preserving Lithuanian statehood. And this was done, upon demanding that later rulers of the Republic recognise the seals of Lithuania. Thus, Chodkiewicz found a way out, even where it seemed that there was none.

Of course, the Poles and Sigismund II Augustus employed pressure during the Union of Lublin – they sought to abolish statehood and tear away land; nevertheless, the outcome of the Union of Lublin was still a compromise which the representatives of the GDL did accept, albeit through tears, though the soundness of this compromise wasn't doubted seriously for two centuries to come. The benefits of the Union of Lublin became evident soon after. Upon Prince of Transylvania Stephen Báthory becoming King of Poland and Lithuania (1576–1586), a decisive victory was achieved in the Livonian War against Moscow, and the threat of this enemy was removed for over half a century (Poland and Lithuania even occupied Moscow in 1609–1611). However, the most important outcome of the compromise of the Union of Lublin was the Commonwealth of Both Nations, which existed for two centuries to come. And it didn't just exist – it also gave Europe bread, tolerance, Nobles' Democracy, Baroque art, and the constitution.

The GDL in Baroque Europe. Nobles' Democracy

Where did the grandeur of Italy – the leader of Renaissance civilization – disappear in the 17th–18th centuries? After the great geographical discoveries and Turkish expansion, the Mediterranean Sea lost economic importance. And what happened to Portugal and Spain, the pioneers of geographical discoveries? From a geopolitical point of view, the latter was matched by no other state in Europe in the 16th century – the sun never set in the possessions of Spain. One of the reasons that Spain and Portugal lost their positions as leaders was too good of a life – gold shipped in from Latin American did not encourage them to develop their

own towns and economies. The decline of Spain's power was marked by the misfortune of the Invincible Armada in 1588. Though it was a chance storm that prevented the fleet from docking in England, Spain never repeated the trip.

In the 17th–18th centuries, the old Western Europe split in two – the Catholic South and the Protestant North. Catholicism was a premise for Italian and Spanish Baroque culture to spread in the Catholic countries of Western Europe such as France, Bavaria, and Flanders, and particularly at the estates of the monarchs and aristocrats of these countries (Peter Paul Rubens – perhaps the most well-known Baroque painter ever – grew up in Flanders).

Protestantism was the reason why one periphery of the Middle Ages – Northern Europe (Scandinavia) – joined the dynamic part of Western Europe (Holland, England), and surpassed Catholic Central Europe during the 17th–18th centuries. This Catholic Central Europe, made up of weaker cities and a weaker need for literacy (in comparison with Protestantism), nestled up to southern Western Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal), which professed Catholicism. In the 16th–17th centuries, that didn't seem like a bad option – Rome, Madrid and Lisbon still shined the light of Catholicism and Baroque architecture and art as far as Mexico and Paraguay. The other edge of this world, farthest to the north, was Lithuania.

The beginning of the epoch can be linked not only to the Union of Lublin, but also to the Jesuits, who came to Lithuania and founded Vilnius University in 1579. Construction of the Baroque church at the Jesuit college in Nesvizh began in 1586, though Vilnius' Church of St Casimir is usually considered the paragon of Baroque architecture. Baroque art, the Jesuits, and Vilnius University were the most important cultural components of the epoch. Various ties linked them to the class system of nobles that came into effect in 1566 and the serfdom-based *folwark* economy established by the Wallach Reform, and this is precisely what allows the use of the concepts of a Baroque system and a Baroque economy.

Baroque was eventually replaced by Neoclassicism, though this style only began to flourish at the very end of the 18th century. Antoni Tyzenhaus's reforms (1767), Paweł Ksawery Brzostowski's Pavlov Republic (1769), the Suppression of the Jesuits and the creation of the Commission of National Education (1773) are all sometimes considered to be the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment.

From the perspective of the history of the state, the Baroque epoch was the alliance of Poland and Lithuania established by the Union of Lublin. The widespread term used to refer to the joint state is the Commonwealth of Both Nations (though even Lithuanians sometimes refer to it as "Žečpospolita", a Lithuanized version of the Polish "Rzeczpospolita", which loosely translates to "Republic"; we also use "PLC" which is an abbreviation for the official name – the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). The name would suggest that this was the equal union of two states. In this union, however, Poland was predominant. The highest organ of power (alongside the ruler) was the joint Sejm, which consisted of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and which elected the king. Lithuania only held one third of the seats in the Sejm, as it was equated to one province of Poland (there were two – Greater Poland with Poznan and Lesser Poland with Kraków).

Not only did the GDL maintain its own state title and territory – it also had a separate executive branch, including a chancellor, treasurer and hetman (it was only in the second half of the 18th century that joint organs of executive state power began to appear), as well as a separate treasury, army, court and legal system, which was made official by the Third Statute of Lithuania in 1588. Thus, the Commonwealth of Both Nations was not a unitary state, but rather a federal one, in which only the highest organs of power – the sovereign and the Sejm – were common. On the other hand, in drawing up the Union of Lublin, Lithuanian diplomats succeeded in preserving the Great Seal of Lithuania, without which the decisions made by the Polish king would not be valid in Lithuania. Furthermore, before attending the joint Sejm, Lithuanian representatives would hold their own "parliamentary sessions" to discuss a common position. In time, the rule of *liberum veto* (unanimity voting) came into place in the PLC Sejm, so there was no way the joint parliament could impose its will on Lithuania. So the Poles wanted a unitary state, but a federal one was created in theory; and in reality, it was a confederation in which both members of the union carried out a common foreign policy.

This legal and political situation was changed by the polonisation of the LDK elite. Although Ruthenian, Latin and Lithuanian linguistic models of culture existed, the Polish one, which was promoted by the processes of integration in public life, became more and more widespread. Perhaps the most significant *terminus a quo* for the Polish model was

The interior of Vilnius' Church of St Peter and St Paul – one of the most majestic and ornate Baroque masterpieces in the PLC (constructed in the second half of the 17th century). Photograph by Arūnas Baltėnas

Maciej Stryjkowski's *Chronicle of Poland, Lithuania, Samogitia and all of Ruthenia*; printed in Polish in 1582, this book became a bible of sorts for the Lithuanian nobility. The process of the polonisation of Lithuania is one of the most important phenomena of the Baroque era. Not only was the language adopted – the culture and lifestyle were as well. It was because of this process that the culture of Lithuania at that time was called "the second edition of Polish culture." Analogies of such a phenomenon include the edition of English culture in Ireland (not to mention the ones in the United States or Australia), of Danish culture in Norway, of French culture in Québec, and the editions of Spanish culture in Mexico and Argentina.

The Statutes of Lithuania defined and legitimised the system of nobles. The only privileged class of society was the nobility, which possessed political rights and sent its representatives to the Sejm. As these representatives

even used to elect the ruler, it might seem that the system was no longer a monarchy, but rather – a republic (especially when the term "commonwealth" has historically been synonymous with "republic"). This would mean that the system of the PLC was close to the early modern period; it was comparable to that of the Dutch (who began to create a republic in the second half of the 16th century), and surpassed England's constitutional monarchy, which took root in 1689. However, the fact that the political system of the PLC was based on just 7% of society (the percentage of nobility) shows its class-based nature – the ruler, though elected by a "nation" of nobles, received his sovereign power from God. Thus, Lithuania's "Nobles' Democracy" in 1566–1795 was a class monarchy, comparable to the 13th–15th century systems of England and France. Unfortunately, there was more anarchy than order in this political system – contemporaries even used to say that "the state is based on confusion". The rule of *liberum veto* had been formed in the PLC Sejm, and each member of the parliament had power to veto its decisions and thereby paralyse proceedings. From 1573 to 1763, 137 sessions of the Sejm were held, 53 of which failed to pass any legislation, often because individual representatives acted on their right to veto the session.

In Western countries, the townspeople acted as a counterbalance to the nobility for class monarchies, but in Poland and Lithuania, the weakness of the towns made it turn into anarchy, or more specifically – feudal decentralisation, or disunion. Due to the dearth of townspeople as a class, the system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth did not acquire the features of absolutism which do away with class representation.

The Statutes of Lithuania, which actually surpassed the legal systems of the countries of Central Europe at a systematic level, as well as Olbracht Gasztołd and Lew Sapieha, who were two of their initiators, have long been a source of pride. However, it was only the nobility that enjoyed political rights (though even in the constitutional and modern Great Britain of the 19th century, the percentage of citizens enjoying such rights was not any larger). Needless to say, there was no shortage of selfishness among the nobility, but that doesn't prevent one from seeing their culture of consensus decision-making, which occasionally allowed them to dig into their own pockets and tax themselves, if need be. Of course, this culture died out as the 18th century progressed, but without this tradition of political culture, it is impossible to explain the reforms of the nobles.

A State Religion or Ten Confessions?

Historians have described Poland's religious tolerance in the 16th–17th centuries as having no analogue in Europe, and Poland as the continent's greatest harbour of tolerance. Multiculturalism and multiconfessionalism are sometimes considered to be Poland's greatest contribution to European culture. Since 1387, the GDL was a Catholic state, like Poland, yet around the year 1500, there were only three Eastern Orthodox dioceses in Poland, while the GDL had six, and all of them were subordinate to the same ecclesiastical metropolis in Kiev, the metropolitan of which used to reside not only in Kiev, but in Navahrudak and Vilnius as well. Thus, Poland's Eastern Orthodox believers were ruled from the GDL, where the weight of the Eastern Orthodox Church determined that the GDL, rather than Poland, be the most relevant area, at least concerning the issue of the implementation of a church union. Therefore, in the 15th–16th centuries, numerous attempts at a church union, which ultimately led to the Union of Brest in 1596, were concentrated namely in the GDL. After the Union of Brest, the majority of Eastern Orthodox believers in Poland and Lithuania converted to the Greek Catholic Church. However, the metropolitans of the Greek Catholic Church were again the Kiev metropolitans, only now they took up permanent residence in Vilnius. Thus, both Eastern Orthodox believers and Greek Catholics played a more important role in the GDL than they did in Poland.

Lutheranism, which began in 1539, was the first branch of the Protestant Reformation to reach Lithuania; later it became more and more linked with the Germans, so the Lutheran communities began to be referred to as "German communities". Indeed, this branch was weaker in Lithuania than it was in Poland, where there were more German colonists. However, a flourishing Evangelical Reformed Church emerged in Lithuania which was considerably stronger than its counterpart in Poland. As a consequence, the nobles of the GDL (the highest social class) became supporters of the Evangelical Reformed faith. Almost all of the Catholic nobles, as well as a part of the Eastern Orthodox ones, converted to Calvinism and secularised nearly 50% of the Catholic churches. True, Calvinism gradually began to weaken.

The GDL also stood out for its other Christian and non-Christian confessions, which had been there since the 14th century, first and foremost the "middleman minorities" – Armenian Catholics and Jews. Of course, these minorities moved to the GDL from Poland and perhaps Hungary, so it is natural that there were fewer of them in this area. Yet in the 17th–

18th centuries, Vilnius, at least, matched, or even began to surpass (the idea of Vilnius as the "Jerusalem of Lithuania") such established Jewish cultural centres as Kraków, Lublin and Lvov. So even if the roles of the Jews, and especially of the Armenians, was less pronounced in the GDL than in Poland, the latter could not boast of such distinct Muslim Tartar and Karaim communities like the ones Grand Duke Vytautas established in the GDL. Perhaps the most well-known member of the GDL Karaim community was Isaac ben Abraham of Troki (1525–1586), who is often mentioned by tolerance researchers. Poland also didn't have Old Believers, who, having separated from the Russian Orthodox Church because of liturgical practices and persecution in Russia, migrated to the GDL in the second half of the 17th century. Cultural diversity in the GDL was increased even more by the ethnic aspect: though some boundaries of faith and ethnicity coincided (Jews, Tatars, Karaims, and the Old Believers in part), confessions often encompassed various ethnic communities.

Until its union with Poland, the GDL surpassed the former in its cultural and confessional diversity, and broadened this diversity within the joint state (for example, with its Muslim Tatars, which Poland had never had previously). With ten different confessions, the GDL was in this respect the leader in the 16th century, even in comparison with the most diverse countries in Europe – Poland and Transylvania. The GDL stood out from the Central Eastern European region for the rapidity of its legitimation and legal formalisation of multiconfessionalism. In Poland, this only happened after the Union of Lublin – by way of the 1573 Warsaw Confederation, to be precise. The same was done in Lithuania in 1563, by a privilege of Sigismund II Augustus, making the rights of all Christian denominations equal; this became legal regulation in both the Second and Third Statutes of Lithuania. The First Statute of Lithuania (1529), not yet knowing of the Protestant Reformation, was already designated for both the Catholic and Orthodox nobility. Although this equality guaranteed by law did not directly touch upon non-Christian faiths (those of the Jews, Karaims and Muslim Tatars), their ethnic communities and religions were tolerated from the end of the 14th century. The boundaries of tolerance later narrowed in both Poland and Lithuania, but changes took place slowly and without compulsion, and multiconfessionalism survived right until the 20th century. Western Europe's situation in the 16th century is characterised by the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris (1572), which be-

came a symbol of religious intolerance in European history. Are all of the aforementioned not enough to conclude that Lithuania, in the mid-16th century, was Europe's cradle of tolerance?

Nations, Languages, and Writing

Let's begin with the Lithuanian written language. First and foremost, this is the cultural programme of Abraomas Kulvietis and Martynas Mažvydas, which gave us the first Lithuanian book and began the tradition of the Lithuanian written language, even though it was created in forced emigration, in Prussia, and was not needed by the GDL elite.

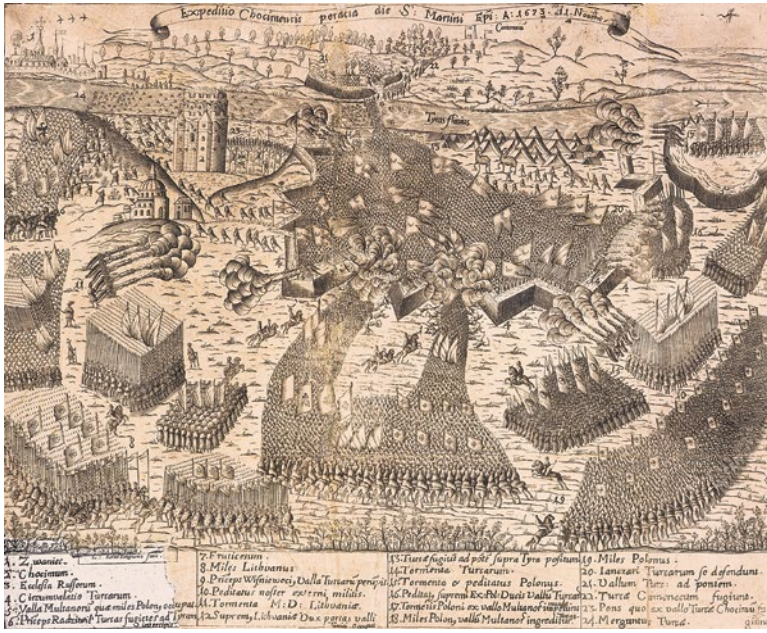
In 1595, Mikalojus Daukša published the first book in Lithuanian in the GDL – the Lithuanian translation of Jacob Ledesma's *Catechism*; in 1599, he published another Lithuanian book – *Postilla Catholica* – the preface of which he used to address Lithuanian society, urging people to use Lithuanian in written language: "Where, I say, in the world is there a nation so poor and worthless that it has not these three seemingly innate things of its own: the land, customs and language of its fathers?" For "it is this language in which its laws are usually written, in which the histories, old and new, of its own nation and of others are published, in which affairs of the state are discussed, and which is used nicely and decently in all sorts of situations at church, at work and at home." Daukša cared not about the everyday use of the Lithuanian language, but about the necessity to create the official model of culture in this language. Daukša's unique undertakings were called a "cry in the wilderness", as the successors of his work did not raise such goals. Although the publication of Lithuanian books continued – albeit sporadically – throughout the entire Baroque era, they were significantly fewer in number than books in Polish or Latin. The title of Konstantinas Sirvydas's *Dictionarium trium linguarum* (*Dictionary of Three Languages*, 1620) is expressive. Intended for young scholars, Polish words are explained in Latin, and only then in Lithuanian. Sirvydas's Lithuanian sermons, later song books (Salomone Slawoczynski's *Hymns*, 1646) and grammar books (*Universitas Lingvarum Litvaniae,* 1737) only took care of the functioning of the Lithuanian language on a daily – church and school – level. Daukša's Lithuanian language programme was therefore never implemented. Life called for more and more Lithuanian words, but rather than creating them, Polish words were appropriated instead. Thus,

Fragment of a map with the first lines of the Lord's Prayer in all of the European languages (Lithuanian circled in red). Nuremberg, 1741

the Lithuanian language, unable to produce neologisms to suit the needs of life, was first surpassed by the Ruthenian language, and later by Polish, which had become the integrative language of the GDL nobility and a means of disseminating Western culture in the Ruthenian lands.

Although Lithuania continued to try to also write in Latin, and even Lithuanian, the process of polonisation gradually embraced the whole of its political and cultural elite.

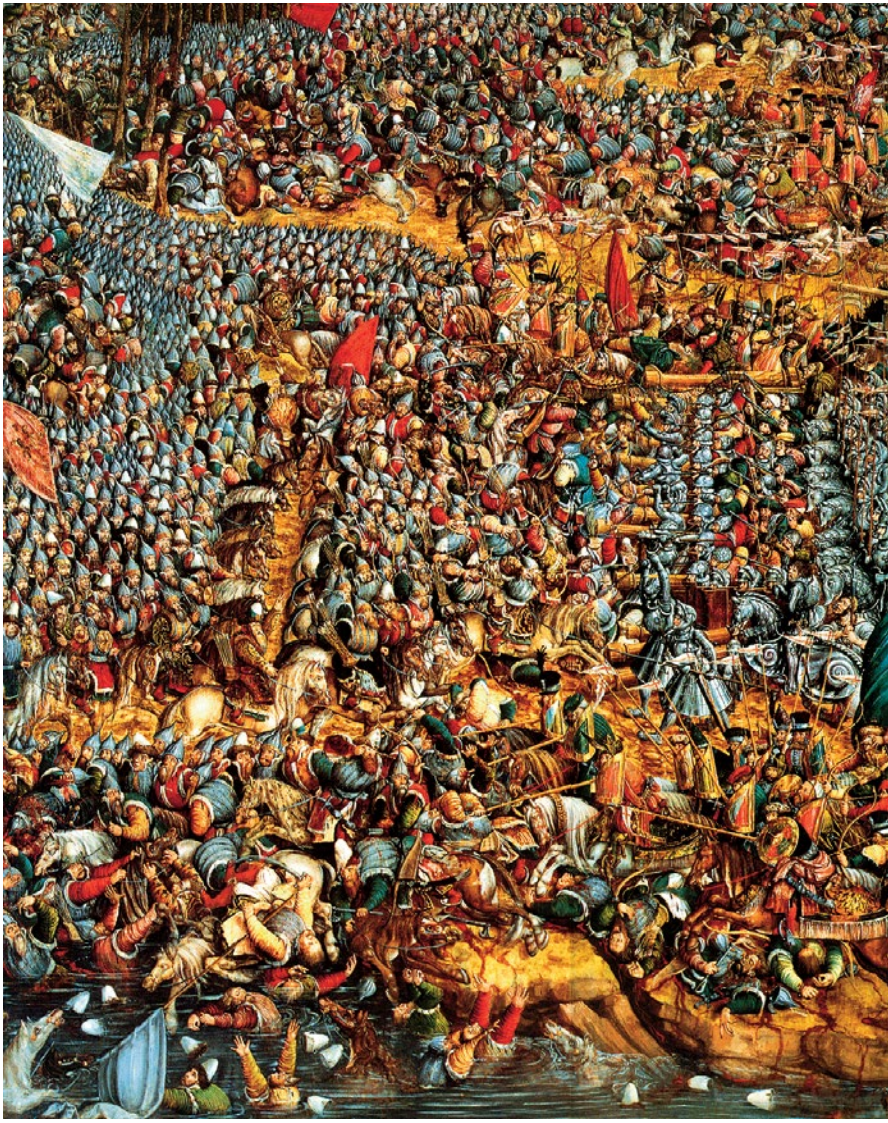
The role of the Polish language in Lithuanian culture is summed up by one of the Radziwiłłs in a letter that he wrote in 1615: "Though I was born



The Polish-Lithuanian army beating the Turks during the Battle of Khotyn, 1673 (from Jakób Bennet's *The Lord's Right Hand Power*, printed in Vilnius in 1674)

a Lithuanian and will have to die a Lithuanian, we have to use the Polish language in our homeland." Little by little, the Polish language took root – in 1697, the Sejm granted it status as the official written language in place of the previously used Ruthenian language. Thus, the Polish language was legitimatised by order of the Lithuanian nobles themselves – it was the choosing of Lithuanian society, and not forced polonisation. The formation of the Lithuanian written language stagnated naturally.

In the 17th–18th centuries, a joint identity of the Commonwealth of Both Nations as that of Poland formed, though within this Poland, the "other Poland" was also clearly distinguished. And even in these late centuries, a "Lithuanian nation", the "political nation" of the GDL, existed nevertheless. This is confirmed by the complex formulas of a dual identity. For example, "gente Polonus, natione Lithuanus" (Lithuanians who identified themselves as Polish) or "Ліцвіны грэцкага закону людзі" (Litvins who were Greek Orthodox believers) or "Ліцвіны рус'кага рода" (Litvins of Russian origin). A common domestic political life, common parliaments



Under the command of Konstanty Ostrogski, Lithuanian and Polish troops defeated the Muscovite army on 8 September 1514 near Orsha. The engraving of an unknown artist of that period

(Sejms) and local parliaments (Sejmiks), and the GDL law that had formed in the Statutes of Lithuania (three codes of laws – 1529, 1566, 1588) developed the concept that a Lithuanian is not a person who speaks Lithuanian, but one who defends freedom and abides by the Statutes of Lithuania. The preconditions of the GDL as a political nation were created by its military victories in Grunwald, Kletsk, Orsha, Kircholm, and Khotyn, where Lithuanians fought shoulder to shoulder with the Ruthenians.

Of the most influential families of the 16th century, only the Gasztołd and Radziwiłł families were of Lithuanian descent; all of the others – the Chodkiewicz, Sapieha, Wołłowicz, Tyszkiewicz and Ogiński families, among others – were all Ruthenians, though they considered themselves to be citizens of the GDL. However, families of Ruthenian descent (such as the Chodkiewiczes and the Sapiehas) even used to make up legends about their Lithuanian origin. Thus, the genesis of the political nation can be found in the 16th or even 15th century, when the Lithuanian nobility as a whole began to trace themselves to the Romans. The legend of the arrival of Palemonas and his descendants from Rome that was created in Lithuanian chronicles became the premise for both the Lithuanian and the Ruthenian nobility to draw their lineage to the tradition of Palemonas or to link themselves to the Gediminid dynasty. It is in this way that this nobility of mixed descent formed a class of nobles of the "Lithuanian nation" with a common identity. These people were Ruthenian in origin, Greek Catholics in belief, Lithuanians in their political identity, and Polish in their speech.

Vilnius University

It is said that when the cannons resound, the muses go silent. Yet during the Livonian War, Stephen Báthory looked after the creation of the muses' refuge – Vilnius University. Of course, the need for an institution of higher education developed in society; the establishment of such a school was stimulated by competition between the Protestant Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Lithuanian Catholics – including bishop of Vilnius Walerian Protasewicz himself – tried to pre-empt the Protestants' intention to found a college. This is why the Jesuits, who came to Vilnius in 1569 on the invitation of the bishop, received funding for their college, with plans of reorganising it into a university in the future. The college was officially opened on 17 July 1570. The Jesuits set ambitious goals for the

Stephen Báthory founding Vilnius University.
Painter Wincenty Smokowski, 1828

burgeoning Vilnius University – to disseminate science and Catholicism not only in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its neighbouring lands, but also in Scandinavia and the Far East (including China!).

Reorganising the college into a university required a considerable amount of funding and qualified professors, as well as papal consent (Pope Gregory XIII gave his approval in 1577). Yet the support of the sovereign was the most important thing. On 1 April 1579, King Stephen Báthory, in support of Bishop Walerian Protasewicz's idea and efforts, issued a privilege to open the Academy of Vilnius. On 29 October 1579, Pope Gregory XIII issued a papal bull that confirmed the upgrade of the Academy of Vilnius to a university. The new school was called *Academia et Universitas Vilnensis Societatis Iesu* – the Vilnius Academy and University of the Society of Jesus.

Right up until its closure in 1832, Vilnius University was not only the main school in Lithuania, but the principal cultural centre as well. The Jesuits, who had determined the cultural content of the Baroque era, disseminated their ideas through Vilnius University. The level of studies at the old university is thought to have been no lower than at the universi-

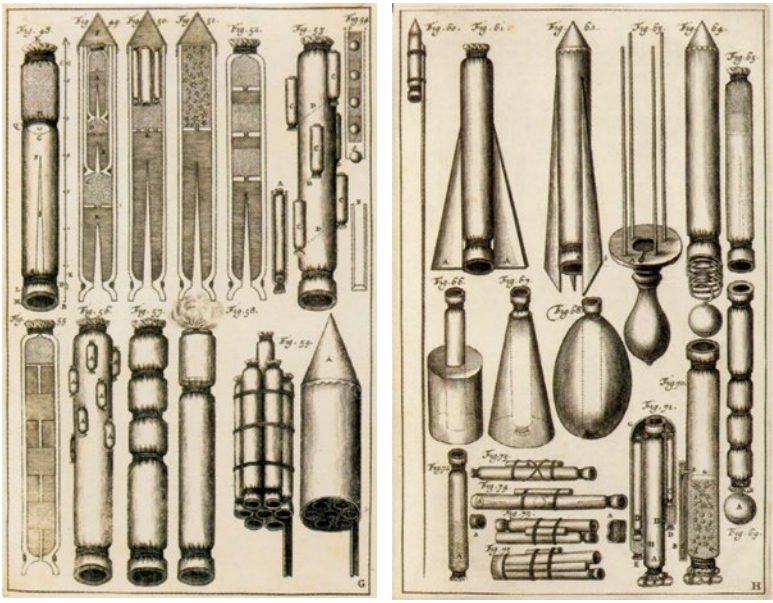
The Grand Courtyard of Vilnius University and the Church of St John, from Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński's *Album de Wilna*, 1850. Painters Philippe Benoist and Adolphe Bayot

ties of Prague, Kraków, Vienna or Rome. Professors who came from these and other Western and Central European Catholic universities brought established teaching principles that had been influenced by the Catholic Reformation, as well as heavy demands and a system of intensive training; the Vilnians spread their authority not just throughout Lithuania (first and foremost, the linguistic works of Konstantinas Sirvydas and Albertas Vijūkas-Kojalavičius), but far beyond the borders of ethnic Lithuania and

Frontispiece of *Artis Magnae Artilleriae* by Kazimierz Siemienowicz, the GDL's most notable military engineer and author of the multistage rocket theory, 1650

the multinational and multiconfessional GDL as well. The phenomena of the Jesuit Vilnius University impacted all of Europe – the schools of theology, philosophy, logic, rhetoric and poetry, in particular. The works of Vilnius University professors even reached Protestant England – for example, Martinus Smiglecius's *Logica* (1618) was referred to not only by doctors at the Sorbonne, but by those at Oxford as well, and the poetry of Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski was translated from Latin into English in 1646 and was read at European universities instead of the usual works of Horace.

Vilnius University is one of the oldest universities in Central Europe, preceded only by the universities of Prague, Kraków, Pécs, Óbuda and



Kazimierz Siemienowicz's rocket sketches. Amsterdam, 1650

Königsberg. However, in Vilnius, the university was founded just two hundred years after the Christianisation of the state, while the progressive Czechs founded theirs 400 years after their conversion to Christianity. There is also another aspect of the historical significance of the old Vilnius University. Since the 14th century, the University of Kraków had been the easternmost university in Europe, but in the 16th century, Vilnius University took over this role and held it for the next two centuries (until the Universities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg were founded). That the university's role as such was not just formal was already clear to the Jesuits who founded it. One of them then wrote: "It must not be forgotten that from here, the doors to Muscovy are wide open to us, and from there we can reach China via the Tatars. Sweden and Livonia should not be overlooked either." Geographically, these ambitions no longer seem that naïve when we remember Vilnius University alumnus Andreas Rudomina, who took the idea of the Society of Jesus to China, where he worked as a missionary from 1626 to 1634 and wrote works on asceticism in Chinese. The greatest significance of the old Jesuit University was its position as the northernmost Catholic university and the easternmost European.

The Easternmost and Northernmost Baroque Architecture in Europe

The concept of Baroque, as we already mentioned, came from art, and architecture and history in particular; the word "Baroque" itself is linked to the Spanish word "baruueco" and the Portuguese word "barroco", both of which refer to an irregular-shaped pearl. In Lithuania, Baroque is most visible in the architecture, especially that of the churches. It passed through several phases of development – from modest Early Baroque that was still influenced by the Renaissance to refined yet splendid Late Baroque and Rococo; from the "import" stage to the very distinctive Vilnius Baroque style and provincial wooden Baroque; and from art created for society's elite to the Baroque creations of the people themselves. Baroque interiors made their way into brick churches of earlier styles; Baroque became a significant style of sculpture and painting; a new branch of art emerged – the theatre; Baroque permeated into objects of everyday life – furniture, dishes, clothes, books. The great phenomena of folk art – wayside shrines with sculptures of Pensive Christ, saints and Pietà – are linked to Baroque. A Baroque landscape formed, characterised by churches, monasteries, Stations of the Cross, chapels, wayside shrines, and crosses – a "holy landscape" which melded organically with the natural environment, and cross crafting remained one of the most important trademarks of Lithuanian folk art.

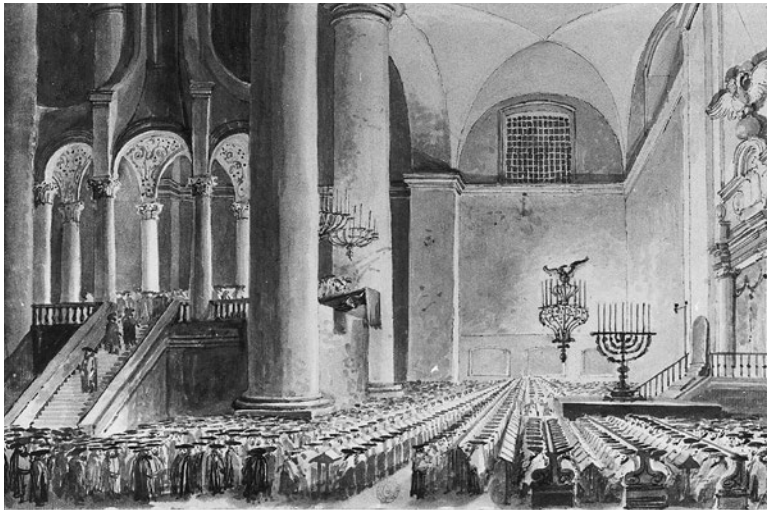
From the 1586 Jesuit church in Nesvizh to the sculptures that were created for the façade of the Vilnius Cathedral between 1784 and 1787, the Baroque spirit was alive in Lithuania for two hundred years. Pieces of European significance were created: St Casimir's Chapel at the Vilnius Cathedral, the Church of St Peter and St Paul, and the Pažaislis monastery near Kaunas. A distinct Vilnius school formed in the first half of the 18th century, the development of whose style is credited to Johann Christoph Glaubitz (c. 1700–1767), a Lutheran who had come from the German lands, and who was also the most productive 18th century architect not just in Vilnius, but in the entire GDL. He fit in the multiconfessional city of Vilnius splendidly, and worked not only for Lutherans, but for Catholics, Greek Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Jews as well. Glaubitz developed a school of Baroque architecture that has no analogue – Vilnian Baroque. The school is distinct for its combination of decorative, compositional

and architectural elements. The especially tall and slender towers that adorn the main façades of buildings are perhaps the school's most striking characteristic. Churches featuring two graceful towers with differently decorated sections became an integral feature of the Catholic landscape and marked the border of Eastern Catholicism as well as that of Central Europe. Glaubitz's thirty years of creative activity (1737–1767) are one of the most distinct phenomena of old Lithuanian civilization, and a sign of dependence upon Western civilization. This allows Johann Christoph Glaubitz to be promoted to the ranks of the most significant people in the history of Lithuania, as the achievements of the era's rulers pale in comparison to his merits.

The Gaon and "Jerusalem of the North"

Vilnius was brought to fame by the Vilna Gaon, Elijah ben Shlomo Zalman Kremer, (1720–1797) – one of the most illustrious figures in the history of the Jewish world. His historical role played an integral part in the halt of the Hasidic reformist movement which so influenced the Jewish people. Supporters of Hasidism, which had spread in neighbouring countries and the south-eastern part of the GDL, all the way to Vilnius, proposed that Orthodox Rabbinism be reformed – to give importance to the individual and his sincere faith, and to mitigate the stringent laws which regulated everyday life. Although Hasidism was a more liberal and democratic branch of Judaism, by renouncing strict standards concerning religion, morals, and the general way of life, it posed a danger to the future of Judaism itself. The Vilna Gaon not only initiated resistance to Hasidism and declared its followers heretics; he also took measures and used his authority to stop the spread of Hasidism in Lithuania. Thus, the line between Rabbinism, which was loyal to tradition, and Hasidism, which proclaimed to be its more liberal reformation, ran right through the territory of the GDL. Although Hasidic Jews now account for about half of the world's Jewish population, the vitality of Orthodox Rabbinism illustrates how important tradition is to Jews. This also explains the authority that the Vilna Gaon had.

The teaching of Jewish theology at the *yeshivas* (Jewish educational institutions) was reorganised and the study of the Talmud in Yiddish was im-



Interior of the Great Synagogue of Vilna.
Painter Franciszek Smuglewicz, 1786

proved on the urging of the Vilna Gaon. He produced works on nearly all of the fields of Jewish studies at the time – from commentaries to the Holy Scriptures to Hebrew grammar and biblical geography. The Gaon's greatest merit was his gloss on the Babylonian Talmud.

The Vilna Gaon's authority seems to have been the deciding factor in the fact that the Lithuanian Jews – the Litvaks – started to be considered exalted Jews, standing out from the rest by their strict observance of religious tradition, intellectual rationality and respect for education. The rumours that all of the sages of Vilnius knew all 64 volumes of the Talmud by heart were not spread in vain. Furthermore, the Talmud was studied in Litvish Yiddish – a dialect of Yiddish that formed in Lithuania. Moreover, it was namely the Litvish dialect that eventually became the basis for modern Standard Yiddish. The concept of "Litvak" that is used today is also related to the name of the place of residence – a Jew from Lithuania (meaning historical Lithuania – the GDL after the Union of Lublin). However, the term also began to be used in reference to Jews who follow the distinctive style of life that remained even after the destruction of the GDL.

Thus, Vilnius became a symbol of Jewish stability and cultural prosperity in the 18th century and was called the Jerusalem of Lithuania

(*Jerusolajim d'Lita*). Today, studies of the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries number Vilnius among the top ten centres of Jewish world culture (alongside Amsterdam, London, Warsaw, Lvov, Thessaloniki, Istanbul, Tunisia and Baghdad).

THE EARLIEST CONSTITUTION IN EUROPE AND ITS REPEAL

Russia's growing influence led to the First Partition of the Commonwealth in 1772, in which Austria and Prussia were also participants. This circumstance, together with the broadening ideas of the Enlightenment, led to reforms that were used in an attempt to strengthen the state by giving up the system of Nobles' Democracy, which clearly was unable to answer to political reality. The Constitution of 3 May 1791 that was adopted by the Great Sejm of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth became the culmination of these attempts; the Constitution changed the government from an elective to hereditary monarchy, yet the king was just a spokesman for the will of the Nation.

The draft of the Constitution of May 3 was modelled after the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen that was adopted during the French Revolution (1789). Hence, the Polish and Lithuanian reformers were clearly guided by the Great French Revolution. It was not in vain that, in the summer of 1791, the monarch of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Stanisław August Poniatowski, wrote to the French Constituent Assembly that, in addition to France, "there is one more nation in Europe". Eloquent words in the midst of absolutisms. The system constructed by the Polish-Lithuanian Constitution was to have been parallel to the one introduced in England 100 years earlier, which – it is true – never did see a written constitution. The world's first constitution was adopted in the United States, in 1787. Thus, the Constitution of the PLC was the second in the world and the first in Europe, having preceded the Constitution of France by a few months.

To the world, and even to some Lithuanians, this constitution to this day is the Constitution of Poland alone, even though Lithuanian deputies succeeded in negotiating the 20 October 1791 Reciprocal Guarantee of Two Nations – the crucial addendum to the Constitution which guaranteed Lithuania equal representation in state-governing bodies.

The Enlightenment Comes to the GDL

On-going wars with the Turks and the Grand Duchy of Moscow (later – Russia) in particular over the eastern territories, as well as attempts to go out to the Baltic Sea and consolidate in Livonia created conflicts between the CBN and Russia as well as Sweden, which had strengthened its military in the 17th century. In the Livonian War of 1558–1583, Lithuania and Poland gained the greater part of Livonia, along with Riga. However, Sweden began to seek dominion over the Baltic Sea (*dominium maris Baltici*). This caused military actions to flare between Sweden and the CBN as well as between Sweden and Russia.

In the 17th century, the CBN fought two wars with Sweden: 1600–1629 and 1655–1660. The war was complicated by the fact that kings of the CBN who were from the Swedish House of Vasa laid claims to the Swedish throne. The fight for Livonia was mainly in Lithuania's interest, as it didn't have a larger port, while Poland had Gdansk. In 1605, the Lithuanian army achieved a decisive victory against the Swedes in the Battle of Kircholm, though Sweden eventually took Riga and control of the Baltic coast.

From 1655 to 1660, the Swedes were already fighting on Polish-Lithuanian territory, and in 1655, Lithuanian magnates even signed the Agreement of Kėdainiai with Sweden, though the Swedes never did manage to fortify their position in Lithuania. During the Great Northern War (1700–1721), Russia destroyed the army of King Charles XII of Sweden, occupied all of Livonia, and took control of the Baltic coast from Vyborg to Riga. Lithuania and Poland weakened economically and politically in this war, their territory was devastated by foreign armies as well as their own, manifestations of anarchy and struggles among magnates emerged, and the Swedes destroyed Lithuania's small ports in Palanga and Šventoji as well. The battles against the Swedes left a deep mark in the memory of the Lithuanian people – this is demonstrated by various legends and stories about the Swedes, *švedkapiai* (Swedish burial grounds) and the Swedish presence in Lithuania.

Poland and Lithuania were threatened not only by Peter the Great's Russia, which was growing in strength, but by Prussia, which had become a kingdom in 1701, as well – these centralised states eventually determined the fate of the CBN.

In the 1605 Battle of Kircholm, not far from Riga, the army of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (left), under the command of Jan Karol Chodkiewicz, defeated 12 thousand Swedish troops with just 3 thousand cavalry. Painter Pieter Snayers, c. 1620

After the fall of the Saxon Dynasty, Stanisław August Poniatowski was elected sovereign of the PLC in 1764. Although he was not one of those rulers who determine the course of history, it was precisely his reign (1764–1795) that became a historical epoch – an epoch of attempts for change and reform, of the decline of Baroque, and of the agony and destruction of the state.

Two new phenomena of Lithuanian culture emerged at almost the same time: in 1759, the first Lithuanian language Alphabet book was published,

and in 1760, Lithuania's first newspapers – *Kurier Litewski and Wiadomości Literackie* – went into print. The most significant event was the establishment of the Commission of National Education (with bishop of Vilnius Ignacy Massalski as chairman) in 1773. Intended to take over the educational system of the Jesuit order, which had been closed down the same year, this was the first equivalent of a Ministry of Education in Europe. The Commission of National Education undertook changes and attempted to create an integrated system of education. The state was divided into the

educational provinces of Poland and Lithuania, and these – into districts. The education of the Lithuanian province was controlled by the reformed Vilnius University. The Commission of National Education modernised and secularised the curriculum (introduced compulsory writing and arithmetic, and began to combine elements of general education with the development of practical agricultural and craft skills), and introduced the study of natural and physical sciences. Crucial changes took place in the fields of science and education at Vilnius University. The study of physics, biology and medicine were introduced, and astronomy became a separate field of study. Although the Lithuanian language was only taught in elementary school, and secondary schools and universities switched from Latin to Polish, the new educational system nevertheless tore down class barriers.

The political changes and the first steps of the Enlightenment coincided with the beginning of Antoni Tyzenhaus' work, which brought significant changes to the Lithuanian economy. He undertook radical reforms at the royal estates: *folwarks* – serfdom-based farm and agricultural enterprises – were established, feudal land rent was replaced by two days of corvée per week, land was re-graded based on its quality, field reclamation was started, roads were laid, and new varieties of (Dutch) animals were bred. Tyzenhaus sent young people to England to study agronomy, and founded schools for land-surveyors, accountants, builders, and veterinarians in Grodno. He set up textile, paper, haberdashery, weapon and cart manufactories on the royal estate of Grodno. Tyzenhaus' reforms were some of the most important phenomena of Lithuanian life at the end of the 18th century.

The cases of releasing peasants from serfdom and giving them personal freedom should be considered steps of the Enlightenment in the Lithuanian economy. The Pavlov Republic established by Paweł Ksawery Brzostowski is regarded as the most vivid example of such. The Four-Year Sejm approved its statutes in 1791, thereby showing its goodwill towards such an "experiment", which was being used to instil a republican lifestyle. At the time, it was said that there were three republics in the commonwealth: Poland, Lithuania, and Pavlov. This illustrates the great importance that the public attached to Pavlov. The phenomenon was unprecedented in Central Europe; it was one of the most radical peasant reforms in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the second half of the 18th century.

In Europe, Classicism was considered to be the style of fashion-dictating France. In Lithuania, the steps of the Enlightenment and Neoclassicism were

Lithuanian peasants. Painter Franciszek Smuglewicz, 1800

essentially parts of the same historical process. In 1769, Marcin Knackfus (c. 1740–1821), one of the pioneers of Neoclassical architecture in Lithuania, became architect to bishop of Vilnius Ignacy Massalski – the future chairman of the Commission of National Education – and began to build the Episcopal Palace in Verkiai, which is now considered to be one of the most prominent monuments of Neoclassicism. In 1769, one of the towers of the Vilnius Cathedral collapsed, and the Vilnius Town Hall tower began to lean. Life itself helped Neoclassicism to become the most prominent style of architecture in Vilnius. Laurynas Gucevičius (1753–1798), Lithuania's most notable Neoclassical architect, began reconstruction of the Vilnius Cathedral in 1782 and of the Vilnius Town Hall in 1786. And although the last pieces of Baroque – the sculptures and the tympanum – were still being created for the main façade of the cathedral, the portico – the symbol of Lithuanian Neoclassicism – was built in 1786. And in 1792, addition of the sculptures of St Casimir – Lithuania's patron saint, St Stanislaus – Poland's patron saint, and St Helena on the pediment of the cathedral was completed.

Reconstruction of the Vilnius Cathedral and Town Hall coincided with the changes fated by the Four-Year Sejm. Gucevičius himself rose in

Vilnius Cathedral, from Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński's *Album de Wilna*, 1847. Painter Isidore Laurent Deroy

defence of the Constitution of May 3, becoming the head of the Vilnius Guard during Kościuszko's Uprising. Gucevičius not only united the ideas of the Enlightenment and Neoclassicism – he was also one of the most prominent artists in the history of Lithuania who bound their fate to that of their land.

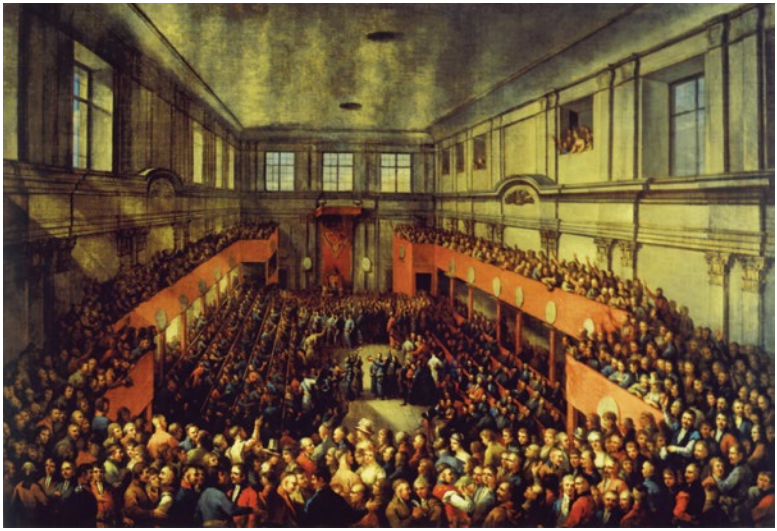
The Constitution of May 3 and the Reciprocal Guarantee of Two Nations

The Four-Year Sejm, which commenced in 1788, adopted the Constitution of May 3. Prior to that, the Sejm had undertaken very important social reforms – for the first time, there were attempts to give townspeople nearly equal rights to that of the nobles, or to at least begin this process. It was the Constitution of May 3 that formalised the rights of the townspeople. It also, for the first time, referred to the fact that the state is to support the peasants in their relationships with the landowners. Thus, the term "nation" used in the Constitution no longer meant just a "nation of nobles", but rather, included nobles, townspeople and peasants equally. The Constitution, in discussing the political system of the state, was based on Charles de Montesquieu's theory of separation of powers. Laws were to be issued by the Sejm. The *liberum veto* – the right of the nobles to protest

parliamentary resolutions and nullify its work – was repealed. Although the king was to chair the Sejm, his legislative powers were limited, though his role in the executive branch was increased. The system of royal elections, which had caused Poland and Lithuania to roll into a quagmire of anarchy, was revoked and the state was declared a hereditary monarchy. The government was to help the sovereign manage the affairs of the state; the so-called Guardians of the Laws included the chairmen (ministers) of the newly created Polish-Lithuanian central organs of state power – the commissions of the treasury, the military and the police. The Constitution concludes with the idea of the nation as the integrity and sovereignty of the state. It was not the monarch with his army, but every citizen of the country who was to defend the freedom of his people. Thus, the PLC acquired a fundamental law that was in line with the spirit of the modern period and the principles of civil society, and which formed a constitutional monarchy system.

There is sometimes doubt that the Constitution of May 3 was also the governing law of Lithuania. This is odd, as it was not just the "reconstruction of Poland" that was carried out. The Constitution writes in plural about the "states of the Commonwealth", i.e. meaning Lithuania as well. In spite of all the unitary tendencies, Articles III and IV of the Constitution clearly refer to the "states of the Commonwealth" – Poland and Lithuania. There are also references not only to common rulers, but also to Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas and his privileges granted to Lithuanian nobles. In discussions following the adoption of the Constitution of May 3, Lithuanian representatives expressed their belief that the Constitution was their concession in the name of the strengthening of the state (30 of 50 GDL Sejm deputies voted in favour of the Constitution). On 16 May, a law was passed on holding every third Sejm in Grodno and on separate sessions for Lithuanian deputies, and on 24 June, the historic terms of the Crown and the GDL came back – the concept of the Commonwealth of Both Nations appeared in the names of the commissions, and codification works took place separately. The position of the Lithuanian representatives was that the GDL must remain as a separate political community with its own law, and that the Statute of Lithuania must be preserved as the basis of the identity of the GDL.

On 20 October 1791, the Lithuanian delegation succeeded in demanding an addendum to the Constitution at the Four-Year Sejm; this was



Adoption of the Constitution of 3 May 1791.
Painter Kazimierz Wojniakowski (based on a drawing by Jean-Pierre Norblin), 1806

called the Reciprocal Guarantee of Two Nations. The amendment was presented to the Sejm by Kazimierz Nestor Sapieha, and was most likely penned by Vilnius judge Tadeusz Korsak. According to this Guarantee, the main organs of executive power established in the Constitution of May 3 – the military and treasury commissions – were to have equal numbers of Polish and GDL officials, and were to be presided by Polish and Lithuanian chairs by turns. Though a "common Homeland – the Republic of Poland" is referred to in the Guarantee as well, it also mentions "both nations" and the GDL. Thus the Constitution regained the principle of dualism – a federal state. Nevertheless, the authors of the addendum and their contemporaries admitted that this was a continuation of the Union of Lublin idea, just adapted to the current needs of society. The equivalence of the composition of the commissions even surpassed the principles of the Union of Lublin, as "neither in its inhabitants nor its wealth does Lithuania make up even a third of the Crown" (Hugo Kołłątaj). In terms of the legal system of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Guarantee became a part of the *pacta conventa* – the obligations of the kings-elect to the nobility of the PLC that were agreed on in 1573. And that meant that the future rulers and their successors would also

have to abide to the Guarantee. Thus, the Guarantee even rose above the Constitution of May 3 in the hierarchy of legal regulations. It couldn't even be changed by extraordinary Sejms, which had the right to make revisions to the constitution every 25 years.

For this reason, the Constitution of May 3 was seen as an act for the revival of Lithuania. The "Glorious Constitution of Poland and Lithuania" returned the once lost "hope of forthcoming grandeur" to Lithuania. The reforms not only put the social and political development of Lithuanian society on the track of progress – they also provided new opportunities for Lithuanian-speaking culture. It was no coincidence that the Constitution was translated into Lithuanian at that time; this fact is underestimated in the history of Lithuanian culture, as until then, only religious texts and belles-lettres were available in Lithuanian. Hence, the translation of the Constitution of May 3 was the first political and legal document in the Lithuanian language. Even 27 of the 33 local parliaments of nobles of the GDL that assembled in February, 1792 took an oath to the Constitution, and the remaining six voted in its approval. In this respect, the Constitution had more supporters in Lithuania than in Poland, where only 10 of the 45 local parliaments took oath to the Constitution, and 27 more approved of it.

The post of Grand Chancellor was established based on the Constitution of May 3. On 8 June 1791, this position was entrusted to Deputy Chancellor of the CBN, Joachim Litawor Chreptowicz. Chreptowicz made up the first Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which formally began operations on 19 June 1791. The first task of the Ministry was to find out what the reaction of the European countries was to the events in the commonwealth after the Constitution was declared. Particular attention was paid to embassies in Berlin and Saint Petersburg. The term of office of the first Ministry of Foreign Affairs was short – in November, 1792 it was struck with the fate of the state...

Although the Constitution of May 3 was not even close to the documents of the French Revolution in radicalness, it should still be considered the boundary between the old system of nobles and the modern period, and thus – the boundary between the Baroque Period and the Age of Enlightenment. All of the 18th century Polish and Lithuanian uprisings against Russia took place under the flag of ideas of the Constitution of May 3.

Destruction of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

The aristocracy and the entire conservative part of society furiously opposed the reforms of the Constitution of May 3. However, the hub of the opposition was in Saint Petersburg, where Catherine II called in all of the reform's fiercest opponents. It was in Saint Petersburg that the Act of the Targowica Confederation, which was proclaimed on 14 May 1792, evolved and was written up (Targowica – a village in Ukraine where the reform opponents rallied). Soon after, the Russian army came to the aid of the Confederates: on 22 May, the army marched into the GDL near Polotsk and the Polish-Russian War of 1792 began. Russia's so-called "Lithuanian army" had 33,700 soldiers, against whom the GDL, with the help of Poland, had just 18 thousand troops to confront them (Russia's "Ukrainian army" had 64 thousand troops, and Poland sent 26 thousand men to fight them). The forces were not equal, so it was anticipated that the resisting army would retreat toward Warsaw. A more serious battle took place on 11 June near Mir, but Vilnius was handed over without a fight on 14 June. In late July, the defence was already rallying near Brest, but right at that time – on 24 July – news came from Warsaw about the capitulation of Stanisław II August and his accession to join the Targowica Confederation.

On 23 July 1792 in Warsaw, Stanisław August Poniatowski, the ruler of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, met with 12 dignitaries (six from Poland and six from Lithuania). The king held to the position that they should no longer oppose the Russian army, which had already approached Warsaw, and accept the note that had been received from Catherine II on 21 July. Seven ministers supported the king, and five were against; the latter proposed to resist and continue negotiations in order to secure the most favourable conditions possible for the state. Quantitatively, it was an incredibly small majority, and also one that would have never been, had one of the heads of the so-called Patriotic Party, Hugo Kołłątaj, not suddenly changed his position in support of the king. The Lithuanian representatives appeared even more honourably than their Polish counterparts: of the five who voted in favour of further opposition, three were from Lithuania: Grand Marshal of Lithuania Ignacy Potocki, Court Marshal of Lithuania Stanisław Sołtan, and Kazimierz Nestor Sapieha, Marshal of the Lithuanian Confederation of the PLC Sejm. History

Allegory of the Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Painter Johann Esaias Nilson, 1773

doomed Stanisław II August's conciliating position – the PLC's prospects for resistance were by no means exhausted in the war with Russian War from May to July, 1792. Admittedly, the Russians had the upper hand – they had 98 thousand troops on the Lithuanian and Ukrainian fronts, while the Polish and Lithuanian army had 55–56 thousand; however, while retreating towards Warsaw, the latter didn't experience further losses and were met by another 40 thousand troops. The GDL army had a good deal of difficulties with military commanders (unlike the Polish army in Ukraine, which was led by Józef Poniatowski), and was not fully prepared for war; nevertheless, the army put up resistance near Mir and in Brest, and withdrew to Warsaw without major losses. Of 72 cannons, only seven were lost.

And near Warsaw, everything came down to the position of Stanisław II August, who never even visited the front and failed to take advantage of the total mobilization or form a militia of townspeople. There is no doubt that the PLC would have lost the war of 1792, but a lost war does not mean a lost state. And what if it had been decided to resist? Upon losing the war, the state would have been cut down – perhaps more than once – but it would have survived. A state that resists resolutely shows that it is a historical entity. Hence, the year 1795 is first and foremost that of the fiasco of Stanisław II August, which was brought about in a systematic manner by his entire biography and personal characteristics. In order to establish himself in power, he played with Russia, but not via the PLC Embassy in Saint Petersburg, but rather – with the Russian Embassy in Warsaw. His ambitions impelled him to become preoccupied with small intrigues; he was on bad terms with his entire surroundings, so he stood alone at crucial moments, and the public, having put so much hope into this ruler and having renounced their right to a monarch-elect by the Constitution of May 3, was left disappointed and betrayed.

Thus, fate did not give Poland and Lithuania a more honourable ruler at the end of the 18th century – history defeated the possibility of a different development with two votes. The Targowica Confederation was approved on 25 June 1792 by the Confederation of Vilnius (i.e. Lithuania), which was headed by Great Hetman of Lithuania Szymon Kossakowski, his brother, bishop of Livonia Józef Kossakowski, and bishop of Vilnius Ignacy Massalski. On 11 September in Brest, the Targowica and Vilnius Confederations united into the Confederation of Both Nations and declared Grodno as their centre. PLC ally Prussia was alarmed by the potential strengthening of the state as a result of the reforms, and Russian Empress Catherine II was worried that the ghost of French Jacobinism had already reached the Russian border.

Two days after Louis XVI was beheaded in France on 21 January 1793, Russia and Prussia implemented the Second Partition of the PLC. All that was left to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania were the ethnic Lithuanian and western Belarusian lands. At that time, Russia forced Stanisław II August to convene the Sejm on 17 June 1793 in Targowiczanin-controlled Grodno, in order to approve of the new peace treaty between Russia and the PLC and thereby authorise the Second Partition. Although the Sejm tried to resist, once a few deputies were detained, the Sejm was surrounded by the

Russian army, and Russian officers were stationed in the hall, the results of the partition were confirmed on 19 August – the Grodno Sejm and Stanisław II August were forced to renounce the Constitution of May 3 and restore the system of Golden Liberty.

In March of 1794, an uprising began in Poland which was led by Tadeusz Kościuszko, a general from the GDL who had made his mark in the American Revolutionary War. The uprising began in Lithuania on 16 April 1794 in Šiauliai, led by Jakub Jasiński. In April, the rebels liberated Vilnius from the Russians and proclaimed the Lithuanian Uprising Act in Town Hall Square, by which a rebel government was formed – the Lithuanian National Supreme Council. The rebels acted decisively – they hanged GDL Great Hetman Szymon Kossakowski and arrested the more notable Targowiczanins. The peasants were addressed (marking the first public proclamation in the Lithuanian language) – inciting them to start partisan warfare against the Russian army, with the promise of civil liberty in return.

For Poland and Lithuania, the culmination of the uprising was the execution of some of the Targowica Confederates, including bishop of Vilnius Ignacy Massalski and bishop of Livonia Józef Kossakowski, who were hanged in Warsaw on 28 June. It was as if the rebels had repeated the course of the French Revolution – the idea of organising an execution came up in the Jacobin Club, which opposed the official rebel government. This club prepared manifestations which forced the court to declare the aforementioned death penalties. All that cooled down a part of the PLC nobility from the uprising and became a pretext for the Russian army, led by Alexander Suvorov, to take action. In summer, the Russian and Prussian armies took over the initiative: Prussian troops occupied Warsaw in June, and in August, Russian troops followed suit in Vilnius. Warsaw, which was also being defended by retreated Lithuanian rebels, surrendered on 5 November. Both Jakub Jasiński, the Lithuanian rebel commander, and Tadeusz Korsak, author of the addendum to the Constitution of May 3, were killed defending Warsaw.

The defeat of the uprising sped up the finale – on 24 October 1795, Russia, Austria and Prussia signed a convention in Saint Petersburg concerning the Third Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Part of the territory of the GDL, i.e. the ethnic Lithuanian lands, went to Russia (and so belonged until World War I). Prussia received Užnemunė

and named it "New Prussia" (this territory belonged to Prussia until 1806, when Napoleon established the Duchy of Warsaw; in 1815, Užnemunė went to Russia). Austria also participated in the partitioning of Poland and Lithuania and received the south-western corner of the GDL which, like Užnemunė, went to Russia in 1815.

On 26 January 1797, Russia, Prussia and Austria signed a new Saint Petersburg Convention which confirmed the Third Partition of the PLC, eliminated the remnants of its statehood and drew precise borders. The convention was accompanied by an abdication act for Stanisław August Poniatowski. Although Soviet Russia, which was the legal successor of the Russian Empire, abolished the acts of the partitions of the PLC on 29 August 1918, the former state was never restored. Rather, two new independent states – Lithuania and Poland – were to form.

CHAPTER III

LITHUANIA UNDER THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE (1795–1915)

"Indeed, no other language in the world has received so many high praises as the Lithuanian language. Great honour is bestowed on the Lithuanian nation for developing and elaborating the details and usage of the most evolved human language with distinctively beautiful and clear phonology. Moreover, according to comparative linguistics, the Lithuanian language is most suitable to represent primeval Aryan civilisation and culture."

IMMANUEL KANT (1724–1804)
From the Foreword to Christian Gottlieb Mielcke's
Lithuanian-German and German-Lithuanian Dictionary

During this period, Lithuania, with the exclusion of Užnemunė belonged to the autocratic Russian Empire, except for the second half of 1812 that is referred to as Napoleon Bonaparte's interlude. Its history is the story of a split, occupied, divided, annexed, broken, and struggling country. This period is marked by the dilemma of statehood restoration and the evolution of ethnic Lithuanians into an independent political and cultural society.

The first 40 years of this period was the time when Vilnius University flourished as the largest and most advanced university in the Russian Empire. In 1864, however, when those in power decided to change the region's cultural and ethnic identity (presumably in an effort to fix the mistakes and injustice of the past 500 years), even apolitical books, newspapers, and prayer books were treated as smuggling goods. Learning to read and write had to be done secretly from gendarmes, police and authorities, and the threat of being sent faraway to Russia was always present. It was also the time of major breakthroughs, changes in ethnic identity, and political conflict. Peasants, who accounted for almost 80% of the region's population, lived in serfdom. After being ousted from po-

litical power, nobility ruled social life. The noblemen's class in Poland and Lithuania was considerably more numerous than elsewhere in Europe and accounted for 6.5% of the population (the average in Europe and Russia was 1%).

Nevertheless, noble landlords constituted only one quarter of the local nobility, and the majority of them owned little or no land, spoke primarily Polish, and cherished the memories and traditions of the gone statehood. They had dual ethnic identity – they identified themselves with both, Lithuanian and Polish (the GDL's noblemen were unwilling to fully integrate into the old Kingdom of Poland, although they did not want to separate from it either). Beyond Lithuania's borders Lithuanian noblemen were considered Polish. The Russian Empire treated them as such as well.

1864 marked a relative boundary. It was the year when Russian Tsar's rule suppressed the last nobility-led uprising that was intended to restore the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. At that time the tsarist authorities started releasing peasants from serfdom, as they had previously announced they would. Peasants became relatively free, and they were granted property rights to the land they cultivated, thus becoming an independent, although the lowest, class of peasants-farmers. By means of brutal and discriminatory russification, the authorities tried to turn the annexed Polish and Lithuanian territories into Western Russia.

More radical noblemen did not put up with the loss of their state and attempted to restore it by getting involved in Napoleonic wars and by staging two uprisings: one in 1830–1831 and another in 1863–1864. The Lithuanian national-cultural movement was started during this time as well. A few decades later this movement was resumed, and it became a strong political power, while ethnic Lithuanians, or the Lithuanian nation, became an independent cultural and political society that demanded independence in 1905.

THE DRAW OF FORMER STATEHOOD

Cultural Autonomy in Napoleon's shadow

The incorporation of the GDL's lands into Russia meant dependence on the autocratic monarchical empire that was implemented by a centralized bureaucratic body subordinate to the monarch. A local administrative unit was called a governorate (*gubernija*) and was run by a governor. Governors were appointed by the Tsar from the government or other governorates, but they were subordinate to the internal affairs department. Governorates were divided into counties (*ujezd*) that were led by governor-appointed county chiefs. The empire's regional capitals as well as its border areas had yet another layer of governance above the governor – governor-general. Each Tsar-appointed governor-general was in charge of a few governorates and the military stationed in these governorates.

Self-government bodies of individual classes, such as meetings of noble landowners in governorates and counties, as well as self-government bodies of the town-dwellers' class and their sub-classes in certain locales, were incorporated into local self-governments since the rule of Catherine II. They were ancillary branches of local self-governments that were supervised by local administrations. County noblemen's meetings elected officials responsible for public order as well as judges of lower courts. Such a system of local self-government was also introduced in the GDL's territory that was annexed by Russia in 1795, and that had a population of 1.8 million, out of which 1.1 million were residents of ethnic Lithuania. About 250,000 people lived in Užnemunė. The population of Vilnius was about 25,000, although despite its claims as the third largest city in the Russian Empire, it was about 10 times smaller than Saint Petersburg and Moscow. Right before the abolition of serfdom, Vilnius had almost 60,000 residents.

Initially, two governorates were going to be established in the annexed territory, but a year later they were merged into one under the name of Lithuania (the Lithuania Governorate). In 1801, this governorate was divided into two: the Lithuania-Vilnius Governorate and the Lithuania-Grodno Governorate. Both of them were made subordinate to the Governor-General appointed that year in the city of Vilnius. In 1819, a narrow coastal

strip that included Palanga and Šventoji counties was transferred from the Vilnius Governorate to the Courland Governorate.

Almost the entire Vilnius Governorate, which was divided into 11 counties, was historically and ethnically Lithuanian, just like the northern part of the Grodno Governorate. The eastern and south-eastern areas, however, were undergoing the processes of bi-lingualism and linguistic slavinisation (belorusification). The people in these areas were losing their Lithuanian identity without acquiring a Belorussian identity; they simply considered themselves to be locals (Tutejszy). The Belorussian language was more pragmatic, because it enabled them to understand Polish lords and priests as well as the Russian authorities. This process gained greater momentum in the second half of the 19th century, but it was later halted by influential activists of the national movement of ethnic Lithuanians, mostly priests.

In 1843, seven counties in the western and northern parts of the Vilnius Governorate were merged to create the Kaunas Governorate; three other counties that belonged to the Minsk and Grodno governorates were merged into the Vilnius Governorate. Consequently, only the Kaunas Governorate was viewed as ethnically Lithuanian by the tsarist authorities, while the Vilnius Governorate was considered to be Belorussian despite the fact that its western part was primarily Lithuanian.

In the 1830s, the Russian system of territorial administration was introduced in Congress Poland. Lithuania's Užnemunė belonged to a governorate that used to be called Augustów, but changed its name to Suwałki in 1967; it covered about one sixth of the current territory of Lithuania. Until 1807 Užnemunė belonged to Prussia, and from 1807 to 1814 it belonged to the Duchy of Warsaw created by Napoleon Bonaparte. The latter was officially called the Kingdom of Poland, and it was not considered an organic part of the Russian Empire in terms of formal political administration. Although the political conditions in the greater part of ethnic Lithuania were different from those in Užnemunė, the formation of the modern nation was moving in the same direction.

Merging the core lands of the GDL into Russia did not change the situation of peasants. The worst thing for them was mandatory recruitment – a 25-year service in the Russian army (annual recruitment quota was 5–7 men of recruitable age for each thousand; the quota would be doubled during war). Small towns lost their autonomy, and the majority of their resi-

dents became serfs. The principal cities of governorates did not lose their autonomy, while county centres got it back. Jewish communities (kahals) were also autonomous until 1840, when Jews got involved in general municipal administration. Jews were forbidden to engage in agriculture; residence boundaries were established, and it was forbidden to move to either one of the two Russian capitals, although this restriction did not apply to educated people and qualified professionals.

Portrait of Michał Kleofas Ogiński by François-Xavier Fabre, 1805–1806. Ogiński was a participant in the 1794 Uprising and the author of the last project on the GDL's independence restoration

While the noblemen lost their state, they gained the rights exercised by Russian noblemen and became privileged subordinates of the empire. Few lost their estates; even former supporters of Tadeusz Kościuszko were able to claim their estates upon returning from abroad and swearing allegiance to the Russian ruler. Among such returnees was a big landowner and composer Michał Kleofas Ogiński, who wrote a famous polonaise "A Farewell to the Homeland". The noblemen were autonomous in governorates and counties, where they had so-called Sejmiks and exercised auxiliary powers. The Statutes of Lithuania remained in effect while the Polish language was allowed in self-government institutions, county administrations, lower courts, and the education system. Vilnius University transitioned from teaching in Latin to teaching in Polish at that time. Thus the territory acquired cultural autonomy.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Vilnius intelligentsia helped draft an educational reform for the entire Russia that was modelled upon the framework used by the Commission for National Education of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (PLC). This reform led to the establishment of a large Vilnius Educational District that had authority over all former lands of the PLC that were merged into Russia, with 9 million people living in them. The District's nucleus was Vilnius University,

Napoleon's troops moving across the Nemunas
on their way to Russia in 1812.
Painter Jean Baptiste Madou, 1827

which was reorganised in 1803 according to the most popular European university model and subsequently received the status of an imperial university. Until 1824, the University's patron was Adam Jerzy Czartoryski (1770–1861), a descendant of Polish noblemen and a personal friend of Tsar Alexander I. He also served as the Russian Foreign Minister for some time. To Czartoryski the District was a preparatory step towards restoring the Polish (or Polish-Lithuanian) state under the auspices of the Russian Empire. This plan ran counter to the hopes of those who had been admiring Napoleon – the rising post-revolutionary French star – since the 18th century.

In 1807, the Duchy of Warsaw first appeared on Europe's map. It was a semi-independent state under the auspices of Napoleon that comprised the Polish lands and Lithuania's Užnemunė, both previously taken from Prussia. By 1809, this state will have claimed the majority of Polish lands from Austria. It adopted the Napoleonic Code and granted its peasants personal freedom, although without property rights to land and without the right to leave one's residence or farm without the knowledge of the landowner.

The retreat of the French Army at the Town Hall Square in Vilnius. From Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński's *Album de Wilna*, 1846. Painter Jan Damel

In June of 1812, Napoleon started a war with Russia, and soon the majority of former lands of the GDL yielded to his power. Napoleon allowed creating the Commissary Provisional Government of the GDL, which maintained public order and undertook to organise military units that assisted Napoleon's Army (one third of the Army consisted of the regiments of the Duchy of Warsaw). In July, a wish to re-join Poland and to claim the lost lands of the GDL was declared in the Cathedral of Vilnius in the presence of the delegation of the Duchy of Warsaw. Napoleon, however, had to retreat from Moscow, and his Army retreated with him. At the end of 1812, Lithuania was taken over by the Russians.

The 1830–1831 Uprising

Alexander I decided not to retaliate against the Lithuanian nobility who broke their oath of allegiance to him, and everything remained the same, although the marching of huge armies through the country twice in 6 months had a negative impact on the economy. According to the settlement facilitated by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the majority

of the Duchy of Warsaw, including Lithuania's Užnemunė, was merged to form the Kingdom of Poland. It was otherwise known as Congress Poland, and its throne was passed to the ruling Russian dynasty by the right of succession. Lithuania's nobility wanted to join this formation, but Alexander I was against it.

Vilnius University became the social and cultural centre of the entire historical Lithuania. It was also the most prominent centre of the Polish culture outside ethnic Poland. This period was probably the most successful time for the University, as the number of its students increased from 200 to 1,300. The University was proud of its well-known professors: historian Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861), philosopher Jan Śniadecki (1756–1830), chemist and biologist Andrzej Śniadecki, biologists Ludwig Heinrich Bojanus and Edward Karol Eichwald, Johann Peter Frank and his son Joseph Frank from Austria. Their work was known internationally. The University was also at the root of copious periodicals. In the years following 1812, the Masonic society gained substantial popularity in Lithuania. The majority of even slightly intellectual people belonged to Masonic lodges. *Gorliwy Litwin* was the best-known lodge. There were a few student organisations in the University that engaged in activities aimed at fostering cultural development and moral improvement, truthfulness, freedom, and loyalty to the Homeland. Among the members of such organisations was Adam Mickiewicz who, among other things, wrote about the Lithuanian Homeland.

A portrait of Adam Mickiewicz. Painter S. Heymann, 1897

In 1822, his first poetry book was published in Vilnius. Later on Adam Mickiewicz's poetry became popular throughout the entire European continent.

Although these organisations did not engage in any conspiracies, they were responsible for encouraging disobedience to authority. The Tsar's administration undertook an investigation that evolved into Europe's largest legal process of that time against stu-

dents and pupils. Charges were filed against more than one hundred individuals, and about 20 of them, including Adam Mickiewicz, were sent into exile or forced into recruits. Professors that were politically distrusted, such as Joachim Lelewel, were sent to exile as well. The University's patron Adam Jerzy Czartoryski was forced to resign. The territory of the Vilnius Educational District was reduced. Tsar Nicholas I's administration became even more vigilant with the establishment of secret police.

After an assassination attempt against the Tsar's brother, who was also commander in chief of the Polish military, at the end of November in 1830 in Warsaw, the city sustained its residents' uprising. The Kingdom's Sejm toppled Nicholas I from his throne as Poland's King and granted sovereignty to the nation. This meant that the Kingdom of Poland was now independent; it also meant a war with Russia. In Lithuania, the uprising began spontaneously right before the spring of 1831 in Samogitia, and it was triggered off by a recruitment drive announced by its authorities. Therefore, rebel units that were led by small local noblemen included a lot of peasants, in some cases even majority, and proclamations in both Polish and Lithuanian (Samogitian) contained a demand to release peasants from serfdom. There was no single body managing the uprising in Lithuania; there were a lot of "governments" in counties, one of which proclaimed itself Samogitia's Government. By May the rebels had taken over almost the entire territory to the west and north of Vilnius.

In June of 1831, the Regular Army of the Kingdom of Poland was strategically sent to Lithuania. The Army consisted of about 12,600 soldiers, and it was led by General Antanas Gelgaudas. They easily took over Kaunas, but did not rush to attack Vilnius, because a provisional government of Poland was being formed in Lithuania. Finally, the Poles decided to advance on Vilnius in the hope that this will cause an uprising in the city, but their hope got shattered. The Polish Army and rebel units suffered a defeat outside the city walls. Some Polish units managed to return to their Kingdom, others crossed the Prussian border. That autumn, Russia claimed the Kingdom of Poland.

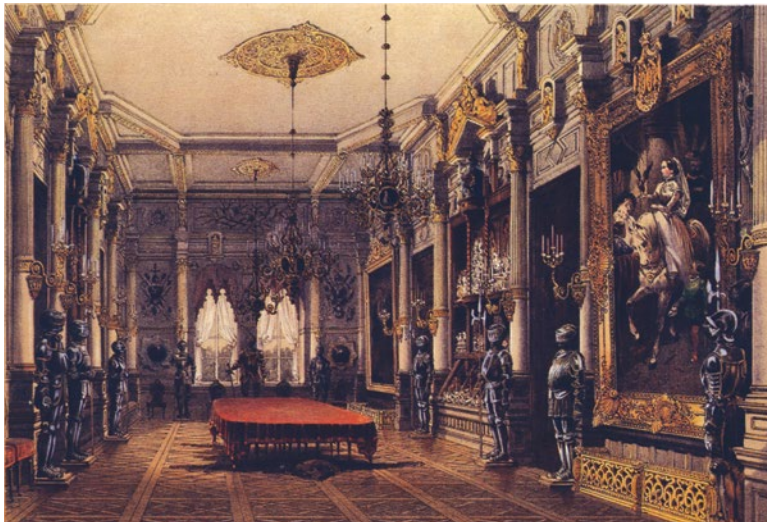
Without the Polish Army, Lithuania's rebel units had about 30,000 fighters. A young landowner Emilia Plater-Broel, who fought in men's clothing and rode a horse, was the Uprising's legend. She got sick and passed away while retreating to Poland in the autumn.

The Tsar: "There Shall Be No Poland Here"

After the Uprising, the Kingdom of Poland lost its political autonomy, while former lands of the GDL faced a new policy introduced by the Tsar, that was also referred to as the Polish-origins' elimination policy. The ideology behind the policy was based on a claim to the GDL's lands on the grounds of Russia's alleged "historical right of priority" to the heritage. This claim was prevalent during Ivan the Terrible's time. It was purported that prior to the Catholic christening of its pagan part and the Act of Krewo with Poland, the GDL was one of the strongest Russian states that competed with Moscow in order to unify Russian lands; the people behind this state – ethnic Lithuanians – would have eventually become Russian. After the Union of Lublin, the GDL was allegedly a territory of Poland. Therefore, after claiming what supposedly belonged to her by the "historical right of priority", Russia had the right – by force, if necessary – "to restore historical justice". Institutions that differentiated this territory from the rest of Russia were consequently eliminated, and Polish was banned in local administrations. Russian was to be used in schools as well. Local noblemen were allowed to work in local administration only after 10 years of service in other Russian governorates.

In 1832, a decision was made to close Vilnius University; the initiators of this decision claimed that it was "a den of free-thinking in Lithuania". However, two separate institutions of higher education that were subordinate to the Russian Ministry of Internal Affairs were established on the premises of two former university faculties. They were the Medical and Surgical Academy and the Roman Catholic Academy. Ten years later the latter was moved from Vilnius to Saint Petersburg, while the Medical and Surgical Academy was closed. In 1840, the Statutes of Lithuania were repealed, and the judicial system was made to resemble its Russian counterpart. The word "Lithuania" was removed from the names of Vilnius and Grodno governorates, while former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was now treated as Western Russia, and former territory of the GDL was now called Northwestern Territory.

There was also a change in the attitude of the authorities to the church. Quite a few Catholic monasteries were accused of helping rebels and were consequently closed. Uniate Church was dissolved in 1839, and the Uniates



Reminiscencing old times – interior of Verkiai Palace in Vilnius, from Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński's *Album de Wilna*, 1848. Painter Philippe Benoist

were forced to become Russian Orthodox. Books and other publications in Polish were not completely banned: in 1835–1841, nine volumes of the *History of the Lithuanian Nation* by Teodor Narbutt, who was a military engineer and a historian, were published in the Polish language in Vilnius. The book was about Lithuania's history up to the Union of Lublin. It included texts written by a prolific Polish writer and a Lithuanian (the GDL) patriot, Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, who published a cultural magazine *Atheneum* in Vilnius in 1841–1851.

The Lithuanian language was not officially banned either. In 1841, the authorities gave permission to establish schools in affiliation with the churches of the Diocese of Telšiai (Samogitia). It was permitted to teach pupils to read and write in Lithuanian, to teach religion, and it was also mandated to introduce pupils to the Russian alphabet. Thus the authorities were inclined to treat these schools as a preparatory step for a public Russian elementary school.

Russia's defeat in the Crimean War (1853–1856) motivated the newly inaugurated Tsar, Alexander II, to prepare for the abolition of serfdom, while ethnic policy became less stringent. In the spring of 1861, the new Emperor signed a manifesto that proclaimed the emancipation of serfs

on private estates; legal acts were subsequently signed that regulated the procedure of transition from a serf to a landowner, and that established a mandatory settlement for the lot given to serfs. The reform of peasants was scheduled to start in two years. Before long a wave of patriotic demonstrations rippled through Warsaw and Vilnius, and it did not subside until the Tsar imposed martial law at the end of the summer.

In 1862, Congress Poland and Lithuania saw the establishment of the Reds whose goal was to organise an uprising. The Reds were noble pro-democratic youth. They thought that serfs would get involved in an uprising, because they believed that serfs would be disappointed in the Tsar's emancipation procedure. Although Lithuania's Reds were for equality in the federal relationship with Poland, some of them saw the future state to be comprised of three or even four nations (Poland, Lithuania, Russia; or Polish, Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Ukrainian nations). In their propaganda in Polish, Lithuanian, and Belorussian, the Reds promised serfs freedom and property rights to the entire land they farmed without any settlement. They hoped that the emancipation reform would bring about unrest in Russia's villages, and that the authorities would not be able to dispatch a lot of troops against rebels. The Whites included mostly larger landowners who were not interested in escalating the emancipation issue, and who saw the forthcoming uprising as an opportunity to exert pressure on the Tsar to finally "return" autonomy to the Kingdom of Poland. The Whites hoped that the uprising would provoke pressure on Russia by the western states who won the Crimean War.

The 1863–1864 Uprising

A new recruiting drive was announced at the end of January in 1863. The Reds had no choice but to start an uprising, even though they were not well prepared yet.

Poland's provisional national government that operated underground announced the beginning of an uprising on January 22. On February 1, leaflets in Polish and Lithuanian were distributed in former territory of the GDL to announce the beginning of an uprising as well. Fearing that Lithuania's Reds may take radical action, Poland's government put the Whites in charge of the uprising in Lithuania.

The majority of rebel units were established and operated in historically ethnic Lithuania, which was the case during the first uprising as well. This time the authorities were prepared to put down an uprising. Hundreds of thousands of Russian troops were deployed in the Vilnius military district, and Russia's Army was increased 1.5 times throughout 1863, as after the Crimean War the Tsar was not confident that his former enemies would not undertake any military action by the Baltic Sea. It was not possible for the rebel units to control larger areas. Zygmunt Sierakowski, former captain in the headquarters of the Russian Army, was appointed chief leader of the Uprising in Lithuania in the spring. He united rebel units into an army, but that gave the opposition a chance to draw a lot of blood in one strike. In early May, Sierakowski's rebel army was beaten near Biržai, the chief leader was wounded and captured, and later publicly hung in Vilnius. After Sierakowski's death, a young Lithuanian priest, Antanas Mackevičius, was appointed chief leader of the Uprising in the Kaunas Governorate (also referred to as *vaivadija* by the rebels). The rebels did not unite into larger units and followed the tactics of small attacks in the partisan war.

With England and France merely sending diplomatic notes that encouraged Russia to avoid further bloodshed, the Russian government was resolute. Mikhail Muravyov was appointed Governor-General of Vilnius. He had experience in putting down an uprising, and with the Tsar's approval, he demonstrated violence and terror. He cunningly won over the uprising's leadership by achieving a correction in the emancipation reform to better suit Lithuanian peasants. The reform was consequently implemented without coordinating with landowners, as established in the 1861 legislation. Although in July Poland's uprising leadership reinstated the Reds to Lithuania's uprising leadership (Konstanty Kalinowski, who was a fervent Lithuanian patriot and a supporter of the national revival in Belarus was appointed as the chief leader), the uprising started losing its steam. At the end of 1863, the opposition caught Antanas Mackevičius and later Konstanty Kalinowski, and hung them both publicly.

From the military point of view the 60,000 rebels stood no chance of winning, and pinning all hopes on the peasants' uprising in Russia was a mere illusion. The West did not intend to shed blood over "Poland's issues" either. Over 6,000 rebels and only about 320 Russian troops died in bat-

Famous painter Michał Elwiro Andriolli depicted the 1863 Uprising: he himself retreats with a mortally wounded friend in Dubičiai (May 5)

tles in former territories of the GDL. About 25,000 people, mostly young males, were sent to labour camps or exile. The authorities confiscated a lot of estates, closed Catholic monasteries and churches, and decided that this was a chance to finally resolve the "Polish issue".

The "Duchy" of Bishop Motiejus Valančius

At the end of the 18th century, the Great French Revolution gave birth to a modern concept of a nation. According to the concept, a nation – a political and cultural community – is comprised not only of the nobility and the educated (high-cultured people), but of all its citizens and subordinates. The public lies at the foundation of a nation and has to achieve high culture through education. The question was what language to use in education in order to integrate the public in the nation – the native language of the nation or the language of the nobility? The majority

of the nobility felt that the language to be used must be the language of the predominant high culture; the public's language may be used in the elementary schools for the public, but the schools must also teach everyone the language of the high culture. This attitude won in the majority of west European countries, and it was also adopted by the Polish-speaking elite of the former PLC until 1831.

In central and eastern Europe, however, the ideas of Johann Gottfried Herder and other German romantics gained popularity; they maintained that the nation's spirit lies in its language and culture, that each language and culture is a valuable asset for the entire humankind. A separate nation consists of all those people who speak a common language, share a common history and culture; therefore, a nation's language has also to be promoted as the language of a separate high culture. If that was accomplished, that language would become the language of the predominant high culture, and elite would have to choose whether to stay with their cultural minority or to join the development process of new high culture.

Such ideas gained support in Lithuania. Especially since European linguists had established that the language spoken by Lithuania's peasants was one of the most archaic living Indo-European languages. In 1808, the Warsaw Society of Friends of Science published a book entitled *On the Origins of the Lithuanian Nation and Language* (*O początkach narodu języka litewskiego rozprawa*) by Ksawery Bohusz, a Lithuania-born priest and theologian. This book was first to express the idea that the Lithuanian language was completely acceptable to be the language of a separate high culture. This idea encouraged certain intellectuals (Dionizas Poška, Silvestras Valiūnas) from Samogitia to start writing poetry in Samogitian, or Lithuanian. Many were impressed when famous scholar Ludwig Rhesa published Kristijonas Donelaitis's poem *The Seasons* (*Metai*) in Königsberg in 1818. Kristijonas Donelaitis was a Lithuanian pastor in Lithuania Minor. The poem was published a few decades after his death and included its German translation. It was acknowledged that the poem was of high literary value and of universal significance.

Vilnius University was instrumental in facilitating the formation of a group of intellectuals (Simonas Daukantas, Simonas Stanevičius, and a few others), mostly from Samogitia, who agreed to work toward developing high culture in Lithuanian (Samogitian), and at the same time to facilitate the education of Lithuanian and Samogitian people in their native lan-

guage (Samogitians were sometimes considered a separate ethnic group related to Lithuanians, but Samogitians considered themselves to be of dual Lithuanian-Samogitian ethnicity). This group of intellectuals spearheaded the national cultural movement of ethnic Lithuanians. A novel Alphabet book was written and published in Lithuanian (Samogitian), and poet Simonas Stanevičius (1799–1848) published a poetry book that included a poem entitled *The Glory of the Samogitians* (*Šlovė žemaičių*). The poem was the movement's unofficial anthem, or poetic manifesto, that asserted that any attempts to eliminate the Samogitian (Lithuanian) nation would be unsuccessful. Historian and lawyer Simonas Daukantas (1793–1864) wrote the first major book on Lithuania's history in Lithuanian in 1822. Its enthusiasts spread it by making hand-written copies. Later on Simonas Daukantas moved to Saint Petersburg and got a job in the Russian State Historical Archives in order to gain access to the documents about Lithuania's history. He wrote two more major books on Lithuania's history in Lithuanian and published a book on *The Character of Ancient Lithuanians, Samogitians, and Highlanders (Būdas senovės lietuvių, žemaičių ir kalnėnų)* as well as a series of educational books intended for literate peasants-farmers. He also compiled dictionaries and even wrote a textbook in Lithuanian for secondary schools.

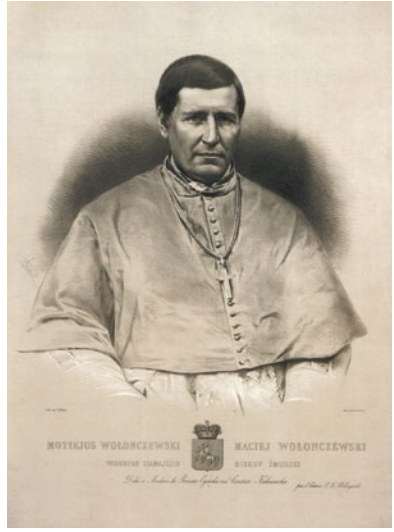
Simonas Daukantas talked his fellow countryman Motiejus Valančius (1801–1875), who was teaching at the Roman Catholic Academy relocated to Saint Petersburg from Vilnius, into writing and publishing a Lithuanian history of the Samogitian Diocese. In 1848, this book was published in Vilnius, and it came as a surprise that it was written in Lithuanian-Samogitian, not Polish. The book's co-author was appointed Bishop of the Diocese of Telšiai (Samogitia) in the same year (approved by Vatican a year later). Romantic Simonas Daukantas admired Lithuania's pre-Christian past, while Motiejus Valančius,

Simonas Daukantas.
Painter Jonas Zenkevičius, 1850

who was practical and politically wise, undoubtedly supported European Catholic civilisation. Bishop Valančius said his first inauguration sermon both in Lithuanian and in Polish. It was probably the first time that the Lithuanian (Samogitian) language was used in the Cathedral by a bishop.

Motiejus Valančius ensured that priest show respect to Lithuanian-speaking people, that they become proficient in Lithuanian and read sermons in Lithuanian; he also instructed priests to establish Lithuanian schools in affiliation with their churches. The diocese encompassed most of ethnic Lithuania, not only Samogitia. Those schools completely outrivaled public Russians schools. In certain areas as many as 60% of people were literate, which was a fantastic accomplishment for rural areas. Moreover, in 1858, Valančius initiated a sobriety movement based on the sobriety ideas spreading in other Catholic countries. After a couple of years over 80% of Catholics in the diocese belonged to these sobriety brotherhoods. Lithuanians stopped drinking vodka, farms became wealthier, families became stronger, and people became more interested in education. Nowhere else in Europe the sobriety movement achieved such a scale.

The Tsar's administration started feeling threatened by such successful population mobilisation. The bishop was nicknamed the Duke of Samogitia. Motiejus Valančius never said a word against the Tsar, and he was respectful to the authorities, but he was also firm and resolute in defending the interests of the Catholic Church. He saw that the Tsar was not only openly protecting the Russian Orthodox Church, but that he was also trying to strengthen its presence among Catholics, and that the general public was becoming a major force in this battle. This became more apparent after 1863,



Motiejus Valančius. From Jan Kazimierz Wilczyński's *Album de Wilna*, 1857. Painter Adolphe Lafosse

when the people, after being encouraged by the bishop, did not give in to the Tsar and thus essentially ruined russification attempts. The people listened to the bishop because he had become an acknowledged and indisputable authority owing to his prior accomplishments. Without being a politician, Bishop Valančius had a greater influence on the 19th century politics in Lithuania than anyone else. While nurturing the people's loyalty to their language and culture, he never spoke against Polish-speaking people, he kept his diary in Polish, and he signed his name in Polish – Wolonczewski.

The national cultural movement orientated at the Lithuanian people under serfdom could not move into the foreground of the country's cultural and political life. Nevertheless, Antanas Baranauskas (1835–1902) – a second generation supporter of the movement, a native of Aukštaitija, a priest, a poet, a future bishop, and the author of the Lithuanian masterpiece *The Forest of Anykščiai* (*Anykščių šilelis*) – wrote in 1859: "I will give the education of the entire world to the Lithuanians;/Writings of the entire world and books I will translate into Lithuanian./The Lithuanian people will all be educated,/The entire world in all sciences will be led by them." He had a vision of a civilized, high-cultured nation. That vision, however, was idealistic. Unfortunately, there were barely any examples of such nations in Europe, where dominant political powers sincerely supported such visions. Despite the fact that before the 1863 Uprising the Tsar had declared that one of their goals was to prevent the polonisation of Lithuanian peasants, the Tsar did not allow publishing a Lithuanian newspaper and rejected the project to establish Lithuanian secondary schools submitted by Valančius. Incidentally, a project expert noted that "Russia will not be better off if her new relentless enemies do not speak Polish, and plot, print leaflets and underground instructions in Samogitian."

PEOPLE BECOME A NATION

Although the domestic policy of the Russian Empire with respect to its non-Russian regions and "outskirts" was not decisively permeated with Russian nationalism at the time (the latter would become the Empire's dominant principle of domestic policy during the reign of Alexander III in 1881–1894), both uprisings caused a wave of Russian nationalism and polonophobia in Russia's upper strata. Those who believed that force should be used in the region without seeking consensus with the local society took the upper hand in the Empire's policy regarding the "Polish question". They hoped to change the very soil of culture that allowed separatism to constantly recover, and believed that, upon turning the peasants into an independent class after the abolition of serfdom, this would be possible to achieve. For separatism thrived first and foremost in the local society of nobles, who considered themselves a separate political nation, while the peasants – their mass – were not members of that nation, so those carrying out russification intended to win with the policy of "elimination of Polish beginnings" having added the policy of "restoration of Russian beginnings".

The 1864–1904 Policy of Russification

This policy was undertaken by Governor General of the Vilna Governorate Mikhail Muravyov, who subdued the uprising and was one of the policy's creators, with the help of his old acquaintance Ivan Kornilov, who had been appointed as director of the Vilnius educational district. The programme was made up of a complex of special economic and cultural measures that were to weaken the economic positions of the local gentry and ensure that in the territories of the PLC that were annexed by Russia and now officially treated as "Russian lands of old", Russian would replace Polish as the predominant language used in public, the Russian Orthodox Church would gain a dominant position, and the peasant children would become a part of Russian high culture.

The Catholic Church was also attributed to the category of "Polish beginnings", but international politics prevented the tsarist government from taking direct actions to liquidate it. Hence, the activities of

The Lithuanian School in 1864–1904.
The allegorical sculpture depicts education
in the Lithuanian language under the Russian Empire.
Sculptor Petras Rimša, 1906

the church were restricted, and Catholics were discriminated against and lured into Orthodoxy. Supporters of the policy of "restoration of Russian beginnings" argued over tactics regarding ethnic Lithuanians. Those who did not entrust the practice of instilling "beginnings" to the local residents triumphed, so the Lithuanian language was not allowed into educational institutions. "Russian beginnings" were to be instilled by Russian teachers, usually from the depths of Russia; at first the majority of them were sent in from Russian Orthodox seminaries. Moreover, supporters of such tactics believed that progress would eventually eliminate the Lithuanian language anyway, and that there was no point in bothering with a language that was spoken by just few million people and had scanty written texts.

Nevertheless, even the authorities understood how challenging it was for non-Lithuanian speaking Russian teachers to start teaching children in Russian in rural schools in ethnic Lithuania. They understood that

first teachers needed bi-lingual textbooks that would have Russian words translated into Lithuanian and written in Cyrillic, not Roman letters. This evolved into a suggestion to replace the Roman alphabet traditionally used in Lithuanian with the Russian Cyrillic. In 1864, Muravyov banned the traditional Lithuanian alphabet and this ban was extended to the entire territory of Russia; it stayed in effect until the spring of 1904.

Nobody talked about eliminating the Polish language and culture from public life and educational institutions in the Kingdom of Poland though. Russian was mandated as a means for "bringing the Polish and the Russians closer to each other". The Polish were expected to finally stop dreaming about restoring their former state and to start realizing that, since they were Slavs, they would be better off under the Russian Empire than under the German rule. The intent "to bring the Polish and the Russians closer to each other" was strategically aimed at protecting non-ethnic Poles residing in the Kingdom from polonisation. The Tsar mandated to establish Russian schools in Lithuania's Užnemunė, where Lithuanian would be merely taught as a subject (Lithuanian was to be taught from textbooks in Cyrillic). The Lithuanian language was allowed to be taught as an optional class in a few secondary schools in Užnemunė. Moscow University had ten state scholarships available to its students with a grade in Lithuanian on their high school diploma. The hope was that the Lithuanians would become members of the high culture in Russia and thus bring the Lithuanians closer to the Russian culture.

This policy remained in effect for 40 years in the Kingdom of Poland and former lands of the PLC annexed by the Russian Empire, but its results were different than expected. Although all county centres and larger towns had Orthodox churches, they did not have enough parishioners. About ten Orthodox churches were built or restored (in the same locations where they were before the 17th century) in Vilnius. The goal was to show that the Northwestern centre was as much Orthodox as it was Catholic. St Casimir's church was turned into a Russian Orthodox Cathedral, and building new or restoring old Catholic churches was banned. This ban angered Catholics, but the Tsar did not lift it until the end of the 19th century; nevertheless, only a small number of Catholics got lured into Orthodoxy.

Although Russian culture started taking roots in the towns of ethnic Lithuania, such instances were merely a part of the cultural life of the

Russian minority that dominated politics. The authorities failed to attract peasants to their side, because rural residents in the greater part of ethnic Lithuania followed bishop Valančius's policy to learn to read and write in their native language. When only Russian schools with Russian teachers were allowed to be established after the 1863-64 uprising, the bishop advised rural residents – through trusted priests – against enrolling their children in such schools. To prevent illiteracy, he encouraged people to set up secret rural schools and have a literate villager teach others. Such schools (so-called *daraktorinės* schools) became widespread in towns as well. Although they were persecuted by the police, and their teachers, if caught, were sometimes sent away to the depths of Russia for a few years, people were undeterred – there was a need, and a tradition was formed.

Ethnic Lithuania had probably the lowest percentage of children attending official elementary schools in the entire European part of the Russian Empire. At the end of the 19th century, approximately 66% of boys and 18% of girls attended elementary schools in the European part of the Russian Empire, but those numbers were respectively 21% and 4% in the Kaunas Governorate. Nevertheless, the first Russian census conducted in 1897 showed that almost 48% of ethnic Lithuanians were literate, while only every fifth of them could read Russian. The average number of literate people among ethnic Lithuanians was almost twice as high as Russia's average, and it was only lower than the average among Jews, Latvians, and Estonians, where native language learning was lawful. Incidentally, it came as a big surprise to the experts that literacy among women was higher than literacy among men in the Kaunas Governorate – 55% as opposed to 52%.

The efforts of the authorities to replace the traditional Latin alphabet with Cyrillic in Lithuanian literature were unsuccessful. If the authorities had allowed Lithuanian elementary schools and Lithuanian teachers, if they had not discriminated against the Catholic Church and not tried to convert Catholics to Orthodoxy, the alphabet may not have been an issue. Valančius saw through these intents and conveyed a message through the clergy that it was a sin to read books imposed by the authorities. Therefore, barely anyone read them, and since there was no demand, the authorities published only 60 of them.

After urging to reject books forced on the public by the authorities, the

Bishop secretly arranged for the publication of Lithuanian books in the traditional alphabet in East Prussia and for smuggling them into Lithuania. Smuggling books became a strong tradition, and toward the end of the 19th century the number of Lithuanian books published in East Prussia and smuggled into Lithuania was increasing.

Although the authorities and gendarmes tried to catch book smugglers and punish them even more strictly than teachers of secret schools, this did not stop the flow of Lithuanian publications into Lithuania. During the Lithuanian press ban, about 1,800 Lithuanian books in six million copies were published in East Prussia for Lithuania Major. The majority of the Lithuanian literature was religious publications and alphabet books, while scientific, political, and literary books became more numerous toward the end of the century.

The positions of the Polish language and Polish-speaking culture were unaffected in former lands of the GDL, and the Russian authorities did not accomplish their goals. The Empire's social framework did not get any stronger in the region, at least not in its greater part. This policy, however, may have caused incompatibility between the tradition of former statehood of the GDL and any new nations entering the sphere of this former state.

Book smuggler. Sculpture by Juozas Zikaras, 1939

"Lithuanian We Were Born!"

Twenty years after the 1863 uprising, the ethnic Lithuanian National Revival resumed its activities. It was induced by the post-serfdom intelligentsia and Lithuanian graduates of Russia's higher education establishments, most of whom were originally from Užnemunė. Although in the beginning they advocated union views (a common state of Lithuania and Poland), after they saw the success of the national movements of Latvians, Estonians, Czechs, and Bulgarians, who all operated openly, they couldn't help by wonder why the authorities were so unjust toward ethnic Lithuanians in their homeland. And to fight for justice is a matter of honour for an intellectual.

In 1883, a group of intellectuals launched the first Lithuanian periodical published in the traditional Lithuanian orthography, *Aušra ("The Dawn")*. It was a monthly that was printed in East Prussia and intended for Lithuania Major. Its first editor-in-chief was Jonas Banasavičius (1851–1927) who was born in Užnemunė, graduated from a medical school in Moscow, and at the time lived in Prague, and who was interested in Indo-European and Baltic history as well as the Lithuanian culture. The secret and illegal monthly helped bring new members of the national movement together; it opposed the tsarist authorities and demanded that ethnic Lithuanians should have the same cultural opportunities and educational conditions as those exercised by Latvians and Estonians in the Russian Empire. Although the newspaper wrote a lot about Lithuania's history, it did not mention the Lublin Union traditions. The idea of an independent Lithuania as a state of Lithuanian-speaking people was mentioned in its pages as a vague dream.

This idea ignited national identity aspirations. Although three years later *Aušra* was discontinued due to internal disagreements and financial difficulties, it had helped increase the number of people whose aim was to develop Lithuanian as an independent nation. They started publishing new Lithuanian periodicals. In 1889–1890, the Lithuanian national movement and the press were split into two categories: secular-liberal and Catholic-conservative. *Aušra*'s ideas were further fostered by *Varpas ("The Bell")* that was launched in 1889 by a Lithuanian student organisation in Warsaw called *Lietuva* (Lithuania). Doctor Vincas Kudirka (1858–1899) served as its editor-in-chief until his death. He nearly started

identifying himself with the Poles, but reading an issue of *Aušra* quickly fixed his thinking and made him "feel Lithuanian". Vincas Kudirka was a poet who wrote the National Hymn as well as its music – it later became Lithuania's national anthem. *Varpas* supported liberal democratic views, sometimes even social-democratic, and it addressed issues related to political systems, criticised the Tsar's rule and his cultural policy, and wrote about the formation of standard Lithuanian. It published good fiction, poetry, both original and translated, and popular scientific articles. The same editorial staff published a newspaper for rural readers, Ūkininkas (Farmer).

Catholic press was mostly focused on the opposition to the russification policy, but it followed the general doctrine of the Church and was loyal to the tsarist authority. The most popular publication was *Tėvynės sargas* (Homeland's Watchman). It had been published since 1896, and its *spiritus movens* was a young priest, Juozas Tumas Vaižgantas, who later became a well-known writer and the embodiment of tolerance and benevolence.

The first political party related to the Lithuanian national movement – Lithuanian social-democratic party that was established in 1896 – published its publications in both Lithuanian and Polish. Its programme set a goal for a sovereign Lithuania that would be in the relationship of a free federation (that is, confederation) with its neighbouring countries.

The national patriarch
Dr Jonas Basanavičius

The works of Polish romantics, such as Adam Mickiewicz and Józef Ignacy Kraszewski, had a profound influence on the Lithuanian national identity and the self-identification of Lithuanian-speaking rural folks as not only part of the people, but as part of the nation. The most romantic, melodious, lyric, and somewhat combative poetry

was Father Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis's poetry in Lithuanian. In 1895, Maironis published two poetry books – *Pavasario balsai* (The Voices of Spring) and *Jaunoji Lietuva* (The Young Lithuania), and his poems became national songs. The national identity was also stimulated by Kudirka's poetry and his satirical stories that mocked the Tsar's officials, as well as by rich realistic social prose by Julija Žymantienė-Žemaitė who came from small landowners. The illegal Lithuanian press also published fiction by writers from other nations, first of all from its neighbouring countries, especially Polish works of Lithuanian patriots in the first half of the 19th century.

According to the 1897 census, the population in the current territory of Lithuania, excluding the Klaipėda region, was approximately 2.7 million. Ethnic Lithuanians accounted for about 1.6 million, or 58% (about 28% of noblemen identified themselves as Lithuanian; at the time noblemen constituted 5.3% of the total population), 13% were Jewish, 10% Polish, and 15% Belorussian, Russian, and Ukrainian combined. About 13% lived in cities and towns. The Jews were the largest ethnic group among city and town dwellers and constituted about 42%. They were followed by the Poles – about 24%, and then the Lithuanians – about 8%. Although the Lithuanians tried to enter trade, business, and manufacturing, their accomplishments in individual areas were small: there were only 14 Lithuanian merchants while the number of Jewish merchants was 3,853. The population of Vilnius at the time was 155,000 (the number rose to 200,000 right before World War I), while the population of Kaunas was slightly over 70,000.

Peasants composed the absolute majority; around 26,000 Lithuanians worked in the manufacturing and handicrafts industries, and nearly 5,000 represented the intelligentsia: clergy, teachers, doctors, state officials, and noblemen. These were the educated members of the society, and they led the way in transitioning Lithuania into a modern nation. Economic development was stimulated by telegraph lines that began operating in the middle of the 19th century, as well as by the steamship operations in the Nemunas. The 1860s and 1870s saw the construction of the Saint Petersburg – Warsaw railway in Lithuania; specifically it was the line between Liepāja and Romny. Later on the railway was extended through Kaunas to Königsberg. The first telephone lines were built in the 1880s, and the first cars were introduced in the beginning of the 20th

century. Thousands of Lithuanians took jobs in Riga, Saint Petersburg, and Odessa, but the biggest economic emigration wave began in 1868 to the USA. 207,000 Lithuanians lived in the USA (Pennsylvania, Chicago, New York) in 1910. They were free to publish their press, form their associations and other organisations that represented social and Christian democratic values (the first US-published Lithuanian newspaper was released in 1879), engage in amateur arts, and form choruses. Lithuanian Americans provided financial support for Lithuania's cultural life, organised political events, and addressed national constraints in the Russian Empire.

At the end of the century, Georg Sauerwein, a German politician and scientist of Sorbian descent who was a polyglot and fought for the Lithuanian language in East Prussia, wrote a national anthem for Lithuania Minor. The anthem contained the following lines: "Lithuanian we were born / Lithuanian we want to be / We received that honour at birth / We cannot let it perish". It immediately became popular in Lithuania Major, and the Lithuanians on both sides of the Nemunas sang it believing that they will not perish.

An Other Lithuania Seeks Autonomy

In the beginning of the 20th century, the ethnic Lithuanian National Revival, in illegally developing its cultural activities, made significant achievements. The culture being developed with the Lithuanian language nearly reached the threshold of high culture not by individual works, but by their entirety. It already satisfied the minimal cultural demands of a civilised nation. A relatively abundant intelligentsia working in many of the areas of science, art and education formed. A group of Lithuanian politicians working on a volunteer basis rallied together, and European-style political parties were created. A common literary written language became established. Even the Russian press stated that the Lithuanian movement was the third most powerful in the Empire (after that of the Poles and the Jews).

Two events had significant impact on the formation of Lithuanian national awareness. The events that took place in Kražiai in 1893 resounded throughout Europe – mounted Cossacks invaded the Kražiai

church, which the residents of the small town had gathered at to protect it from being shut down. People were wounded and killed, and women were raped – the people dubbed the incident the "Kražiai Massacre". The brutal behaviour of the Russian government triggered outrage among the more sober-minded strata of Russian society, as well as protest from the Vatican. Prominent lawyers stood up to defend residents of Kražiai being tried for resistance to government orders, so the punishments were not severe. Lithuanians presented themselves for the first time at the 1900 Paris Exposition. Lithuanians from Lithuania, together with their countrymen from Lithuania Minor and with considerable assistance from Lithuanian Americans, prepared an exhibit at the ethnographic pavilion which included examples of Lithuanian national costume, agricultural instruments, and other items, the most important of which being samples of Lithuanian press secretly published in Prussia. Thus a message was sent to the world that the tsarist government prohibited press in the Lithuanian (Latin) alphabet, and that a country such as Lithuania did indeed exist.

The Lithuanian National Awakening, which had considered the tsarist regime its enemy, soon found yet another in the people implementing polonization. The growing number of families speaking Lithuanian in public as well as the requirements for holding Lithuanian language services at church sparked opposition among Polish speakers. Landowners, defending themselves from "litvomania", grew more and more distant from the Lithuanian speaking village population, and the priests, who had not become nationally conscious, had already begun to seriously conflict with the aspirations of the Lithuanians. In 1906, a priest named Adomas Jakštas-Dambrauskas published a book in Polish in which he laid forth the aims and programme of the new generation of Lithuanians, requesting that the new generation of Lithuanian nobility also clearly declared who they are – Lithuanians or Poles. He asked of the Lithuanian nobility that they be conscious and unfeigned Lithuanians, that they speak and pray in Lithuanian, that they love their country and work in its name, that they be its leaders and look after the education and welfare of its people, and that the young nobles be the salt of Lithuania's earth. The proposal to cooperate with the nobles was turned down by the Vilnius Poles on the basis of Dr Ludwik Czarkowski's brochure entitled *Przenigdy* (Never), which worsened Polish-Lithuanian relations. Many of the nobles did not understand

the Lithuanians' aspirations in general, and considered cooperation with them to be dishonourable.

With revolution becoming imminent throughout Russia, the tsarist government was forced to make concessions. To this day, the greatest victory of the Lithuanian National Revival is considered to be the 1904 repeal of the ban on Lithuanian language publications printed in the Latin alphabet; once the ban was lifted, Lithuanian press quickly emerged and was published legally in the country itself.

At the beginning of 1905, the first social democratic revolution that had begun in the capital of Russia quickly made its way to the towns of Lithuania as well. Strikes, demonstrations, and rallies took place. Their organisers were mainly the local chapters of the Russian as well as the Polish social parties. The Social Democratic Party of Lithuania took up political agitation in the smaller towns and rural areas. In spring and summer, various professional organisations were set up to a massive degree, usually on a national principle. The Revival began in Lithuania's countryside in autumn: government-appointed clerks were driven out of the districts, and Russian teachers were replaced by Lithuanians at elementary schools.

When Tsar Nicholas II, frightened by the rising wave of revolution throughout Russia, issued a manifesto in late October 1905 in which he vowed to recognise fundamental democratic freedoms and organise elections to the State Duma (Parliament), Lithuanian activists decided to legally convene a large convocation of Lithuanians from around all of Lithuania in Vilnius. The initiator of this idea was Jonas Basanavičius, who had returned from emigration in Bulgaria. Upon receiving permission from the authorities, the assembly, which was later named the Great Seimas of Vilnius, took place at the City Hall in Vilnius on 4–5 December. It was attended by approximately 2,000 delegates from nearly all of the ethnographic regions of Lithuania, representing all strata of society and all the political currents and trends; people came from even the more remote districts of Belarus, and representatives of the Polish-speaking landowners and delegates from the Polish Socialist Party in Lithuania also participated. The culmination of the assembly was the adoption of a resolution concerning the granting of political autonomy to Lithuania. The resolution demanded that Lithuania be granted autonomy, and that it be permitted to elect the Seimas (parliament) in Vilnius by full universal suffrage. The territory in

which this autonomy was to take effect was defined as the ethnographic Lithuanian lands, including Užnemunė – or Suvalkija – which belonged to the Kingdom of Poland, as well as those lands that tended to be considered a part of Vilnius.

In other resolutions, people were urged to stop paying government taxes, evade the army, and organise local self-governments – this prompted Lithuanian villages and towns to take the district municipalities into their own hands. Over the course of the winter, many areas of the Lithuanian countryside were taken over by the local people. However, as the wave of revolution subsided, the tsarist government restored its order, albeit slightly revised, with the help of Cossacks and the army in spring of 1906. Obviously, no one in Saint Petersburg gave serious consideration to the resolution on granting Lithuania political autonomy.

Post-1905 Lithuania – a Cultural Struggle

Though an institution of representative (albeit, not democratically elected) government emerged in Russia after the revolution – a bicameral legislature, made up of the State Council and the State Duma, which shared legislation with the Tsar – all executive power and passing of constitutional laws remained in the hands of the latter. In the elections to the Duma, the Lithuanians, having formed a bloc with the Jews against the landowners and Polish-speakers, elected their first parliamentarians, who were mainly Social Democrats. The local government model did not change either. The so-called *zemstva* – institutions of local government that supplemented this model and which began to be implemented in Russia in 1864 – never did become established in Lithuania. In discussing the question of Polish political autonomy at the State Duma, Lithuanian activists expressed an opinion that the Lithuanian part of the Kingdom, i.e. Užnemunė, which was then usually referred to as Suvalkija (derived from the Suwałki Governorate, of which most of it was part), should be detached from it. However, the Duma rejected the proposal of autonomy for the Kingdom of Poland.

The tsarist government continued to refer to the former territory of the GDL as the Northwestern Krai, thereby treating it as an integral part of the "real" Russia. This in turn meant that Poles, Lithuanians, and Jews

were simply considered to be ethnic minorities of the region who were permitted to cultivate their own cultural activities provided that said were not, in the opinion of the tsarist administration, detrimental to the interests of the Empire. The official system of education was still Russian, though the Lithuanian and Polish languages were let into the government schools as subjects of study (optional in secondary schools). Lithuanians and Poles were no longer forbidden to work at these schools as teachers. Furthermore, individuals and public organisations were permitted to found schools as well, where classes could also be conducted in Lithuanian and Polish. The majority (approximately 70) of such elementary schools where classes were taught in Lithuanian were founded by Catholic societies. There was a private secondary school for women with instruction in Lithuanian in Užnemunė. Village children continued to be taught to read, write and count in small home groups – this was no longer forbidden by the government.

After the revolution, when there was no longer any chance of obtaining political autonomy for Lithuania, Lithuanian activists – like, incidentally, their Polish counterparts – focused on cultural activities in the wider strata of society that were politically oriented towards their own vision of statehood. There was hope that sooner or later, conditions may arise for a particular political fight concerning the realisation of that vision, and that was linked either to a new revolution in Russia or a war in Europe.

A competitive struggle was taking place on the propaganda level between political factions of different ideological tendencies (which often referred to themselves as parties); these factions acted on behalf of the Lithuanian and Polish communities separately, and these correspondingly maintained the positions of either Lithuanian or Polish ethno-linguistic nationalism and *a priori* considered each other's ambitions to be hostile and in principle illegal. The only ones who didn't follow this position were uninfluential radical leftist organisations that were still oriented towards the Communist revolution and "proletarian internationalism" and which operated illegally, as well as a handful of intellectuals and the so-called Krajowcy (*Fellow Countrymen*) democrats, a small group that supported the idea of GDL statehood. The latter advocated the idea of an autonomous Lithuania within the limits of the former GDL as a multicultural state formation of Lithuanians, Poles, Belarusians and, in a certain sense, Jews, where the languages

of the first three would have official status. If this formation became an independent state, it could be joined with Poland as a confederation or an equitable federation. Lithuanians considered the Krajowcy to be Polish, while Polish nationalists considered them "ungenuine" or "completely wrong-thinking" Poles. In the circumstances of that time, the position of the Krajowcy was difficult to execute because of mutual phobias.

Of the Lithuanian groups, the strongest positions were secured by the Christian Democrats – mainly Catholic priests – who had resolved to accept the ethnic Lithuanian National Revival and were able to operate via the church as well as the cultural and educational organisations and abundant press under its wing. They devoted the bulk of their attention to Lithuanian cultural and social activities which were in line with the Catholic doctrine. Together with a group of future Nationalists huddled together around a *Viltis* (The Hope) newspaper edited by Antanas Smetona, they fought for the rights of the Lithuanian language in churches of the Vilnius diocese; this fight often turned into a brawl between the Lithuanians and the Poles. The diocese was dominated by Polish Christian Democrats, who followed the doctrine of Polish nationalism, saw the Polish state in as broad a territory of the former PLC as possible, and looked to strengthen the positions of Polish patriotism and the Polish language. The Christian Democrats benefited from the fact that they demonstrated loyalty to the tsarist government, and the Tsar's administration in turn did not create any significant obstacles for their activities.

Perhaps the Christian Democrats' greatest rival within the ethnic Lithuanian National Revival was the liberal Lithuanian Democratic Party, which was formed in 1902 based on the organisation that published the *Varpas* newspaper. These intellectuals promoted the principle of separation of the Church from the State. The ideal programme for the Lithuanian Democrats was an independent and democratic Republic of Lithuania within the boundaries of historical Lithuanian ethnographic lands, "with fair distribution of wealth" and linked with neighbouring democratic states on a federal basis. The Democrats also published illegal press, collaborated with the Lithuanian Social Democrats, and tried to start a dialogue through Masonic Lodges with the Polish public activists that belonged to them concerning the prospects of future statehood, but they did not find common ground.

The SDPL, being the oldest party linked to the most general ideals of the Lithuanian National Revival, lost the public popularity that it had achieved after the revolution and suffered from the most extreme forms of tsarist repression. The Social Democrats supported the idea of Lithuanian independence, spoke in favour of social reform, and advocated equality of the Lithuanian and Polish languages.

Many social and cultural organisations operated within the territory of Lithuania as well, as did branches of nearly all of the Polish political parties (of Poland). The party that developed its activities the most in this area was the Polish National Democrats, whose leader on the level of all of the Polish lands Roman Dmowski followed the doctrine of Polish integral nationalism. In the Polish State (or autonomous Poland within the Russian Empire) that they imagined, the status of an ethnic cultural minority was foreseen for ethnic Lithuanians. The position of the Polish Christian Democrats wasn't much different. A separate approach to the prospects for Lithuania was held by the Polish Socialist Party headed by Józef Piłsudski, a native of ethnic Lithuania. Piłsudski's supporters where supporters of a decisive fight, first and foremost against Russia, and did not shy away from acts of terrorism. Piłsudski himself – a supporter of the restoration of the former dual Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, now imagined that duality as something of a federation, and Lithuania itself as if it was divided into three parts: the ethnic Lithuanian western part, the Polish-speaking central part together with Vilnius and Grodno, and the eastern part together with Minsk, where there was also room for the Belarusian language. Of course, the Polish language would have official status in all of that triple Lithuania. Piłsudski was not a supporter of linguistic polonization, but he did not take Lithuanian claims to create an independent Lithuania within its historical territory seriously, since the Lithuanian language had already begun to lose its position in most of that territory's outskirts (including where he was born). Furthermore, the largest ethnic group in Lithuania's ethnographic cities was that of the Jews, and after 1905, Polish pushed Russian into second place as the language spoken in the streets.

Polish and Lithuanian cultural organisations operated in Lithuania in parallel. Since attempts to restore the university in Vilnius failed (though in 1905 such attempts were made, incidentally, upon the joint agreement of Lithuanian and Polish intellectuals that it would have three languag-

Participants of the Lithuanian Scientific Society assembly that took place in Vilnius in 1912. Sitting in the first row from left: linguist Jonas Jablonskis, writer Julija Žymantienė-Žemaitė, Petras Kriaučiūnas, Dr Jonas Basanavičius, Liudvika Didžiulienė-Žmona. Photograph by Aleksandras Jurašaitis

es of instruction), the Lithuanian Scientific Society, which cultivated the ethnic Lithuanian National Revival, and the Society of Friends of Science in Vilnius, which united Polish-speakers, were formed. The initiator and chairman of the Lithuanian Scientific Society was Jonas Basanavičius, who was already at that time regarded by Lithuanian society as the "Patriarch of the Nation". Both societies paid considerable attention to the past and the legacy of the GDL, but the Lithuanian Scientific Society was particularly oriented towards Lithuanian language and ethnic research and the compilation of textbooks for Lithuanian schools. Both societies published recurrent scholarly journals. Incidentally, they were both collective members of each other's societies.

In the areas of fine and performing arts as well as architecture, parallelisms between the societies can also be observed. The Lithuanians were the first to found the Lithuanian Art Society in Vilnius; they began to organise public exhibitions, but soon the local artists who did not want to identify themselves with the goals of the ethnic Lithuanian National Revival founded a separate Vilnius Art Society. Some had a hard time deciding which society to join, even though it wasn't prohibited to belong to both at the same time. Among these artists was Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis

(1875–1911), who is currently the most widely-known Lithuanian painter and composer in the world and who studied music and art in Warsaw and Leipzig. Though Čiurlionis came from an ethnically Lithuanian environment, he did not even speak Lithuanian well prior to that period; nevertheless, he chose to be with the Lithuanians.

Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis. Photograph by Stanisław Filibert Fleury, 1908

During this period, Lithuanian literature rose to new heights – works written in the Lithuanian language satisfied even the most intellectually developed minds and those with refined artistic tastes. The goals formulated on the basis of Lithuanian ethnicity by bishop Antanas Baranauskas for the nascent nation seemed achievable, especially if a state was to emerge that would also consider them part of its cultural policy. In their plans for statehood, the Poles only foresaw an ethnic minority status for Lithuanians. As if "returning the favour", the Lithuanians also only planned an ethnic minority status for Polish-speakers in the Lithuanian state that they envisioned. The dialogue became complicated. In the beginning of 1914, no one had yet thought that in a few years they would have to take actions to implement their dreams, and that soon they would have to choose their societies not based on what language they spoke, but based on whether they had a Polish or Lithuanian passport.

Chapter IV

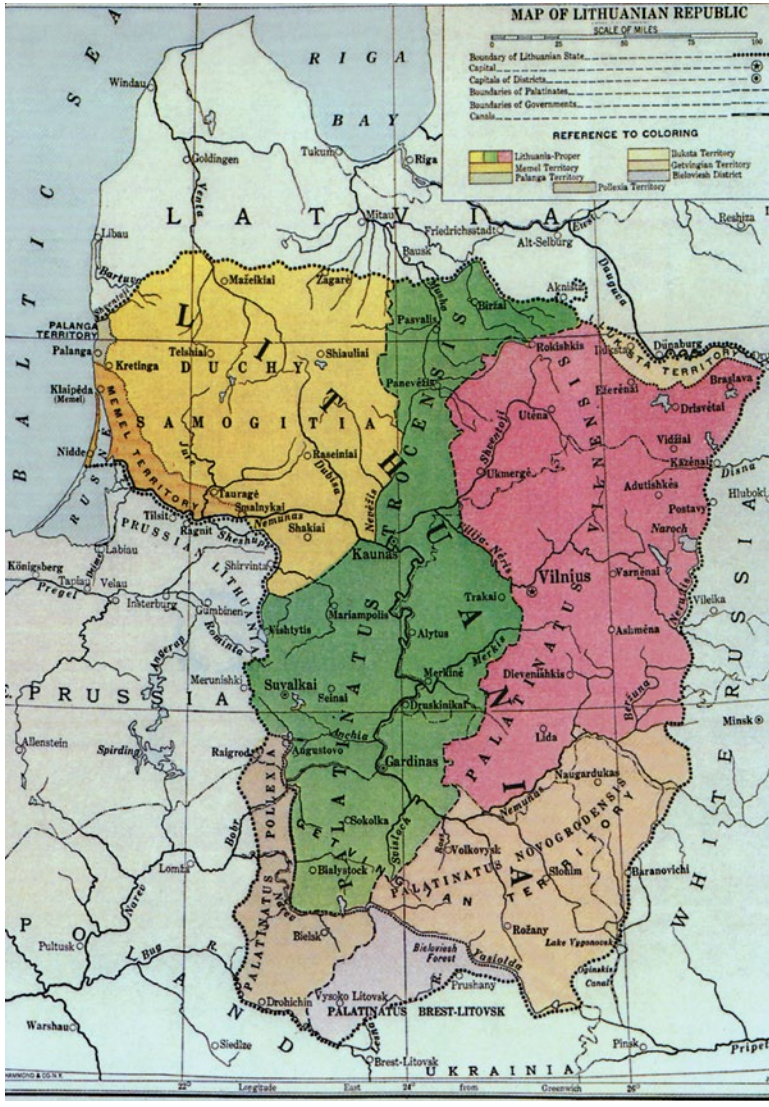
RESTORATION OF THE LITHUANIAN STATE

"Of all European languages, the Lithuanian has the greatest number of affectionate and diminutive terms, more than Spanish or Italian, even more than Russian, and they can be multiplied almost indefinitely by adding them to verbs and adverbs as well as adjectives and nouns. If the value of a nation in the total sum of humanity were to be measured by the beauty of its language, then the Lithuanians ought to have the first place among the nations of Europe."

BENJAMIN W. DWIGHT in his book *Modern Philology*

At the beginning of the 20th century, the existence of the Lithuanian nation was well known only to the renowned linguists of the time, who made known the special properties of the Lithuanian language, its preservation of archaic features of the Indo-European proto-language and its value to comparative philology. Many Poles considered the emergence of the Lithuanian nationalist movement to be a project of Russia's Tsarist policies, designed only to split and weaken Polish strength. Later they would hold the revival of the Lithuanian State to be just an intrigue of Germany. As the First World War created possibilities for independence, the independence-seeking Lithuanians were confronted with a dilemma: what kind of Lithuania did they want? Would it be like the GDL (Grand Duchy of Lithuania) – multilingual and multicultural – or would it be a smaller Lithuanian-speaking country? As if seeking a blessing from on high, they had to consider how to deal with those who wanted a restored GDL. They also had to consider how to arrive at a *modus vivendi* with the Poles, who had plans for a restored Commonwealth of Two Nations and did not understand or acknowledge the Lithuanians' aspirations for sovereignty.

In the 20th century Lithuania would try to rise again as a newly established country with a historic link to the GDL. But this option was not in Lithuania's best interest, so it was decided to re-establish the country on ethnographic principles: a Lithuanian-speaking Lithuania. Like its neighbour Poland and most other European countries at that time, Lithuania was created as a modern national state consisting of one nation. It is not clear how it would have appeared if it had been restored on the tradition



The territory that Lithuania dreamed of: *Lituania Propria* (map from Jonas Žilius's book The Boundaries of Lithuania (Paris, 1920))

of the historical predecessor state, within historical boundaries. The 1795 model of the state was made complicated due to the historical factor, since the borders of *Lituania Propria* ('Lithuania Proper') no longer coincided with ethnographic borders; and to absorb the eastern populations that now only spoke Belarusian and Polish appeared to be an impossible task.

STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

Lithuania's Plans: From Autonomy to Independence

The nationalist movements of Europe received a new impulse for their activities on 28 June 1914, when the shots rang out in Sarajevo that killed Franz Ferdinand, the Archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Two huge coalitions prepared for war: Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire went to war against the Triple Entente of France, Great Britain and the Russian Empire. When Russia raised the question of a solution to the partition of Poland that had been done by the three Empires, the Lithuanians shuddered. Surely they weren't going to let the Lithuanians in the Guberniya of Suvalkai come under Polish control? The Russians were silent when in July 1914 in Vilnius, Jonas Basanavičius, Stasys Šilingas and Donatas Malinauskas composed the so-called Amber Declaration, which was proclaimed in the Russian Duma on 4 August. It stated that in the event of Russian victory in the war, it was the Lithuanians' aspiration to see a unification of Lithuanian lands on both sides of the Nemunas: Greater Lithuania and Lithuania Minor (East Prussia) and to see this united Lithuania achieve autonomy within the Russian family of nations. The Germans responded to the Declaration on 1 August. In the Landtag, the parliament of Prussia, the ethnic Lithuanian parliamentarian Vilius Gaigalaitis stated on behalf of Lithuanians in Prussia that they hoped to see the annexation of Greater Lithuania to Germany. This idea made some progress even beyond Europe: in September the idea of Lithuanian autonomy was supported by the Lithuanian Catholic Seimas in Chicago (USA). By now some Lithuanians made a coordinated effort to declare the ethno-political separateness of Lithuania and they raised the question of Lithuania's status, using the issue of Lithuania Minor as a bargaining chip to internationalise the question.

Another state-modelling phase began when, after feeling the ravages of war, Lithuania fell into the German occupation zone. In the spring of 1915, the Germans seized the strategically important fortress of Kaunas without resistance. Then on 15 September they marched into Vilnius. Thus all the Polish and Lithuanian territory that had come under Russian control during the partitions of 1795 now came under the control of the invading German and Austrian troops. That territory was inhabited by Poles, Lithuanians, Latvians and Belarusians. The Germans seemed to be a little uncertain about where they were, because they distributed a proclamation in Vilnius in

which they referred to Vilnius as "the most beautiful pearl in the Kingdom of Poland". However, they withdrew the proclamation when the Lithuanians protested. Six months later the Germans had a better understanding of where they were. The Chancellor of Germany, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, declared in the German Reichstag that Germany would not give back to Russia any territories from the Baltic Sea to the swamps of Volhynia, regardless of whether they were populated by Poles, Lithuanians, Germans or Latvians.

The emerging contours of the new constellation aroused the Lithuanians' interest; and the resolutions of the warring parties on the Polish question presented an opportunity for also raising the Lithuanian question with Germany. The Germans considered Lithuania to be Russian-occupied territory, so when the front stabilised in 1915 they formed a Military Administration called Ober Ost (from Oberbefehlshaber Ost – Senior Commander of Eastern Army). It was formally headed by General Paul von Hindenburg and General Erich Ludendorff and it used all the resources of Lithuania for German military purposes. They divided the country into Districts, the borders of which were changed often. In June 1916 the Litauen District (with its centre at Kaunas) was combined with the Vilnius District; and in 1918 Militärverwaltung Litauen (Military Administration of Lithuania) was established. The surprising thing was that on the map, the Ober Ost territory stretched South from the Baltic Sea in much the same borders as those of the GDL of 1793–1795, when, as President Smetona put it: "It ceased to be a State."

Some Lithuanians of the educated class had fled to St Petersburg. Those who remained in Vilnius and Kaunas understood that Germany was planning to annex the occupied territories and to colonise and germanise them. At a later phase of the war, these plans centred on more refined attempts to create a local administration for a country that would be formally independent, but in practice quite dependent on Germany. However, the Ober Ost would also need Lithuanians' votes. The pluralistic Lithuanian political entity was divided into parties and social movements and it was conditionally described as having two directions: a radical direction espoused by Social Democrats and the Democratic Party; and a conservative direction espoused by the Tautininkai (Nationalists) and Christian Democrats. These were not monolithic camps; and in between them there were various small transitional groups consisting of other political elements.

Both those groupings supported the principle of self-determination for nations and Lithuania's historical tradition of statehood. Their territorial

aspirations were as similar as twins: the historically ethnic Lithuanian lands in the guberniyas of Vilnius, Kaunas, Suwałki and Grodno and part of the Couronian Lagoon. Given that the consequences of the common Polish-Lithuanian state were still in evidence, and since the Polish-speaking residents of Lithuania were starting to lean toward the Polish cultural orbit and the idea of Polish statehood, not getting ready to convert to becoming Lithuanians, the striving for Lithuanian statehood began to crystallise on an ethnographic basis. The creators of a Lithuanian-speaking Lithuania were not offering the Polish speakers any special privileges, only the right to retain their identity as a cultural minority, since most Lithuanians would have been highly unlikely to agree to privileges for the wealthy landowners. Although a few estate owners of Lithuanian origin (generations ago) supported Lithuanian aspirations, most of them placed their hopes with Poland. Józef Piłsudski, the war-time leader of Poland, was the son of estate owners in Lithuania and he called himself a Lithuanian.

Gabriel Narutowicz became President of Poland, while his brother, Stanislovas Narutavičius, became one of the fathers of Lithuanian independence and a member of Council of Lithuania.

Long discussions with the Poles about the future of Lithuania and the seeking of political compromises with them proved fruitless. Meanwhile, the Ober Ost military-colonial régime was exploiting the peasants, confiscating their food, imposing huge taxes and obligations on them, removing industries to Germany and starting germanisation in schools. (The Lithuanians established about a thousand schools, and teachers' courses, but the military authorities introduced compulsory teaching of the German language, which was done by German Lutheran teachers appointed by them, who primitively taught them to praise the Kaiser, like conscripted soldiers). Travel between Districts was restricted, posting letters written in Lithuanian was forbidden, and the only (censored) Lithuanian newspaper permitted to be published was *Dabartis* ('Now'). The Germans arrested anyone who published declarations criticising such German behaviour and they deported teachers, about which the Lithuanians complained to Berlin.

During the war a benevolent association was formed to help the people who had lost homes and their funds, including those who had lost their homes and all their possessions in fires. The head of the association was Antanas Smetona, who, seeking compromise, invited the participation of the leaders of the left and liberal political factions. This communal activity, focussing attention on the progress of the war and future post-war re-

construction issues caused the Lithuanians of Vilnius to gravitate toward the political centre, out of disillusionment that neither Russia nor Germany were promising Lithuania even as much as autonomy. Lithuanians were devising future plans for various options from Lithuanian autonomy to restoration of the GDL, even restoration of the Polish-Lithuanian state – the Commonwealth of Two Nations. However, the latter option had a fundamental flaw: this option did not guarantee Lithuania's independence. Since Lithuania's political leaders had to conform to Germany's interests, this provoked a conflict not only with the Poles but among the Lithuanians themselves. When the Lithuanians announced for the first time, at the Captive Nations' Congress in Lausanne in 1916, their intention to proclaim their country's independence, the German occupation force in Lithuania did not permit much speculation on this theme. It had more to say about Lithuania's independence only toward the end of the war, when it did not support any plan for a union of Lithuania and Poland and it changed the borders of the lands, lessening the numbers and influence of the Poles in the Ober Ost territory to the benefit of the Lithuanians and Belarusians. The Lithuanians' attempts to gain more influence worsened their relations with the Poles.

When the Germans and Austrians announced plans to restore the Polish state, Lithuania's representatives began to raise the question of Lithuania. As the Germans updated their annexation and union plans, they needed the occupied Lithuanians to vote in favour, so in the summer of 1917 Lithuanians were allowed to organise a conference in Vilnius.

The conference's organisational committee (Mykolas Biržiška, Petras Klimas, Antanas Smetona, Fr Juozas Stankevičius and Jurgis Šaulys) chose 5–8 of the most active representatives of various social and political groups. The Conference, to which Polish estate owners were not invited since they did not consider themselves to be Lithuanian, took place on 18–22 September in the Vilnius City Theatre. There were 213 invited participants and another 9 were co-opted. The Conference was predominately attended by priests (66), peasant farmers (65) and educated/professional people (59).

In the main resolution of the Conference the Lithuanians defined the outlines of their planned future state: "an independent, democratically organised state within ethnographic boundaries with the correctives essential for economic life", the final structure of which would have to be specified by "a Founding Seimas of Lithuania convened in Vilnius, democratically elected by all the people of Lithuania"; and the cultural rights of ethnic minorities would be guaranteed. The Christian Democrats proposed an addendum

Presidium of the Lithuanian Conference in Vilnius (September 1917)

to the resolution if Germany would agree to recognise Lithuanian statehood before the Peace Conference and to outline some real but yet to be fully specified relations with Germany, as long as that did not affect Lithuania's interests, because Lithuania's interests were "leaning not so much to the East (Russia) and not so much to the South (Poland) as to the West (Germany)". The Conference delegates elected a 20-person Council of Lithuania (which started to operate on 24 September) as the executive organ of the people of Lithuania. Its Chairman was lawyer and Lithuanian newspaper editor Antanas Smetona. He believed that he could bridge the gap between the radical and conservative factions of the Council. The Council did not have any real executive power, therefore it took on the difficult role of being an intermediary between the Lithuanian nation and the Ober Ost, trying to make use of the differences that were becoming plain in Germany between the Kaiser, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the centre (Catholic) deputies of the Reichstag in order to disrupt the plans for annexation of Lithuania.

One of the most important discussion topics was the extent of the territory of the future Lithuania. At the Bern Conference of 2–10 November 1917, which was attended by the whole Presidium of the Council of Lithuania (Antanas Smetona, Steponas Kairys, Jurgis Šaulys) and representatives of Lithuanians abroad, representatives of Lithuanians in Europe and USA spoke in favour of the ethnographic principle for determining

Lithuania's territory within the confines of *Lituania Propria*: the guberniyas of Kaunas and Suwałki , the districts of Białystok, Grodno, Słonim and Wołkowysk, almost all the guberniya of Vilnius (apart from some Orthodox areas) and also the district of Ilūkste in Courland as far as the Daugava River. The intention was also demand the port of Liepāja (not mentioning German Klaipėda for tactical reasons). In general, the plans for future Lithuanian territory changed as the international situation changed. No one could really say what size the future country might turn out to be.

Debate about the future of Lithuania had top priority and was far-reaching. Around 300,000 Lithuanians, who were war refugees and employment migrants, were scattered all over the huge territory of Russia. In St Petersburg and Voronezh they formed Lithuanian centres with such things as Lithuanian newspapers and high schools; and they were preparing the young people to return to Lithuania. The Russian Revolution and the overthrow of the Tsar created better conditions for Lithuanian activity, but they were also politically divisive. At a Lithuanian Seimas in March 1917 in St Petersburg, the left-wingers, full of revolutionary euphoria, spoke in favour of Lithuania's future as a member of "Russia's federation of free states". This caused the conservative minority, who were clearly in favour of full Lithuanian independence, to walk out.

When the USA joined the war against Germany in April 1917, this vitalised the more than 300,000 people of Lithuanian descent living in USA (mostly in Chicago, New York and Pennsylvania). They had a well-developed organisational structure and a prolific Lithuanian press and cultural organisations. President Woodrow Wilson's proclamation of his "14 Points" gave the opportunity for the question of Lithuania to be raised. The Lithuanians of USA sent support for war victims, and they asked President W. Wilson to declare a special day for Lithuanian victims of war on 1 November 1916, when $US 200,000 was collected for them. The US Lithuanians gave financial support to the activities of the Lithuanian Information Bureau in Lausanne (led by Juozas Gabrys-Paršaitis and others) and to publications about Lithuania in foreign languages, in which they raised the issue of independence for Lithuania. In March 1918 the most influential American Lithuanian Catholic and Nationalist (*Tautininkai*) organisations demanded independence for Lithuania at their general meetings. Representatives of those organisations also took part in several Lithuanian conferences in Switzerland, and coordination of the activities of organisations in Lithuania and abroad became stronger.

Declaration of Independence of 16 February 1918

At the end of 1917, as Germany prepared for separate peace negotiations with Soviet Russia, it pressed the Council of Lithuania to proclaim a Lithuanian State and its union with Germany. The Ober Ost, headquartered in Kaunas, provided a draft of the required resolution to the Council, which returned it, endorsed but somewhat amended, to the Military Administration on 11 December. In the first part of the resolution it was stated, on the basis of free self-determination of nations and the Vilnius Conference declarations, that Lithuania is an independent country with its capital in Vilnius and that all previous political linkages with other countries are annulled. However, in the second part of the resolution the Council, fulfilling Germany's demand, declared that it was in favour of "a permanent, strong union of the Lithuanian State with the German State", which would be enacted through four conventions (military, transport, finances, and customs). There was no mention of the Founding Seimas. Of course, Germany benefited from this resolution at the peace negotiations of Brest, to which no delegation from the Council of Lithuania was even invited.

However, there was one positive outcome. The resolution of 11 December caused negative reactions by Lithuanians in USA and Russia, which in turn caused a rift in the Council itself. At the end of January 1918, the radicals Steponas Kairys, Stanislovas Narutavičius, Jonas Vileišis and Mykolas Biržiška withdrew from the Council in protest at its policy of appeasement. Since Germany had not recognised Lithuania even on the basis of the resolution of 11 December, the disillusioned Council leaders began to seek a compromise with the left-wingers. A text that was mutually agreeable to both sides was agreed upon, and in Vilnius on 16 February 1918, the Council of Lithuania passed a new resolution in which on the basis of the acknowledged right of nations to self-determination, they declared the restoration of an independent, democratically organised Lithuanian State with its capital at Vilnius and the separation of that State from all political links that had previously existed with other nations. The resolution declared that the foundations of the Lithuanian State and its relations with other countries would be definitively ascertained by the Founding Seimas, which would be democratically elected by all residents.

The declaration uses the term "restored" talking about independence: a clear reference to the GDL, with the references to the "restoration" and "re-establishment" of the Lithuanian Sate underlining the aspect of Lithuanian statehood without Poland. Furthermore, this made it clear that

Council of Lithuania 1918: Dr Jonas Basanavičius fifth from left in first row, Antanas Smetona sixth from left in first row

it was possible to restore not just the GDL but also the State of the time of King Mindaugas's Lithuania – depending on international conditions. The new Lithuanian State had to be a democratic, parliamentary State.

The Declaration of Independence of 16 February, which expressed the hopes and aspirations of the Lithuanian people, became the national symbol of freedom and sovereignty, Lithuanian Independence Day. It was the start of Lithuania's true independence, a clear statement of where the Council was taking Lithuania. On 23 March a delegation of the Council led by Smetona was in Berlin and they acquainted the Chancellor of Germany, Georg von Hertling, with the contents of the Declaration. The same day, Kaiser Wilhelm II announced Germany's recognition of Lithuania's independence, but he pointed out that this was conditional on Lithuania maintaining very close links with Germany on the basis of the resolution of 11 December.

A Constitutional Monarchy for Lithuania remained on the agenda, since the Council had to nervously deal with the military administration and Berlin, where there was discussion of plans to join Lithuania in a personal union with Saxony or Prussia. In order to block such ideas, on 13 July 1918 the conservatives and monarchists of the Council of Lithuania, backed by Matthias Erzberger, leader of the Catholic-centre faction in the Reichstag, invited the Duke of Württemberg, Wilhelm von Urach, to become the constitutional monarch of Lithuania as King Mindaugas II.

However, this did not achieve anything for Lithuania's sovereignty; and meanwhile the left-wingers in the Council were complaining that the right-wingers had usurped the people's rights. When Germany's fortunes in the war began to wane, the appointment of Urach to be monarch was annulled on 2 November 1918.

New opportunities were presented when both Empires – the Russian and the German – lost the war, with revolutions taking place in both countries. The Council tried harder and harder to achieve aspects of real power, preparing to take over the Government. It sent protests concerning the requisitioning carried out by the Germans, it made arrangements for prisoners of war to be returned from Germany and Austria and for repatriation of Lithuanians from Russia (195,000 people returned to Lithuania up to January 1922).

On 2 November 1918 the Council adopted the Interim Constitution. This Constitution made the Council the legislative instrument, while the Presidium of the Council (Chairman Antanas Smetona and two Vice-Chairmen Justinas Staugaitis and Stasys Šilingas) together with a Cabinet of Ministers formed the executive government. With the approval of the new German Chancellor, Max von Baden, the Council invited Augustinas Voldemaras to form a Cabinet of Ministers. This Cabinet began to operate on 11 November 1918. The flamboyant history professor Augustinas Voldemaras, who had also been appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, astonished everyone by announcing that he was not planning to create a Lithuanian Army, since, according to him, Lithuania was not preparing to go to war and it would be enough to have a militia…

But as early as 23 November, Voldemaras had to proclaim a mobilisation. Russia's Bolsheviks, infused with zeal for global revolution, began to export revolution, planning to bolshevise Poland, then Germany; and Red Army divisions were starting to come in and replace the withdrawing German Army. On 13 November 1918 they reneged on the terms of the Treaty of Brest that was supposed to bring peace with Germany and they began an outright military and political battle "for the liberation of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine from German occupation". Solely on the basis of the presence of Red Army units in Lithuania, on 16 December the Lithuanian Bolsheviks issued a manifest declaring the birth of Soviet Lithuania. A week later Soviet Russia recognised this manifesto with a decree signed by Vladimir Lenin. However, the general Lithuanian population did not see the Soviet Russians as having anything to do with the Lithuanian national state, so they did not support the Bolsheviks. Lithuania's

problem was that as the Red Army drew nearer to Vilnius at the end of December 1918, the government of Voldemaras did not have any armed forces. On 21 December 1918, Smetona hurriedly departed for Berlin, where he asked for a loan of 100 million marks in order to purchase armaments. Germany supplied arms to the fledgling units of the Lithuanian Army; and, at the insistence of the countries of the Entente, Germany was allowed to use its units to help stop Bolshevism. The new government of Mykolas Sleževičius, which had retreated from Vilnius to Kaunas, quickly created the Lithuanian Armed Forces. The first Lithuanian military units, assisted by Saxon volunteer units, entered into armed combat against the Red Army and they finally halted its progress on the Kaunas–Alytus front.

Gradually the esteem of the Council of Lithuania changed: the Left – who had blamed the Council for being 'provocative', the Poles and even the Entente had to acknowledge that under difficult circumstances and pressure from outside sources, the Council of Lithuania had managed to manoeuvre and to raise the question of independence for Lithuania, while managing to free itself from the German political Diktat; and it had precipitately gone about creating central and local government institutions.

Treaty of Versailles

Unlike Poland, Lithuania was not an official member of the Paris peace Conference that started at the beginning of 1919, so the Lithuanian delegation could only operate 'in the corridors'. The Lithuanian delegation was led by Voldemaras, assisted by Lithuanian Jewish representative Simon Rosenbaum (Simonas Rozenbaumas), Belarusian representative Dominyk Semashko and many Lithuanians from USA. Printed material was arranged by French poet Oscar Milosz (Oskaras Milašius), descendant of an old Lithuanian family. The delegation drew the Conference's attention to the issue of recognition of the Lithuanian State by means of memorandums, articles and its statements to Committees of the Conference. This was the first time the Lithuanian delegation was not just consulting with other Lithuanians but was operating on behalf of Lithuania in the most important international forum, creating conditions for independence. The delegation had been instructed to base its arguments on the ethnographic principle when discussing border issues, insisting on essential economic correctives, such as having an outlet to the sea at Klaipėda or Liepāja; and stressing that Vilnius belonged to Lithuania as its capital and making sure that Lithuania was admitted to the League of Nations.

Vilnius 1916 – epicentre of the Lithuanian-Polish dispute.
Photograph by Jan Bułhak

The delegation made clear that Lithuania did not wish to belong to Poland or Russia, that it is a historic country. It looked for friends and allies. It talked to the Estonians and Latvians, also the Poles. It sought to define its borders to include the Suwałki triangle and it performed an informational and propaganda role. The multitudinous Poles who supported Roman Dmowski and Józef Piłsudski were trying to keep Lithuania as part of Poland, so in its note of 24 March 1919 the Lithuanian delegation stated that Poland had always exploited Lithuania and that the political union with Poland in the 16th century had caused internal chaos in Lithuania. The representatives of the Russian White Guards did not promise anything. However, other events began to attract the attention of Conference participants.

The Lithuanian delegation in Paris breathed a sigh of relief when they got news that the advance of the Red Army in Lithuania had been stopped and that the situation had stabilised. On 4 April 1919 a session of the Council of Lithuania had appointed Smetona as President of Lithuania, since he had been able to unite the factions that had been very hostile to each other (left wing, liberals and Christian Democrats), thereby guaranteeing political stability.

By the end of June the Lithuanian Army had about 6,000 men and it was growing steadily. An officer school was set up in Kaunas to train officers, which were lacking. Volunteers proudly and enthusiastically joined the Lithuanian Army. There were about 12,000 of them and they had been promised blocks of land at the end of the war. Military action against the

Reds ceased upon their repulsion from Lithuania in the summer of 1919. By that autumn, the Lithuanian forces had also secured a victory over the strange army of the Bermondtians, a combined force of Russians and Germans commanded by Pavel Bermondt-Avalov and formally answerable to Russian White General Alexander Kolchak. The weapons seized from them were an important contribution to Lithuania's military arsenal.

However, the attempts to get Lithuania recognised were not going well, as many doors were slammed shut to the Lithuanians, due to France's support of the Poles' plan for a Poland that stretched "from sea to sea" (from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea), especially in the event of the disintegration of Russia. However, the federation of Poland and Lithuania that the Poles longed for was not coming together. It appears that the only independent Lithuania the Poles would agree to was one in a greatly reduced ethnographic area. Since the Poles were ignoring Lithuania's interests, the Lithuanians stood in unwavering opposition to any offer made by the Poles, even if the offer appeared to be possible or useful. The discussions went on, offers were made, but the Polish delegation rejected all of them. There was no agreement on Vilnius or who should control Eastern Lithuania.

The Lithuanians claimed that Eastern Lithuania was their historical territory, while the Poles claimed that the residents of the Vilnius region mostly spoke Polish and that Vilnius was "a Polish city". Right up until that time no one had ever denied that Vilnius was the historical capital of the GDL, so Lithuanians kept repeating the historical arguments.

In his desire to see the Polish eagle spread its wings right over the East, Piłsudski argued for Polish occupation of Vilnius on the grounds of self-determination for local Polish-speakers and the necessity to continue the fight against the Bolsheviks. When Lithuania requested that the Entente draw a demarcation line between the Polish and Lithuanian troops, the Poles ignored the "Maréchal Foch Line" of 18 June 1919, while the Entente avoided recognising the new nations, as they were adhering to the principle of the indivisibility of Russia. The Lithuanians also made blunders. Without consulting anyone, Voldemaras, when answering a question in June from British representative James Simpson concerning Lithuania's position on a federation with Russia, replied that "Lithuania could join a federation with Russia as long as it were more or less on the same basis as Bavaria's situation in the German federation". Dumbfounded, the Lithuanian Government in Kaunas hurriedly issued a declaration stating that this was only Voldemaras's personal opinion...

The aspiration of the 19th century Lithuanian nationalist movement was for all Lithuanian lands to be united in one entity, even though East Prussia, known as Lithuania Minor to the Lithuanians, had never been ruled by the GDL. However, at Versailles the Lithuanian delegation raised the question of the transfer of East Prussian territory (where 100,000 Lithuanians lived alongside half a million Germans) to Lithuania and the issue of Lithuania's access to the Baltic Sea via Klaipėda. Since it had lost the war, Germany did not protest too vociferously, believing that this way it would reduce the intrigues of the Allies. Indeed, Article 28 of the Treaty of Versailles excised the Klaipėda territory from Germany and put it under the interim control of the Allies. In a statement to the Germans, Georges B. Clemenceau explained that by doing this the Allies were not going against any nation's right to self-determination, since the Klaipėda region "had always been Lithuanian", and the port of Klaipėda was Lithuania's only exit to the sea. The French were granted the right to administer the Klaipėda region. This arrangement left open the possibility of Lithuania claiming the territory once Lithuania's statehood was recognised. Therefore close relations with Prussia's Lithuanians were cultivated.

In Paris Lithuania had to explain itself on some issues of internal politics, rejecting accusations that the Council of Lithuanian had engaged in provocative politics. It had to promise to give broad cultural autonomy to the Jews and ethnic minorities and it had to explain its plans in relation to proposed agrarian reform. At home some terrorist plans were successfully deflected: in August 1919 the Lithuanian intelligence agency arrested 200 members of POW (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa* – Polish Military Organisation) who had been planning a coup and the formation of a pro-Polish government. This event greatly diminished any remaining Lithuanian enthusiasm for a federation with Poland.

Also successfully defused was a planned coup in Kaunas by Bermondt sympathisers. The regiments of volunteers of the Lithuanian Army that were formed right there on the battlefield, and the partisans who participated in battles for Lithuania's independence lost 1,444 men, but they defended the country and repelled foreign invading armies from it.

In Paris Lithuania succeeded in securing political support from Britain, material support from USA and military support from France. Some foreign army officers were recruited to serve in Lithuania and a military brigade of US Lithuanians was formed. Although many other similar ideas were never implemented due to a shortage of funds, they made a good impression on

the Allies. At the insistence of the Lithuanian delegation, the French, British, Americans and the Supreme Council of the Entente undertook military missions to Lithuania. These were instrumental in raising Lithuanian hopes for achieving independence; and furthermore these missions supplied the Entente with objective information about the situation in Lithuania.

When the British took the initiative in supporting Lithuania, joyful mass manifestations took place to thank them. When news was received on 26 September 1919 that Great Britain had officially extended *de facto* recognition to the Lithuanian State, thousands of people gathered in the main central square of Kaunas in front of the Town Hall (*Rotušė*). Newspaper reports of the time wrote that Kaunas had not seen such crowds in five centuries. Airplanes flew past in the sky hauling the tricolour Lithuanian flag overhead. People rejoiced and President Smetona greeted the crowds from a balcony. In the remaining months of 1919 the Lithuanian State was recognised *de facto* by Norway, Latvia, and Finland and in 1920 by France (11 May) and Poland (4 July).

Peace Treaty of 12 July 1920 With Soviet Russia

Lithuania found itself at the point of intersection of the spheres of interest of the two countries that had lost the war: Russia and Germany. The resurrected Polish State was probing that intersecting sphere of interests, hoping to step into the newly created Eastern European power vacuum. Western countries, hoping to create a *cordon sanitaire* between Russia and Germany, looked favourably on Poland's plans. However, Lithuania saw Poland's plans as a threat to its own borders and its existence as an independent state.

It became necessary to do battle on several fronts, since Russia had not abandoned its claims to the legacy of the GDL and to present-day Lithuania as a constituent state of the Russian/Soviet agglomeration. However, during the civil war, due to pressure from the White Army, Soviet Russia took the initiative in September 1919 and offered Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia the chance to begin peace negotiations, thereby extending *de facto* recognition to those countries and strengthening their positions. At the beginning of 1920 Lithuania agreed to commence the negotiations.

The Lithuanian delegation, led by Tomas Naruševičius, arrived in Moscow and immediately demanded the recognition of the re-established Lithuanian State as a successor of the GDL. However, the Soviets, led by Adolf Joffe, treated Lithuania as a new political unit and agreed to recog-

nise Lithuania on the basis of the right of self-determination of nations – a weaker form of recognition.

However, Article 1 of the Peace Treaty was favourable to Lithuania, with Russia agreeing to renounce any rights over Lithuania for all time, recognising its independence and sovereignty. Territorial questions were also solved favourably. Lithuanians laid claim to the former Russian guberniyas of Vilnius, Kaunas, Suwałki and Grodno, which had generally been referred to by Russian governments as Lithuanian. Even though some of that territory was already controlled by Poland, Joffe agreed to assign to Lithuania not just Vilnius but also places like Grodno and Lida, where there were not many Lithuanians. This made the agreed territory quite similar to the extent of Lithuania's territory in 1795. But in return Joffe was asking for a military alliance with Soviet Russia. (The Lithuanians informed the British, hoping the British would help them reduce the Polish appetite for Vilnius, but the French neutralised these attempts.) Thus doing battle for more territory in the East, justifying the size of the territory claimed on the basis of the extent of Catholic predominance, ethnographic and historical data, and using the arguments of the Jewish member (Simon Rosenbaum) and Belarusian member (Dominyk Semashko) of their delegation, the Lithuanians were able to satisfy one more request of Joffe: to let the record state that Lithuania and Soviet Russia "had never been in a state of war" (which sounded paradoxical, because the document they were drafting was a "Peace Treaty"). Lithuania received compensation of three million gold roubles and promises that they would be able to log some Russian forests and to take back Lithuanian archives that had been removed to Moscow. Lithuania was taking a risk in signing the treaty, as it knew that if the White Guard was able to defeat the Bolsheviks, Lithuania could be made part of Russia or Poland. In general, Lithuania's Peace Treaty of 12 July 1920 with Soviet Russia was a big win for Lithuanian diplomacy as it tried to repair relations not only with Russia but also with Poland. Nor could the Western countries ignore this Treaty.

However, the Treaty had a weak spot: in their version the Russians had added a secret addendum to Article 2, saying that any passage of Russian troops through Lithuanian territory during Russia's war with Poland would not be considered a hostile act against Lithuania or a breach of the Treaty. This enabled The Red Army to occupy Vilnius on 14 July 1920 and Russian troops to transit to the front where they were fighting the Poles. Lithuania no longer appeared neutral in this dispute, as it had claimed to be, and the

Poles interpreted this as failure to support them in a united front against the Bolsheviks. This was the price Lithuania had to pay for Russian recognition of Vilnius.

There was another side to the peace treaty with Moscow. When the Polish forces began to retreat under Russian pressure, at the Spa conference of 5–16 July 1920 the major countries ordered Poland to return Vilnius to Lithuania and Poland said it would comply. This was a unique opportunity for Lithuania to regain its capital with Entente assistance and Poland's cooperation. However, the Polish troops did not hand over Vilnius to the Lithuanians immediately and in the meantime units of the Red Army began entering it. So the Lithuanian Army was able to enter only on 15 July, after the Peace Treaty with Moscow had been signed. Consequently, Vilnius was handed over to the Lithuanians by the Russians, not the Poles.

Of course, the Peace Treaty of Moscow would not have been worth much if Poland had not defeated the Russian Bolsheviks, because the latter were busily preparing for a coup in Lithuania in August 1920. They had arranged the entry into Lithuania from Russia of 2,000 saboteurs with false Lithuanian documents, they had been illegally storing up arms in arsenals in Kaunas and other cities and they were recruiting local residents. It was only the Red Army's defeat near Warsaw that caused the Bolsheviks to cancel the putsch. So it was that a miracle took place: Lithuania survived, forming an army of 30,000 men, it defended itself and it began to run its own economic affairs.

On 22 September 1921, Lithuania was admitted as a member of the League of Nations, although the major Western countries were not yet guaranteeing Lithuania *de jure* recognition. Within a short time the Vatican, USA, Spain, Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries had given Lithuania *de jure* recognition and on 20 December 1922, four Entente countries (France, England, Italy and Japan) followed suit. However, it had not been easy for Lithuania to become a fully-fledged nation of Europe. The historic partitions of the GDL had culminated in this, that only the Lithuanian part of former GDL lands was achieving statehood as a nation state, while the rest of the former GDL lands had been swallowed up by Poland and Soviet Russia. Lithuania had signed its first treaties as a nation state and was recognised as such by others: the miracle of independence had occurred. Lithuania had managed to defend itself against the Bolsheviks. Its neighbours – Poland, Finland, Latvia and Estonia – had also managed to defend their independence.

Last Chance for a Federation With Poland

Not having enough military power, Lithuania had been unable to unite even all the ethnographically Lithuanian lands, where Lithuanians were in the majority. Lithuania had lost Sejny and Puńsk in military clashes with Poland. The struggle against Poland took on not just a territorial but also a sociological hue when in September 1920 the Prime Minister, Sleževičius, stated in the Seimas that "the Poles are attacking us because our polonised estate owners have invited Polish legions to Lithuania to help them continue to exploit our people and to defend their estates. All able-bodied men need to take up arms".

The role of Sleževičius in the battles for independence is exceptional, because he achieved political consensus, consolidated the central administration and got the local government councils under control. He invited ethnic minorities to join in the fight against the invaders; which is why there were some Jewish and Belarusian volunteers in the Lithuanian Army. Lithuanians rejected the Bolshevik concept of class warfare, but Sleževičius stressed that Lithuanians are peasants or the children of peasants, and those of them who were landless or had only tiny landholdings would be receiving the confiscated land of Polish estate owners whose offspring had joined the Polish Army. This persuaded most citizens to support the Government.

After only a couple of months in Lithuanian hands, Vilnius reverted to Polish control in the autumn of 1920 when Poland defeated the Red Army near Warsaw. Even though the Lithuanian and Polish delegations at Suwałki signed a truce on 7 October 1920 and established a military demarcation line, which left Vilnius in Lithuanian territory, two days later on 9 October 1920, before the truce had come into force, Polish General Lucjan Želigowski and his units marched into Vilnius and declared the creation of *Litwa środkowa* – Central Lithuania. This took place in accordance with the treacherous plan of Piłsudski, which was to pretend that the city had not been occupied by the Polish Army, but by the "units of Lithuanians and Belarusians from Vilnius" of the "rebel" general Želigowski, who had allegedly disobeyed orders from the Polish Government. Želigowski's action was welcomed by crowds of Poles in Vilnius. The League of Nations appeared to be powerless to do anything; while the Lithuanians had to do everything they could to stop any further advance of the Želigowski forces into Lithuanian territory. It took the Lithuanian Army until the middle of November to reorganise and put an end to the Poles' advance in battles at Širvintos and Giedraičiai.

Lithuanian artillery against Polish units in 1920 in a battle near Giedraičiai

The thinkers and planners of the Entente, in their projections concerning post-war Europe, imagined that Lithuania would be a buffer state along with Latvia, Estonia and Finland, and these would be led by Poland, providing a trustworthy security buffer against Bolshevism. However, Lithuania only partly became a buffer state, because its desire to recover Vilnius led it to have dealings with revisionist countries, even though those countries' need for revisionism threatened Lithuania with loss of independence. Of course, the Lithuanians were "revisionists by necessity". At first an effort was made (especially by Foreign Minister Voldemaras) to enlist German or Soviet Russian assistance to stand up to Warsaw; however, this offer was not attractive to the Russians. Lithuania still had to seek support in the West, but it did not have enough strength to make use of disputes between neighbours for its own benefit. Lithuania's dealings with Russia were based on its opposition to Poland concerning Vilnius. This suited the Russians, who were interested in dividing and conquering and gaining influence in the region that way. As Lithuania repelled Polish patronage, Soviet Russia was more or less the only country to acknowledge Lithuania's interests in Vilnius. However, Lithuania understood the Soviet régime's real intentions, including the danger of becoming a Soviet satellite, and it therefore hoped to get assistance from Germany, which occasionally it did.

Lithuania's foreign policy was dominated by two major territorial problems: the questions of Vilnius and Klaipėda. Because of these territorial problems, Lithuania played a more important role in European politics

than would have been expected, given its size. But in 1921 the thinking of the Allies was to resolve the Vilnius question and the loggerheads between Lithuania and Poland by means of a federation. Warsaw was not against it, but a federation did not suit Lithuanians. Why fight for independence and lose it in a federation? As the idea of a federation became popular in Western capitals, Lithuania could not think of a counter-proposal. Belgian Foreign Minister Paul Hymans became mediator in the talks with Poland. He wanted to create a federation that would serve the interests of both Lithuania and Poland, as well as contributing to peace in Europe.

Lithuania's leader in the negotiations, Ernestas Galvanauskas, was instructed and authorised to satisfy Poland's economic interests, to guarantee an outlet to the Baltic Sea for the Poles and to agree to conventions, including a defence one, as long as Vilnius was returned to Lithuania. Senior Polish negotiator Szymon Askenazy intended to deal with the federation question, but without any reference to Vilnius. Lithuanians were instinctively not keen on the federation principle, wondering logically how two million Lithuanians could survive in a sea of 28 million Poles, but they agreed to negotiate, as long as Warsaw would recognise Lithuania with Vilnius as its capital.

Over three weeks Hymans prepared a plan for a Lithuanian federal state on the Swiss model, consisting of the cantons of Kaunas and Vilnius. Lithuania and Poland had to coordinate foreign policy and come up with military and economic conventions. Both parties agreed to accept the plan as "a basis for discussions". In the summer of 1921, the Council of the League of Nations adopted a resolution in support of the Hymans plan. In September Hymans adjusted the plan in Lithuania's favour, giving the Vilnius region the status of 'autonomous region' instead of 'canton'. Both parties to the negotiation wanted to make the negotiations fail, but without being blamed for the failure.

Within Lithuania the Hymans Plan negotiations were supported by Lithuanian diplomats, but they were opposed by all political parties, the military leadership and the Army Reservists (Šauliai). There were even threats of a *coup d'état*. The plan was seen as a Trojan horse of the Poles. German and Russian diplomats urged the abandonment of the plan. On 15 November in Kaunas a bomb exploded on the window sill of negotiator Galvanauskas's bedroom. He was badly injured but he survived. The murder attempt was never investigated and the guilty parties were never found. The plans for a Polish-Lithuanian federation foundered, and the rejoicing party was ... Moscow. The Russians considered this to be a major triumph of their diplomacy.

The Poles, observing how Lithuania was weakening the economic pow-

er of the Polish estate owners (during the war of independence the requisitioning of horses, stock feed, and food supplies was mostly targeted at Polish estate owners) and reducing the size of their landholdings, did not wait any longer. In January 1922 they arranged elections in 'Central Lithuania' – the occupied Vilnius region, and subsequently formally annexed it to Poland. Lithuania was left in a situation of "neither war nor peace". Did Lithuania lose out by not availing itself of the possibility of federation with Poland, not trying out in Eastern Europe the canton principle that had served Switzerland well? What is more likely is that a cantonal Lithuania would have become another version of Northern Ireland, a hotbed of nationalist conflict, based on the language difference of two ethnic groups instead of the religious difference. No doubt the Polish and Lithuanian liberals would have managed to get along, but how would have Polish and Lithuanian nationalism fared side by side in the Vilnius region? Wouldn't Warsaw have imposed its policies on the Poles of the Vilnius canton (or autonomous area)? Would the Lithuanian language have been able to predominate in the Vilnius region, increasing its spheres of usage? Would it even have been able to achieve an equal footing with the Polish language? These questions of the utmost importance troubled our national leaders. There were some legal conundrums too. The Polish-Russian border defined by the Treaty of Riga in 1921 went to the East of the Lithuanian-Russian border defined by the Treaty of Moscow in 1920. Both those Treaties stated that Lithuania and Poland would have to sort out the Vilnius question. Moscow confirmed that it considered its Treaty with Lithuania to be valid and that Lithuania had a sovereign right to Vilnius until such time as it might renounce that right in favour of Poland.

The decision of 15 March 1923 of the Ambassadors' Conference to leave Lithuania's historical capital city, Vilnius, under Polish control was at least in part due to the failure to stay silent of … Galvanauskas, who had requested the Conference to make a ruling about the Eastern border of Poland. The Ambassadors' Conference interpreted this the way they wanted to interpret it: as if Lithuania was acquiescing to Poland's annexation of Vilnius, and accordingly they endorsed Poland's border with Russia as defined in the 1921 Treaty of Riga and a new demarcation line between Lithuania and Poland, with Vilnius remaining on the Polish side. Poland was somewhat surprised when Lithuania categorically refused to acknowledge the validity of this ruling, whereas Poland and the Western countries considered the matter to be settled. This created an indescribable tension

between Lithuania and Poland along the demarcation line. The border was closed and no train traffic was allowed, likewise no postal services, for 16 years. Substantial birch trees had a chance to grow up in the middle of the road at the demarcation line checkpoint. It is probably true to say that at that period no two countries in Europe were at greater loggerheads than Poland and Lithuania.

The Polish seizure of Vilnius finally shaped Lithuania's choices between national-ethnic statehood and revival of its traditional, historical statehood. The lingering threat of absorption by Poland created a siege mentality in the Lithuanians, strengthening their Lithuanian nationalism. Meanwhile, the anti-Polish political consciousness that resulted gradually took on almost a religious intensity. Its need to defend itself influenced Lithuanian foreign policy. In this aspect Lithuania was not much different from other European nations of the time, except that Lithuanian nationalism was not expansionist: it just tried to repel other expansionists.

Founding Seimas and Its Decisions

During World War I, Lithuania's physical and material resources waned. There were Lithuanians fighting in the armies of Germany and USA; and about 11,000 Lithuanians were killed in battle as they fought as members of the Russian Army. The country was devastated by the warlike actions of the Russians and Germans. As they evacuated, the Russians took with them 160 industrial establishments. The Ober Ost did not behave any better. In Lithuania's first year of statehood, the major source of revenue for its GDP was the export of linen and forest products. As Lithuania got established all over its territory, it had to turn its attention to national structural questions. Since the battles for independence went on so long, the elections for the founding Seimas could not be held before the middle of April 1920. The right to vote was available to all Lithuanian citizens over the age of 21, regardless of their religious affiliation, ethnicity or gender. Unlike in France and most of Europe, the franchise was extended to women and also to military personnel.

The public participated actively in the April 14–15 elections of 1920, which were won by the Christian Democrat bloc (consisting of three parties: Christian Democratic Party of Lithuania (CDPL), Lithuanian Farmers' Union (LFU) and Lithuanian Labour Federation (LLF)), who won 59 seats. In this Catholic country the result was no surprise, as devout women voted

for the party recommended by priests. Furthermore, the Catholic Church and its clergy were outspokenly anti-Polish; and, what was more important, they promised to nationalise or reduce in size the estates and to distribute the land to the poor. The left-wing Peasants' Popular Bloc (which later became Lithuanian Peasants' Union (LPU)) got 29 seats, with the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (LSDP) coming in third. Ethnic minorities (6 Jews, 3 Poles and 1 German) won ten seats in the Founding Seimas. There were also 5 women elected to the Founding Seimas. On 15 May 1920 the 112 elected representatives gathered to attend the first session of the Seimas. It had been originally planned to include about 100 representatives from the Vilnius region and 9 from Lithuania Minor, but as Lithuania did not control those areas, elections were unable to be held there. However, this shows that the Lithuanians did not consider the amount of territory they held at the time to be its final extent.

The members of the Founding Seimas tried to justify the voters' trust in them. A document proclaiming Lithuanian independence was passed unanimously, which once again, like the Declaration of 16 February 1918, proclaimed that Lithuania was an independent country, within "ethnological borders". This surely signified a partial retreat from the idea of ethnographical borders, in the hope of getting more territory this way. LFU leader, agronomist Aleksandras Stulginskis (President of Lithuania in 1922–1926) was elected Chairman (Speaker) of the Founding Seimas. On 19 June, a Government led by Popular Bloc leader Kazys Grinius was formed. Solidarity with Lithuania Minor was expressed. On 11 November 1921 the Founding Seimas unanimously passed a resolution demanding the addition of the Klaipėda region to Lithuanian territory. On 1 August 1922 the Seimas adopted a Lithuanian National Constitution on the model of the democratic principles espoused by France's Third Republic. The Lithuanian State was declared an independent democratic republic, with supreme power belonging to the whole nation (whereas in the GDL supreme power belonged to the *bajorai* (noblemen) and they occupied a privileged place in the country.) The Lithuanian language was instituted as the official national language. Regardless of gender, origin, religion or ethnicity, all citizens of Lithuania were guaranteed equal before the law and other democratic rights. The choice of colours for the national flag (yellow, green and red) did not provide continuity with the flag used by the rulers of the GDL; however, the official coat of arms, the Vytis – a white figure of a mounted knight on a red background – was retained. The Capital of the country was not named.

The Constitution gave great power to the Seimas, as the representatives of the nation. The Seimas and its elected Chairman/Speaker were elected for three years. The Constitution gave broad autonomy to ethnic minorities living in Lithuania and made elementary education compulsory.

The Vilnius problem and strained relations with Poland were partly responsible for the level of democracy in Lithuania. There was a war alert situation in the country, and because of this there was press censorship, citizens' freedom of assembly was somewhat curtailed and the ruling party penalised opposition publicists. Nationalists Voldemaras and Smetona, the harshest critics of the régime, spent some time in jail.

With hopes of restoring a large historical Lithuania dashed, it was necessary to come to grips with creating a reliable economic base for a national state. Therefore, in this agrarian country, the most important issue soon became – Who would own the country's main resource, the land? Compared with Latvia and Estonia, estate owners in Lithuania owned a smaller percentage of the country's land, only about half as much. The estates were about 5–6 times smaller, with the average peasant's plot in Lithuania being 15.2 ha, compared to 21.0 ha in Latvia and 29.4 ha in Estonia). The landless peasants desperately wanted land (21% of people employed in agriculture), as did small landowners (about 25% of people employed in agriculture). They blamed their impoverished lives on the existence of the estates and the inequalities of land distribution. The social inequality was intensified by its ethnic overtones: more than half of the large landowners were Warsaw-oriented Polish-speaking polonised Lithuanians, who owned 26% of the country's territory. Only by redistributing some of the estate owners' land could the Government hope to win the support of a large section of the peasantry.

On 15 February 1922 the Founding Seimas passed the basic Land Reform Statute on the vote of the Christian Democrats. A State Land Fund was established to administer all State land and all land that had been acquired by its current owners as a result of a gift of privileges made by the Tsar of Russia, the land of Bermondtians or people who had fought in the Polish Army against Lithuania's independence, as well as any land in excess of 80 ha currently owned by individuals, churches, monasteries and convents and other church institutions. The 80 ha limit was not chosen arbitrarily. This appeared to be the dividing line between the size of polonised estate owners' properties and the properties of hard-working Lithuanian peasants or professionals, industrialists and merchants who earned them by hard work in the late 19th and early 20th century. (Even more radical ac-

tion was taken in Estonia and Latvia, where land was seized from German barons and they were only left with 50 ha.) The first to get land were the former volunteer soldiers, landless peasants and small landholders (owning up to 10 ha), village tradesmen and some State and public institutions.

In the course of the land reforms, ancient villages were abandoned, people established farms around single homesteads, agricultural modernisation began and the system of three-field crop rotation was superseded.

The State made available to farmers at subsidised rates a better selection of cereal seeds and breeding stock and it also helped to train agricultural specialists. Farmers began to use organic and mineral fertilisers in their production and their cereal output improved (from 9 centners per hectare before WWI to 12 centners per hectare in the 1930s). Farmers began to form cooperatives, especially for milk processing, acquiring up-to-date equipment such as refrigerators. The export of milk and meat products increased.

At first the German Ostmark continued to be used as the local currency. The Lithuanian Government referred to them as *auksinas*. The decline in the value of the German currency due to all the upheavals of WWI and subsequently had a negative effective on the Lithuanian economy, and the catastrophic effects of inflation forced the Lithuanian Government to seek a solution. On 9 August 1922 the Founding Seimas passed the Currency Unit Statute, whereby the currency of Lithuanian became the gold-backed *litas*, consisting of 100 cents. The litas was introduced on 1 October 1922. It had the value of 0.150462 gram of pure gold, i.e. the litas to US dollar ratio was 10:1. The litas held its value throughout the independence period, and the currency was backed up by securities and 12 tonnes of gold, therefore it was held in high esteem in other countries. The Latvians and Poles introduced their own currency in 1923.

The standard of education rose now that Lithuania was independent. New schools were established and in 1919 there were already 1,036 schools operating in Lithuania, with 45,540 students. Higher education classes in Kaunas were officially given university status on 16 February 1922. Over not even two full decades it produced 3,700 specialists, scientists, pedagogues. The Lithuanian language gained official status not only in Government institutions, but also in the military (with the establishment of Kaunas Military Academy) and it began to be used in science and scientific research. New traditions were born: in Kaunas in 1924 the first national song festival took place.

These reforms were taking place in a small, mainly mono-ethnic country. According to data from the first Lithuanian Census of 17 Septem-

ber 1923, the population of Lithuania (without Vilnius or Klaipėda) was 2,028,971. Lithuanians accounted for 82%, Jews 7%, Germans 4%, Poles 3%, Russians 2.3%. Lithuania was an agrarian country with 84% living in rural areas, where Lithuanians comprised 91% of the population. Although Lithuanians were mainly a nation of agriculturalists, they made up 50% of city dwellers. Jews made up 33% of city and town dwellers, with only 0.5% of them living in villages. Lithuanians predominated in all the professions, but Jews predominated in the import/export business. They also comprised 83% of business owners, while Lithuanians comprised only 13%.

At that time there were about 350,000 people of Lithuanian descent in USA (180,000 who had been born in Lithuania), about 100,000 Lithuanians in Vilnius and the surrounding area and about 6,000 in England. In the first years of independence thousands of emigrants returned to Lithuania, buying land, starting businesses, opening business firms and banks.

Tomas Naruševičius, Bronius Balutis, Jonas Žilius, Jonas Šliūpas, Steponas Darius and others became well known community activists, diplomats, military men. Money sent by Lithuanians in USA constituted 10% of Lithuania's national budget. Lithuanian political parties were financed by political movements abroad, and these also raised money for nation-building work in Lithuania.

BECOMING A NATION

Lithuania Gets a Sea Port – Annexation of Klaipėda

The priority of the new nation state was the Lithuanian nation. Therefore, considerable attention was paid to East Prussia, where many of the local inhabitants spoke Lithuanian and Lithuanian newspapers were published. Vytautas the Great had once laid claim to the area. Having lost Vilnius, Lithuania's attention turned to Lithuania Minor. The British floated the idea that in return for losing Vilnius, Lithuania should get Klaipėda; although later they changed their minds and supported the idea of a "Free City". The idea of a swap did not suit the Lithuanians, since Vilnius is the historic capital; but Lithuania very much needed a port. Under the Treaty of Versailles, Klaipėda was ruled by the French, supported by a battalion of French infantry. The French had stated that Klaipėda could only ever become part of Lithuania if Lithuania unified with Poland. Poland scarcely concealed its desire to establish itself in Klaipėda. Prime Minister E. Galvanauskas was convinced that Lithuania

would never get Klaipėda through the League of Nations or the Ambassadors' Conference, so he decided that the area had to be taken by force, following Piłsudski's example of presenting a *fait accompli* and then negotiating from that basis. (Smetona said that without *de facto* control there would never *de jure* control.) At the beginning of 1922, Lithuania's representative in Klaipėda, Jonas Žilius, reported to the Lithuanian Government that the only way to get control of Klaipėda was by military force. Army officers believed that the operation could be accomplished within 24 hours.

Only a few people from the Government knew about Galvanauskas's plan to prepare a political back-up and diplomatic defence of the Klaipėda action. Seeking the support of local residents and the creation of pro-Lithuanian sentiment in Klaipėda itself, Lithuania gave cash support to pro-Lithuanian organisations; it commissioned favourable articles to be written and even purchased newspapers and acquired other property. The leaders of Lithuania ensured that German reaction would be favourable: the German Government believed that in the future it would be better for Klaipėda to belong to the Lithuanians (easier to annex from Lithuania when the occasion arose than from the French). The Germans had no objections to the Lithuanians expelling the French from Klaipėda, as long as Lithuania guaranteed a place for German economic and cultural rights.

Moscow was interested in stymying Poland's plans whenever it could, so they too did not protest Lithuania's action. They made clear that if Poland were to make a move against Lithuania, Soviet Russia would not sit by idly on the side-lines.

The Lithuanians of Klaipėda, having a tradition of living under German culture and being Lutherans rather than Catholics, remained politically faithful to Germany and did not wish to take part in an uprising. Only some East Prussian Lithuanian activists were in favour of union with Lithuania for the sake of preserving national culture and the language, also hoping to get good jobs in the administration. It was left up to Lithuania to plan the implementation of the uprising. The mutual psychological gap was obvious. Galvanauskas and the leader of the planned insurrection, Intelligence Officer Jonas Budrys (Polovinskas) were surprised that Lithuanian army officers who had fought against the Poles, the Bermondtians and the Bolsheviks signed up for the Klaipėda mission only reluctantly, because ... they did not see it as fighting for their homeland.

On 6 January 1923 the Supreme Committee for Rescuing Lithuania Minor (SCRLM), three days after its formation in Šilutė, requested Lithuania to

come to its assistance. On 9 January the border into the Klaipėda territory was crossed by 1,050 Lithuanian Army volunteers dressed as civilians, in whose pockets you would not have been able to find any Lithuanian documents, matches or cigarettes. Among them were 40 Regular Army officers and 584 men. In addition there were army reservists (šauliai), students and about 300 local residents, including some Germans, as evidence to the Allies that this was a local uprising. The rebellion participants had been warned in the event of a shoot-out to try to keep the number of French fatalities to a minimum. The action took place at a good time. In the West there were heated debates in progress about unpaid German reparations and the admission of French Army units into the Ruhr area. The march on Klaipėda went off smoothly. Kaunas portrayed it as a local rebellion, saying that moreover the local Germans were not against it. The Lithuanians explained to the French that the revolt was against the Germans, not against the administration of Gabriel Jean Petisnè.

In the shooting 16 Lithuanians died from French bullets and two Frenchmen were killed by Lithuanian fire. Everyone protested, but the French most vociferously of all, with the Germans and even the British protesting formally. The Poles took it quietly, trying not to provoke any military action by Germany. Piłsudski declared that he espoused policies that were essentially pacifist and that he would not attack Lithuania, a 'fraternal' country.

This was a triumph for Kaunas and euphoria engulfed the whole country. The success of the "rebels" seemed to be some sort of moral satisfaction for the loss of Vilnius. On 17 January 1923 SCRLM announced its decision to join the Klaipėda region to Lithuania with rights of autonomy and it requested military and financial support from the Government of Lithuania.

The Seimas was well disposed to this request and on 24 January it gladly acceded to it. On 17 February the Ambassadors' Conference transferred the sovereign right over Klaipėda to Lithuania. The Lithuanians considered this to be a huge diplomatic and military victory, which indeed it was.

On 8 May 1924 the Memel (Klaipėda) Convention and Statute eliminated the territorial aspect of the "Klaipėda Problem" and the area was proclaimed an autonomous region of Lithuania. A Census of Klaipėda in 1925 showed that there were 141,000 residents, of whom 64,000 described themselves as Germans, 37,000 described themselves as Lithuanians and 34,000 described themselves as *klaipėdiečiai* (locals of Klaipėda) and spoke Lithuanian at home. Since Lithuania had no qualms about considering these *klaipėdiečiai* to be Lithuanians, it regarded the population of the Klaipėda

Prime Minister Ernestas Galvanauskas reviews the Lithuanian parade in Klaipėda in 1923

region to be 50.8% Lithuanian. Lithuania had acquired an ice-free port.

Having put in order its affairs with the Allies, and trying to avoid hesitations about the territory's new status, Lithuania signed a series of agreements with Germany, including an important trade and shipping agreement; and on 29 January 1928 in Berlin, after long and difficult negotiations, Lithuania and Germany signed a border agreement that defined the line of the border, leaving the Klaipėda territory on the Lithuanian side. After that, Lithuania believed that the Klaipėda question was henceforth an internal issue for Lithuania. However, the Germans did not think that technical agreements would mean a final renunciation of Klaipėda...

Democracy of the Left and the Coup of December 1926

In spite of their geographical proximity and shared history, plus ethnic relatedness (in the case of Lithuanians and Latvians), relations with Latvia and Estonia did not really develop. Although during their respective wars of independence there had been some cooperation and earnest urgings to create a Confederation, the three countries travelled their separate paths. Latvia and Estonia avoided getting involved in the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilnius and both were in fact somewhat pro-Warsaw. Because of the Vilnius problem, Lithuania was left on the side-lines in ideas about a fu-

ture regional structure guided by Poland. Moscow used the Polish-Lithuanian conflict for its own purposes, which was detrimental to the interests of both Poland and the Baltic countries. However, it is true that on 16 February 1921 Latvia did recognise Lithuania *de jure*, which was much-needed support during Lithuania's time of international isolation. In March that year, with the help of international arbitration, the border between the two states was defined.

Many beautiful Baltoscandian ideas and plans were also cultivated, but collaboration with the Scandinavian countries did not develop either. Lithuanian was pretty much on its own, and on 28 September 1926 in Moscow it signed a non-aggression and neutrality pact with the USSR. In the text of this pact, the USSR declared that all the provisions of the 1920 Peace Treaty were still in force. Georgi Chicherin appended a note confirming Lithuania's interests in the Vilnius territory; and the Soviets assured the Lithuanians that the *de facto* breaches of Lithuania's borders did not change Moscow's position on Lithuania's territorial sovereignty. In effect, despite Polish displeasure, Moscow recognised Lithuania's sovereignty over Vilnius.

Lithuania's political forces were affected by general European processes: parliamentary crises, the establishment of dictatorships, putsches. There was the Bolshevik dictatorship in the USSR, Benito Mussolini's rise to power in Italy, putsches in Bulgaria and Portugal, and especially a left-wing military take-over in May 1926 in Poland, during which Piłsudski returned to power. All this encouraged those who were not happy with rule by the Seimas ("Seim-ocracy") to take action. After three years of heavy-handed rule by the Christian Democrat bloc, the elections of 8–9 May 1926 for the 85-seat 3rd Seimas had a sensational outcome: the CDPL (Christian Democratic Party of Lithuania) lost. In June a new ruling coalition was formed for the first time by the left – the Peasants' Popular faction and the Social Democrats, with seven representatives of ethnic minorities in the Seimas joining their ranks. Kazys Grinius, leader of the Peasants' Popular faction was elected President. The Social Democrats supported him only on the condition that he would coordinate all action with them. The Government was dominated by the Peasants' Popular faction, led by Prime Minister Sleževičius.

The new ruling majority of the 3rd Seimas hurried to introduce full democracy in Lithuania. On 17 June martial law was discontinued and political prisoners were amnestied, among them many secret Lithuanian Communist Party members. All restrictions on the press were lifted and for the first time in the country's history, totally free elections were going to be allowed. In an effort to economise, the new Government reduced wages and

it was planning to bring in civil registration of births, deaths and marriages (a big financial blow to the Catholic priests, especially given that from the beginning of 1927 it was planned to stop paying wages to the clergy). The Government planned to reduce the number of officers in the military. Irate military officers explained publicly to one Seimas member that "Instead of you reducing our numbers, the Army will reduce your numbers." The Government's sudden reforms and its lofty aims rebounded on it. From the autumn of 1926 onward, the opposition began to speak more frequently in the Seimas and the press about the threat Communism posed to Lithuania's independence. They blamed the Government for not controlling the Communists. Since the numbers of security police had been reduced, there was no one to control anti-Government demonstrations and hooligans wandered the streets after Communist meetings waving red flags and insulting uniformed soldiers. The Opposition Christian Democrat bloc shuddered in fear of "bolshevisation", as did the nationalists, military officers and those who supported them (in November mounted police brutally dispersed a patriotic student demonstration). Accusations against the Government of "bolshevisation" were accompanied by accusations of polonisation, because in fulfilment of its election promises the Government let Polish speakers establish 70 Polish schools. At a time of such tension between Lithuania and Poland, this was interpreted as a danger to the whole nation.

According to Smetona, democracy in Lithuania was like shoes bought for a child that are too big. In barely six years, the parliamentary tradition had not matured or taken deep root; and it was particularly difficult when there was a coalition. The Seimas appeared to be incompetent and excessively interfering in the Executive Government's affairs. To the conservative side it seemed that the democratic state model did not serve the national interests, as it failed to promote Lithuanian identity and created a threat for Bolshevism to develop. This was the moment that the army stepped into the political arena. Having defended Lithuania's freedom and joined Klaipėda to Lithuania, the military officers felt powerful against the politicians. They dedicated time to soldiers' education, developed the officers physically, made them play sport and taught them hygiene. Such men, the most active officers, alarmed at the sudden lurch of the country's political vector to the left led some troops into the city early in the morning of 17 December 1926 and set up guards by each of the more important Government buildings. At 03:43 a.m. armed officers broke into the assembly of the Seimas and disrupted a session about the next year's budget. They dis-

Rebellion of 17 December 1926 – armoured unit in front of Supreme Command of the Army

missed the Seimas but took hostage the Chairman/Speaker, all Ministers and several Seimas members. Having encountered no resistance, Major Povilas Plechavičius declared himself supreme leader of the rebellion and temporary dictator; however, he very quickly offered to pass on this post to the first President of the Lithuanian Republic, Antanas Smetona. The latter agreed, since the military coup leaders had fulfilled the condition he had raised: a rebellion without a shot being fired.

Under pressure from the rebels, President Kazys Grinius, having received the support of the leadership of the Peasants' Popular faction, dismissed the government of Sleževičius and instructed the Nationalists' leader Voldemaras to come up with a new Cabinet of Ministers. Under the threat of civil war, which could be exploited by the Poles, President Grinius agreed to step down himself, convinced that a new government would obey the Constitution. The Nationalists, having reached an agreement with the Christian Democrat bloc and trying to avoid a new problem concerning international recognition of the government, convened an extraordinary session of the 3rd Seimas on 19 December 1926. In this session the Nationalists' leader Smetona was elected as the new President of the country, with the help of CDPL (Christian Democratic Party of Lithuania) votes, and he swore to honour the country's Constitution. The CDPL bloc was given the posts of Chairman/Speaker of the Seimas (Aleksandras Stulginskis) and his helpers.

In an attempt to explain the events of December 1926, the Nationalists and the CDPL announced that they had saved Lithuania from a Communist take-over (and the attempted Communist putsch in Estonia on 1 December 1924 showed that there was indeed such a possibility). Four Lithuanian Communist Party leaders were sentenced to death and ten days after the coup they were shot. This was meant to signify that the real culprits had been dealt with, although the opposition parties were not convinced that a Communist threat existed.

Smetona and Voldemaras openly stressed the need for strong presidential powers. They did not value the role of political parties, claiming that they represented the will of only a portion of the nation, not all of it. They had no intention of returning to "the days of the Seimas", which they described as being days of disorder and anarchy. They said the work begun by the 3rd Seimas would not be done and that it was "contrary to the fundamental psychological principles of the nation". When the left-wing opposition recovered from its shock, it tried to restore the Seimas by subversion, but when Juozas Pajaujis, a Seimas member of the Peasants' Popular faction was arrested in the spring of 1927, the insurrection planned by a group of his followers came to nought. While the Opposition was protesting the arrest of Pajaujis, and had not approved the Government's declaration, on 12 April 1927 the President issued a proclamation dissolving the 3rd Seimas, with no subsequent election date set, on the grounds that there would be a plebiscite. Thus was President Smetona able in one blow to push the Christian Democrats – the strongest political force in the land – away from the rudder of government.

On 8–9 September 1927 armed groups of Social Democrats arranged putsches in several parts of Lithuania. The only place that a rebellion had a lasting effect was in Tauragė, where they succeeded in taking control of the city for a while. But this rebellion was eventually crushed by the Central Government and most of those who took part were arrested and sentenced. The rebels and their leader Jeronimas Plečkaitis went

Antanas Smetona – President of Lithuania 1919–1920 and 1926–1940

Visitors to the 7th Lithuanian Agriculture and Industry Show (Kaunas, 1928)

abroad and for a while they operated from Riga, then Poland, organising acts of terrorism in Lithuania and harbouring plans ... assisted by authoritarian Poland to overthrow the undemocratic government of Smetona. This discredited the Social Democrats in the eyes of the community.

President Smetona spent the whole summer and autumn of 1927, accompanied by military officers, Ministers, journalists and news chronicle cameras, travelling from town to town, where he was met ceremoniously at the town entrance that had been decorated with flowers and garlands by Lithuanian organisations and students. After that he would similarly be met by the local Jews at the appropriately decorated entrance to their part of town. The President visited churches, synagogues and Russian orthodox churches. President Smetona reassured people by explaining the plans of the new leadership to restore order in the country, to no longer allow irresponsible promise-makers to do politics in the country, to show more concern for the affairs of common people, to put an end to the corrupt practices of public servants and to make life better and more peaceful. President Smetona himself said that this unprecedented whistle-stop tour of his had enabled people to find out about the new Government's future plan of action and it had "inspired trust in the Government".

So it was that in a trice the sons of conservative, religious Catholic peasants – military lieutenants and Reservists (šauliai) – exchanged the democratic

model of a nation state that international politics demanded of Lithuania for a dictatorship to benefit the authoritarian régime of President Smetona.

President Antanas Smetona and Prime Minister Augustinas Voldemaras

And so across the cobblestone squares of Lithuania's towns and villages, the steel-rimmed wooden wheels of the Nationalist leader's authoritarian wagon rattled. For the time being, perhaps the star of the show, as far public opinion was concerned, was the flamboyant Voldemaras, a renowned orator and for these skills perhaps the Lithuanian figure that was best known to the West. He was not just Prime Minister but also Foreign Minister. He appeared to have run out of new ideas for foreign policy; while Smetona tried to stick to a "middle path" not associated with any specific country or group. Voldemaras believed in the saying "The enemy of my enemy is my friend." He therefore held the Nationalist position, that a solution to the Vilnius question was to be found via Moscow and Berlin, so he pragmatically sought the support of the USSR in the struggle against Poland.

Once Germany became a member of the League of Nations, it could no longer support Lithuania's ambitions over Vilnius, but it was precisely with Germany that eight agreements were signed in 1928 and the most was achieved. Voldemaras pushed foreign policy in a more radical direction, stressing that Lithuania's attitude to Poland had not changed, and that without Vilnius, Lithuania was not an intact body. Voldemaras missed the mark when he agreed to negotiations with Poland in April 1927, hoping to demonstrate that the Vilnius question was not finalised. But the Poles refused to talk about Vilnius. After his meeting in Paris with the Polish Foreign Minister August Zaleski on 22 June 1927, Voldemaras's train returning to Lithuania was met at Kaunas Railway Station by a group of military officers who told him that any more negotiations with the Poles under such conditions would meet with strong opposition. Smetona and Voldemaras were henceforth more careful: negotiations with Poland ceased and in 1928 Lithuania's Constitution was amended to describe Vilnius as Lithuania's Capital.

Poland understood this tactic and in an effort to make Lithuania more communicable it instituted economic and cultural sanctions against Lithuanian organisations in the Vilnius region. Lithuania denounced Poland over this to the League of Nations on 15 October 1927 and the situation became particularly tense, since Lithuania had never called off its state of

Lithuanian delegation at the League of Nations in Geneva in 1926. From the left: Dovas Zaunius, Prime Minister Augustinas Voldemaras and Ambassador Petras Klimas. Photograph by H. Roger-Viollet

war against Poland. There was a confrontation between the two countries in the League of Nations in Geneva on 10 December when Piłsudski asked Voldemaras: "Is it war or peace?" Voldemaras, caught off guard, answered that there was no state of war between Lithuania and Poland.

The League of Nations was pleased about this and a resolution was passed in which the line between the two countries was no longer called a "demarcation line" but it was now referred to, fulfilling the Lithuanians' wishes, as an "administrative line", not a "border". Both countries considered the results in Geneva to be a victory, and on his return to Kaunas, Voldemaras stated at the Officers' Club (*Karininkų ramovė*) and on the radio that: "[…] we have come out onto the world political stage". But in reality, Vilnius had slipped further away from Lithuania's grasp.

The Vilnius problem was compounded by the questions of the formation of an Ecclesiastical Province of Lithuania and a Concordat with the Vatican. In the course of the Government's negotiations with the Vatican concerning diplomatic relations, the Opposition accused the Christian Democrats of having abandoned the Dioceses of Sejny and Vilnius. But Voldemaras managed to sort the matter out on 27 September 1927 during a visit to Rome, when he signed a Concordat with the Vatican, setting out the

President Antanas Smetona inspects the cavalry in 1938

position of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. However, relations between the Church leadership, which backed the CDPL bloc, and the country's leadership remained complicated.

Relations with the British and French deteriorated during the visit of Voldemaras to London in May 1928. This was just after Lithuania had proclaimed its new Constitution, which declared Vilnius to be the Capital of Lithuania. This in effect involved London in the dispute over Vilnius. Whitehall was furious over this surprise sprung by its guest and Lithuania's international isolation continued.

On 15 May 1928, "with the unanimous support of all Cabinet Ministers", Smetona used the new Constitution to strengthen his position, since it legalised his dominance over the Seimas, giving him the power to dissolve the Seimas, to announce elections and to pass legislation (the State Council (*Valstybės Taryba*) that had been established only had the right to draft and debate legislation), and in the absence of the Seimas, the power to do its work. The President was to be elected for seven years by a select group of national representatives, and he was to personally oversee all appointments and dismissals. In effect the Constitution formalised the existing situation, legalising the authoritarian régime of Smetona.

As the European tendency to preserve the inviolability of borders grew, Voldemaras could not change anything. As both Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs he could not manage everything, he was in con-

flicts with several other Ministers and he began to aspire to be the solitary ruler in the country. Following a murder attempt on Voldemaras by socialist-revolutionary students in May 1929, all the Cabinet Ministers stood down *en masse* in September 1929 and Voldemaras had to stand down too. On 23 September, President Smetona appointed economist Juozas Tūbelis Prime Minister. Voldemaras was left with nothing after imprudently declining an offer to become Minister for Foreign Affairs. The quiet master of manipulation Smetona wielded his scalpel again and lanced a few more boils: he got rid of the clique of rebellious military officers as well as Voldemaras; and later he closed down the quasi-secret, armed radical nationalist organisation Iron Wolf (*Geležinis vilkas*), which considered Voldemaras to be its leader. These people, the so-called Voldemarists (*voldemarininkai*), would continue to operate underground and would make more than one unsuccessful attempt to return their patron to power.

The new leader of the nation had to compare himself with a historical hero, to seek a historical justification for authoritarian rule. Heroic role models were available: all the great noblemen of Lithuania's past provided an inspirational link to modern, 20th century Lithuania, the revived successor state to historical Lithuania. The developing Lithuanian national consciousness was inspired by the traditions of the GDL and the names of Lithuanian knights and noblemen and the warriors Gediminas, Kęstutis and Vytautas the Great. The State and the nation had chosen as their hero a ruler of ancient times: Vytautas, Grand Duke of Lithuania, a great leader in war, the nation's master strategist. The 500th anniversary of the death of Vytautas in 1930 was solemnly commemorated. It suited everyone to honour and praise Vytautas the Great, finding modern relevance in his historic role. He was a military leader who won the Battle of Grünwald (Žalgiris), who expanded Lithuania from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, who sought to become King of Lithuania but had his crown stolen by treacherous Poles ... The Catholic Church also liked Vytautas because he was responsible for allowing the Christianisation of Lithuania and he built 33 churches. His model of firm rule appealed to the Nationalists. Sportsmen praised Vytautas's physical fitness and the temperance brigade (*blaivininkai*) claimed that Vytautas never drank wine or beer.

Vytautas's tolerance appealed to the ethnic minorities. He is the one who brought Tatars to Lithuania and he gave Jews privileges that they would only get much later in the rest of Europe. Vytautas embodied a national and political ideal that was acceptable to every Lithuanian: he saved Lithuania from being absorbed by Poland and he was laid to rest in Vilnius.

A moment in the veneration of Vytautas the Great: a special ceremony in Pasvalys in 1930 to honour a painting of the Grand Duke as it does a tour of Lithuania

The Vytautas the Great War Museum, opened in 1935.
Architect Vladimiras Dubeneckis. Photograph by Vytautas Augustinas

The Committee for the Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Death of Vytautas the Great decided to build a Vytautas the Great War Museum in Kaunas as a commemorative pantheon. A painting of Vytautas the Great toured Lithuania, with formal receptions arranged in all the cities and towns of Lithuania, and many monuments to him were built.

Thus the cult of Vytautas the Great was stimulated to remind Lithuanians of the glorious life of this hero of ancient times and to draw a parallel with the contemporary strong national leader, Antanas Smetona – a second Vytautas, you could say – and the way he ruled Lithuania. The most important message of the Vytautas jubilee commemorations was unity of the nation through a wide patriotic movement, finding strength in the GDL and its glorious pagan past and sending the message that Lithuania is an old historic state.

Antanas Smetona and Juozas Tūbelis Tandem

Juozas Tūbelis, a founder and leader of cooperative and economic organisations, turned out to be diametrically different from the eccentric Voldemaras. He calmly led both the Government and the Lithuanian Nationalists' Union from 1931 to 1938. Tūbelis fully understood Lithuania's economics and finances and he was resolutely opposed to the devaluation of the litas. His prudent economic policies enabled Lithuania to withstand the crisis and the country's finances did not collapse; Lithuania did not take on an unbearable amount of debt. His theory was economically conservative: avoid spending more than you earn, improve the financial situation by expanding production. He did not borrow abroad and he made decisions carefully, believing in the autarchy of economic activity – getting by with as few imports as possible.

Lithuania's 160,000 new farmers undertook melioration, making arable land out of thousands of hectares of grazing meadows, scrub and forest. The amount of land under crops increased by one third and Lithuania became self-sufficient in grains for stock feed and human consumption, with the surplus being exported (132,000 tonnes in 1938). As a result of cooperatives and independent farmers importing thousands of red and white and black and white Holstein cattle from Denmark, Sweden and Germany, milk production increased from 700 litres to 2,000 litres, surpassing production in many other countries. When private economic initiative failed in many instances to achieve the required results in the country's econ-

omy, Tūbelis created cooperative or broad-based shareholder companies and strengthened their economic activity. He believed moderate State regulation in matters of employment relations, education and culture was useful and necessary. Accordingly, his political style has sometimes been described as a variety of moderate State socialism.

Juozas Tūbelis – Prime Minister (September 1929 to March 1938)

Tūbelis's activities strengthened capitalist networks in Lithuania and his support of cooperatives and societies assisted the growth of the Lithuanian cooperate societies Lietūkis, Pienocentras and Maistas.

The export of grains decreased, but other farm production (pork, butter, cheese, meat products) accounted for 65% of exports in 1935 and 78% by 1939. In 1924 Lithuania exported only 542 tonnes of butter, but by 1939 the figure was 17,413 tonnes, while exports of pork had increased to 41,000 tonnes.

The sugar and preserves industries grew, as did textiles (in 1939 there were 80 firms involved in producing linen, woollen products, cotton and silk textiles and knitted wear). There was growth in the production of footwear, paper and glass products, i.e. industry producing manufactured goods from local raw materials, which expanded fourfold. The cities grew and modernised. In 1939 Kaunas had 154,000 residents, 60% of whom were Lithuanian, and it was an up-to-date, orderly city. Schools were built; as were libraries, new museums and university faculty buildings. There were improvements in health care, new hospitals were built, 1,500 doctors were trained and mortality began to decline, getting close to the rate for developed European countries (13 people per 1,000). In the number of births, Lithuania left Latvia and Estonia far behind. There were plans to begin industrialising Lithuania around 1941–1942.

The authoritarian régime of calm publicist and speaker Smetona did not satisfy the right-wing Nationalists, who were impressed by Italy's fascism and its energetic leader. In the Army, influential Nationalist Voldemarists kept trying to bring their leader Voldemaras back to power via a putsch. The most dangerous attempt was that by General Petras Kubiliūnas, who in

1934 led a coup attempt that involved stationing army units in the streets of Kaunas. However, the coups were not aimed directly at Smetona and they were stopped on time. On this occasion Voldemaras was punished more seriously – he had to leave his home in the Lithuanian provincial town of Zarasai and he was banished to Paris. To ensure the Army's future loyalty, a simple solution was found: the 1,750 officers in an army of 25,000 soldiers were paid extra-large salaries and they got free health care and accommodation and other benefits. The régime also had the support of the police and a smoothly operating Department of State Security.

As the complaints began to increase about the lack of Presidential elections, it was necessary to introduce laws that at least foresaw that possibility. On 2 May 1931 the local government councils became organs of the regional (*apskrities*) bosses. These bosses where chairmen of the regional Councils, which selected colleges of "outstanding representatives of the nation", which in turn elected the President. While the "outstanding representatives of the nation" were being chosen in this way, it was very hard to select anyone that was opposed to Smetona. In this way Smetona set up a system that would keep re-electing him. The "outstanding representatives of the nation" unanimously chose him as President of Lithuania on 11 December 1931. Similarly, Smetona was chosen as President again on 14 November 1938. The régime of Smetona appeared by comparison to be quite liberal when Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933 and authoritarian régimes were established in Estonia and Latvia in 1934.

Military officers were demanding a share of the budget for modernisation of the armed forces. In 1935 the National Defence Council adopted an armed forces reorganisation plan which meant that about 20% of the national budget would go to defence expenditure. Tūbelis, who was in the Council of Ministers for 7.5 years (the longest of anyone), guaranteed the stability of Governments and a united policy from all Ministers, giving Lithuania a chance to expand multifacetedly in all spheres without any assistance from abroad. But there were also some failures. Growth in the agricultural and industrial sector was insufficient for the rapid rise in living standards; many small farms had to be sold by auction. In 1935 Pienocentras, the agency that bought milk products from primary producers, reduced the price it paid threefold. The peasants of Suvalkija (southwest part of Lithuania) announced a strike, they prevented milk from being delivered to Kaunas and they established guard posts on the roads. When the police tried to dismantle them, riots broke out and the police in

Veiveriai shot three peasants, arresting hundreds. In 1934–1935 when tension was high between Lithuania and Germany as a result of a trial of Nazis in Klaipėda, Germany closed its border to Lithuanian agricultural products and stopped the traditional import of geese. In an effort to help Lithuanian farmers, all public servants had to buy geese regularly. The Government compensated the low prices for agricultural products from the national budget. Tūbelis managed to establish trade with Great Britain and this became Lithuania's major partner for both imports and exports.

The events in Suvalkija were a heavy blow to both Prime Minister Tūbelis and Smetona. The Parties, especially the CDPL bloc, criticised the régime. At the beginning of 1936, when the Christian Democrats became particularly active, political parties were officially banned in Lithuania, except for Lithuanian Nationalist Union (LNU), which Smetona did not officially permit to become a party, but only to support his régime. At first it appeared that opposition parties no longer existed.

However, as the Opposition continued to demand an opportunity to form without delay a Government that had the confidence of the nation, by reconstituting the Seimas, and the Left clung to populist Sleževičius's motto "We will keep fighting until the Seimas is reconvened", people close to Smetona talked him into allowing an obedient Seimas to be the target of some of the public's discontent. So the Seimas was revived as an institution. Candidates to the Seimas were put forward by the Regional Councils and in Kaunas – the City Council, but candidates to the Seimas could not be put forward by community organisations or groups of citizens, only by the Nationalist-controlled Councils. Thus it was that no opposition representatives were allowed to take part in the Seimas elections. The Seimas elections of the summer of 1936 were not democratic and the 4th Seimas that was elected was called the "Smetona Seimas". Its 49-member majority consisted on Nationalists and people loyal to the Government.

On 12 May 1938 the authoritarian régime of the President was strengthened by the proclamation of a new Constitution for the country, signed by President Smetona and Prime Minister Mironas. It proclaimed that Lithuania was a republic, but it was no longer described as "democratic". Although under this Constitution, sovereignty belongs to the nation, the country is led by a President elected for seven years and he is not even fully responsible for exercising his own powers, as a Presidential decree requires the Prime Minister's signature, as do national defence decisions. The President can pass legislation, draw up and ratify treaties/agreement, appoint and dismiss sen-

ior officials, and as Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces he appoints and dismisses the military Chief of Staff. The Capital of Lithuania is Vilnius. This Constitution fully backed the authoritarian régime of Smetona.

Smetona felt he had not much to fear from the activities of the weak left-wing parties. They had their newspapers and there was not much threat from the weak (about 1,200 members) underground Lithuanian Communist Party, even though Moscow kept pumping funds into its flabby muscles. However, the CDPL bloc and the Catholic Action Centre (CAC) kept breathing down the Nationalists' necks, not permitting them to monopolise the ideological and organisational space. Catholics had bigger organisations and youth groups than the Nationalists and their press was more influential. The Christian Democrat sympathisers in the Opposition openly aspired to take part in governing the country. They supported the ambitious Head of the Army, General Stasys Raštikis, who had great popularity in society. Even though he was married to the President's niece (daughter of the President's brother), after a long conflict of ambitions President Smetona dismissed him from his post in April 1940.

Jews and Poles as Lithuanian citizens

For centuries there had been no serious anti-Semitism in Lithuania because Lithuanian peasants depended on the Jewish merchants and agricultural agents (crop purchasers) who had a complete monopoly, and these Jews depended on the Lithuanian peasants. Jews were jokingly referred to by the diminutive form *mūsų žydeliai* ("our little Jews") because they were not tall and because they took on jobs in commerce and trade that the peasants did not value as "serious" work. They were noted for their literacy and their love of books and in that sense they were a good example for the Lithuanian nationalist movement, even though they appeared "different" to other Lithuanians. The Jews viewed Lithuanian peasants as country people with a low level of culture, from whom they just bought their products. The barely emerging Lithuanian culture meant nothing to them, just as it meant nothing to the Poles. The Jews talked Russian or Polish with the Lithuanians. In the 20th century the situation began to change. Lithuanians began cooperating with Jews in getting deputies elected to the Russian Duma, thus beating the Polish candidates for deputy. However, both sides were doing it for their own purposes, not envisaging a mutual strategic partnership.

It could be said that the two most important problems of international politics – the Vilnius and Klaipėda issues – had a bearing on the situation of Jews and Poles in Lithuania. As the Lithuanians did not have a strong middle class to provide leadership, a small group of Lithuanian intelligentsia were interested in getting the support of Jews, especially if Lithuania were able to get re-established with Vilnius as its capital. The support of Jewish urban communities with their trade and finances in areas that were not yet under Lithuanian control was important from both an internal and foreign policy point of view. In December 1918 Jewish Zionists Jakub Wygodzki and Simon Rosenbaum became members of the Lithuanian Government as Minister without Portfolio for Jewish Affairs and Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs respectively. Lithuanians did not harbour anti-Semitism and plans for assimilation of Jews; and meanwhile the Paris Peace Conference promised them everything they had asked, especially very broad cultural autonomy. In general, Jews supported Lithuanian independence; they took part in the activities of the Council of Lithuania and some Jews fought as volunteers in the Lithuanian war of independence. In 1920 at a national conference of democratically elected Jewish *kahal* (community) representatives, a 34-member Council (*Vaad*) of Lithuanian Jews was formed, which had to decide on all Jewish social and cultural questions. Any Jewish members of the Lithuanian Seimas who did not speak Lithuanian well could talk Yiddish – a practice unheard of in Europe. However, the loss of Vilnius weakened Lithuanian promises, and when the 1922 Constitution was being drafted, the parties supported cultural autonomy for ethnic minorities and gave them equal rights. However, no privileges were granted, for fear of creating a state within a state.

The Constitution protected the official status of the Lithuanian language and spoke out against the marginalisation and persecution of minorities, urging that their culture be respected. It did not mention the Jews specifically. It was thought that there were about 250,000 Jews in Lithuania, but a Census counted only 150,000 (7% of Lithuania's population) and their numbers were not growing due to a high rate of emigration and a low birth rate. In 1923 the post of Minister without Portfolio for Jewish Affairs was abolished, following which precedence was given to President Smetona's policy that since ethnic minorities were permitted to keep using their native languages and to keep maintaining cultural organisations and networks, in return the minorities "must be patriots of our land and must love Lithuania and honour the Lithuanian nation".

Despite the new ascendance of Lithuanian culture, which until recently had been ridiculed, the Jews were able to continue to fully satisfy their national cultural needs. Jews and Lithuanians lived separate lives that only intersected, if ever, for work purposes. In the national sphere Jews were unable to participate in the Public Service, so they traditionally predominated in trade and commerce, which was of great assistance to Lithuania's reconstruction efforts. They founded Jewish economic and financial organisations, including a unique system of separate schools and education, in which lessons were conducted in Hebrew and Yiddish. These became important centres of Jewish culture. The young and not yet venerable Lithuanian culture (Lithuanian classic literature authors Maironis, Vaižgantas, Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius who lived in Kaunas) was not very attractive to Jews. On the other hand, Lithuanians, who had endured so much under the Tsars, had their national feelings offended by the Jewish predilection for using Russian among themselves.

The Jews were a multipolar, pluralist, politically fractured community, with many parties and organisations. In view of on-going secularisation, modernisation of youth and disintegration of confined Jewish ghetto life, the Government was not concerned by the growing number of Jewish left-wingers active in the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP) and members of the Communist underground, where Jews operated in LCP organisations, mostly the Communist Youth and MOPR (International Organisation to assist Revolutionaries, led from Moscow). As Lithuanians flooded into cities and got jobs in industry and commerce, especially when the economic crises started, competition became stronger. Jews controlled about 40% of the country's industry, 54% of its internal production, 20% of its exports and 40% of its imports. Many Jews worked as freelance professionals: they supplied 42% of Lithuania's doctors, somewhat fewer lawyers, art specialists and journalists; 32% worked in commerce and 23% in industry and the trades. In the 1930s Lithuanian businessmen began to attack Jewish merchants rather aggressively in the newspaper *Verslas* ('Business'), openly using the slogan "Lithuania for Lithuanians".

However, the Government effectively stopped exhortations to limit Jewish rights, and philo-Semite Smetona made it clear to the more aggressive *jaunalietuviai* ('Young Lithuanians') that there was "room enough for everyone". The Nationalists appreciated Jewish assistance in solving the Klaipėda and Vilnius problems, whereas Jewish participation in local government elections was seen as an "unjustified" attempt by the Jews to increase their

Sportsmen of the Jewish *Hapoel* Club march down one of the main streets of Kaunas in 1935 (archive of the Lithuanian Jewish Association in Israel)

influence. However, as the cities became more Lithuanian, the activities of Lithuanians and their agricultural cooperatives inevitably weakened Jewish commercial positions. By 1934 the share of Lithuanian capital in exports was 45% and by 1938 it was 70%. In some spheres the Jews clearly predominated: they exported more horses, pelts and skins and more forest products; and they also imported more. In general, Jews lived a separate community life and hardly integrated into Lithuanian society. The Zionist movement was recruiting Lithuanian Jews to go and live in Palestine.

The cultural life of the Polish community (who made up 3.2% of Lithuania's population, although they claimed it was 10%) also revolved around Polish schools. The situation of the Polish speakers was made difficult by Poland's curtailing of the rights of Lithuanian cultural life in the Vilnius region, since the Lithuanian Government would respond with similar restrictions on Poles in Lithuania. The number of Polish children in elementary schools was falling: in 1923 there were 2,852 pupils in 30 Polish schools while by 1932 the number was only 603. As of 1927, an administrative practice was introduced making it necessary to indicate a pupil's ethnicity. A child could go to a Polish school if both his parents were Poles; but if one of them was Lithuanian, the child had to go to a Lithuanian school.

The influence of the Polish speakers was limited, because the Government was trying to lithuanianise them, considering them to be just polo-

For more than ten years, roads between Lithuania and Poland were closed. Relatives living on either side meet at the administration line. Photograph c. 1937

nised Lithuanians anyway. President Smetona considered that since they had once become Poles, why couldn't they revert to being Lithuanians again?

Since the Poles did not live all concentrated in one area, they were unable to provide Polish schools for their children in all parts of Lithuania. They sent their children to illegal schools, of which it is estimated there were around 40 in 1935. Polish education was assisted by the Polish cultural organisations *Pochodnia* ("Torch"), *Oswiata* ("Enlightenment") and *Jutrzenka* ("Dawn"), which all received funding from Poland. They provided funding to Polish elementary schools and to Polish high schools (which were also funded by the Lithuanian Government) in Kaunas, Panevėžys and Ukmergė. In the 1935–1936 academic year there were about 30 Polish schools operating.

Since the Poles of Lithuania did not have much scope to manoeuvre politically due to poor relations between Lithuania and Poland, they devoted a lot of attention to cultural activities. In general, Lithuania's ethnic minorities, including Russians and Germans, despite having the freedom to cultivate their language and culture, did not feel that they were on an equal footing with the Lithuanians, playing only the role of assistants to Lithuanians, facing invisible barriers when they applied for public service jobs. Germans and Poles tried to get cultural autonomy on the Jewish model, but the Russian minority did not make such demands.

By 1939 the effect of international events on both Lithuanians and ethnic minorities was evident. The presence of Red Army units was causing

the right wing of Lithuanian youth to become even more ardent as radical nationalists, while on the left, Jewish youth and some Lithuanian young people were expressing their support for the USSR and Bolshevism. Neither side was satisfied by the authoritarian régime of Smetona, although for different reasons in each case.

The Independence Generation

During its not quite two decades of independence, Lithuania had become definitively Lithuanian and it could no longer be rolled in with either Poland or Russia. Smetona had essentially succeeded in implementing his régime's priorities and his model of a state: creation of national culture and a Lithuanian-speaking Lithuania. National culture, unregulated and unfettered, blossomed. A generation had grown up of educated, competent people who were capable of being open to international developments and interpreting them in the Lithuanian context. Illiteracy was essentially eliminated, thanks to Lithuanians' veneration of books and a free press since the time of the banning of Lithuanian printed materials by the Tsar. In 1937 in Lithuania there were 150 periodical publications appearing in Lithuanian and Russian with a combined print run of 930,000. In 1938 there were 2,312 schools in the country with 5,110 teachers. In elementary schools alone there were 283,000 children. The Lithuanian language became dominant in all spheres of the nation's life. As well as the Vytautas Magnus University producing graduates in Kaunas, there was the Academy of Agriculture in Dotnuva and the Academy of Veterinary in Kaunas producing specialists in those fields. Teachers' College produced teachers, while an Art School and Conservatoire produced artists in those fields. About 1,500 young Lithuanians received scholarships and completed studies in engineering, seamanship, medicine, language and history and military studies abroad.

Young couples considered it a great honour if they could get married in Paris, while getting acquainted with world literature and art. This era saw the birth of Lithuanian art, architecture and our own school of philosophy. Poetry and literature reached a high standard and there was experimentation with formerly unheard of styles. Psychological and satirical novels appeared; as did historical and realist dramaturgy. There were professional critics to reflect on and analyse the directions and competing ideas and

Development of architecture: Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Kaunas. Architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, 1938

priorities of the Catholics, the Nationalists and the Left in the context of European as well as Lithuanian cultural developments. As Lithuanians retreated from Russian cultural influence and shunned Polish influence, they were somewhat open to German and French cultural influences, while remaining equally wary of influences from all cultural giants.

Even though the régime of Smetona talked a lot about creating Lithuanian culture, it did not regulate the development of cultural phenomena. State funds were used to create a professional opera, ballet and theatre and to form a national cultural élite. On 1 November 1938, the Antanas Smetona Lithuanian Language Institute was founded: an academic institution for the purpose of studying the Lithuanian language, folklore and history and organising material and sources in those fields, as well as representing Lithuanian studies both in Lithuania and abroad and setting technical terms, gathering treasures of Lithuanian folklore and songs. The Institute continued compiling the Dictionary of the Lithuanian Language commenced by Kazimieras Būga in 1902. The first volumes appeared while Lithuania was under German occupation, then more appeared during the Soviet occupation era, although the work was disrupted by *politruks* (political commissars). This most unique work of lexicography was completed in 2001. The complete dictionary consists of 20 volumes, with 22,000 pages in all. It covers half a million Lithuanian words, giving examples of their use.

Building of *Pienocentras*, Kaunas, c. 1938.
Architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis

Lithuania was catching up with neighbours such as Poland on some economic and social indicators such as per capita income. In 1930 in Lithuania the average per capita income as 450 pounds sterling (higher than in Romania and Bulgaria), whereas in Poland it was 550, in Latvia 900 and in Finland 950. But income wasn't everything: the Government worked at creating national and State traditions, erecting national monuments, encouraging respect for traditions. The nation had to have national heroes and places to venerate them. This was the inspiration behind the construction of Church of the Resurrection in Kaunas, a national sanctuary built in the Lithuanian style with Lithuanian ornamentation, reflecting the religious and national spirit of the Lithuanian nation. The church was viewed as a symbol of national unity.

This was Kaunas's highest building. Designed by architect Kārlis Reisons, the building was constructed from reinforced concrete slabs in record time. The occupying Soviet régime converted it into a radio factory, and it was only refurbished to be used as a sanctuary in the first years of the 21st century. In the late 1920s, as the tenth anniversary of Independence approached, commemorative crosses and patriotic monuments were built to commemorate the wars of independence; and arrangements were made to care for the graves of Lithuanian soldiers. On 23 November 1934 an Unknown Soldier was interred in the courtyard of the War Museum

in Kaunas, next to the Monument for those who perished fighting for Lithuanian's Freedom. Ceremonies to honour the war dead were devised, the graves of Lithuanian soldiers were cared for, a sense of caring about soldiers who gave their lives for Lithuania was cultivated and Army Foundation Day, 23 November, was ceremoniously celebrated every year.

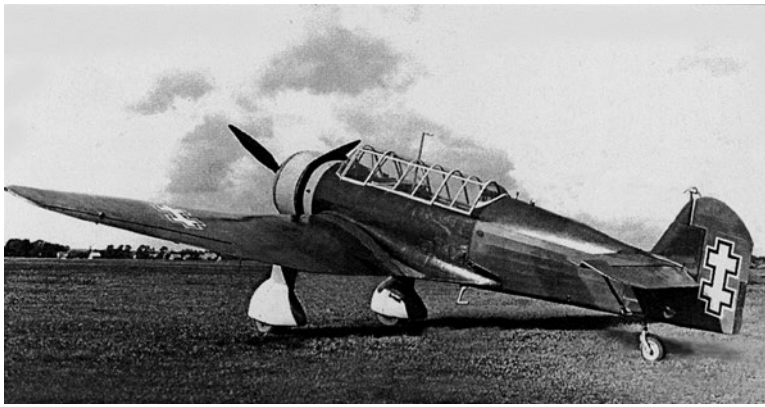
Starting in 1930, the 8th day of September – the Feast of the Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the day of the planned but never carried out Coronation of Vytautas – was chosen as the day to celebrate Lithuania's National Day. State buildings were decorated with large portraits of Vytautas the Great and Smetona, there were military parades, processions through the streets of the cities, enactments of dramas were staged and excursions were arranged for foreign visitors. These celebrations underlined the link between past and present, they connected national achievements, they educated young people with examples from our proud past and they tried to demonstrate a unity between the army and the people.

Eventually modern heroes of the young nation emerged. On 15–17 July 1933, two Lithuanians, Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas, flew the small airplane Lituanica on a non-stop flight from New York to Lithuania.

After flying 6,411 km in 37 hours and 11 minutes without any stop for refuelling, the second longest non-stop flight ever done in the world until that time, the aviators suffered a disaster over the territory of what was then East Prussia. Almost a hundred thousand people waiting at Kaunas airport to see Lituanica appearing in the Western sky burst into tears when they heard the news. In a note they wrote before setting off on their flight, the pilots urged Lithuanian youth to dedicate themselves to achieving honour for their homeland. This exhortation became a motivating force for thousands of young men and women. A mausoleum was built for these two heroes in Kaunas, but the Nazi occupiers half-demolished it and the Soviet occupiers completed the demolition. On 21–22 May 1935, another American Lithuanian, Feliksas Vaitkus, successfully completed the trip that Darius and Girėnas had attempted.

These events inspired young people's interest in aviation and in flying and gliding as sports. The talented aircraft designer and builder Antanas Gustaitis, who had been head of the Lithuanian Air Force since 1934, constructed a series of aircraft and called them ANBO (from the acronym made from the first letters of *Antanas nori būti ore* — Antanas wants to be in the air). The military aviation workshops in Kaunas produced 66 such

Trans-Atlantic pilots
Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas



ANBO VIII Light Bomber (1939)
designed by General Antanas Gustaitis and
built by military aviation workshops in Kaunas

aircraft. A group of three ANBO IV aircraft, led by A. Gustaitis, flew 10,000 km in 1934, visiting virtually every European capital city.

Creatively using German motors and French fuselages, the Lithuanian military aviation workshops in Kaunas designed and built their own aircraft for military and sporting purposes, including light bombers and gliders.

As Lithuania entered the international sporting arena, there were some victories. In 1937 in Riga, Lithuanians became European basketball champions with a bit of help from some trainers and players who were Lithuanians from USA. As the train carrying the sportsmen returned from Riga, it stopped at every station along the way in Lithuania, where the team was met by crowds of thousands of people with flowers, the national anthem, cheers of congratulations and tears of joy. In 1939 in Kaunas Lithuania won the European championship a second time and shortly after the Lithuanian women's basketball team won a silver medal in the European championship in Italy. Basketball became Lithuania's favourite sport for all time, seen as a symbol of national success, a triumph of physical and psychological training, a great example for participants in other sports. Sport became an integral part of life, which was demonstrated at the first Lithuanian Olympiad in Kaunas in 1938, in which Lithuanians from abroad participated in large numbers.

Lithuanian communities abroad were growing and becoming more geographically diverse. Farmers who owned very little land and could not make an adequate living succumbed to the temptation of emigration, mostly to South America, because USA had introduced immigration quotas. Over 20 years about 100,000 people left the country. About 30% of these were Jews headed for Palestine, the Republic of South Africa and USA. Lithuanians emigrated mostly to South American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela and Uruguay). A Fellowship for Lithuanians Abroad (*Draugija užsienio lietuviams remti*) was created to assist them and to help them maintain links with the homeland.

The Fellowship looked after such matters as providing the colonies with Lithuanian press; it also sent priests and teachers and established several elementary schools. As the emigrant groups in USA were the strongest financially and in terms of organisations, most of the Fellowship's dealings with them were via political organisations of the same persuasion, either professionally or personally. At the World Lithuanian Congress in Kaunas in 1935, which was attended by 3,000 delegates and guests from 19 countries, it was evident that most Lithuanians abroad felt close to Lithuania

In the Kaunas Sports Arena in 1939, the Lithuanian men's basketball team became European champions for the second time

and they cared about its future, although they did not support the political restrictions brought in by the authoritarian régime.

During these years of independence the contours of the Lithuanian State were defined clearly and the content of national values was specified. The young generation of Lithuanians who had been born and had grown up in independent Lithuania held the country's sovereignty to be first priority and to them it was self-evident that a nation's economic, cultural and political life is looked after by the nation itself, even if the nation is not flawless. (According to one high school student of the time, his dream was to liberate Vilnius from the Poles and to topple Smetona.) Lithuania's high school students, university students, soldiers and young farmers reacted in a lively way to threats from abroad, expressing a clear resolve to defend the homeland, if this were required. After all, this is what they were taught. And their own country, passed down from the times of Mindaugas, Kęstutis, Algirdas and Vytautas, was the very highest value, the guarantee of their dreams and future plans.

A Lithuanian Lithuania, even though sometimes without Vilnius or Klaipėda – this was the greatest success of the nation builders. Without it, Lithuania could hardly be what it is today. Smetona's preferred model

of a State, fairly typical in Europe at that time, and the nationalism and patriotism that was instilled were a form of preparation for the independence generation to face three foreign occupations, the last one which lasted almost 50 years. The consciousness of Lithuanian independence that they grew up with, and the hope to again live in freedom, would give them the strength needed to preserve their native language and culture through the coming maelstrom of black swastikas and red sickles that would decapitate the best sons and daughters of our nation.

ERA OF ULTIMATUMS FROM THREE NEIGHBOURS

Lithuania and Poland: Relations Without Relations

Relations with the neighbours were not going well. Poland, the USSR and Germany all stood in the way of closer relations between Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. That is why it took until 12 September 1934 for the Baltic States to sign a political and diplomatic agreement in Geneva. This was the Baltic Entente or Baltic Covenant, which sought to strengthen economic, social, legal and administrative cooperation. However, it did not guarantee that Lithuania would get help from Estonia or Latvia in the case of a conflict with Poland concerning the Vilnius region, although it did strengthen the countries' regional cooperation.

After the unsuccessful negotiations with Poland, Lithuania limited itself to *ad hoc* diplomatic relations with Poland, while continuing to look at all other international political events through the prism of the Vilnius question. Lithuania faced a diplomatic conundrum, since its two basic aims were contradictory: Lithuania wanted revised borders in the case of Vilnius but in the case of Klaipėda it argued for maintenance of the *status quo*. How could Lithuanian diplomats win two important diplomatic skirmishes if the two aims were contradictory?

As the political situation in Europe changed, the Russians underwent a rapprochement with Poland. When the Russians signed a non-aggression treaty with Poland in July 1932, the Soviet guarantees regarding Vilnius essentially fell away. Furthermore, Kaunas was getting nervous about increasing German aggression. That is why non-official relations with

Lithuanian Army soldiers on parade in 1937

Warsaw began to be knit in 1934. Two forty-year olds, Foreign Minister Stasys Lozoraitis and the Army Chief of Staff General Stasys Raštikis, began to modernise the diplomatic service and the army and to prepare a new national security strategy. Lozoraitis was guided by the idea of "independence foremost", so for him a *modus vivendi* with Poland was an essential precondition for continuing independence.

In April 1935, Lozoraitis handed President Smetona a secret memorandum in which he set out a plan: we have Klaipėda, although it is under threat; whereas we do not have Vilnius and there is no hope of reclaiming it in the near future. We cannot fight on two diplomatic fronts, so Lithuania needs to get the Poles back on our side and to use this in our struggle against Germany. In the military sphere, Raštikis probed the possibilities of cooperation with Latvia and Estonia and he was in favour of a military alliance between the three countries, but Smetona and Prime Minister Tūbelis were of the opinion that such an alliance would not be useful to Lithuania.

Contact was made with Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck, but this led to nothing. In January 1936, Beck made a speech in which he berated Lithuania, and in March that year Smetona responded in a similar tone, slamming the door to compromise. While the negotiations were at a stalemate, on 11 March 1938 there was an incident at the administration line: a Lithuanian border policeman shot a Polish soldier who had crossed the line. Even though the Poles had already shot seven Lithuanian border police-

men in similar incidents in the past, Warsaw whipped up anti-Lithuanian hysteria, echoed by Germany, which was in the process of absorbing Austria. On 17 March Lithuania was given an ultimatum by Poland, demanding commencement of diplomatic relations, and if an unequivocal positive reply was not received, it would be bad, in other words, there would be war.

The politicians in Kaunas had been expecting an ultimatum and they were looking for ways to commence relations. The French and British advised Lithuania to accede to Polish demands; Moscow and Berlin were advising Lithuania the same way. In a Cabinet meeting General Raštikis said that if ordered the Army would fight, but he was under no illusion what the outcome of such a battle would be, and therefore he favoured a peaceful solution.

Since the ultimatum did not include recognising the annexation of Vilnius by Poland, on 19 March Lithuania accepted the ultimatum. Although thousands of hotheads filled the streets of Polish cities chanting "*Marsz na Kowno*" (March on Kaunas), Polish officials contented themselves with acceptance of the ultimatum.

This was a severe blow to Lithuania's national ambitions. Lithuanians had to stop commemorating 9 October as "Loss of Vilnius Day". They had to allow a Polish Embassy in Kaunas and to open a Lithuanian Embassy in Warsaw and even a Lithuanian Consulate in Vilnius. They had to disband the patriotic organisation Vilnius Liberation Alliance, which had 700,000 members, and to stop publication of the journal *Mūsų Vilnius* ("Our Vilnius"). Despite the establishment of diplomatic relations, cooperation between Lithuania and Poland did not increase. Lithuania considered this to be a tactical withdrawal and in the revised Constitution accepted in May 1938, it was again stated that the Capital of Lithuania is Vilnius.

When the Government accepted Poland's ultimatum, the Cabinet of Ministers of Prime Minister Tūbelis stepped down and Tūbelis was replaced as Prime Minister by another close associate of Smetona – Fr Vladas Mironas. He dismissed Lozoraitis, whose faction had lost, but the Government of Lithuania tried to act as if nothing significant had happened. However, the Government's total acceptance of the ultimatum really consolidated the forces that were opposed to the rule of President Smetona. The leaders of the Christian Democrats and the Peasant Popular Union formed an "axis" and had discussions about a joint program. They were joined by the ultra-radical Voldemarists. As of the end of 1938, this "axis" very sharply criticised the rule of Smetona, whose authority was waning.

They did this in their publications in Klaipėda, where local autonomy did not permit the Lithuanian Government to censor the press. The formation of this "axis" following a crisis caused by foreign intervention showed that the opposition parties had changed their tactics.

First Trial of Nazis in Europe and the Loss of Klaipėda

One of Lithuania's most serious problems was the unsuccessful integration of the Klaipėda region, since Klaipėda seemed not to "adhere" to Lithuania. The Germans in the Local Government were more inclined to listen to what Germany said. Two German Nazi organisations were formed that ran a propaganda line against the Lithuanian Government and prepared for an uprising and *Anschluß* with Germany, terrorising Lithuanian meetings and attacking Jews. Klaipėda was slipping from Lithuanian control. In an effort to quell anti-State activity, a Law on the Protection of Nation and State was passed on 8 February 1934. This Law provided penalties for those who would insult and harm the Lithuanian nation, the Government of Lithuania and national symbols and the flag, or who would collaborate with a foreign power against the interests of Lithuania.

The Government of Lithuania assiduously gathered evidence against the accused and did searches, during which it was discovered that between them, 805 members of Nazi organisations had 1,104 firearms and ample inflammatory literature. One hundred and twenty-six (126) persons were brought to trial and on 13 July 1934, Nazi organisations were banned.

The trial, which lasted from July 1934 to March 1935 in Kaunas, was the first trial, unprecedented in Europe, of German National Socialist Party members for anti-State activity. The proceedings were monitored by many journalists from Western Europe. This enabled them to get a deeper knowledge of the terrorist and propaganda activities of the Nazis and to inform their readers about the danger they represented. Thirty-four volumes of inculpatory evidence were collected and the courtroom walls were lined with 300 boxes of evidence: swastikas, flags, stormtroopers' uniforms, instructions, leaflets, weapons. Most of the accused stated that they were admirers of Nazism, they considered Klaipėda to be part of Germany and they got orders from Nazis in Germany, being themselves just a chapter. They said the orders came from Nazi leaders Walter R. Hess, East Prussian Ober-

Trial of Klaipėda Nazis in Kaunas, December 1934

präsident Erich Koch and the German Consulate in Klaipėda. The trial was completed on 26 March 1935 with the sentencing of 76 Hitlerites.

Nazi Germany exerted huge political and economic pressure on its small neighbour Lithuania over this trial; therefore President Smetona quickly commuted the death sentences to life imprisonment, but in 1937 those who had been sentenced were amnestied.

A plebiscite in Saarland and its annexation to Germany frightened the leaders of Lithuania. Smetona privately referred to Hitler in 1935 as a "dangerous political miscreant", who for the sake of implementing his pseudo-ideologies was capable of slaughtering half of Europe.

At the end of 1938, after the Munich Agreement, the state of Martial Law in the Klaipėda region was revoked and Lithuania no longer controlled the situation. Even though the Lithuanian Government allocated a lot of funds to the Klaipėda region (42 million litas was invested in the port alone, although the port's revenue was only 11 million litas), it became evident that funds were lacking and the Lithuanian Government's influence in the region waned. The Law guaranteeing equality of the two languages was a fiction: you could only use Lithuanian in Lithuanian firms and organisations. Nazi sympathisers predominated in German firms and in almost

all schools the lessons were in German, even though the majority of the students were Lithuanian. Attempts to provide lessons in Lithuanian for students of Lithuanian origin were not successful. Instructions to employees to speak Lithuanian at work and to take part in Lithuanian festivities produced the opposite result: opponents effectively stymied the integration of the Klaipėda region.

The Government of Lithuania did not find any internal support in the Klaipėda region. The local Germans did not like being an "ethnic minority" and they considered Lithuanian rule to be just a passing phase. Kaunas tried to get the support of internal migrants to Klaipėda from the rest of Lithuania, but these were mostly simple people, workers who were not highly educated. The most important factor was that for complex social, political and psychological reasons, Lithuania lost the support of Lithuanian-speaking Klaipėdans, who voted for German parties in the Local Government elections (as did the French speakers of Alsace and the Polish speakers of Silesia). In many respects, the Klaipėda region was more similar to Latvia and Estonia in regard to development parameters than to other parts of Lithuania. If the average index of wellbeing and culture (literacy, public libraries, health care, consumer goods and other indicators, taking a per capita average) for the Baltic countries was 100, then Estonia's score was 132, Latvia's 138, Klaipėda region 137, and Lithuania's was 59. So Klaipėda did not "adhere" to Lithuania because of Lithuania's lower standard of development.

If it wanted to keep Klaipėda, Lithuania would have to invest hundreds of millions of litas or else as many army divisions as Germany. Unfortunately, at the beginning of 1939, when Germany was already planning an attack on Klaipėda, the British and French (co-signatories of the Klaipėda Convention) announced that they would not guarantee the *status quo* in Klaipėda, and without their help, Lithuania could not defend and hold onto Klaipėda. On 20 March the Germans demanded in an ultimatum that the Klaipėda territory be handed over to them. They threatened that otherwise the German Army would advance on Klaipėda and Lithuania and who knows where it would stop?

At a Cabinet meeting lasting 5 hours, Smetona asked military officers how long Lithuania could resist the invaders. When General Kazys Musteikis and Raštikis agreed that the answer would be "not even three days", Lithuania accepted the ultimatum.

Adolf Hitler in Klaipėda on 23 March 1939 being greeted by local Nazi sympathisers and SS stormtroopers

On 23 March Lithuania and Germany signed a treaty transferring the Klaipėda territory to German sovereignty. Hitler sailed to Klaipėda on a military vessel and from the balcony of a theatre he addressed the jubilant local Germans. The entire Lithuanian nation was greatly upset, because the dominant mood had been a desire to fight back. The economic blow to Lithuania was enormous: although Klaipėda accounted for only 6% of Lithuania's territory and 5% of its inhabitants, its excision meant the loss of one third of Lithuania's economy; and 70% of Lithuania's exports went through Klaipėda.

The Christian Democrats and the Peasant Popular Union were conditionally returned to power after the annexation of Klaipėda. The Government of Jonas Černius, who replaced Mironas as Prime Minister, was called a Government of "working together", since both Opposition parties had two ministers each. But the Government and the Opposition each saw the changes to the ruling structure differently. In the eyes of the authoritarian government, working together was supposed to proceed not on party lines but on the basis of individual competence. The President was able to dictate the Government's work agenda, so Ministers from the Opposition had to complete the task as specified by the Government.

The Christian Democrats and the Peasant Popular Union did not insist on allowing their party organisations to be revived and they agreed to

have two representatives each in the new Government of Nationalist Prime Minister Antanas Merkys that was formed in November 1939. This tactic could be called being "between the Government and the Opposition", or "the politics of compromise". But real political unity was required, because there were very difficult times ahead.

Politics of Neutrality and Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

As the postulates of the Treaty of Versailles faded into insignificance and the League of Nations could no longer guarantee its members' security, the Foreign Ministers of the three Baltic countries decided in the summer of 1938 not to let foreign armies cross their territory, even if this were to be demanded under Article 16 of the League of Nations Statute. Left with no choice, the three Baltic countries prepared statutes of neutrality. Lithuania ratified its statute on 10 January 1939. However, for the moment there were no major political developments abroad, so Lithuania continued manoeuvring between Warsaw, Moscow and Berlin, taking pains not to get involved in any military conflict. In April 1939, the Head of the Lithuanian Army, General Raštikis, attended Hitler's 50th birthday party; and in May he visited Poland at the invitation of Marshall Edward Rydz-Śmigły. As relations between the big countries intensified, in May the Lithuanian diplomats were instructed that Lithuania would observe strict neutrality "in every situation and on every question".

As it tried to defend itself by clinging to neutrality, the Government in Kaunas was shocked by news of the signing of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression treaty on 23 August 1939, whereby Nazi Germany and the USSR agreed in a supplementary secret protocol to divide the region into spheres of influence: Finland, Estonia and Latvia were to go to the Soviets, whereas Lithuania was to go to Germany. Both parties recognised Lithuania's interests in the Vilnius region, but the borders were not specified. The Voldemarists, Army Reservists (Šauliai) and Young Nationalists blamed the Government for impotence and during the war between Germany and Poland they urged the Government to order a forceful take-over of the Vilnius region. Germany, having attacked Poland, urged Lithuania to march on Vilnius, promising support with aviation, tanks and artillery. Lithuania could have taken Vilnius without German help in view of the

Army Chief of Staff Stasys Raštikis (centre) and General Jonas Černius (right) on manoeuvres in 1938

Poles' military setbacks in the war with Germany, but the Lithuanian Government viewed this as a problem for a political solution, not a military one. The Lithuanian Government assured the Poles that not one Lithuanian soldier would cross the administration line. Otherwise Lithuania would have been viewed as an aggressor, which would ruin relations with the British and the French. The Soviets also advised against seizing Vilnius.

On 17 September, when the USSR invaded Poland, the Lithuanian President demonstrated Lithuania's resolve to defend its independence by proclaiming a partial mobilisation. Lithuania's Army increased from 24,000 to 89,470 men (the Army would be formally enlarged if aggressors were to cross Lithuania's borders). However, when on 28 September Vyacheslav Molotov and Joachim von Ribbentrop signed a treaty of border recognition and friendship between the Third Reich and the USSR, with its secret protocol assigning the territory of Lithuania to the sphere of USSR influence (for which Germany received the Voivodship of Lublin in return), Germany's pressure on Lithuania ceased instantly.

However, then the pressure from Moscow started. Molotov invited Minister Juozas Urbšys to come to Moscow. This took place on 2 October. On the eve of his trip a partial demobilisation of Lithuania's army was begun. This was a risky undertaking, because in a critical situation there could be no opportunity to increase the size of the army again. On 3 October in Moscow Joseph Stalin pressured Urbšys to sign a mutual assistance agreement,

Lithuanian troops enter Vilnius,
end of October, 1939

a treaty for the transfer of the city of Vilnius and the Vilnius region to Lithuanian control and another treaty ceding some territory in south-western Lithuania to Germany. The final element shocked the Lithuanian delegation, since the area concerned was ethnically 100% Lithuanian and it involved about 150,000 people. They were difficult negotiations. Urbšys had to fly to Kaunas for consultations, because the Soviets were demanding the right to establish military bases in Lithuania. Lithuania suggested that instead of allowing Soviet bases it could increase the size of its own army, arming it with heavy weapons and coordinating joint movements by creating a joint Military Commission, that way basically maintaining its neutrality. Stalin replied that Lithuania would only be neutral for so long as he wanted it to be.

Negotiations were made more difficult by the fact that at the beginning of October the Soviets had already forced the Estonians and Latvians through similar agreements to accept Soviet military bases. The Lithuanians tried persistently to avoid having bases, to keep their ethnic lands and to recover some Lithuanian-inhabited parts of the Vilnius region (Švenčionys and Druskininkai). At first the Soviets were demanding the entry of 50,000 soldiers, but they reduced the number to 20,000. The Lithuanians, by now convinced that nobody would help them and that Germany had let Lithuania pass into the USSR's sphere of influence, and with Stalin and Molotov aggressively breathing down their necks, signed a treaty for the transfer of the city of Vilnius and the Vilnius region to Lithuanian control and a mu-

tual assistance agreement between USSR and Lithuania on 10 October in Vilnius. Although the pact mentioned the Lithuanian-Russian treaties of 1920 and 1926 as grounding documents on bilateral relations, some articles of the pact potentially threatened Lithuania's independence. Lithuania got 6,700 km² of territory with Vilnius and about half a million residents. This was only about 20% of what should have been recovered according to the borders in the Peace Treaty of 1920; and for this they had to allow the establishment of Soviet military bases. Berlin and Moscow decided to leave the question of south-western Lithuania in abeyance for the moment. However, according to yet another secret protocol, on 10 January 1941 the USSR would buy the area from Germany for 7.5 million gold dollars.

This pact fundamentally changed Lithuania's international situation: Lithuania lost its neutral political status and a degree of its sovereignty. Only the recovery of Vilnius, Lithuania's historic capital, was a ray of sunshine in an otherwise bleak situation. Furthermore, Lithuania had become dependent on the USSR (leading many members of the public to quip: "*Vilnius mūsų, o mes rusų*" (Now Vilnius belongs to us, but we belong to the Russians).

Germany reiterated that it did not have any interests in the region; Britain and France were at war with Germany; and a defeated Poland had very little influence left in the region.

USSR's Ultimatum of 1940 and Soviet Occupation

After allowing the establishment of Soviet bases, Lithuania had to forego its ambition of being electing to the Council of the League of Nations. The Baltic countries avoided condemning the USSR for its aggression against Finland, even though the USSR had been expelled from the League of Nations for that aggression. Germany greatly reduced Lithuania's trade with UK and tried to monopolise Lithuania's foreign trade. It was too late to make a union of the Baltic countries. Lithuania had to take care of the integration needs of the recovered Capital and Vilnius region. That required a lot of funds, but the region had been severely damaged during the Russian-Polish war and the Russians had plundered any modern technology they could find and transported it off to USSR. At that time Lithuania was magnanimously caring for more than ten thousand interned Polish soldiers and officers, providing them lodgings and sustenance; likewise 12,000 Polish Jews. The Lithuanian

currency unit *litas* had to be introduced in place of the worthless *zloty*, the unemployed needed to be provided with sustenance and jobs had to be found for them; all the afore-mentioned also needed to have documents issued to them. According to its demographic profile at the time, Vilnius appeared to be a Polish town with about a thirty-three per cent Jewish population. Polish patriots were hostile to Lithuanian administration, especially once its external appearance started to alter as Polish signs were substituted by Lithuanian ones and Lithuanian language courses were arranged. They were angry about the closure of Stephen Báthory University. The Lithuanian Government did not hasten to transfer Ministries and other institutions of the Capital from Kaunas to Vilnius. Caring for the needs (housing, etc.) of the 20,000 Red Army soldiers stationed in Lithuania was also a demanding task.

However, by the end of May 1940 the Soviets' promised non-interference in Lithuania's internal affairs came to an end. Moscow publicly accused Lithuania of "kidnapping" soldiers from the Soviet bases. "Victims" were found, but the Soviets refused to listen to any Lithuanian offers of cooperation and they did not even let the alleged kidnap victims be questioned. It was clear that these accusations were just a pretext for much more far-reaching plans and in no time Moscow invited Lithuanian Prime Minister Merkys for a visit. In view of this obvious threat, President Smetona authorised Merkys to sign whatever documents it might be necessary to sign, but without breaching the agreement of 10 October 1939.

From the moment he arrived in Moscow on 7 June 1940, Merkys was shocked by Molotov's brutal behaviour toward him. Molotov absurdly accused Lithuania of anti-Soviet policies, kidnappings of soldiers that had not happened, including allegations of interrogating and torturing the "kidnap victims" and a non-existent anti-Soviet military pact with Latvia and Estonia. Molotov objected to an anti-Soviet caricature in a Lithuanian newspaper, even to an article that Merkys had written. Molotov would not accept any explanations and he insisted that the people to blame for the "provocations" – Internal Affairs Minister General Kazys Skučas and Security Department Director Augustinas Povilaitis – had to be dismissed from their posts. The absurdity of Molotov's shrill accusations caused Merkys to break down psychologically. On 10 June when it was heard in Kaunas that Merkys had not been able to normalise the situation, it was agreed to send Minister Urbšys to Moscow. But neither Urbšys, nor Smetona's conciliatory letter to Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union

Occupation: Soviet tanks in Kaunas on 15 June 1940.
Photograph by Georg Birman

Mikhail Kalinin, nor the dismissal of the two high-ranking Lithuanian officials did any good. On 14 June – the same day the Wehrmacht marched into Paris – at 11:45pm Urbšys received a hand-delivered ultimatum from Molotov which demanded that Lithuania let in more Soviet army units in unlimited numbers, unfettered by any agreement, that the Government be replaced by a pro-Soviet one, that the "guilty" officials be punished and that a response be given the 10 o'clock in the morning the next day (15 June). Molotov then told Urbšys verbally that regardless what Lithuania's response would be, Red Army units were going to invade Lithuania anyway.

The USSR had been preparing to invade Lithuania. Near the border they had established field hospitals for those who would be injured and barracks to house the foreseen prisoners of war. Already that spring the Soviets had secretly stationed in Lithuanian cities special diversionary espionage groups whose members had been trained to speak Lithuanian, ready to assume power locally. Just before the invasion, the Russians had commenced an air and sea blockade of the Baltic countries. On the morning of 15 June they attacked several Lithuanian border posts, killing one border policeman and kidnapping another, also disarming border guards in other posts.

Throughout the night of 15 June the Government deliberated whether to oppose the occupation or to accept the ultimatum. The main argument against armed resistance was that this could make Lithuania a future en-

emy of Great Britain and France (also USA, and maybe USSR), for which Lithuania could suffer heavily after the war. The Christian Democrats and Populists, who had reached an agreement beforehand, demanded that the Prime Minister appointed to replace Merkys should be General Raštikis, who was close to the Christian Democrats. This was another blow to Smetona, having the Prime Minister he appointed toppled by the Opposition in the face of an ultimatum, although he did approve of Raštikis's candidacy. But the President of Lithuania could no longer appoint a Prime Minister anyway: the Soviets immediately rejected Raštikis's candidacy. Smetona's proposition for armed resistance was supported by only two Ministers. The military men present (Army Chief of Staff General Vincas Vitkauskas and General Raštikis) explained that on its own, Lithuania would be unable to offer any serious resistance to the Soviet war machine, and there would be countless casualties. The Government accepted the ultimatum.

On 15 June 1940 at around 3:00pm, crudely violating all bilateral agreements that it had with Lithuania, the USSR ordered an undefinedly large military contingent – the 3rd and 11th armies – unlimited by any treaties, to enter Lithuania and occupy the most important strategic points in Lithuania. Meanwhile, military aircraft packed with troops were landing in Lithuania's airports. Only then did the Lithuanian public hear on the radio about the ultimatum and the Lithuanian Government's acceptance of it and the invasion of the USSR Army. When he heard the news that Soviet tanks were already rolling through the streets of Kaunas, heading toward the most important Ministry buildings, President Smetona, having declared that he would not participate in the sovietisation of Lithuania, declared that he was unwell "as a small protest" and handed over the post of President to Merkys. Together with Defence Minister General Kazys Musteikis and their families, they hurriedly left Kaunas for Germany. The President hoped to be politically more useful abroad.

Some of the Opposition were glad that the régime was changing and that there would be new developments. But they had no idea that this was the end not only of the rule of Smetona, but also of Lithuania's independence. They could not conceive that their future (whether with Smetona or without him) no longer depended on themselves, the Lithuanians. Optimists still believed that, given that no blood had been spilled, the Soviets would grant Lithuania (as a worst case scenario) at least the status of a state totally dependent on Moscow, like Mongolia.

The naïve and overly optimistic were wrong.

Chapter V

LITHUANIA: THE SOVIET AND NAZI OCCUPATIONS

"It may be surmised that if we possessed a Lithuanian literature of a date contemporary with the oldest literature in India, it might be contended with the greater reason that the cradle of the Aryan language must have been in the Lithuanian region."

ISAAC TAYLOR (1787–1865)
in his book "The Origin of the Aryans"

IN THE CLUTCHES OF STALIN AND HITLER

A period of friendship between the communist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany was evolving into their decisive clash at the beginning of the 1940s, and both totalitarian states were preparing for war for the seizure of Europe. Lithuania stood in the way of these military giants, with World War II in the background. The country considered its chances of survival not only as a state, but also as a nation. The thought "Whose rule is better – that of the Russians or Germans?" did not denote sentiments of early surrender, merely a realistic evaluation of the chances of a small state. The issue was at the centre of heated discussions not only in cafés, but also in the President's Office. Many countries had already been occupied by the Nazis, Poland was shared by predators and the Baltic countries therefore understood that their turn was coming. The possibility of falling under Russian sway and thus outliving the hardships of war was understood as a temporary return to the Russia of Nicholas II, without any realisation of the essence of the totalitarian Soviet Bolshevik regime. The regime ruled through terror, forcibly isolating and destroying its opponents and ideologically – hostile political and social groups.

The Soviet Union took advantage of the international situation and the world's focus on the German invasion of Paris to not only occupy Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia in the summer of 1940, but also to bring these states into the USSR within weeks after forcibly instituting a quasi-democratic form

of government (officially called "the people's democracy"). It was the start of a period of two successive occupations by totalitarian regimes which would destroy those whose political, social or racial affiliations opposed or displeased them. In the wake of battlefields, returning Soviet armed forces used weapons to suppress the partisan war of the Lithuanian nation that had lasted for a decade. Without the ability to defend their independence, the Lithuanians chose other ways to survive, resist and try to save the nation, language and culture, while awaiting a favourable time to restore the state of Lithuania. The aspirations of the Lithuanian nation to live in a state of their own would be fulfilled only at the end of the Cold War, when the country succeeded in restoring its independence for the second time in the 20th century. Lithuania regained its international recognition, becoming a fully legitimate part of the Western World and democratic Europe.

The Sovietisation of Lithuania

On 16 June 1940, Soviet divisions strategically separated Latvia and Estonia from Germany by marching through Lithuania. They then occupied the two neighbouring Baltic states with lightning-fast speed. From then on, the trio had very similar destinies. Real power went not to the ministers who remained in the country, but into the hands of Vladimir Dekanozov, the emissary of the Soviet Government who arrived from Moscow on the afternoon of 15 June (accompanying him was the First Deputy to Internal Affairs Commissar Lavrentiy Beria, Vsevolod Merkulov, who called himself "Comrade Petrov" and acted secretly as a representative of intelligence services). Dekanozov was also assisted by a Soviet mission led by Plenipotentiary Envoy (*Polpred*) Nikolai Pozdnyakov and by the small Communist Party of Lithuania (CPL), which had been acting underground until then. The events that ensued were determined by the multi-thousand USSR military force deployed in the country.

After small European countries were occupied by Germany, it was hard to expect that Lithuania would remain untouched by the Nazis and the Soviets' conspiracy. When the hope "Maybe the Soviets will not occupy us?" diminished, another one still remained: "Maybe they will not sovietise us?" No way… Under the instruction of Dekanozov, the departure of Antanas Smetona was explained as the President's resignation and the impression was created that Antanas Merkys became President legitimately. This was

necessary because Merkys did not have the right to appoint a new head of government while acting in the post temporarily, in accordance with the Constitution of Lithuania. This is how a cleverly-conceived type of transitional puppet "People's Government" emerged on 17 June. It included well-known intellectuals who criticised Smetona's administration. Communist-minded populist journalist Justas Paleckis was appointed Prime Minister and writer Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius was named his deputy and Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ernestas Galvanauskas and General Vincas Vitkauskas remained Minister of Finance and Minister of National Defence respectively. It was declared that the only aim of bringing Soviet troops into the country was to strengthen Lithuania's security, without making essential changes. It was the goal of the Soviets to create that impression. Only anxious rumours made it necessary to persuade people that land ownership would not be affected and that "the Lithuanian Army remains and, if required, will defend Lithuania's independence and freedom".

In fact, the People's Government followed the will of the Soviets, undermining Lithuania's statehood and replacing the administration from the first days. Key governmental positions were entrusted to communists who were amnestied political prisoners. The CPL's leader, Antanas Sniečkus, became Director of the State Security Department and Mečislovas Gedvilas was appointed Minister of the Interior. The CPL was legalised on 25 June 1940, although other political parties were not. The so-called "Smetona" Seimas (Parliament) was dissolved and all non-Communist organisations, newspapers and magazines were closed. The People's Government abolished Lithuania and the Vatican's Concordat on 27 June, while pressure by Dekanozov led to a decision on 12 July to transfer Lithuania's gold kept abroad to the State Bank of the Soviet Union. However, only gold stored in Swedish and Swiss banks was appropriated. Moscow implemented a USSR-type management model among the administration, police and the courts, and formation of a people's militia started. On 3 July, the Law on the Reform of the Lithuanian Army was adopted and it was transformed into the People's Army (thereafter the 29th Rifle Corps of the Red Army). On 11 July, the activities of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union were terminated and it was disarmed. County governors, volost chiefs and police chiefs were dismissed from office, and their posts were taken up by Soviet sympathisers. When communists gained a majority in the government, preparations started for a complete absorption of Lithuania into the USSR.

Annexation was implemented by arranging elections of the so-called "People's Seimas", with the same scenario applied in Latvia and Estonia. A single candidate could be nominated for one place and could be proposed only by the Communist Party, the Communist Youth League, MOPR (International Red Aid) and communists-led trade unions. The 79 nominated candidates (in a rush, it was omitted that one was deceased) represented the mythological Lithuanian Labour People's Union (LLPU). Half of these were selected members of the Communist Party and others were represented by communist sympathisers ("non-party communists"). During the election campaign, governing authorities devoted a lot of attention to the criticism and stigmatisation of Smetona's regime and propaganda. Lies were told that the elections would be democratic, Lithuania would remain independent and litas would be preserved, while rumours about the establishment of *kolkhozy* (Soviet collective farms) were denied. There was a public threat that "persons who abstain from voting are enemies of the people" and this is how nationalists and high-ranking officials were labelled. Just before the election, the government arrested several hundred of the country's well-known figures on 11–12 July.

According to official data, the 14–15 July elections to the People's Seimas were attended by 95% of the electorate (a stamp certifying that a person has voted would be affixed in his passport), with 99.19% of them voting for the candidates of the Lithuanian Labour People's Union. According to the Election Law, candidates who received a majority of votes would be considered elected representatives. Half the candidates polled less than half the votes, but the regime announced that all candidates were elected and the results were therefore fraudulent. A similar farce took place in Latvia and Estonia.

The "parliaments" of the three Baltic countries that gathered for their sessions on 21 July were strikingly synchronous in declaring themselves as Soviet Socialist Republics. On 22 July, the so-called Lithuanian People's Seimas adopted the land nationalisation declaration, under which all Lithuanian land became state property and farmers became land users. Banks and large industrial enterprises were nationalised. The Seimas elected a 20-member delegation led by Paleckis, which went to Moscow on 3 August and allegedly stated that Lithuania wanted to join the USSR voluntarily. This is how the annexation of Lithuania was formalised and

Election campaign poster of the People's Seimas, July 1940

the Soviets' imperialist aspirations were satisfied. As the People's Seimas appointed by the occupiers did not have powers granted by the Lithuanian nation and the country's whole population to abolish Lithuania's statehood and apply to join the USSR, the resolutions were illegitimate. All Lithuanian envoys in foreign countries who made statements of protest against occupation and annexation were deprived of their citizenship and their property was nationalised. Lithuanians in the USA also became agitated.

The camouflage of voluntariness was abandoned as Lithuania was converted into a constituent part of the USSR, while the administrative system was arranged in line with the model of the Soviet Union. The People's Seimas was renamed the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR on 25 August and the Council of People's Commissars was formally approved the next day as the supreme executive power of the Republic to replace the People's Government. The Soviet constitution, which was a

replica of the so-called "Stalin Constitution" adopted in the Soviet Union in 1936, was approved. All Lithuanian institutions, especially the NKVD (the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs), were filled with "professionals" who arrived from the USSR and introduced the Soviet regime. However, there was still an internal border between Lithuania and the rest of the Soviet Union.

As the Soviets implemented agricultural reforms, farmers who had more than 30 ha were dispossessed of their land. Such farmers were regarded as *kulaks* (wealthy peasant farmers) and "enemies of the people". Attempts were made to eliminate them through a three-fold increase in taxes. Landless and land-poor peasants could receive up to 10 ha of land. Land that remained in the state fund was to be used for the establishment of *kolkhozy*. Industrial enterprises that employed more than 20 people were nationalised. Industry soon started to lack raw materials and permanent signs of socialism appeared, including shortages of goods and queues. Prices jumped as soon as the rouble was introduced alongside the litas in the autumn of 1940, with personal savings depreciating and people losing all their deposits as banks were nationalised. The NKVD's secret service based its policy of Sovietisation on terror: night-time arrests were commonplace and people were cast into prison and exiled. Even the USSR's greatest supporters had to keep their mouths shut – Bolshevism can only become known once one has lived under it.

Repression and the June Uprising of 1941

Repression, arrests, deportations and fear of these actions formed an integral part of the policies pursued by the Bolsheviks. On 6 July 1940, Antanas Sniečkus, Director of the State Security Department, issued an order authorising the arrest of those who agitated against the People's Government. The "operational liquidation plan" for the leadership of Lithuanian political parties and riflemen was approved, with lists of people to be arrested drawn up and troops of the Soviet NKVD assigned to prevent them from escaping to Germany. During the first mass arrests from 10–17 July, well-known politicians and public figures of the independent Lithuania were imprisoned. These people included the last Prime Minister Antanas Merklys and Foreign Minister Juozas Urbšys, who were

both exiled with their families to the depths of the USSR. Those arrested were proclaimed outlaws and their property was confiscated. Within a year of the Soviet occupation, 6,606 people accused of political offences were arrested. In April–June 1941, half of them were deported to the depths of the USSR, mainly to Siberia.

The occupation authorities carried out the first mass expulsion of the Lithuanian population from 14–18 June 1941, deporting 17,500 people. The Soviets were assisted by local workers, comprising Communist Party members and particularly Komsomol members. Lithuania's political, military and economic elite were exiled, including former Lithuanian President Aleksandras Stulginskis, former Prime Minister Pranas Dovydaitis, many ministers, hundreds of teachers, 79 priests and leaders of ethnic minorities. Most of the exiles were Lithuanians, while Jews constituted 13% (2,045) and Poles 10% (1,576). There were 5,060 children aged under 16 among the exiles. This unprecedented mass deportation struck Lithuania because the expulsion was aimed at the physical destruction of families. Under the Nazi occupation, this expulsion was used to promote sentiments of ethnic intolerance by imposing responsibility for the expulsions on Jews, who suffered severely during the first days of Soviet rule. Jewish commercial banks, production and trade enterprises and private property were nationalised. The deportation of exiles to places with an inclement climate near the Arctic Ocean and the Altai region, where some of them died or were killed, should be regarded as a crime against humanity.

After war broke out between Germany and the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941, Lithuania was occupied by Germans within three days. This is why the Soviets managed to hastily evacuate only some political prisoners from Lithuania. Those who could not be evacuated in time were killed. The mass murder of prisoners was arranged at the prison colony in Pravieniškės (where about 230 people were put to death) and near Rainiai (where 76 people were killed after being brutally tortured). Similar events occurred on a smaller scale in several other counties, with 700 deaths in total. Many detainees were freed from prison when the June Uprising of 1941 broke out among Lithuanians at the start of the German-Soviet war. This massacre by the Soviets opened a period of mass destruction in Lithuania. When Germany attacked the Soviet Union, hatred for the annexation and terror of the Soviet administration, as well as for the nationalisation of property, arrests, deportation and massacres spilled out. This is why many

Prisoners and superintendents of Pravieniškės Camp murdered by the Soviets on 26 June 1941

Lithuanians welcomed the Wehrmacht's entry into the country, some even with flowers in their hands.

As the German army was invading Lithuanian territory, an uprising broke out on 22 June and spread throughout Lithuania within a few days. The uprising was largely a spontaneous response to Soviet policy in Lithuania and partly prearranged action. The idea of an anti-Soviet uprising at the start of the Germany-Soviet war was nurtured by the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) led by Kazys Škirpa, the former Lithuanian envoy in Berlin. The movement was founded by a group of Lithuanian emigrants in Berlin in November 1940, which considered itself the main organiser of the uprising.

The activists gathered news from Soviet-controlled Lithuania and sent various instructions through messengers from Germany, in which particular attention was paid to the possibilities of restoring Lithuania's statehood and details of the future uprising. As the military part of the LAF collaborated with the Abwehr, instructions were given to first of all occupy places like bridges, key railway junctions, airports and factories. The LAF leadership relied too much on Nazi Germany, with the belief that "in the new Germany-ruled Europe, all nations will be granted the right to manage their own countries as they want".

Škirpa believed that the new movement needed to maintain especially close ties with Nazi Germany. The LAF's Programme and other documents

Kaunas residents welcome the entering Wehrmacht in 1941. Reproduction by Romas Mičiūnas

did not avoid nationalist rhetoric and anti-Semitism (Paragraph 16 of the Programme cancelled the right of Jews to live in Lithuania). However, the German Government prohibited Lithuanians from forming a Lithuanian government in the event of war or publishing any appeal to the people "without having received the consent of the competent German authorities." Insurgents in occupied Kaunas confronted the Germans with a fait accompli – having captured the radio station, LAF representative Leonas Prapuolenis announced on 23 June 1941 that: "The provisional Government of the newly-reviving Lithuania hereby declares the restoration of a free and independent Lithuania" and that "the young state of Lithuania enthusiastically undertakes to contribute to the organisation of Europe on new grounds." He spared no sympathetic words for Nazi Germany, which "saved European culture and civilisation" from the Red Terror, and invited Lithuanians to take up arms and help the German army. The rebels' main aim was to restore the independent state of Lithuania.

The Lithuanian province was dominated by spontaneous insurgency activities. Even before the Wehrmacht troops entered Lithuania, rebel groups that had formed started to open fire on withdrawing Soviet troops, and they also occupied local authorities and arrested activists of the Soviet regime. The Lithuanian administration was restored not only in Kaunas, but also in many other cities including Vilnius. Small towns were freed and

national flags were flown. The Germans allowed the restored self-government system to continue to act because there was no alternative to it. The rebels had manpower of up to 10,000–15,000, with around 600 killed in fights with the Bolsheviks. Most of the partisans were young and middle-aged Lithuanians, including intellectuals, farmers, workers, students and the military.

As the Nazis kept the LAF's leader Škirpa in Berlin and took him into custody under "house arrest", literature lecturer Juozas Ambrazevičius was appointed head of the newly-formed Provisional Government (PG) on 23 June. The PG was dominated by people who tended towards Christian Democracy. Through their resolutions, they restored laws that were in effect before the Bolshevik occupation, as well as Lithuanian court order. Public life was again based on private property and the ownership of land, homes, capital and enterprises was returned. However, these denationalisation laws were not to be applied to Jews, non-Lithuanian citizens and people "who actively contributed to actions against the interests of the Lithuanian nation." The Provisional Government believed it would deal with a German occupation regime that it knew by 1918 and would be able to manoeuvre as the Lithuanian Council. However, it did not realise that Lithuania now fell under the domain of the totalitarian Nazi regime, which was already planning not only ideological but also racial extermination policies. The PG itself did not plan murders. However, its declaration of anti-Semitism (drawing up provisions for the status of Jews and establishing a concentration camp at Fort VII) meant that it sought concessions from Nazi Germany and sailed in the wake of its policy. Nonetheless, the Nazis still failed to acknowledge this government and most of the more than 100 laws and resolutions that it adopted were therefore not enforced. The PG could not control the situation because it could not maintain communications with the whole country – postal, telegraph and telephone services were used only for the Germans' military purposes. Having restored the order that existed before 15 June 1940, with the restoration of counties, city municipalities and the organisation of the police, the German occupation authorities did not allow the formation of a regular Lithuanian army of partisans and Lithuanian military units that fled from the Red Army.

The Nazis were dissatisfied with the PG's existence and carried out a putsch on the night of 23 July through nationalist *voldemarininkai* (supporters of Augustinas Voldemaras, a Lithuanian nationalist political figure)

who obeyed the Gestapo. They removed the LAF's appointees and took the commandment of the battalions and police into their own hands. Without any obstacles, the Nazis now directly gave orders to municipalities and the police, as well as auxiliary police units. They also readily took over property that had been nationalised by the Soviets and on August 5 prohibited the activities of the PG. Prime Minister Juozas Ambrazevičius had to acknowledge that the government "considers that its activity has been suspended against its own will." When most ministers refused to become general advisers, the Nazis closed the LAF on 26 September. They also closed the Lithuanian Nationalist Party formed of *voldemarininkai* in December. The activities of legal Lithuanian organisations thus ended in Nazi-occupied Lithuania.

The disabling of the Provisional Government shows that it first of all looked after the interests of the Lithuanian nation, was proclaimed against the will of the German administration and was not a product of Nazi political intrigue.

The June Uprising was the most important event that destroyed the Soviet myth about Lithuania voluntarily joining the Soviet Union, which was claimed by the Soviet Union to meet the expectations of the Lithuanian nation. It is not strange that the uprising was cursed by Vyacheslav Molotov on Moscow radio. On the other hand, the events of 22–28 June present another tragic page in the history of the Lithuanian nation: the Nazi occupation that replaced the Soviet regime not only ruined the implementation of Lithuania's independence, but also opened the way for a mass extermination of Jews in the country.

The Extermination of Lithuania's Jews – the Holocaust

As Germany rapidly occupied Lithuania, only a very small part of the population withdrew eastwards. The Soviets barely had time to evacuate the Government of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LSSR) to Moscow. This had disastrous consequences for Jews, as most who tried to escape to the East were returned by Lithuanian rebels or came back themselves because they were outstripped by the Wehrmacht on the road to Moscow. Soviet soldiers and NKVD members at the inner border also hindered the withdrawal of people to Russia, considering them to be

deserters and panic mongers and suspecting them of spying as soon as documents were presented in Lithuanian. The Jews started to feel the hatred of part of the population from the first days of the Nazi occupation. In June 1940, communist-minded Jewish youths had greeted the Red Army's entry with flowers in their hands and Russian songs. For them this meant salvation because the Wehrmacht would otherwise have entered instead. Jews gained positions in authorities, enterprises, institutions and trade unions as the Soviets formed a new administration, especially youths among them who readily started to speak Russian. Jews became noticeable in pro-Soviet demonstrations, administrations and among political leaders, which was unusual. Without any greater support from Lithuanians, the Soviet regime encouraged Jews to become involved and many appeared in the state machine, the NKVD and the militia. This fact particularly strengthened anti-Semitic feelings, and many Lithuanians thought that Jews had betrayed independent Lithuania and its ideals. The sudden intensification of anti-Jewish sentiments caused concern among Moscow's henchmen: on 27 June 1940, Krėvė-Mickevičius, acting Prime Minister of the Moscow-formed People's Government, complained to Beria's deputy Merkulov that people were indignant at the behaviour of Jews who ignored Lithuania's statehood.

Although Jews were responsible for neither the occupation nor sovietisation, their visibility allowed them to be associated with the Soviet regime, and the slogan of "the struggle against Judeo-Bolshevism" spread by the Nazi propaganda machine intertwined with Lithuanians' strong anti-Soviet sentiments. Many people, including Jews, were persecuted during the first week of the Nazi occupation as communists and Soviet activists. Several thousand of them were killed during the so-called "clean-up operations", which were started by operational units of the deployed SD *Einsatzgruppen*. Unlike in Western Europe, however, the Nazis started the massacre of Jews without any transitional period.

On 24 June 1941, special SD groups (Tilsit Gestapo unit) shot dead male Jews within a 25 km zone at the Lithuanian-German border and 201 Jews in Gargždai. The following day, 214 Jews were killed in Kretinga and on 27 June, 111 Jews were killed in Palanga. Jews in other locations were also killed.

The *Einsatzgruppen* organised terror so as to give the appearance that the first pogroms and "clean-up" actions had been carried out by local

people. Henchmen were found among Lithuanians who had suffered at the hands of Soviet terror, sought revenge or tried to wash away their sins from the Soviet time. Such people were involved in the terrible SD-inspired pogroms in Vilijampolė on 26 June and in Lietūkis Garage in Kaunas on 27 June, although reports from SD *Einsatzgruppen* commanders stated that it was not easy to organise the pogroms. The Germans did not trust armed partisans, so rebel detachments were dissolved on 28 June and an army of volunteers was formed into the National Labour Protection (NLP) Battalion under the Kaunas Military Commandant. One of its companies was made into a *Sonderkommando* and participated in the massacre of 30,000 Jews under Nazi command on July 4 and July 6 at Fort VII in Kaunas (these Jews were now segregated from the arrestees suspected of being Soviet activists only on the grounds of their nationality). In the complicated situation of 1939–1941, Lithuanian society was struck by a severe moral and psychological crisis. Three ultimatums, occupations and the loss of independence without resistance erased not only the state, but also human values for some people. In this climate, a perception formed among part of the society that Jews were an implacable enemy and a misconception of patriotism. According to one executioner, "it was scary to shoot, but I thought it was necessary for Lithuania's independence". Moreover, the invaders ordered and encouraged it.

After the first SD *Einsatzgruppen* actions in early August 1941, 95% of Lithuanian Jews were still alive. However, in July 1941 Reichskommissar Heinrich Himmler travelled all over the occupied western part of the USSR and conveyed a message to the *Einsatzgruppen* (to the "A" unit that operated in Kaunas and the "B" unit that acted in Vilnius) that not only Jewish men, but also women and children had to be killed. A mechanism was designed to carry out the massacre: on 16 August, Lithuanian Police Department Director Vytautas Reivytis used the secret Circular No. 3 to order the detainment of all Jews and their concentration in designated locations. All provincial Jews were driven into ghettos and isolation camps. Over the next few months, the Nazis started ugly shootings of Lithuanian Jewish communities in the province. Whole Jewish communities were shot dead in forests, fields and gravel pits a few kilometres away from ghettos and camps and their bodies were dumped into pre-dug ditches. The preparation of massacres and the transport and shooting of victims involved Lithuanian self-defence police units (battalions that formed the so-called

Massacre of Jews in *Lietūkis* Garage on 27 June 1941.
Reproduction by Romas Mičiūnas

NLP, in locations including Zarasai, Kupiškis and Jonava). These actions also involved police officers of auxiliary police and police stations which had already given their oaths to Adolf Hitler. Shootings were carried out mainly by the two special *Sonderkommando* units formed of Lithuanians – the Special SD Squad in Vilnius (in Paneriai) and Hamann's *Skrajojantis Būrys* ("Rollkommando Hamann"), which went to provincial areas a few times a week and shot there (this unit was based on the 3rd Company of the Kaunas NLP Battalion). Each *Sonderkommando* consisted of at least 50–100 members. Some executions were carried out only Lithuanian auxiliary police and police volunteers, with some criminals among them. They sought to seize Jewish property, including houses, goods, jewellery, bedding and clothes. The Nazis also used Russian Andrey Vlasov's army units in actions against the Jews in Lithuania, as well as Ukrainian and Latvian police battalions.

Day after day in the summer and autumn of 1941, most Lithuanian Jews (about 150,000) were killed in massacres. About 50,000 Jews were temporarily left in Vilnius, Kaunas, Šiauliai and smaller ghettos and used as cheap labour. Jews in big ghettos were however also regularly killed during the so-called campaigns. In 1943, the Nazis destroyed city ghettos and dug up and burned dead bodies as the war approached its end. Some 11,000 Lithuanian Jews were deported to concentration camps in Estonia and Latvia, about 3,500 to camps in Poland and about 8,000 to

Stutthof, Dachau and Auschwitz. During the Holocaust, about 90% of the approximately 208,000 Lithuanian Jews were killed (including those in the Vilnius region). About 8,000 were rescued and survived and a further 8,000–9,000 escaped death because they managed to retreat to the depths of the USSR. In addition, about 6,000–8,000 Jews brought from Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia and France were shot dead in Fort IX in Kaunas. Parts of the Lithuanian police self-defence battalions were involved in actions against civilians in Belarus, Poland and Ukraine.

Resistance groups emerged in ghettos, while some Jews fled into forests and joined the anti-Nazi resistance. These were partisan Soviet units, in which the Jews took up arms despite facing anti-Semitic sentiments. Many Lithuanian Jews fought in the 16th Lithuanian Riflemen's Division formed in the depths of the Soviet Union.

In the autumn of 1941, Lithuanian city and town centres emptied and Jewish homes accommodated institutions or new hosts, while the Nazis devastated all the most valuable pieces of Jewish culture. The massacre of the Jews caused widespread outrage. Nazi collaborators lost their reputation in society, faced denunciation and accusations in churches and were denigrated as žydšaudžiai (Jew shooters) among the people. Another section of Lithuanian society risked their lives trying to help and save Jews, with some shot for hiding them. Many Jews were saved by Catholic priests, nuns and ordinary peasants. Some 830 Lithuanians are recognised as "Righteous Among the Nations" for rescuing Jews, although there were actually many more and the list is still to be supplemented.

As a result of the Nazi policy of racial genocide, Lithuania lost its colourful ethnic component of the Jews, who had lived in the country for centuries. The massacre of innocent people just because they were Jews is the bloodiest page in Lithuania's 20th-century history marked by the loss of many talented people, enormous bereavement and a tragedy for the Jewish people and the whole of Lithuania.

Nazi Self-Government and Lithuanians' Self-Strangulation

The Nazis regarded the population of the USSR and its occupied territories as backward nations which had to obey German domination. They considered that the German nation's racial and cultural su-

periority made it the "dominant" or "noble nation", while "racially foreign elements" needed to be eliminated. In Nazi Germany's plans, the Baltic countries were regarded as the Germans' "defensive space" which had to gradually mingle with the Third Reich. Even before attacking the USSR, Germany's leadership in the conquered lands decided to annihilate the Jews, Roma people, incurable and mentally-ill people and officials of Soviet authorities and the Communist Party. Part of the remaining population was to be germanised, while others would become cheap labour. Exiled people were to be replaced with millions of displaced Germans.

Germany considered Lithuania a constituent part of the Soviet Union and it was initially administered by military authorities, with control through civil occupation introduced at the end of July 1941. By the time of the resolution of 17 July, the *Reichskommissariat Ostland* was formed of "the formerly free states of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia" and Belarus. It was subdivided into the General Regions (*Generalbezirk*) of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Belarus. Each region was headed by a *Generalkommissar* who, alongside key civil authorities, looked after police control and the rational use of labour in supplying the German army and military economy. The German administration in Lithuania subjugated the country's resources and economy for the needs of Germany, irrespective of the needs of the local population. Lithuanian farmers had to pay high duties and severe penalties were imposed if they failed to comply. German colonists were sent to Lithuania (about 30,000 people, mostly Germans who had lived there before the war). In an orderly manner, the occupation administration destroyed and devastated the country's cultural values, hindered the activities of educational and cultural institutions and sought to use them for the germanization of the region, propaganda and the dissemination of Nazi ideology. After Lithuania's resources were involved in the war against the USSR, the country's residents were forcibly deported to Germany to carry out forced labour. This happened especially after the defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad, when the war industry lacked a labour force. About 60,000 Lithuanian residents were deported to Germany for forced labour.

The Nazis consolidated their rule through repression, terror, the murder of politically-unreliable and insubordinate people, and farmers who were unable to deliver the required quantity of agricultural products. Anybody suspected of attempting lives of German soldiers was executed without trial and sometimes entire villages were burnt down (such as Pirčiupiai).

Lithuanian Americans who collected donations and purchased the *Lituanica* aeroplane for the US Army. The aeroplane is being blessed by Priest P. Lubys, 1943 (a postcard from that time)

In 1941–1944, the Germans killed not only Jews, but also about 15,000 Lithuanians, up to 20,000 people from other ethnic groups and about 170,000 war prisoners from the Red Army. These people were executed by specially-formed operational units of the aforementioned German security police and the SD. The policy of terror in Lithuania was also pursued by SS military units, self-defence police battalions and local police. The lack of manpower for the establishment of an occupation administration meant the Nazi regime allowed activities of local self-government. Intermediate and lower-level positions continued to be held by Lithuanians appointed by the Provisional Government. The German regime appointed general advisers instead of PG ministers as heads of the Lithuanian administration, with ministries renamed as "offices". The Lithuanian administration was therefore supervised by Lithuanian advisers who were subordinate to the General Adviser, with *voldemarininkas* General Petras Kubiliūnas appointed to this post. Four advisers who refused to carry out the Germans' policies were detained in 1943 and deported to Stutthof concentration camp.

The staff of the Lithuanian self-government system consisted of approximately 300 county governors and rural district chiefs, about 900 Lithuanians who served as security and criminal police officers, about 8,000 Lithuanians who served in the police self-defence battalions and

about 6,000 who served in the public police who kept public order. In addition, there were hundreds of elders, honorary police officers, tax collectors, inspectors and other officials who willingly or unwillingly served the Germans and helped them exploit the territory. For this and other reasons, the Lithuanian underground press described the Nazi-permitted self-government system as "*savismauga*" ("self-strangulation"). Time and again, Lithuanian officers failed to carry out German orders, frustrated them and helped rescue Jews. Germany did not allow the establishment of Lithuanian political parties or organisations and prosecuted people who were averse to the occupation authorities, with strict press censorship in place. Lithuania's anti-Nazi resistance did not turn into armed opposition because this would entail the threat of mass murder of the Lithuanian population, which was openly used by the Nazis to threaten Lithuanians. A resolution was also made not to waste forces against the side that was losing the war. The underground movement followed tactics of unarmed resistance, disseminating anti-Nazi propaganda, discouraging enrolment in German-organised military units, as well as going to Germany for work and carrying out agricultural duties, and encouraging the preservation of Lithuanian cultural and educational institutions and the exposure of collaborators. Politicians of the Christian Democratic wing and *ateitininkai* (members of a Catholic youth movement) gathered in the Lithuanian Front (LF) and the Lithuanian Unity Movement, while liberal-minded nationalists gathered in the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters (ULFF). Both movements issued underground publications. In 1943–1944, the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (SCLL) acted underground and united different Lithuanian political forces. This organisation carried out the functions of the illegal Government of Lithuania until the restoration of the country's independence. It also led the resistance movement and defended the rights of Lithuanian sovereignty inside the country and abroad. Under the initiative of Reserve Lieutenant Kazys Veverskis, lower-ranking junior officers rallied in a secret military organisation called the Lithuanian Freedom Army (LFA) set up in Vilnius in 1941. It was the largest mass anti-Nazi organisation, which intended to declare independence in at least part of the territory and maintain it with arms.

In 1943, the German occupation regime demanded that occupied nationalities, including Lithuanians, should send men to join the SS Battalion, as the Wehrmacht was suffering defeat at the Eastern Front.

The Lithuanian underground movement boycotted the campaign, with only Poland and Lithuania failing to form Waffen SS divisions among all the Nazi-occupied countries. In revenge for the boycott, the Gestapo arrested 46 prominent Lithuanian public figures in mid-March 1943 and deported them to Stutthof concentration camp. They also closed Kaunas and Vilnius Universities, teachers' colleges and other establishments, and arrested many underground press publishers and collaborators, as well as members of ULFF and LLA groups. In May–June, they additionally arrested six of the nine members of the SCLL leadership. Most of the arrestees were deported to Nazi concentration camps. While losing battles at the Eastern Front, the occupation authorities mitigated their position and allowed the Lithuanians to convene the so-called Lithuanians' Conference in Kaunas on 5 April 1943. Through the Conference, the Nazis sought to secure the support of Lithuanian society for their mobilisation endeavours and give them a semblance of legality, while Lithuanian figures aimed to preserve the nation, avoid repression and gain greater political concessions and Lithuania's sovereignty. Although Conference participants spared no sharp criticism of the occupation authorities, the decisions they adopted reflected their orientation and part of Lithuanian society towards Germany. In order to implement those decisions, it was necessary to collaborate with Germany in its labour and military service institutions. However, this time the mobilisation of Lithuania's youths failed again.

On 23–24 November 1943, a meeting of general advisers and the so-called National Council elected at the Lithuanians' Conference rejected plans for the organisation of an SS unit in favour of an ethnic Lithuanian army. Forced by failures at the Eastern Front, the German authorities approved the Lithuanians' proposal to set up military units at the beginning of the following year. The Local Team was to be led by Lithuanian officers and operate only in Lithuanian territory, with General Povilas Plechavičius taking command of it. Some 20 000 volunteers responded to his call and 10 000 of them were admitted into the units. The Germans demanded that the team should be subordinate to them. The Lithuanian soldiers did not intend to fight on the German side and began to disperse with arms and ammunition. The Nazis arrested the leaders of the Local Team, shooting eighty soldiers dead and deporting some to Germany for forced labour.

Lithuanian-Polish relations experienced complicated developments in the Vilnius region, which was made part of the General Region of

Lithuania and assigned to the Lithuanian administration by the Nazis. In implementing Nazi-dictated policy, the Lithuanian administration ignored the interests of the Polish majority and attained their hatred. The civil administration sent units of the Lithuanian Local Team to combat the resistance of local Poles and faced armed units of the Polish Armia Krajowa (Home Army). Lithuanians considered the Vilnius region as part of Lithuania, while Poles regarded it as part of Poland. In several cases, both sides therefore poured their wrath on local Lithuanian or Polish villagers. Communication between the Polish and Lithuanian underground movements was lost. The Lithuanians continued to follow tactics of passive resistance towards the Nazis and considered the USSR their main enemy, while the Poles' main enemy was Germany.

The Lithuanians' passive anti-Nazi resistance helped them avoid even greater mass repression and casualties. Preparations were made ideologically and organisationally to resist the order which the Moscow-based leadership of the Lithuanian SSR was ready to introduce, according to statements made by it on Moscow Radio.

BACK TO THE USSR

As the Germans were forced to withdraw from the occupied territories from the summer of 1944 to the start of 1945, the Red Army (RA) broke into those territories and freed almost the whole of Eastern and Central Europe from Nazism by May 1945. However, power in territories occupied by the Red Army was taken up by local communist parties which were entirely dependent on the Soviet Union. The communist regimes introduced within a few years in Eastern and Central Europe survived for nearly half a century.

Occupation: the Soviets Replace the Nazis

In the summer of 1944, Soviet military forces liberated Lithuania from Nazi Germany. However, the problem was that Lithuania was reoccupied in parallel and almost at the same time. Soviet troops therefore occupied Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia for a second time, with the Stalinist regime restored, requisitions started and men captured for forced labour. The totalitarian regime was again directed by the Communist Party,

state security bodies the NKGB and the NKVD, Soviet officials and the occupation army. By spring 1945, 6,000 Russian-speaking people were sent to Lithuania to take up key posts in the newly-created administration.

In restoring Soviet rule in Lithuania, Joseph Stalin broke his promise in Yalta to disease-stricken Franklin D. Roosevelt to take into account the opinion of the population of the Baltic States. Elections (although absolutely non-democratic) were also held in Lithuania to the supreme institutions of the occupation regime, namely the Supreme Council of the USSR and the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR. Elections to these institutions took place for the first time after the war in 1946 and 1947. Elections also took place to local councils, as the Soviet Union formally had the power of soviets (councils). In all elections, candidates could be nominated exclusively by the Communist Party. Results were rigged, while a turnout of more than 90% of voters was officially reported and an absolute majority was said to have voted for the nominees. The LSSR's institutions had no real power: even the Central Committee of the CPL (Bolsheviks) had only rights equal to those of a party committee of an ordinary Russian oblast. For as long as three decades, the CPL was headed by Central Committee First Secretary Antanas Sniečkus, whose activities were "looked after" by a Moscow-appointed non-Lithuanian Second Secretary of the Central Committee. The CPL had 3,500 members in 1945, 22,200 in 1948 and 36,200 in 1953 (however, Lithuanians accounted for only 18% of them).

Stalin sometimes kept the Lithuanians sweet. For the first time in the nation's history, Klaipėda and Vilnius together became parts of Lithuania, although it was occupied, not free. This was how the Soviets tried to "buy" Lithuanians' favour for the regime. The Soviet-ruled territory of the Lithuanian SSR grew to a size of 65,000 square kilometres and Vilnius became the Republic's capital city. As a result of losses suffered in the war, the population's ethnic composition changed dramatically: the Nazis and their collaborators killed about 70,000 Vilniusians, mostly Jews, while 12,000 city residents were deported to Germany for forced labour and most never returned. About 30,000 Vilniusians moved out of town for various reasons. In 1945–1948, the USSR repatriated 107,600 Poles from Vilnius and about 197,200 from all over Lithuania to Poland. Around half the increase in the population of Vilnius was therefore constituted by migrants from other Soviet republics, mostly from Russia and Belarus. The number of Lithuanians among "new Vilniusians" grew in the ensuing years.

A scene of World War II in Vilnius, July 1944

The capital city had 179,000 residents at the end of 1951, including 55,000 Lithuanians (30%). In January 1989, Vilnius had a population of almost 0.6 million, including 291,000 Lithuanians (50%). And in 2011, Lithuanians accounted for 58% of the city's population. The mass forced emigration of local Germans meant that Klaipėda was lithuanised in a similar manner. Lithuanian cities generally grew and their populations increased several-fold during the period of the Soviet rule. City dwellers accounted for 23.7% of the country's population before of World War II, while the corresponding indicator was 68% in 1989. New cities emerged, including Naujoji Akmenė (13,000 inhabitants), Elektrėnai (16,000) and Visaginas (32,000).

When mobilisation to the Soviet military forces started, the Soviet regime was surprised that Lithuanians tried to escape service in the Red Army. Lithuanians considered their country to be occupied, whereby the USSR was not entitled to carry out mobilisation of men into the Red Army and violate international law (under the Hague Convention of 1907). The internal and border troops of the USSR's NKVD mobilised 108,000 Lithuanian men into the Soviet military for the fight against Germany (and later on Japan) in 1944 until the autumn of 1945, mainly through raids and terror. Thousands of Lithuanians concealed themselves or fled from the Soviet military, so they were included in the category of officially-wanted "deserters".

Lithuanian people are deported to Siberia in cattle wagons

Irkutsk, 1952.
Lithuanian exiles chop wood

Thousands joined the ranks of the Lithuanian partisans, who fought against the Soviets. The mobilised Lithuanians were recruited into the 16th Lithuanian Riflemen's Division of the Red Army and, having been hastily and therefore poorly trained, were thrown into battles in East Prussia, the assault on Berlin, and the Courland Pocket, where thousands of them were killed. Lithuania-stationed NKVD divisions carried out punitive operations. In July–December 1944 alone, terrorist attacks by the occupiers killed 2,489 people and about 100,000 Lithuanian residents suffered some form of violence from the invaders. Mass deportations to Siberia were initiated to suppress armed resistance, with 40,002 people deported in May 1948, 33,500 in 1949 and 20,357 in 1951. After these mass deportations, opposition to Soviet policy and the rural population's resistance were broken down and people began to join newly-established *kolkhozy* on a wide scale. Some 456,000 people (every third adult Lithuanian or every second man) fell victim to the Soviet genocide and terror. A total of 332,000 people were imprisoned, exiled or deported to Gulag camps and another 26,500 were killed in Lithuania. Lithuania lost a total of 1.058 million people, or more than a third of its population.

The situation started to change after the death of Stalin in 1953, especially when Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin's cult after three years. The

russification process was soft-pedalled and the regime began to rely more on local Lithuanians. Prisoners and exiles began to be released throughout the USSR. Although the Lithuanian Communist administration did not want to see exiles returning to their home country because they supposedly strengthened nationalist sentiments among Lithuanian people and would complicate guiding them in the spirit of the "friendship of people", about 60,000 exiles and 20,000 political prisoners returned to Lithuania in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of these people were prohibited from settling in Lithuania, holding managerial positions and teaching in higher education institutions. They were ignored, shadowed and accused of "anti-Soviet activity" and "bourgeois nationalism."

As mass physical terror was abandoned during the post-Stalin period, violations of human rights and freedoms became less open and wide-scale. However, the forced ideological brainwashing of people and application of administrative methods continued. A firm monopoly on power was held by the Communist Party of Lithuania, which was gradually becoming more and more Lithuanian (there were 13,000 Lithuanians in the CPL (37% of party members) in 1953 and the number increased to 55,000 (63%) in 1965). The totalitarian character of rule remained, with everyone having to manifest the official ideology, people publicly shadowed, any resistance suppressed and the Republic's authorities only carrying out administrative functions according to directions from Moscow. The character of rule toughen again when Leonid Brezhnev entrenched himself at the height of power and revenge-seeking Stalinist forces in Moscow consolidated. The persecution of dissidents started again, with 1,583 people sentenced for anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda in Lithuania in 1967–1975. The economy and public life were also militarised and communist ideology was implemented more actively, although the regime did not resolve to resume terror.

The Soviet regime in post-war Lithuania inflicted significant losses on the country's population. During the Stalinist period, the occupation authorities killed not only thousands of people, but also destroyed entire social strata, their culture and property. People who remained in Lithuania were restrained with fear for their own and their relatives' safety and had to adapt, collaborate or resist. Conformism in Lithuanian society spread particularly widely during the de-stalinisation period, but was preceded by a bloody fight.

War After War – Armed Resistance

From the summer of 1944, Soviet repression and terror fuelled the resistance of the Lithuanian nation and a decade-long guerrilla war for Lithuania's independence broke out. Resistance was strongest in Lithuania among the three Baltic States. People here still naively believed in the West, that Communist rule would be short-lived, that the USA and Great Britain would eventually fulfil their promises entrenched in the Atlantic Charter to return independence to the countries that lost it in the war, and that the West would rise to fight against Stalin's USSR. They were preparing for the return of independence by fighting, so they could take power into their own hands when the time came. Partisan teams began to emerge at the end of summer 1944 and grew fast, with partisan detachments, districts and areas forming. Partisans wore Lithuanian military uniforms, although most were young men, farmers' children, small landowners and landless peasants who had never served in armed forces. After joining the partisans' ranks, these men had to learn tricks of warfare and adapt to hard living conditions in woods and bunkers. For this reason, military training was arranged in the teams.

Anti-Nazi resistance was concentrated in cities, while anti-Soviet resistance was armed and occurred in rural areas, where partisans could receive support from peasants in the form of food, medicines and clothing. Help from abroad could not be expected and the partisans fought alone. In 1944–1946, large partisan regiments formed that consisted of up to 100 fighters each and jointly totalled about 30,000 men. They controlled the whole of Lithuania except for cities and towns, and stayed in villages, installed guard posts and went into battle when NKVD units appeared. When they managed to occupy towns and local garrisons, they destroyed rural district documents, mobilisation lists and grain tribute sheets, released detainees, shot dead zealous henchmen of the occupation authorities and warned others not to serve the enemy. Partisans hindered the occupation authorities when they carried out elections, opened fire on voting stations, impeded forest harvesting and log transportation operations and fought against the forced formation of *kolkhozy*. They also court-martialled, tried and executed perpetrators of deportations, Soviet officials and spies.

Press and information departments were set up in all counties when the Soviets cut Lithuania off from access to information from the free world

A group of Lithuanian partisans, 1947

and deprived people of radio receivers. Some 80 names of periodicals were issued for a longer or shorter time during the whole period of guerrilla war. These periodicals served as a public source of information about partisans' attitudes towards collaborators and world political news. Partisans prepared collections of poetry, satire, prose pieces and partisan prayer books. The press was distributed mostly by young people, with 640 people arrested for it in 1947 alone.

In a second stage from June 1946 to November 1948, partisans formed small mobile teams and dug underground bunkers at and near homesteads to hide themselves from the enemy during mopping-up operations, having lost about 10,000 men in battles. The teams were no longer a place for romantic and casual fighters, but only for those who were determined to fight to the death. Heavy casualties and persecution broke off communications between teams and counties, and the control of teams weakened. They switched over to their usual guerrilla war tactics, with the setting up of ambushes and the killing of Soviet officials and spies. To fight partisans, the occupation authorities increasingly used hitmen troops mixed of converted partisans and regular officers of the Ministry of State Security (MGB).

Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas

At the end of 1947, partisans Juozas Lukša-Skirmantas and Kazimieras Pyplys-Mažytis dispatched certain documents drawn up by partisans through the "Iron Curtain" to the free world. These documents included lists compiled by counties of people exiled, killed and arrested by occupation authorities, a letter by the partisan leadership to Pope Pius XII and other relevant materials, in the hope that the world would pay attention to the occupation of Lithuania and international organisations would demand that the Soviet Union ended terror. Communication was established for the first time between partisans and Lithuanians who moved to the West and their organisations, with the West receiving some truthful information about the situation in Soviet-occupied Lithuania and partisan battles. However, the West did not support the armed struggle of Lithuanians and only used a group of resistance fighters to spy on the USSR.

Centralised structures eventually formed from November 1948 to May 1953, but were destroyed soon afterwards. After many unsuccessful attempts, the first and last congress of all Lithuanian partisan commanders took place in a bunker between Radviliškis and Baisogala on 2–22 February 1949. The congress approved the organisation's new name as the Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters (ULFF) and partisans started being called "freedom fighters" (occupation Soviet authorities usually called the Lithuanian partisans "bandits". The Union took the lead of both the political and military activities of resistance organisations. The congress considered the most important documents that regulated the activities of partisans, envisaged a common fighting strategy and tactical approaches and formed a supreme partisan leadership. Jonas Žemaitis-Vytautas, a professional military officer (he graduated from Kaunas Military School in 1929, attained the rank of lieutenant, served in the 2nd Artillery Regiment for some time, and studied in an artillery school in France from 1936–

1938) was elected as Presidium Chairman of the ULFF and was awarded the highest rank of Partisan General. The 16 February Declaration of the ULFF adopted in the bunker envisaged the restoration of the Lithuanian state and its governing principles: that the state system would be that of a democratic republic; the sovereign authority of Lithuania would belong to the nation; the government of Lithuania should be exercised by the Seimas elected through free, democratic, general and equal elections by secret ballot and an appointed Government. The Presidium of the ULFF Council became the supreme authority until free and democratic Seimas elections.

A strong military force of the NKVD was stationed in Lithuania to fight against the partisans. Its manpower was up to 20,000 in the summer of 1945 and numbered about 14,000 military men in 1946. NKVD and NKGB departments, which were set up in all counties, coordinated and led punitive operations and raids of people, interrogated detainees and recruited agents. Occupation authorities founded destroyer battalions ("*istrebitelnyje batalyony*") under the NKVD to fight against Lithuanian partisans. The Lithuanians called the members of these battalions *stribai* (from the Russian word "*istrebiteli*") and the occupation authorities agitated locals to join them. In 1944–1954, more than 20,000 people (including 16,000 Lithuanians) became members of such teams because it excused them from serving in the Red Army, while they also received a monetary allowance and clothing. Some of them escaped to join the partisans after taking arms. Many *istrebiteli* were persons of dubious morals and had no authority, and it was soon decided that their name *istrebiteli* should be changed to "defenders of the people". They were deployed in all rural districts and guarded core Soviet groups.

Bodies of Dainava County partisans outraged by the Soviets

In an effort to suppress support for the partisan movement, repressive institutions exiled families of participants in the armed resistance movement and its supporters

to Siberia, tortured members of the resistance, used psychological coercion, discarded semi-naked corpses of killed partisans in central city squares, publicly desecrated them and did not allow their burial, furtively dug their bodies in swamps and dumps. MGB and KGB hitmen troops used attributes and uniforms of the resistance movement for terror, killing resistance members and torturing armed resistance fighters, including women, old people and children, as well as shooting partisan messengers and sponsors.

In the spring of 1953, recruited agents betrayed Žemaitis-Vytautas (after suffering a stroke in December 1951 he was being treated in an underground bunker) and he was shot dead in Butyrka prison in Moscow after a year and a half of interrogations. In his cell Žemaitis was visited by USSR Security Marshal Beria, however, the content of their conversation remains unknown until now.

This fact alone shows that Beria acknowledged the ongoing guerrilla war in Lithuania as a serious threat to Soviet control. One of the last partisan commanders, former teacher Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, was arrested in 1956 and was shot dead the following year after being brutally tortured. Although the organised armed struggle ended in spring 1953, several individual partisans hid themselves for another ten years or more.

Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas with his faithful friends, small hawks, settled on his shoulders

Although the guerrilla war, in which partisans fought single-handed, was lost, its significance is great. The universal extent of this war is manifested by data about the occupants' punitive operations: in 1944–1953, bodies of the MGB eliminated 2,353 partisan groups, killed 20,000 and arrested 19,000 partisans (the total number of those killed, arrested or decriminalised was 120,000 people), and captured 9 cannons, 30 anti-tank guns, 31 mortar guns, 3,002 machine guns, 40,000 assault ri-

fles, rifles and pistols and 557 typewriters and photocopiers. Through their courage, sacrifice and lives, freedom fighters proved that in the summer of 1940 Lithuania was adjoined to the Soviet Union against the will of the people and ransomed the failure to act of the Lithuanian Government and military. The partisans killed about 2,830 officers of the USSR's state security and internal affairs agencies, 1,000 state security military officers, 1,300 *istrebiteli* and Communist Party and Soviet activists. Significant civilian casualties were not avoided, as in any other war. Many such casualties occurred in areas where Soviet hitmen troops operated. Among the partisans were people, though not many, who abused alcohol or participated in the massacre of Jews – it was impossible for team and county commanders to check the credentials of their fighters. A long life in bunkers underground also had a negative influence.

Heroic armed resistance caused great losses and claimed lives, like any war resulting in unnecessary deaths. Perhaps this had a decisive impact on the Lithuanian nation – having revived at the end of the 20th century it chose not an armed struggle for freedom and independence but the path of a dissident movement and a singing revolution.

Sovietisation of the Economy

In an effort to unify the life of all Soviet republics, the Soviet regime persistently eliminated private property in all sectors of the economy. In agriculture, *kolkhozy* therefore had to be set up. However, the collectivisation process in Lithuania was impeded by the guerrilla war. According to the new order, land left in abeyance and the land of those who escaped to the West or were repatriated to Poland was taken over to the land reserve. The land of partisans and exiles was also confiscated and transferred to the land reserve. In the spring of 1948, the organisation of collective farms in the Lithuanian countryside stirred severe opposition. Measures were therefore taken firstly against wealthy peasants, who were allowed to retain up to 30 ha of land and were called *kulaks*, as well as against those who used hired labour, possessed agricultural machinery including threshers, tractors and engines, and mills and sawmills, and those who rented stock or lent grain and tools to other peasants. *Kulaks* faced increased taxes and grain tributes, which were 50–100% higher than those for poor peasants (they were called "working peasants"). Many *kulak* fami-

"Red wagons". Forced collective delivery of agricultural produce to the state. Vilnius, 1947. Photograph by L. Meinertas

lies were exiled during the deportations of 1949 and 1951; others moved home to cities or other republics in the USSR. As the regime deliberately raised land taxes and grain tribute rates for peasants, more than half of Lithuania's peasants were indebted to the state for milk and meat in 1949. Such farms were taken over and their owners were convicted. *Kulaks* could in fact be deprived of everything except for their dwelling houses.

The policy of terror had its desired effect. Only 4% of peasants were members of *kolkhozy* at the start of 1949 and this number increased to 62% by the end of the year. In 1952, as much as 94% of all the country's land was collectivised. A *kolkhoz* member was not allowed to move to another residential area without the permission of the *kolkhoz* management. As the land had been expropriated by the state, a *kolkhoz* member received a meagre reward for his work, making a living from his 0.6 ha homestead land plot that would produce around three-quarters of his income. Over the course of time, the situation in *kolkhozy* was changing for the better.

However, collectivisation sharply undermined the Lithuanian agricultural sector. The LSSR only reached the agricultural production levels of pre-war independent Lithuania in terms of crop yields, livestock population and productivity after 20 years. Driven into *kolkhozy* by force, peasants did not try to work hard and their low wages led them to steal from *kolkhozy* (which they did not consider a crime), despite heavy punish-

Stalin Avenue in Vilnius, 1954.
Photograph by Judelis Kacenbergas

ments. They also lost their respect for work. The high morals of religious peasants degenerated and some began drinking vodka to drown their sorrows. The collectivisation also meant the death of farmsteads. During the remaining Soviet period, peasants' farmsteads were decimated and their owners were forced to move to collective settlements set up in rural areas (where neighbours knew everything about each other and were controlled by authorities) or to towns and cities.

The Lithuanian industry had to become an integral part of the USSR's industry. The Soviet regime's post-war plans were facilitated by the previous Soviet nationalisation, which had not been reversed by the Nazis during the years of occupation. Increased taxes meant that private companies had to wind up their activities. Machinery, equipment and raw materials for the economy undergoing restoration were delivered from the USSR or occupied East Germany, with many food products and wood brought from Lithuania in turn. Within several years, the ruined Lithuanian industry was restored and reached the pre-war level.

The Soviet Union began new reforms in the 1950s, emphasising a need to "democratise" public life, grant local staff more powers and enhance the "sovereignty" of Soviet republics. Ministries were amalgamated in 1953

by merging several into one, with various committees and directorates abolished and their functions transferred to ministries. The new order granted more authority to the republics of the Soviet Union: they were allowed to approve the production plans of LSSR-controlled enterprises and manage the distribution of their products and to transform industry management from industry-specific to territorial when regional Councils of National Economy (CNEs) were established instead of industry and construction ministries in 1957. The Lithuanian CNEs started to control the country's enterprises, which employed 76% of workers. The industry sector became more specialised. The chemical and electronic industries started to be established, while the local authorities increased the production and processing of agricultural products and thus developed the agro-industrial complex and consumer goods industry. The Lithuanian Government developed industries that were under its control after securing approval from Moscow, seeing that it was difficult to control industrial USSR-controlled enterprises. This policy proved itself and yielded comparatively good results in the conditions of the time. It was not without reason that Lithuania was known as the farm of the Soviet Union, as heavy investments were directed towards the agricultural and food industry sectors. However, this did not mean prosperity in Lithuania. As in the whole of the USSR, shops were half empty, with a shortage of meat, vegetables, butter and often even bread and other food. People were placed on long waiting lists for coupons (permission) to buy furniture, dishes and TV sets. In addition, there was a catastrophic shortage of housing, medical supplies and drugs and everything was in fact in short supply. Picking on the inefficiency of the command planned economy, it was bitterly joked that there would soon have been a shortage of sand had socialism been introduced in the Sahara Desert.

In the 1960s, the LSSR administration drew up the country's regional economic development plan, the essence of which was to restrain the expansion of the old industrial centres such as Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Panevėžys, and to construct new enterprises in smaller towns. An absolute majority of the staff of industrial enterprises in these towns was formed of Lithuanians who came from rural areas, as Russian-speaking migrants arriving from the USSR were reluctant to settle in Lithuanian provincial towns. In the course of decentralised industrial development, local labour resources were used better: residents of the same city or district

Gathering at Kaunas Hydropower Plant on the occasion of the commissioning of the first turbine. Kaunas, 16 July 1959. Photograph by Marius Baranauskas

accounted for 50–70% of staff in Alytus, Plungė and Utena factories, while newcomers from the USSR made up just 3–5%. The transfer of Russian nationals to new industrial towns in the LSSR was impeded by a mental barrier. It was one thing to move to Riga, Tallinn or Vilnius, where their own Russian-speaking environment ("*svoyi*") prevailed, but quite another to go to unheard-of towns where older people did not speak Russian at all. Although many Russian-speaking people settled in Vilnius, Klaipėda and Sniečkus (now Visaginas) in Soviet times, Lithuanians accounted for about 80% of the whole population in industrialised Lithuania, where industrial agriculture was particularly developed.

Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation took place during the "thaw" period, in accordance with the Soviet model. Many new large industrial enterprises were built in the 1960s and 1970s, including Kaunas hydropower plant, Mažeikiai oil refinery, Jonava nitrogen fertiliser plant and Ignalina nuclear power plant. The industrialisation caused rapid growth in the country's number of workers, from 490,000 in 1960 to 850,000 in 1970 and more than 1 million in 1980. As cities grew (the urban share of the population was about 40% in 1960 and 60% in 1980), workers lacked housing and multi-apartment residential buildings were built to satisfy demand. The construction of residential buildings was standardised according to

Žirmūnai Neighbourhood in Vilnius, 1972.
Photograph by Jonas Botyrius

standard designs and the use of precast large-panel structures was the most broadly applied construction technique. In 1962–1969, the first neighbourhood of such buildings in Vilnius was built in Žirmūnai Neighbourhood. These neighbourhoods of uniform, faceless, energy-inefficient residential buildings became one of the most prominent signs of Soviet urbanisation.

Continued bad relations between the USSR and capitalist countries meant that the industry of Lithuania and other Soviet republics was isolated and they became entirely dependent on other regions of the USSR, as a result of close ties with raw material suppliers. Newly-built huge facilities were integrated into the Soviet Union's economic system and they mainly manufactured specific-purpose technical products and supplied them to the whole of the enormous country. Although Lithuania was the leader in terms of meat and dairy industry production per capita in the whole of the Soviet Union, the lion's share of products made there was shipped to other regions of the USSR, with Moscow and Leningrad (now Saint Petersburg) the main consumers of these foodstuffs. Meanwhile, income generated by production enterprises went to the USSR's common budget.

Bribes went to Moscow in the form of suitcases stuffed with smoked sausages and ham, and that was the reason why the Soviet authorities

eagerly built and invested in Lithuania. Besides, there was no *dolgostroy* (long-delayed construction projects that demanded endless financing) in Lithuania. Construction materials were not plundered on a huge scale and new enterprises were put into operation more or less in time. This appealed to Moscow functionaries who faced major corruption and theft problems in other areas of the USSR. Environmental problems began to emerge as a result of the construction of large enterprises and especially those that dealt in chemicals, amid a lack of funds for environmental protection and population growth in major cities. As no waste treatment facilities were installed, the rate of pollution of Lithuanian rivers, groundwater and the atmosphere increased significantly. Comparatively good industrial indicators of occupied Lithuania could not compensate for the loss of the country's independence.

Cultural Unification

The years of Stalin's reign were a period of the direct destruction of Lithuanian culture. Great efforts were made to eradicate any national spirit and all fields of culture were controlled and strictly administered by the Communist Party, which censored every word. Marxist-Leninist philosophy was imposed, communist ideology was implanted and had to be disseminated by all cultural institutions. While the leading figures of the communist ideology were glorified, the cultural heritage of independent Lithuania was crucified. Books by the famous Lithuanian writers Vincas Kudirka, Maironis, Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius and other authors were removed from libraries, along with literature of a national character. In 1944–1951, about 600,000 publications were destroyed. It was forbidden during the Stalinist period to even mention the names of cultural figures who escaped to the West. Any cultural figure who refused to carry out the regime's requirements could incur severe punishments: 1,651 representatives of the creative and scientific intelligentsia were arrested between 1944 and 1953, with most of them exiled or imprisoned and some killed. A significant proportion of cultural figures therefore tried to behave as demanded and lived a dual life in public and private.

Compulsory teaching of Stalin's Constitution and Russian language was introduced in schools and the number of Lithuanian language lessons was

cut. In universities and higher education institutions, specialists brought from other republics taught only in Russian. Students were forced to join the Young Pioneer and Komsomol organisations, while ideologically unreliable teachers were fired.

The Soviets destroyed monuments from the time of independent Lithuania, defaced tombs of Lithuanian military volunteers from the interwar period and banned ethnic and religious festivals. In 1950, the Lithuanian National Hymn by Kudirka, *Tautiška Giesmė*, was prohibited. City and town monuments that bore witness to Lithuania's statehood were replaced with statues of the Soviet Winner Soldier, Lenin and Stalin, and communists' slogans were hung everywhere. The cultural situation started to ease only in the second half of the 1950s with the onset of de-Stalinisation.

During the "thaw" period after Stalin's death, the official attitude to national cultural heritage became more lenient. Famous Lithuanian writer Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, who escaped to the West at the end of the war, was rehabilitated. His works were published, as well as the works of Jurgis Baltrušaitis, Balys Sruoga, Maironis, Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas and other authors, the albums of M. K. Čiurlionis and folk art. In such publications, the author's biography or review of works were presented in accordance with the guidelines of Marxism.

The political thaw and signs of liberalisation in cultural life did not mean any essential changes. Soviet security closely oversaw cultural organisations, while tight censorship remained and most foreign or pre-war publications were kept in so-called "special reserves". After the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 and the Poznan workers' uprising in Poland in the same year, Lithuanian authorities made it clear that cultural policy would not undergo any essential changes. An ideological attack against employees in the Lithuanian Literature Department of Vilnius University and some cultural figures began from the late 1950s. Delinquents were accused of "bourgeois nationalism" and being negatively influenced by Western culture.

During the "thaw" period, attempts were made to associate the ideologised Lithuanian culture with its tradition and foundations. A museum of ethnography was set up for this purpose in Rumšiškės (near Kaunas), with societies of art and local lore studies established, ethnographic research legalised and the formation of folk music groups permitted. Although

relevant institutions began to take care of sacred buildings and the artistic valuables they contained, they placed emphasis on their artistic value, not mentioning their original function. An art gallery was opened in the closed Cathedral of Vilnius, with closed churches adapted in a similar way: the Museum of Atheism was opened in St Casimir's Church, the Museum of Science in St John's Church, the Museum of Folk Art in All Saints Church, the Museum of Sculpture and Stained-Glass Artwork in Kaunas Garrison Church and an ancient art display of the M. K. Čiurlionis Museum in Pažaislis Monastery. References started to be made to the pages of heroic history: the battle of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania against the crusaders and even pagan Lithuania were idealised, it was permissible to mention the Battle of Grunwald and write about events like the heroic deed of Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas. However, history was generally converted into a servant of the government and was used for the dissemination of anti-Western and anti-Catholic attitudes. Fearing that nationalism would strengthen, the constraining of cultural life resumed after the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the USSR and other countries of the socialist camp in 1968. The regime began to reproach artists for the pessimism that allegedly pervaded culture and editors of some printing houses and culture periodicals and some officials in this field were replaced. Culture was developed in line with the Soviet principle of "folk in form, socialist in content", and choirs dressed in traditional national costumes sang songs about Lenin. However, in the long run and especially at song festivals, such songs remained just a shell as the obligatory (socialist) programme, while the other part was dedicated only to the national Lithuanian song and dance. People also learned to pay tribute to communism in other fields of culture and at the same time developed their national culture, yet within a limited range.

Until the national rebirth various prohibitions were in force – people were not allowed to mention the independent state of Lithuania, they were encouraged to criticize and despise it and were not permitted to speak about post-war mass deportations and partisan struggles. The cultural situation improved from the 1960s. Writers, artists and researchers could voice their opinions more openly. In public, they said and wrote what was demanded by authorities, while the most important things were discussed inside their circles. Cultural figures gradually became the voices of the nation's conscience. The so-called "Brezhnev era" was fa-

vourable to culture and the more famous a person was, the harder it was to institute a criminal case against him or her (contrary to the Stalinist era, when the rule "all are equal" was in force and security officers could arrest any person, be he or she a professor, minister or common man). Under the new conditions, artists increasingly distanced themselves from socialist realism and tried as far as possible not to bring art into conformance with politics and propaganda. This was the time of the appearance of historical novels, plays and movies and the growth of a new generation of artists unaffected by Stalinist repression who came from the new social strata. Attempts to bring Lithuanian culture entirely to its knees and thrust it into the communist Procrustean bed failed during Soviet times.

Education and Russification

Rapid urbanisation and militarisation of the USSR and a defensive military complex required skilled labour. During Soviet times, more than 400 military objects were built in Lithuania and the Soviet army used more than 6% of the country's territory. That labour was trained by the fully-controlled education system and delinquents were punished. Teachers were forced to study the works of Lenin, Stalin and Karl Marx, as well as the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), the Constitution of the USSR and the CPSU's congress and resolution materials. Young Pioneer and Komsomol organisations were set up to strengthen communist ideological education for students, "Lenin's corners" were arranged and posters were issued in schools.

During the post-war period (with about 1,200 teachers exiled from 1945–1948), occupied Lithuania became a part of the common Soviet educational system. The 11-year secondary education was however preserved in Lithuania, factoring in the need to learn the Lithuanian language, while a unified 10-year secondary education system was introduced throughout the USSR. Lithuanian schools transferred to a 12-year education in the autumn of 1988, while schools with Russian as the teaching language transferred from 10 to 11 years. As cities grew, a network of pre-school nurseries, kindergartens, orphan homes and boarding schools for children with disabilities developed. In addition, there were schools for workers who had a secondary education. In 1985, nearly 97,000 stu-

dents studied in 97 professional technical schools. Technical and polytechnic colleges trained specialists for the manufacturing industry, agriculture and construction sectors. Almost 59,000 students studied in 66 technical colleges in 1987.

The content of education was also rearranged, with their adaptation to Soviet ideology and the requirements of Soviet pedagogy. The most important tasks were plying students with a materialist world view, training "comprehensively educated, active and conscious creators of the communist society", and developing friendship between the USSR's nationalities. Textbooks were translated from Russian, except those for studying the Lithuanian language and literature and the history of Lithuania (this received little attention, with past events forged and interpreted in accordance with the principle of class struggle, while the role of the USSR and especially the CPSU was always made positive and a cornerstone). Particular attention was paid to the Russian language. Participants at Tashkent conferences held in 1975 and 1979 agreed to strengthen the role of the Russian language in the USSR through measures including additionally further teaching it at educational institutions at different levels, increasing the number of hours of Russian language in optional courses enhancing qualifications of the staff in Russian language departments at higher education institutions, organising Russian language qualification improvement courses for teachers, equipping Russian language teaching rooms in districts, and revising and improving the publication of books necessary for the teaching of Russian. This programme was aimed not only at improving communication between people, but also had a hidden aspect of cultural expansion. Despite the abilities of the leadership and responsible officers of the LSSR to defend the teaching status of the Lithuanian language in the educational system, the Russian language teaching facilities were expanded in Lithuania in around 1987–1989.

The role of the Lithuanian language decreased in public life, with the language forced out of the police, railways, airports and most government offices and enterprises. By the Communist Party and any administration, internationalism was understood as speeches delivered in Russian. There was a popular saying at the time which perfectly reflected Communist Party ideology: "a Russian who loves his own motherland, language and culture is an internationalist; a Lithuanian who loves his culture and

language is a nationalist; a Jew who loves his culture and language is a Zionist".

In Lithuanian higher education institutions, teaching was politicised and it was obligatory to teach a course on Marxism-Leninism. Higher education institutions were reformed in accordance with the USSR's system of higher education. The regime openly interfered in the affairs of higher education institutions and changed structures and the names of *almae matres* at its own discretion. For example, in 1950 Vytautas Magnus University, which by that time had already been renamed as Kaunas University, was reorganised into Kaunas Polytechnic Institute and the Kaunas Medical Institute. The staff of higher education institutions were watched and checked up on, teachers were removed for ideological reasons and those from other areas of the USSR were brought in to replace them. Universities and several other newly-established higher education institutions were expanded and the number of faculties, specialties and students increased. There were 7 higher education institutions with a total of 6,000 students in 1940–1941, while 12 higher education institutions enrolled 65,000 students by 1987. The most important thing was that Lithuanian was the teaching language not only in secondary schools, but also in higher education institutions, although most of the literature was available only in Russian. Many young people studied in higher education institutions in Moscow, Leningrad and other locations in the USSR.

All newspapers in Lithuania began to be duplicated in the Russian language, with many works of Russian literature published and Russian plays staged. Bilingualism started to be applied everywhere. The beginning of official talks about "the formation of the Soviet people", "one Soviet culture", a "fusion" of nationalities with the Russian language as a "means of international communication" and the "rapprochement and fusion of Soviet nations" made it clear that the path was towards an intensification in formation of the ideologically-unified and Russian-speaking Soviet nation, so that Lithuanian and other languages would become extinct in the future. The final product was to be *Homo Sovieticus,* a person without a national character who would work elsewhere upon the Party's order, as if by the lyrics of a well-known song: "My address is neither a house nor a street; my address is the Soviet Union." A feeling of methodical, long-lasting ethnocide was in the air.

When it was permitted to write a Soviet interpretation of Lithuanian history, Lithuania no longer needed to thank the Red Army for its "libera-

tion" from the bourgeois yoke in 1940. According to a theory of socialist revolution, the Lithuanian nation had made a voluntary decision to join the Soviet Union. However, the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and 20 years of Lithuanian independence put a spoke in the Soviet historiography's wheel. The politicisation of science, direct government control, isolation from the Western world and ideology-based staff policy meant that teaching levels in education institutions during the Soviet period were lower than those in pre-war Lithuania, despite an increase in the number of education institutions.

Lithuanian Diplomatic Service and the Diaspora

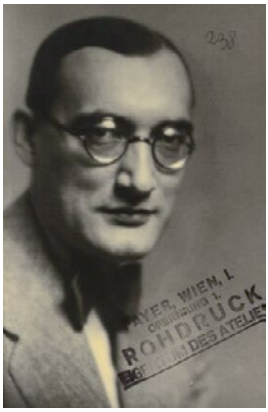
At the end of World War II, thousands of Lithuanians fled to the West in fear of the return of the approaching Red Army and deportations. According to different data sources, there were more than 72,000 Lithuanian refugees and exiles in Western Europe in 1945 (with more than 111,000 Latvians and about 31,000 Estonians). The ranks of refugees were joined by Lithuanians who were forcibly moved to Germany for labour during the Nazi occupation. After Germany lost the war, some fell into camps for so-called *dipukai* (from the English abbreviation DP meaning "displaced persons"). These were war refugees, who for various reasons found themselves beyond the boundaries of their native country. Among the Lithuanian DPs, there were 400 teachers from Kaunas and Vilnius Universities, half the members of the Writers' Guild and thousands of school teachers and engineers. The Lithuanian intelligentsia went in two directions: to the West and to Siberia…

Americans began to change their attitude towards DPs when the Cold War broke out between the USA and the USSR broke out. In mid-1948 the US Congress adopted the so-called Displaced Persons Act, which envisaged admitting 205,000 DPs into the country (among these were 40% of refugees and exiles from the Baltic countries and Poland). Within three or four years all Lithuanian exiles and refugees who wished to go to the USA, a total of nearly 30,000, managed to arrive in the country. Others went to Great Britain, Canada and Australia.

President Smetona, who arrived from Lithuania in June 1940, was not a *persona grata* in any European country. He therefore arrived in the USA after

Lithuanian refugees picking donated clothes in a camp in Germany (Scheinfeld), 1948

travelling through Germany, Switzerland and Portugal. However, he had to undertake not to carry out any political activities in order to be issued with a US visa. So, he was engaged only in maintaining relations with Lithuanian Americans and Lithuanian diplomats. Smetona died in a fire in Cleveland in 1944. The issues of Lithuanian refugees and the nation's freedom were handled in the Western world by the Lithuanian Diplomatic Service (LDS), a symbol of Lithuania's statehood which survived throughout the occupation period. The LDS sought to maintain the state's international recognition in countries which had not recognised Lithuania's forced inclusion in the USSR: the USA, Canada, Brazil (until 1967), Colombia, Uruguay (until 1977), Great Britain, France, Switzerland and the Vatican. The number of such states declined for various reasons. The existence of the LDS was significantly influenced by an order issued by US President Franklin Roosevelt on 15 July 1940, by which funds of the Baltic States held in US banks were frozen. These funds enabled the LDS to maintain its missions and personnel until the very end of the diplomatic work.



Stasys Lozoraitis, a Lithuanian chief diplomat

Supreme power was wielded in the LDS by the leader of the service. This post was held by diplomats Stasys Lozoraitis (1940–1983) and Stasys Antanas Bačkis (1983–1991). Lozoraitis interpreted the post of leader of the diplomatic service as *primus inter pares* ("first among equals"). Although erased from the political map, the efforts of the diplomats thus meant that Lithuania was not washed out of the political mind. At first, the LDS tried to form a Lithuanian government in exile in the 1940s. However, this took the form of a symbolic expression as the ranks of diplomats thinned out because various states adhered to the practice of recognising only Lithuanian diplomats who had been working in diplomatic service before the nation's occupation in 1940. The full attention of the LDS was focused on maintaining diplomatic missions and personnel, as hopes of restoring the independent state of Lithuania with the West's support faded. In countries where they carried out their missions, diplomats symbolically represented Lithuania, maintained relations with representatives of other Baltic countries and participated in the receptions of embassies and official institutions of various countries. They helped establish new ties and keep existing ones, maintain mission buildings and prevent the Western world from forgetting the matter of Lithuania's liberation. With the restoration of Lithuania's independence, the LDS ceased its activities on 6 September 1991.

The USA was the activity base for the largest part of the Lithuanian diaspora, consisting of the most important and strongest organisations: the Lithuanian American Council (LAC, founded in 1940), the Lithuanian World Community (LWC, founded in 1951) and the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (SCLL) that had moved over from Europe. They sought to act jointly and contribute to spreading the subject of Lithuania's freedom internationally. This process was influenced by the provision of the Lithuanian Liberation Work Conference held in New York (in the city of White Plains) on 26–27 October 1974: "To seek the restoration of an independent Lithuania on the basis of the uncrushable will of the Lithuanian nation." Conference participants planned to provide economic, cultural and political assistance to the population of occupied Lithuania, transmit information from Soviet-ruled Lithuania to the Western world (such as newspaper articles, radio and TV programmes and annual publications about human rights violations), inform the Western world about the case of Lithuania and cooperate with organisations and forums which could help influence the governments and parliaments of Western countries, first of all in the USA.

The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe held in Helsinki, which was signed by the USA, Canada and 33 European states (including the Soviet Union) on 1 August 1975, contributed to Lithuania's case for liberation. The signatory states undertook to respect human rights in their respective territories. High hopes were inspired by Chapter IV of Part 1: "No such occupation or acquisition [of a territory] will be recognised as legal." In signing the Final Act, the USSR itself also reaffirmed the principle of free self-determination for all nations in the face of other states.

Lithuanian diaspora organisations also emphasised that the USSR had illegally occupied Lithuania. After the Helsinki Final Act was signed, they made the public aware of violations of the rights of compatriots living in Soviet Lithuania and the persecution of dissidents. Contrary to the USSR's wishes, Western countries, particularly the USA, favoured the efforts of the Lithuanian diaspora. These countries emphasised the illegal inclusion of the Baltic States in the Soviet Union, in line with the stance of diaspora organisations. However, they did not always agree with the SCLL and the LDS. The SCLL considered itself the main resistance organisation and sought political monopoly. It also engendered the discontent of envoys, especially Lozoraitis, and mutual friction that lasted many years. Cooperation in the activities of the LDS and the SCLL gradually gained unity and this had a positive impact on raising Lithuania's issues internationally.

The LDS and Lithuanian diaspora did a great job of raising the matter of Lithuania's liberation in the Western world. The most important aspect of this was that during the years of the Cold War they kept the world informed about the illegal inclusion of Lithuania in the Soviet Union and the latter's acts in occupied Lithuania. The relations maintained by Lithuanian diplomacy and the diaspora and their activities allowed influential global powers to better orientate themselves in the matter of the liberation of the Baltic States. In turn, the main goal of the restoration of Lithuania's independence encouraged Lithuanian diplomats and the diaspora to unite and strive for the unity of the motherland liberation forces.

An uncompromising society

Lithuania was the only Catholic country annexed by the Soviet Union. Although the Soviet regime did not tolerate other religious

believers either and persecuted them, Catholics were particularly inconvenient because the Communist leadership associated Catholicism with undesirable "westernisation", the centre of Catholicism, the Vatican, which has never been subordinate to Moscow. So, the attitude towards Catholicism was more brutal than that towards other religions. Paradoxically, the number of priests aggrieved in Lithuania during the years of Stalinism was double that during the times of Mikhail Muravyov the Hangman. All priests were shadowed, while the names of their visitors were entered in special registers and sermons were recorded. The Soviet regime sought to undermine the authority of the Catholic clergy and create obstacles for young people seeking to study in theological seminaries. In 1946, the seminaries in Vilnius, Telšiai and Vilkaviškis were closed. Only a single seminary in Kaunas was allowed to operate, while the number of seminarians was reduced. Just 55 seminarians remained in 1962, even though churches lacked priests. During Stalin's era, occupation authorities tried to injure the clergy physically, exile them and turn churches into warehouses. During the time of Nikita Khrushchev, churches suffered from defamation and moral pressure despite the fact that 130 priests were released from places of exile. In 1958, the "thaw" period was drawing towards its close and a battle against religion began in education and research institutions. Atheist study groups were set up in enterprises, bell-ringing was prohibited, christening ceremonies and the Catechism were restricted and visits to religious festivals in Žemaičių Kalvarija and Šiluva were limited. The latter is a small town near Raseiniai, which authorities declared off-limits during religious festivals pretending that it was affected by swine fever. Believers were also ridiculed and insulted, with the installation of crosses banned and harsh methods used to stop the construction of a new church in Klaipėda.

During the years of occupation, the sense of the Cross as a source of strength and hope revealed itself with special emphasis. The Hill of Crosses 12 km north of the city of Šiauliai, featuring thousands of crosses, became widely known not only in Lithuania but also abroad. At the same time, the Hill of Crosses became a symbol of belief in freedom. People erected more and more crosses on the hill at night because the authorities prohibited their installation. The crosses were often demolished and cut into pieces, burned and smashed (in 1961 alone, as many as 2,179 crosses that stood on the hill were destroyed). The Hill of Crosses thus acquired a symbolic meaning and people started to refer to it as the Lithuanian Golgotha (it was

visited by Pope John Paul II in 1993). Tens of thousands of pilgrims would assemble, despite the government ban on religious manifestations. They not only prayed and communicated among themselves, but also acquired prohibited religious relics and illegally printed literature such as prayer books, catechisms and the Holy Scriptures.

In the 1970, some priests began to oppose the violent government policy and to require constitutional rights for believers and the Church. On 19 March 1972, a group of clerics started to publish the journal *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. Its first editor was Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, who worked in Simnas at the time. The publication covered Soviet anti-religious activities and propaganda. *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* became Western radio stations' main source of material on Lithuania. In its very first issue the authors published a memorandum of Lithuanian Catholics protest against the persecution of believers, which had been signed by more than 17,000 people. Similar documents were printed in subsequent issues. Separate issues of *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* reached the West through Moscow dissidents, with 5–8 prepared annually. It was almost the only journal published in the Soviet Union on a continuous basis for as long as 17 years (although not regularly). Although *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* was intended for religious members of the public and raised only issues of belief, it turned into a symbol of the resistance of the Catholic Church in the face of the Soviet regime and engendered strength.

On 22 November 1978, three priests – Alfonsas Svarinskas, Sigitas Tamkevičius and Juozas Zdebskis – informed foreign journalists at a press conference in Moscow they had established the Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights in Lithuania. The Committee was set up on 13 November and also included priests Jonas Kauneckas and Vincentas Vėlavičius. The Committee raised the problem of religious discrimination, claiming that believers did not have the same rights as atheists and that religious

The Catholic Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights. From left, priests: Vincentas Vėlavičius, Alfonsas Svarinskas, Sigitas Tamkevičius, Juozas Zdebskis, Jonas Kauneckas

freedom was restricted in practice. The Committee sought that Catholics could enjoy the same rights as atheists and drew attention to discrimination against believers, requesting that their rights were defended. The Committee pursued no political goals and operated for five years. It drew up 53 documents and distributed some of them.

In late 1950s, the Soviet regime began to encounter opposition from some individual Lithuanian intellectuals, who were called dissidents and were idealist reformers of the Soviet regime. The dissident movement tried to force the occupation authorities to at least not publicly ignore recognised human rights and liberties and to adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the UN General Assembly in 1948, which was actually disregarded by the USSR. The aspiration of Lithuanian dissidents was to preserve the nation's self-esteem, partially neutralise the activities of hostile forces and defend human rights.

The year 1960 is considered the beginning of Lithuania's dissident movement. In that year, the first Lithuanian dissidents of that period including Aleksandras Štromas, Tomas Venclova and Pranas Morkus established relations with Moscow dissidents, assisted them in publishing the journal *Syntaxis* and provided information from Lithuania. The movement was facilitated by the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, under which signatories undertook to respect human rights. Through the initiative of academician Andrei Sakharov, groups that monitored the implementation of the Helsinki Final Act's provisions and informed other states about human rights violations were set up in the USSR. On 12 May 1976, the first Moscow Helsinki Group (headed by Yuri Orlov) was founded in Moscow and a similar group was set up in Vilnius in the autumn. Members of the group included priest Karolis Garuckas, physicist Eitan Finkelstein, poet and former prisoner Ona Lukauskaitė-Poškienė, poet Tomas Venclova and former political prisoner Viktoras Petkus, who maintained relations with international human rights watch groups that acted in Moscow and other regions of the USSR. By the start of the revival period in 1988, the Lithuanian Helsinki Group had drawn up, published in the illegal press and sent to Western states more than 50 documents that highlighted the Soviet regime's policies in Lithuania. This is how the democratic West learned about the real human rights situation in the USSR. The Soviet regime combined repression against dissidents with tactics of partial concessions for dissent, while avoiding taking drastic measures. Well-known dissidents were expelled

from the Soviet Union and others, including Balys Gajauskas and Viktoras Petkus, were arrested and convicted. Unlike the Catholic opposition, dissidents raised issues about Lithuania's freedom.

The Lithuanian Liberty League (LLL), which was founded in 1978, was notable for its activity and had the following goals: the restoration of Lithuania's independence, the enhancement of religious, ethnic and political consciousness and the raising of the issue of Lithuania's liberty in international forums. The founder and leader of the LLL Antanas Terleckas referred to himself as a resistance fighter. In his opinion, the goal of the LLL was not to reform the USSR, but restore Lithuania's independence through peaceful means. The organisation's members fought against the Soviet order and some of them could not escape conviction, with Romaldas Juozas Ragaišis and Terleckas convicted three times and Nijolė Sadūnaitė and Petras Cidzikas put in prison. The LLL published the underground newspaper *Laisvės Šauklys* (*The Herald of Freedom*) from 1976 and the journal *Vytis* from 1978, as well as other underground publications.

LLL members put a particular emphasis on the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed by Germany and the Soviet Union on 23 August 1939. The LLL appealed to the UN General Assembly, demanding the decolonisation of the three Baltic States. An even greater response was evoked by the so-called Memorandum of 45 Baltic citizens addressed to UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, signatory states of the Atlantic Charter, and the governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. The Memorandum was signed by 4 Estonians, 6 Latvians, 35 Lithuanians, Sakharov and 10 other well-known Russian dissidents. This Memorandum is the most important document announced by the LLL: it drew an international response by requesting the USSR's Government to disclose all the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact to the public, acknowledge it as null and void from the signature date and to eliminate its consequences, i.e. to withdraw foreign troops from the Baltic countries.

Although constantly persecuted, the LLL was the only underground organisation which survived until the times of the revival. It was just the time when its arrested active members were released and the organisation became legal. The LLL manifested itself especially boldly on 23 August 1987 when commemorating the 48th anniversary of the Molotov-

The first unauthorised public rally of Soviet times arranged by the Lithuanian Liberty League in Vilnius to commemorate the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, 23 August 1987.
Photograph by Romualdas Lankas

Ribbentrop Pact. Under the organisation's initiative, a protest rally was arranged near the monument to Adam Mickiewicz in Vilnius. The irrepressible clergy and dissidents encouraged Lithuanian society to fight for the freedom of belief and human liberties, not to submit to the order imposed by the Soviets and struggle for their own independence when the time came.

In the 1960s, ideas from Western music and about youth freedom, as well as new lifestyle ideas, spread both throughout Europe and in Lithuania. Activities of youth communities clashed with the cultural standards established by the Soviet system. Two cultural directions formed – the ethno-cultural movement and communities of youth music bands, hippies, punks, rockers and others that formed under the influence of Western culture. After the events of 1968 in Prague, "organisations without organisation" started to form in Lithuania. They united people who had common ideas and goals. Societies for local lore studies of an ethno-cultural character were set up and their members not only collected old Lithuania's cultural heritage, but also encouraged interest in the nation's past. They developed the population's national consciousness and established ethno-cultural hiker clubs. Semi-legal clubs for intellectuals became increasingly popular. Marches, folklore festivals and other events were attended by approximately 20,000 people until 1965, while two years later this number

had risen to 200,000. After the regime banned these key clubs, some young people became closer to the dissidents.

The first groups of the hippy movement emerged around 1968 inspired by the Prague Spring. Hippy and punk movements that existed within the Soviet system protested against the system itself rather than against the consumer society as in the case of hippies in the West. The Soviet regime could not tolerate hippy activities. Their attention to their own inner world, confession of absolute freedom, evasion of Soviet Army military service, a provocative dress style and long hair were in sharp contract with the rules of the well-established life of *Homo Sovieticus*. They were persecuted, their hair was cut and reports of offences were drawn up when they were detained. Many of them were also expelled from higher education institutions or schools.

The time of the rise of the hippy movement is associated with the events that occurred in Vilnius and Kaunas in the early 1970s. In 1971, a restaurant in Vilnius accommodated an illegal rock music festival known as the Congress of the Baltic attended by as many as 300 hippies of the USSR. On 14 May 1972, 19-year-old Romas Kalanta, a well-read young man who wrote poetry, played guitar and looked like a hippy, poured gasoline over himself in a garden near the Musical Theatre in Kaunas and set himself on fire, exclaiming "Freedom for Lithuania!" Kalanta died in hospital. This was Lithuania's first case of self-immolation in protest against the occupation regime. In 1968, Czech Jan Palach set himself on fire in protest against the Soviet army's invasion of Prague.

The self-immolation of Kalanta stirred panic among the CPL and Soviet security officers, who hurried to bury him before the time that was originally announced. The people who gathered for the funeral were outraged by the arbitrary treatment on the part of the authorities. Mass processions began and political slogans were chanted. The demonstrations continued for several days and were accompanied by violence and arrests. The unrest was suppressed on 19 May. More than 400 people were detained out of 3,000 active participants in the protests. Of these, 50 were convicted of criminal offences and 8 were sentenced to between one and three years in prison. In a bid to diminish this event, the Soviet regime announced that the serious mental illness schizophrenia was the cause of Kalanta's self-immolation. This information was not true, as the young man was conscious and aware of his actions.

The rally procession in *Laisvės* Avenue in Kaunas on 18 May 1972. The KGB marked the leaders of the procession with numbers

The self-sacrifice of Kalanta received a great response and raised the issue of Lithuania's lack of freedom. Kaunas residents commemorated 14 May each year. Lithuanians living abroad arranged celebrations, published books and erected monuments and other memorable symbols in community gathering places. Kalanta became a symbol of resistance, and the events in Kaunas promoted the movement of informal youth groups. There were about 70 such groups from the 1960s to the end of the occupation. Members of these groups made proclamations against the Soviet order, flew national flags, celebrated national festivals and drew symbols of national statehood in public places. The Soviet regime could no longer control Lithuanian society.

Dissatisfaction with the existing system and constraints grew in many informal groups. Only the bravest who did not fear the judiciary, arrests and imprisonment risked open confrontation with the Soviet regime. Thus far, these people were in a minority. Despite the LLL's continuous fight for Lithuania's liberty, it was the Lithuanian Reform Movement (Sąjūdis) rather than the LLL which became the main driving force behind restoring Lithuania's independence. It appeared that the divide between the two movements could be perceived not only in their tactics, but also in their different traditions. The LLL was the last resistance organisation which enlivened the tradition and the spirit of resistance during the Brezhnev Stagnation period. Acting illegally or semi-legally on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet regime, it survived until the epoch of revival

and became the first national liberation organisation. Meanwhile, Sąjūdis was the national front that united the broadest strata of the Lithuanian society, which had various worldviews but was still syncretic and undifferentiated. The scientific and cultural intelligentsia stood at the forefront and raised the nation through global, universal ideals of freedom, democracy and independence which were especially precious for the oppressed nation.

Chapter VI

SINGING REVOLUTION

WITH SĄJŪDIS – FOR LITHUANIA!

When Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policy began in the USSR, Lithuania's tingling silence contrasted with the situation in Moscow, Ukraine and Georgia. The first conformist secretaries of the Lithuanian Communist Party's Central Committee, Petras Griškevičius and his successor Rimgaudas Songaila, remained inactive after passing power on to Nikolai Mitkin, the second secretary from Moscow who did not speak Lithuanian and sought to sovietise Lithuania. Secretaries from the Lithuanian Communist Party's town and regional committees continued to follow the Central Committee's instructions. Nothing changed in the provinces, with public discontent increasing until the public themselves finally took the initiative.

Lithuanian Reform Movement Sąjūdis in 1988–1990

Club activities concerning culture, environmental protection, ecology and other matters not prohibited by state authorities, stirred writers to demand that Lithuanian, which had been pushed out of the public use, should become an official language. Writers also demanded that Lithuanian history should be taught as the main subject in school history lessons and cited so-called 'blank spots' in the country's past. Writers were followed by the Artists' Union, economists and philosophers. Critically-minded members of the Lithuanian intelligentsia who opposed the authorities closely observed Gorbachev's reforms and changes in Soviet republics. When the Popular Front of Estonia was established as an unofficial reform movement on 13 April 1988, it appeared that the Soviet authorities refrained from taking repressive measures against the most active partisans of the reform. On 3 June 1988, a group of Lithuanian intellectuals established an initiative group of the Lithuanian Reform Movement Sąjūdis (LRMS) in the hall of the Lithuanian Academy

of Science in Vilnius. The group comprised 35 well-known Lithuanian intellectuals and contained no dissidents, representatives of state authorities, workers or students. The composition of the LRMS was initially different from Czechoslovakia's Prague Spring of 1968, which was led by the ruling party, and from the Polish Solidarity movement, which was led by workers.

Discussions showed a greater interest in history as the press gained more freedom, particularly the events that took place in Lithuania in 1939–1940. More vigorous movements were launched for the protection of nature and monuments, and the influence of the Russian press was huge. At first Sąjūdis was essentially a baby of Gorbachev's *perestroika,* when fights were associated only with the push for a free Lithuania. Gorbachev was compelled to rely on forces supporting reforms in his fights against the Soviet Union's old Communist Party. The LRMS tried to support the reforms initiated in Moscow and implement them in Lithuania. The main slogan of these reforms was "glasnost, democracy and sovereignty". Significant attention was paid to matters involving culture, ecology and state economy. Well-known Lithuanian economists Kazimieras Antanavičius, Kazimiera Prunskienė, Antanas Buračas and Eduardas Vilkas started to publicly discuss the question of Lithuania's fight for economic independence and supported the independence of enterprises and freedom of the market. They stated that a republic should not be a mechanical collection of enterprises, in the same way that the USSR should not be a mechanical collection of republics. The concept of "sovereignty" was subject to gradual change, yet nobody discussed changing the political system, and opinions about the question of nationality were not yet voiced openly. People's fears that a person speaking or writing differently from convention would be detained, deported or confined to a psychiatric hospital began to melt away. When the LRMS was set up, a decision was made not to elect a chairman of the initiative group. The meetings were presided over by each member in turn. Since the group comprised intellectuals well-known throughout Lithuania and their ideas were supported by many famous public

Sąjūdis badge with Columns of Gediminas. Artists Giedrius Reimeris and Algimantas Nasvytis

figures (including Vytautas Petkevičius and Justinas Marcinkevičius), the message about the LRMS initiative group spread very quickly.

An LRMS initiative group was established in Kaunas on 10 June 1988 and another in Klaipėda on 6 July 1988. The first meetings were successful and attracted thousands of participants. The first one in Gediminas Square (today Cathedral Square) drew about 30,000 people and another on 9 July attracted about 100,000 to Vingis Park, where the LRMS leadership announced its aim to legalise national symbols, the tricolour flag and the National Anthem. The so-called Rock Marches became extremely popular, with these youth music marches taking place in 1987, 1988 and the summer of 1989. Their purpose was to disseminate the ideas of the LRMS and free people frightened by the regime. The Rock Marches were headed by Algirdas Kaušpėdas, a member of the LRMS initiative group and lead singer of popular rock group *Antis*. Sąjūdis members Arvydas Juozaitis, Vytautas Radžvilas and others made patriotic speeches during the concerts-demonstrations. The Lithuanian Green Movement gained in strength.

A visit by Alexander Yakovlev, Secretary of the Central Committee of the USSR, to Lithuania on 11–12 August had a positive impact on LRMS activities. Yakovlev told the LRMS leadership that "the intelligentsia is an expression of people's self-consciousness". The party no longer prohibited communists from partaking in LRMS support groups and officially recognised the tricolour flag and National Anthem. It also allowed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact to be commemorated in Vingis Park for the first time and granted the LRMS the right to publish a newspaper and have a permanent TV show. The LRMS became even more popular when it started to publish the newspaper *Atgimimas* ("Rebirth", editor Romualdas Ozolas) from 18 September, along with the bulletin *Sąjūdžio žinios* ("Sąjūdis News").

The LRMS's public influence grew. Initiative groups were established throughout Lithuania between July and September and meetings with thousands of people were organised to which initiative group members were invited. Sąjūdis groups recognised the leadership of the Sąjūdis initiative group, although it was elected only by Vilnius residents. There were 1,200 Lithuania-registered LRMS groups with 300,000 members by late 1988. The size of membership was helped by the fact that Sąjūdis was open to all people of the country and they could all participate in its

Founding congress of the Lithuanian Reform Movement Sąjūdis in Vilnius Sports Palace on 22–23 October 1988. Photograph by Vladimiras Gulevičius

campaigns. Everyone who took part in the campaigns felt that Lithuania's future depended on them. During a few months in operation, the LRMS obtained self-evident results. On 21 October, Algirdas Brazauskas assumed the post of First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party. He gained significant public trust, especially when he returned Vilnius Cathedral to believers after the LRMS founding conference. On 6 October, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet designated Lithuanian as a national language, as well as legally approving the Lithuanian tricolour flag, the National Anthem created by Vincas Kudirka and the Lithuanian national symbols Vytis (coat of arms) and Columns of Gediminas. It also cancelled orders that prohibited meetings, processions and demonstrations.

The most prominent event took place on 22–23 October 1988, when the LRMS founding congress was organised. A total of 1,021 delegates were invited, including 980 Lithuanians, 9 Poles, 6 Jews and 18 people of other nationalities. The majority of attendees were scientists and artists. The congress was observed by more than 400 correspondents, including over 100 foreign journalists. Lithuania was in the spotlight. The congress adopted the general programme, statutes and 30 resolutions on politics, culture,

the economy, public life, democracy and other areas. The LRMS general programme set the main goal of supporting the reform of a socialistic society on the basis of democracy and humanism, with central objectives of openness, democracy, statehood, economic and cultural sovereignty of the state and the rule of law. However, the programme sought to create an impression that the LRMS supported the reforms initiated by the USSR's leadership.

The congress elected 220 members into the Seimas. On 25 November, musicologist Vytautas Landsbergis became Chairman of the Seimas Council. The people's movement which had been organised up to that date seemed to be ready to challenge the Communist Party. The LRMS became a force capable of satisfying public hopes and expectations and acting as an intermediary between the leadership and the nation, as well as a political party that was starting to be created. In November, all Lithuanian meetings and gatherings demanded that amendments to the USSR's constitution that provided for greater centralisation rather than the development of sovereignty of republics should be rejected. Some 1.8 million signatures were collected that supported such demands. All key draft legislation pending in the Supreme Soviet was also considered from autumn 1988 onwards in the parliament of the LRMS and its Council, which submitted their comments and proposals. On 18 May 1989, constitutional amendments were adopted on demand of the LRMS that provided for the supremacy of Lithuanian legislation with respect to the USSR's laws and contained a declaration on the state sovereignty of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Special attention was paid to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact signed between Germany and the Soviet Union on 23 August 1939. The Baltic States' incorporation into the Soviet Union was against the USSR's declared principles, under which decisions were supposed to be made by the nations involved. The state commission established by the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR therefore examined and publicly denounced the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the repercussions of the secret protocols, which involved Lithuania's occupation and unlawful annexation by the Soviet state in the summer of 1940.

On 23 August 1989 at 7:00pm, the populations of three Baltic States staged a protest campaign called the Baltic Way to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the signature of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. The cam-

The Baltic way – a human chain spanning across Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn on 23 August 1989. Photograph by A. Petrovas

paign attracted about two million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians joining hands in a 650-km human chain from Gediminas Tower in Vilnius to Tall Hermann Tower in Tallinn. The protesters held black ribbons and candles as symbols of mourning for victims and the pain of a major loss. Under pressure from the Baltic States, the 2nd congress of the USSR People's Deputies finally denounced the consequences of the secret protocols in December 1989, but without linking them directly to the occupation of the Baltics.

The Lithuanian national liberation became political in 1989. In March, LRMS candidates won a sweeping victory in the USSR Supreme Soviet elections. The LRMS could legally partake in the country's political life after amendments to the constitution were adopted on 7 December, under which the Lithuanian Communist Party was stripped of its monopoly to hold power in the state and society and conditions were created to set up various political parties. The sudden popularity and a huge size of the LRMS (almost all districts in Lithuania had a Sąjūdis division or initiative group), the results it achieved in forcing the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR to take decisions favourable to Lithuania showed the high level of awareness among Lithuania's population and the determination to demand bigger concessions from Moscow. During an eighteen-month period, Lithuania made a huge step towards the restoration of its independence on the basis of the work carried out by Sąjūdis.

Restoration of Lithuania's Independence

When the LRMS became a political movement in late 1989, it comprised many members of the Communist Party of Lithuania (the CPL, which was part of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)) who refused to continue following instructions from Moscow. The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Lithuania in December 1989 had a major impact on party activities. The CPL had 200,000 members, of whom 70% were Lithuanians. During the congress, 855 of the 1,033 delegates voted for an "independent CPL with its own programme and statute". As a result, the CPL separated from the CPSU and a national type of a eurocommunist party was created with a reformed activity programme and a new statute. An independent CPL, which was later renamed as the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party (LDLP), followed a socio-democratic direction. A minority of communists and pro-Soviet organisation Yedinstvo, which operated as the Soviet's fifth column in Lithuania and resisted the restoration of Lithuania's independence under instruction from Moscow, did not have a major role to play. There were no more political threads to keep Lithuania linked to the USSR.

Two parties confronted each other during the campaign for election to the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR in January and February 1990. One of these was the Lithuanian Reform Movement Sąjūdis, a national movement that was open and determined to promote the idea of Lithuania's restoration as an independent state. The other was an independent CPL, which shouted the popular yet obscure and ill-defined slogan "Lithuania without sovereignty is Lithuania without a future". On the face of it, there was no confrontation between the two political forces. The LRMS took a parliamentary way to restore Lithuania's independence and the independent CPL did not oppose the plan. However, under the reform tactics chosen by the CPL ("a step by step approach"), no legal or political documents were drafted that provided for the continuity of the state and there was no programme for the state's restoration.

Anticipating the direction taken by the movement, Moscow did everything to stop the eventual restoration of independence. It resorted to blackmail by threatening to annex Lithuania's Klaipėda region to the Kaliningrad

oblast of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) and create autonomy in the Polish and Russian speaking Vilnius turning it into a mini-Lithuanian SSR (following the Transdniestrian example) if Lithuania failed to comply with the USSR's constitution.

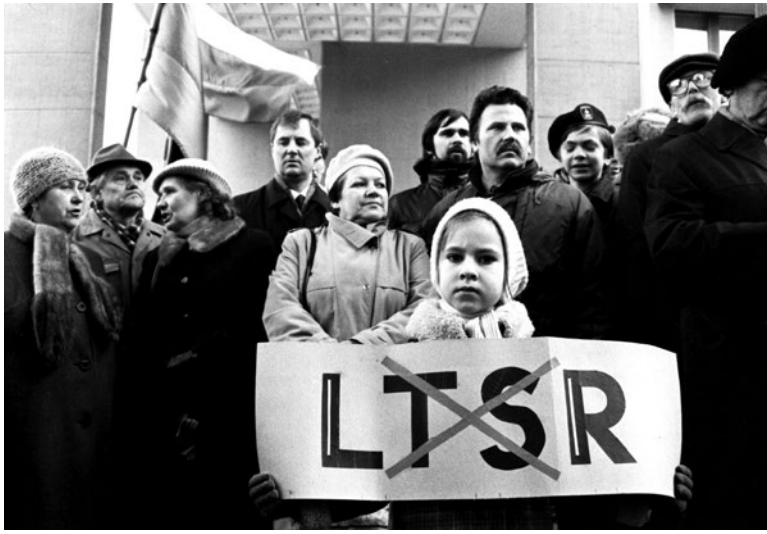
Yet this course of action did not help the imperial powers. Sąjūdis was determined to promulgate the state of Lithuania. Even Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Lithuania on 11–13 January 1990 did not force the LRMS to abandon its plans. Although Gorbachev explained that Lithuania was the only republic of the USSR to take the most of benefit from socialism, Lithuania longed for its ultimate goal of independence.

Sąjūdis felt its power. During the Supreme Soviet elections of the LSSR in February–March 1990, candidates put forward and supported by the LRMS obtained as many as 96 seats out of 133 deputies elected. It became clear that Lithuania was taking a new road, with the Communist Party having lost its autocracy and the majority of Lithuanian residents undoubtedly supporting Lithuania's independence. Vigorous actions were taken during the historical session of the Supreme Soviet of the LSSR on 11 March 1990. A group of LRMS deputies had prepared documents for the session and decided that independence should be declared immediately. Sąjūdis candidates kept their election promises after electing Vytautas Landsbergis, a leader of the Sąjūdis parliament, as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the LSSR on 11 March 1990. They renamed the Supreme Soviet of the LSSR as the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, reinstated Lithuanian's old name of the Republic of Lithuania and declared Vytis as the official coat of arms and state emblem.

At 10.44pm, the Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania was adopted by an absolute majority of deputies (124 deputies voted for the act, nobody voted against it and 6 deputies abstained). The act proclaimed that "the execution of the sovereign powers of the State of Lithuania abolished by foreign forces in 1940 is re-established and henceforth Lithuania is again an independent state."

In spirit, the Act of 11 March was close to the Act of Independence declared by the Council of Lithuania on 16 February 1918. The new act was not however based on the universally-recognised right of peoples to self-determination, which would be politically dangerous because of Moscow's intentions to subject Lithuania to the mechanism for leaving the USSR. This mechanism would involve nationwide "self-determination"

Mikhail Gorbachev's unsuccessful visit to Vilnius (11–13 January 1990). Lithuanian residents demanded independence during the meetings. Photograph by Vladimiras Gulevičius and Kęstutis Jankauskas



At the palace of the Supreme Council in Vilnius on 11 March 1990. A girl with a poster demands a Republic of Lithuania (RL) instead of the LSSR. Photograph by Algirdas Sabaliauskas

After the declaration of Lithuania's independence on 11 March 1990. Leaders of the Supreme Council – Reconstituent Seimas SC-RS: President of the Council Vytautas Landsbergis (centre), deputy presidents Kazimieras Motieka and Bronislovas Kuzmickas (left), deputy president Česlovas Stankevičius and member of the Presidium of the SC Aloyzas Sakalas (right). Photograph by Paulius Lileikis

referenda that would impose part of the USSR's public debts and international commitments on Lithuania. Under the Act of 11 March, the state of Lithuania was re-established in its own territory with its population. The Act of 11 March restored its sovereignty rather than administering the occupied territory. The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania (later renamed as the Reconstituent Seimas and hereinafter referred to as the SC-RS) started to implement a provision that no other state's constitution should be applied in the state's territory. To apply this provision in pursuance of the state's continuity and identity, the Supreme Council had to terminate the validity of constitutional acts of another state in Lithuania and restore the validity of the constitution effective in the last independent Lithuania (1918–1940). It therefore adopted the Law on the Reinstatement of the 12 May 1938 Constitution of Lithuania. However, the Constitution's validity was not renewed in its entirety. Within half an hour it was suspended and the so-called Provisional Basic Law was adopted as a provisional state constitution. This law corresponded with social relations and the state governance structure at the time, but cancelled all former duties of Lithuania and its citizens that had been unlawfully

laid down by the Soviet constitution and its laws. This was an accomplishment of part of the Sąjūdis election programme that dealt with the restoration of the State of Lithuania and the separation of its citizens from Soviet jurisdiction.

The LSSR coat of arms is replaced by Vytis. Photograph by Romas Jurgaitis

Sąjūdis was supported by the whole Lithuanian nation; Sąjūdis was the source of its power and strength. The movement took advantage of all favourable conditions, choosing the means of an unarmed fight and uniting various social classes under its flag. In this way, Sąjūdis brought Lithuania to freedom and made a weighty contribution to the collapse of the USSR and the whole communist system. The docile Russians also admittedly lost their patience after years listening to lies about the future paradise of communism, aware that the promises never came true. They were no longer satisfied to see the halo of the USSR as a nuclear and space-conquering superpower in which the older generation gave toothless smiles, shops were empty and flats were tiny or only in the process of being built, with queues everywhere and vouchers for everything. As a result, Russia joined the "parade of sovereignties" when other Soviet republics started to declare their sovereignty. The Act of 11 March was therefore Lithuania's biggest contribution to the history of 20th-century Europe.

Awaiting the International Recognition of Lithuania

The USSR's leadership and Mikhail Gorbachev in particular, did not want to hear anything about the independence of Lithuania and insisted on repealing the Act of 11 March. Vytautas Landsbergis was determined to follow only the principles of the moral policy that "what was stolen should be returned". When Lithuania complied only with

its own legislation, the USSR started an economic blockade that lasted from 18 April to 29 June 1990. Despite the enormous blow to the country's economy from a lack of fuel, suspended operation of the Mažeikiai oil refinery, the closure of several factories and the first people getting unemployed, Lithuania withstood and achieved removal of the blockade through diplomatic means. However, Gorbachev issued an ultimatum to the SC-RS on 10 January 1991, demanding that it should re-establish the validity of the USSR's constitution immediately. Armoured vehicles drove into the streets of Vilnius during the night of 10–11 January. On 11 January, the Soviet army seized the Press House and the buildings of the Military Defence Service in Vilnius, Šiauliai and Alytus and later seized the dispatcher's office at Vilnius railway station. Pro-Moscow squads planned to storm the SC-RS and dissolve the Parliament, and the Soviet army and special Alfa squads were sent to interfere in a "civil conflict" (which was triggered by Kazimiera Prunskienė's decision to increase food prices) and overthrow the lawful Lithuanian government. However, the Soviets failed to implement the scenario.

Invited by the leadership of the Reconstituent Seimas, thousands of Vilnius residents and people from other places in Lithuania came to stand guard at the Parliament, Lithuanian Radio and Television and the Vilnius TV tower on the evening of 12 January. Concrete walls and barbed-wire barricades were built around the SC-RS building. At about midnight, Soviet tanks and armoured vehicles surrounded the TV tower and the Lithuanian Radio and Television building, which thousands of peaceful Lithuanian residents defended with their bodies. When the Soviet army attacked the TV tower on 13 January 1991, 13 Lithuanian freedom fighters were killed. The casualties included one woman, Loreta Asanavičiūtė (born 1967), who was run over by a tank and died in hospital. Medical institutions received 580 victims, including 152 women and 312 demonstrators whose hearing was impaired as a result of tanks' firing blanks. A total of 122 people had multiple wounds (cuts, scraps, lacerations and gashes) and 46 were wounded by bullets.

Lithuania's SC-RS addressed the people of the USSR on 13 January, reminding them that the tragedy in Lithuania was also their tragedy and urging them to do everything possible to stop the Soviet army's aggression. The fact that people were informed and invited to defend their state contrasted with 1940, when the nation knew nothing about the rising

Vytautas Landsbergis's address to protestors – supporters of USSR – attempting to invade the Parliament, 8 January, 1991

Defence barricades at the Parliament on 14 January, 1991. Photograph by Eugenijus Masevičius

Attack on the Vilnius TV tower: caterpillar tracks of Soviet tanks roll over peaceful demonstrators. Photograph by V. Usinavičius

threat to independence. During his address at the Parliament, state leader Vytautas Landsbergis urged people to suppress their anger, resist provocation and... sing.

"Singing has helped us; it has helped us for hundreds of years. Let's sing now, let's sing holy songs and avoid cursing and swearing and getting into fights. [...]. Let's be as we should be and our Lithuania will be light and happy! Let's ignore the shooting and let's sing!"

The events at the TV tower shocked the whole Lithuania, with the news echoing worldwide. When the victims of 13 January were buried, solidarity bells tolled in Latvia, Estonia, Finland, Sweden, Norway and other European states. Masses for Lithuania were offered at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris and many other global churches. Yelena Bonner, a human rights activist and wife of Russian academic Andrei Sakharov, in a demonstration said that democrats in other republics and Russia were learning from Lithuanians. In a March 1991 demonstration in Moscow, more than 200,000 Muscovites shouted the slogans "Hands off Lithuania" and "Gorbachev, Step Down!"

Lithuanian residents who stood guard day and night during that tragic time at the nation's heart, its Parliament, managed to withstand the

armed forces and stopped the growing Soviet aggression through peaceful means.

The experience of unarmed resistance was soon applied in the other Baltic States and on 19–21 August 1991 in Moscow, where protesters managed to defend the lawful government and democracy. The events of 13 January 1991 in Lithuania can retrospectively be compared with such historical events as the creation of Poland's "Solidarity" movement and the collapse of the Berlin Wall. "Solidarity" began breaking down the USSR-dominated block of socialist countries (the so-called socialist camp) and Germany's reunification ended it. The date of 13 January can be seen as marking the collapse of the Soviet empire because that was when Russia learned that the USSR was doomed to die.

The Soviets failed to block information disseminating from Lithuania to the rest of the world. When radio transmission was cut off on 13 January, a radio station was launched in Sitkūnai (near Kaunas). Lithuania's authorities informed the United Nations about events in the country and its fight for freedom. Western countries reacted, sending condolences to Lithuania and demanding that the USSR's authorities cease military action. This was a blow to Gorbachev's image and "Gorbymania" collapsed. However, the Soviet army and forces hostile to Lithuania continued to control the Lithuanian Radio and Television despite the suspension of military action against the country. These forces also managed other strategic objects of the state.

The funeral of victims of 13 January represented the peak of pursuit of the goal of independence and unity between the nation and government. No criminal offences were registered in Lithuania in the five days after the events of this date.

The universal referendum on Lithuania's independence involved 84% of people with a right to vote, with as many as 90% of them voting in favour of independence. After the referendum, the Reconstituent Seimas adopted a constitutional law that designated Lithuania as an independent democratic republic.

However, several months passed before Lithuania received international recognition. The West feared that recognition of the Baltic States would undermine Gorbachev's reforms and he would be overthrown by the "hawks". It was not easy for the West to choose between "Gorby" and Lithuania, but Iceland gave it a hand. On 11

Funeral of the victims of January's aggression – the protest of the whole of Lithuania against the USSR's policy

February 1991, Iceland's Althing was the first parliament to recognise Lithuania's independence.

The route to recognition of independence was opened up in August, after the communists attempted to regain power in the Soviet Union during the Moscow coup. Lithuania was recognised by all the world's largest countries within a matter of days, including France (25 August), the United Kingdom (27 August), the USA (3 September) and finally the USSR (6 September).

Lithuania regained its place on the world map from which it had been coercively erased in the summer of 1940. The international recognition of Lithuania is another of the country's great achievements in the history of the 20th century.

Lithuania rushed to build its armed forces, created a diplomatic service

Lenin's monument removed in Vilnius 23 August, 1991.
Photograph by Jonas Juknevičius

and started building embassies in countries not having them. Young specialists in different subject areas flooded the restored Ministry of Foreign Affairs and many countries invited them to study diplomacy. Young men and women who were invited to serve their country's interests were very ambitious and had great ideas and energy. Seeing how young and enthusiastic they were and how unconventional their actions were, senior Western colleagues nicknamed them the "Baltic Kindergarten"...

Catching Up With Western Europe

The reader would be misled if we said that nothing positive happened in Lithuania under the USSR's rule and that this period saw only destruction of the country's independence, terror, deportations, killings, persecution and Russification. On the positive side, Lithuanians learned the Russian language well and directly benefited from the great achievements of Russian culture. The Klaipėda region and Vilnius were reintegrated into Lithuania through building roads, highways, railways and involvement of people. The USSR's unification policy made the economic situation in Latvia and Estonia substantially worse, but the economy actually improved in Lithuania. Lithuania eventually caught up with its neighbours with regard to all economic indicators and produced as much as Latvia and Estonia combined. Having regained independence, the Baltic States had to create a new economy, address the issue of energy independence, look for new markets and search for their place in Europe and the world.

As a fully-fledged European state, Lithuania sought to reform its domestic governance, following a democratic Western model. The Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania was adopted on 25 October 1992 through a national referendum. The Constitution's preamble enshrines the nation's main principles of an open, just and harmonious civil society and the rule of law, fostering national concord and the right to live and create freely in the land of fathers and forefathers. The preamble lays down a certain continuity of rights, traditions, statehood and the incorporation of these areas into law. The Lithuanian nation based its foundations on the Lithuanian Statutes adopted by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) and constitutions of the Republic of Lithuania. The Constitution's main provisions state that Lithuania shall be a democratic republic, the state shall be created by the Nation, sovereignty shall belong to the Nation and the Nation shall execute its supreme sovereign power either directly or through its democratically-elected representatives. The provisions also state that state power in Lithuania shall be exercised by the Seimas, President, Government and Judiciary, with the scope of power limited by the Constitution. The fundamental law of Lithuania guarantees innate human and citizen rights and freedom and states that citizens belonging to ethnic communities have the right to foster their

French President François Mitterrand's first visit to Lithuania. Speaker of the Seimas Vytautas Landsbergis with François Mitterrand at the Gate of Dawn in Vilnius Old Town. Vilnius, 1992

languages, cultures and customs, with the State providing them with support. Lithuania selected the principle of a president elected by the entire nation, which means that Lithuania is a compromise between a presidential and a parliamentary republic. The country is more oriented towards parliamentary government because a presidential approach to state government was not accepted.

Society became pluralistic, with as many as 40 parties registered. The Lithuanian political stage was however dominated by two key players: a social-democratic party which evolved from the independent CPL, known as the Democratic Labour Party of Lithuania (DLPL, which later united with the Lithuanian social democrats and became the Social Democratic Party of Lithuania, SDPL); and the Homeland Union-Lithuanian Conservatives (HU-LC), which was established in 1993 on the basis of the Sąjūdis majority.

The Brazauskas-led DLPL gained a majority during the 1992 Seimas elections and the Landsbergis-led conservatives took their turn four years later. People said that Lithuanian society was split into followers of Brazauskas and Landsbergis.

The situation began to change in 1998, when President Algirdas Brazauskas was replaced by Valdas Adamkus, who returned from the US to live in Lithuania. It changed further after the 2000 Seimas elections, when no party had a majority and a new era of coalition governments began. Although governments changed one after another, necessary reforms were taking place. At the time of the planned economy, Lithuanian people were impressed with a belief that if they took hold of production, they would be able to adapt it to their needs and the State would flourish.

Lithuania wanted to achieve a similar economic level to that of Western Europe on the basis of the Soviet economy, but the reality was different. The collapse of the Soviet system, which opened up the borders to a capitalistic Western world, revealed the actual status of Lithuania's economy. The reality was that there was no demand for Lithuanian industries, due to the lack of supply of raw materials (with the USSR as the major supplier) and the developed machine-tool industry, while other industries simply lost orders. The situation was similar in Latvia, Estonia and other post-communist countries. Even the free market economy of Finland faced a drop of more than 10% of GDP because it had exported 22% of its production to the USSR. Once links were cut off, Lithuania could no longer export goods produced by its major enterprises.

The situation worsened as prices rose for strategic raw materials and energy resources. Lithuania's economy experienced a recession in 1992–1994 when it lost its old markets, with the country's real gross domestic product (GDP) in 1993 accounting for 40% of the 1988 level and only starting to grow from 1995. The inflation rate began to shrink in mid-1993. This happened mostly because the Bank of Lithuania pursued a stricter monetary policy when national currency the litas was introduced and because of the application of a currency board model from 1 March 1994 under which the litas was pegged to the US dollar at a rate of 4 litas per dollar. According to economists, the act of pegging the litas to the US dollar was one of the wisest economic policy decisions during the entire existence of the restored Lithuania.

The country's economy faced new challenges in 1998–1999 at the time of the Russian financial crisis. Lithuania faced budgetary difficulties because most of its goods had been exported to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) before the crisis, and primarily to Russia. Lithuanian exports to CIS countries fell by 59% in 1999 compared with the previous year. Exports to the region represented just 18% of total exports, compared with 36% in 1998. Russia received as little as 7% of these exports, while Russian goods accounted for 20% of Lithuania's imports. Due to the crisis, Lithuanian exports had to be shifted from unstable Eastern markets to more demanding Western markets and the country's main foreign trade partners became Germany and Poland. The Lithuanian economy avoided recession after quickly changing its direction towards the West.

Economic difficulties fell heavily on the shoulders of a society which was used to "the Soviet order". In half a century, the Soviets turned their population of civil servants, workers and kolkhoz (collective farm) labourers into state employees and executors of government decisions. Most people were not ready to lead an independent life and the ship of the planned economy drifted in a sea of capitalism. Private agricultural enterprises and industrial companies were slowly established, with most oriented towards the market of the capitalist Western world. They needed initial capital to start operating, which they gained by selling private property bought with investment vouchers, bank loans or funds obtained from abroad. Most state enterprises became private companies during the so-called privatisation period, with a new business community built that operated in line with Western economic standards.

Although all the country's nationals seemed to have equal opportunities to acquire privatised state property with investment vouchers, very few used the vouchers properly. A number of voucher buyers who had purchased former state enterprises tried to resell them at a profit. Many people sold their vouchers and even managed to privatise their places of residence.

There was a prevailing belief that privatisation was unfair in principle and doubts remain about whether this was the most efficient method for privatising the economy. As a matter of fact, this approach shaped the country's economic development during the first decade of restored independence.

State authorities struggled to reform Lithuanian agriculture on capitalistic basis. However, they failed to develop a programme of economic reforms amid a rapidly changing geopolitical situation and even an assessment of the scope, depth and consequences of reforms was a challenge because no one had experienced such developments anywhere in the world. The agricultural reform strategy was developed and implemented using a top-down administrative approach, ignoring the opinions of people involved in agriculture. Initial legislation provided for restitution of land and property to former owners or their heirs and privatisation of the assets of collective and state farms. There was officially a demand that used agricultural areas returned to their former owners should not be abandoned, but in reality people behaved differently. Some owners who regained their land used it as property rather than a means of production, which could wait for better times. Former farms could be divided among several candidates selected to receive them and made smaller as a result. The land reforms meant that most Lithuanian farms were too small to ensure a family income equivalent to a minimum subsistence level. The average size of a restored farm became smaller. Most farms in Lithuania were up to 6 ha in size, at 62% of all farms. This was also true in neighbouring countries, with farms of up to 5 ha in size accounting for 72% of all farms in Poland, 41% in Latvia and 64% in Estonia.

The agricultural reforms destroyed the Soviet agricultural system, as well as kolkhoz and Soviet farms. When workers became shareholders, the majority of the population who lived on farms created during Soviet times simply divided farm property among themselves and started their own farming. When they learned that they were incapable of engaging in individual farming, they started to set up agricultural companies. However, most of these companies could not operate on the foundations of the new market economy and went bankrupt within several years. As the key agricultural reforms were implemented when Sąjūdis was in power, most of the Lithuanian population blamed Chairman of the Supreme Council Vytautas Landsbergis for the failed agricultural reforms. However, these consequences were brought about by the old economy.

Lithuania's privatisation legislation left a huge number of loopholes that allowed privatisation without following public tender procedures and the attainment of state property for a mere trifle. Joint stock and investment agricultural companies were established to buy privatised property,

but legislation did not provide for any legal liability for owners for making such companies profitable and no guarantees were given to people who entrusted their investment vouchers to such entities. Former kolkhoz heads and directors of Soviet farms abused the situation and soon became rich.

Rural communities had a complex social structure: agricultural workers who set up their own farms pursuant to the Law on Peasant Farms and used the support of a collective or state farm; those who regained their land and leased or bought additional plots regained by others, and sought to develop a major trade in farming; and former workers and servants of agricultural companies who resided in new settlements of former farms and had no title to land in the territory. The latter were owners of 2–3 ha plots who engaged in farming to survive after they became unemployed and had no opportunity to buy land or move elsewhere. Improvement in the agricultural situation was sluggish.

The majority of large companies went bankrupt during the first decade of privatisation and thousands of people lost their jobs. Massive unemployment provoked widespread emigration among Lithuanian residents. According to a variety of data, more than half a million residents left Lithuania since 1990: mainly for the USA, Ireland, United Kingdom (London), Spain and Norway. Most emigrants were young people of working age. One painful repercussion of emigration was "brain drain", with many knowledgeable people leaving the country. When the Lithuanian police gained a victory against growing organised crime, groups of criminals left the country in the wake of emigrating residents and started to terrorise and rob local residents and offer them narcotics "Made in Lithuania"... As a result, some criminals had an opportunity to thoroughly study prisons in Western Europe. When Western Europeans learned that the situation in Lithuania was secure because criminals had fled the country, they came to visit a safe Lithuania as tourists...

Lithuania was shocked by the collapse of some of its major banks, with the situation peaking when a moratorium was declared on two commercial banks in late 1995. Due to the banks' collapse the national budget incurred substantial losses and the turbulences in the financial sector had a direct impact on 30% of the country's economic entities, with the rest 70% experiencing an indirect impact. This undermined Lithuania's economic and financial development and shattered trust in the banks

nationally and abroad. Nevertheless, the major difficulties experienced by Lithuania's banking sector and those in other Western and Eastern European states also had positive consequences: the banking sector become stronger, surviving banks started to operate with more caution, the portfolio of bad debts shrunk and more stringent scrutiny of banks was introduced.

Everything changed in both an intimidating and encouraging manner. When Lithuania's independence was restored, almost all the country's sportspeople refused to participate in the USSR's teams and championships. Many of our country's best sportspeople, such as basketball players, footballers and volleyball players, left to play in foreign clubs from 1988. When the 4th World Lithuanian Sports Games were organised in the summer of 1991 in Lithuania, more than 2,000 Lithuanian sportspeople from all over the world came to participate. In August 1991, the International Olympic Committee returned international rights to the Lithuanian National Olympic Committee and Lithuanian sportspeople took part in different international sports for their country at the Olympic Games. Lithuania was proud of its first medals, with discus thrower Romas Ubartas winning the newly-independent nation's first golden medal at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. The Lithuanian men basketball team performed a major feat by winning bronze medals at the Olympics in 1992, 1996 and 2000. Lithuania achieved even better results at the European Basketball Championship, finishing second in 1995 and winning the EuroBasket for the third time in 2003. Lithuania's female basketball players were crowned European champions in 1997.

The education system was fundamentally restructured over the course of several years, with changes introduced in the educational management structure and the general education system, as well as vocational, college and higher-education establishments. The first private schools and gymnasiums were established in 1991 and 1992 respectively. A procedure was developed under which study at state and municipal general education and vocational schools and colleges was free of charge. The state guaranteed autonomy for higher-education establishments, with autonomy covering academic, administrative, economic and financial activities based on principles of self-governance and academic freedom. Payment has been introduced for some higher-education studies. In a move to integrate its education system into Europe, Lithuania in 1999 joined the Bologna

Declaration that aimed to create a common European higher-education area. Lithuanian higher-education establishments began to take part in EU-funded science and study programmes.

The content and quality of study in educational establishments changed fundamentally during the period of independence. Youths gained an opportunity to seek higher education not only in Lithuania, but also in other countries. Book and periodical publishing developed rapidly, along with a network of national libraries. These developments led to a well-educated, receptive and mobile Lithuanian society capable of competing on an equal footing with a Western society whose accomplishments seemed like an unattainable ideal for most Lithuanians in the early years of the country's independence.

After the dramatic occupation events of 1940–1990 by the Soviets, the Nazis and then the Soviets again, Lithuanian society summed up its historical experience feeling that it had a difficult but crucial moral lesson to learn: when an invader comes, do not rush to help, serve or collaborate with them because you could be used for a disgraceful or shameful task that will land you and your nation in trouble and you will be ashamed when Lithuania regains its freedom. There were heated debates about those who eagerly helped the Nazis and the Soviets, the role of Lithuanians in the Holocaust, deportation to Siberia and repression, with the questions of de-Sovietisation and lustration slowly addressed. Wounds began to heal, but there were many people both domestically and abroad who were keen to reopen old wounds and scratch them... There are others who are still keen to do that.

During the first 14 years of independence the restored Lithuania had to catch up with the West and learn about many new matters and methods for applying them. Other post-communist countries faced similar problems. Although reforms were accompanied by painful experiences, obstacles were overcome and Lithuania was restructured under the model of a democratic Western world in a short period of time.

Neighbourly Relations and Transatlantic Integration

A comparison of the independent Lithuania's foreign policy during the first half of the 20th century and after 1990 reveals key

differences. During the interwar period, Lithuania entered into a dispute with Germany over the Klaipėda region and with Poland over the Vilnius region. The situation changed later in the 20th century. Germany was forced out of Eastern Prussia (currently the Kaliningrad region) after World War II and, having no border with Lithuania, did not aspire to regain the Klaipėda region which was populated mostly by Lithuanian residents.

Lithuania's relations with neighbour Poland improved because the demographic situation in Vilnius changed during the second half of the 20th century, with Lithuanians dominating and Poles accounting for 20% of the population. Even though during the earlier years of independence the Polish communist functionaries of the Vilnius region instigated by Moscow sought to establish their autonomy in Vilnius county that would cover Vilnius and Šalčininkai regions, which were populated mostly with Poles, Lithuania's relations with Poland did not worsen despite the fact that Lithuanian authorities introduced temporary direct rule in the territory. In fact, Warsaw understood who provoked such actions. After long negotiations, Lithuania and Poland signed the Treaty on Friendly Relations and Good Neighbourly Cooperation on 26 April 1994.

Among other provisions, the treaty's preamble refers to previous territorial disputes between Lithuania and Poland, condemns the use of violence that previously existed in relations between the two nations and formally ratifies the current and future integrity of the current territories, with capitals in Vilnius and Warsaw. Both states committed to basing their relations on mutual respect, trust, good neighbourliness and integration into the family of Western states. The treaty's ratification and entry into effect meant that Poland formally renounced any claims to Vilnius region. Lithuania similarly lost its right to make territorial claims with respect to Sejny or Punsk, although historical factors and the issue of national minorities sometimes provoke heated debates.

After the restoration of independence, Lithuania gained a border with Russia's Kaliningrad region in the west. The Potsdam Conference gave the USSR the right to govern the Kaliningrad region. The democratic Russia openly supported Lithuania's fight for independence. The day after the massacre in Vilnius on 13 January 1991, Russian leader Boris Yeltsin addressed military forces serving in the territory of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. He urged them not to succumb to reactionary forces and to think about

Signing an agreement with Russia:
Vytautas Landsbergis and Boris Yeltsin (centre)

the future of Russia and its nations before attacking civil buildings in the Baltic States. Friendly relations between state leaders allowed an agreement to be developed on interstate relations between Lithuania and the Russian Federation. Landsbergis and Yeltsin signed the agreement on 29 July 1991 and it came into effect after a year. Under the agreement, Russia recognised Lithuania's independence and agreed to eliminate the consequences of annexation by the Soviet Union in 1940, while Lithuania recognised Russia as an independent state. Diplomatic relations were built between the two states in late October.

In October 1997, the Republic of Lithuania and the Russian Federation signed an Agreement on the State Border between Lithuania and Russia and the Treaty on the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf in the Baltic Sea.

Although Russia remains a very important economic partner for Lithuania, relations between the two states are not very close. The main obstacles are the countries' different geopolitical orientations in terms of foreign policy and their diverging views towards the recent historical past and democratic order. The objective of the "controlled democracy" regime pursued by President Vladimir Putin is to regain influence in the so-called post-communist area, primarily in the territory of the collapsed USSR. Lithuania chose to integrate into the EU and NATO. On 8 June 1992, it adopted the Constitutional Act on the Non-Alignment of the Republic of

Pope John Paul II during his visit to Lithuania, accompanied by President Algirdas Brazauskas and Vilnius Archbishop Metropolitan Audrys Juozas Bačkis. 4 September, 1993, Vilnius

Lithuania to Post-Soviet Eastern Unions (a similar decision was taken by Latvia and Estonia).

Lithuania insists that Russia, as a transferee of the rights and obligations of the USSR, must reimburse the losses incurred by the Lithuanian nation during almost half a century of Soviet occupation. Russian authorities refer to the collapse of the USSR as a geopolitical disaster, although they have condemned the aggression of the Soviet Union against the three Baltic States. They claim that Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia willingly joined the USSR and that the USSR cannot be blamed for the actions at the time, saying that the blame lies with the international environment...

The reborn Lithuania sought to establish good relations with a new state, Belarus. In October 1991, Lithuania and Belarus signed a Declaration of the Principles of Good Neighbourly Relations and after four years they signed an Agreement of Good Neighbourliness, Cooperation and the State Border. Economic relations developed well, but political relations were undermined by the dictatorship of President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus.

On 12 May 1990, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia renewed the Treaty on Concord and Cooperation of 1934 between the Baltic States and estab-

President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus and NATO Secretary General George Robertson during the international conference in Vilnius on "NATO's Role in the Changing Security Environment in Europe" on 19 May 2000

lished the Baltic Council, which has held meetings to develop a common foreign policy position. Close cooperation between the states ensured their successful integration into transatlantic organisations.

Like its neighbours, a free Lithuania aspired to integrate into key international Western organisations and become a fully-fledged state. It became a member of the United Nations on 17 September 1991 and joined specialised organisations of the UN in late 1991, including UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and the ILO (International Labour Organisation). Lithuania became a member of the Council of Europe in 1993 and was embraced by key organisations the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the European Union (EU) in 2004. The first precondition for Lithuania to join Western security structures was a successful withdrawal of Russian troops on 31 August 1993.

Lithuania embarked on its road to NATO in December 1991, when it joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council. In January 1994, Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas sent a letter to the Secretary General of NATO, Manfred Wörner, saying that Lithuania wished to become a member of the organisation. Lithuania joined the Partnership

for Peace initiative in the same month. In May 1999, the NATO Summit in Washington recognised Lithuania's efforts and progress in aspiring for membership and adopted the NATO Membership Action Plan. Seven NATO candidate countries were invited to start negotiations for NATO membership in November 2002, including Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The urge to join NATO was particularly triggered by the historical words of US President George Bush on 23 November in Vilnius. Mr. Bush said: "Our alliance is determined to defend its members. Anyone who would choose Lithuania as an enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America." George Bush also reminded everybody that the USA never recognised Lithuania's occupation and always believed that "our continent will not remain divided for ages." After the invited candidates signed protocols to the Washington Treaty in March 2003 and the Seimas ratified the Washington Treaty, Lithuania became a fully-fledged member of NATO on 29 March 2004.

The main advantage of NATO membership is highlighted in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which guarantees the inherent right of states to individual and collective defence in the event of an armed attack on any of the Alliance members. The article states that none of the Member States will need to rely on their own efforts and economic resources if their safety is threatened.

As Lithuania does not have an adequate means of protecting its air space, the old NATO Member States have been in charge of this since the country's membership. NATO membership means not only greater security guarantees, but also commitments to maintain stability and peace in Europe and beyond. More than 200 Lithuanian servicemen have taken part in international missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Georgia. Lithuania was offered the chance in late 2004 to head an international NATO group for the restoration of Afghanistan's Ghōr province, in order to create conditions there to ensure stability and security and help the country's central authorities expand their role in the region.

Lithuania was determined to pursue democratic values in a bid to strengthen its membership and democracy. These values included ensuring opportunities for national minorities to use and promote their language and culture, the restoration of property to religious communities,

Athens, 2003: President Algirdas Brazauskas and Minister of Foreign Affairs Antanas Valionis sign the EU Accession Treaty

learning from the lessons of the Holocaust, returning dispersed Jewish cultural assets (300 rescued Torahs and documents of the YIVO Institute) and sacred buildings to Jews, fighting against anti-Semitism, racial and religious intolerance, and guaranteeing freedom of speech, the press and elections.

The second-most important strategic foreign policy objective of the restored Lithuania is integration into the European Union. On 14 December 1990, heads of the Baltic States addressed the then European Economic Community for the first time. They asked it to provide political, economic and cultural support to the Baltic States directly, avoiding the Soviet Union. After the events of 13 January 1991 in Lithuania, the EEC (since 1993 the EU) strongly condemned the use of force in the Baltic States. In 1992, Lithuania and the EU signed the Trade, Commercial and Economic Cooperation Agreement and a declaration on political dialogue. As soon as official diplomatic relations were established, the EU started to offer assistance to Lithuania through the PHARE programme. Three years later, the EU signed an Association Agreement with Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, by which the EU recognised the Baltic States' objective to become EU members. Lithuania joined the EU on 1 May 2004, attaining the right to create its own and the continent's future alongside other democratic states.

The scope of Lithuania's trade and exported goods increased after it joined the EU. This meant that Lithuania exported more to other countries, with foreign capital investment in its own economy, more intensive competition and a more rational use and distribution of economic factors

Trakai Castle. Photograph by Kęstutis Fedirka

(labour and capital). EU membership limited the Lithuanian Government's power to interfere directly and indirectly in the operation of the country's economy and opened up more freedom and opportunities for Lithuanian enterprises and consumers. On the other hand, the mandatory nature of EU regulation brought about discussions on restriction of the nation's sovereignty.

Nevertheless, new markets opened up for Lithuania when it became a fully-fledged member of the EU. The results were demonopolisation, greater efficiency, a supply of goods and services and new opportunities for the development of education, culture and attention to social issues. Consumers gained the greatest benefit in this case.

As an EU Member State, Lithuania is obliged to implement provisions with regard to the population of Member States. Each EU national has the following rights: unrestrained freedom of movement and residence in the territory of the EU Member States; the right to vote and run for local and European elections in a country where a person lives; the right to be defended by the diplomatic and consular institutions of each Member State; and the right to submit petition to the European Parliament. EU membership is associated with the stability of institutions that serve as guarantors of democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for the protection of minority groups.

As an EU Member State, Lithuania can express its position in Brussels about a variety of issues and influence EU decisions: it has its own commissioner and 12 members in the European Parliament. Although the impact of a single state on the EU decisions is not major, the collective power of Central and Eastern European states may grow significantly if they hold similar positions. Lithuania had to pay a price to enter the EU. One of the most striking examples was the unwritten requirement to decommission the Ignalina nuclear power station, which Western Europeans considered unsafe. The EU continued to insist on its established criteria and Lithuania gradually conceded because the country's strategic goals were of paramount importance.

Lithuania has visibly strengthened its security and international status and has become stronger economically while playing a successful role in a variety of NATO and EU activities. Lithuania is currently a fully-fledged democratic European state. The fate of European states depends on EU Member States and the decisions they take.

* * *

Lithuanian statehood was restored after World War I, but Lithuania was erased from the European map during World War II and was reborn during the collapse of the Soviet model of communism. When the socialist camp confronted political, economic and national crisis, Lithuanians found strength to resurrect the nation, create a model of a national movement, disrupt communist governance in the republic and start to abolish the one-party regime in the USSR and finally the USSR itself. This was carried out by generations which grew under the Soviet regime rather the pre-war population. Leadership was held by Lithuanian intellectuals who preserved the ideals of freedom and independence. In many ways, Lithuania suffered most as the first country to fight the Soviet regime. However, it withstood, restored its statehood and took a determined route towards democracy. As a nation state, Lithuania restored independence twice in the 20th century alone and this is a record that is unlikely to be broken by any country in the future. After creating a democratic state and market economy, Lithuania was affected by the global and regional economic crises and the impact of globalisation. New opportunities for people to change their places of residence posed threats of emigration on an unseen scale. The Lithuanian nation

and its governments entered the 21st century searching for a response to all key challenges they faced, with the whole of Europe and the world already a constituent part of a democratic Europe and a transatlantic security system.

THE END, OR THE SCATTERED FACES OF LITHUANIA

There were many things that Lithuania was unable to be of significance to the world in the 19th–20th centuries. Occupation, annexation, exile, genocides and the Holocaust, during which the Jewish Litvak community, which had garnered Lithuania worldwide acclaim, was destroyed, though it retained living roots in Lithuania, the United States and Palestine (later the State of Israel). The descendants of the Gediminid and Jagiellon dynasties passed their genes on to all of Europe's most famous monarchies, and that makes us feel better. We also produced many prominent families and aristocrats, and we gave America and Europe hardworking miners, builders, weavers, nannies, and engineers. Polish president Bronisław Komorowski's father's roots are in Lithuania, at his estate in Rokiškis County. We could list the people of Lithuania who were thrown far into the world by the wave of emigration, but the names of many of them are better known there than they are in Lithuania.

Let's imagine an "ideal Lithuania", where plays and films are made not only by Jonas Mekas or theatre director Eimuntas Nekrošius, but also by Robert Zemeckis (who was born in Chicago in 1952 to a Lithuanian father), and the roles are played by Sir John Gielgud and Charles Bronson. All of these world-famous theatre and movie stars are Lithuanian emigrants or of Lithuanian descent. And when you see Hercule Poirot – actor David Suchet – walking around the provincial town of Tryškiai looking for his ancestors, the Suchedowitzes, who emigrated to the South African Republic via Turkey, you begin to wonder how many more names like these Lithuania is hiding.

Let's fantasize some more: orchestras directed by Saulius Sondeckis, Gintaras Rinkevičius and Donatas Katkus are accompanied not only by Violeta Urmana, who is known today on the European stage, but also by the great violinist Jascha Heifetz, who was born and schooled in Vilnius, and art exhibitions are opened not only by Stasys Kuzma or Petras Repšys, but also by famous artists from the West, such as Chaim Soutine, Jacques Lipchitz, or George Maciunas (born Jurgis Mačiūnas), one of the founding members of Fluxus, or perhaps by sculptor Victor David Brenner (1871–1924; born Viktoras Barnauskas in Šiauliai), designer of the United States Lincoln Cent, or the artist Vytautas Kasiulis, who became so famous in France. And nearly every Frenchman knows of the poet Oscar Milosz, as well as the semiologist Algirdas Julien Greimas, Vilnius-raised two-time *Prix Goncourt* winner Romain Gary, or Emmanuel Lévinas, who was born and educated in Kaunas.

Let's imagine even further: Lithuania is represented not only by Lithuanian and NBA star Arvydas Sabonis, but also by Mother of Women's Basketball Senda Berenson Abbott (b. 1868, Vilnius), Frank Lubin, who was a member of the United States' gold-medal team at the Berlin Olympics and of Lithuania's gold-medal team at the 1939 European Basketball Championship, heavyweight boxing champion Jack Sharkey (born Joseph Paul Zukauskas), American football player Johnny Unitas, or tennis player Vitas Gerulaitis.

Today, we are proud of the school of cardiac surgery established by Algimantas Marcinkevičius and Vytautas Sirvydis. And it shouldn't be forgotten that the world's first successful human-to-human heart transplant was performed in the South African Republic in 1967 by Christiaan Barnard, who was presumably of Litvak descent (and even if this was to be incorrect, the patient in his famous operation was Louis Washkansky, a Lithuanian Jew). It would be wrong not to also mention the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine laureates who were directly related to Lithuania – David Baltimore (1975 Nobel Prize), whose surname is even slightly reminiscent of Butrimonys, where his family's origins go back to, and which was also where the pre-eminent authority on Renaissance art Bernard Berenson (born Bernhard Valvrojenski, 1865) was from, Gertrude Elion (1918–1999; 1988 Nobel Prize; her father emigrated from Lithuania to the United States when he was 12 years old), or Sydney Brenner (born in 1927 to a cobbler who emigrated to South Africa from Lithuania in 1910; 2002

Nobel Prize). And there are Nobel laureates in other fields as well. Born in Želva, Sir Aaron Klug was winner of the 1982 Nobel Prize in Chemistry (born in 1926, he emigrated to South Africa with his parents at the age of two and later moved to Great Britain), and Bernard Lown, who was born in Utena as Boruchas Lacas in 1921 and emigrated with his parents to the United States in 1935, was founding co-president of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, which was awarded the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize for its work against nuclear proliferation.

Alongside Czesław Miłosz, winner of the 1980 Nobel Prize in Literature, who glorified Vilnius for the years he spent studying there, is South African writer Nadine Gordimer (b. 1923) who won the 1991 prize for her "very great benefit to humanity", and whose father was from Lithuania.

And can you guess what world-renowned musicians, the likes of Jimi Hendrix, Eric Clapton and Bob Dylan, George Harrison and Paul McCartney, Keith Richards and Ronnie Wood, David Gilmour and Bruce Springsteen had in common? Well they all played Zemaitis guitars, which were created by Tony Zemaitis (born in a Lithuanian immigrant family in London as Antanas Kazimeras Žemaitis in 1935), and which have since become a generic term in the world of rock. After all, this ancestry was shared by Bob Dylan (whose grandmother was born in Lithuania and immigrated with her family to the United States in 1902), as well as Leonard Cohen (whose mother's family was of Lithuanian ancestry) and Anthony Kiedis of the Red Hot Chili Peppers... You can't name them all.

We are left with the hope that in the future, Lithuania will no longer squander its names, and the second millennium will be luckier than the first.

The authors of this book are grateful to European Union officials for their goal to construct a common European history that is smooth, non-conflicting, and disimpassioned, and which no longer causes problems for the 21st century citizen. This is precisely the kind of history we so ardently want to write for Lithuania. Many a person might say that our narrative, the history we tell, seems to reveal too many sharp contradictions and is perhaps even too critical of our neighbours. However, such an impression can only be made because there were states that (at times) very much wanted to take Lithuania "under their wings" for as long as possible, or simply dominate within it. The authors feel no guilt for such desires to see Lithuania as their own, or for the persistent struggles of the Lithuanian

people for self-dependence and their own independent state which they certainly deserved and which they created and re-created several times; in fact, they are proud of this struggle, especially since they neither distort, nor make up, nor politicize old historical phenomena, but rather just tried to lay them forth and explain them, as clearly as possible, using all the latest developments in our historiography.

For it is certainly not Lithuanian historians that are to blame for the complexity of Lithuania's history.

History is to blame.

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This book strives to present an answer to a question which is one of the most significant to the people of Lithuania: how did Lithuania come into being, and why is our country not an expression of chance or circumstance, but rather, a fruit ripened for centuries, a path of self-dependence paved by the lawful self-determination of its people, and a natural, merited recompense for the life of each and every Lithuanian?

In 2013, Lithuania will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union – the union of free and democratic European countries. Not only is this a unique opportunity to contribute to the creation of a common European future; it is also a chance to strengthen the attentiveness of the countries to the past of the continent's nations, and, of course, for us ourselves to take a look and remind the entire world what Lithuania was and is, in a concise, easy-to-read retrospect of Lithuanian history based on the criteria of truth and openness. The long, victorious, sometimes difficult or even tragic historical path of our state, which traversed through different political regimes, the pits of occupations and the ups and downs of restored independence, is laid bare.

This is the first attempt since 1990 to embrace the entire history of Lithuania, from antiquity to 2004, in a responsible and prudent glance.

THE HISTORY OF LITHUANIA

Alfonsas EIDINTAS, Alfredas BUMBLAUSKAS,
Antanas KULAKAUSKAS, Mindaugas TAMOŠAITIS

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