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Photo by Arūnas Baltėnas

Mindaugas Navakas. *Grand Vase*, 2005.
Polished and chiselled granite, 450 cm x 250 cm x 200 cm.
"R Works," Latvian National Museum of Art, Riga, 2006.

When the Tanks Rolled – Vilnius 1991

ALFRED ERICH SENN

In the first week of December 2010, I began thinking about the twentieth anniversary of the "January events" (*sausio įvykiai*) in Lithuania in January 1991. Official anniversaries emphasize lessons and current concerns; as the American journalist Ted Koppel has said, "History is a tool for politicians to justify their ambitions." I was not driven by any political ambition; I simply began to feel an urge to record my memories of January 1991: How I witnessed the "January events," the violence in Lithuania in January 1991. And I succumbed to this urge. This is not an account of what happened in Lithuania in that week; it is an account of my experiences in Lithuania in that week. I originally wrote it for a small group of friends and relatives who I believe might be interested; their response has led me to offer it to a larger audience.

Memory is tricky. We remember what we want, and perhaps also what we most do *not* want to remember. In between is a lot of space. My account draws on three sources, all of which are my own doing: 1. My memory – those were days that were *burned* into my memory; 2. Accounts that I have published – particularly *Lithuania in Crisis*, a pamphlet published in March 1991 and several times translated into Lithuanian, and *Gorbachev's Failure in Lithuania*, a book I published in 1995; and 3. A little grey notebook in which I scrawled thoughts and impressions during those days.

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My decision to go to Lithuania in January 1991 was built on past experiences. In the fall of 1988, I had participated in the fascinating development of Lithuanian national feeling. When the opportunity came to join a delegation headed to Lithuania in January 1990 to consolidate the "Sister Cities" relationship between Vilnius and Madison, my daughter and I signed up. The trip fell between semesters at the university, and since that time accidentally coincided with Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to Lithuania, it provided a real "upper" for returning to the classroom. In the summer of 1990, I visited Lithuania during a governmental crisis there that probably never will reach the history books, and after all this, I decided it would be fun to go again in the space between semesters in January 1991.

Lithuania was changing rapidly. Having declared their independence of Moscow, the Lithuanians had split into political factions among themselves. Gorbachev was showing growing impatience, but he was having trouble keeping order even in Moscow. Nevertheless, I really did not expect any sudden outburst of trouble. Despite the uncertainties, I received a Soviet visa very quickly – quite a contrast to the situation during Moscow's blockade of Lithuania in the summer of 1990, when the Soviet mission in Washington first denied me a visa and then called me on the phone to tell me to apply again.

It was not easy to fly into Lithuania in those days. In 1990, I had to fly through Moscow. In January 1991, my ticket read Chicago-Amsterdam-Berlin-Vilnius. On the first leg, flying to Amsterdam, I sat with an Irishman who had been working in the post office in Minneapolis and now considered this to be his cheapest route home. (I still cannot explain that.) When I told him of my destination, he declared that once there I should buy a horse. Why? Because the Soviets would impose a new blockade, and horseback would be my only possible transportation out of the country. I laughed that off.

In Berlin, where I overnighted, the radio gave me news of trouble exploding in Lithuania. Moscow had sent troops into

Lithuania, allegedly to collect recalcitrant military recruits. Russians in Vilnius, with the support of the military, were mounting demonstrations against the government. Lithuanian Prime Minister Kazimiera Prunskienė had resigned under pressure from the parliament; Lithuania had to form a new government. This sounded serious, but on I traveled. On the plane to Vilnius, I met a small group of Germans who were planning business contacts in Lithuania. We compared travel itineraries: We were flying in on Wednesday, January 9, and we would see each other when we departed on Wednesday the 16th. That was quite a week.

My friend Alfonsas Eidintas met me at the airport and apologized that his wife Birutė could not provide me with my traditional first meal in Lithuania. The stores had been closed on Tuesday because the government had ordered an increase in food prices, but with Prunskienė's fall from power, the parliament had cancelled the increase. As a result, stores had to close again on Wednesday to reduce marked prices. We ate at the Neringa Hotel (where I was to stay), and after dinner we went to Independence Square where Lithuanians were gathered to protect the parliament building from Russian demonstrators. I was deeply moved when some Lithuanians recognized me and shouted things like "Tell the world that we are not afraid."

The continued presence of Lithuanian demonstrators at the parliament and the television tower was a major factor in the developments of the following days. Lithuanian leaders announced quotas for various regions of the republic to send people in buses to the capital to serve shifts at the two buildings. The demand for bread in the city grew enormously over the next several days, and subsequently Lithuanians were advisors for demonstrators throughout the Soviet Union on problems of providing food and toilet facilities for large crowds. At times musical groups provided entertainment, and the demonstrations occasionally had the tone more of a festival than of a guard watch.

That evening I learned that, late in the afternoon, Soviet troops had briefly occupied the television tower in Vilnius,

suddenly withdrawing again. I later came to suspect that the Soviets had planned for Russian demonstrators at this time to take over the parliament, and then the television facilities would serve new masters. The Lithuanians, however, had gathered too many defenders at the parliament to allow any quick move, and the military retreated. Television that evening showed a basketball game between Kauno Žalgiris and Moscow TsSKA. Žalgiris won; Lithuanians hoped they could take this as a good sign.

Thursday the 10th was a day of rising tension. In the afternoon, I was in the Mažvydas Library, next to the parliament, when the radio brought news that Gorbachev had sent an ultimatum demanding that the Lithuanians cease their efforts "to restore the bourgeois order." The Lithuanian government called for popular support. My friends in the library took me to a large window on a high staircase across from the parliament, and I could watch Lithuanians streaming from all directions into Independence Square in front of the parliament. Many came running. The square was soon packed with people. There was no invasion.

Late in the afternoon, I made my way through the singing crowd over to the parliament, and at the security entrance, I called around to find someone who could give me a pass into the building. After a few minutes I succeeded, and I proceeded to the parliamentary floor. I knew a number of parliamentarians personally from the exciting days of 1988, and after the election of a new prime minister, Albertas Šimėnas, I was able to put together an interesting story of the maneuvers involved in his selection, in his agreement to serve, and in the protests of his own party that would not approve his selection. I subsequently put all this into my pamphlet on the January events, and as I later learned, a number of conservatives complained strongly about my readiness to reveal internal Lithuanian squabbles to the wide world. I do not think any Lithuanian has yet published an account of these maneuvers, but I have chosen not to repeat my account here. This is my personal story.

Thursday night and Friday morning, we heard more stories about Soviet measures cutting Lithuania off from the outside world. The airport was closed (Soviet special forces were flying in), the train station closed, and international trains were stopped; I heard that highways were closed. (The blockade, to be sure, seemed focused on Vilnius; I do not think people in Kaunas experienced the full taste of these measures.) As I shaved on Friday morning, listening to the radio, I thought to myself: "I am a hostage! I should grow a beard!" But I had already begun shaving, so that would not work. And I had not bought a horse! But then again, I have never ridden a horse in my life.

On Friday morning, the 11th, Eidintas and I had business. We went to the Press Building, where the publication of Lithuanian newspapers was centralized, so that I could pick up an honorarium that I was due. A group of women and men, armed with the national flag, fire hoses, and umbrellas, told us they were expecting a surge of Russian demonstrators at any time and that we should hurry. We hurried, and they waved goodbye to us as we left. We went on to a publishing house where I signed a contract for Lithuanian translations of two of my books. Upon returning past the Press Building we saw a Soviet tank parked at the entrance; the Soviet army had occupied the building. (I heard that some thirty tanks had driven around the building during Thursday to Friday night; speculation had it that this had been a rehearsal.) We later heard that a Soviet officer, sprayed by a fire hose, raked the side of the building with rounds from his gun. Lithuanian television that evening repeatedly showed film of the officer and of a truckload of dolls that had been damaged by the tank; the sight of the broken dolls surely evoked images of children victimized by rampant tank drivers. In the afternoon, troops seized the international telephone exchange.

Television news on Friday evening amply illustrated the conflict. Lithuanian television reported Soviet actions and threats; the poet Justinas Marcinkevičius spoke of a "menacing black wing" and declared, "The cause of freedom is always

correct." After the news, the mayor of Vilnius appeared on television to urge Lithuanians to provide food for the passengers stranded on the immobile international trains. Moscow television reported discrimination in Vilnius against Moscow loyalists, who had just announced the formation of the Committee for National Salvation, which in turn called for "presidential rule" to replace the existing government in Lithuania. That evening, I visited friends in Antakalnis, and at midnight, as they accompanied me to the bus stop in front of a building housing Lithuanian defense forces, we all commented on how quiet things seemed. A half hour later, a bomb blew up the building. Each evening now, Soviet tanks rumbled through the city, shaking buildings. Lines of Lithuanian cars followed them, no doubt irritating the Soviet authorities. (The Soviets had a military base, Šiaurės miestelis, in the center of the city; the tanks did not have far to go to make people notice them.)

Saturday the 12th was a day of enormous tension. Troop movements like this were not meant "for show." Just before noon, the radio reported that George Bush's press spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater, had said it was too soon to speak of any use of force in Lithuania – this did not improve the mood in Vilnius. In Moscow, Gorbachev was meeting with his new "Federation Council," made up of representatives of the major nationalities of the Soviet Union, and no one could be sure of the result. There were rumors that the council had established contact with the Committee for National Salvation, even that the council might seat the committee as Lithuania's representative. Endless discussions considered the Soviet government's previous violent actions in Tbilisi, Baku, and Moldava. (It was said that the troops that seized the Press House included veterans of Baku and Tbilisi.) Would the council approve some sort of action against the Lithuanian government?

In the afternoon, I went to Independence Square where buses were lined up to block access, and I visited the parliament to speak with various acquaintances. Audrius Siaurusevičius, then a fledgling journalist and now the director of Lithuanian radio and television, greeted me with the cheerful thought

"They have not yet shot us!" I have recorded other statements by Lithuanian leaders at this time in my pamphlet *Crisis in Lithuania* and my book *Gorbachev's Failure in Lithuania.*

In the early evening, news came that the Federation Council had decided to send a delegation to Vilnius in the hope of finding a "political" solution to the situation. For unexplained reasons, the commission would spend the night in Minsk and then fly into Vilnius on Sunday morning. The announcement brought enormous relief, but even as Moscow television seemed to be adopting a more restrained reportage, Lithuanian government spokespersons, especially Vytautas Landsbergis and Zigmas Vaišvila, called on demonstrators to remain at their posts at the television tower and the parliament building. "You cannot trust Moscow," was their message. The State Opera, making its contribution to the spirit of sacrifice for the nation, announced that there would be no admission charge for its performance that evening of the opera *Pilėnai,* telling how medieval Lithuanians had set their castle on fire to prevent its capture by German invaders. On the other hand, Soviet television expressed support for the Committee for National Salvation.

That evening, I was at a social gathering of historians, and we generally believed that the worst was over. Political prophets – hah. My friend who drove me back to the Neringa Hotel was looking forward to a good night's sleep. In fact, he got none. Shortly after his returning home, his parents demanded that he take them back into the city. Soviet troops were moving, and many Lithuanians wanted to show their national feeling and their support for their government.

I was in bed reading newspapers when the first three tank cannon shots went off at 1:36 a.m. It was now January 13. I immediately turned on my television set, and a Lithuanian spokesman said the Soviets were shooting blanks. More cannon shots. At 1:53 the television announcer reported that armed Soviet troops were "at our door" and declared that she would remain at her post as long as she could. At 1:59 they entered the station. At 2:02, Vilnius radio, located on the first floor,

closed down with a crash. Television cameras showed armed Soviet soldiers advancing through the building and opening every door. At 2:08, the television sound began to fade, and at 2:09, the picture of the announcer, Eglė Bučelytė, blanked out. For another eight minutes television carried pictures from the square in front of the parliament, showing the crowd reciting the "Hail Mary" and then singing *Lietuva brangi* (Precious Lithuania), which had been the unofficial national anthem in the Soviet years. The demonstrators had put aside their spirit of celebration, and now they faced real danger. Then television ceased.

I rose from my bed, put on a warm-up suit, and went out into the hotel lobby to find someone, anyone, to talk to. The hotel administrator came to me and asked whether I had something for an upset stomach. (By this time, having already stayed several times in the Neringa Hotel, I had a reputation for having a magic medical kit – I usually handed out an aspirin or two.) I gave her a package of Tums. In the lobby, people speculated what would be next. I finally decided to walk down to the parliament building. I threw on a coat over my warm-up suit, and set off. As I passed the Soviet KGB headquarters, I noticed that all the windows were dark; the Soviet security forces had presumably established operational headquarters someplace else. (The KGB headquarters were next to the Music Conservatory; some Lithuanians referred to the KGB building as the Department of Solo Singing and Percussion Instruments.)

Independence Square was bright with electric lights. A band played. People knew there could be a military attack, and many had come dressed up in their best clothes, ready for death. An announcer occasionally tried to help separated groups to collect themselves together again. In the distance, we could hear pops that we presumed to be gunfire. In a piece written for the London *Guardian*, Siaurusevičius described the action at the television tower: "The troops started firing into the air, and the tanks rolled over lorries and cars in their way, crushing them… In two hours it was all over. The transmission tower was firmly in the hands of the Soviet troops." There was

no sign of military activity in the square, but the Lithuanian government kept issuing warnings to demonstrators not to stand too close to the building.

When I returned to the hotel, I stayed on in the lobby for several more hours. There we heard Radio Kaunas, which had already been functioning since about 2 a.m.: "Kalba Lietuvos radio!" (Lithuanian radio speaking!) Broadcasting items successively in six different languages (Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, German, French, and English), it gave the rising body count of dead at the television tower: 9 dead, 70 injured; 11 dead, 108 injured. One of the Germans with whom I had flown into Vilnius declared that the spoken German – "Es spricht Litauens Rundfunk" – sounded like a World War II underground broadcast. At 6 a.m., I still sat in the hotel lobby with an American-Lithuanian professor – we were drafting a statement that we would make if we got out of all this alive. We were not sure what was really happening. We also had no idea that there were so many foreign journalists in Vilnius at this time and that they had such modern means of communication – our statement died in my little notebook.

I got to bed about 7 a.m. At 9:30, heavy pounding at my door awakened me, and my first thought was "They have come for me." I did not fear violence; I thought that "they" might just force me to leave Lithuania. But the visitors turned out to be two of the Germans. The Germans had rented a car to take them to Minsk: Did I want to join them? I am still amazed that I immediately said no. As a historian, I felt it was almost a duty for me to stay in Vilnius to see how this matter would turn out. I asked them, however, to call my sister in Virginia to tell her that I was all right. And they did.

Now wide awake, I went to the hotel café for breakfast, where the journalist Algimantas Čekuolis joined me and gave me the latest news. The Prime Minister, Albertas Šimėnas, had disappeared – possibly he had been kidnapped – and Lithuanians were barricading Independence Square with trucks and construction equipment. Trucks with loudspeakers were roaming the city declaring that the Committee for National Salva-

tion was now in charge and that Vilnius now lay under martial law. Major General Vladimir Uskhopchik, chief of the Vilnius garrison, was now commandant of the city and Lithuanians were to observe a curfew from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. The voice announcing the Soviet takeover was that of the historian Juozas Jarmalavičius, who a year earlier had told me that he hoped Lithuania could avoid bloodshed.

Amazingly, no one seemed to take the Committee for National Salvation seriously. Its membership remained anonymous; Moscow eventually admitted that it was ridiculous for Soviet troops to be accepting orders from an anonymous committee that feared to reveal its members' names. Even Jarmalavičius eventually claimed to know nothing about the organization, and Gorbachev and Moscow loyalists obviously wanted everyone to forget about it.

Late on that chilly Sunday morning, I walked to Independence Square with a friend. We squeezed through a narrow passageway that blocked entrance to the Square from Gediminas Prospektas, and saw that the large space in front of the parliament and the Mažvydas National Library was filled with groups huddled around fires. No stage, no bands playing. Demonstrators had torn apart a local construction site and were burning the wood; the acrid smell of the smoke added to the tense atmosphere.

The day passed in enormous confusion. We now knew that the foreign journalists who had gathered in Vilnius had sent news of the military action to the world. We were not in an isolated "bears' den." The Lithuanian parliament, called into session during the night, met, named a new prime minister, and managed to broadcast through informal, makeshift radio arrangements. The broadcasts were confusing, and listeners could not put together any clear understanding of developments. News that Boris Yeltsin had flown to Tallinn and had issued a statement of support for the Baltic raised spirits considerably. Šimėnas, the former prime minister, reappeared, but the Lithuanian authorities refused to reinstall him and rejected all calls for explanation of his disappearance. There

were rumors that Soviet tanks might yet attack the parliament; the rumors suggested different times. I was myself at Independence Square at 4 p.m., one of the hours mentioned, and saw nothing that even hinted at such a possibility.

At the hotel, I fell into a conversation with a young couple who worked for the German embassy in Moscow. They understood nothing and were obviously frightened. The man questioned why all this action over a rise in prices? I did not try to explain, but I asked them to notify friends in Hamburg, who were expecting me on the following Wednesday, that I was all right and expected to arrive as scheduled. To be sure, I was not at all confident that I would be there, but such is life. I later learned that the embassy did call my friends.

The key issue of the moment, however, revolved around the work of the delegation from Moscow that had overnighted in Minsk and finally arrived in Vilnius at noon. Through the afternoon, it talked with Lithuanian and Soviet representatives, and then in the evening, out of the muddle of reports, came the news that a provisional settlement had been reached. The delegation proved to be sympathetic to the Lithuanians, and the pro-Muscovites retreated. The military would take its patrols off the street, and the Lithuanians would tell the demonstrators in Independence Square to move out. The military held on to the buildings it had seized, but the Committee for National Salvation melted away into the shadows from which it had come. On the other hand, a Lithuanian spokesperson told the demonstrators that they did not have to hurry away.

The tension eased, but it did not immediately dissolve. That evening, I was to go to dinner at the home of friends who lived near the television tower. When the hotel authorities learned of my intentions, they insisted that I not go. Members of the staff assembled, even calling the doorman, and said they would not allow me to leave the building – it was too dangerous. So instead, I sat in the hotel café and collected information. My friends, with whom I was to dine, came to the hotel with a bag full of hot *cepelinai* for me. As I ate, young friends who had been acting as translators for foreign journalists sat with me

and recounted what the journalists had learned during the day. A member of parliament stopped in and told me that the parliament building had been mined – "We could become ashes in a minute." (An American friend later claimed to have seen bottles of "Molotov cocktails" in the parliament even in the summer of 1991.) Particularly interesting was a young Russian who played an audiotape of the sounds at the television tower in the early morning – gunfire, yells, screams. He declared that, because of his dark complexion, the soldiers had thought him to be a Georgian, and he told us how Soviet troops had beaten and kicked him.

Monday the 14th saw falling action, but still some excitement. I called the airport to check on whether my scheduled plane to Berlin would be leaving on Wednesday as scheduled. I got the answer, "Of course it will. Why shouldn't it?" At times, the events of these days struck me as pure fantasy, even Kafkaesque.

There were now rumors that the Soviets were planning a helicopter attack on the parliament building. The gossip included stories that the defenders had somehow loosened the roof and that upon landing the helicopters would fall into the building. The worst-case rumors suggested that the defenders would blow themselves up.

Toward noon, walking on Gediminas Prospektas, I had a moment of enjoyable relief when, by chance, I met an old Communist Party functionary with whom I had, so to speak, crossed swords in a Milwaukee-Vilnius "radio bridge" some four years earlier. He confirmed my thought that I had confounded the Soviets in this discussion between "ordinary Americans and ordinary Lithuanians" when I had refused to allow my comments to be translated into Russian like every other American's comments. I had insisted on providing my own translation into Lithuanian. The Lithuanians in Vilnius had been under orders to use only Russian, but after my intervention they applauded and happily switched to Lithuanian.

These cheerful reminiscences, however, were interrupted when a man ran up to announce that Soviet troops had uncov-

ered an underground, illegal radio station just a block away. I hurried off to the scene. A crowd was gathered in front of a building, chanting anti-Soviet slogans, and at a window on the third floor, a defiant woman waved a Lithuanian flag. A Soviet soldier stood on a first floor window ledge holding an automatic rifle that he waved around in an attempt to intimidate the demonstrators. I joined with a pair of British journalists in pushing our way to the front of the crowd, but I stopped short of trying to get into the building. (I had no credentials as a journalist with me.) I stood a moment to get the flavor of the situation, the crowd chanting "Fascists, fascists." Suddenly I realized that the soldier now had that gun pointing directly at me. I thought to myself, "I would rather read about this than experience it," and I edged my way back out of the crowd.

At 8 p.m. on Monday evening, I walked to the Sports Hall, Vilnius's basketball palace, where the Lithuanians had set up an elaborate wake for Sunday morning's dead. I did not go in: There was a long line of people outside waiting to pay their respects. Exercising the passion I have for measuring things, I walked around the building and estimated the line to be well over a mile long. In the line I saw Alfonsas and Birutė Eidintas, who had been standing there since 5 p.m.; the next day, I learned that they had gotten into the building at midnight. (They had been able to leave the line for an hour at one point to go home to check on their children.) On Wednesday, after my departure, I heard that "hundreds of thousands" of people had participated in a procession taking the bodies to the cathedral for the last rites of the Church.

On Tuesday the 15th, I suddenly felt a change in my own feelings and attitudes. Up to that time, I had been a participant in the kaleidoscopic events; I was a part of them. I had even come to grips with the thought that, while I was not looking for trouble, I might not get out of this place alive. (I considered who might be upset by my demise – I chuckled at the thought that the students who had taken Incompletes in my last course would surely have problems.) Now as tension visibly, palpably, receded, I was overwhelmed by the feeling that I wanted to get

out of Lithuania, to return home. At the same time, I had strong feelings of guilt for this attitude: I would be abandoning my friends to an unknown fate as I fled to safety. I do not remember going through such drastic mood changes at any other time in my life.

Tuesday was the last day in my sojourn. In the morning, Eidintas and I traveled around Vilnius in a taxi, visiting the sites of action and tragedy over the weekend: the Press House, the television tower, etc. I then went back to the Sports Palace. As an American, an "outlander," I received immediate entry (*be eilės*), but inside the building, it took another half hour to reach the basketball court. Inside, people filed in twos past the orchestra gathering to play and then ten bodies, nine men and one girl, were placed in caskets on the basketball court. Each coffin was open: At the head of each was a picture of the deceased; in front of each lay flowers beside burning candles. Members of the families of each victim stood as honor guards. Young men and women in national costume served as guides. The sports identity of the building was minimized: The scoreboard was dark; there were no baskets to be seen. People sat in the stands for a mass that began at noon: I estimated the orchestra at about twenty members, the choir at about forty singers. The preacher likened the Soviet actions to "Satanism."

After that, I went to the parliament for a last visit to get a feeling for the atmosphere. First of all, I discovered that the authorities had changed the entrance to the building; I could not see how to get into it now. Fortunately, I ran into Lionginas Šepetys, the former ideological secretary of the Communist Party, with whom I had established an acquaintance the previous summer. He led me toward the entrance of the moment and then stopped; he advised me to go up alone. "They" might not admit me if they saw me talking with him. I got in with no problem; I saw that he entered behind me.

Inside, my first impression was formed by the smell of sweat. Armed volunteers controlled the first floor, and they had obviously been living there for these four to five days without benefit of adequate conveniences. In other parts of the

building, I was confused by the temporary, emergency housing of government offices. At one point, looking for a woman I knew who worked for the Committee on Foreign Relations, I walked into her office and disrupted a session of the cabinet of ministers. The prime minister, Gediminas Vagnorius, informed me that she had moved to another office. Various government officials, fearful of the vulnerability of their offices to Soviet intervention, had chosen to move their work to the parliament building.

One other moment of that brief visit stands out in my memory. Mounting a staircase, I ran into Landsbergis himself, coming the other way and surrounded by his bodyguard of several men. Here was the man at the core of this crisis. In the past criticized by more than a few, at this moment he embodied Lithuanian resistance. Besides getting out of the way, what does one do or say at such a moment, especially with the bodyguard eyeing me suspiciously? (Landsbergis and I had first met at Sąjūdis gatherings in 1988.) Antanas Terleckas, a rebel nationalist who had spent time in Soviet camps, had just told me of his joy that the government had finally expelled all "communists," and he had assured me that Landsbergis was "irreplaceable" as chief of state. I simply shook hands with Landsbergis and wished him well.

Finally, Wednesday morning, the 16th, arrived, and it turned out that our flight was not quite as certain as officials had declared on Monday. As we somewhat nervously waited for the plane to come from Berlin, three of us travelers formed our own little group. (The Germans with whom I had flown in had, of course, long since left the country.) My traveling companions now were a German travel agent who was trying to arrange tourist excursions to Kaliningrad and a Swedish journalist who was just ending his first stay in the Baltic States. After a bit of delay and uncertainty, everything fell into place, and we were able to fly out. I received an unexpected bonus when the journalist, saying he wanted to see Berlin and spoke no German, asked me to be his translator in Berlin during the couple of hours before my train was to leave for Hamburg. I

agreed – he hired an East German taxi driver, and we had a fabulous tour of East Berlin before he dropped me off at the Zoo train station.

Once I got to Hamburg, it was a new life. The Gulf War Part I started, and German protesters took to the streets. The contrast between the violence of demonstrators in Hamburg and the peacefulness of demonstrators in Vilnius made a deep impression on me. Throughout the week in Vilnius, Lithuanian leaders had urged their fellow Lithuanians to avoid violence or "provocation." The Soviet troops were destructive; the Lithuanian demonstrators destroyed nothing. Russians broke windows; Lithuanians did not. While in Hamburg, I gave an interview, by telephone, to a radio station in Chicago, and then I made a quick trip to Bonn to see my son, who was studying there. In Bonn, I went to a demonstration in support of Lithuania, and there I met the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, Algirdas Saudargas, whom the government had sent out of the country to represent Lithuania in the event that the Soviets occupied the parliament building. I also spent an hour in a coffee shop with a member of the German parliament, filling his head with my commentary on politics and personalities in Lithuania. At one point, he interrupted our conversation for a telephone call to the German Foreign Minister. Once back in Madison, I gave one or two lectures and even appeared on early morning TV. My wife claims that it is frequently difficult to integrate me back into Midwestern life after a lively stay in Lithuania – this time was no exception.

I had left Vilnius convinced that Gorbachev was politically bankrupt, despite the fact that he had already been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. He could not speak of liberalizing the Soviet system while he tried to crush Lithuania. The Soviet authorities had attempted a *coup d'état* that had ended as a fiasco. Gorbachev then tried to dissociate himself from the events in Vilnius, but he failed miserably. The organizers of the Committee for National Salvation felt that he betrayed them by not proclaiming presidential rule. This all may well have affected the misbegotten Moscow putsch of August 1991. At this point

in my writing of this memoir, however, I must remind myself that I am writing a memoir, not a political history. I wanted to record *my* activity, a personal story, through that incredible week in Vilnius twenty years ago. For more commentary on Gorbi – or Landsbergis – I urge the reader to look elsewhere.

One last rather humorous note on this period. A few days after my return to Madison, the receptionist in the Wisconsin History Department told me that a *New York Times* correspondent had just called to check on a report that I had died in Lithuania. She told him that she had just seen me that morning and that I was alive. "Not in tomorrow's first edition," came his response. To my knowledge the *Times* has not yet reported my demise.

Afterthought

When I met Saudargas in Bonn, he immediately asked whether I had any photos. When I said that I didn't, he rather scornfully asked why not. I did not explain to him, but in 1988, I had decided that I could not write notes and take pictures at the same time. Sensitized by years of criticism as the world's worst imaginable photographer, I decided then that my strength – whatever it might be – lay in words rather than pictures. I had already lost one camera in travel, and therefore it was an easy decision to carry a notebook rather than a camera.

The Deposition of Jadwiga Dobilas to the Military Delegation, 16 August 1834

WENDELL MAYO

The following was inspired by Saulius Sužiedėlis's translation of a document from the Diocesan Archive of Łomża, Poland.

Sirs, I knew Jósef Dobilas before I married Adam Adamczyk. I knew him long before my children with Adam were born and long before Adam died. I knew Jósef when we were children in Gordzie, schoolmates. Years passed before I saw Jósef again just before Pentecost of this year. I went into the forest to pick mushrooms. It was about dusk. In the distance, someone was burning brush, and blue smoke was drifting through the pines. It was quiet and hazy, but I was able to see Jósef leaning against a pine tree, holding a foot up with one hand and tightening the leggings of his birch sandal with the other. I was in a hurry – night was coming on – so I turned to go. I startled Jósef. He gasped, dropped his foot to the ground, and jumped behind the tree. I saw a bit of his face – one eye – peer at me next to the bark. He recognized me.

"Jadwiga," he called. "Where are you going?"

I came a bit closer to him and saw he wore only a light vest for such a chilly evening. He started to shiver.

"I'm sorry I frightened you," I said. "I thought you were in the Polish Army."

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He revealed a little more of himself, a hand, elbow, one ragged lapel of his shirt.

"I was," he replied and removed a small flask of *midus* from the pocket of his vest. "After the fall of Warsaw, I returned to my family in Gordzie, but my sister, fearing harassment from the Polish Military Delegation, kept my holding in the farm and sent me away."

The sun went down, and it was getting dark. I could scarcely make out his features. I told Jósef I had to go – but he went on with his story. He was only a dark shape, speaking, one leg up, one hand again adjusting his sandal so it made a rasping sound in the forest.

"You understand, right? I'd already fought in the insurrection against the Czar. And then to be drafted by the new Polish government installed by the Russians?" Finally, he let his leg drop. "Anyway, I went to the Russian Empire and wandered there for two years."

Jósef started to advance on me from the tree, but I took two small steps back and said, "What did you do in Russia?"

He stuck an elbow on the tree and leaned there, then went on.

"I wanted to do many things," he said and scratched his head, "but there were thieves and people of low moral character there. It is difficult. You know how things are. Besides– the Russians wanted to draft me."

"The Russians?"

By now, almost all of his features were obscured by the lack of light. I could see only the ghost image of Jósef, something that reminded me of what a mother in our village once said to her son who was about to be drafted by the Russians:

Dear child, foreign soil will cover your bones,
so I will mourn you now – while you are home...

"Yes, Russians!" he went on. "But I escaped and returned and have been living in these woods by any means possible, trying to avoid the Polish Military Delegation... Russians. Poles. Now it's all the same thing. War everywhere."

Sirs, I felt sorry for Jósef and told him to begin distilling

pine tar in the woods for income. In the meantime, I explained, I would secretly provide him with food. I know it was wrong, but what woman would not show pity for a man hunted by two empires? I believe he suffered greatly from many travails. Anyway, sirs, in a way, I did regret telling Jósef that I would help him survive in the forest. I was not sure how I could provide for him and my two children from my marriage with Adam Adamczyk, who then lived with my old mother.

The next day, I went into the village to sell the mushrooms I'd gathered. While on the road entering the village, I paused a moment to let the wagons pass. I suppose I just stopped the way people sometimes stop to rest a little. As one wagon passed, the pink snout of a pig poked out of the bed, barely breathing, destined for the knife. Above the sideboards, its round wild eye rolled about in bewilderment and terror. When another wagon passed, out popped the drooping heads of ducks, geese, and chickens, also heading for the knife. But it wasn't the two wagons passing that changed my regret about helping Jósef. It was the third wagon, overloaded, a girl sitting atop a swaying mountain of grain fresh from the fields. She wore a white kerchief on top of her head. She seemed so content, so happy, and she was smiling at me – me! Sirs, perhaps you know moments like this. One moment everything seems so hopeless, the next everything seems all right: You begin to believe that every scrap of food may be stretched impossibly far.

After this, I went to Jósef's farm to visit his sister, who provided a little rye bread (stretched with potatoes) and some *gira*. His sister didn't ask about Jósef's condition. She didn't say anything. She simply gathered the provisions and handed them to me. The rest of Jósef's food I got from begging.

Most days, I got food to Jósef just before dawn. I took it upon myself to be the first to rise in the household of my master, Rifleman Mnich. I slept on top of the stove, so it was simple for me to get up, remove my bedding, and light the wood splinter. I took the bucket and then went out for water, but extended my stay near the stream at the location where Jósef and I agreed to meet. I delivered Jósef's food. By the time

I returned to the Mnich homestead with the water, a cold light was seeping through cracks in the door and windows. Rifleman Mnich's niece was starting the bacon. I handed her the water for the potatoes.

"Sun's already up," she chided me. I had to hurry in the days that followed to keep Jósef safe.

Next time I visited Jósef in the forest, he was again leaning on a tree, this time a birch, chewing on a twig, his new woolen coat and leather leggings I'd gotten from his sister wrapped about him.

"Have you any tar for me to take into town?" I asked him.

He stared at me a long time then tossed the chewed twig aside. He kept looking at and beyond me, the whites of his eyes big and wet. I couldn't get the image of the pig's eyes going to slaughter out of my mind.

"What food have you brought?" he said.

I removed a hard sausage and some black bread from my pockets. He snatched them away, sat, and began to eat. "Marry me," he said, while chewing.

"Marry a deserter?" I replied, astonished. I kept looking at the sausage in his hand. Half of it I'd wanted to deliver to my mother and children.

"Your orphans need a father," he smiled.

"They don't need to be orphaned twice!"

"Don't worry," he went on, "you can get my share of the farm from my sister and use it to persuade Headman Krol to approach the Military Delegation with a waiver for me from the draft."

"Will it work?"

"No problem. Besides, your orphaned children..."

I'd thought about choosing a husband from among those few who were not conscripted, perhaps even one who may have mutilated himself, chopped off fingers or a hand to avoid military service. I supposed I would not find another physically able husband soon.

I went immediately to Borkowski, a servant at the Mnich

homestead, and asked him to go with my future husband to find a pastor in Sapieżyszki. For the pastor's services, I gave Jósef and Borkowski three złoty I had gotten from Jósef's sister.

Later that evening, both men returned and, as agreed, we all met by the stream. Both men were very drunk. Their clothes were soaked from falling into the stream.

"The pastor," Jósef said, his back on the ground, eyes closed, face up. "He would not see us. Such times we live in. Such people! We were so disappointed. We went to a tavern..."

"And the three złoty I gave you?"

Jósef then began to curse his sister – called her by a terrible name – followed by something about her being the only woman he'd ever known to inherit a man's fortune. Then he rolled over on his face and slept. I sent Borkowski away. Then I removed my future husband's clothes, made a fire, and dried them – being sure to cover him with my cloak while I waited for them to dry.

After that, I went to Sapieżyszki myself and found Father Mackiewicz, the curate there, who said he hadn't known anything about two men coming earlier to see him, only that there had been some loud drunken disturbance outside the church caused by two men. But he couldn't imagine it was related. When I told Father Mackiewicz about my orphaned children and Jósef living in the forest and our plans to wed, he graciously agreed to conduct the ceremony free of charge. Father Mackiewicz accompanied me into the forest. When we came upon Jósef, he was lying on one side of his face in the tall grass near the pine tree where I'd first met him. A bit of drool had formed at one corner of his mouth and ran down into the grass. Father knelt beside him and rousted him. Poor Jósef shivered like a newborn lamb when he saw Father.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" Jósef said, seeming to recognize Father, and leapt to his feet.

"It's alright, Jósef," Father whispered. Jadwiga has explained everything.

"Everything?" Jósef gasped.

"Yes – you want to be married, don't you?"

"Uh, er, yes," Joseph mumbled, sighing with relief like wind through trees.

I gave the names of Agata and Tadenz Jajko as witnesses, although they were not present. It was then that Father Mackiewicz wedded me to Jósef Dobilas.

That evening, I went secretly with Jósef to the granary of Rifleman Mnich, where we spent the night together and completed our marriage contract.

Not long after we were married, but before Jósef had distilled any tar in the woods at all, he was arrested while stealing food from Rifleman Mnich's household. Borkowski found me in the pasture bringing a midday snack to some of the workers. By the time I got to the main house, where they were detaining my husband, two soldiers were escorting him along the road into the forest.

I knew the soldiers would be taking him to Mariampol for his trial – and prison – or worse. Against my better judgment I went to see Rifleman Mnich, for I could have been discharged from service in his household for secretly marrying Jósef Dobilas. But when I told him, he was kind and did not discharge me. He was standing by the hearth, lighting his pipe. I heard him sucking hard on the pipe and watched the smoke float toward the ceiling in tiny clouds that flattened and vanished.

"Can my husband be executed?" I asked my master in a panic.

"He has evaded the draft – and committed other crimes," he said. Then he paused, removed his pipe from his mouth, and rested it in his hand at his hip. "It is likely he will only serve a short term in prison, then his military service." Then his voice changed from reassuring to stern. "But if your husband escapes from the authorities again and is recaptured, he will certainly be put to death."

I thanked Rifleman Mnich and quickly departed to follow the two soldiers and my husband on the road to Mariampol. I followed the three men all the way to Gryszkabuda, where they entered a tavern. When I entered the tavern myself, I noticed my husband sitting in the corner with the two soldiers.

In a moment they were all three looking at me, then they put their eyes down to their drinks – vodkas all – and began talking and laughing.

I approached them and said to Jósef, "I see you have at least twenty thaler there. Where did you get that kind of money?"

"From my dear sister – my share of the farm." He grunted, and one of the soldiers laughed. "And from other sources – with the help of *aitvaras!*"

"You already have your share?" I asked. But my husband did not answer, so I went on. "I am happy for your good fortune, husband," I said. "May I have a few złoty to support my children?"

His eyes rolled sideways in his head. One of the soldiers nudged him in a knowing way. Then with a disdainful face, my husband slid three złoty across the table in my direction.

"You're happy," he said, "at my misfortune. And now you want my last grosz."

"Of course not!" I said, so loudly that the soldier on my husband's right took a bit of vodka up his nose and sneezed.

"Husband, if you'll give me a little more, I can use the money to approach Headman Krol and the Military Delegation about your waiver from the draft."

That was when my husband ordered me to buy vodka for him and the two soldiers with the entire three złoty he'd just given me for the children.

"No!" I said, but the soldiers' stares were so cold and menacing, I thought the soldiers might somehow harm Jósef. I ordered their drinks and paid and stood there, watching.

They were all well into their cups when a young woman came up to my husband and in my presence spoke to him:

"Jósef!" she said, laughing, almost howling. "Don't you know me? I am your cousin."

"You might be my cousin," my husband laughed, "but our family is large around here." He patted the seat next to him. "Sit down," he said. "We'll have some fun."

Sirs, when I left the tavern in Gryszkabuda for home I felt sure that neither my orphaned children nor I would ever

see Jósef Dobilas again. Walking among the pines, where it is so quiet, as though one is in a church, one can let one's heart walk out and not worry whether it will return; after a while one doesn't care; there's too much war; one can only hope the wandering heart will not die too far from home.

Well, sirs, I don't know who that young woman was in the tavern or why she should know my husband, and I don't see that you've asked, so I'll go on to say that it was there, in these pinewoods, my heart walking away as I described, that I made up my mind to continue to support my children from the household of Rifleman Mnich – and from begging – until word came about my husband's fate – a prison term, no doubt, military service, no doubt. But I would wait. What else could I do? All this I accepted. A peace came over me that I cannot explain.

Several days passed, and then one day, while I was drawing water from the stream near the Mnich homestead, just after dusk, there he was – my husband, Jósef Dobilas – crouching on a rock nearby, like a toad, his knees up, and smiling through his beard.

"How did you get free of the soldiers?" I asked him.

He did not answer and instead hopped down from his rock. "Who was that woman in the tavern?" He remained silent, knelt, and began tugging at the laces of his new boots. "And where did you get those boots?"

"Bring me some food," he commanded.

Well, sirs, this was the very moment the Military Delegation – that is, you – arrived at the homestead of Rifleman Mnich. Jósef and I heard your horses and so moved into the tall thistles near the stream and listened, while you made inquiries about my husband's whereabouts.

The hour was late, and eventually the crickets began to chirp so loudly that my husband complained he could not hear what you were saying or where you might be moving – to search for him. And so he ran downstream and into the forest, commanding again, with his last breath, "Don't forget my food. Bring it to the usual place!"

Sirs, I continued to listen to your inquiries, then heard one of you say my husband was sentenced to death, then say, "Poor devil." I couldn't have been mistaken, for those words, "poor devil," must have already been in my head waiting for you to set the same words adrift on the night air.

Sirs, these are terrible times. When I go to market, I no longer see meat for my children. Yet I see the wild eyes of beasts condemned to slaughter, meant to feed others. I hear people say all around, "Nowadays, sacrifices must be made." I hear it in town, "war," whispered after meals, "more death." I see it on the faces of children who run in the streets. "Sacrifices" – I see it in the faces of women without men, men like Jósef without countries, without souls. Sirs, I know that my husband has been condemned to die, though I must admit, like you, I hardly know him – or that woman at the tavern. That is why I will risk your thinking I am not a loyal wife, because I know, as you know, that in these times sacrifices must be made. That is why I will take you to his hiding place, where I first startled Jósef Dobilas while I was picking mushrooms this past Pentecost, in hopes that, after hearing my deposition, that you, God help me, may spare his life – or, knowing this to be impossible, and considering my husband's character, and considering my needs and the needs of my orphaned children for a good, God-fearing husband and provider, that you, that the new government, God help me, will quickly, very quickly, and without further delay, once and for all and forever, release Jósef Dobilas, poor devil, from all his earthly travails...

Read, accepted, and signed by Jadwiga Dobilas, xxx, 16 August 1834.

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THE LITHUANIAN PLAGUE OF 1710 AND THE KARAITES.

A Poem of Lament in the Karaim Language from Tadeusz Kowalski's Archival Collection.[1]

MIKHAIL KIZILOV

In spite of the fact that many scholars have devoted their attention to the Lithuanian Karaites (Karaims),[2] a comprehensive history of the Karaite community of the country is yet to be written. To begin with, although the official 600th anniversary of the arrival of the Tatars and Karaites in Lithuania was celebrated

1 I am grateful to Professor Daniel Lasker (Be'er Sheva) for his comments on the early draft of this paper; a word of thanks also goes to Dr. Barry Dov Walfish (Toronto).

2 E.g., classical studies, such as Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History*, 551-1408; Bałaban, "Karaici w Polsce," 1-92; and Kowalski, *Karaimische Texte*. The recent book by Stefan Gąsiorowski (*Karaimi w Koronie i na Litwie*) turned out to be a disappointment. Numerous factual and textual errors make his study less valuable than it could be. Many publications by modern Karaite authors, e.g., Kobeckaitė, *Lietuvos karaimai*, are often not based on historical sources. For a complete bibliography on Lithuanian Karaism, see the section entitled "Lithuania" in Walfish, Barry and Mikhail Kizilov, eds. *Bibliographia Karaitica: An Annotated Bibligraphy of Karaites and Karaism.*

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in 1997, scholars are far from unanimity regarding the exact date of the arrival of the Karaites in this part of Eastern Europe.[3] Most students of the problem usually connect the arrival of the Karaites with the international policy of Grand Duke Vytautas (Witold; ruled 1392-1430). While the main evidence for the Karaites' arrival in Trakai (Troki[4]), the *ketubbah*, or marriage contract, from 1400, was undoubtedly falsified,[5] it is still highly probable that the first Karaite settlers indeed appeared in Trakai during the time of Vytautas or a bit later. It is important to stress that, during the reign of Vytautas, Trakai gained importance as a significant commercial center, trading with the Teutonic Order and northern European ports, primarily Danzig and Königsberg. It is also known that in 1423 Vytautas granted his Jewish subjects the right of free trade with the Teutonic Order, since the Grand Duke was in need of skillful artisans and merchants, such as the Karaites.[6] The earliest Karaite settlers

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3 For a discussion, see Kizilov, "The Arrival of the Karaites," Akhiezer and Shapira, "Qara'im be-Liṭa," 19-60.

4 Karaite sources normally used a Polish transliteration of Lithuanian toponyms.

5 Unfortunately, most scholars (including the author of these lines) relied on Jacob Mann's conclusion that the earliest reference to the existence of the Karaite community in Trakai is the Karaite *ketubbah* (marriage contract) of 1400 (Mann, *Texts*, 558). My examination of the *ketubbah* in question (National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, F. 946, Evr. I, Doc. II, no.1 (3)), however, revealed that the early date of this document and the reference to Vytautas had been inserted by a later hand. This *ketubbah* dates to a much later period, most likely to the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, which is still quite early for a document of this type. Thus, we are still at a loss with regard to the exact time of the arrival of the Karaites in Lithuania and can only assume that it happened during the reign of Vytautas. The document about the arrival in Trakai in 1400 of Moses Sgan, which contained a genealogical tree of the Karaite physician Ezra ben Nisan ha-Rofe, also seems to be a nineteenth-century fabrication (see Mann, *Texts*, 1178, nr 120; cf. Kizilov, "Ezra ben Nisan ha-Rofe").

6 Fanciful stories about the Karaites serving as guards of Grand Duke Vytautas are not corroborated by a single medieval document and should be regarded as the invention of late "romantic" Karaite scholarship.

were apparently Turkic-speaking Karaite artisans and traders from the Golden Horde and, specifically, from the Crimea. The exact route and circumstances of their wandering through Europe to Lithuania, however, is still the subject of debate.[7]

The earliest solid evidence of the Karaite presence in Lithuania is a copy of a letter from the Trakai Karaite community to Constantinople from 1483 or 1484.[8] From this letter, however, we may infer that the Karaite community had already lived in Trakai for a comparatively long period of time. There are other documents that may be interpreted as evidence of the arrival of the Karaites in Lithuania not later than the first half of the fifteenth century. In 1414, Lithuania was visited by the French traveller Ghillebert de Lannoy. When describing the multiethnic population of Trakai, de Lannoy mentions among other nations the *grant quantite de juifz*. It is very likely that some of these numerous Jews seen by the traveller may have been the first Karaite settlers of the town, who had already arrived there during the time of Vytautas.[9] Two merchants, Sadko Danilowicz (i.e., Zadok ben Daniel) and his brother Shamak (a Turkic name) of Trakai, are mentioned as important lessees of the Grand Duke between 1463-1494. The names of these two merchants testify that they were, most likely, Karaites.[10]

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7 They may have come to Lithuania directly from the North Caucasus or Middle Asia; a part of them may have arrived from Mamluk Egypt and Byzantium. The idea about the resettlement of the Karaites from the Golden Horde was formulated for the first time in Akhiezer, Shapira, "Qaraʾim," 55; Shapira, "The Turkic Languages," 669.

8 National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, F. 946, Evr. I Doc. II, no. 37-39.

9 Lannoy, *Oeuvres de Ghillebert de Lannoy*, 41. Bałaban considered this remark of de Lannoy to be the first reference to the Karaite presence in Lithuania (Bałaban, "Karaici," 55). Szyszman's argument that, when writing about the Tatars, de Lannoy meant in fact the Turkic-speaking Karaites is very weak: de Lannoy described the Tatars as Saracens, i.e., Muslims, whereas the Karaites undoubtedly adhered to Judaism (Szyszman, "Osadnictwo karaimskie i tatarskie," 32, and "Osadnictwo karaimskie w Trokach," 55).

10 Litman, *The Economic Role of Jews*, 168, 157.

The first Karaite immigrants settled apparently only in Trakai, which was at that time the capital of Lithuania. From the fifteenth through the seventeenth century, Karaite communities were established in a number of Polish and Lithuanian towns – and the Karaite tradition that speaks of thirty-two or forty-two Karaite communities in the country is not far from the truth.[11] The main Karaite congregations were in such important Lithuanian centers as Trakai (Troki), Vilnius (Wilno), Panevėžys (Poniewież), Pasvalys (Poswol), and Naujamiestis (Nowe Miasto). Smaller communities lived in towns and villages in the north of the country. Because many scholars still make mistakes spelling the names of these smaller Karaite communities, it would be worthwhile to provide the full list of them in their Lithuanian and Polish forms: Ukmergė (Wiłkomierz), Upytė (Upita), Kėdainiai (Kiedajny), Krekenava (Krakinów), Pumpėnai (Pompiany), Šėta (Szaty), Pušalotas (Puszołaty), Saločiai (Sałaty), Kaunas (Kowno), Biržai (Birże), and Šventežeris (Świętojeziory).

As a consequence of the Russo-Swedish war, which was fought in Lithuanian territory, as well as frequent famines, conflagrations and epidemics, by the end of the eighteenth century, the Karaite community of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth dwindled to 2,000 to 3,000 souls.[12] The tendency toward demographic decline continued in the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries. Today, the Karaites still live in several Lithuanian cities. According to the census of 2001, there were 273 Karaites in Lithuania (146 in Vilnius, 68 in Trakai, and 25 in Panevėžys, with the remainder scattered among other towns).[13]

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[11] Twentieth-century Karaite scholarship usually refers to the presence of the Karaite communities in 32 or 42 settlements of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Szyszman, "Osadnictwo karaimskie i tatarskie," 29, ft.1). This data, undoubtedly, goes back to Firkowicz's *Avne Zikkaron* (252), which counts 32 Karaite settlements in Poland-Lithuania.

[12] Czacki's information that the Karaite population of Poland and Lithuania in 1790 was 4,296 souls seems to be an exaggeration (Czacki, *Rozprawa o Żydach i Karaitach*, 145).

[13] Adamczuk, et. al., *Karaimi w Polsce*, 34. Other less significant com-

The Karaites have two functioning houses of prayer, one in Vilnius and the other in Trakai.

One of the most interesting ethnographic features of the Karaites, which always differentiated them from their neighbors, was their language of everyday use: the Turkic Karaim language. While retaining Hebrew as their *leshon ha-qodesh* (Heb. "sacred language"), the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite communities adopted the Turkic Karaimo-Kypchak language in the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries as their *Umgangssprache.* This feature differentiated the Karaites from their ethnic neighbours: the Yiddish-speaking Ashkenazic Jews, the West Slavic Poles and the East Slavic Ruthenians (Ukrainians), and even from their Tatar-, Greek-, and Arabic-speaking Karaite brethren of the Crimea, the Ottoman Empire, and the Near East. The Turkic language of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaites is known in the academic literature as "Karaim/Qaraim/Qaray" or "Karaimo-Kypchak/Qıpçaq of Lithuania and Galicia-Volhynia" (sometimes also called "Northern" or "Western Karaim"). Today, Karaim is considered one of the most archaic spoken Turkic languages in the world, and is, perhaps, the most northern Turkic language in Europe. The exact reasons and circumstances that caused early Karaite believers to adopt this language as their *Umgangssprache* somewhere in the vast steppe areas of *Desht-i Kypchak* (Cuman Steppe) has been the subject of academic debate since the end of the nineteenth century.[14]

Only a few examples of Karaite poetry in the Turkic languages have been published and translated into European languages.[15] This article presents a highly interesting poem in the

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munities, such as Upytė, Krekenava, Ukmergė and Kaunas (Upita, Krakinów, Wiłkomierz and Kowno), ceased to exist a long time before.

[14] For a survey, see Shapira, "Miscellanea Judaeo-Turkica," and "The Turkic Languages."

[15] Kowalski, "Pieśni obrzędowe w narzeczu Karaimów z Trok"; Kizilov, "Two Piyyutim and a Rhetorical Essay;" Shapira, "Miscellanea Judaeo-Turkica," "A Karaim Poem in Crimean-Tatar" and " 'Pesn' o Mangupe' 1793 goda"; Munkácsi, "Karäisch-tatarische Hymnen aus Polen"; and Jankowski, "Reading Loose Sheets of Paper." More

Karaim language discovered by me in Kraków in the archival collection of the famous Polish Orientalist, Tadeusz Kowalski (1889-1948).[16] Kowalski most likely received a version of the elegy written in Hebrew characters in around 1927 from a leading interwar Halicz Karaite intellectual, Zarach Zarachowicz (1890–1952).[17] The scholar, apparently, had problems reading the Karaim text in Hebrew characters. As a consequence, he subsequently asked Nowach Szulimowicz, another Halicz Karaite intellectual, to read it for him. On the basis of Szulimowicz's reading, Kowalski transliterated the poem into Latin characters. There is no doubt that Kowalski himself had readied this elegy for publication, but for some reason, did not translate it[18] and never submitted it to the press. In this article, I rely largely on Kowalski's Latin transliteration, which I had to modify slightly because some of the characters used by Kowalski are absent from the computer keyboard. Furthermore, I corrected some of Kowalski's typos by comparing his version with the variant in Hebrew characters provided by Zarachowicz.

The elegy represents a lamentation (Karaim *kyna*, a loanword from Hebrew) on the devastation of the Lithuanian Karaite community by the "mighty disease," i.e., the plague. The epidemic of 1710, known also as the Great Plague, began to spread through Poland about 1704 and by 1708 had reached Silesia, Lithuania, Prussia, and a great part of Germany and

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than 70 Karaim poems by various authors were translated into Lithuanian by Karina Firkavičiūtė (*Čypčychlej učma trochka / Į Trakus paukščiu plasnosiu)*; this book is based largely on the texts published in *Karay Yirlary*, ed., Mykolas Firkovičius.

16 Archiwum Nauki PAN i PAU, Kraków. Spuścizna K III-4. Tadeusz Kowalski. No. 122:1. Fols. 52-54a, 55-58; ibid., No. 122:2, Fols. 239-242 (*hereafter*: AN PAN).

17 I have established this on the basis of the comparison of Kowalski's manuscript with Zarachowicz's letters in other archival collections (e.g., Manuscript Division of the Lietuvos Mokslų Akademijos Biblioteka, Vilnius F.143, No. 723, Fol.1 (v)). The letter of Z. Zarachowicz to S. Szapszał of 8.07.1948). For more information on Zarachowicz, see Kizilov, *The Karaites of Galicia*, 241-244, 247-249.

18 His personal archive contains an unfinished Polish translation of the elegy (AN PAN 122:2, fols.1-2, 37-38).

Scandinavia. In Lithuania, the epidemic reached its climax in 1710-1711, with smaller outbreaks there a bit later. Not only the Karaites, but all the other ethnic groups inhabiting the country suffered from the disease. It is estimated that during the plague Lithuania lost about a third of its population. This deplorable event is reflected not only in Karaim poetry, but also in Lithuanian folklore.[19] According to Karaite sources, the plague was a mighty blow against the Lithuanian Karaite community, which never managed to restore its importance after that. Mordecai Sułtański (1838), for example, informs us that the pestilence lasted for five months and killed "numberless and countless" people.[20] According to Solomon ben Aaron of Trakai (Troki) the plague lasted from Tammuz 5470 (June/July 1710) until Tevet 5471 (December 1710/January 1711) with the deadliest days in the month of Av 5470 (July-August 1710).[21] For the Karaite author, this circumstance had a special significance, since in both the Karaite and Rabbanite traditions, the month of Av was largely a month of assiduous fasting and commemoration of the destruction of the Temple, perhaps, the saddest day in Jewish history.[22] Karaite documents also inform us that, as a consequence of the decimation of Trakai by the plague, the newly elected head of the community and other surviving members of the *qehilah* were forced to move to nearby Vilnius, where they stayed from 1710 to 1719.[23] The plague became a serious and deplorable event in the history of the Lithuanian Karaites that was still recalled many generations later. After the plague was over, the Trakai Karaites developed a special liturgical service dedicated to the memory of its victims. In addition to the liturgical part, the Karaites visited the local cemetery and touched the graves of their deceased relatives with a handker-

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19 Krivickas, "Relations Between the Living and the Dead."

20 Sułtański, *Zekher Tsaddikim o qitsur agadah*, 116.

21 Shishman, *Seder ha-tefillot ke-minhag ha-Qara'im*, 259-260.

22 The difference is that the Rabbanites observe the 9th of Av as the day of the destruction of the Temple, while the Karaites observe the 7th and 10th of Av.

23 Mann, *Texts*, 570-571, 580, 911-918, 1262-1267.

chief. The handkerchief was originally supposed to serve as a measure against infection. It later remained as a symbolic part of the ceremony.[24]

The author of the first elegy was not identified by either Kowalski or his Karaite colleagues. While trying to identify its author, I recalled the figure of Solomon ben Aaron of Trakai (1670?-1745), Karaite poet, theologian, and spiritual leader of the community.[25] It is known that Solomon ben Aaron was a survivor of the plague in Trakai, but it was a personal tragedy for him as well because his own family suffered considerably from the epidemic.[26] In the second decade of the eighteenth century, he described the devastation of the local community in a letter to the Karaite communities of Constantinople and Damascus.[27] My hypothesis that Solomon ben Aaron had composed the *kyna* in question was corroborated when, armed with a reference from Jacob Mann's study, I read a Hebrew elegy by Solomon ben Aaron. This elegy also described the devastation of the Trakai community by plague, with a short introduction in prose.[28] Furthermore, after a careful comparison of Hebrew and Karaim versions of the elegy, I concluded that the Karaim variant is in fact a translation of the Hebrew original. There is no doubt that the Hebrew version was composed first and not *vice versa*. The Hebrew version presents an acrostic that starts with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and ends with the name of its author, Solomon ben Aaron. Since the Karaim version does not possess this structure, it was composed after the Hebrew original. The Karaim version is a skillful literal translation of the Hebrew original with little variation. For

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[24] For more details, see below. A similar rite of kissing the tomb through a handkerchief is still practised by the Polish Karaites in Warsaw (I received an explanation of this ceremony from members of the community in Warsaw, in 1999; cf. El-Kodsi, *The Karaite Communities*, 28-29).

[25] More about him in Kizilov, "Jüdische Protestanten?" 250-251.

[26] Mann, *Texts*, 570.

[27] Mann, *Texts*, 570, 580, 1262-1267; cf. Shapira, "Some New Data on the Karaites," 11-23.

[28] Shishman, *Seder ha-tefillot ke-minhag ha-Qara'im*, 259-261.

example, the Karaim version has a reference to the "Lithuanian people" (Kar. *el Litvanyn*, here in the sense "the Karaite community of Lithuania"), whereas the Hebrew version does not mention this. In general, however, the versions are quite similar in terms of their expression and content. One may assume that the Karaim version was composed by Solomon ben Aaron himself, since he is the author of several other important poems in the Karaim language.[29] Kowalski's Latin transliteration of the elegy, somewhat surprisingly, reflects the Galician-Volhynian phonological features of the Karaim language, and not its Lithuanian variety.[30] This, however, may be explained by the fact that the poem was provided and dictated to Kowalski by the Galician Karaites.

In the prose introduction to the Hebrew version of his elegy, Solomon ben Aaron mentions that this *qinah* should be sung by the Karaites in all communities after reading of *parashah* and *haftarah*, starting on the 9th of Tammuz and ending on the 7th of Av. Furthermore, it should be sung on the 7th of Av after the *qinot* dedicated to the destruction of the Temple. The melody followed the pattern of a song from a Sephardic *siddur*.[31] One lacks information about the liturgical use of the poem in the Crimea, Volhynia and Galicia (although the presence of this translation in Halicz can be evidence of this), but in Lithuania, the poem was still in use at least until the 1920s. In that decade, the young Ananjasz Zajączkowski (1903-1970), the future famous Karaite Orientalist in Poland, described in his first publication, the ceremony of commemoration of the victims of plague. On the 9th of Tammuz, after a special liturgy in the synagogue-kenesa, the whole Karaite community of Trakai

[29] Especially famous is his poem "Hej, hej kyzhyna..." published in *Myśl Karaimska* 2:3-4(1930):21; *Karaj Awazy* 3(5)(1932): 25-26; Firkovičius, *Karay Yirlary*, 188. For his poem "Da ty pienkna [sic] damulenka" (You are truly a pretty maid; Polish in Hebrew characters), see Kowalski, "Z pożółkłych kart."

[30] On Northern (Trakai) Karaim, see (with caution) Kocaoğlu and Firkovičius, *Karay*; Firkovičius, *Mień karajče ürianiam*.

[31] Shishman, *Seder ha-tefillot ke-minhag ha-Qara'im*, 260.

went to the local Karaite cemetery, where a special *kyna*, i.e., apparently Solomon ben Aaron's elegy, was sung.[32]

Let us now analyze the text of the Karaim version. The elegy states that all members of the community suffered from the plague irrespective of their age and social status. It mentions the neglected state of "the street," i.e., undoubtedly, Karaite Street (Kar. *Karaj oramy*) in Trakai and the death of the "head of the community, the law-giver" (Kar. *dzymatnyn ayasy, oł Tora jes'is'i*). The "law-giver" mentioned here was apparently a head of the community, known in Hebrew as *av-beit-din* or *shofet* and as *wójt* in Polish. This could have been Abraham Moskiewicz of Pasvalys (Poswol), who according to some data, was the *shofet* of the Trakai community until 1709-1710.[33] According to the Karaite documents analyzed by Jacob Mann, the office of the Trakai *shofet* remained vacant until 1713.[34]

The elegy next describes the physical symptoms of the disease ("signs upon the bodies, exceptional torments"), the expansion of the cemeteries and the spread of the plague into fortified settlements (even, perhaps, to Trakai castle and other Lithuanian fortresses where the Karaites lived). These data are partly corroborated by epigraphic evidence. It seems that there was a special section in the Karaite cemetery of Trakai, located next to the side entrance to the old part of the burial ground, where victims of the pestilence were buried. Only two tombs from the period of the plague have survived there.[35] Especially interesting is a tombstone inscription on one of them, which mentions that the five persons (!) buried there were victims of the plague (Heb. *magefah*).[36] Finally, the lamentation ends with

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[32] Ananjasz Zajączkowski, "Promień miłosci," 20, ft. 3.

[33] See Jerzy Wierzyński, "Dokument z r. 1706."

[34] Mann, *Texts*, 570-571, 580, 911-918, 1262-1267

[35] One should keep in mind that many of the tombs from the cemetery have not survived. Furthermore, it is known that only comparatively rich people could afford stone tombs, while less well-to-do people were often buried without tombstones or with wooden *matsevot*.

[36] Yeshayah ben Isaac, his sons Isaac and Joseph, and daughters Sulamith and Dina died in 1710, 1713, and 1716. Their collective

the expectation of the coming of the messiah and restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem.

There are a number of Hebrew and some Slavic loanwords in the elegy, which is normal for the Karaim literature of the early modern period.[37] Some of these loanwords are absent from the only standard dictionary of the Karaim language published to date.[38] Most of the Hebrew loanwords had a religious character: *k'yna* (elegy), *χaχamłar* (sages), *naviłer* (prophets), *micva* (commandment, duty), *Israełłer* (Israelites), *łeviłer* (Levites), *koγenlik* (priesthood), *Tora* (Torah), *mas'ijaχymiz* (our messiah), *małaχ* (angel), and *ganeden* (Garden of Eden). Two Hebrew loanwords were topographic names: *Łevanon* (Mt. Lebanon) and *S'irjon* (Sirion, the name of Mt. Hermon). There are only two Slavic loanwords in the elegy. One of them, *Litva*, the standard Karaite term to designate their northern homeland, Lithuania, is especially interesting for our topic.[39] The other, *karanja* (punishment, retribution) had a more abstract meaning.

The publication of the elegy is an important contribution to our knowledge of early modern Karaite history and literature in the Karaim language. Furthermore, it also provides us additional information about the perception of the plague of 1710, a great tragedy for Lithuania, through the eyes of one of its ethnic minorities.

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tombstone was erected apparently after 1718, when the community returned to Trakai from Vilnius (Akhiezer and Dvorkin, "Ktovot ha-matsevot mi-batei ha-'almin be-Lita," 245).

[37] The number of Slavic loanwords in Karaim literature grew considerably in the nineteenth century. Between the two world wars, the Karaim language was somewhat artificially Turkicized and purified of Hebrew and Slavic loanwords within the framework of de-Judaization reforms carried out by the leaders of the Polish-Lithuanian Karaite community at that time. For more information, see Kizilov, "The Press and the Ethnic Identity," 268-277.

[38] See Baskakov, et.al., *Karaimsko-russko-pol'skii slovar.'*

[39] Standard Hebrew for Lithuania is *Lita*.

Elegy on the destruction of the Lithuanian Karaite community by the plague of 1710.

Ojangyn jireg'im k'yna oχumakka,
Kotarma acuvun kaχyryn Tenr'in'in!
Ucrady ułusta jadawłu *karanja*,
Tig'endi aŋŋyndan kic'li χastałyknyn.
Ułłułar, kic'iłer, atałar, ułanłar
Astry k'yjnałdyłar ałnyndan tarłyknyn.
Bir k'yska zamanda kurdu karsymyzda
Tesce k'epk'enete okłaryn ełetnin.
Syzłatma eks'itme abajły elimni
Ystyrdy k'y'jasa avyna kusłarnyn.
A kajda χaχamłar, tig'eł ak'yłłyłar,
Tiz iwretiwc'iłer jołuna Toranyn,
Ereŋłer, katyŋłar, jig'itłer da kartłar,
Kułłuk etiwc'iłer, kułłuγun Tenrinin,
Sukłancy ułanłar, abajły tuwmusłar,
Ceber k'yłykłyłar uksasy sappirnin,
Aruw jirekliłer, micva k'yłuwcułar,
Tiz inc'k'ełewc'iłer syrłaryn Toranyn
Kołłary bajłandy k'yłmaktan micvany.
Endiłer zeretk'e, ic'ine topraknyn,
Tig'eł γ'ermetliłer, sukłancy dzewγerłer.
S'iplik'k'e tasłandy basynda oramnyn.
Łevanon da S'irjon syjyt etiniz bek.
Bu χastałyγyna tavusułmaγymnyn
Dzymatnyn aγasy, oł Tora jes'is'i
Xorłandy jaryusu była oł kaχyrnyn.
Juvasłar, tig'ełłer birg'e cajpałdyłar.
Murdar kijikłerden g'ewdes'i tizłernin
Acuvu Tenrinin da ułłu kaχyry
Ot kibik kabundu elinde *Litvanyn*.
Boj k'yzłar ceberłer, naγys kijitliłer
S'iplikni kuctułar kic'inden syzławnyn.
Jas es'ikłerinde, syjyt kabakłarda.

Teredzede bełgis'i ułłu verenliknin.
G'ewdełer ikłendi ułłu kuppałarda
Saγarda sałada ornunda zeretnin.
Zeretłer arttyłar bar orunłarynda
Iwłerde, tizłerde ceginde bekliknin.
Bełgiłer gufłarda, tamasa awruwłar.
Bełgis'i awruwnun kaχyrnyn tarłyktan.
Az awłak kałγanłar tirlikk'e jazyłγan
Saγync bitikłerde kłeγ'ibe Tenrinin
Bełgis'i tirliknin manłajda kojułγan
Ki bołγaj kotarma maχtawnun Tenrinin.
Xajifs'in bijimiz kajγyły bu ełni,
K'etirgin dewłetin tez Israełłernin,
Cajpawcu małaχny toχtat cajpamaktan,
Endirgin ułuska cykłaryn ałγysnyn.
Bu acuw vaχtynda ełg'enłer bołsunłar
Asaisłykłarda, k'erkinde tynchyknyn,
Syjły ortakłykta, naviłerbe birg'e,
Ic s'iverłeribe korkunchu Tenrinin.
Bałkuwłu ornunda, satyr ganedende
Jarysyn izłeri jaryγyn k'ekłernin.
Emirlik atamyz, uvuł jasłyłarny,
Ystyryγyn kałdyγyn tozułγanłarynnyn
Γ'ermetin askartkyn, kondaryγyn iwinni,
K'ergizgin izłerin mas'ijaχymiznin,
Tadzyn koγenliknin da syjły bijliknin.
Kajtaryγyn bijens'in dzany jasłyłarnyn,
Uvunchu sezłerin cyγaryγyn jarykka.
Tełeme basyna ec dusmanłarynyn
Turγuzγun topraktan eliłerimizni
Bas urma ałnynda baγatyr Tenrinin.

Wake up, my heart, to read the elegy
And announce the fury of God's wrath!
The people were punished with painful retribution
Which finished with a mighty disease.
Great ones, little ones, fathers and sons
Suffered greatly from the disaster.
In a short time, He [God] prepared
Fast and sudden arrows of plague against us.
To torment and diminish our venerable people
He gathered [us] as birds in a net.
Where the wise ones, righteous sages,
Virtuous teachers of the ways of the Law,
Men, women, young and old,
Servants in God's service,
Beautiful children, honorable relatives
Of mild character, similar to sapphires,
Of pure heart, keepers of the commandments
Righteous readers of the secrets of the Law,
Whose hands [He] bound with fulfilment of the commandments.
They are put into the cemetery, into the earth,
Righteous venerable ones, beautiful precious stones.
The beginning of the street was left in dust.
Mounts Lebanon and Sirion lament greatly.
This disease is our destruction.
The head of the community, the Law-giver,
Suffered from the sentence of this [i.e., God's] wrath.
Modest and righteous ones were together destroyed.
The bodies of virtuous ones [devoured] by unclean animals.
God's fury and his mighty wrath broke out
As a fire among the Lithuanian people.
Unmarried beautiful maids in embroidered dresses
Embraced dust because of the mighty disease.
Tears are at the door, grief is at the gates.

A sign of great devastation is at the window.
The bodies bore the burden of large worms.
Instead of town or village, there was a cemetery.
The cemeteries became larger everywhere,
In houses, in fields, within the castle bounds.
Signs upon the bodies, exceptional torments.
Signs of suffering the pain of [God's] wrath.
Those few who remained, with God's will
Are registered for life in [God's] memorial books.
The sign of life that remains on the brow
Shall reveal praise to God.
Our Lord, have mercy on this miserable people,
Raise swiftly the might of the Israelites
So that the angel of extermination stops extermination.
Send to the people the dew of your blessing
So that in this time of wrath the dead ones
Shall be in heavenly bliss, in the grace of peace,
In honorable brotherhood, together with the Prophets,
With three beloved ones of wrathful God.
The rays of half the light of heaven
Are in a radiant place, in the merry garden of Eden.
Our eternal father who comforts the tear-stained ones,
Gather the rest of your dispersed ones,
Make known your respect, erect the House[40],
Show the traces of the messiah,
The crown of priesthood and an honorable kingdom.
Restore the joy of [these] tear-stained souls.
Reveal your words of consolation
To take revenge on the heads of your enemies.
Raise from the dust our people
To bow their heads before almighty God.

[40] I.e. the Temple in Jerusalem.

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ART AS A WITNESS

ELONA LUBYTĖ

Sculptor Mindaugas Navakas

Navakas's worldview and motivation are closely related to the popular political activism associated with "1968." His civic position is one of a critical social activist who rejects any kind of conformity. He was always publicly outspoken, whether playing in Kęstutis Antanėlis's rock band in Soviet times or voluntarily participating in national security activities during the first years of independence. Speaking against the romanticized relationship between the artist and society, he denounced the unwillingness of the Lithuanian Artists Association to adopt liberal-democratic principles (He quit the association in 1993). He criticized the classical educational approach that Vilnius Art Academy takes with its students.

Navakas's oeuvre is also marked by a strong-willed consistency. Reflecting the world in aesthetic categories, the sculptor seeks to embody intuitive senses in three-dimensions, to materialize them. This task makes the artist a ruminative technologist, constantly expanding the limits of knowledge, creative decisions, and cultural associations.

Navakas as a sculptor, as an architect of form and space, has always been interested in the postmodern dialogue of cultural meanings and intensely fluid forms that are created between site (public, institutional or alternative) and the associated piece of art (sculpture, object, installation or projection) during the production process. In this dialogue, there lurks a fusion between metaphysical threat, existential anxiety and frivolity, and irony. With each work, while overcoming the creative

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and productive challenges, the artist pursues "little pleasures for himself" (for example, *Vilnius Note Book 1* [1981–1985] the ironically postmodern project that proposed Situationist Style habitation, through sculpture, of Soviet-era public spaces).

A closer look at Navakas's recent work attests to his tireless and consistent vitality as a technologist and researcher. He is loyal to hand-sculpted local granite boulders that he first encountered in 1977, when attending a granite sculpture symposium in Klaipėda. Moreover, Navakas is constantly replenishing his arsenal of expression; he confronts unexpected elements of culture, nature, and industry; he does not succumb to the consumer neurosis of the post-command economy society, and he makes its cult objects, commercial goods, into material for creative remakes.

Equipped with a granite chisel and a diamond-tipped drill that penetrates rock crystal, as well as with a camera and other tools, Navakas remains an "'unclassified' artist, with a European 'quality certificate'.[1]"

***Elona Lubytė in Conversation with Mindaugas Navakas*[2]**

How does a contemporary artist get involved in the process of change? By choosing the standpoint of romantic distinction or independent survival? As one of the challenges of the new twenty-first century,[3] an intellectual worker independent of politics, power and economic crises must organize himself and learn when and how to change. Today, he is mobile and free to choose, since his "production tools" – knowledge and skills – are at his personal disposal. However, changes are still regarded as more like death or taxes: they are considered unwelcome and delayed as long as possible. On the other hand, in periods of upheaval, like the present one, shifts and changes are considered a norm. Certainly, they are painful and risky and require a lot of hard work. In such periods only the leaders survive. Is the struggle with challenges part of an artist's daily creative process?

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1 Giedrė Jankevičiūtė, "An 'Unclassfied' Artist with a European 'Quality Certificate'," in *Kultūros barai*, 2000, No. 1, p. 18.

2 "Art as a Witness: An Interview with Mindaugas Navakas, by Elona Lubytė," in *Interviu*, 2006, No. 5, 12–13, 41–40.

3 Peter F. Drucker. *Management Challenges for the 21st Century*. Butterworth-Heinemann, paperback edition, 2002.

Elona Lubytė:

— How does an artist experience constant changes?

Mindaugas Navakas:

— It must have been fun to live in the times of Ptolemy. The earth was flat and stable – the center of the Universe. There is a well-known engraving representing a man at the edge of the Earth, sticking his head through a hole in the vault of heaven and admiring the constellations passing by. I wonder if he had made the hole himself or had found it, ready made by someone else. This question is going to torture me from now on. No wonder Galileo caused such indignation. It must feel horrible when you realize that you are jumping on some ball flying at jet-speed and spinning around its axis. Probably, since then, we secretly desire to wake up from this nightmare. Another reason to hate change is the incessant race that goes on in our life. As soon as we feel that we are losing our strength and someone else is hot on our heels, we want to shout – stop, it's the finish line! Unfortunately, the race never ends. "Kitty kitty, why are you shaking, little pussy, you will die!"[4] Constant change is one of the very few remaining stable things. The best album by Jimmy Hendrix is titled *Them Changes*. In this album, Buddy Miles, a black drummer of imposing bulk and mass, sings in a high-pitched tenor the blues number titled "Changes." It's a shame I haven't seen it live.

— And how does the constant process of change influence an artist's world outlook?

— I'd prefer that it should happen in the direction of clarity and higher precision, but most often, the changes have a frustrating effect. Rembrandt was not crushed by hardship as an artist, but he was Rembrandt! Many talented guys were crushed by hardship, and the names of many others are gone with the wind. Conformism is not a world outlook. To my mind, creation is an instinct! The first impulse that gives rise to creation is intuitive. The ideological motivation and self-control is secondary, but its presence, the participation of both elements in the creative process, is desirable.

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[4] Kostas Kubilinskas (1923-1962), Lithuanian lyrical poet who mainly wrote for children.

— Is it possible to trace what impulse has given rise to an artwork? Let's say, the cycle of sculptural objects constructed from Chinese ceramic and sanitary delftware displayed at the exhibition?

— Most probably, the impulse was a huge Baroque tile stove on elegant legs, which I saw standing in the center of a room at Kadriorg Palace in Tallinn in 1973 or 1975. Empress Catherine once used to warm herself by this stove. However, you can never tell with this impulse. Every day your gaze flashes by a thousand shapes appearing in the visible field, but gets captured by very few. The point is why it gets captured.

— Can you explain why, from among thousands of goods on the supermarket shelves, your gaze was captured by these particular objects referring to globalization and consumer society?

— A supermarket shelf comes by accident, because, as I already mentioned, I got "captured." All these objects have been remade, and most of them have been put through a new technological cycle – fired, glazed. They are raw material rather than an object with independent meaning. This process can be compared with the production of sculpture from sheet metal. Sheet metal is not found in nature; it is iron ore that is mined.

— Is this "getting captured" constant or changeable?

— For some time now, I have been trying to use the possibilities offered to me by the context (circumstances). It means that, quite often, I must alter my preconceptions and sometimes even start everything anew. What is important in this exhibition is the space densely filled with information, the hall lavishly decorated in the Eclectic Style rather than the institution itself. I try to develop a side story referring to the topic offered by the site.

— What is more important, the process of remaking or a remade object? Let's say, the installation with the old truck tent – why has it been chosen from a thousand objects? It is a kind of neo-brutal reference to the infinite horizons of the world that have opened before us, general transit, migration and lack of security changing the romantic attitude toward travel experience.

— I can only say that I liked it. It is flexible, firm and wind-resistant. I'm not so keen to find out why. It is enough that I got

captured by it and, having chosen it as raw material, started remaking it.

— Let's return to the question about an artist's stance in the environment of challenges and changes: does he adapt himself, does he try not to notice them, or does he try to become a leader?

— The answer is related to world outlooks. In my opinion, in the universal court, process art is a witness rather than a judge. A fragmented, changing and moving reality is a live and vital reality. What is stable may be stagnant, frozen, and dead. The social reality of parliamentary democracy is an arguing, quarrelling, constantly negotiating and renegotiating, dynamically developing reality. But I'm not interested in social issues in my art practice. I find artists who analyze social topics naïve, since they imagine that they can change the world. The twentieth century abounds in examples of the naïve engagement of artists in social life, which ended badly, either for the artists, or for society, or both.

— What is the world outlook of an artist who is not naïve?

— An artist who is not naïve is a Stoic, from the viewpoint of the ancient Greek tradition.

— And how is it expressed today?

— It is expressed in persistence in doing your work, without regard to unfavorable circumstances. An artist's aim is to reflect on the world in aesthetic categories. Unlike applied art, fine art does not aim to satisfy the client's tastes. The question is one of totally different aims, in the presence of which art becomes a struggle for survival.

— Can we regard this attitude as a small personal challenge to the environment?

— A challenge is something that requires putting forth more effort than usual, facing an obstacle larger than usual. Artistic creation, as I have mentioned, is an instinct, and this often helps to conquer obstacles larger than usual.

— If an artist seeking to solve social issues is naïve, then what issues should be solved by an artist who is not naïve?

— Personal issues, but in terms of subconsciousness rather than on a biographical level. Personal experience is a kind of pool ball that hits other balls in a state of equilibrium. A pinch

of fun is very important to me. I wouldn't like to educate or convince anybody.

— *Should it be related to the restless/fidgety nature of an artist?*

— The category of anxiety is crucial here. Anxiety is always present. It is hardly related to exterior changes or an unstable environment, it is deep, existential. It is an important impulse, an engine in action, a constant escort. I came to the conclusion that creation is little related to the artist's peace of mind. Perhaps it is the curse of the artist – you are doomed to be in an intermediate state, because if you leave this state, you may lose your creative impulse. But then, the world would be a bit more boring.

— *However, doesn't an artist conveying personal experience in his work also reflect some generally urgent issues?*

— I think it is a romantic utopia. As I said, art is a witness rather than a judge. It is nice to observe it in the past tense, and that's what museums are for.

Translated by Aušra Simanavičiūtė

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MINDAUGAS NAVAKAS was born on January 24, 1952 in Kaunas and now works in Vilnius. In 1970-77 he studied Architecture and Sculpture at the State Institute of Art of the Lithuanian SSR, and taught sculpture there from 1977 to 1981. Since 1990 he has taught at the Sculpture Department of the Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts.

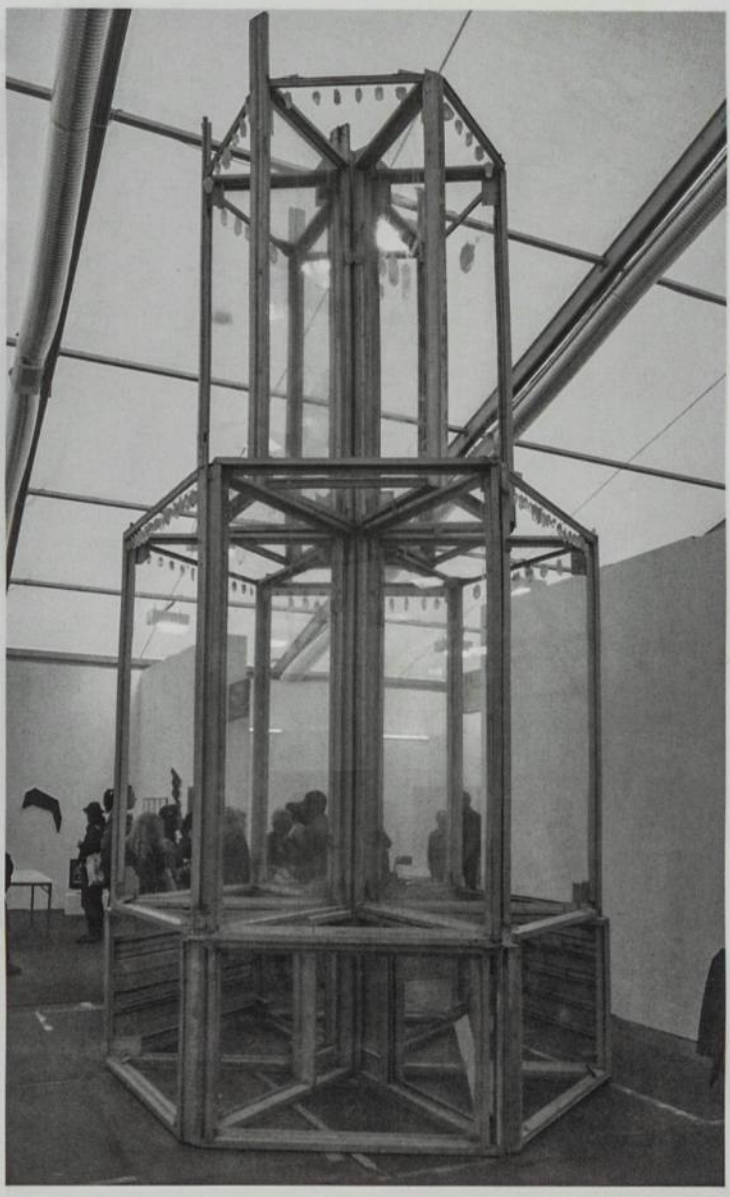
Navakas has been holding exhibitions in Lithuania and abroad since 1977, including at the first Lithuanian National Pavilion at the 48th Venice Biennial in 1999. Navakas has participated in numerous symposia in Lithuania, Germany, Finland, Korea, and Latvia, organized sculpture exhibitions in public spaces, and created site-specific works such as *The Hook* at the Art League, Vilnius, 1994; *Reconnaissance* in Helersdorf, Berlin, 1997–1998; *Big Fish* in Tranoy/Hammaroy, Norway, 2006; and others. His awards include the Herder Prize in 1995, the National Prize for Culture and Art of the Republic of Lithuania in 1999, and the Baltic Assembly Prize in 2004.

Photos by Mindaugas Navakas →

Column N. Ceramics, glaze, 350 cm x 75 cm x 75 cm, 2005. Personal show "It's Getting Harder," Kumu Art Museum of Estonia, Tallinn, 2009.

Folded V. Used truck canopy (polyvinyl acetate/polyester), webbing belts, rope 1600. Show "Ex voto," Reims Palais du Tau, Reims, France, 2008.

Red. Polished and split granite, 520 cm x 120 cm x 70 cm, 2004. Personal show, R–O Works, Contemporary Sculpture Museum, Oronsk, Poland, 2006.



Smash the Windows, Snatch the Crystals, 2009. Old CAC windows aluminum profiles, glass, rock crystals, 570 cm x 310 cm x310 cm. "Frieze Art Fair 2009," London.

"We Didn't Keep Diaries, You Know": Memories of Trauma and Violence in the Narratives of Two Former Women Resistance Fighters[1]

DOVILĖ BUDRYTĖ

A growing number of works focusing on collective trauma has started to acknowledge the crucial role of gender in remembering, expressing and memorializing events. In the literature focusing on the Holocaust there is a growing understanding that traumatic history would be incomplete without the addition of women as victims, perpetrators, resisters and bystanders. In the words of Yehuda Bauer, "if all human experience has a gender-related agenda, as women's studies tells us, the Holocaust can be no exception. Indeed, it seems to me that the problems facing women as women and men as men have a special poignancy in an extreme situation such as the Holocaust."[2]

Gender approaches to the study of traumatic events focus not only on the ways in which women's experiences differ from men's, but they also point out how those experiences and traditional women's roles are practiced under various circumstances.

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[1] My thanks to Ingrida Vėgelytė for her help with setting up the interviews. The interview with Vitalija Kraujelytė took place in her home on July 9, 2009. The interview with Natalija Gudonytė took place in her home on July 23, 2010.

[2] Quoted in *Experience and Expression*, xxvii. Article: xiii-xxxiii.

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Studies of traumatic memories associated with the Holocaust and other catastrophic events suggest that women experienced imprisonment, humiliation and torture differently than men; thus, their memories and the expressions of those memories were different.

The literature focusing on the repression that took place under Stalin has only recently started paying attention to the role of gender and women's experiences. Most accounts are about women as victims in extreme situations, such as mass deportations and widespread violence. A gender perspective has been applied to study the experiences of Baltic women deported to Siberia. In *Carrying Linda's Stones*, an anthology of the life stories of five Estonian women who were deported to Siberia, the editors give the following reasons for applying a gender perspective to study traumatic memories: "We have chosen to focus on women because the majority of life stories written about World War II and its aftermath were published by men who often have a different perspective... Women's and men's lives differed considerably during this period. Women's stories not only concentrate on themselves, but on broader family relations."[3] According to Hinrikus and Koresaar, gender-sensitive perspectives compel researchers to pay attention to women's bodies and women's issues, such as infertility, single motherhood, and the death of children—issues that tend to be omitted from mainstream historical perspectives."[4]

Applying a gender perspective to the study of traumatic memories and focusing on stories told by women can help to develop a more individual, moving and personal narrative, thus decentralizing traumatic history and moving away from imagining the nation as a fighting and suffering hero. For example, according to Violeta Davoliūtė, *Lietuviai prie Laptevų jūros* (Lithuanians by the Laptev Sea), the famous memoir by Dalia Grinkevičiūtė, is a heroic narrative of individual resistance and, as such, it departs from "the irredentist, ethnocentric historical

[3] Malik, *Carrying Linda's Stones*, 20-21.
[4] Hinrikus, *She Who Remembers Survives*, 20-23.

consciousness" usually associated with deportee memoirs in Lithuania.[5]

In Baltic studies, gender perspectives have been applied, by and large, to interpret the memoirs of deportees. There is a shortage of accounts analyzing the lives, experiences and memoirs of women who were and viewed themselves as active participants in war, including the perpetrators of violence. According to Žaneta Smolskutė, women played an active role in the Lithuanian anti-Soviet resistance. She gathered factual information about two hundred and fifty women who had received the status of *kario savanorio statusas*, "volunteer fighter," from the government. At first (in 1945), there were no strict restrictions on women joining the partisans. This situation changed in 1949, when the Lithuanian Freedom Fighters Movement (the anti-Soviet resistance) stopped accepting women as active fighters. Smolskutė concluded that during the Lithuanian war of resistance, in many ways, "women partisans were treated in the same way as men" by the perpetrators.[6] The bodies of murdered women partisans were displayed in town squares, and they were subjected to torture. There were not many women leaders of partisan groups; they performed mostly auxiliary roles as messengers and paramedics. When arrested, women partisans tried to play down their roles in the resistance movement; however, there is evidence suggesting that they were active and brave participants in military operations.[7]

How do women who were resistance fighters remember their roles in relation to violence as well as the traumatic experiences of torture and deportation? How do they cope with traumatic memories? Are those memories transformed into empowerment through political activities? With these questions in mind, in 2009 and 2010, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews, which allowed the free flow of narrative, with two former resistance fighters, Natalija Gudonytė

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5 Davoliūtė, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 52.
6 Smolskutė, *Genocidas ir Rezistencija*, 60.
7 Ibid.

and Vitalija Kraujelytė, a sister of the legendary and controversial Lithuanian partisan Antanas Kraujelis. The lives of the two women share some contours. Both were active members of the resistance movement and were deported to labor camps. They both suffered and experienced humiliation upon their return to Lithuania. Currently, they are active in the Political Prisoners' Union, and both act as "agents of memory" – they are interested in and actively involved in trying to establish the truth about the past, honoring the victims (in the case of Vitalija, her brother Antanas; in the case of Natalija, her fellow deportees) and identifying the perpetrators. On the other hand, there are significant differences as well. Natalija was born and raised in Vilnius; she had an upper-class upbringing and was involved in nonviolent resistance. Vitalija was born and raised in a peasant family in Kaniūkai (a village close to Utena), and she was part of the violent resistance.

Remembering Resistance and the Trauma of Betrayal

According to Smolskutė, women resistance fighters in Lithuania were unlikely to try to establish themselves as leaders of partisan units or political organizations. Natalija's and especially Vitalija's stories support this finding – both women saw themselves as performing supporting roles in the resistance movement:

Vitalija: After the war [World War II] was over, our whole family, including us six sisters, immediately joined the partisan movement. We made hiding places for weapons, and the whole family was involved. There were two bunkers in our house. The leader of the partisan movement in Aukštaitija lived in one of them. When I became a messenger for the partisans, my parents knew where I was going, but my parents constantly were trying to warn me; they knew that I had to join the cause, but they also warned me: try to be careful, don't get in trouble... My job was to help maintain communications [serve as a messenger] between two partisan units, one close to Skudutiškis, the other in the region of Anykščiai. I often had to deliver packets.

I did not even know what was inside of them; usually I pretended to be a seamstress. I was so scared; often I could not stop trembling.

Natalija: My involvement with the underground movement started in 1939, when there was an announcement that Lithuania would be annexed [by the USSR]. At that time, I still was in school, in Marijampolė, and there was a big gathering there... where we made a pledge to stay in Lithuania and to work for Lithuania. I continued to be engaged in underground activities when I started studying French at the university in Vilnius. ... My secret name was Vosilka, "corn flower." Our underground organization was large and popular; there were many patriots who joined it. ... I had various duties, including delivering messages, publishing [underground] newspapers and making fake documents.

Serving as messengers was not easy; sometimes the tasks were very dangerous, such as transporting and hiding weapons, even machine guns. However, it was not fear that became the most lasting traumatic memory – it was betrayal. Both women experienced the trauma of betrayal. In the words of Natalija Gudonytė, "I still do not know why there were so many traitors among us... I recall arrests, one after another. The arrests probably had something to do with promises – maybe many were promised freedom. There were many who betrayed their friends, but who later became unwanted even by their new masters; thus, they ended up in prison themselves. ... I was betrayed by another messenger, her name was Butkevičiūtė. She probably betrayed me for money. Later her mother asked her, 'where did you get all this money from?'... Well, it was dirty money."

Having experienced betrayal, Natalija ended up in the same KGB prison cell in Vilnius where Žemaitis (a famous partisan) was kept.

What can I tell you? I never could imagine such methods of torture and such ways of treating people. We were traitors, enemies... I heard everything... such nasty words... It is difficult

to survive in those cellars [the prison cells were below ground level] without any sleep... And those nasty words. They called me a prostitute and so on. These... and it was cruel and it was disgusting... and... those investigators, speaking Russian. But then, the Lithuanians were not much better. Sometimes, I would spend the whole night without being asked anything. I was forced to sit in one place without moving; just sit, period. I had to put my hands on my thighs; you couldn't cross your legs nor anything... you couldn't lean against anything, not even against the wall... the chair was fixed to the floor. If you fell, they would pour water on your head, and so it went... the same thing over and over again. ... But, to tell you the truth, I think that women may be stronger than men... because men were traitors.

Vitalija's memory about the trauma of betrayal emerged from a story that involved a Lithuanian flag. (She demonstrated her emotional attachment to the Lithuanian flag later during our conversation, when she told me that she knew that Lithuania was truly independent when she saw a Lithuanian flag on Gediminas Hill during the time of the national revival.)

I will never forget this beautiful Easter morning in 1948. As my family and I were returning from church, we saw a Lithuanian flag in the neighboring house that belonged to a *stribelka* [an antiresistance female fighter or someone who was married to a *stribas*, an antiresistance fighter]. At that time, there were five resistance fighters hiding in the cellars of our house, among them the leader of the Aukštaitija partisans, whose name was Žalgiris. We told them what we saw [i.e., the flag]. The leader warned the partisans, put on my father's old coat and went to take down the flag. We all were watching him as he was going to get that flag. He brought it back as the most important, the most treasured thing in the world and spread it out in the room with the table prepared for Easter. Our leader [i.e., the leader of the resistance fighters] kneeled and kissed the flag, hugged it and started to cry. All of us started to kiss the flag and cry a lot; this was a solemn oath of our family, and I will never forget

it. It is a pity that there was no one to take a photograph of this event.

...But after a week this celebration turned sour. We now know that a traitor raised this flag [in order to find out who the resistance fighters were]. One week later, on a Monday morning, there was thick fog outside. Our mother prepared breakfast for the men, and we went out to look around before we opened the hiding place [the bunker]. My brother Antanas was the first one to notice a commotion in the [neighboring] farmstead of our cousin; I tried to find out what was going on, and suddenly I realized that our own home was surrounded. My mother and my sister were able to warn the resistance fighters and hide the entrance to their hiding place. My brother Antanas pretended that he was sick, started to cough—thank God, they did not touch him. *Stribai* were poking everywhere with metal sticks... but this time, they did not find the bunker. Shortly afterwards, however, they found out that my sister Ona was in the resistance; they [the *stribai*] started searching our house regularly; Antanas had to leave home. I became his helper. My parents knew everything, and they never scolded me... I was not afraid to die; I was only afraid to be put in prison.

One time the *stribai* found a notebook with partisan songs and poems in our house. I told the *stribai* that this was my notebook: "give it back to me; I found it on the road..." This was my first christening... They took me for questioning, but I kept silent. They hit me. My lip was cut; it started to bleed... But then, before sunset, I came back home... and I was so young then... I was crying as I was going home. My mittens were wet; I tried to wipe my face, my lips were bloody... When I came back, I found out that the partisans were really afraid that I would be a traitor. I was not... I remember the traitors; one of them was Pranas Jasiulionis who lived in Skudutiškis. Once I even brought a machine gun to him... but later Pranas betrayed me. He knew everything. He lived in Jonava and died recently; I found out from reading our newspaper [*Tremtinys* (Deportee)]. It is a pity that I did not visit him before he died...

I was beaten severely, deported to Siberia... my head was hit so many times it is amazing that I still remember anything... But my memory is not perfect. We did not keep diaries, you know.

Vitalija's story suggests that Pranas had never been prosecuted for his betrayal. Natalija echoes Vitalija's discontent with the lack of transitional justice in post-Soviet Lithuanian society: "There were so many traitors. You would sit, talk with a person and you would never know... some traitors today are respected more than victims in Lithuania. [It is important] to know the truth; know what's black and what's white. It is a pity that our current government does not see it and does not want to talk about it."

Memories of Deportation and the Return to Soviet Lithuania

Vitalija and Natalija do not say much about the journey to Siberia ("you already know it from other memoirs"). Their stories about their experiences in labor camps in Siberia focus on food preparation and bonding with other women and children – underlining the traditional cultural roles associated with women. Food preparation is especially prominent in Natalija's story, as the routine of food preparation acquires a new meaning and importance in a labor camp: "We tried to celebrate all holidays. Oh, we have some bread – this will be for Christmas. Every day, I would put a piece of bread aside. Sometimes I hid it in snow to make sure that no one would eat it... And then later we would gather all these pieces of bread together, warm them up, mix them up, and make a 'cake' (*tortas*). We would think of different ways to celebrate."

Natalija's story is punctuated with memories about the lack of food in Siberia: "We got some water for tea in the morning and then many little fish... the fish were so incredibly salty. We were so hungry, but there was no water... You want to eat, and that's it. So many women ate those little salty fish, and their bodies became incredibly hairy... See, if you were working and did not fulfill the required quota, you did not get any bread. [If you fulfilled the required quota,] then you would get 250

grams of bread. The bread looked like a cube. I remember taking that bread into my hand, smelling it—somehow this bread would disappear—and I would lose all memory of eating it."

Survival was possible because women of different nationalities, from different parts of the world cooperated in completing "manly" tasks, such as cutting wood, pulling up stumps or working in a mica (a type of stone) factory. According to Natalija, "there was a special relationship [among women], a certain kind of love... Everyone tried to survive. If someone was ill, we tried to help them... Then there was unexpected laughter, a song – and somehow that pain would go away."

Vitalija remembers cooperation and singing as ways of survival in the labor camp as well:

"I remember one Christmas Eve. It was morning; we were transported to work – Poles, Ukrainians and Lithuanians in the morning. And one of us, Balys, started to sing. And the Poles and the Ukrainians started to sing as well. The local Russians took off their hats to show respect... The local Russians were good people. We women had to cut wood. We had to turn pieces of wood around. Sometimes I would just hang there [from a piece of wood]. I recall one little Russian coming over and telling me, *Vika, chto ty delayesh, ne budyesh rozhat*, "Vika, what are you doing, you'll be infertile." Yes, the local Russians were superb people.... And I loved the children; it did not matter to me whether they were Russians or not. I got a job in the boarding preschool there in Siberia. Thus, I became almost a mother to these children. When their parents came [to pick them up for the weekend], they cried and wanted to go back to their 'mother,' that is, me. The children of alcoholics especially did not want to go back home."

In her story about her experiences in the labor camp and her interaction with other women, Natalija highlights her urban origins, which set her apart from the other women: "Our [Lithuanian] girls were wonderful; nice, girls from villages, you know... They were different [from me]. But we became very close there. They read very little. Having graduated from high

school, I had read a lot. I used to tell them stories from novels; they loved that! Later they wrote to me in their letters: when they were listening to my stories, they forgot their pain. I gave them lessons in geography... We prayed together... We laughed together, and thus we were able to complete hard tasks [such as pulling out stumps]. So that's why you see that we are laughing in photographs taken in Siberia. We could take photographs starting in 1954."

In the mid-fifties, Natalija and Vitalija were allowed to go back to Soviet Lithuania. (Vitalija had to go through the trauma of deportation twice.) The stories about the return to Soviet Lithuania are similar to the stories of other former deportees and political prisoners. Their social interactions in Soviet Lithuania were poisoned by an awareness of "otherness." They, the former deportees and political prisoners, were different. Natalija's and Vitalija's stories about Siberia also suggest that it was somewhat easier to be a "patriot" in Siberia than in Soviet Lithuania. (A similar point has been made by Marija Eigrejienė, a parliamentarian and former deportee.[8] Although, unlike other former deportees, neither Natalija nor Vitalija expressed a desire to go back to Siberia, their narratives mention humiliation and disillusionment with their lives in Soviet Lithuania. According to Vitalija, "We lived in Kairėnai, in a small room, close to a psychiatric hospital. It was rough, but it was still Lithuania. Well... all of my life was rough."

According to Natalija, she had three herrings and twenty-five rubles on the way to Soviet Lithuania. "I had no parents, nobody, only distant relatives. There were eight of us in a small room. You know then I tried to find a job... through acquaintances." Natalija tells a story about how she was ignored by her former classmate and good friend, Petrė, who refused to recognize her when Natalija was trying to reach out to her for help in her job search. "When I was looking for a job [in education], Petrė told me, 'Stop looking, those like you will never find a job.' See, she was a Communist already then. I told Petrė that I was not there to see her, but I wanted to see the Minister

[8] Budrytė, *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 341.

of Education. And then I left and started to cry. Once I ran into her, so I looked the other way. I thought to myself, 'what a pig' ... Eventually, my Jewish friend Kašumanaitė finally found me a job, because she knew what it was like to be deported."

The Duties of Memory

According to Lenz and Bjerg, there is a clear division of roles in the process of constructing national metanarratives about the past. Men are assigned what appears to be a more important role in narrating, interpreting and collecting factual evidence about the past; they serve as "theme-givers." Women, on the other hand, are likely to focus on family stories and act as "theme-takers." Men tend to serve as the creators of a "collective encyclopedia" about the national past, while women are likely to focus on their family albums. In this gendered system, men are seen as brave warriors and resistance fighters, while women are likely to play the supporting role of helpers.

Like the stories of other women acting as agents of memory, the stories of Natalija and Vitalija demonstrate the interdependent relationship between creating a "collective encyclopedia" and gathering pictures for "family albums." Vitalija likes talking about her brother Antanas; in fact, her identity as a woman resistance fighter is inseparable from that of being Antanas's helper. Given the status of her brother as a famous resistance fighter, Vitalija's stories enter the public realm and become part of "collective encyclopedic" knowledge about the war of resistance. Not surprisingly, Vitalija did not address the more controversial aspects of her brother's partisan activities (e.g., there are stories about how Antanas, together with a fellow resistance fighter, killed an entire Lithuanian family in 1949[9]); her story is affected by and is part of the so-called "fighting and suffering narrative" about the Lithuanian war of resistance and mass deportations.

In contrast, brave male warriors are curiously absent in Natalija's story. Her narrative focuses on her traumatic experi-

[9] Jurgelis, "Pagerbtas smurtas—pažemintos aukos," www. DELFI. lt., November 9, 2010.

ences of being imprisoned and deported. Natalija showed me an extensive collection of memory objects well known to anyone familiar with the traumatic history of deportations – rosaries made of bread, many letters, including poems, written on birch bark, objects knitted using fish bones, and photographs, many photographs. "All this will be given to an archive," Natalija promises. "I gathered all this, she says, and I do not want to lose it. What you see here are tears, pain, love – whatever you can imagine, you will find it here. I started to collect letters [written by prisoners] – you cannot imagine! Love letters [exchanged between the prisoners in men's camps and women's camps]. Love was strange in labor camps. You could get love letters and never get to meet the person. We were isolated from men for years. Thus, one poet kept writing love letters to me. I have never met him, but I still have his letters... My drawers are full of memories. Something needs to be done. But I have so many community service duties!" Natalija's service duties include collecting objects of memory from former deportees – their pictures, their stories, and publishing them as albums and books. One of her recent books, *Naikintos bet nenugalėtos kartos kelias* (The Path of a Generation which was Decimated but not Overcome), consists of photographs from the personal albums of former political prisoners and deportees. Currently, Vitalija considers finding the remains of her brother and marking the place where he was killed as her duty of memory.

Conclusions

Despite their involvement in different types of resistance, the two women described in this essay had some things in common – their experiences of torture, betrayal and exile, the trauma of coming back from Siberia to Soviet Lithuania, and their dissatisfaction with the lack of transitional justice in post-Soviet Lithuania. Their narratives are influenced by the national metanarrative about fighting and suffering during the postwar era (this is especially true about Vitalija's story). Neither Vitalija nor Natalija played leading roles in the resistance movement; however, they understood the importance of being

helpers. Being women affected the content of their narratives, especially when their experiences in the labor camps were remembered (e.g., Natalija's narrative about food). It is probably fair to say that care giving had an important role in both narratives. Natalija remembered her friendship with and the supportive relationships between women in the labor camp, as they supported each other during difficult times. Vitalija remembered her experience as a caretaker in kindergarten. (Similar observations have been put forward by scholars studying women in the Holocaust. Acts of cooperation among women were important for survival in the concentration camps. Hunger dominates the Holocaust narratives, and women's responses to hunger were different from those of men.)

Including women's stories in the discourse about resistance helps to broaden the discourse about resistance, and (hopefully) deconstructs the image of the nation as a fighting and suffering hero (i.e., the male narrative). Women's stories raise numerous other questions: How did the resistance movements function on a day-to-day basis? Which stories are still not heard? According to Judith Greenberg, who has studied women in the French resistance during World War II, one of the most important functions of including women in the study of resistance is to make sure that "a fixed idea of resistance" is resisted.[10] Resistance is a complex societal phenomenon, and its participants often struggled with internal tensions, fears, anxieties and traumas. This insight can be applied to the Lithuanian war of resistance and to the discourses surrounding it as well.

[10] Greenberg, *Experience and Expression*, 157.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Naimark, Norman M. *Stalin's Genocides*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-691-14784-0.

Snyder, Timothy. *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. New York: Basic Books, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-465-00239-9.

These two books make excellent reading. Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands* is a bestseller not lacking in scholarship, whereas Norman Naimark's book is a short polemic about the term genocide and its uses. In addition to providing scholarly evidence for his subject, Snyder often interjects vignettes of individuals suffering from Hitler's or Stalin's genocide. Like his previous study, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, which was translated into Lithuanian, *Bloodlands* and Naimark's *Stalin's Genocides* will doubtlessly also be translated. Both, Snyder and Naimark are among the most respected and authoritative scholars in East European history. Although the borders of the bloodlands roughly correspond to those of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the authors deal with the Baltic States only tangentially. Both have a broader agenda. Snyder and Naimark use a transnational approach to analyze their subject, rather than focusing on the Baltic States or any single nation. They put all of the "smaller" genocides into the context of the massive deaths perpetrated by the Soviets and the Nazis. The number of Lithuanian Jews killed during the Holocaust, 200,000, seems rather small in comparison to the total number of six million killed. Whereas, the number of Lithuanian citizens deported to Siberia in 1941, 40,000, seems even smaller in comparison to Stalin's murder of tens of millions.

The two authors correctly point out that Westerners know very little about this region. Westerners might be surprised to find out that very little of the Holocaust took place in Germany, just as most of the victims of Stalin's mass murders did not come from Soviet Russia. The Holocaust and Stalin's

massive purges of various nationalities and social classes took place in the bloodlands. Westerners familiar with the liberation of Nazi concentration camps by the Western allies may see Snyder's history as groundbreaking, but he does not present a great deal that is new or original for readers already interested in Lithuanian or Baltic history. An English-reading audience is simply not as familiar with Stalin's crimes as they are with Hitler's. Terms such as kulak, or names like Yagoda or Yezhov, and places like Holodomor or Katyn are vague in most Westerners' memories.

Snyder starts with Ukraine, where Stalin induced the Holodomor Famine in the 1930s. Then he proceeds to Hitler's Final Solution, continues with the ethnic cleansing that followed the war, and ends with some rather facile ethical pronouncements. Naimark starts his book by declaring, "Stalin's mass killings of the 1930s should be classified as 'genocide'."(1)

Snyder mentions Lithuanian pogroms, but nothing specifically, such as the events at the Lietūkis garage or the murders at Kaunas's Ninth Fort, which where incited by the Nazis, but perpetrated by "local collaborators." However, he mentions the shooting of Jews by Lithuanian auxiliary forces at Paneriai Forest. Snyder clearly states that, "As a result of trained collaboration and local assistance, German killers had all the help they needed in Lithuania."(192) But, later Snyder writes, "Interwar communist parties had in fact been heavily Jewish..." but he warns that not many Jews were communists.(194) In general, Snyder paints the Lithuanians as willing perpetrators of the Holocaust. Naimark's polemic about Stalin's genocide starts with a small digression about the Baltic States legislating a redefinition of genocide to include deportations, imprisonment, loss of freedom, and other Soviet crimes. This makes it seem as if Nazi and Soviet crimes were equal.

However, Naimark's emphasis is on the use of the term genocide, not on current Baltic political machinations. He starts with a short history of the term itself. Originally coined by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1943, the term evolved once the Soviets, as allies of the Western democracies, were includ-

ed in defining it through their own political prism. By the late '40s, genocide had become a legal and political football in the United Nations, where, under Soviet pressure, the U.N. accepted a definition that excluded political groups. Its decision was deliberately narrow. Because of the U.N.'s language, Stalin's crimes could not be considered genocide.(15) But Naimark argues the opposite. He essentially broadens its definition. Nevertheless, like Snyder and most serious scholars, Naimark accepts the fact that the mass murder of the Jews by the Nazis was the worst and most unique genocide, requiring a special category: Holocaust.(137) Another factor that must be kept in mind is that Stalin was a Western ally who helped defeat Hitler. One genocidaire assisted the defeat of the other. Snyder and Naimark admit that Hitler was history's greatest genocidal dictator, but no doubt, Stalin was second.

Depending on the user and the context, terms like holocaust and genocide have alternately acquired specific or general meanings. The Bible uses the term holocaust in reference to the fire sacrifice of an animal to God. Others have warned against nuclear holocaust. However, Lithuanian philosopher Leonidas Donskis refuses to write the word Holocaust in lowercase when referring to the mass murder of the Jews. (Editor's note: Lithuanian rules for capitalization require that it be lowercase.) Tomas Venclova, a famous Lithuanian writer, has coined the term "stratocide," the elimination of a social class, to use when referring to Stalin's crimes against kulaks and Lithuanians, but a new word does not change anyone's emotional reaction to these events. Alternately, genocide has also been used in various contexts from Cambodia to Darfur, to Armenia. These terms may have a legal, historical, religious, and political context, but they do not explain the feelings of the survivors. One should always respect the sensibilities of victims and their descendants, but political correctness may be an impediment to understanding history. Naimark is saying that people should not be held hostage to definitions that regimes with specific political motives drew up. No one should be able to hijack terminology or fear to use it.

Snyder implies that Stalin's policies in Eastern Europe prepared the way for the Holocaust. His purpose is to show that the interaction between the two genocidal regimes during World War II led to more mass killings than either might have carried out alone. Some Lithuanians will see *Bloodlands* and *Stalin's Genocides* as proof of the "theory of two genocides." Naimark and Snyder are not ant-Semites nor is their intention to obfuscate, or minimize Hitler's and Stalin's mass murders. Nor do they equate the crimes of Nazism and Communism, as some Lithuanians would like. Both Naimark and Snyder are moderate in their assessments, and their comparisons of genocides are a legitimate avenue of research.

Snyder presents the reader with a myriad of statistics and numbers, which he uses critically and carefully, but he warns that many politicians, with the help of nationalist historians, have inflated those statistics and numbers. He writes that Jews and Lithuanians have competed for martyrdom, and that "nationalists throughout the bloodlands have indulged in quantitative exaggerations of victimhood, thereby claiming for themselves the mantle of innocence."(402) The Lithuanian government is fighting for memory rather than a dispassionate analysis of history. Lithuanians want to commemorate what the Communists did to them, but they do not want to be labeled as a nation of Jew-shooters. The present government is needlessly resurrecting a divisive and painful historical argument with its "theory of two genocides." By equating and comparing the Holocaust with the crimes of the Soviet regime, Lithuanians want to vindicate their own suffering. In doing so, the government has gained nothing more than a reinforcement in the minds of Westerners that Lithuanians are anti-Semites. The irony is that anti-Semitism persists in a country with very few Jews.

Ultimately, readers must judge these two books on their own merits rather than the interpretations that political fanatics will attribute to them. Snyder is as objective as possible, whereas Naimark's polemic is as thoughtful as possible. Snyder and Naimark are historians who have written masterly works that are interesting, well researched, and thoughtful.

Virgil Krapauskas

Ronald D. Asmus. *Opening NATO's Door – How the Alliance Remade Itself for a New Era.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2002. A Council on Foreign Relations Book.

The year 2009 marked both the tenth anniversary of the accession of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic to NATO and the fifth anniversary of the subsequent round of seven additional countries from the region.

The events of 1999 and 2004 were remarkable. Only a decade prior to their occurrence, no one except a handful of visionaries, would have even dreamed that out of the ruins of the Soviet Union the countries of Central and Eastern Europe would be firmly ensconced in the embrace of the transatlantic alliance. Together with EU membership, the Western orientation of the region was firmly underscored. Moscow's grip was released, its hegemony scorned.

One person who believed in this, and a central figure in facilitating the process, was Ron Asmus.

First at RAND, and then as U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs from 1997-2000 during the administration of Bill Clinton, Asmus was a point man for developing and seeing through the policy, undertaking the sea change necessary to tackle these goals.

Asmus penned *Opening NATO's Door,* published in 2002, during a stint at the Council of Foreign Relations. The book certainly remains the most thorough observation of the process that took the notion of NATO enlargement to the CEE countries from just a twinkle in the eyes of a few to the signing of the protocols of accession in 1999.

Asmus navigates the behind-the-scenes look at the players, on both sides of the Atlantic, and demonstrates how United States policy evolved. With it is the fascinating interplay between the administration and congress, and the diplomatic dancing between the various state actors. Evocative of the relation building was the unlikely cooperation between Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Jesse Helms, who were otherwise at opposite

ends of the political spectrum. There is also much detail about the critical work with the Russians in getting Moscow to see the light and to not impede the process.

Asmus points as well to not just the Baltic countries, but Baltic-Americans who had gone back to their homelands to lend a hand with societal development and the Baltic-American community in the U.S., which was "small but well organized and worked closely with other groups to build political support for NATO membership" (159).

This was also noted by State Department officials, who when in visits to Congress, "often found that Baltic-American representatives had either just preceded them or were standing outside ready to make the case..." (159).

The Balts knew that it would take a lot of exertion and time before Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania could join NATO. Their efforts would be rewarded only a few years later, taking the lessons and the momentum of the 1999 round.

Asmus shows in *Opening NATO's Door* what it meant to take these steps. The support for NATO enlargement came not just from within the United States, but also from the outside, especially the Nordic countries.

Important to the Baltic countries, and due in large part to the dedication of Asmus and those around him, was the drafting of the U.S.-Baltic Charter, signed in January 1998. The book devotes about a dozen pages to this process. The Baltic Charter was a blueprint that helped guide and reinforce the Baltic States' future NATO aspirations. The Charter would be the model for future Membership Action Plans, which would later help take Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania over the threshold.

Karl Altau

ABSTRACTS

Dovilė Budrytė
"We Didn't Keep Diaries, You Know": Memories of Trauma and Violence in the Narratives of Two Former Women Resistance Fighters

The goal of this essay is to gain a more comprehensive understanding of traumatic memory by focusing on the perspectives and life stories of former women resistance fighters. Although representation of women (usually as victims) is essential for construction of nationhood in war narratives, women fighters' voices are often left out from the "grand" picture. How do women who were resistance fighters remember their roles as related to violence as well as the traumatic experiences of torture and deportation? How do they cope with traumatic memories? Are those memories transformed into empowerment through political activities? To gain insight into these questions, the essay presents the narratives of Vitalija Kraujelytė and Natalija Gudonytė.

Mikhail Kizilov
The Lithuanian Plague of 1710 and the Karaites. A Poem of Lament in the Karaim Language from Tadeusz Kowalski's Archival Collection.

One of the most interesting ethnographic features of the Karaites was their language of everyday use: the Turkic Karaim language. Only a few examples of Karaite poetry in the Turkic languages have been translated and published into a European language. This article presents an interesting elegy in Karaim discovered by the author in the archival collection of the Polish Orientalist, Tadeusz Kowalski in Kraków. The elegy is a lamentation on the devastation of the Lithuanian Karaites by the epidemic that climaxed in Lithuania in 1710-1711. It is estimated that Lithuania lost about a third of its population during this plague. The author of the elegy was not identified by Kowalski or his Karaite colleagues, but the author argues that it was composed by Solomon ben Aaron of Trakai (1670?-1745), Karaite poet, theologian, and spiritual leader. Its publication is an important contribution to our knowledge of early modern Karaite history and literature in the Karaim language. It also provides information about the perception of the plague of 1710 through the eyes of an ethnic minority in Lithuania.

Elona Lubytė
Art as a Witness

Mindaugas Navakas (b. 1952) represents the generation of sculptors who revolutionized Lithuanian sculpture in the 1970s through the 1990s by establishing the inherent aesthetic value of form and material, and by their original interpretation of late abstractionism, which focused on a grotesque combination of fragments from the cultural environment. The sculptor takes great interest in sculpture technology: in the 1970s and 1980s he made bronze and granite castings by an original technique; in the 1980s, he worked with concrete; since 1990, he has used sheets of steel and asbestos-cement, as well as silicone, glass, and dried plant leaves. He won the Herder Prize in 1995, the National Prize for Culture and Art of the Republic of Lithuania in 1999, and the Baltic Assembly Prize in 2004.

Alfred Erich Senn
When the Tanks Rolled – Vilnius 1991

An account of the author's experiences in Vilnius during the "January Days" of 1991 when Soviet troops, backed up by tanks, seized several strategic buildings in the Lithuanian capital.

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