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Motorcycle race held on July 9, 1939 in Vilnius. See article on page 53

What Powers of the President are Possible in Lithuania?

LAURAS BIELINIS

The general presidential election is approaching in Lithuania. Many are thinking of a strong and independent individual who would be able to defend and fulfill the expectations and interests of the citizens. The society, the media, and the politicians are discussing the potential candidates and comparing and evaluating their characteristics, chances of winning, and the benefit their electoral victory would bring to the state if this or that person won. However, there is a shortage of detailed examinations of the President's powers and the possibilities to fulfill the presidential functions in a manner that would satisfy the majority. Understandably, as specified in the Constitution, the President is the head of state. He represents the state of Lithuania and does everything entrusted to him by the Constitution and the legislation.¹ However, after a closer look at the institution of the President, we recognize many ambiguities, some doubts arise, and functional contradictions emerge in relation to the existence of this institution.

What are those exceptional functions of the President that were entrusted to him by the Constitution and the legislation and that allow the President of Lithuania to be identified as an independent political force? The fact that presidential functions obligate the President to execute State power is also underscored

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. Article 77.

by Article 5 of the Constitution, which grants such a power to the President alongside the Seimas, the Government, and the Judiciary: "In Lithuania, state power shall be executed by the Seimas, the President of the Republic and the Government, and the Judiciary. The scope of power shall be limited by the Constitution".

In the past, President Rolandas Paksas sought to obtain an exceptional status for himself which would enable him to carry out independent political actions, i.e. actions that are barely dependent on the will of the Seimas. For this purpose, he started accumulating structures in parallel to local government that were supposed to serve as a sort of counterweight to the official structures and become the source of the implementation of his political power. Resignation prevented him from realizing this program, which would have enabled the President to act without consulting anyone and in parallel to the Seimas, but also would have created a large source of political tension. Constant uncertainty and political and administrative disputes regarding which of the authorities is higher would cause problems in all areas of the country's existence.

During the presidency of Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, in the first half of the term, when the party which had nominated him was dominant in the Seimas, he felt strong and independent, but this independence was ensured not so much by the legal and political exceptionality of his institution as by the favourable configuration of the Seimas factions. After the next election, when the Conservatives started dominating in the Seimas and DLPL lost a large number of seats in the Seimas, Algirdas M. Brazauskas was deprived of most of the possibilities to influence the domestic policies and pushed aside. In quite the same way, Valdas Adamkus managed to amass a coalition that would support him during his first term and thus created the conditions for himself to influence political processes. In the second term, after he lost the possibility to have a majority favourable to him in the Seimas, Valdas Adamkus was pushed away from most of the processes and decisions.

In the relevant political and legal situation, the President and his institution is a structure which is legally, politically, and even emotionally separated from the political elite. Adamkus attempted to establish stronger ties between the institution of the president, the President, and the elite: he arranged meetings, commemorations and festive events, organized major press conferences-reports; and yet he still remained restricted from the actual decision-making processes.

Conversely, Dalia Grybauskaitė has consistently supported her own separation and even exploited it in a way, by turning it into a kind of a secret. In this way, she is no longer treated as cooperating with the Seimas, but rather as existing beside it, above it, without it, and treated not as belonging to the public, but existing above it, as an emotional image rather than as a political agent of democracy.

But let us take a look at the presidential possibilities in the political arena of Lithuania. They are certainly not as wide as imagined by ordinary citizens. Presidential initiatives, vetoing, and nomination of candidates for political posts are merely functions which we still have to associate with the parliament. The institution of the President is fighting an uphill battle against politicians for the approval of the Seimas or the Government. We keep witnessing public demonstrations of independence and political will of the Seimas members (as they oppose the “feeble” will of the president) as well as declarations of integrity by parliamentary factions and individual members of parliament in which the politicians contrast themselves, their factions, or their parties, with the president’s position. All of this confirms that in reality the constitutional functionality of the President is strictly limited because of the will and the interests of the Seimas and the Government. For this reason, the idealization of the president’s powers and the uproar over the election in the public sphere are deceptive and misleading to the voters and the citizens.

The political power of the institution of the President is also expressed in the number of politicians and members of the public who are the true “beneficiaries”. The higher the number of

people who can exploit the election victory – acquire the power of governance, the posts and the opportunities for decision-making – the more significant the role this institution plays in the State. However, once the presidential election ends, the political benefit will be gained by the victor himself only:

1. If one of the candidates wins, it does not mean that a political party or a political ideology has won. The president must sever his ties with political parties: “A person elected the President of the Republic must suspend his activities in political parties and political organisations until the beginning of a new campaign for the election of the President of the Republic”.²
2. After one of the candidates wins, only he and his immediate associates become the beneficiary, with the latter acquiring a certain kind of status, more illusory than actually significant, within the institution of the president. The Office of the President of the Republic of Lithuania is not so much an advisory institution as one large secretariat.
3. Today the institution of the President is more reminiscent of a chamber and a centre of chamber policies where a positive result, i.e. beneficial and pursued in the president’s name, is only possible when the President obeys the ruling majority and cooperates with it, admitting its domination, or, even better, if he comes from the ranks of that majority, like Algirdas M. Brazauskas was in his time, during the first half of his term, when he sensed support from and was heard by the ruling authorities because it was the majority of his former party. When the composition of the Seimas changed and the Conservatives became the centre of the majority, Algirdas M. Brazauskas was isolated and pushed away from exercising influence in Lithuania.

Thus, the Presidential institution in Lithuania is a structure which is formally and constitutionally defined as a part of the political system which has practically no independent functions.

² Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania. Article 83.

Or, more accurately speaking, it has functions that are too narrow for the image of the president as perceived in our public opinion and tradition.

Nevertheless, the public tends to exaggerate and raise the presidential image above everything else. Here, in Lithuania, the President is not so much a political leader as an image of power. Even in the Constitution, he is defined metaphorically and supplied with the needed direction of image perception: "the head of state". The President is attributed the sort of powers that have long been avoided in countries which we call democratic republics. However, the image does not disappear; it is based on the president's characteristics that encourage us even more to imagine the president as autocratic and all-powerful. He is granted:

- 1) exceptionality due to the imagined and ritualistically-supported status in the political hierarchy;
- 2) favourable public opinion when the President's position is treated as incontestable and being beyond discussion;
- 3) constitutionally and psychologically, the President is above political structures and therefore elevated above political bickering and scandals;
- 4) in the public opinion, the President is elevated above the authorities (the Parliament, the Government, the Courts, etc.). He is granted the status of exceptional authority (practically the king's status).

This contradiction between the formal status and the publicly recognized image has deep roots. We can encounter them even in the romanticized and cherished interwar period of Antanas Smetona and especially in the Soviet times, when his person was contrasted with representatives of the Communist regime as determination which symbolized independence.

After 11 March 1990, serious talks began about the restoration of the president's institution. At the time, contrasting perspectives also emerged on the president's status, powers and place in the political system of the Republic of Lithuania. The first draft was

presented by Vytautas Landsbergis. This is how its assessment was described by Bronislovas Genzelis:

On 3 December 1991, Vytautas Landsbergis brought forward the definition of the provisions of the forthcoming Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania to the Supreme Council. (The text of the constitutional provisions presented by Vytautas Landsbergis did not survive in the Archive of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania). The Supreme Council rejected them because Lithuania is perceived in them as an authoritarian state, which fundamentally contradicted Article 1 of the Constitution adopted in the referendum of 9 February 1991.³

Thus began the debates, which were long yet very interesting historically. I think that they are still waiting for a scholar who would review all previous ideas of presidential governance, all intersecting axes of opinion, and all political aspects. Even though Genzelis was himself caught up in those debates, he attempted to take a neutral perspective on the disagreements of the time:

Various potential constitutional models of state governance were analysed: a regular parliamentary republic (Austria, Italy, France in 1946, Germany, Greece), a combined parliamentary-presidential republic (France in 1958) and a parliamentary monarchy (Japan, Sweden, Spain).⁴

However, the fundamental division among the debaters was related to the sole principal aspect of the political composition of the state: there was an emergence of “principal differences between the main text and the alternatives: expansion of the President’s powers – reduction of the Seimas’ powers”.⁵

After rejecting Vytautas Landsbergis’ draft, two alternative Constitution drafts were prepared in the summer of 1992: a draft formulated for the preparation of the Constitution draft by the Provision Committee established by the Supreme Council was based on the governance form of a parliamentary republic, while

³ Genzelis, “Lietuvos Respublikos Konstitucijos rengimo peripetijos,” 238.

⁴ Ibid., 239.

⁵ Ibid., 240.

the Constitution draft by the *Sąjūdis* coalition "For Democratic Lithuania" predominantly featured the governance model of a semi-presidential republic.

In order to prepare a single Constitution draft which could be presented for the national referendum, the Group for the Handling of Constitutional Issues was established. In late September and early October of 1992, one so-called "compromise" draft of the Constitution was prepared from the two alternative drafts and presented to the Supreme Council and, later, for the national referendum".⁶ This document served as the basis for the Constitution as it is in effect today.

Thus, the mechanism for the implementation of the president's interests, goals and powers in Lithuania is becoming not so much an execution of legally distinct norms but rather a flexible tactical game of intervening in between government branches and creating majorities that are self-serving and necessary for the adoption of the ruling. It is the case very often that the President's power arises not so much from the institutional potential and organizational possibilities of the President's Office, but rather from the simulation of the political structures of various types (Seimas, Government, regional entities) and from them maintaining a fake relationship with the president. In my opinion, the president's environment anticipates this situation and assesses it realistically. For this very reason, ratings and public trust turn into an exceptionally important and possibly the sole true element of power. Looking back into the past, we may note that even in the conflict between Rolandas Paksas and the Seimas, where the collision was actually between two equal powers, we see how Rolandas Paksas' team exploited and actively bolstered his authority in the eyes of the public and ignored the declining opinion of him in the ranks of political elite.

Is a full-fledged presidential government possible? Can we imagine a domination of the President's powers in Lithuania? In

⁶ Sinkevičius, "1992 m. Konstitucijos rengimas: to laikotarpio užrašų fragmentai," 28.

my view, it is unrealistic. Only an ignorant mind or an individual who is completely confused politically could imagine that presidential governance, a vertical system of power distribution can be implemented under the conditions of the current Constitutional composition and European democratic conjuncture. Lithuania may not be the ideal political construction in the sense of either the political composition or the public political culture, but institutionally, an individual's aim to dominate in politics is in conflict with the norms of the current political system and the existent and sufficiently precise system of checks and balances. Thus, to create an authoritarian regime, or at least as authoritarian as it was in the era of Antanas Smetona, an intense and long-term transformation is required in the structure of institutions and the system of their legal statuses and dependencies. This change is not possible without public support, and thus without changes in the public consciousness.

Meanwhile, today we observe that a tense, one might say vicious, system-level war is taking place in the arena of the upcoming presidential elections. As a result of this war, a certain portion of institutions has started functioning in the mode of alarm and panic. At its core, this is a competition between the democratic and the autocratic realm. Naturally, none of these tendencies are clearly expressed, and one cannot claim that the representation of democracy and autocracy is perfectly conveyed. However, the contrast is evident in the public opinion. In the eyes of the public, the governing authorities, especially the president, are treated as existing above the public, their purpose is sacralised. In the mind of an ordinary citizen, the prevalent idea is that those who are in the government can do everything and the Head of State is the highest position, therefore, his powers are the strongest. In this respect, we are not dissimilar from other societies. In Lithuania, like in many other countries, the institution of the President concentrates powers within itself that allow it to manage exceptional situations. Similarly to most countries, this institution is treated as a mediator and moderator of political discussions.

This is why the institutions of the president fight vigorously in order to maintain the president's rating. The president's rating has a significant role in the political system of Lithuania. The rating's stability is a key factor not just to the President but also to his structure – the Office of the President. Even though the stability of the Presidential team is determined not so much by the stability of the situation as by the functional simplicity, political insignificance, and the resulting lack of political threat to the Seimas, the Government, or the Self-Government structures.

When discussing declarations of the President's political power, one should consider the importance of annual addresses. In the yearly speeches of the President, we are suspicious of the interests of the president himself, as a political figure. It remains rather unclear what those interests are, because what we actually see in the content of the annual addresses and the major statements or speeches is not declarations of a politician's or individual's goals and interests, but a functional justification by a representative of a weak institution. The sort of stalwart, authority-affirming manner of the speech is simply a stylistic act which covers up the individual's and the politician's weak functional application of oneself in the political constellation of Lithuania. In fact, the president could name the country's traumas (historical, cultural, economic, social, psychological) and take on the establishment of strategies or strategic groups dedicated to the elimination of those traumas. However, we will be able to perceive the limits and the political potential of presidential willpower in this way only after rejecting personalized and party-based perspectives and interpretations of it.

Precisely because of this, the annual addresses of the presidents include a clear declaration of general issues which is focused on themselves, on their concern about those issues. A strong president will emerge only after the political-administrative system will discover the exceptional function of the President which is needed and appropriate in Lithuania, i.e. assigned exclusively to the President as a distinct branch of the government. Today it is more of:

- 1) a representative function which is equally easily and frequently performed within the structure of the Speaker of the Seimas and by the Prime Minister, who often conducts representative actions;
- 2) a function of performing certain rituals which become elements of the political tradition and culture (presenting prizes, participating in national celebrations or commemorations);
- 3) mediation between political and bureaucratic groups, which is not clearly defined but is performed to the extent that the specific president is capable of performing;
- 4) a function of consigning and vetoing the decisions of the Seimas as an additional safeguard in the adoption of laws and appointments of high-ranking officials;
- 5) a function of regulatory initiative, which is assigned to a number of other institutions in addition to the President;
- 6) representation of the state internationally. But this is performed by everyone: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Seimas, the Government, and even members of Self-Government.

Almost all presidents of Lithuania sought to establish and force the authority system to adopt new inter-relationship rules that were not very public but were clearly expressed in their speeches and that included the President as a principal decision-maker not only formally. However, with time, it became clear that what was discussed and presented was not a relationship system but more of a debate about those relationships, and thus as a result the political system has had to put up with matters of character expression interpreted by the surrounding figures as regulations instead of actual clear-cut regulations. Any attempt by Dalia Grybauskaitė, and earlier by Algirdas Mykolas Brazauskas, Rolandas Paksas, or Valdas Adamkus, to demonstrate political will and to force others to acknowledge the President's claims to leadership was returned to them as a negative reaction from the Seimas' majority and as disregard for the proposals or drafts presented by the president.

In many cases, aiming to intervene in the procedures of political agreements, consciously or not, the President in Lithuania tries to disrupt anything that does not correspond to his understanding of political negotiations and to establish new rules of communication in which he would dominate as a negotiation agent or initiator. This is done in a rather forthright manner, employing demands and pressure with the leverages of power at hand or through the public sphere as a realm which is favourable and understandable to the President. If he succeeds, the President becomes one of the participants in an established system of negotiation-relationships.

Ultimately, it has to be concluded that the actual powers of which the president or his representatives can boast are simply the powers of a historically established image which the President can use to increase his rating or to appeal not to institutionally clear and strong political or economic powers but to the public opinion, which usually ignores the legal norms and is based on the traditionally established images of the president and his power.

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Translated by MARTYNAS GEDVILA

Five Latvian Proverbs, Global and Personal

GUNTIS ŠMIDCHENS

Folkloristics offers an effective method for glimpsing the world from another person's perspective. A starting point for folklorists is to let people speak for themselves, recording and transcribing the exact words that they say. People's own words can continue to be an effective primary source even if those people who once spoke are no longer with us, living on only in our memories.

Folklore Texts as a Aortal to One Person's Worldview: Five Examples

Here's an example. My *vecpaps* (grandpa) Pēteris Pūliņš passed away three decades ago at age 84. I often think about my time with him and things he told me. I'd like to recall every detail. But I don't have a recording of grandpa's voice. Not that I didn't think about it—I asked him once if I could interview him with my cassette tape recorder, and he said no, too many people are writing their memoirs nowadays who shouldn't, and he didn't want to write his memoirs, neither on paper nor on cassette tape. So nowadays I can retell things he told me, but that's me talking, not him. Sometimes, however, I do remember specific words he said – pithy sayings that shared fragments of his philosophy.

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When I put these proverbs together, I see taking shape a living, speaking portrait.

I see a face, creased and suntanned, smiling at me. We're outdoors on a hot summer day by the end of the barn where he kept shovels, hoes, rakes, a roto-tiller and lawnmowers. I don't remember which job we were discussing. He said,

#1 *Darbs nav zaķis – tas nekur neaizskries* [Work is not a rabbit – it won't run away].

Farm work was not something that could ever be finished. There will always be more than enough work, no need to fight over who gets to do it. He appreciated my wish to help, but it was okay, or maybe preferable for me to spend my time playing in the woods and barn, riding my bicycle, reading, or doing nothing.

He had purchased these twenty acres in Kansasville, Wisconsin, with money saved up from his two jobs in Chicago – janitor during the week and lawn mower/gardener over weekends, and moved there when he and grandma retired in 1969. We, grandkids, spent our summers out there. He wanted that farm, he later said, so that his grandchildren could experience life and work in the countryside. He would, for example, cut and dry hay in the traditional way, so that we could sleep in the hayloft as he had once done back in Latvia. He introduced us to his favorite berries: strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries, black currants, and the “queen of berries,” red currants. His vegetables tasted best, he said, because they were “cooked, baked, steamed in the sun” on hot summer days. He woke at daybreak and spent most of the time working – gardening, tending chickens, growing flowers for grandma. To us he would occasionally assign tasks like weeding, watering, harvesting or mowing.

He was good at saving money, never buying food that he could grow or preserve himself, making hard cost/benefit decisions on whether to repair versus replace, investing money in safe, predictable-interest bank accounts. But he was not a miser.

Every summer he wrote out checks to “pay” his grandchildren for the “work” they did in his garden. He said,

#2 *Tāpēc nauda ir apaļa, lai tā ripo* [That’s why money is round, so that it keeps rolling].

Money circulates, and it must circulate. Trying to hold on to it is futile. That’s what this proverb says, seemingly lamenting the fact that he was losing money. But he easily managed without his grandchildren’s work, and didn’t have to pay even when they did do some chores. He gave his money with a smile, and not as payment for services. The money should roll to their pockets, he thought, even while summer on the farm was meant to be a vacation. Gardening work was a good excuse to give it to them. But their real job was school, and later college. He said,

#3 *Kas tev galvā iekšā, to neviens tev neatņems* [What you have in your head, nobody can take from you].

The value of our learning was much greater than any money in his pocket. Vecpaps himself had spent many years as a *mūžīgais students* [eternal student], partying at his fraternity house and occasionally taking interesting courses to stay enrolled at the University of Latvia for many years, but he never finished a degree. He didn’t need to, he would think back then, because he had, after all, the business savvy and drive to earn enough and pay off his father’s mortgage, marry and live comfortably with his family, and cover fraternity dues to boot. Until the Communists came, and then the war, leaving him with no things. His wife Margota, who in Latvia earned a master’s degree in English, would, unlike him, later find a solid office job in the USA. And his children and grandchildren too should get the education and skills that they could carry with them wherever life might take them.

In the last few years his body slowed, stiff joints wracked by gout, heart broken and flower gardens abandoned after grandma’s death in 1982. When I dropped by, he offered his guest a very simple meal of meatloaf (mix a pound of ground beef, an egg, salt, and breadcrumbs in a bread pan, bake for about 45 minutes until ready), and for dessert a SaraLee frozen cheesecake. Way

back when, on Christmas Eves years earlier, he would cook up banquets while his wife, three children, their spouses with his eight grandkids were at church. But that kind of heavy work was no longer an option, and after all, just sitting in the living room and chatting, or watching the news on TV with his guest was more important than what we ate. He said,

#4 *Cilvēks nedzīvo, lai ēstu, bet gan ēd, lai dzīvotu* [A person does not live to eat, but rather, eats to live].

In eating, moderation is best. Enjoying good food is not bad, but focusing too much on this pleasure is not a recipe for life fulfilment. Tying happiness to food would depend on things that are out of a person's own control. This proverb he learned from his father, who said it whenever his second wife (grandpa's step-mother) worried that dinner hadn't turned out well.¹ She had not been a great cook, and on most days she served soup (this is why when grandpa married he asked grandma to not make soup too often). The proverb also connects to his memories of scrounging and begging for food during the war, saving the best tidbits for his children while he himself lived for a month off of a sack of kohlrabi that he gotten somewhere (in his gardens he experimented with every kind of squash, tomato, potato, turnip, lettuce, zucchini and corn, but never kohlrabi). If you have something tasty to fill your stomach, life is good.

He once shared a definition of happiness, the best life that a human can hope for. While I cannot remember the specific occasion, I nevertheless remember the exact words he said,

#5 *Garu mūžu nodzīvot, bērnu bērnu piedzīvot* [To live a long life, to meet your children's children].

¹ He told me at least twice about this proverb that his father said to his step-mother, as recorded in my notes from August 21 and November 22, 1986. He also remembered another proverb his father used at such times, *Vēders nav grāmata!* [A stomach is not a book!], but I do not recall him ever saying this one in conversation; a character in Māra Zālīte's recent novel explains this proverb, "a stomach is not as fine a thing as a book is. A book is a fine and precious thing, which can't be compared to a stomach," *Five Fingers*, 115.

Generations depend on each other. Young people depend on their elders to support and teach them how to survive, and an old person can ward off despair if he sees that he has nurtured life in others who continue when he no longer does. Where there's life, there's hope.

These five proverbs together offer a glimpse into vecpaps's worldview, expressed in his own words as I remember them. Strangely, my mother and uncles know most of these proverbs but do not connect them to their father (*laikam viņš vairāk ar padomiņiem dalījās ar mazbērniem*, writes my uncle Juris – apparently he shared his tidbits of advice more with his grandchildren). All three of my sisters vaguely remember him saying proverb #1, and my older sister recalls three others that I do not remember,² but nobody besides me remembers #2, 3, 4, and 5. So it could be that these were words he said only to me as spur-of-the-moment utterances. But this is not the case. Somebody else said them to him first, and he remembered them.

The Comparative Method in Folklore Studies: Proof that a Text is Traditional

I can easily prove that vecpaps did not invent any of these sayings. He must have heard, remembered, and repeated them from

² My sister Inga remembered three other sayings: (1) *Nemet jaunu naudu pakaļ vecai*, [Don't throw new money after old], which he said, for example, while debating whether her old car was worth fixing; it relates to a Latvian variant, *Labāk no jauna darīt nekā vecu labot* [Better to make from new than to repair old], in Kokare, *Latviešu sakāmvārdi*, #3128; and the American proverb, *Throw good money after bad*, Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Early American Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases*, #M219; and it also echoes the Biblical *Nobody puts a piece of new cloth into an old garment*, Matt. 9:16 and Mark 3:21, referenced in Mieder, *Not by Bread Alone*, 72. (2) *Nauda ir izdošanai, kapā nevajadzēs* [Money is for spending, it won't be needed in the grave], a variant of *Kapā paliks zelta kalns, kapā nabaga tarba* [A pile of gold, or beggar's sack, both will go to the grave] Kokare, *Latviešu sakāmvārdi*, #6659. And (3) *Kapēc ēst saldo ēdienu beigās – viss tānī pašā vēderā saiet!* [Why eat dessert last? It all goes to the same stomach!].

somewhere else, because all of them were spoken or written long before he was born. Vecpaps was not alone: he shared all of these proverbs with people speaking different languages in many countries. Matti Kuusi's index of proverb types reveals that these five proverbs share themes with many other proverbs used by humans in response to comparable situations, and index notes help map the outlines of a given proverb's geographic dissemination.³ Standard reference books help find international variants, as documented in this section. In summary, four of vecpaps's proverbs appear in Wolfgang Mieder's standard reference dictionary (a book grandpa did not have), and more variants from other languages appear in Emanuel Strauss's three volumes of European proverbs. National compilations offer variants within a single language or region: for example, four of these five proverbs exist also in Estonian (a language grandpa did not speak), and at least three were known in North America long before he immigrated:

#1 has variants in German, Polish and Czech, as well as Karelian, Estonian, Vepsian and Livonian.⁴ Russian variants typically have a wolf or bear, not rabbit.⁵ Estonian and Lithuanian proverbs

³ The five proverbs discussed here fall under the following subgroups in Matti Kuusi's Type Index: M7e "There will always be more than enough work—and sleep", K2g "Money circulates; people grow richer and poorer", M3a "The value of wisdom, knowledge, intelligence and reason", D3i "Moderation is best > overeating is bad for your health", T3c "Trusting in the future, preparing for the future, dreaming, optimism and pessimism" and G2c "The mutual dependence of generations" in Lauhakangas, *The M6 international type system of proverbs*; see also Lauhakangas, *The Matti Kuusi international type system of proverbs*.

⁴ Mieder lists *Work is not a hare, it won't run away* as a Latvian proverb in *The Prentice-Hall Encyclopedia of World Proverbs*, #18311. Kokare compiles three Latvian and three German variants in *Latviešu un vācu sakāmāvārdi paralēles*, #20; German, Polish and Czech variants appear in Strauss, *Dictionary of European Proverbs*, #1395; Kuusi, *Proverbia septentrionalia*, #362. Matti Kuusi's type M7e, (see footnote 3 above) is common in North and East Europe.

⁵ *Work isn't a wolf, it won't run off into the forest* (Russian), Mieder, *Prentice Hall Encyclopedia*, #18312, Permiakov, *300 obshcheupotrebitel'nykh russkikh poslovits i pogovorok*, #189.

may also replace the rabbit with a wolf, bear or frog, and among the many Latvian variants there is even one in which the animal that won't run away is a cat.⁶

#2 is traditional in a large territory, from Europe to Asia.⁷ It has variants in English, German, Yiddish, French, Spanish, Rumanian, Polish and Estonian,⁸ and has also been recorded in oral tradition, in Washington and Wisconsin of the United States.⁹

#3 has variants in Philippine, Estonian, Lithuanian and American tradition.¹⁰

#4 is known across European and Islamic cultures.¹¹ Variants are documented in Latin, French, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Ger-

⁶ *Ega tūō jānes pole, iest ārā ei juokse* [Work is not a rabbit, it won't run away] Krikmann, *Eesti vanasõnad*, #12416 B,a; see also #12418 and #12503; *Darbas – ne zuikis, nepabēgs* [Work is not a rabbit, it won't run away], 35 variants in Grigas, *Lietuvių patarlės ir priežodžiai*, #2054; *Darbs nav zaķis, projām neskries*, [Work is not a rabbit, it won't run away] in Straubergs, *Latviešu tautas mīklas, sakāmvārdi un parunas*, #979, and Kokare, *Latviešu sakāmvārdi un parunas: Izlase*, #1778; *Darbs nav kaķis, projām neskries* [Work is not a cat, it won't run away], *Latviešu Folkloras Krātuve* (on-line), #LFK-1404-613.

⁷ Matti Kuusi's Type K2g 10, "Money is roundish so that it can move."

⁸ Mieder, *Prentice Hall Encyclopedia*, #11164 *Money is round* (English); #11165 *Money is round and rolls easily* (Rumanian); #11166 *Money is round; it must roll* (French); and #11167 *Money is round; it rolls away from you* (Yiddish). Strauss, *Dictionary*, #1466 adds other English variants such as *Money is round and meant to roll* and German *Das Geld ist rund und muss rollen* [money is round and must roll], along with French, Spanish and Polish variants. See also Estonian variants in Krikmann, *Eesti vanasõnad*, #9476. Vita Džekčioriūtė-Medeišienė reports that no variants have been collected in the Lithuanian Folklore Archive, e-mail to author, February 2, 2018.

⁹ *Money is round and rolls away*, Mieder, *Dictionary*, 416.

¹⁰ *Learning is wealth that can't be stolen* (Philippine), Mieder, *Prentice-Hall Encyclopedia*, #9013; *Mes inimene oppeb, see ei lää kunage hukka* [What a person learns will never be destroyed], Krikmann, *Eesti vanasõnad*, #2169:1; Vita Džekčioriūtė-Medeišienė reports that the Lithuanian Folklore Archives contain eight unpublished variants, among them "*Ką išmoksi, to nė ugnis nesudegins, nė vagis nepavogs* [What you learn, neither fire will burn, nor a thief steal], recorded by J. Vencius in 1932, LTR 390 (140/1068). 11. *If a man empties his purse into his head, no one can take it from him*, Mieder, *Dictionary*, #491. Kuusi's Type M3a 19 "Good sense costs money and cannot be bought with money" is a global proverb, found in all human cultural areas.

¹¹ Kuusi Type D3i 28, "Some eat to live, others live to eat."

man, Dutch, and Polish, as well as Estonian and Latvian.¹² The proverb first appeared in writing seven centuries ago, and in North America it was first written down in 1693 by William Penn; it continues a vibrant life in current American English.¹³ #5 does not appear in the standard proverb reference collections, but its connections to international traditions are clear: It is synonymous¹⁴ with two Biblical proverbs,¹⁵ and shares a common

¹² *Mēs ēdam, lai dzīvotu, bet ne dzīvojam, lai ēstu* [We eat to live, but we do not live to eat], Kokare, *Latviešu sakāmvārdi*, #5403. *Me ei ela selleks, et süüa, vaid sööme selleks, et elada* [We do not live to eat, but eat to live], Krikmann, *Eesti vanasõnad*, #561; Vita Džekčiorūtė-Medeišienė reports that the Lithuanian Folklore Archives hold nine variants, among them *Žmogus gyvena ne tam, kad valgytų* [A person does not live to eat], *Lietuvių tautosakos rankraštynas*, 3533 (843); see also *Gyvenk ne tam, kad valgytum, tik valgyk, kad gyventum* [Do not live to eat, only eat to live], *Lietuvių patarlės ir priežodžiai, elektroninis sąvadas* (on-line), 6 Lithuanian variants in Grigas, *Lietuvių patarlės*, #5026. Whiting quotes *Eat to live and not live to eat*, from Benjamin Franklin in 1733, *Early American Proverbs*, #E20; Mieder, *Prentice-Hall Encyclopedia*, #4341; Strauss, *Dictionary*, #903.

¹³ Mieder, *Dictionary*, #175. A search for “eat to live” in the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* turns up 9 variants of the proverb.

¹⁴ The three terms, “synonymous,” “shared structure,” and “common basic core” (images and phrases have the same meaning) refer to criteria that for Matti Kuusi proved a proverb’s traditionality, in Lauhakangas, *The Matti Kuusi international type system of proverbs*, 24. The proverb is not listed in Mieder or Strauss’s compilations. Its basic core inverts Kuusi’s Type G3d 20 “Children beget children to the nuisance of their parents.” In some contexts, it may be synonymous with Kuusi’s Type T3c 25 “Trust in the future,” or more broadly Type T3c, “Where there’s life, there’s hope”; Mieder identifies *While there’s life, there’s hope* as an English proverb, *Prentice Hall Encyclopedia*, #9210.

¹⁵ Related texts in the Bible include *One generation passes away, and another generation comes*, Eccles. 1:4, Mieder, *Not by Bread Alone*, 48; and *Children’s children are the crown of old men*, Proverbs 17: 6, with variants in three Latvian Bible translations: *Behrnu Behrni ir to Wezzako krohnis* [Children’s children are the crown of the elders], 1689, *Sirmgalvju kronis ir behrnu-behrni* [The crown of gray-haired people is children’s children], 1945, and *Vecu cilvēku vainagojums ir viņu bērni* [The crowning of old people is their children], 1965. This proverb is not listed in the standard references, but it has a traditional structure: “X is Y’s crown,” shared with the Old Testament proverb *A virtuous wife is a crown to her husband*, Prov. 12:4, Mieder, *Not by Bread Alone*, 1990, 71; see also Kuusi’s type G5f 38, “A good wife is a goodly prize”.

core – images that have the same meaning – with other Biblical passages as well as expressions in current American English.¹⁶

And so, with a quick check of some standard folklore reference works I've proven that my grandpa's five proverbs have been shared by many people over large distances in time and space. Studying my own grandpa thus also means studying shared traditions of humankind.¹⁷ But the main questions in folkloristics are not only about whether the speaker invented or borrowed a proverb, or listing all places and languages in which a proverb exists. A folklorist investigates how an individual performer adapts a text to suit a particular context.

The Comparative Method, Continued: Proof of Individuality

Although the five proverbs listed above are traditional and found in numerous languages, they are by no means common. None of the five appears in Gyula Paczolay's list of the 106 most widespread European proverbs.¹⁸ Only one (#1), appears in Matti Kuusi's list of 900 proverbs widely shared among the Finno-Ugric languages spoken to Latvia's north and that same proverb is the only one appearing in Uvarov's recent collection of 54,000 late-twentieth–twenty first century Russian proverbs.¹⁹ Annelies Beyer's standard collection of German proverbs also lists only one (#4).²⁰ Nor are any of these five proverbs common in the English-speaking

¹⁶ In Psalm 128:6, a good man will live long and "see thy children's children." The *Corpus of Contemporary American English* reports that the saying, *May they live to see their children's children*, was used by the author Timothy P. O'Malley in 2012, and "His eyes lingered on his children, and his grandchildren, whose children's children he would likely live to see," by Robert J. Sawyer in 2006.

¹⁷ Lauhakangas, *Matti Kuusi System*, 76–77.

¹⁸ Paczolay, *European proverbs: in 55 languages*.

¹⁹ Kuusi, *Proverbia septentrionalia*; Uvarov's proverb #39281 refers to a wolf, not rabbit; *Entsiklopediia narodnoi mudrosti*.

²⁰ Beyer, *Sprichwörterlexicon*.

world.²¹ And, strangely, only two of the proverbs (#1 and #4) appear in the standard collections of Latvian proverbs compiled by Straubergs and Kokare (cited above). So, it is difficult to classify this group of proverbs as typically “Latvian” or “European”, because three have not been documented among other Latvian speakers, and four are not well known in many European languages.

They are definitely not all in any particular nation’s or ethnic group’s (including Latvians) “paremiological minimum,” a core set of proverbs known and actively used by adults in these societies.²² One would thus not look to these proverbs as a reflection of the “mentality” of any ethnic group or nation. Nor can we know the relationship between this one speaker and the larger corpus of Latvian proverbs²³ – for that, we would need to know more about his proverb repertoire, which certainly was larger than the five texts quoted here but can no longer be reconstructed.

Four of grandfather’s proverbs do have variants in Estonia, Latvia’s northern neighbor, and three find parallel texts in Lithuania. He did not know these languages, and to my knowledge he never traveled to those countries. Did proverbs #1–#4 somehow travel from Estonia into grandfather’s repertoire? Did #1, #3 and #4 travel from somewhere else to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania? Or were these proverbs created independently by vecpaps and other speakers in different places? We do not know. We can not know the history of how these proverbs were created or traveled over time and space.

²¹ None appear in Mieder’s list of 75 high-frequency American proverbs, *Proverbs: A Handbook*, 129–130, or Haas’s list of 313 “familiar” American proverbs, “Proverb Familiarity in the United States,” 337–343.

²² Grigorii Permiakov, “On the Question of a Russian Paremiological Minimum,” 91–102. Permiakov estimated that a language has about 800 proverbs or proverbial phrases that are understood by all speakers; he published a list of 300 such Russian proverbs as an aid to students studying Russian as a foreign language, *300 obshcheupotrebitel’nykh russkikh poslovits*. Comparable lists have been compiled for other languages, as summarized by Mieder, *Behold the Proverbs*, 27.

²³ Brandes, “The Selection Process in Proverb Use,” 167–186; Mieder, *Proverbs: A Handbook*, 135–137

We do know that all five proverbs appeared in my grandpa's conversations with me, and that the combination of these particular proverbs in one person's repertoire is unique. We can examine how one proverb resonates with the others, and hypothesize about meanings that vecpaps may have associated with them. We might then open a small window into his worldview.²⁴ That's what I'll try to do here.

Words are Shared, but Meanings Often Aren't

Although the meaning of any proverb may seem obvious at first, folklore studies prove otherwise: Lithuanian folklorists, for example, asked people to explain the meaning of #1 above, "work is not a rabbit (wolf, bear)," and what might be the situation where a person would say it. They heard a variety of replies, ranging from anti-procrastination to pro-procrastination. In the words of seven individuals from the Lithuanian folk:

- (A) a lazy person says this;
- (B) sometimes one says it, maybe even resentfully, when urged to work;
- (C) they say this when they postpone chores to a different hour, dragging their feet;
- (D) if you don't do work then it will remain undone;
- (E) no need to rush;
- (F) "Stay a while, visit" – "I can't, work is waiting for me" – "Work is not."
- (G) you'll manage.²⁵

²⁴ The study of how proverbs are used by individuals has up to now centered mostly on people who produce large corpuses of writings and recorded speeches – literary authors or political leaders. From their writings a folklorist can extract a proverb repertoire and paint a detailed picture of that person's creative innovations and poetic style, rhetorical skill, or ideology. This essay, based as it is on only five proverbs documented only in my own memory, cannot approach the depth of classic studies such as Wolfgang Mieder's analyses of proverbs in the repertoires of American presidents.

²⁵ Kartais net su užsigavimu sako raginamas dirbti; sako tinginys; jeigu nepadarysi darbo, tai jis ir liks nepadarytas; šitaip sako, kai darbus vis atideda kitai

A five-second internet search reveals even more variants currently circulating in Latvian. “Work is not a rabbit,” for example, may be quoted in different ways:

- It is a subtitle in a list of “signs that a relationship might fail”: forming a relationship may be problematic if one’s partner is not actively looking for a job (i.e. he is lazy and might use this proverb to justify unemployment)²⁶.
- It is quoted to argue that a person should slow down and lessen stress: “Advice to workaholics: How to make life easier”²⁷.
- It is the title of a video showing a magician pulling a rabbit out of his hat, wishing viewers a happy Year of the Rabbit.²⁸
- It has entirely lost its connection to work or rabbits, and is merely an online sound file demonstrating correct pronunciation for Latvian language students.²⁹

A proverb’s meaning emerges from its context – the words and actions that surround it. So, which meaning applies to my grandpa’s proverb? To answer, I need to revisit the proverb’s specific context as I sift through possible meanings documented by earlier folklorists. I noted above that grandpa worked very hard, never leaving for tomorrow work he could do today. He said this proverb about work while referring to his grandson *not* working in the garden. It could first appear that he had negative feelings about a lazy grandchild, as in Lithuanian definitions A and D. But in my memory of vecpaps’s proverb repertoire it also connects to other proverbs related to the importance of school, and gifts of money – indicating that he may not have been scolding me when he said this one. I’ll add some information about the “texture” of his words: He said it with a sly smile, his voice hinting at a joke that he knew I would understand.

valandai, velka; suspēsi; nepabēgs, nēra ko skubinties; „Pabūk, pasvečiuk” – „Negaliu, darbas laukia” – „Darbas ne...”; Sakoma, kai kas skuba dirbti, o antrasis pašnekovas nori paplepėti. Grigas, *Lietuvių patarlės ir priežodžiai*, #2054.

²⁶ “Darbs nav zaķis – neaizbēgs” (on-line).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “Darbs nav zaķis... daudz laimes un prieka!” (on-line).

²⁹ “How to pronounce darbs nav zaķis, mežā neaizbēgs.” (on-line).

I cannot today ask vecpaps to explain what his proverb meant. But I can apply methods of folklore studies to produce a reasonable conjecture. I'm now ready to interpret the meaning, based on my description of the proverb's (a) text, (b) its texture and (c) its context, enriched by (d) comparative study of the proverb's variants and (e) variant meanings in different contexts, and by (f) exploration of its connections to other proverbs in grandpa's repertoire. I think this is how he might explain the meaning:

- You and I know that people who don't work are lazy, and laziness is not good. Not working on my farm might be seen as being lazy, and what I'm saying might sound like scolding, but actually you and I know that I'm not expecting you to do my work. You and I know that you're not lazy and if I asked you to work more, you would. But you're on vacation from school, which is the most important work you're doing, and I think you should take a break and have some fun.

In a way, this definition includes all of the meanings collected by Lithuanian folklorists, from A to G. But the meaning is not a sum total of all meanings. In any specific performance context, too, the speaker and listener deduce and select which meaning or combination of meanings is true to their conversation.

Describing and Empathizing with People's Folklore and Shared Identity: Mission Possible?

I think the "you and I know" portion of my explication is important. The group in which this proverb was shared was not a national or ethnic group, but rather, it was a group of only two people.³⁰ The joking context was tied to something we shared beyond language. These were "inside jokes." He trusted me to know that what he was saying was all in fun. And trust, not expressed in words, strengthens bonds between people, building a

³⁰ Oring, "Dyadic Traditions," 19–28.

shared identity. I think many other folklore traditions work this way. While people share, borrow, and perform folklore texts, the act of sharing and understanding these texts is a bridge of understanding between speaker and listener, performer and audience. If we can describe and understand other people's traditions, we can share their identity, and see their world as they see it, from their "insider's point of view".

I hope that now, after reading my ethnographic description of five traditional proverbs, you can sense what it's like to be me or my immigrant grandpa, chatting in his native language. I think the methods of folklore studies demonstrated here can easily be applied to the study of any and all humans, and I hope you'll try these methods out for yourself. And that someday, when we all become folklorists, all humans will know how to understand each other.

Author's Note

I am interested in hearing about proverbs in Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian families. If you'd like to share your traditions, please write to me, guntiss@uw.edu.

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Prose poems

CRAIG CZURY

In The Cafés Where

I write, in the morning cafés hidden and unexpected, surrounded by others who are also waking into their foreign languages, just the right pitch of clutter to cradle my search for the right lost words, the spark and surprising associations. I love this not knowing where I'm supposed to be. Not knowing where I'm supposed to be on the page. Only, this damn American music, constantly everywhere I could have stayed home for. America's #1 export, as if these former Eastern Bloc countries don't have their own psychoses. Yevtushenko, in '64, explaining why a print run of fifty thousand disappears overnight, "Not because the Russian people love poetry, it's because the Russian people don't have pop culture." Then *bam!* Soviet Union collapses, the Lithuanian poets and literary critics are making real money translating voice-overs for DALLAS re-runs, the samizdat presses are cranking out fashion magazines and pornography. And, inside all this projectionism, I find the word *careen* as how I got here, the place *cobble streets*, another way *stumbling*, and the diagram of a coal mine with prepositional phrases *over bricks the dead have pushed tree roots up into their grip on my...* Righteous Brothers? Am I really back in 8th grade on a side street against the alcove with the preacher's

CRAIG CZURY is from the coal mining region of northeastern Pennsylvania. "Growing up in immigrant communities, English wasn't my first language, broken English was, in all of its visceral tones and undertones, like poetry." His most recent book, *Fifteen Stones*, is a collection of prose poems from Italy, Lithuanian and the space between.

kid teaching me how to French kiss? Did I really have to live this long, travel this far to relive the taste of her breath the first time with her tongue parting my lips to awaken mine? Oh Lithuania. Albania, these same damn American songs I didn't have to graduate high school for. Hell, if I wanted Warsaw I could have caught a ride to Nanticoke. *Hey Hey we're the monkeys.*

A Thin Sandwich, But

nutritious. This small book. Small bites at a time like the little rat bites Monk and the boys took out of my lunch pail sandwiches when they weren't throwing dynamite at me in the mines. Little pranks. Each poem a little prank theorem, knowing there's no such thing as absolute. Each line an absolute leading to the *therefore* of it all. Little defeatist punchlines gnawing at the fiber. Just roll your eyes. Do you have all your absolutes in order? I've sunk mine between the joists behind the medicine cabinet of my old house, knowing whoever comes in to clean up after me will shovel all this nonsense into a dumpster. DOWN TIME IS CLEAN UP TIME the sign over the conveyor belt reads at the sawmill. I'm not sure, *bičiulis*, as with all other distractions that keep life seemingly normal, how to respond to your cancer.

God's Shiny Glass

Eye—that cosmetic eye you can't see a damn thing through—title of the book I wrote when I drifted back home to find who I would have become if I'd never left after high school. Or, who I was supposed to be, *big strappin' boy* that I was, stepping into my rite-of-passage at the same time our fathers, uncles, older brothers were let go from the mills and factories shut down. The mines collapsed, or collapsing as Vietnam wound down. Minimum wage \$2.35. I could have stuck around, have my old man pull some strings to get me on at the tire re-tread plant, or hit

up a buddy to landscape estates. It's a common scenario: A summer job. The girl you're playing around with gets pregnant. Your life is here. Shit-ass Coal Town (as my mother puts it), zip code. I'm writing this from Kaunas fifty years later, feeling at home among the dour and restless, beatup-looking men and sad women. It doesn't matter I don't get what they're talking about, we're suffocating inside the same cigarette cloud and Bedouin trance music like Trotsky over and over getting whacked from behind. I could still go back and maybe get it right. Maybe I got one good sperm left. I'd shovel snow for a living. It's pretty much the same action as the mines after all the shit blows loose.

Sunlight strikes a glint off the side of a hill

A familiar sign

God's shiny glass eye thrown us a glance

Antanas Ulevičius

Antanas Ulevičius has always been interested in the human figure. His early sculptures were an adaptation of traditional Lithuanian folk art, but soon succumbed to more academic influences including his studies in architecture. Artists' influences and themes crisscross in his ceramic figures; his strongest inspiration comes from historical artists like Klimt, Modigliani, Matisse, Giacometti, and notably M. K. Čiurlonis. He has also referenced Samurai armor and costumes, and Futuristic clothing. American Plains Indian regalia are an important influence both from their physicality as well as the idea of freedom, as in the lives and culture of Native Americans prior to colonization by Europeans.

Antanas Ulevičius was born in Kaunas, Lithuania and came to the United States in 1989, fresh out of his architecture and ceramic studies at the Lithuanian Academy of Art in Vilnius. He and his brother Kostas, found a benefactor in Lithuanian Stanley Balzekas, a Chicago area Chrysler dealer, who gave the brothers a small working space at his dealership. In 1990, Antanas had his first taste of United States ceramics at a month long visiting artist residency in ceramics at Illinois Wesleyan University in Bloomington. From those humble beginnings, he has perfected his art and gained notable recognition in the art fair circuit. His success in the field has allowed him to build a home and studio and raise a family in St. Petersburg, Florida. He has won numerous awards for his work at the Bruce Museum Arts Festival in Connecticut, Boston Mills Art Festival in Ohio, and an Award of Distinction at the Bonita Springs National Arts Festival and Boca Raton Museum Art Festival in Florida, to name a few.



Antanas Ulevičius in the studio,
photo: Ruta Ulevičius

Antanas' sculptures are made of stoneware clay and fired to 2200 °F; each piece is fired as many as three times to achieve the desired effect. He exhibits and offers his work to the public at art fairs and festivals throughout the United States.



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Charming Lady*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 36"/10"/8", photo: Kostas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Abstract Warrior*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 33"/9"/6", photo: Kostas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Blue Figure with the Bird*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 30"/8"/5", photo: Antanas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Blue Figure*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 35"/9"/7", photo: Kostas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Don Quixote*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 31"/11"/7", photo: Antanas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Dreamer*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F,
34"/8"/6", photo: Kostas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Figure with Two dots*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 27"/8"/5", photo: Kostas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Philosopher*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 30"/7"/6", photo: Kostas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Warrior*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 33"/10"/6", photo: Kostas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Crazy Horse*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 36"/11"/7", photo: Antanas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Cheyenne Warrior*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 32"/9"/6", photo: Antanas Ulevičius



Antanas ULEVIČIUS. *Matisse Woman*, Stoneware, glazes, 2200 °F, 31"/7"/6", photo: Kostas Ulevičius

A Conversation with Ričardas Gavelis

ALMANTAS SAMALAVIČIUS

An English translation of the novel *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short* by Ričardas Gavelis was published at the end of 2018 by Vagabond Voices in Glasgow. Ričardas Gavelis (1950–2002) was one of Lithuania's leading prose writers who among many other things introduced postmodern narrative into Lithuanian fiction and challenged Lithuanian culture with his *Vilnius Poker* on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet system. A prolific author with seven novels and four collections of short stories to his credit, Gavelis also wrote plays for theater, film scripts and occasional literary essays. In addition to a review of the English translation of *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short*, I have decided to include my interview with Gavelis, conducted in 1994. An author of three novels at that time, he was also widely acknowledged as a provocative and insightful, often ironic political and economic analyst, and yet most often viewed as an *enfant terrible* rather than as one of Lithuania's best prose writers of the end of the last century. I hope that this short communication will add some light on the ideas and personality of this exceptional literary figure who coincidentally was one of the handful of Lithuanian authors who wrote important books in a period when there was no hope to ever see them published. Today, however, representing Lithuanian literature at its best, Gavelis novels are not only reprinted in his home country but are being translated into many languages. Back in 1994 when I conducted this conversation, his prose was almost unknown outside the country.

A. S. *Your famous novel Vilniaus pokeris (Vilnius Poker), which came right out of the blue to the Lithuanian readership, was written during the years of strict censorship and was kept hidden in sections by reliable friends you agreed never to mention. This period is over and the present-day situation is quite different. Many of your colleagues felt somewhat lost in the changing atmosphere, as if they didn't know what or how to write. But you are still continuing to dwell on the themes of power and abuse. Did the social changes have any impact upon you as a writer?*

R. G. Every human being is to a certain degree subject to external conditions. They also change internally. However, the external can never change the essence of the internal. Whatever attracted me some time ago is still within the range of my current interests. I don't feel any necessity to change myself. That's why in terms of my work I have not changed considerably. I don't feel any creative crisis. What I feel is a hopeless lack of time. These days, one has to find additional resources for living. Less time is left for writing.

A. S. *Many critics place you in the category of 'scandalous authors' (though we don't have many Lithuanian examples of this kind). What is your reaction to attempts to frame you that way? And what do you think about a society in which an artist's and writer's dwelling on sexual or political violence is considered to be openly scandalous, or in other words, obscene?*

R. G. I don't care what categories I'm prescribed to. As for being scandalous – well, it seems natural. Lithuanian literature during the Soviet years was extremely and falsely puritanical. Those who suddenly chose to write about the litter of life, like love and violence, were suddenly branded scandalous. To view the situation from a pragmatic point of view, these themes contributed sufficiently to the sales of my books. But speaking more seriously, perhaps the time has come to revive necrotic Lithuanian literature, to give it some fresh air. I do shamelessly believe that *Vilniaus pokeris* (Vilnius Poker) was a novelty in Lithuanian literature. Maybe this novelty was not especially soothing or beautiful, but afterwards many younger authors felt much more free. The book broke a lot of taboos.

A. S. *You are also active as a columnist and polemicist, provoking reconsideration of economic issues. You are strongly advocating liberal ideas of 'new economic thinking', bringing many controversies into local debates on politics and economics. Why do you think these seem to be quite attractive to some circles of business people?*

R. G. During the Soviet years we were deprived of economics. Marxism was the only possible doctrine. Little by little, I realized that there was a gap in my education. Somewhat unconsciously I got interested in what economics really meant. And I was sincerely perplexed. I found it was a completely new sphere of cognition. Contemporary economics is something more than just the presentation of mathematical figures. It is a completely new and very interesting science to Lithuania. It proclaims that people are acting independently, that they have their own goals. It is the science of achieving goals, or even art. And yet, 99 per cent of Lithuanian businessmen haven't the slightest idea about all of this. The 'businessmen' are those who managed to get hold of former state property. But contemporary economic thinking states that success is achieved by those who are more flexible and individual, not those who managed to get their share from the former cake of 'common property'. 99 per cent of our 'capitalists' and bourgeoisie of the nomenclature type would be quite willing to destroy normal economic thinking.

A. S. *Your articles and essays are often loaded with an irony that I also often share. Are writers forced to choose this sense of irony because of our specifically absurd situation, or for you is this just a matter of individual style?*

R. G. Irony is comprised of different parts. Here and now, we have just a few alternatives – either to sob, tearing the hair from our heads, or to live with a sense of irony. The latter option is much closer to my heart. Tearing out hair, seems simply funny to me. I can use sarcasm and satire in its place.

A. S. *Some years ago you openly proclaimed in one of your essays that the era of the dilettanti is approaching. When that was written, many people were feeling a patriotic upheaval with remarkably bright visions of their near future. All of us have now witnessed what was*

supposed to be that 'future'. Have you changed your opinion on the subject since you wrote that? And last but not least, what is your opinion about Lithuanian politicians?

R. G. The dilettanti did indeed get into full swing. I started to write my own essays on economics only because I realized that Lithuania was being governed by people who use books that are forty years old. It is difficult to say anything definite about politicians. We are being ruled by hopelessly ungifted people. Not just ungifted, but hopelessly ungifted. One hears a lot of rubbish in the parliament of any country, but Lithuania in this respect is surely leading the whole of Europe. Everywhere, government ministers slip up occasionally on foolish words. But in Lithuania we have government ministers who talk nonsense constantly.

To put it bluntly, I detest the caste of politicians.

Motorcycle Sports in Interwar Vilnius

RIČARDAS ŽIČKUS

Occasionally, articles are published in the Lithuanian media about the motorcyclists of Kaunas, Šiauliai, or Klaipėda. However, the capital of Lithuania, Vilnius, is neglected; perhaps this is because it belonged to Poland during the interwar period, or possibly because the researchers cannot read in Polish. As the modern state of Lithuania is currently celebrating its centennial, I would like to discuss the motorcyclists of interwar Vilnius as well. Their activities are certainly worthy of attention.

In the period between 1920 and 1939, Eastern Lithuania was occupied by Poland. Vilnius became a remote province of Poland and a highly militarized territory. Ever since the times of Tsarist Russia, the regional road structure had been oriented toward connections to the East rather than the West, and their condition was poor. Many of the bridges were destroyed during World War I, and roads became impassable in autumn and spring. East Lithuanian roads were also less developed for vehicles. In 1923, Vilnius Voivodeship had 40 registered passenger cars, 19 trucks, 4 buses and 2 motorcycles. However, even under the most difficult conditions, there are always enthusiasts who want to defeat all obstacles and demonstrate the supremacy that they and their equipment have against their predicament. Here I will attempt to describe what was going on in the motorcyclists' lives in in-

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terwar Vilnius; there were numerous and interesting events taking place. Unfortunately, the pertinent illustrations, and photos in particular, have been scarce so far. It is worth mentioning the collection of plaques dedicated to the interwar motorcycling awards and the commemoration of the competition participants, which is an apt illustration of the activities of Vilnius motorcyclists at that time.

The history of Vilnius motorcycle sports began in 1931, when the first motorcycle club was founded, which was not registered as a separate legal entity but rather appended to the Vilnius Cycling Association, which had already existed in Vilnius for many years. The first chairman of Vilnius Motorcycle Club was M. J. Sitarskis.

The precise date of the “unification” of cyclists and motorcyclists has not been determined yet. Based on the events in 1931, it can be claimed that the first motorcycle club was established in Vilnius during the second half of 1931. The motorcycle club became a part of the Vilnius Cycling Association.

On 20 September 1931, the club organized its first event, the race Vilnius–Grodno–Vilnius, where the race course was: Vilnius–Paluknys–Eišiškės–Radun–Zabalać–Novy Dvor–Astryna–Aziory–Grodno and back. Jan Sobecki was appointed as the commodore of the race. The race started at 4 a.m. in Cathedral Square. The participants started every 5 minutes. In Grodno, the second leg of the competition launched at 12 p.m. Like the starting line, the finish line was crossed at the Cathedral Square in Vilnius.

The special winner prize for top-class driving was awarded to L. Palevičius, who rode a NSU motorcycle and carried a lady in the backseat. The *Slovo* newspaper reported: “The lady, too, could have been awarded for her resolve and endurance”.

In individual classes, the winners and the recipients of the club’s prizes were: 200 cm³ – Ignatowicz (DKW); 300 cm³ – Sitarski (Excelsior); 350 cm³ – Moroz (FN); 500 cm³ – Pimonov (BSA); 550 cm³ – Urniaž (BSA); 750 cm³ – Olszewski (Indian). The runners-up were: 350 cm³ – T. Kleber (Gillet); 500 cm³ – L. Palevičius (NSU). Additionally, the race participants’ various

achievements were rewarded handsomely by numerous private companies that were, naturally, directly related to motorcycles. The first event of the Vilnius Motorcycling Association was successful and, as the race participants were accepting their prizes, they were already discussing the next event which was to follow a few weeks later. There was no shortage of enthusiasm.

Lithuanian newspaper *Vilniaus Rytojus* wrote on 30 September 1931:

A motorcycle race, Vilnius–Grodno–Vilnius, was recently organized (1931.09.20). The most prominent motorcyclists from Vilnius took part in the race. Leonas Palevičius from Lithuania also attended the race, riding a motorcycle with a sidecar. At the end of the race, the results were announced. The club's first prize for beautiful and exemplary driving was given to Mr. L. Palevičius, who raced and returned on time, without any penalties. Mr. L. Palevičius is a well-known Vilnius sportsman who gained prominence while still attending Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium, when he also took the first prize at the Vilnius Scout Running Race as a member of the Lithuanian Scout Troop in 1928. Mr. L. Palevičius has also won more than a few prizes in German motorcycling races while studying gardening in Germany.

The next race organized by the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association, Vilnius–Lida–Vilnius, took place on 11 October 1931. The length of the racetrack was 274 km. The race started on 6 a.m. and ended between 3 and 5 p.m. at Cathedral Square. The race's commodore was an engineer, Stelmasiewicz, while the vice commodore was V. Kurec. The technical commission consisted of engineers Szestakowski and Janowicz, jury chair Krukowski, and members Felitan, Rydzewski, and Andrukowicz. No information has so far been found about the race itself or about the club's third event organized in 1931. I only found one document related to the latter in the archive, a message to Vilnius Voivodeship, which said:

We would like to inform you that, on Sunday the 25th of this month (October), the Fox Hunt will be organized: it is a motorcycle pathfinding competition. The event will conclude at 12



The participation plaque of the first Vilnius motorcycling race's winner Leonardas Palevičius and the plaque of Urniaž's award. Trakai History Museum

p.m. on Montvilos Street (currently Vasario 16-osios Street). Additionally, would you please provide us with the permit for the "Slow Driving" competition? The competition would be held on the 25th day of the month, at 12 p.m., from the corner on Montvilos Street, Mickevičiaus Avenue, to the Cathedral Square. Traffic would proceed as usual, on the right side, at the slowest possible speed.

Three motor sports events were held in Vilnius in 1932. Two were organized by the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association: a race, Vilnius–Grodno–Vilnius, on 15 May, and a competition, Vilnius–Eišiškės–Vilnius, on 29 May. The third event, competition Warsaw–Vilnius–Warsaw, was organized by the military sports club Legia. Just like today, in order to organize an event in the city of Vilnius, a permit was required back then from the governments of the city and the voivodeship, thus several requests regarding competitions have been found in the archive; however, the association was not obligated to report to the government about the results of the organized events. For some reason, the local press did not do practically any reporting on the aforementioned events, so there is no detailed information about them. An interesting draft of Vilnius voivode's letter to Vilnius City's elder, sent in June 1932, confirms that the events did indeed take place:

Over the recent weeks, motorcycle races have been quite frequently organised by the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association. The start and the finish of the race is typically in the city centre, e.g. Cathedral Square or somewhere similar. While we should retain the goodwill towards all sports events, in the future, we should refrain from allowing races in the city centre and the key transportation arteries because the race impedes normal traffic and is a threat to order and public safety. I request the Elder to warn all the parties involved about the aforementioned perspective. I also request the Elder to inform the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association that they should address the Elder directly rather than the Voivodeship Department regarding the matters of the race's organization <...>.

The race Warsaw–Vilnius–Warsaw took place on 13–14 August 1932. Based on several short news items about the race, it appears that two motorcycle clubs were already opened in Vilnius in 1932: one of them was already well-known, while the other was the Motorcycling Unit of the Jewish Academic Sports Club (JASC) at Stefan Batory University (SBU) in Vilnius. The latter club had a number of various sections for individual sports and, in 1932,

the motorcycling section was added. Both of the clubs greeted the race participants in Vilnius as they were returning from Warsaw. The race started and finished on the road near the Paneriai Chapel. All 29 sportsmen who started the race in Warsaw successfully crossed the finish line in Vilnius. In the evening, the race participants visited Verkiai and explored the city. On the early morning of 14 August, the racers went back to Warsaw.

I would like to begin the story about the events of 1933 with a brief excerpt from a popular Polish journal, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (No. 28):

One of the fires that incite the development of motorization is competitions: races, rallies, drives, etc. Three years ago we had a large number of interesting events in Poland that reinforced the autoclub's ambitions. Now, as a result of financial difficulties, our motor sports movement is completely lifeless. Only the Lvovians did not give in to hopelessness and did not surrender to the Financial Crisis, initiating large-scale, well-organized, and truly international races in Lviv.

So, the Polish motorists, as well as the Lithuanian ones, were defeated by the crisis; however, the motorcyclists of Vilnius, who had recently established new clubs, were active and did not give up. The motorcycle clubs of Vilnius organized no less than six events in 1933. The season began on 21 May 1933, with the race Vilnius–Radun–Vilnius. It was organized by the Motorcycling Unit of the Jewish Academic Sports Club and the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association. 17 motorcyclists participated in the race. Unofficially, the participants were divided into two sides: the members of the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association versus the Jewish Academic Sports Club. The race started on Barboros Radvilaitės Street. The racers entered the track every two minutes. The goal was to drive consistently at a set speed rather than to reach the finish line as fast as possible. After the participants completed the race and the points were counted, the first place was awarded to K. Balter (JASC), the second place to Ignatowicz, the third one was shared by S. Holstein and E. Rudak, and the fourth one by V. Kaczyński and

A. Hermanowicz (all from the Cycling and Motorcycling Association). The event was successful, both the spectators and the participants were satisfied by it.

Later, it seemed as if the floodgates had opened for events organized by motorcyclists: a race on the streets of Vilnius was organized on 28 May 1933, then a race Vilnius–Lida–Vilnius proceeded on 25 July, followed by Vilnius–Eišiškės–Vilnius on 30 July and, two weeks later, Warsaw–Vilnius–Warsaw, which was attended by 40 racers. On 13 August, a drive to Vilnius was organized.

The motor sports season in Vilnius culminated on 10 September 1933 with Radiorajd: an impressive event organized by the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association with assistance from Vilnius Radio. The race track was Vilnius–Trakai–Vilnius–Nemenčinė–Vilnius. The start was at 1 p.m. on Gedimino Avenue, near Lukiškių Square. Large crowds of people gathered to watch the event. The city's buses were forced to temporarily change their routes. 27 racers participated, reaching the finish line in Vilnius at about 4 p.m. Afterwards, a slow driving event followed, where 30 participants agreed to take part. The winner was a prominent Vilnius cyclist and motorcyclist J. Kalinowski, who "outpaced" (in a slow driving event, the set distance has to be completed as slowly as possible) Pimonov and Kleber. The participants' award ceremony was held on 13 September at Vilnius Radio Station on Vytauto Street and was broadcast live on the radio. At the time, this was akin to science fiction becoming true in Vilnius.

I would like to continue the story of motor sports in Vilnius with some statistics, and draw your attention to the numbers: in 1933, there were 157 passenger cars and 105 motorcycles registered in Vilnius, while in 1934 their numbers changed to 126 and 149, respectively. Furthermore, in 1933, the third motorcycle club was established in Vilnius, under the Vilnius Division of Strzelec, the Polish Gunners' Association. There were three motorcycle clubs and just 150 motorcycles registered in Vilnius. One should not forget that motorcyclists from other cities of the voivodeship

could join the clubs. As the number of motorcycle clubs increased, an informal rivalry grew between them. When one club organized an event, the other clubs attempted to boycott it, each club tried to be more important than the others and to draw in more members. Thus, the large number of clubs did not bring major changes to the sports activities, but the motorcyclists were surprisingly active. This is confirmed by yet another motorcycle club established under the militarized sports association KPW (Railwaymen's Military Training Association). Militarized sports clubs were established for political reasons and received both moral and financial support from political parties and the government. Notably, around this time, the Jewish motorcycle club of the JASC disappeared from the world of motorcycle sports. The local Vilnius press sang the praises of the Strzelec club, whose members arrived to events in large numbers, wore uniforms and followed military discipline; the competition programmes began to include shooting and off-road driving. In a complicated political situation, only the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association remained politically independent and rather strong, because its core consisted of businessmen and rich and active public figures.

The season of 1934 began on 6 May. The opening was organized by the recently established Strzelec motorcycle club. A service and consecration of the motorcycles were held at St. John's Church. Later the club's members went on a picnic to Lentvaris. There is no mention of other clubs' participation in the season's opening. A week later, a new club organized a competition entitled 'Fox Hunt'. The competition included participants from other clubs as well. The first ones to find "the fox" were two participants who shared the first place: A. Hermanowicz, who drove a Panther motorcycle, and V. Kurec, who drove a Norton. It is worth pointing out that V. Kurec suffered an accident and was severely injured while "hunting", but he continued the competition and found "the fox". However, immediately after the contest, he was taken to an emergency hospital in Vilnius.

On 2 June 1934, the regular driving competition Vilnius–Białystok–Vilnius commenced; it was organized by the Vilnius Cy-

cling and Motorcycling Association. 18 sportsmen participated. The racetrack had 20 checkpoints; because of this, the results took longer to be counted and were announced only over a week later. In the 350 cm³ category, Bronisław Moroz came in first, while the 500 cm³ race's winner was Vincent Kaczyński, the runner-up was Wojciech Kierszewicz, and the 3rd and 4th places were taken by Tadeusz Kleber and Antonijus Sabukas, who earned an equal amount of points.

Possibly the only serious motorcycle event which had remained in Poland during the difficult crisis and still drew in large numbers of participants was the traditional competition Warsaw–Vilnius–Warsaw organized by Legia military sports club. The fifth competition was held on 12–15 August 1934. 25 motorcyclists took part in it, even though a much greater number was expected. The favourites were German and Czechoslovakian sportsmen. The race started in Warsaw at 6 a.m., the first racers reached Grodno at 1 p.m., and the first finishes occurred in Vilnius at 6 p.m. Cathedral Square was crowded with spectators and an orchestra was playing. The Third Engineer Battalion erected a beautiful arch for the greeting of the participants, which made the race feel even more celebratory. The sportsmen stayed in Vilnius for two days and set out for Warsaw, where the finish line would be crossed, in the early morning of Wednesday. Vilnius motorcyclists considered the participation in such an event to be not just an honour but also a challenge. Marking this occasion, Strzelec motorcyclists and the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association organized a drive to Vilnius and a welcoming reception. 40 racers from various cities of Poland, including 15 motorcyclists from Grodno and 18 Vilnius citizens, took part in the drive. The first place was won by a contender from Warsaw, Mr. Wołyniec, who drove 986 km. The other two podium finishes were by motorcyclists from the city of Kielce, Mr. Dambrowski and Mr. Savka. All participants of the drive were awarded commemorative participation plaques and a large number of prizes from private companies. During the interwar, commemorative participation plaques were manufactured for each sporting event; the surviving



The start of the race Warsaw–Vilnius–Warsaw in 1934. NAC

ones are sometimes the only source of information about the motorcycling competitions of the past.

The closing of the year's season was planned for 14 October 1934, but it was postponed until 21 October due to some difficulties. Newspapers reported that the best motorcyclists of Vilnius would join the track competition. The Piromont Stadium (the location of Žalgiris Stadium today) was filled with spectators. In the knockout round, three sportsmen competed per race, while the semi-final and the final had two contestants each. Kalinowski, Kleber, Palevičius, and Rabinowicz reached the semi-finals. The final race had 10 laps. Palevičius and Kleber competed fiercely until the very last moment, when fortune favoured Kleber and he was just one second faster than Palevičius. Much to the delight of the audience, the event incorporated motorcycle acrobatics performed outstandingly by Kleber

and Basas. The event's final program included great performances by Kurec, Kleber, Maksimowicz, Abramowicz, Urniažas, Puchowski and others. Thus, 1934 was yet another year full of motorcycling events, including the first motorcycle track race in Vilnius. Unfortunately, just like the analogous cycling competition, this motor sports event did not gain ground among the motorcyclists of Vilnius. The chief reason was the absence of an appropriate stadium, which was, understandably, the problem of the city's government rather than of the racers.

The opening of the motorcycling season in 1935 took place on 14 April. Members of all motorcycle clubs were invited to take part in the Holy Mass on 10 a.m. at St. John's Church in Vilnius, which was followed by the Prof. Rev. Urbonavičius christening the motorcycles in the courtyard and wishing the best of luck to the motorcyclists. After a celebratory parade on the city streets, the sportsmen went on to enjoy recreational activities in Trakai.

The motorcyclists of Vilnius did not cut back on their activities and held a beautifully named event, Motorcycling Gala, on 12 May; it was organized on the streets of Vilnius for the second time. The initiators were the Strzelec motorcycle club and the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association. Those wishing to participate could fill in applications at the headquarters of both clubs. The registration fee was 1 złoty. All motorcyclists could join the competition. On the day following the contest, Vilnius newspapers reported: "Yesterday a motorcycling gala was organized in Vilnius, which contributed greatly to the promotion of motor sports in Vilnius". The competition was preceded by a motorcycling parade on Gedimino Avenue at 1 a.m.; afterwards, 24 sportsmen began a regular race on the city streets at 2 p.m. The competition's circuit covered almost the entire city. The results: 1st place was won by V. Maracewicz; 2nd place was taken by Z. Wajnberg; 3rd – H. Wajnberg; 4th – M. Znajdzielowski; 5th – J. Maksimowicz; 6th – H. Chrzanowski; 7th – A. Kowalewski; 8th – W. Kaczynski; 9th – B. Puchowski; 10th – M. Wurawski. On Friday 17 May, an award ceremony was held for the compe-

tition's participants on the premises of the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association (Gedimino Av. 22–2).

On 12 June, the newspaper *Kurjer Wilenski* reported:

On 16 June, the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Assoc. and the motorcyclists from the Strzelec club will be organizing a motorcycle race around Vilnius. The race route will consist of the following locations: Vilnius–Maišiogala–Nemenčinė–Varniany–Rindžiūnai–Soly–Ashmyany–Vilnius. The length of the route is 240 km <...>.

Only members of motorcycle clubs could join this race. One curious and new detail of this race was that the participants received the map of the route and found out the predetermined average driving speed only moments before the start. In this contest, M. Ronczewski (Strzelec) came in first, followed by A. Sabukas and L. Palevičius in the 2nd and 3rd place (both from the Cycling and Motorcycling Association), M. Rabinowicz in the 4th (Strzelec), and B. Tatarynowicz in the 5th (Strzelec). The award ceremony took place on 22 May, where the gifts and the prizes were awarded by the commodore of the race around Vilnius, J. Gostkiewicz. Interestingly, the announcements of the race's results and the awarding of the winners took place not immediately following the race, but a few days later, sometimes even after a week.

In 1935, the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association organized the race Vilnius–Białystok–Vilnius, while the motorcyclists of the Strzelec club likewise held the race Vilnius–Grodno–Vilnius. The year was rich in the motorcycling sports and propaganda events. However, I would like to end the recollections about them with a quote from *Kurjer Wilenski* No. 263:

Once again, I am saddened that there is some sort of on-going miscommunication between the motorcycle clubs of Vilnius. It is an unhealthy sports phenomenon. There are very few sportsmen in Vilnius. Fighting is futile. We think that in the near future the disagreements between the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association and Strzelec will be resolved and the conflicting sides will shake each other's hands amicably.

The militant and chauvinistic behaviour of the members of the Strzelec motorcycle club certainly had nothing in common with sports, so the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association, a completely civilian organization, did not wish to be associated with it in any way. In 1935, after the death of the First Marshal Józef Piłsudski, a large number of events in Poland were organized in his memory. The automobile and motorcycle clubs of Vilnius participated in them, but this is a separate subject altogether, because those events were more political and propagandist rather than sports-related.

The season of 1935 ended on a sad note for the motorcyclists of Vilnius. On 1 October, the funeral of a well-known mechanic and sportsman from Vilnius, Antonijus Sabukas, was held. He died while riding a motorcycle to Naujoji Vilnia. The funeral procession, which began on the Alley No. 4 (now Lydos Street) of Kauno Street and moved towards Naujosios Rasos Cemetery, included 30 motorcycles from the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association, whose member the departed was, also motorcyclists from the Strzelec and KPW organizations, and a KPW orchestra. All kinds of stories circulated about the circumstances of Sabukas' death, but ultimately the police determined that it was an accident.

1936 could be described as the year when the Strzelec motorcycle club thrived. The club organized a number of events and established separate sections in the larger cities of the voivodeship: Hlybokaye, Ashmyany, Maladzyechna, and Pastavy. It also started to actively encourage youth technical and military training.

The season of motorcycling sports in 1936 began on 19 April, with the Sunday Mass at St. John's Church. The participants included cyclist and motorcyclist associations, the Strzelec sports club and KPW motorcyclists. After the Holy Mass, which was held by Rev. Soltanas, the motorcyclists rode to the Gate of Dawn and laid a wreath in honour of the First Marshal Józef Piłsudski. After the formalities, no less than 60 motorcyclists went on a tourist trip to Benyakoni. The activity level of the motorcyclists

at that time was almost equivalent to that of today's motorcycle season openings.

On 12 May 1936, the funeral of the First Marshal Józef Piłsudski's heart took place in Vilnius, at the Rasos Cemetery. Marking the occasion, the President of Poland arrived in Vilnius, as well as other highest state and military officials. The city was full of guests. On 10 May, the motorcycling section of the Strzelec organization in Vilnius organized a drive to Vilnius by motorcyclists from all of Poland. The finish line was in Lukiškės Square, where the arch for the greeting of the participants was built and the Third Engineer Battalion Orchestra was playing. No less than 58 racers took part in the drive, mostly from Vilnius clubs. Surprisingly, three motorcyclists came from the Sosnowiec club Unja, while just one participant arrived from Warsaw, even though many more were expected.

After calculating the results, it turned out that the leaders, by the number of kilometres ridden by the teams or all club members, were the members of Vilnius' Strzelec, who rode the total of 3,308 km. The competition participants put a wreath beside the urn of the First Marshal's heart in the evening and set out for Trakai on the next day. On Tuesday, the motorcyclists attended a funeral procession to the Rasos Cemetery.

In early June, the third aviation celebration "Flight Around the North-Eastern Region of Poland" was held. For this occasion, the Strzelec club organized a competition, Vilnius – Zalavas – Vilnius (Zalavas is Piłsudski's birthplace). The race included 26 motorcyclists from Vilnius clubs as well as motorcyclists and commodores from Ashmyany. Czesław Dubaniewicz (Vilnius' Strzelec) was first, Józef Jurkiewicz (Vilnius' Strzelec) came in second, and school inspector Jan Śledziński (from Ashmyany) came in third. In the village of Zalavas, at the location where the First Marshal Piłsudski was born, competition participants put down their wreaths, while the commodore, Col. Ocetkiewicz, delivered a speech. The race was not without accidents. Zenon Wisłocki, a member of Vilnius KPW club, lost control of his mo-

torcycle at one of the turns of the track, drove over a pile of stones on the side of the road, fell off the motorcycle and, unfortunately, suffered from a severe body concussion. The unlucky racer ended up in the Geležinkelių (Railwaymen's) Hospital.

The energy and the possibilities of the motorcyclists from the Vilnius Strzelec sports organization seemed limitless. In July 1936, this club once again organized a motorcycle race Vilnius–Lida–Grodno–Vilnius, which took place on 19 July. The award ceremony for the winners was held on 24 July in the Upper Hall of Zacisze Restaurant. The main prize, presented by the competition's commodore, Col. Ocetkiewicz, was won by M. Rabinowicz, who rode a Rudge motorcycle. The second-place winner was Z. Wajnberg, who also drove a Rudge, and the third place was taken by V. Mazarewicz with a BSA. He was awarded a diploma by the BSA representation for the best results achieved riding a BSA motorcycle. In the category of motorcycles with a sidecar, the top performer was J. Jurkiewicz, who rode a BSA motorcycle. The competition's podium finishers were also awarded club flags with gold, silver, and bronze stripes by commodore Ocetkiewicz.

In August, the Strzelec club sent out two motorcyclist teams to Krakow (3 motorcycles per one team) where they would take part in the Szlakiem Kadrowki competition. This was a drive to Krakow and the race Krakow–Kielc. The first team of Vilnius' Strzelec consisted of: Major Z. Orog, M. Znajdzilowski, and F. Abramowicz. The second team was: B. Wasilewski, Z. Mias, and N. Ambroż. The length of the circuit was 127 km with many turns, sudden elevations and descents. Additional tasks of shooting and some others had to be completed on the circuit. The Vilnius Strzelec teams won the drive. The motorcyclists from Vilnius performed well in this event.

On 30 August, the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association organized the competition Vilnius–Białystok–Vilnius. The length of the track was 532 km. The race was won by Jan Maksimowicz, the runner-up was Wiktor Maracewicz, and Leonardas Palevičius came in third.

The motorcycle sports season of 1936 ended with a competition organized by the Strzelec club, Vilnius–Grodno–Vilnius. It started on 19 September, at 4 p.m., in the Cathedral Square. After spending the night in Grodno and visiting the city's historical landmarks, the competition participants went back to Vilnius. The finish was planned for 6 p.m. in Cathedral Square.

There was yet another report confirming the high activity level of the motorcyclists of Vilnius. Polish automobile club's monthly magazine *ATS* reported in the edition No. 11 of 1936 that Leonardas Palevičius from Vilnius attended the motorization propaganda week in Chorzów (near Katowice). He won the drive to Chorzów after riding 1,147 km in 36 hours and also finished first in the motocross competition on the third day of the motor vehicle propaganda week. At the time, sportsmen travelled to all competitions using their own money; the practice of looking for sponsors was not established. Sometimes in the larger events they received free oil or, very rarely, petrol. There were no monetary prizes. So, not every motorcyclist could take part in competitions.

The motor sports season of 1937 began on 25 April, with the already traditional prayer at St. John's Church. Afterwards, no less than 57 motorcycles from three Vilnius clubs roared loudly as they sped off through the streets of the city towards Nemenčinė.

On 13 June, the Strzelec club organized a competition on roads and off-road on the route Vilnius–Švenčionys–Tverečius–Pastavy–Ashmyany–Vilnius, 330 km in total. The route was deliberately chosen to include remote corners of the voivodeship in order to promote driving motor vehicles in the periphery and to encourage activities by the Strzelec clubs in rural areas. After the contest, one paper reported:

<...> One should have seen the participants of the last competition who completed the 330 km-long circuit in top form, after defeating all obstacles with gusto and in high spirits like true gunners. As one should know, the Strzelec club fosters a young citizen's spirit with its activities, trains him for future military service, prepares a gunner/driver, and definitely deserves the attention and support from the government <...>.



The start of one of the races at Cathedral Square in 1937. Collection by R. Žičkus

The Vilnius motorcycle club of the Strzelec sports association kept growing and its activities were expanding. In 1937, it already had 40 members in Vilnius and 140 in the club's peripheral sections. The club organized not only sports events but also started holding free training for the military conscripts and reservists.

On 11 July 1937, the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association organized the competition Vilnius–Augustów–Vilnius. At that time, the route to Augustów passed through Grodno. The commodore of the race was Lityński, a lawyer. On early Sunday morning, 17 participants stood behind the starting line. After reaching Augustów, they were provided a boat tour of the city's beautiful lakes. The finish line on Universiteto Street in Vilnius was reached in the period between 6 and 8 p.m. by 13 participants who successfully completed the 500 km circuit. The least fortunate driver was Mr. Bejnarowicz, who wore the number 13. After he had already returned to Vilnius, while riding on Savanorių Avenue, the motorcycle's front fork broke and the vehicle fell to pieces. Luckily, neither Mr. Bejnarowicz nor his wife, who was in the

sidecar, were hurt. The competition's results were announced and the awards were presented almost a week later:

Category A – motorcycles up to 350 cm³:

1. Józef Jurkiewicz, BSA.
2. Herbert Buzek, BSA.
3. Viktoras Matulevičius, FN.

Category B – motorcycles over 500 cm³:

1. Severyn Kowalewski, BMW.
2. Bronislovas Morozas, Triumph.
3. Czesław Karol, Matschles.
4. Leonardas Palevičius, Sarolea.
5. Maurycy Zurawski, Hudson.
6. Kazimieras Druetas, Rudge.
7. Bernardas Cicėnas, BSA.
8. Aleksandr Tomaszewski, Rudge.

Severyn Kowalewski, who took first place in the standings, was awarded a crystal cup from the Polish Motorcycle Club Association which was sent from Warsaw exclusively for this contest. As usual, separate prizes were awarded by companies that sold motorcycles, oils, and tyres. On the night of the awards, the Cycling and Motorcycling Association presented prizes to club members Maksimowicz and Palevičius for their participation in the recent race around Poland, Szlakiem Marszałka Piłsudskiego. The night concluded with a performance by Vilnius Conservatory student Mrs. Palevičienė, who played a number of pieces by Bach and Chopin.

Meanwhile, the Strzelec club organized the competition Vilnius – Grodno – Vilnius and sent announcements to all the newspapers of Vilnius about its contribution to the promotion of motorization and friendly relations with Strzelec clubs in other regions. Since it was a propaganda event rather than sports-related, no one else reported on it.

Around the same time, the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association and the Vilnius Committee of Physical Education organized a beautiful motor sports event for the motorcyclists

and residents of Vilnius: a track racing event in a stadium. The motorcycle race was organized in conjunction with a bicycle race. The chosen venue was the stadium in Piromont (currently the location of Žalgiris Stadium), which was the most appropriate stadium for such a race at the time. Even before the race started, *Kurjer Wilenski* reported:

<...> This is not an ideal track, but it can be used for the start, and the start of motorcycling races causes a high degree of interest. A great racer of ours, Palevičius, takes part in the training almost every day and impresses everyone with his greatness <...>.

The most prominent companies of Vilnius offered 13 prizes for the track race. The racers had four laps to fight for the top position in the knockout stage and eight laps in the final stage. Morozas, Matulevičius and Kowalewski were eliminated in the first stage. Palevičius and Savchuk entered the final. The winner was Leonardas Palevičius, who rode a Rudge motorcycle. After the track race, acrobatic performances of motorcyclists were organized. The spectators simply went wild. The event was great. The *Vilniaus Rytas* paper reported: "On the 4th of September, a motorcycle race was organized in Vilnius, which drew in a large audience. A prominent Lithuanian motorcyclist from Vilnius, Leonardas Palevičius, came in first in the race".

Just two weeks later, on 19 September, the same organizers held the closing event of the motorcycling season at the same stadium. The event program included a large number of bicycle and motorcycle races. Palevičius was once again the fastest motorcyclist on the track, while Kowalewski came just behind him. Since the Piromant Stadium was not adapted for motorcycle track racing and was not safe for the spectators, several knockout stage sessions were interrupted due to unsafe driving by the motorcyclists.

The motor sports events organized in 1937 reveal a high degree of activity from two Vilnius motorcycle clubs. Other clubs, while they were theoretically still functioning, were completely overshadowed. In any case, the track race in Vilnius was a very

positive phenomenon which drew in several thousands of fans into the stadium. Naturally, it was still far from a true motorcycle track racing event, even though such full-fledged races were already regular in Klaipėda, Riga, Tallinn, and Lviv.

The traditional opening of the motorcycling season in 1938 was held on 24 April, followed by a competition organized by Strzelec and the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association. On 16 June, the Vilnius Aeroclub as well as the Vilnius automobile and motorcycle clubs organized the competition entitled "Catch the Glider". The involvement of a plethora of technical clubs was really beautiful and unheard of. Two gliders were planned to be launched into the air at the event: Komar and SG. In accordance with competition regulations, the gliders could be in the air no longer than for an hour and could fly no further than 40 km from the Porubanek Airport (currently Vilnius International Airport). The landing location for the SG glider had to be determined by car, while the Komar's landing location was supposed to be established by motorcyclists. 8 cars and 11 motorcycles participated in the competition. Due to poor weather conditions, only the SG glider was launched, but the participants were in high spirits. After the launch, everyone started to enthusiastically watch as the glider was descending; however, when it turned around and began landing in the Porubank Airport, "the catchers of the fox (the glider)" had to get back as quickly as possible. In the category of passenger cars, the first one to arrive at the descended glider's location was the Chairman of Vilnius Autoclub, Luczinski, the runner-up was Hochheim, and the third one was Krukowski. Among motorcyclists, the main prize was awarded to Leonardas Palevičius, who had already become a Vilnius celebrity, followed by Saplis Ludzikas, Longin Oleszkiewicz, and Romualdas Rytas in the second, third, and fourth place respectively. At about 6 p.m., the participants returned to the headquarters of Vilnius Autoclub (24 Mickevičiaus Street), where the winners were awarded and a party was held.

On 11 July 1938, the KPW club successfully organized the first motorcycling competition Vilnius–Oranai–Vilnius (120 km). This

route was chosen because of the very poor condition of the roads and was reminiscent more of a motocross rather than a road track. 16 motorcycles took part in the event. After counting the results of the regular driving and the shooting competitions, the announced winner was Czesław Sadowski, while the runner-up was Witold Cybulski, who was, in turn, faster than Jan Bałachowicz.

In 1938, diplomatic relations between Poland and Lithuania were restored. An opportunity emerged for the residents of Vilnius region to visit Lithuania. In the same year, the first Lithuanian national Olympics were organized in Lithuania, which was also attended by a delegation of Lithuanian athletes from Vilnius, which was headed by P. Žižmaras. It included two motorcyclists: one of the best motorcyclists of Vilnius, Leonardas Palevičius, and a teacher from Vytautas Magnus Gymnasium in Vilnius, Bernardas Cicėnas; both of them drove BSA motorcycles. At the very last moment, they managed to register for a competition *Aplink Lietuvą* (Around Lithuania), which was organized outside the Olympics but took place at the same time. The Lithuanian press devoted quite a lot of attention to them. *Lietuvos Aidas* wrote:

<...> Both sportsmen are members of the Vilnius Motorcycle Club and have attended and won various competitions of that kind. Agr. Palevičius is considered to be a master among Polish motorcyclists and has won many prizes.

The head of Lithuanian Automobile Club, Reserve Col. Senatorsky, kindly agreed to take care of the sportsmen from Vilnius, providing them with free fuel and other things, while a representative of Kaunas motorcycle company BSA, Jočinas, provided the necessary motorcycle parts <...>.

8 motorcyclists participated in the contest:

<...> Since just two motorcyclists managed to return to the finish, they were awarded the first two places without competition. A. Ilgauskas, driving a Harley Davidson motorcycle, took the first place, while Vilnius resident L. Palevičius with a BSA won the second place. Furthermore, the third place was given to Vilnius resident Cicėnas, who returned later, after a light injury on the road <...>.

So, the Vilnius motorcycle sport season of 1938 was very colourful and entertaining. The closing of the motorcycle season was held on 25 September, when all clubs took a friendly trip to Trakai.

In 1939, the schedule of motorcycle competitions planned in Poland was announced in the issue No. 3 of the Polish magazine *Auto*. The plans in Vilnius were once again impressive. The magazine announced 7 events that were planned by Vilnius motorcycle clubs.

The motorcyclists of Vilnius were optimistic and, following the tradition, organized the season opening on 23 April. The event program included the following items: the gathering of motorcyclists in the clubs and their arrival at St. John's Church; a festive Holy Mass and consecration of motorcycles in St. John's Church at 10 a.m.; participants driving to the Rasos Cemetery and honouring Józef Piłsudski's heart; a parade on the city streets towards the Cathedral Square, where the event would end; the dinner of the participants in Zacisze Restaurant. No less than 70 motorcycles were present at the event. However, it did not go without accident. A car driving towards the Cathedral on Gedimino Avenue hit the motorcycle ridden by Kazimierz Rożnowski, who had arrived from Ashmyany. The motorcycle was badly damaged, while the driver was almost unscathed.

On 7 May, the Strzelec club invited the club members and their friends to a leisure-sightseeing trip by bus to the plywood factory in Grigiškės, and, on 14 May, to the road-motocross competition Vilnius–Narach–Vilnius. The award ceremony for the contest's participants was held on 19 May on the premises of the Strzelec club. For the second time, the race was won by Severyn Kowalewski, who rode a BMW 500 motorcycle. The prize for the winner, a Swiss pocket watch, was presented by Strzelec chairman M. Jasiński. The runner-up was a young racer, Stanisław Łapiński, who rode a Victoria 200 motorcycle, while the third place was won by the already well-known Leonardas Palevičius with a Sardea 500.

On 9 July 1939, the Vilnius Cycling and Motorcycling Association organized a race on the route Vilnius–Pabradė–Švenčio-



23 April 1939. The opening of the motorcycling season. The motorcyclists have gathered by St. John's Church. Collection by R. Žičkus

nys–Adutiškis–Pastavy–Narach–Mikhalishki–Vilnius. The starting and finishing line of the race was in the Lukiškės Square. The starting line was crossed by 11 motorcyclists, however, only 9 of them reached the end of the almost 300 km-long race. The race results:

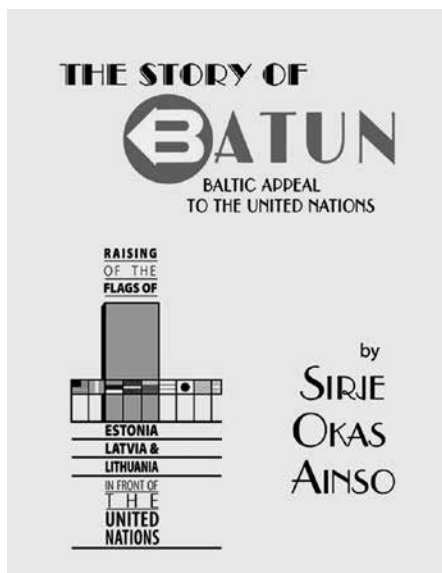
1. Kazimieras Drutelis
- 2–3. Shared by Witold Cybulski and Adam Dziedziak.
4. Stanisław Łapiński

The podium finishers were awarded valuable prizes by Stomil, Stolle, Autotechnika, engineer Pruzhanov and, of course, the race's commodore.

1939 was a fateful year for Europe. The plans were radically at odds with reality. The Second World War broke out.

Translated by MARTYNAS GEDVILA

BOOK REVIEWS

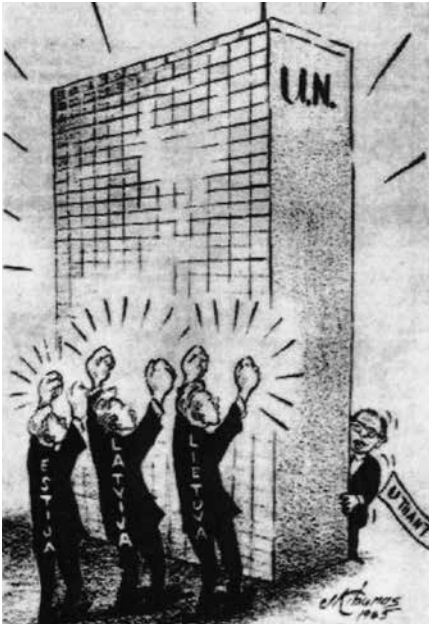


*The Story of BATUN
(Baltic Appeal to the
United Nations)*
by Sirje Okas Ainso.
In large format,
108 pages, plus
extensive appendices
of photographs
and documents,
2018 USA,
ISBN 978-0-692-10308-1

In 1965, an ad hoc group of young Lithuanians organized a massive rally, about 14,000 people, at Madison Square Garden in New York City, to mark the 25th anniversary of Soviet occupation of the Baltic states, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and to bring the question of Baltic independence before the United Nations.

Out of this rally, a permanent organization, “Baltic Appeal to the United Nations” (BATUN), was established the following year with a board of directors and officers from exiles of each of the three Baltic nations. BATUN’S purpose and its mission, was to inform and lobby the UN to take up and address “The Baltic Question”.

Ms. Ainso, an active Estonian member of BATUN for many years, documents the 25 years, lasting until the Baltics regained their independence, during which BATUN’s staff, mostly unpaid



volunteers, wandered in the wilderness, receiving no official response and little encouragement from the UN. No country wanted to confront the USSR, even if some individual UN diplomats were sympathetic (revolutionary Iran's diplomat advised BATUN representatives to "die for your cause").

In 1970, several events brought worldwide attention to the Soviet repressive regime in the Baltic States, including Pranas Brazinskas and his 13 year old son hijacking a Soviet plane and forcing it to land in Turkey, and Simas Kudirka jumping from a Soviet vessel on to the deck of a US Coast Guard cutter and then being forcibly returned to the Soviets. These events encouraged and provided additional impetus for BATUN's work.

Much of BATUN's initial focus was on the UN's declaration of 1960 on decolonization, and on UN support for independence for colonized countries. The Baltic countries were being colonized by the Russians, who at that time called themselves Soviets. But many UN member countries had no interest in supporting Bal-

tic self-determination, since it may have set a precedent for minorities within their own countries to seek independence. BATUN then shifted its emphasis and focus from “self-determination” for the Baltics, to “violations of human rights” by the Soviets. (BATUN was aware that one of the basic “human rights” being violated, of course, was “self-determination” or, simply put, independence. So, this was not a change of mission, but simply promoting the same mission in a different package.)

BATUN continued over the years to visit and lobby individual UN diplomats, providing them with memorandums and position papers on the status of the Baltic states. This gained the Baltic states’ claim to independence increasing numbers of favorable responses from individual UN diplomats. But official action by the UN was not forthcoming.

It was not until 1991, when events in the Baltics themselves were outpacing international political maneuvering, that “The Baltic Question” finally found a place on the official UN agenda – almost simultaneously with the declarations of independence by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

It was at this time that BATUN’s many years of efforts at the UN also provided additional benefits. Not only had BATUN staffers, over the years, kept the UN informed of the issues relating to the Baltic States. BATUN staff had also accumulated knowledge of how the UN and its various bureaucracies worked, and gained a favorable reputation with a number of UN delegations.

BATUN was, thus, able to lend its knowledge and familiarity with the UN and some of its individual delegates, to the inexperienced Baltic diplomats, which made entry and integration into the UN, smoother than it would otherwise have been. A number of BATUN activists also entered the diplomatic service of the three emerging nations.

BATUN had been formed at the initiative of Lithuanian activists, and from BATUN’s first president, rev. Jonas Balkūnas, through the last Lithuanian activists such as Gintė Damušis and others, Lithuanians continued to work in BATUN, but over the years BATUN’s most active members were Latvians and Estonians.

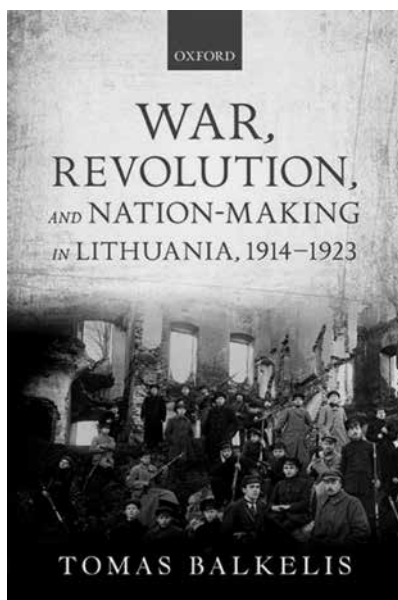
Perhaps the most significant accomplishment of BATUN is its contribution to keeping the three Baltic states' quest for independence alive and not forgotten. When the USSR started to fall apart, it was not necessary to start from zero, not necessary to explain to the world's nations that there existed these countries called Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, and not necessary to explain why their people were demanding independence.

BATUN, through its information and lobbying efforts, had kept the world and its diplomats and politicians informed, and had thus prepared the ground for Lithuania's, Latvia's and Estonia's entry into the community of nations.

The Baltic states, in declaring independence and in seeking to join the UN, received support from a number of nations, and especially early support from the Scandinavians. Then, on August 28, 1991, France and the United Kingdom, presented to the UN Secretary General letters from Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, seeking admission to the UN, which was granted on September 17, 1991.

There is not much literature about BATUN. Ms. Ainsó's book is a chronological documentary, with much detail, dates, names, photographs and documents, of the actions of the largely volunteer staffers of BATUN, who worked for years, responded to changing world events, and did not waiver in pursuit of their mission. The book will be a valuable resource for future historians and researchers.

DONATAS JANUTA



Tomas Balkelis
*War Revolution, and Nation
 Making in Lithuania,
 1914–1923*
 Oxford: University Press,
 2018, 208 pages
 ISBN 978-0-19-966802-1

This indeed is a very interesting book. A sequel to his earlier work *The Making of Modern Lithuania* (Routledge, 2009) (v) which dealt with the Lithuanian national renaissance, this book focuses on war. Balkelis proposes an interesting paradigm – the creation of a national identity through violence. He does not dismiss the usual factors of economics, social classes, linguistics, and the cultural dimensions of nation-making, but he contends that in a time when events move “faster than history,” violence determines one’s choice of national identity. Balkelis proposes that violence often forces people with mixed linguistic heritages and an indifference to national identity to decide quickly what side they are on.

In 1918 at Versailles, the world believed that the Great War had fulfilled the Wilsonian dream of “the war to end all wars,” but in Lithuania and the borderlands, violence intensified and continued until 1923. Westerners often perceived the Eastern front of World War I, and the other regional wars it spawned as a babel of backward nations. Churchill named this violence “wars of pygmies.”

Lithuanians today are mythologizing the heroic “wars of independence” as if Lithuania had become a united nation free of Russian oppression. Before the Great War, Lithuania was an ill-defined territory loosely associated with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Ethnically and linguistically, it existed as an amorphous rural region. The peasants wanted a redistribution of land. The Polish gentry held the estates from which the land would be taken. All factions – nationalists, local Bolsheviks, social revolutionaries, and the Moscow-led Bolsheviks, promised land reform at the expense of the Poles, furthering tensions between Pole and Lithuanian.

Barkelis used various printed and archival sources, some of which are Communist. Too often people consider monographs written between 1945–1990 as a black hole of obsequious Marxist-Leninist propaganda. Barkelis uses sources such as Moscow’s puppet Vincas Kapsukas’ memoirs of that period as well as collected sources and anthologies from the post-1945 Soviet era compiled by Juozas Žiugžda and Bronius Vaitkevičius and others. Although biased, these sources were not falsified. They help the author show the differences between regional Bolsheviks who were willing to give the peasants land and the Muscovite Bolsheviks who proposed War, Communism, and the expropriation of land. Ethnic Lithuanians perceived both White and Red Russians as foreigners who would requisition land and materials for their own Civil War. The Whites and the Reds wanted to preserve the borders of the Russian Empire. Eventually, regional Lithuanian Bolsheviks might morph into socialists, social democrats, or even join the nationalists. Barkelis also uses German, Polish, Russian, and White sources, creating a broadly researched work that holds no loyalty to today’s “wars of independence” mythology.

The appearance of this book in 2018 coincided with the one hundredth anniversary of the *Lithuanian Declaration of Independence*. Here again, Barkelis reviews the events that led up the *Declaration* of February 16, 1918. Originally Lithuanians merely sought autonomy, either within the German or Russian empires. Initially the Lithuanians constituted themselves into relief com-

mittees to help Lithuanians fighting in the Russian military. With the Russian Revolution, the Lithuanian *Taryba* [Council] declared in St. Petersburg its desire for autonomy within the Russian Empire. But as events unfolded, the *Taryba* had to reconstitute itself again – only this time in Vilnius, and so declared independence on December 11, 1917, with promises of close military and economic ties with Germany. There were even notions of making Lithuania a monarchy with a German Catholic as king. Unable to predict the victors, the Lithuanian *Taryba* had to change what great power to ally with depending on who might win the war.

With the Entente powers looking to win the war by 1918, one has to wonder what the significance of the February 16th *Declaration* meant and to whom? Everything had to be provisional until a parliamentary constituent assembly could democratically write a constitution, and set boundaries. In a time of war Lithuania faced virtually every imaginable problem. Military, economic, administrative, and legal matters had to be dealt with and even so, there were splits within the *Taryba* itself between liberals and conservatives. Balkelis explains and gives historical context to the post-war chaos. He answers the innumerable questions, such as what group was in charge and how the *Taryba* maneuvered trying to create a nation-state in a “Multidirectional War and Paramilitarism.”

By the nineteenth century the Lithuanian language, used primarily by peasants, was on the brink of extinction. Only a few enlightened peasants who could write in Lithuanian emerged with university or seminary educations. In his writings the historian Simonas Daukantas, and in underground school systems Bishop Motiejus Valančius, just to name two, fostered the use of the Lithuanian language, but with a handful of other notable members of the intelligentsia, they could not imbue the peasant with a clear sense of national identity. After the failed Polish-Lithuanian Insurrection of 1863, the Tsarist government tried to divide the peasantry from the Polish nobility. The Russians even prohibited the publishing of Lithuanian books in the Latin alphabet. Russification did not succeed, but the government’s sal-

utary neglect, or rather sloppiness, allowed for book smugglers to import Lithuanian books and newspapers from Lithuania Minor, which was under German rule.

Balkelis asserts that from 1915–1918, as many as a quarter of a million Lithuanian refugees became the last and possibly most important group to support Lithuania's claim for independence. By the end of World War I, ethnic Lithuanian refugees scattered across the Russian empire, longed to return home. Balkelis contends that the repatriation of Lithuanians to their perceived fatherland created a bridge between the elites in charge of creating a Lithuanian state and the masses who wanted a better life and an escape from the upheavals of the Russian Revolution. Balkelis also sees the returnees as an essential group in state-building, providing much needed military, and administrative and political expertise.

Like Lithuania's wars against the Reds and Whites, the Polish-Lithuanian War became another element in national myth-making. From the days of its founding by the Grand Duke Gediminas, Lithuanians considered Vilnius its capital city. Demographically, its ethnicity was German, Jewish, Polish, and Russian. Today being the exception, Vilnius always has had a small minority of Lithuanian speakers. Because the Lithuanian military could not hope to defeat the Reds in 1920, it relied on help from demobilized German units, Whites, or any gang of bandits to secure its borders. In the same year, Piłsudski and his Polish Military Organization stopped the Reds at the "Miracle on the Vistula." This Polish victory saved Lithuania from a Bolshevik occupation, but it also put Vilnius into Polish hands.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ The Polish-Lithuanian War was never officially declared, yet it became one of the "wars of independence". In addition, the victorious Entente powers tried to mediate cease-fires by assigning various demarcation lines which both sides might agree on. These lines, however, did not reflect the military might of Poland or the ineffectiveness of the Lithuanian military. The governments could sign an armistice, but independent paramilitary units might start a skirmish somewhere else.

One wonders whether the new Lithuanian nation-state could even have assimilated Polish speakers into the emerging Lithuanian state. Piłsudski thought of himself as a real Lithuanian, whereas he thought the *Taryba* and its government merely represented peasants who could not speak Polish. From the Lithuanian perspective, another bandit was the Polish general Żeligowski who, despite demarcation lines, staged a “Mutiny” that eventually led to Vilnius’ incorporation into Poland and thus proving the axiom that might makes right. Violence mobilized the mentality of a Lithuanian identity during the inter-war era, based on a hatred of Poland and the Poles. This mindset perpetuated a long-term crisis in which Lithuania became a mobilized nation of citizen soldiers who created a Lithuanian identity and allowed the state to survive.

These types of partisans loom large in the Lithuanian collective memory, but as Balkelis shows, they often simply filled a power vacuum. German units, and later Friekorps units, remained the most effective fighting forces even after the November 11th armistice. After the withdrawal of German troops, the White ex-Tsarist Bermond-Avalov joined in the ravaging of the Lithuanian countryside. Paramilitary units led by Povilas Plechavičius engaged in summary executions of suspected Bolsheviks, requisitioning of materials. The regular army detachments of Vincas Grigaliūnas-Glovackis behaved similarly. Conversely, the Muscovite backed Kapsukas had Felikas Baltušis-Žemaitis organize the largest paramilitary unit in Lithuania, but engaged in less terror than the combined forces of the withdrawing Germans, Whites, Poles, and Lithuanians. The reader must also realize the scope of Lithuania’s wars for independence. The Lithuanian military suffered 1,440 casualties, (157) a miniscule amount in comparison to the great powers.

Meant as a scholarly monograph, *War Revolution* will attract a broader audience than just scholars. It is essential reading for those interested in the Russian Civil War. This book deals more directly with Russia’s involvement in World War I than Vėjas Liulevičius’ seminal work *War Land on the Eastern Front* (Cam-

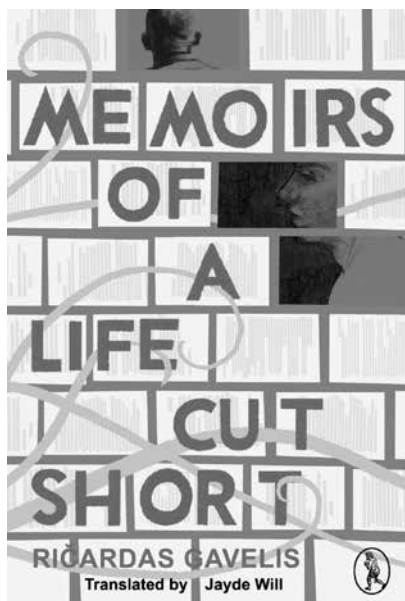
bridge 2000), which focuses on the German *Ober Ost*. Balkelis emphasizes the refugees returning after 1917 and the end of official hostilities between the Germans and the Reds. Balkelis describes one piece of a mosaic that is essential in understanding the post-war settlements in the former parts of the Russia Empire.

Although *War Revolution* is riddled with written errors, readers will understand what Balkelis has written. This book is not a translation from Lithuanian. Too often, good Lithuanian scholarly works are subject to poor translations that distort the meaning to such a degree that the reader no longer understands the original intent. Because of the enormous number of events and cast of characters, Balkelis could have included a chronology of events and a list of people who participated in those events including when, where, and how long they participated in those episodes. Nevertheless, based on the "Epilogue," Balkelis seems poised to continue his history of modern Lithuania with a new book on the authoritarian inter-war government, a task for which he is well suited.

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Autopsy of the System Before Its Collapse



Ričardas Gavelis
Memoirs of a Life Cut Short
Translated by Jayde Will.
Glasgow: Vagabond Voices,
2018, 244 pages.
ISBN 978-1-908251-7

Ričardas Gavelis (1950–2002) was one of the most important Lithuanian prose writers of the last Soviet decades and early post-Soviet period. He literary shook the Lithuanian cultural establishment with the publication of an early novel that turned out to be his Opus Magnum – *Vilniaus Pokeris* (Vilnius Poker) that appeared first in 1989 and was followed by a second edition just a year later – something quite unusual for the literary culture of the late Soviet period. Both editions of this book combined sold no less than 100 000 copies and since then not a single novel published in Lithuania ever enjoyed such large sales. Being already a somewhat established and relatively well-known young writer and author of several collections of short stories that were well-received by the readers and literary critics alike, as well as a playwright with several staged theater productions to his credit, Ričardas Gavelis, immediately rose to literary stardom after the publication of *Vilnius Poker*. This turned out to be his blessing

and curse. Despite the fact that he became the most widely read Lithuanian writer and a kind of media celebrity constantly interviewed in daily papers and appearing on TV as well as a target of numerous book reviews, it soon became obvious that he was destined to remain an isolated literary loner envied and even despised by his fellow Lithuanian writers who felt overshadowed by his instant fame. At the same time, he was misunderstood or ignored by academic critics who seemed to be unable to find a key to interpret his writings. From the current perspective, the reasons for this cold if not hostile attitude are quite obvious: neither literary nor popular audience was ready to meet the powerful challenges of *Vilnius Poker's* imagery: representations of Lithuania's capital as the "ass of the universe", penetrating and demystifying quasi-philosophical and in many ways sociological discourse on *Homo Lithuanus* – a human type that he found even more morally corrupt than his twin brother – *Homo Sovieticus*, attacks on the semi-sacred national symbols like Gediminas Tower that was referred to as a 'blunt phallus', impersonating the loss of national pride and submissive obedience to the Soviet colonizers... Being invited to give a graduate seminar on Lithuanian contemporary literature and criticism at Vilnius University back in 1998, I was surprised to find out that several dozens of graduate students of Lithuanian literature viewed him as almost nothing more than a pop writer obsessed with pornographic images (sic!). Today all this seems ridiculous as after his premature death reception of his literary work has significantly changed. Though oddly never being given any significant literary prize in his lifetime, Gavelis is widely read by new generations of Lithuanians and a large number of his books – collections of short stories and novels have been republished and reprinted though none of these had the circulation as large as *Vilnius Poker*. His writings have finally become objects of academic criticism as well as doctoral dissertations. In addition, his novels have been translated into many languages: *Vilnius Poker* was translated into English by Elizabeth Novickas and published by Open Letter in 2009 and eventually republished by Pica Pica

Press. The French translation of the novel was somewhat sensational: published in 2015, it triggered several dozens of book reviews praising his literary talent and perceptive capturing of the era of totalitarian power. Ironically, one of the most established French publishing houses – *Gallimard* – had the serious intention to publish it in French, but Gavelis immediately rejected the publisher's plea to revise the novel so as to cut a quarter of its original length and the project was soon abandoned. Curiously enough, a pilot translation into English failed in the same period as well, as the translator was unable to secure a publisher, and thus the novel was destined to wait for translators into both languages two decades or even more after it appeared in Lithuanian.

His shorter, however, no less mature and impressive novel *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short*, translated into English by Jayde Will, was recently published in the United Kingdom and is now available internationally to an English reading audience worldwide. Readers of *Lituanus* were provided a chance to glimpse fragments of this literary masterpiece, as excerpts of the novel were published in issue 4, 2017.

The origins of *Jauno žmogaus memuarai* (Memoirs of a Life Cut Short) are still clouded by the same secrecy as his *Vilnius Poker*. Both novels were started years before they got a chance to be published; both were kept hidden by some friends he could trust, and he never indicated their names even when two decades passed after their publication. *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short* was published in book form in 1991, but in fact the novel was already well-known to the literary audience since 1989 when it was published in series by Lithuania's largest literary monthly magazine *Pergalė* (presently known as *Metai*).

Memoirs of a Life Cut Short is beyond any doubt one of the best novels ever written by Ričardas Gavelis, who penned seven books in this genre in addition to several collections of short stories and occasional essays. The novel is focused on the life story (no matter how brief) of its protagonist – Levas Ciparis, a young man who grows up in the poisonous atmosphere of the late Soviet era when the regime of Leonid Brezhnev became

famous for its cynicism, corruption and hypocrisy known as the 'stagnation period'. In a certain sense this is Gavelis' version of a traditional *Bildungsroman*; however, coming of age in the context of the Soviet era is interpreted as anything but natural. The protagonist of the novel reflects upon his childhood, adolescence, and coming of age from a *post mortem* perspective while at the same time presenting a brilliant literary autopsy of the Soviet regime before it was finally dismantled. Its narrative is constructed in a form of some fourteen letters that Levas writes to his spiritual mentor and older fellow student of physics, Tomas Kelertas (a character that regularly appears in many other writings of Gavelis). These letters reveal the hidden mechanisms of the 'Empire of Evil' as the Soviet Union was famously called by President Reagan. Employing the genre of letter writing, the protagonist reveals his own creeping, moral decay in the milieu of a culture based on lies and hypocrisy. These memoirs in the form of literary letters also include shorter pieces of the same genre – letters that are addressed to a number of renowned writers and intellectuals of the last century like Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Jose Ortega y Gasset or the Lithuanian author Vincas Mykolaitis-Putinas as well as the notorious political leader, Leonid Brezhnev himself. One of the main issues that Gavelis is preoccupied with in this early novel (like in all other writings of this genre) is the question of power. As a writer, he is interested in how power originates and what forms it takes, and what impact it has upon individuals and their fates. However, in *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short*, Gavelis does not speak of power in terms of THEY – a hauntingly perceptive image he elaborated in *Vilnius Poker*. In this shorter novel Gavelis by-passes sociological discourse focused on THEM and chooses other images of 'the great community' (the all-mighty Communist Party) and its ideological tool labeled as 'phantasmagorical spores'. These are the reflexive concepts with the help of which Gavelis dissects the double-faced Soviet system in which a human being is destined either to disappear in his/her meager existence on the margins of the system (like Tomas Kelertas who gives up the career of a highly

promising physicist) or to transform oneself into the system's faithful and obedient servant. The latter choice as proved by the example of the short life span of Levas Ciparis, results in a conscious disposal of one's true self which eventually leads to the road toward degradation and self-destruction. Gavelis, however, includes a third element into this seemingly bipolar system through the image of a father-in-law that epitomizes those that are embedded in power and become its eternal agents. The father-in-law of Levas Ciparis is presented as someone much more than a wise, cunning and morally corrupt Soviet bureaucrat. It is this horrifying character or even perhaps an elaborate concept that contains a direct link to those conspirators against humanity that have sought to control humans since the times of Plato that is so thoughtfully, insightfully, and provocatively discussed by Gavelis in his *Vilnius Poker*.

Though the English translation of *Memoirs of a Life Cut Short* is available almost twenty years after its original was first published in Lithuania, it still remains a book that is by no means outdated. This short novel still deserves a close reading. In addition to the inquiry into the essence of the Soviet system even before it finally collapsed, it also provides some more general insights into how power originates, and how it finally enslaves and corrupts individuals and humanity alike. However, it is far less gloomy and less loaded with sexual images than the 'nightmare' of *Vilnius Poker*, as its translator Elizabeth Novickas labeled the latter. In many ways, it is a novel that has somewhat less 'weight' but demands a close-up reading...

The novel is accompanied by a brilliant introduction by its publisher Allan Cameron, who gives his own reading of this multi-layered narrative, suggesting a possible framework for contextualizing and interpreting it in a wider Western literary context. Also, the work of the novel's translator Jayde Will is worth considerable thanks if not praise.

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ABSTRACTS

LAURAS BIELINIS

What Powers of the President are Possible in Lithuania?

The paper analyzes the debates among members of the Seimas and lawyers regarding the political significance of the institution of the President, the diversity in approaches during the Constitution-drafting period, and the perspective on the President in the context of the current election. It also discusses the legal potential for the exercising of the president's powers as well as the impact of the active constellation of political forces on the expanding and narrowing of the President's authority. Additionally, the paper examines the ability of the President's person to perform the functions at his/her hand and the unavoidable importance of public opinion to the institution of the President.

GUNTIS ŠMIDCHENS

Five Latvian Proverbs, Global and Personal

Five proverbs spoken more than three decades ago by a Latvian-American immigrant can be used to reconstruct his worldview: *Work is not a rabbit; Money is round; What you have in your head nobody can take from you; A person does not live to eat; and Meet your children's children.* Each proverb's meanings are illuminated by comparative study of native and international variants, revealing ideas that are shared with many people across cultural boundaries. But the combination of these five texts in one person's repertoire is unique, an expression of one inimitable individual's identity.

RIČARDAS ŽIČKUS

Motorcycle Sports in Interwar Vilnius

In the period between 1920 and 1939, the territory of Eastern Lithuania was occupied by Poland. Vilnius became a remote province of Poland, however, the history of Vilnius motorcycle sport began during this period – in 1931, when the first motorcycle sport club was founded in Vilnius city. The article provides an overview of its activities during the period.

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Monument to Janusz Radziwiłł. Sculptor Algirdas Bosas, 2006

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FRONT COVER: Market square of Kėdainiai

Photo by Almantas Samalavičius