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Juozas Skirius

LETTER TO THE EDITORS.
LITHUANIAN RULER GEDIMINAS –
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Interview with Author Herkus Kunčius



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Letter to the editors. Lithuanian Ruler Gediminas – Grand Duke or King? Will We Restore the Rightful Historical Titles of Lithuania's Rulers?

JUOZAS SKIRIUS

As Lithuania celebrates the anniversary of the city of Vilnius, which was first mentioned in written sources seven hundred years ago, it is only fitting to remember ruler Gediminas, the founder of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. It is also worth remembering the titles of Lithuanian rulers before and after Gediminas. Were they titled only grand dukes of Lithuania? Or did Lithuania have more kings? These are not new questions. They have come up every now and then.

Though the title of Mindaugas is not disputed, the status of the other rulers is. Back in 2009, on the occasion of the millennium of Lithuania, Dr. Rasa Gečaitė published a bold documented article “Išniekinta Lietuvos karalystė ir karaliai” [The Deseccrated Kingdom of Lithuania and the Kings].¹ Over the last decade alone, a lot of information has been accumulated on this issue. On October 4, 2013, the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences organized a seminar, entitled “Lietuvos karaliai, arba Lietuvos valstybės statusas XIII–XIV a.” [The Kings of Lithuania, or the Status of the State of Lithuania in the Thirteenth–Fourteenth Centuries]. On that occasion, historian Auksė Ūsienė prepared a well-reasoned ten-page booklet in which she discussed the status of the

¹ *Atgimimas*, February 27, 2009. <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/print.php?id=20758150>.

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Lithuanian rulers.² In 2018, Prof. Alvydas Butkus published an article “Lietuvos valstybingumo pobūdžiai ir jų interpretacijos” [The Nature of Lithuanian Statehood and Its Interpretations], which also examined the issue of the titles of the Lithuanian rulers.³ Incidentally, the article was prepared on the basis of the lecture delivered at Daugavpils University on the occasion of the awarding of an honorary doctorate to the author.

In the same year, a solid work was published on the subject, Dr. Algimantas Bučys’ sizeable book *Lietuvių karaliai ir Lietuvos karalystė de facto ir de jure Viduramžių Europoje* [Lithuanian Kings and the Kingdom of Lithuania de facto and de jure in Medieval Europe], which was reprinted the following year. The conclusions of research, which the author committed to the analysis of the historical titles of the rulers of ancient Lithuania until the early fifteenth century, refuted the outdated myth of Mindaugas as the only king of Lithuania. It is also interesting that in his book, Bučys mentions that Saint Boniface of Querfurt baptized the Lithuanian king Netimėras in 1009.

One can find many more articles and opinions on the question under consideration. However, it should be noted that Lithuanian historians in the United States (Jonas Dainauskas, Rimantas Kunčas-Žemaitaitis, Violeta Rutkauskienė, etc.) unambiguously have stated the opinion that Lithuania was ruled by kings until the early fifteenth century. Although there seems to be enough research and sources on the issue, the academic community is still dominated by the “traditional” point of view. In school textbooks, students learn about the rulers of Lithuania—the grand dukes. Why? A long time ago, during my fellowship in Chicago in 1998, historian Jonas Dainauskas (1904–2000), who took pride in the fact that he “had been studying Lithuanian-Polish relations for forty years,” tried to provide an explanation. The explanation was not the most pleasant. He said that Lithuanian historians have been strongly influenced by Polish historiography, when

² See kam.lt/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/lietuvos-karaliai.pdf.

³ See <http://alkas.lt/2018/05/05/a-butkus-lietuvos-valstybingumo-pobudziai-ir-ju-interpretacijos>.

referring to senior Lithuanian scholars. In order to better understand what the Lithuanian-American historian meant, we have to examine the question again, and refer to the texts of the above-mentioned authors.

Not every person interested in the history of ancient times is satisfied with the opinion that has prevailed in Lithuanian historiography that Lithuania had only one king, Mindaugas (1200(?)–1263), and that the Kingdom of Lithuania under his rule lasted for about seven years. Moreover, it seems odd that the Lithuanian state is probably the only European state that did not collapse after the death of its ruler Mindaugas but instead, grew in territory and strength. But somehow, and by someone, this kingdom was “renamed” as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (hereafter referred to as the GDL), and its rulers as grand dukes.

As some historians point out, in the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries (before the beginning of Vytautas’s reign), there is not a single written document (except for the Slavonic chronicles) that attests to the existence of the GDL. All the documents of that time (letters of Mindaugas and Gediminas, their treaties, letters and bulls of the Popes, the Livonian Chronicle, and the Chronicle of the Land of Prussia by Peter of Dusburg, etc.) mention the Kingdom of Lithuania and its kings (Latin: *Rex*, German: *Kunig*). Only Jogaila, who married Queen Jadwiga, changed the title of King of Lithuania to King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. This is the first evidence of such naming.

So why do historians continue calling the rulers of Lithuania grand dukes (Russian: *velikij kniaz*)? The answer may be short: there was a strong belief that only Christian rulers endorsed by the Pope had the right to be called *kings*. This tradition dates back to the eighth century when the Pope gave his blessing to ruler of the Franks, Pepin the Short, father of the future emperor Charlemagne. Unfortunately, however, this argument does not stand up to criticism, as it is contradicted by the writings of the popes themselves, which refer to the rulers of Lithuania as kings and Lithuania as a kingdom. For example, in the early fourteenth-century chronicle of Peter of Dusburg, Lithuania is

repeatedly referred to as a kingdom, and Vytenis and Gediminas are referred to as kings of Lithuania. Peter of Dusburg writes about Pope John XXII's wish to baptize Gediminas, "the famed king of Lithuania and of many Russians" in 1324. Despite Gediminas' refusal, he is still referred to as a king in the Dusburg's chronicle.

In addition, Peter of Dusburg also mentions the Lithuanian king Pukuveras, whose son is Vytenis. He also mentions Treniota, the son of the king of Lithuania. Thus, even though the hostile military societies, such as the Livonian Brothers of the Sword and the Teutonic Order, as well as the popes who sought to unsuccessfully baptize Lithuania and other officials, certainly had no intention of praising our rulers, they apparently addressed them using their real titles. Therefore, their documents should also be seen as indisputable legal evidence to call Lithuania a kingdom and its rulers kings. This is not a trifle but an essential point, because renaming a kingdom to the GDL "erases" the status of statehood and legitimizes a certain merging of lands and subordination to another state, i.e., a kingdom. But none of the Lithuanian rulers before Vytautas the Great had any other ruler superior to them, they were not vassals or sub-monarchs.

According to one of the most famous contemporary Lithuanian language historians, Prof. Zigmas Zinkevičius (1925–2018), "rulers are of two types": 1) Rulers who did not have a suzerain over them, and therefore did not belong to anyone, and who considered themselves kings, and were called so by rulers of other countries, even by the Pope (the case of pre-Christian Scandinavians and Germanic people is somewhat similar) and 2) Rulers who were "anointed" as kings by the Pope; like Mindaugas, who in 1251 converted to Christianity and in 1253 was crowned king.

The question is: where did the titles of duke and grand duke come from and why did they become so common in Lithuania? First of all, we do not know how the Lithuanian rulers were titled by the Lithuanians themselves. We have no definite knowledge

about that. It is possible that it was a *priest*, a *commander*, a *ruler* or a *lord*, as these are the only ways to translate the title of the Lithuanian ruler, *Hospodar*, which is used in clerical Slavic writings. This uncertainty certainly complicates the work of scholars.

Secondly, one of the reasons why our rulers are called grand dukes could be that from the early fourteenth century, Lithuanians began a successful military expansion to the East, annexing the Slavic-Ruthenian lands, which had previously been subject to the khans of the Golden Horde. The rulers of the Slavic lands were called *kniazi* (dukes), and the Slavs naturally gave the Lithuanian rulers their own titles. However, at that time, this title in Slavic lands meant the khan's deputy. The khans also appointed a chief deputy, the grand duke (*velikij kniaz*), who was subordinate to the suzerain khan. In Latin it is *Magnus Dux*. Thus, after the Lithuanian rulers were mistakenly referred to as "grand dukes," they later came to be understood as vassal rulers (?). Slavic chronicles refer to Mindaugas as *velikij kniaz*, even though it is known with certainty that Mindaugas was already a king at that time. Thus, historians, especially Russian ones, consciously or unconsciously gave in to the influence of the Slavonic annals.

But Polish politicians and later Polish historians had the greatest influence in this matter. From the time of the Polish chronicler Jan Długosz, i.e., from the late fifteenth century, they started to apply the title of the grand duke to the rulers of Lithuania. The aim of their efforts was to show the world that in the past Lithuania was only a duchy and Poland a kingdom.

Polish historians strictly adhered to this point of view in their publications. For example, the *Codex Diplomaticus Lithuaniae...*, a collection of old documents published in Wrocław in 1845, refers to Lithuanian rulers as kings, but in the commentaries the compiler of the collection, Edward Raczyński, emphatically refers to the same rulers as dukes. Another example, the Polish historian Marian Gumowski in his work on seals also falsified information. Although the seal of any Lithuanian ruler bears the title of king, the historian wrote in the caption that it is the seal of a duke of

Lithuania.⁴ Thus, from that time onwards, distorted titles were consistently “coined,” and the public was accustomed to the “dukes” like Gediminas, Algirdas, Kęstutis, Jogaila and previous rulers. In fact, Długosz was probably the first to call Jogaila the Grand Duke of Lithuania, even though Jogaila himself did not use that title. His seals bore the inscription *King of Lithuania*.

When Jogaila became King of Poland in 1386, he gradually handed over power in Lithuania (1392–1401) to his cousin Vytautas as his viceroy. In 1401, Vytautas became grand duke of Lithuania and was only nominally dependent on Poland. The title of the grand duke of Lithuania was consolidated by the Pact of Vilnius and Rodom. Vytautas, seeking full independence for Lithuania, formally sought royal approval from the Pope. He needed to break the *de jure* treaty with Jogaila in a civilized manner, even though *de facto* he ruled one of the largest European states. The Burgundian knight and diplomat, Guillebert de Lannoy, wrote in his diary in 1414: “I have come to visit the Kingdom of Lithuania and its king, duke Vytautas.” The king of Lithuania was Jogaila, but he lived in Poland, and duke Vytautas represented the king and acted as one.⁵ It should also be noted that in Vilnius Cathedral, in the Chapel of St. Casimir (seventeenth century), there is a statue of Vytautas with a crown of a king and not a grand duke. The crown is similar to the crown of the statue of Jogaila. They are both depicted and treated as kings. It was the American historian Stephen Turnbull who first pointed this out in his book *Tannenberg 1410, Disaster for Teutonic Knights*.⁶

⁴ See Dainauskas J. *Lietuvos bei lietuvių krikštas ir 1387-ji metai*. Chicago, 1991, 43–44.

⁵ Dainauskas, 44.

⁶ “G. Zemlicko pokalbis su istorike Violeta Rutkauskiene: Kas sieja slibinę ir dvigubą kryžių” [G. Zemlickas’ Conversation with Historian Violeta Rutkauskiene: What Links the Dragon and the Double Cross] *Mokslo Lietuva*, April 23, 2009, No. 8, 9.

⁷ *Atgimimas*. 2009 m. vasario 27 d.: <http://www.delfi.lt/archive/print.php?id=20758150>

In conclusion, it is perhaps appropriate to recall Dr. Gečaitė's words: "One can only speculate when students will be presented with undistorted historical facts from the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries, based on authentic documents and not on theories. Or perhaps today's historians are still repenting for their pagan past and voluntarily carrying the cross of punishment over the desecrated graves of the Lithuanian kings. The dead know the truth, and so might the living."⁷ It should be noted that some historians have come up with a compromise, or a "golden mean"—more often than not, they refer to the rulers and not to the grand dukes of Lithuania. That is some progress. Moreover, history textbooks for schools are constantly being updated, and there is hope that a textbook author will appear who will provide students with titles of our rulers based on documents. Let us hope so!

Translated by Dalia CIDZIKAITĖ

Legal Regulation of New Architecture on the UNESCO Protected Sites in Lithuania

DALIA TRAŠKINAITĖ

Introduction

The emergence of new architecture in UNESCO protected territories is significantly restricted in order to minimize the damage to the valuable features of a site for which the site is inscribed on the World Heritage List. Military operations, armed conflicts, natural disasters are, of course, the factors that can have the greatest impact on heritage sites due to which the heritage sites can be exposed to danger. The List of World Heritage in Danger is a means of informing the international community about the conditions on the basis of which a site or an object was put on the List; at the same time, it is an incentive for action to be taken to help restore the situation. Currently, in Europe, due to the ongoing military operations in Ukraine, the historic center of Odessa has already been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and also on the List of World Heritage in Danger (in 2023).¹ It is also likely that due to intensive military attacks, the historic ensemble of the center of Lviv, whose cultural heritage values in the buffer zone have already suffered, will also be put on the List of Cultural Heritage in Danger.² In addition to the aforementioned causes for sites to appear at risk, are unplanned

¹ UNESCO World Heritage Committee, "Odessa." Online.

² UNESCO World Heritage Committee, "Lviv." Online.

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changes in the development of a city, concentration of new architecture and, as often as not, exceeding of the recommended construction height in a protected territory or its protected zones. The Liverpool City Center and Docklands put on the World Heritage List in 2004, due to the planned development of “Liverpool Waters” which was to have a big and widespread negative impact on the protected site, in 2012 was put on the List of World Heritage in Danger,³ and, the situation not changing, in 2021 was deleted from the List and is still missing World Heritage Site status.⁴ The business sector, with its considerable influence and pressure, can often determine the decisions of urban development based on economic factors and efficiency alone, ignoring the cultural and social values of a site, thus setting a precedent that represents a one-sided approach and poses a real risk to that protected World Heritage site. Liverpool’s historic center and Docklands was the third site to be removed from this List, and such developments are basically a loss to the international community as a whole, to internationally shared values and the obligations under the World Heritage Convention. By a curious paradox, Vienna, where a conference was held in 2005 (Vienna Memorandum) on specifically contemporary architecture and heritage, which came up with the official definition of the term “Historic Urban Landscape” (HUL) and marked its inception,⁵ is also on the List of World Heritage in Danger. In 2017, the historic center of Vienna (a World Heritage site since 2001) was inscribed in this List due to the planned construction and reconstruction of high-rise buildings in this protected territory, highlighting the issue of the height of new constructions and assessing this as a negative impact on its Outstanding Universal Value.⁶

The provisions of heritage protection are constantly changing along with the perception of the most proper and best way to

³ Boland et al., *The politics of World Heritage Sites*, 8.

⁴ UNESCO World Heritage Committee. “World Heritage Committee deletes Liverpool.” Online.

⁵ Gábor, “The Historic Centre of Vienna,” 57.

⁶ UNESCO World Heritage Committee. “Historic Centre of Vienna.” Online.

preserve heritage values. The various needs of citizens in protected territories are also changing, and so they are also taken into account in shaping heritage policies. Each new object that appears or is reconstructed in such territories is inseparable from the environment in which it is planned; therefore, heritage protection issues are extremely significant and directly or informally shape design solutions. Of course, the protection of immovable cultural heritage itself is a constantly changing area of society's activities, which manifests itself at the theoretical, legal, and practical levels, aiming for the continuity and coherence of environmental formation.⁷ International legal documents, the heritage protection doctrine (charters, declarations, recommendations, etc.) are a written reaction to political, social, and economic changes, and form the basis of heritage policy.⁸ Due to changes in the heritage protection line of thinking, every previous legal document of UNESCO, ICOMOS or a national heritage protection document, should be understood as a product of its time, and should be read and understood periodically to check whether it has not lost its relevance in today's decision-making. The complexity of a protected World Heritage site depends on the interests of different groups and the abundance of legal documents and guidelines that must be taken into consideration in the protection and planning of changes, reconstruction of existing buildings, and building new ones on it. The amount and scope of the documents is large, so as often as not architects find it a difficult task to design. In order to analyze the conditions of and the possibilities for the insertion of new architecture and the reuse of existing buildings and their reconstruction in their historical environment, as well as the applicable requirements, restrictions and recommendations, an analysis of national and international legal documents was carried out, delving into two World Heritage sites in Lithuania: The Vilnius Historic Center and the Curonian Spit. The article discusses the key international and national legal

⁷ Jurevičienė, *Nekilnojamojo kultūros paveldo apsauga*, 7.

⁸ Bucher and Kolbitsch, "Coming to Terms with Value," 2.

documents regulating the aspects of the emergence of new architecture in protected territories, highlighting the most significant principles of the legal regulation of the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Lithuania, which define the architectural, urbanistic and aesthetic expression of buildings of contemporary architecture (new and reconstructed) in these territories.

The Significance of Documents of International Heritage Law

Cultural heritage is a common interest of humanity protected under international law, which has developed from the need to preserve cultural values during armed conflicts. Later its concept was expanded to the need to protect and nurture the property and material objects of nations in peacetime, until, in the long run, intangible cultural heritage became the object of cultural heritage protection as well.⁹ Cultural values are the collective cultural heritage of all humanity; therefore, in ensuring the protection of cultural values in a sense of common global interest, the privileges of the international community are more important than those of a country, but at the same time it is kept in mind that “a cultural value is part of the cultural heritage of the nation in which it is located or that of the nation in which the cultural descendants of its creator are present”.¹⁰ Every country has its own jurisdiction and control framework within its borders; therefore, every international law (convention, charter, etc.) is influenced by domestic legislation and, vice versa, each level of uniformity of the national legislation of different countries will shape future international standards for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.¹¹ It is therefore important to view these legal standards from two positions: from the national position to the

⁹ Kono, *The Impact of Uniform Laws*, 4–5.

¹⁰ Warring, “The Fundamental Differences of Opinion,” 247.

¹¹ Kono, *The Impact of Uniform Laws*, 5–6.

international one, and from the position of the application of international standards to national law, in order to identify, as a correlation between these two constituents appears, what legally emerging regulated model should be applied to new and reconstructed architecture in protected territories while already analyzing a specific case (or cases) of a cultural heritage site.

The principles outlined in the heritage protection framework are guidelines, although they can also be interpreted in light of the social, economic and cultural context of the site, its significance and values.¹² Traditions, which used to be the main supports of heritage vitality when knowledge of how and what to do to foster continuity was passed down from generation to generation, are now often contested and marginalized; therefore, when analyzing and delving into a protected territory, it is important to know both sides of the heritage protection paradigms underlying the common historical development of legal documents. The protection of the urban heritage of a city is the process of finding the most appropriate degree of intervention in order to balance the cultural, social, economic and political interests in a way that does not undermine the right of future generations to live in that city and identify themselves with it.¹³ In a sense, the development of the principles behind heritage protection emphasizes the change in deciding what is the real value of protected heritage sites in the present and the past, and at the same time tries to tackle the overall problems rather than isolated ones. It also shows society's attitude towards itself through the solutions to and discussions of such problems. Finally, this change in the principles of value and heritage, which is reflected in international and, of course, national heritage protection documents, as well as heritage itself, are no longer considered a static set of objects of fixed significance; it is a social process through which any human artifact can be a conscious

¹² Orbaşlı, "Conservation theory," 12.

¹³ Stoica, "Urban Conservation," 78.

investment in the retention of memory.¹⁴ Consequently, the decisions taken in designing new buildings in protected territories are not only a study of their physical parameters and achieving of conformity to them, but a consideration and implementation of social, cultural and intangible factors as well.

Every state which takes care of its cultural heritage values, heritage objects and sites, can and does apply the different heritage protection principles set in various charters with a view to its culture and traditions, but the general, internationally formulated principles of cultural heritage values provide a common denominator to communicate, advise and follow a similar policy in all states. The protection of each state's heritage is based on values defined by its laws and is a result determined by the general socio-cultural and legal context of that state. The concepts and definitions that are created in the laws themselves are conditioned by the legislative traditions and practical possibilities for heritage protection in a specific state; accordingly, differences are felt when trying to find a common denominator, creating new international heritage protection documents and vice versa – in adapting the existing ones and transposing them into national law. The definitions of heritage and heritage values also depend on the level of the legal document and its binding power; consequently, e.g., conventions are binding for each state party, whereas recommendations and resolutions are only general guidelines that state parties are only advised to take into account. In EU law, regulations and partly directives are also classified as mandatory documents,¹⁵ ICOMOS charters and resolutions unite ICOMOS members,¹⁶ but the opinions of the members of this organization are usually also taken into account by UNESCO¹⁷ (ICOMOS Mission and Vision), EUCO (the European Council) and the EU.

¹⁴ de la Torre, "Values and Heritage Conservation," 158.

¹⁵ European Commission, "Types of EU law."

¹⁶ Rules of Procedure of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, ICOMOS, 7,12.

¹⁷ "ICOMOS Mission and Vision." Online.

Most of the conventions were issued under the guidance of UNESCO (the United Nations Cultural Agency), most of the charters – by ICOMOS (a non-governmental organization), and, taken together, all the charters and conventions form the essence of the doctrine of cultural heritage protection, which is constantly replenished with new documents over time. These doctrinal texts are one of the main tools that enable formulating a structured set of heritage protection theory and creating a solid foundation for heritage care and management.¹⁸ The article analyzes (summarizes) the major heritage charters and declarations of four international organizations: ICOMOS, ICCROM, UNESCO and EUCO that mark the heritage protection development and the most important changes in the attitude towards new buildings, interventions in protected territories and what would be appropriate behavior in assessing and taking account of the heritage values in those territories. Two main ideological poles can be distinguished in this respect: that of the modernists and traditionalists. They originated from a strong international disagreement about two ideas: rebuilding and non-rebuilding/restoration that arose after 1850, whereas the current doctrine is basically the late nineteenth-early twentieth-century product.¹⁹ The growing number of texts of the heritage protection doctrine is a problematic signal, which leads to their underestimation and weakening of their positions or even denies their meaning at all.²⁰

It is impossible to examine the problems of new architecture in the historic environment and issues of its emergence in it without discussing the supporting document of the heritage protection theory – the Venice Charter (1964). The basic principle of the Venice Charter is to maintain and preserve the aesthetic and historic value of protected objects.²¹ The document also focuses quite extensively on the explanation of the concept of a protect-

¹⁸ Walter, "Conservation practice," 98.

¹⁹ Philippot, "Foreword," vii.

²⁰ Szmygin, "Venice charter," 98.

²¹ Chung and Kim, "The Development of Attitudes," 28.

ed monument closely related to its site, emphasizing that the moving of all or part of a protected monument cannot be allowed except where the safeguarding of that monument requires it or where it is justified by national or international interests. Thus, the protection of a monument itself and, consequently, of its site requires the following: if the surviving authentic (in terms of time) site shall be protected on a mandatory basis, then "no new construction, no modification, which would alter the relations of mass and color must be allowed."²² These strict provisions formulated in the ICOMOS document have often been criticized and still are criticized because of the limited possibility to use contemporary materials; heritage protection regulation for urban complexes is also missing²³ (due to the drafters of the Charter with no experience in urban protection rather than the ignorance of the problem itself).²⁴ Yet it was exactly this document that was one of the first such documents to address cultural heritage decay problems globally, so the rather strict wording of its provisions and its aim to preserve the remaining devastated cultural heritage values without changing them radically,²⁵ are only natural, with priority given to authenticity (although the concept itself was not defined in the document) and stylistic equality. One more most common criticism of the Venice Charter is its narrow approach which only reflects Western heritage protection,²⁶ and neglects the needs of Third World countries that are rich in natural and cultural heritage, but economically poor. The contents of the Venice Charter is quite often criticized without taking into consideration that it basically provides just general principles and guidelines, which is indicated in the text of the document itself, leaving enough space for each state to adapt them to its own culture and traditions. Many international rec-

²² "Venecijos chartija," 237.

²³ Lardinois, "Contemporary Architecture," 256.

²⁴ Banderin and van Oers, *The Historic Urban Landscape*, 39.

²⁵ Szmygin, "Venice charter," 75.

²⁶ Kwanda, "Western Conservation Theory," 15; Chung and Kim, "The Development of Attitudes," 25, 29.

ommendations and guidelines are often vague, although they do address perceived heritage issues, yet their abstractness makes them more difficult to apply, as is also the lack of adequate research to underpin proposed heritage interventions.²⁷ Based on the Venice Charter's fundamental ideas, further documents issued by ICOMOS (charters, recommendations) have gradually included new heritage values, areas, and aspects of preservation. Despite abundant and as often as not valid criticism, this historical document – the Venice Charter, as one of the most widely studied and interpreted documents of the ICOMOS doctrine, reflecting the mid-twentieth-century process of the creation of international heritage protection principles, is constantly reviewed and revised.

Analyzing the development of heritage protection and the change in the concept of heritage, the latter can be divided into three segments: heritage seen as the whole of all valuable objects; heritage as part of the setting in which it has occurred; and heritage as a socio-cultural construct.²⁸ The protection of cultural heritage defined by charters, conventions, and recommendations is laid down in chronological order, beginning with very specific and objective criteria (starting from the Athens Charter, 1930). With the change in the concept of heritage and its expansion into the field of intangible heritage, subjective criteria are introduced to define this field of heritage and its protection; finally, the role of society in heritage protection processes is emphasized. Heritage is no more objective monuments along with the surrounding environment; it already faces a social, cultural construct, and the main focus is clearly shifted from the contents of heritage or its structure to heritage as a process. Therefore, the emergence of new buildings in such territories and the reconstruction of buildings that are already safeguarded should be determined by various cultural and social factors as well as the involvement of society in these processes. One could think that, historically, the

²⁷ Stoica, "Urban Conservation," 75.

²⁸ Konsa, "Heritage as a Socio-Cultural Construct," 126.

present-day theory of cultural heritage protection and its provisions are different from the architectural theory of the past, yet in fact, they developed side by side and both are affected by the influence of each other's respective time. The concept of heritage protection has changed and broadened significantly; heritage protection itself has become more integral and interdisciplinary, with the most recent concepts outlined in HUL (Historic Urban Landscape, 2011), and the stipulation of contemporary architectural quality principles in legal documents (Davos declaration, 2018, Baukultur principles) denotes similar principles aimed at a very wide field of criteria, largely subjective.

One of the currently prevailing theses that is also specified in HUL is that objects of cultural heritage should be preserved by reusing them, adapting them to new uses, as an action that realizes the principles of sustainable development. Protected objects and buildings of cultural heritage also give identity to cities and communities, thus they should be preserved or reused (reconstructed) for present and future generations.²⁹ While such thoughts had their genesis earlier in the past, their genesis is documented in contemporary heritage protection as well. Significant attention is given to the sustainability of World Heritage objects, while this concept is basically related to the strengthening of their resilience – the ability of their social and cultural processes to withstand natural and man-caused disasters and to respond to gradual change, allowing for adaptation and evolution, but maintaining their Outstanding Global Value,³⁰ which is a particularly important aspect for cultural landscapes, urban and mixed sites. The HUL approach is widely used in the global urban growth perspective and is integrated into the goals of sustainable development, helping cities achieve their more sustainable, more resilient and more inclusive development.³¹ The recommendation itself is an additional instrument of UNESCO's

²⁹ Jacobs, *The Life and Death of Great American Cities*.

³⁰ de Marco et al. "“No past, no future?”," 176.

³¹ Rey Pérez and Pereira Roders, "Historic Urban Landscape."

doctrines, which does not change them or the conservation approaches, but seeks to integrate the heritage site protection policy and practice into the broader goals of urban development, with due consideration of and respect to different cultural contexts, values, and traditions.³² All these tools are often subject to criticism for the abstractness of their approach and the lack of specific instruments;³³ some more conservative heritage professionals even see it as a way of justifying development that is detrimental to a heritage site. It is reasonable to say that the changes that have taken place in the field of cultural heritage over the last 40 years can be equated to a revolution, but the confusion of the experts themselves about those changes made it possible for them to remain unnoticed.³⁴ At the same time, whatever the strengths and weaknesses of all the texts of the heritage doctrine, on which contemporary heritage protection is based, it is also a marker of collective identity, which is very important for the definition of this discipline.³⁵ This UNESCO recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape provided the basis for the emergence of other heritage documents. One of them is the Warsaw Recommendation 2018 on Recovery and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage, based on the Strategy of Integrating Sustainable Development Perspectives within the Implementation of the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage.³⁶

Culture is dynamic, it does not stand still; even the text of the doctrine for the protection of a building or heritage changes, which is why building or heritage assessment faces serious challenges. One of such challenges is translation of doctrinal texts from one language into another, when it changes somewhat the

³² UNESCO, "Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape."

³³ Rey Pérez and González Martínez, "Lights and shadows over the Recommendation," 24–26.

³⁴ Philips, "Turning Ideas on Their Head," 8–32; Thompson and Wijesuriya, "From 'Sustaining Heritage'," 182.

³⁵ Walter, "Conservation practice," 97.

³⁶ UNESCO, "Policy Document for the Integration." Online.

meaning, becomes more romanticized, but not to the extent that would allow us to fully replace the meaning of a text with what we would like it to be. Texts in themselves do not exist without a changing cultural context, without a changing situation, thus the analyzed texts with regard to heritage protection show the relationship with the modern world, the context, a certain dialogue that can determine practical heritage solutions. In addition, the contemporary heritage protection system requires integration of practice and theory that would maintain a constant dialogue between them, and the theoretical knowledge arising from practice and returning back to the practice, keeps that system alive.³⁷ Even though the purpose of each doctrinal text was to establish the universal principles of heritage protection, they nonetheless are constrained by a specific context; consequently, they can mark a certain direction in heritage protection rather than the basis for protection. Any such text will always lack precision, even though it will aim to enshrine the heritage principles in doctrinal documents; as a result, that constant dialogue, with the pole of practice in the center, will help maintain the critical respectable set of legal heritage functional. Effective change also requires a new approach to take root, that would unite all changes into one coalition and would generate more results. Whereas in heritage practice, necessary creative solutions are produced through discussion, not only through the top-down transmission of knowledge within the heritage system.³⁸

Heritage protection has changed from the elementary preservation of individual heritage to the change of the very concept of heritage – to heritage that maintains greater social welfare and benefits; therefore, the emergence of new objects or reconstructions on protected sites has become important to society as the direct user of that heritage, responsible for its viability. The focus of attention is now on contextual knowledge and collective decision-making, and transfer of decision-making to those who are

³⁷ Walter, "Conservation practice," 109.

³⁸ Thompson and Wijesuriya, "From 'Sustaining heritage'," 190.

closest to issues, which reflects a general change that has taken place in other sectors as well in the application of sustainable development policy.

The Influence of Lithuania's Cultural Heritage Protection Documents on New Architecture

Lithuania became a member of UNESCO in 1992. It has joined almost all major heritage protection conventions but has not ratified all of them. By ratifying, a state party to conventions and charters undertakes to fulfill their provisions, but it can only implement them after those provisions are transposed into national law. ICOMOS (Lithuania has been its member since 10.21.1991) charters and recommendations bind its members, but they are often taken into consideration by UNESCO, the European Council and the EU as well, as ICOMOS is a global organization of professionals in world heritage protection and is an advisory body to UNESCO on heritage issues. In fulfilling the purpose of ratifying conventions, charters and other documents by transposing them into national law, problems inevitably arise, different, specific interpretations of provisions to be integrated (including due to the subtleties of translation) are faced, and the content of some provisions may even remain undefined due to the established distinction and irrelevance of the principles applied in national heritage protection. Even though, after agreeing, signing and ratifying international documents, countries undertake to be guided by those documents, there nonetheless exist different standards in the direction of different countries, settled over time, with a unique concept of preserving national cultural heritage as the international documents are adapted to the country's current legal tradition, financial capacity, and environmental management³⁹. The intricacy of Lithuania's legal framework for the protection of heritage and frequent changes in documents

³⁹ Jurevičienė, *Nekilnojamojo kultūros paveldo apsauga*, 11.

are among the possible obstacles that prevent ensuring efficient heritage protection and at the same time the emergence of new, quality architecture in the protected territories of cultural heritage.

In an effort to maintain the Outstanding Universal Value of protected World Heritage sites and manage the sites properly, their management plans are prepared. These are documents of strategic rather than territorial planning, and they are binding on all UNESCO World Heritage sites in ensuring their legal protection. Lithuania has two World Heritage sites where the construction of new buildings is allowed: The Curonian Spit and The Vilnius Historic Center. The Vilnius Historic Center (put on the World Heritage List in 1994) before 2023 had an outline of the UNESCO World Heritage site management system; the goal is to prepare a plan for the site's management by 2024. The process of preparation of the plan for the management of the Curonian Spit (put on the World Heritage List in 2000) should begin after the process of the preparation of the management plan for The Vilnius Historic Center has been prepared. UNESCO's fundamental document on heritage protection is the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, a document which has the greatest power and is the most widely recognized heritage protection document internationally,⁴⁰ which, together with the Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention, is adhered to in the protection of World Heritage. This document is the main document regulating the protection and management of World Heritage objects that is directly applicable, yet each World Heritage state undertakes to integrate it into its legal framework, which Lithuania has not done thus far. Best practices of protection are basically decision-driven. Best practices that could help determine completely and objectively whether the proposed interventions into a historical site are right or wrong, are rarely explained, and thus legal acts cannot directly ensure the quality of preservation practice; however, those best practic-

⁴⁰ Karalevičienė, *Pasaulio kultūros ir gamtos*, 38.

es can be ensured indirectly by laws (e.g., through allocating financial aid, to be able to meet best practice requirements). For an architect who designs in protected territories, it is difficult to grasp the context of the cultural environment and to convey it in his design. According to architecture researcher Vytautas Petrušonis: “the main reason behind the problems in the contemporary treatment of cultural heritage is the antiquated effect of the classical worldview,”⁴¹ whereas one should focus not only on the aesthetic function of art, but also on the work’s semantic definitions, so its form would not be separated from its contents.

The Vilnius Historic Center

“Vilnius is an exceptional illustration of a Central European town which evolved organically over a period of five centuries.” The outstanding value of the Old Town of Vilnius lies in its universality, the harmonious whole of the abundance of its various features. The Vilnius Historic Center was inscribed in the World Heritage List based on criteria (ii) and (iv): (ii) – “Vilnius Historic Center is an outstanding example of a medieval foundation which exercised a profound influence on architectural and cultural developments in a wide area of Eastern Europe over several centuries”; (iv): “In the townscape and the rich diversity of buildings that it preserves, Vilnius...”⁴² The history, culture and traditions of both Vilnius and Lithuania, its landscape and spatial composition that has been changing over time, buildings from different historic periods – this is what has shaped Vilnius as it looks now and provided the conditions for further changes in the city and the protection of its heritage. The Old Town of Vilnius was declared a protected antiquity as early as 1936 and in 1949 was included in the list of historic cities of the USSR, yet

⁴¹ Petrušonis, „Nauja kultūros paveldo objektų aprašo koncepcija,” 13.

⁴² “Retrospective statement of the exceptional universal value of the historical center of Vilnius.” Online.



“Misionieriai Garden”, Vilnius. Photos by the courtesy of Dalia Traškinaitė

its protection was more of a declarative nature as there were intentions to rebuild it using advanced construction methods. The motif of reshaping the Old Town by modernizing it remained in other planning documents from the Soviet period as well. The construction of new buildings was not regulated until the 1950s; mention was only made of the possibility of building them and that they should serve as a background for the environment.⁴³ New architecture was the focus of attention of the 1956–1959 draft plan for the reconstruction of the Old Town. It underscored that new architecture must fit in the environment without imitating it, and only allowed the restoration of buildings based on historical information. In the 1970–1974 regeneration project, the Old Town was divided into several zones, with different requirements for the construction, restoration, and management of new buildings. The plan was to generally use the rehabilitation meth-

⁴³ Navickienė, *Nauja architektūra istorinėje aplinkoje*, 48.



Paupys district, Vilnius

od, to not permit new construction on the most valuable streets, and when preparing individual plans for other places, to apply the principle of contrast to the environment as a feature of the Old Town of Vilnius, or to fit new construction formally into the environment. The correctional project for the regeneration of the Old Town (1988–1992) focused on the Old Town’s urban whole and plots,⁴⁴ while in regard to new constructions, it moved away from the modernization ideas, suggesting rebuilding or restoring of the former appearance of a building. After regaining Independence, in 1992 and later, with the development of both the regulatory base and different corrections and their broadening in scope, the requirements for new architecture have depended on different protection regimes applicable to different zones; and, with a view to maintaining the whole of the Old Town in harmony, it has focused on the harmonious relationship between new and reconstructed buildings and on verification from different viewing points in the Old Town of Vilnius.

⁴⁴ Glemža, *Nekilnojamojo kultūros paveldo*, 155–159.



Pylimo St, Vilnius

The abundance and developments of legal documents for the protection of the Old Town of Vilnius show that it is not easy to change existing documents; instead, it is more convenient to supplement them with separate new documents that allow covering more fully all protection and management related issues, in many cases responding to issues that serve as precedents. The Recommendations for the Maintenance of the Old Town of Vilnius prepared in 2012 is an example of such a supplement to legal acts. More than one conceptual version of the plan for heritage management/maintenance (from 2014 – Vilnius Old Town Management Plan) was drawn up. Prepared in the period from 2009 to 2012 (by VĮ “Lietuvos paminklai”), it regulated activities not only in the Old Town of Vilnius, but also in its protection zones. After examining all presented options, the plan was finally drawn up and approved by the Ministry of Culture and the Department of Cultural Heritage in 2012. It approved major maintenance trends: conservation and restoration, and set the modes of operation for already developed structural parts once again. The issue of rebuilding is regulated more strictly in this

plan as well: reconstruction and conversion of new buildings are allowed after detailed research and having presented a legal basis for it; territories in which urban structure developments are projected are subject to regulation. It is important to regulate the surrounding environment of the Old Town, i.e., its protection zones as well, with a view to preserving the Old Town and the surrounding landscape, by regulating the protected site's developments, so that no new elements were in disharmony with the city's structure and that no new buildings emerge that could spoil the Old Town's unique silhouettes, perspectives and panoramas.⁴⁵ An act of the Old Town of Vilnius Assessment Council was approved in 2013, which specified and named all the valuable features of the Old Town, its panoramas, silhouettes, perspectives, layouts, morphological types of its development, and buildings that have valuable features and constructions. This act's material has become the basis for preparing solutions to the Old Town of Vilnius' management plan.

The Curonian Spit

In the description of Outstanding Global Value,⁴⁶ the Curonian Spit is defined as a UNESCO protected World Heritage site, as a sandy, wooded cultural landscape of a coastal spit with small coastal settlements, formed and continuing to develop as a result of the interaction of wind and human activity, characterized by an abundance of unique natural and cultural heritage values, having a social and cultural importance.

In addition to the already discussed morphological structure of the landscape and the significance of the factors that have determined its formation, along with its general spatial structure, the vivid panoramas and the silhouette from the side of the Curonian Lagoon are singled out as the most valuable landscape

⁴⁵ Filipavičienė and Kliobavičiūtė, "Vilniaus senamiesčio apsauga," 11.

⁴⁶ *Retrospective Statements of Outstanding Universal Value of Curonian Spit*, 1.



Nida, Curonian Spit

elements of this site.⁴⁷ The panorama of the old fishing villages of the Lagoon's coastal area that have turned into resort settlements, their spatial planning structure and architecture: the old wooden fishermen's houses, the nineteenth-century professional architectural structures – lighthouses, piers, churches, schools, villas, elements of maritime cultural heritage – all of them are among the most valuable elements of the cultural landscape.⁴⁸ The protection of the Curonian Spit's heritage changed along with the takeover of this territory under different political circumstances. Until the mid-twentieth century, everything old and valuable was taken over and preserved in the creation of new objects.⁴⁹ In 1907 in East Prussia, a law was adopted that prohibited the marring of areas and beautiful landscapes; a year later –

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁸ UNESCO, "World Heritage Nomination, Curonian Spit."

⁴⁹ Bučas, *Kuršių nerijos nacionalinis parkas*, 238.



Nida, Curonian Spit

an official decree forbidding the construction of buildings that could mar cities and towns. Consequently, it can be assumed that new buildings were erected with due respect to the surrounding environment, with a view to saving and protecting it. After World War Two, cultural heritage in the territory of Neringa was not protected, and only after the Curonian Spit was given the status of a landscape reserve in 1960, new construction projects began to be agreed on with the environmentalists.⁵⁰ Due to Neringa's functional purpose as a tourist-recreation site, in order not to waste valuable space for individual residential construction, it was recommended to build boarding-houses, summer hotels, pioneer camps, tourist bases, tent camps, campsites, and tourist recreation bases there. In 1961, the aim was already to protect the old fishing villages by directing constructions towards the sea. In that same year, the approved general project

⁵⁰ Drėmaitė, "Nuo žvejų kolūkių iki prestižinio kurorto," 98.

for the planning and putting up of the Nida settlement with buildings was divided into zones, distinguishing the preservation of ethnographic buildings. In 1961–1967, subtlety, moderation, harmony with the landscape were sought in the designing of buildings, but their stylistics was up to the author. In the 1960s, a specific requirement was set for new buildings in the old architectural zones – no higher than two floors, whereas in other zones they could be three or four-storied.⁵¹

The Curonian Spit is also a national park whose territory falls under the provisions of the Republic of Lithuania Law on Protected Areas and the Regulation on the Protection of the Curonian Spit National Park. The latter document pays significant attention to detailed requirements for new architecture, the architectural expression of the region's ethnic architecture and typical local villas. One of the zones in the Plan for the Management of the Curonian Spit is the protected landscape management one, by distinguishing which, it is aimed to preserve the boundaries of historic domains within which it is allowed to recreate former valuable buildings; but it is not allowed to erect constructions that are not typical of the site, to alter spatial composition, panoramas and silhouettes. Older documents (than those currently valid), for example, the 1994 general plan of the Neringa Municipality, strictly state that new construction is not allowed on higher points of the relief (the ridge of the dunes),⁵² yet private capital has managed to decide the levers in its favor, paving the way to the emergence of new constructions in, e.g. Nida (in the northern part of Mount Urbo, G.D. Kuverto Street), which expanded the block of rest houses built in the Soviet period. The requirements laid down in the Regulation on the Protection of the Curonian Spit National Park are usually more general, whereas the Park's management plan defines requirements for specific objects:⁵³ for farm buildings –

⁵¹ Ibid., 108.

⁵² Stauskas, *Architektūra. Aplinka. Atostogos*, 69.

⁵³ "Kuršių nerijos nacionalinio parko tvarkymo planas". Online.



Nida, Curonian Spit

the use of typical architectural expressions, volumes, materials, decorative elements in the Curonian Spit; for existing buildings – dismantled connections between buildings, glass annexes; for reconstructed buildings – not increasing the height of existing buildings and the density of their development. The management plan⁵⁴ also indicates specific territories in which contemporary architecture and new buildings are allowed; reconstruction or conversion of existing Soviet buildings is mostly allowed, and rebuilding of the old villas in Juodkrantė is planned. Reconstruction of existing holiday homes is allowed in the Preila management zone: by dividing volumes and designing them close to the volumes and proportions of fishermen's traditional homestead buildings, using traditional colors and materials; the allowed maximum number of floors of a building is also indicated. When building new objects in other zones of

⁵⁴ Ibid.

the Curonian Spit management plan, the character of the Curonian Spit's urban landscape and the architectural shapes characteristic of fishermen's homesteads and old villas must be maintained. The zone covering the part of the recreational priority of Nida and Juodkrantė with prevailing multi-apartment construction is not distinguished for "architectural and urban value", according to this document. Protected panoramas and silhouettes from the side of the Lagoon become important, and thus "compatibility of architectural volumes and shapes with local recreational architecture must be ensured in principle, without negatively affecting the panoramas and silhouettes from the side of the Lagoon." There is also a fair number of Soviet modernist and post-modernist buildings on this World Heritage site that this document proposes to reconstruct without increasing the existing number of buildings, by installing sloping, red tile roofs, and reducing the volume and density of buildings.

Conclusions

Each UNESCO World Heritage site may lose its Outstanding Global Value due to a large scale and concentration of new architecture in its territory. This may inflict harm, have irreparable effects, and cause visual and physical harm to it. Armed conflicts, weak economy, natural disasters, as well as irresponsible activities of states or individuals, such as irresponsible, scientifically unfounded decisions in the planning of new buildings on a World Heritage site and its buffer zone, can pose a serious threat to the already settled values in the historic environment. Constant change in the thought of heritage protection based on legal documents entails the change in the attitude towards the conditions for the emergence of new architecture and its aesthetic expression. Since heritage itself is no longer just objective monuments together with their surrounding environment, the planning of new buildings in protected territories expands into a set of multilayered criteria, with the focus on the very process of heritage

protection and the planning of new development, which is determined by different cultural and social factors and public involvement in these processes. The Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) method (2011), which has contributed to the change in the direction of contemporary heritage protection, stipulated the necessity of adopting integral and interdisciplinary decisions vis-a-vis protected areas, while the consolidation of the quality of contemporary architecture in the principles of the Davos Declaration (2018) and the New European Bauhaus, also mark a shift to a wide field of criteria.

World Heritage sites, including the Curonian Spit and The Vilnius Historic Center along with their buffer zones, where the construction of new architecture is permitted but limited by various requirements, face legal, planning and regulatory challenges. The abundance of legal documents for the protection of both sites, and the Old Town of Vilnius in particular, and their developments show that it is not easy to change the legal documents in place; instead, it is more convenient to supplement them with separate new documents that allow covering more fully all protection and management related issues, in many cases responding to issues that serve as precedents. It is hoped that the new plans for the management of these sites will take into consideration the best practices of contemporary heritage protection, allowing to better ensure their Outstanding Universal Value, and will be a valuable tool for implementing different planning and development processes in the protected sites, causing as little damage to these World Heritage values as possible without posing a threat to them to appear on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

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Translated by Kerry SHAWN KEYS and Dalia ŠATIENĖ

THE COLLECTIVE FARM IS GETTING ON ITS FEET*

HERKUS KUNČIUS

On March 5, 1953, Comrade Stalin – the father, teacher and benefactor of all nations – died in the Kuntsevo Dacha near Moscow. A general mourning was declared throughout the country.

Immediately after hearing about the mourning, Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beria was the first to mourn. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev mourned. Georgy Malenkov mourned. Sniečkus mourned. Paleckis mourned. Šumauskas mourned. Gedvilas mourned too. The whole Communist Party of Lithuania (Bolsheviks), CPL (b) mourned. The whole All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), AUCP (Bolsheviks) mourned. The entire progressive world mourned too. The workers and peasants mourned. The intelligentsia mourned.

The Soviet people, on learning this terrible news, pulled their hair from their heads at home, apprentices in factories mutilated themselves to death out of despair, and pregnant women, without seeing a brighter future for their children, refused to give birth *en masse*. In those days, rivers of tears were shed not only in Moscow, Prienai, Vilnius or Magadan, but also in Warsaw, Beijing, Prague, Berlin; hysterical cries were heard everywhere, suicides spread in resorts, as people were confused. They no longer knew how to live without Comrade Stalin.

* Excerpt from the novel *Annals of the Collective Farm*.

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Stalin's death shocked everyone in the "Lenin's Way" collective farm as well. Secretary of the primary party organization, *partorg* Sergei Dushkin, got drunk for an unpredictable time, the depressed veterinarian categorically refused to leave the barn, and the young agronomist, who had just graduated from a technical school, disappeared somewhere in the fields of the collective farm. All the burden of the worries related to the mourning fell on the shoulders of the director of the collective farm, Vytautas.

After wrestling with his conscience, he decided to hold the mourning ceremony in the collective farm's office. The flags hanging on its façade were lowered to the ground. Fir branches were laid on the ground and floor. It was swept up. Tidied up. The office was adorned. Comrade Stalin's portrait in the house was bound with a mourning band. Dozens of kerosene lamps and twice as many splinter lamps were lit. The office desk was pushed to the farthest corner, and professional female lamenters from the collective farm were seated on the benches along the walls.

As they began to weep, the director of the collective farm, Vytautas stood there as the guard of honor. He froze. Soon, collective farmers began to flock to the office. The Soviet agricultural workers moved slowly, respectfully, and, looking at Stalin who had left them orphans, somewhat timidly. The more sensitive wiped away their tears and were not ashamed to cry. The more generous ones, as a sign of respect and not being afraid to admit that they would love him forever, piled the flitch, hams and flanks they had brought with them under the portrait. Others, who had not yet renounced their religious superstitions, knelt before the image of the leader of the nations and crossed themselves secretly.

Standing next to the brightly lit Comrade Stalin's portrait, the director tried to get into a mournful mood, but for some reason his thoughts kept turning to the tractor, "Stalinets," which were in short supply. The collective farm desperately needed a powerful tractor indeed. Gone are the days, thought the director standing guard, when all the work in the fields was done by a nag or a biddy harnessed to a harrow. Progress must come to

the collective farm. And electricity. Land reclamation. Sewerage. Moreover, a motorcycle “Dnieper” would come in handy for him as a collective farm director. Or maybe “Izh” would be better, because it is more powerful. With efficient work, later one could also think of a harvester, Vytautas gave himself up to dreams.

Compared to serfdom or Greco-Roman slavery, socialism has many advantages, the director pondered while standing the guard of honor. This economic and political system invented by comrade Karl Marx and brilliantly developed by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin initially encourages thinking about the collective and then only a little about oneself or one’s family. On the other hand, why the hell a family for the Soviet man? – the director contemplated. Then, in the case of collective ownership, not only immovable or movable property, but also human resources belong to all, i.e., collective farmers. True, there is still a lack of awareness in the collective farm; for some reason, collective farmers rush to cities. However, this is temporary. Soon, all of Lithuania will turn into a huge collective farm. And then there will be no more cities or villages. Everyone will live, make love, sing and dance in a friendly way under one roof.

In this line of thinking, the collective farm director did not even notice daybreak. The splinter-lamps in the office had long gone out. The lamps, too, had run out of kerosene. However, people with aloe veras they had grown by themselves still flocked into the office. The female collective farmers wept; they seemed appropriately emotional.

Vytautas would have stood guard for even a longer time among the hams and aloe veras, yet the wireless radio outside announced through a loudspeaker that the sacred remains of Comrade Stalin would soon be taken from the Hall of Columns in the House of the Unions in Moscow to the Mausoleum to lie next to Lenin.

The time came for the director to exit from the guard of honor; moreover, supported by the milkmaid Stasė and the cattle feeder Bronė, the *partorg* Sergei Dushkin, suffering from delirium tremors, showed up in the collective farm’s office. Rushing to

the portrait of Stalin, he began to scream something about unforgivable overreach, the cult of personality, and the new Party line he had just dreamed up while drunk under the table. Comrade Dushkin was torn away from Comrade Stalin's portrait and taken outside to breathe in some fresh air. The mourning rites in the collective farm ended.

From now on, without Comrade Stalin, the life at the collective farm became much sadder. Therefore, to lift their spirits, the collective farmers began to raise a glass more and more often. Even zealous abstainers and supporters of the Valančius Sobriety Society would not refuse to raise a glass of moonshine. As often as not, possessed by high spirits under its influence, they not only surpassed the hardest-drinking drunkards in the collective farm but also managed to take the lead.

Having improved their mood, everyone set off to work without sparing themselves and not counting the working days. The director, losing all patience, had to forcibly drive them away from the collective farm fields, farms or warehouses where everyone's collective property was stored.

It is no secret that the collective farmers gave not only their hearts but also their souls to the collective farm. Therefore, at the sight of such zeal which was harmful to health, the director sometimes reprimanded the collective farmers and demanded during their meetings that, upon return from the collective farm fields, they paid at least a little attention to their unforgivingly neglected land, those few acres. The collective farmers, shamed by the director, grumbled in dissatisfaction, and would secretly sneak out again at the slightest opportunity to create the welfare of the collective farm.

Realizing the benefits of collective farming to the bone, also changed the landscape of everyday life on the collective farm. Now, no one prevented the collective farmers from working peacefully. No longer terrorized at night. No longer shot in the back or kicked in the ass, or thrashed on the butt on the dance floor.

After the Communist Party laudably announced an amnesty, partisans began to return from the forests to the collective farm,

whom the collective farmers contemptuously called *Forest Brothers*. After spending a few years in Siberian labor camps, they would later harmoniously join the collective of agricultural workers and sometimes even climbed the career ladder – becoming storekeepers.

It must be admitted that the People's Defenders, who were respectfully referred to by the collectivized village as *stribas* (sg. *stribas*), contributed significantly to positive changes in agriculture. Even though similar to Neanderthals, they were often educated, broad-minded, extremely intelligent activists of the Soviet government, ready to not only defend the collective farmers from the raging *Forest Brothers* but also sacrifice their lives. *Stribas* were treated with respect; they were extremely astute politically, the brightest minds of Lithuania. Among them, one could find a few academicians, a good many poets and philosophers, a dozen engineers, dozens of Doctors of Science, hundreds of university professors and associate professors, who had put aside their scientific, creative and academic activities for a noble purpose.

If, during a strong blizzard, a *stribas* visited a collective farmer's house at midnight, he was always seated in the most honorable place. The hostess did not spare him the tastiest bite, and the host, after giving away his last shirt to the guest, always poured him a small glass of homemade vodka. After emptying their glasses, the men would hug and kiss each other. Then they would start singing the favorite songs of the *stribas* with all their hearts. Where the need arose, the host would allow the guest to sleep with his wife, mother or eldest daughter. Being aware of the difficulty of the work of these *stribas*, who sacrificed themselves for the people, the collective farmers of the Lithuanian SSR always saw them off from their home with a basketful of all sorts of goodies.

Feeling the love and universal respect of people, the *stribas*, too, served the collective farmers in return. After hunting some partisan in the forests, they would drag him to the collective farm's office so that, after laying the body in the dirt, the people could rejoice – from now on, the collective farm will be much

safer. On recognizing a desecrated relative or neighbor, the collective farmers took a fierce joy, sparing no standing ovation for the *strib*s. Later, with the director's approval, a feast would be held in the collective farm's office, and the *strib*s celebrated for several days, having seated themselves at the table next to the NKVD gunmen who assisted them.

Unfortunately, after the death of Comrade Stalin, such feasts became less and less frequent. Maybe that is why some collective farmers began to buzz publicly that they would like to leave the collective farm. Fortunately, there were few of them. The collective farm director Vytautas managed to talk them out of it easily, using the arguments of his fists.

And yet the director, as a prudent person, took preventive measures. Having consulted with the Board of the Collective Farm, he decided to fence the collective farm's territory with barbed wire. Once it was there, he took care of setting a post at the gate, which from now on was guarded by armed *strib*s. Now no one could leave the collective farm on an arbitrary basis. If some collective farmer set his mind on leaving the collective farm for personal reasons, he had to obtain written permission from the collective farm's director; only if he or she showed the pass, were they allowed to go to the city or the neighboring state farm, *sovkhoz*. The introduction of such an order made living in the collective farm still safer. No outsider came there anymore, and the collective farmers who broke free from the territory for a few hours had to come back at the time specified by the collective farm's director. Upon violation of this order, people were exposed to the risk of the People's Court, extra working days, and corporal punishment.

The collective farmers liked the novelty introduced by their director. Now they knew the limits of freedom, so they tried to use freedom as smartly as possible. Without a serious reason, no one turned their nose toward other cities, the district center, or the neighboring collective farms, and no one longer dreamed of staying in such places. Without passports, the collective farmers led a sedentary life. Feeling a direct connection with their native

land, they could devote themselves to labor wholeheartedly and raise agricultural productivity. It is true that, in the late fall evenings or in a snowy winter, living in the collective farm was a bit boring, so the mobile Soviet cinema, self-activities, and the courses in Marxism-Leninism organized by the *partorg* Dushkin lightened the collective farmers' mood.

Director of the Collective Farm and the Church Dean

When Soviet power came to Lithuania, the people learned the long-hidden truth – there is no God. This good news did not pass by the collective farm either. At first, the collective farmers found it difficult to put up with the fact that from now on they would no longer be watched by the all-seeing eye of God, and that after death they would no longer be threatened with purgatory or suffering in hell. Soon, everyone relaxed, coming to terms with the new reality. Now they could do whatever they wished as long as it did not contradict the program of the Communist Party or the decrees of Soviet authorities. Rising up from their knees, the collective farmers felt themselves free and no longer restricted by superstitions. They became masters of their own destiny and did not look back on the past.

The news that man appears to have descended from the monkey brought huge satisfaction to the collective farmers. This fact, proven by scientists, allowed the collective farmers to be proud of their origin. True, the topic caused heated debate.

During one meeting of the collective farm, when the *partorg* Dushkin reminded them of the role of work in the process of humanizing the monkey, the collective farmer Vitulskis publicly announced that he and his numerous relatives had descended from gibbons. This caused universal laughter among the *stribas*, who considered themselves to be the descendants of gorillas. The director of the collective farm tended to believe that his ancestors were orangutans, while the veterinarian and agronomist were convinced of being the direct descendants of baboons.

Loreta, the collective farm's accountant, believed she was the love fruit of a lemur and a capuchin.

Shortly, during a collective farmers' meeting, they began to argue which species was superior. The majority of the collective farmers considered themselves to be chimpanzees, while the others considered themselves macaques. Both species had obvious advantages and disadvantages. The chimpanzees were hard-working, but got tired quickly, so if they stayed up late, they did not shy away from sleeping longer in the mornings, and sometimes they did not show up at work at all. The macaques were politically flexible, agile, but very noisy; they always caused chaos during meetings. When it was decided to vote on who should be considered the collective farmers' direct ancestors, the votes split 50/50; therefore, it was decided to postpone this issue for the future.

Although there was no more God in Soviet Lithuania, there were still plenty of signs of his alleged presence on the collective farm. At every corner you would unexpectedly come across a small chapel, and the waysides and crossroads were just cluttered with all kinds of crosses, wayside shrines, and roadside poles. The collective farmers would not stop being disgruntled. More than once, overcome with rage, they applied to the Board of the Collective Farm in writing asking it to take measures so that the collective farm's public spaces be cleaned from the unwanted foreign bodies. After all, the rotten wooden crosses and roadside poles posed a serious danger to the collective farmers' lives.

Upon receipt of the next-in-turn complaint from the collective farmers, one day, the collective farm director Vytautas finally took to action. With the help from the most muscular *stribs*, he succeeded quite easily in pulling down the oldest cult objects. The morally outdated hundred-year-old wayside shrines were left to rot on the ground, the healthier ones were used for the construction of farms, and the carvings of the Pensive Christ, saints and other minions of the Lord were chopped up and given to the collective farm's office as firewood.

However, some roadside poles and crosses proved stubborn and were not going to give up so easily. Having arbitrarily put down root into the collective farm's land, they expected to continue to stand there as if there was nothing to it, scaring not only the children of the collective farmers but also the district authorities at night. The collective farm's director was obliged to use machinery. After promising to pay the credit in the distant future, he succeeded in begging for a tractor from the district authorities. The iron horse was perfect for this kind of work. As soon as the tractor touched a cross or a roadside pole, they immediately fell down and never rose again. In a few days, thus laboring around the clock, the crosses and small chapels were finally gone in the collective farm; the latter had been particularly favored for demolition by the collective farmers because, when heavy showers came, they offered shelter for dogs and vagrants.

Once the collective farm cleaned itself from the foreign bodies, the landscape of the collective farm became more beautiful; its microclimate improved as well. Now, a collective farmer stopping to rest at a crossroad, could rest assured that no unsafe cross would fall on him, and the children would no longer be frightened by the primitive figures from wayside shrines. For this work, the collective farm director Vytautas was praised by the district authorities and mentioned as an example to be followed by others.

The collective farm had one more headache. A church stood near its office. The eighteenth-century construction of low value was surrounded by a brick wall, like some fortress. An ugly belfry stood next to the church, which, during the years of class struggle, could easily turn into the Church Dean's donjon.

The unbearable sounds of the bells, which persistently, on a daily basis, invited the collective farmers to religious orgies, had been driving them crazy for years. Several collective farmers went totally deaf, and four members of the Board of the Collective Farm needed help from a psychiatrist. Such a situation could not be tolerated any longer. One had to take the most decisive

measures so that the extraneous sounds would no longer disturb the collective farm's acoustic field.

At first, the collective farm's director wanted to come to an agreement with the Dean of the church in a nice way. However, he was hard-nosed and did not allow himself into talking about not polluting the collective farm's airwaves. What was more, he chased the director away from the churchyard with bangs and waved a cross in his face, ordering him not to turn up there anymore.

The Dean's behavior made the director of the collective farm, Vytautas sad. He summoned the Board, which made a decision to solve the problem on a unilateral basis. Through the mediation of the district authorities, acoustic specialists were invited to the collective farm to investigate the threat posed by the bells to the collective farmers' health.

After thorough scientific research, it was found that not only the noise created by the bells, but also the angry sermons of the Dean were ten times above permissible limits. The Dean of the church was obliged to pay a fine stipulated by the law to the state and moral compensation to all those affected – there turned out to be more than a hundred of such in the collective farm. In addition, from now on, singing, playing the organ, and ringing bells in the collective farm were strictly forbidden, and in case of disobedience, these instruments were to be confiscated for the agricultural needs of the Lithuanian SSR.

After announcing the results of the investigation, the Dean, of course, began to grit his teeth and threatened to complain to the Bishop or even Pope Pius XII, which greatly amused the Ministry of State Security (MGB) acoustics team sent in from the district. In good spirits, they loaded the sound meters they had brought with them into their truck and, singing *Shiroka strana moya rodnaya* (*Broad is my Motherland*), left the collective farm.

The Dean was not only dark by nature, but also vindictive. He did not want to admit the mistakes he had made and did not react to the criticism adequately. Despite the warnings to behave

decently in the future, he nonetheless began to gather together an opposition. Misleading some of the gullible collective farmers, he listened to their confessions licking his lips, sprinkled their heads with polluted water, baptized secretly in the church, asked himself to funerals (allegedly they wouldn't do without him), criminally married couples, held religious orgies, and persistently and tirelessly slandered the Soviet power during his sermons. Demanding freedom of belief, which did not exist in the Soviet state, like a snake, he polluted the air with essential oils, kept deliriously talking about political persecution, an iron curtain, continuing to tell collective farmers the same old stories about the afterlife. What was more, he organized impudent religious processions in the churchyard during alleged religious festivals. With non-Soviet flags raised, people demonstratively circled around the church.

The collective farmers were outraged by this. They wanted to live without lies and hypocrisy – during those processions, some misguided old mothers had the opportunity to dress up in colorful scarves sent to them from the hostile country of America, and young milkmaids – in nylon dresses; and what's more – sprinkled with despicable spangles! Therefore, they kept on filing complaints, which now reached not only the district authorities but those based in the capital as well.

For the collective farm director, the Dean was like a thorn in his flesh. He was invited a few times to explain himself to the Board of the Collective Farm; the district's Party authorities, too, tried to talk with him in a nice way. Alas, all efforts to enter into a dialogue with him were fruitless.

The director of the collective farm did anything he could think of for the sake of peace of mind: he called the militia to achieve reconciliation; broke the windows in the rectory with stones; strew shards of glass in the churchyard at night so that the collective farmers did not crawl on their knees there; held atheist rallies near the fence on Sundays; poured several tanks of ammonia into the priest's well. And what not.

The director of the collective farm felt helpless in despair. The Dean had a mushy brain; nothing helped. The most painful thing

about the situation was that the Dean – no matter how you saw it – was also a Soviet man, had a passport of a citizen of the USSR, constitutional rights and duties.

And yet one day it was over for the church Dean. His persistent screams from the pulpit about the rights of believers being violated in the Soviet state led to a revision. The MGB agents who arrived from the capital and searched the rectory did not only find an abundance of anti-Soviet literature there, but also scarce goods meant for speculation as well as an arsenal of side arms, and also a bottle-shaped hydrogen bomb in the basement.

After collecting indisputable evidence, the church Dean was arrested and taken for interrogation.

In the court, he, of course, did not admit any responsibility and did not plead guilty; however, he was nonetheless sentenced by the Supreme Court of the Lithuanian SSR to several years in prison and ten years in a labor camp, where, felling trees in the Siberian taiga, he could not only reflect on his mistakes but also the extent of the harm he had inflicted on the Soviet state.

After getting rid of the cult servant, the sun lit up the collective farm irreversibly. Now, instead of kneeling on their knees in church on Sundays, the collective farmers could devote more time to agricultural work, self-education, their hobbies, various clubs; the director was able to give all of his strength to the collective farm, and the collective farmers' children were no longer frightened by the man in a black dress they had sometimes met on the edge of the forest.

Detente

In 1956, the 20th congress of the CPSU took place in Moscow – a significant event not only for the Communist Party of the USSR, but also for all the Soviet people and the entire progressive world.

Full of energy and innovative ideas, the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, delivering the report “On the Cult of Personality and its

Consequences" at the congress, resolved to reveal the disguised misdeeds of Comrade Stalin. It turned out that everyone's beloved and revered Comrade Stalin had not been spotless. Millions of people were killed by his will and as many groundlessly repressed. This demon of darkness, Satan incarnated as a communist, struck fear into the hearts of people and had nurtured the seeds of evil for several decades.

The speech of Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev opened the eyes of the Soviet people. Urged by the Communist Party of the USSR, everyone began to hate Comrade Stalin, called him evil and demanded his removal from the Mausoleum. The Soviet people, who had set out to create communism, now hated with all their heart the malicious foreign spy Lavrentiy Pavlovich Beria, also the obscenely obese Georgy Maksimilianovich Malenkov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, – after starting to push the anti-party line in the Politburo, he was put on a diet and sent to the province to run a power plant.

These changes in Moscow made the members and candidates of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party come together, prick their ears, and watch carefully which way the wind was blowing.

At the earliest suitable opportunity, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Comrade Antanas Sniečkus unconditionally endorsed Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev's report. Comrade Justas Paleckis, Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR, Mečislovas Gedvilas, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian SSR, Motiejus Šumauskas, the Second Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, and Aleksandras Gudaitis-Guzevičius, a member of the Board of the Writers' Union of the USSR, who was diving deeper and deeper into great literature, did not oppose it either.

After carrying out a thorough inspection in the premises of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party and the institutions subordinate to the Party, not a single Stalinist was detected in the ranks of the communists of the Lithuanian

SSR – to the joy of the working people of the Republic. All leaders were clean and progressive. Their conscience was not troubled by bad deeds. On the contrary, everything they had done was for a noble purpose, the welfare of the people. True, there had been some cases of going too far under Stalin's rule, yet the auditors from Moscow found them quite innocent. Reassured that Khrushchev would not sentence and shoot them, the communists of the Lithuanian SSR took on the leading role with an even greater energy.

As the eyes of the Soviet people had been opened to reality, the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, thought of opening the iron curtain and showing the Soviet state to the world. Which was only natural; after all, the achievements of socialism, despite some overdoing it in the past and the cult of Stalin, which had already been condemned, were obvious. Moreover, with the cold war still ongoing, American imperialism raging and Israeli Zionism rearing its head, the Party wanted to show the peaceful nature of the USSR and dispel the unfounded suspicions that, allegedly, there was no democracy or the freedom of the Soviet people being restricted.

For this noble purpose, the Third World Youth Festival was organized in Moscow in 1957. Upon the recommendation of the district authorities and with the unanimous approval of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party plenary session in the capital, Vytautas, the director of the "Lenin's Way" collective farm, was sent to take part in it. While already a candidate to join the Party, he was still of Komsomol age.

At first, the director of the collective farm was extremely reluctant to go to the Third World Youth Festival in Moscow. In the district's Party Committee, he raged and blustered, reasonably trying to prove that summer was the busiest season in the collective farm, so the collective farmers would be sad without him and would feel themselves helpless. However, the district's Party leadership was adamant; it could not ignore the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party's resolution. The

collective farm director could do nothing but obey. Having packed up his belongings, he left for Vilnius quite reluctantly, where he took a train to Moscow, the capital of the USSR, the heroic city that the Fascists had been unable to capture.

Moscow welcomed the guests of the Festival with lavish hospitality. There were squads of grinning cops on every corner, so you could always ask them directions if you got lost. Muscovites, who had never seen such an abundance of foreigners before, pulled the unseen guests they met on the street by the sleeve into their homes, seated them at the table and persistently tried to get them drunk, communicating in sign language. The Poles and Bulgarians even found pleasure in it, but the Shiite and Sunni youth grumbled that they had again got totally sloshed God knows where against their own will.

Upon arrival in Moscow, the collective farm director Vytautas met smart dressers, *stiliagas* he had never seen before, on Gorky Street on the very first day. The children of enemies of the people, USSR diplomats or high officials of the CPSU did not want to look like Soviet people for anything. To stand out from the crowd, they wore brightly colored clothes, checkered jackets, flouncy dresses, and outraged everyone around them with their striking hairstyles. Blindly worshipping everything that came from the West, the *stiliagas* roamed the streets of Moscow without any noble goal, listened to satanic music and danced *rock 'n' roll* and the twist rather than Soviet dances. Their pathetic desire to look like Western vagrants was boundless. For a moist *Lucky Strike* cigarette butt, a brightly colored tie, a shoelace or a flowery shirt, *stiliagas* were ready to lay down not only huge money but also sell their home country too. During the festival, they, like jackals, hunted down more naïve foreigners in dead-end streets begging for the socks or underwear that struck their eyes or exchanging them for something of their own.

Vytautas, collective farm director, for some unknown reason, was considered a Central Eastern European in Moscow. Despite defending himself heroically while pressed against the wall of the Kremlin and trying his best to prove that he was just an

ordinary Soviet collective farmer, he was nonetheless forced to exchange his clothes with a *stiliaga*.

As a result of this transaction, the young director of collective farm lost his straw hat, linen pants, several waistcoat buttons and government clogs, which he reluctantly exchanged for worn sandals. On the other hand, being mistaken for a foreigner secretly flattered the collective farm director's dignity and boosted his self-esteem. Therefore, when asked by the Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Turkmen and Moldavs who were forever losing their way in Moscow, if maybe he was a local Russian, he lied, saying that he was a European without blushing.

Moscow was buzzing during the World Youth and Student Festival like a boiling cauldron. Here, with thirty-four thousand guests crowded in, you could meet jet-black Ethiopians, narrow-eyed Mongolians, Syrians, dignified folks like monuments of Lenin, curious students from India, timid guys from Bangladesh, and many other colorful young people from the Soviet Union republics.

The director of the collective farm, Vytautas, a member of the headquarters of the delegation of the Lithuanian SSR, represented at the Festival the song and dance ensemble of Vilnius Vincas Kapsukas University, dressed in Lithuanian national clothes from head to toe, and also curated a joint Lithuanian SSR youth choir. This was the will of the Party Committee and subordinate special services. Even though the director of the collective farm had little contact with the ensemble, choir, dances and songs, he sat patiently during the ensemble's rehearsals writing down diligently in his notebook who said bluntly what during the breaks, who communicated with whom, and when they returned to the Bauman University dormitory for the night.

However, shepherding Lithuanian SSR students, unlike collective farmers, turned out to be much more difficult. In Moscow, they relaxed and felt free. They were unpredictable, sometimes even insolent, and tended to biting, sharp retorts. After tearing themselves from home, the students kept looking for dangerous adventures, which caused quite a headache for the collective farm director looking after them.

As soon as slipping away from the rehearsal hall, the guys of the ensemble persistently searched for connections with *stiliagas*. Making acquaintance near Lenin's Mausoleum, they persistently asked to be invited to the stiliagas's homes, used alcohol excessively and, intoxicated, tried to repeat the obscene movements of the boogie-woogie. Whereas the female members of the choir preferred spending their time with Bangladesh guys or Egyptian Arabs. The latter were unbearably clingy; they did not take a single step away from the choir girls, and did not miss the opportunity of pressing themselves to them as close as possible in a crowded subway car. Making them believe their snow jobs, they invited the girls to their place and, promising to make them queens in Egypt, hung on them head to toe worthless pendants with the image of their sacred President, Gamal Abdel Nasser.

All this, as well as the ensemble choreographer's nocturnal amusements with the students of the Budapest Technical School of Fine Arts, could not go unnoticed. The KGB, which closely observed and supervised the Vilnius Vincas Kapsukas University ensemble in a fatherly manner, took an interest in it. Upon receipt by Ivan Serov, Chairman of the State Security Committee, of more than one signal, a promising officer Sergei from the KGB's 2nd Board was sent off to find out what was really going on with the delegation of the Lithuanian SSR.

Upon arrival at the headquarters of the delegation of the Lithuanian SSR, which was based in the smoking room, *kaptiorka*, of the Bauman University dormitory, Sergei, a senior lieutenant of the State Security Committee, was very kind. Even before they started an open conversation, everyone saw that he was a warm and friendly person. He first told a few anti-Soviet anecdotes and made the Lithuanians laugh out loud, and then admitted that it was a great honor for him to visit the headquarters of the delegation of students from the Lithuanian SSR. Allegedly, he had long dreamed of reviving his friendship with the Lithuanian brothers, with whom he had had private and intimate ties for a long time.

To save the festival guests' time, Sergei soon offered to talk with each member of the headquarters on an individual basis, so he asked the others out of the *kaptiorka*, ordering the head of the delegation alone to stay. For some reason, the latter's hands began to shake.

Finally, it was the turn of the director of the collective farm, Vytautas. When he and the senior lieutenant Sergei locked themselves up in the headquarters, the latter hit him in the face with his fist out of habit, and then, blood pouring from Vytautas' nose, he set his intent sword-like look on him and asked if comrade Vytautas remembered him. Indeed, even though Seryozha, a friend from the days in Penza, a child of enemies of the people, was already quite well-fed and changed, the director of collective farm recognized him in a moment. Suddenly falling into each other's arms, the best childhood friends broke down. After calming down, they began to share their memories from the war years, when they lived in an orphanage.

Seryozha, the words choking in his throat and barely able to control his emotions, told Vytautas how Lithuanians were loved in the Penza orphanage. Being aware that they had come from a starving country, the children shared bread and salt with them, and did not spare compote for them either. If it were not for Seryozha, the pioneer Vytukas would have died of hunger long ago. It was he – the pioneer Seryozha – who persistently defended his friend, did not allow elder children to abuse him, to call him a Lithuanian scumbag, a fascist, a curly prick. More than that, Seryozha helped Vytautas at school, did homework for him, hardened his body in a hole in the ice, and taught him the great Russian language which he now speaks almost with no accent.

The director of the collective farm, Vytautas, also had something to recall. None other than he, who had been taught by pioneer leader Ninel in the dunes of Palanga, opened the rich world of onanism to Seryozha. Only thanks to Vytukas' skillful hand did the son of shot enemies of the people, Seryozha find out what solo love is. It was he, the pioneer Vytukas, who introduced oral, then – anal sex to his friend. Talked into it by Vytu-

kas, the pioneer Seryozha became a real man, because after an evening dedicated to the creations of Salomėja Nėris, he allowed his friend to know him from his back side in the Red corner of their barracks.

The childhood friends would have thus shared their memories for a long time, yet the senior lieutenant of the State Security was pressed for time. Interrupting the director of the collective farm's story about the pranks of pioneers in the washroom, Sergei asked Vytautas to revert to the key topic and tell him what he knew about the Vilnius University song and dance ensemble. Urged with a fist to hurry up and not to conceal anything, the collective farm director told him everything he knew.

It turned out that Irena, a female *kanklės* player, had an affair with a student from Ghana and was probably expecting a child from him. Anupras, the soloist of the joint choir of the Lithuanian SSR, was hiding from everyone his long-standing chronic clap, or otherwise gonorrhea. The *birbynė* (chanter) player Gintaras, after tasting *Pepsi* he got from foreigners for the first time, praised it highly to his friends, although he vomited and had diarrhea for three days after that. And the dancer Viktorija receiving a gift of the chewing gum *Spearmint* from a Yemeni law student, had put the whole package into her mouth and swallowed it without chewing, so she did not come to the next rehearsal as she was spending time locked in the toilet.

Having received the extremely valuable intelligence information, the KGB senior lieutenant Sergei did not want to owe a debt of gratitude. In return, he offered the director of the collective farm to show him around Moscow. He had many acquaintances, so, to make it more fun, he promised to invite a foreigner to join them – Patrice Lumumba, who had come to Moscow from the Congo with a student delegation; he, allegedly, was curious about the life of Soviet people in a socialist country. Having agreed on the time and place of meeting, the childhood friends parted.

The senior KGB lieutenant Sergei came hurriedly to Lubyanka Square, which is decorated with a monument to Felix Edmun-

dovich Dzerzhinsky, the founder of the Cheka (Soviet secret police organization), just five minutes late. He looked disheveled, his forehead was dewy and his knuckles were grazed. He kept apologizing and making excuses to the director of the collective farm, Vytautas, that he had urgent work in the Committee.

They had to wait for Lumumba from the Congo for much longer. He turned up after an hour and a half from the side of the *Detsky Mir* store, and was not alone. Two charming female Muscovites – Galina and Zina – took care of the guest's balance, holding him by his arms like iron hooks. The girls were amused too and kept giggling, and when Lumumba said that he was late because it took him longer in the Committee, they began to whiny uncontrollably.

The senior lieutenant Sergei, who had always railed at the non-punctual Africans, cursed their unpredictable ways and doubted if they would ever build socialism in Africa, now looked at Patrice Lumumba from the Congo with leniency. Glad that the promising African politician kept his word and having introduced him to his childhood friend, he suggested they not waste any more time at Lubyanka and everyone should go look around Moscow instead.

The working day was coming to an end. Soon the streets and subways of Moscow were flooded with crowds of people. The senior KGB lieutenant Sergei walked his team around the city at an energetic pace. Perfectly orienting himself to the topography of the city, like a clever captain of a ship, he avoided the biggest traffic jams, crossed streets and avenues at unauthorized places, not avoiding mysterious nooks and crannies.

When Patrice Lumumba said he was already tired and began to whine about it, Sergei finally took everyone to the promised goal. There, stood a wooden booth in a dead-end street, and a signboard attached to it announced in large letters that this was *Ryumochnaya* open around the clock. A kilometer-long queue of grumpy men and mysterious ladies lined up before it. Some with shaking hands, the eyes of others darted restlessly, still others stomped and urged the queue to move faster.

Actually, despite the uttering of curses and exchanging nervous retorts, the queue moved forward with determination and quite quickly.

Less than half an hour later, the company found themselves in a cramped room where a matron with a paper crown on her head reigned behind the counter. She poured drinks in absolutely cold blood, working so skillfully as if she were standing at a conveyor belt.

This establishment sold only two products – warm vodka and wet sandwiches. Once one paid, the matron would pour one hundred grams of vodka into a glass and push the customer a sandwich with *Lyubitelskaya* sausage. After receiving one's ration, one had to immediately pour the contents of the glass down their throat, have a bite, and then disappear outside as quickly as possible.

No one wasted time here, didn't tell sad life stories or silly anecdotes. After quickly bracing themselves at the counter, the customers, in a good mood, would return to the back of the queue after an hour or an academic hour, only to receive the alcohol ration approved by the Ministry of Health of the USSR because ordering a double or triple at once was strictly forbidden here. By the way, the well-known saying "to take a shot without stepping aside from the counter" was born exactly in this public catering institution.

The motley company, after waiting patiently in line thrice, were now having fun. True, Patrice Lumumba, barely standing on his feet, begged to stand at the back of the queue again – one last time, really the last one. However, Sergei somehow made him change his mind, because he had promised the director of the collective farm to show him around the All-Union Exhibition of the Achievements of the National Economy, which was relatively close to the drinking facility.

After walking to the spot in unsteady steps, trouble suddenly started – because of Patrice Lumumba. The man from Africa went berserk. Overwhelmed by wild emotions, he shouted something belligerent, showed incomprehensible signs to passers-by

and kept trying to escape from Galina and Zina's arms to get rid of their care.

Bursting out of their embrace, Lumumba, like a toddler, tried to hide himself in the RSFSR achievements pavilion, then squatted several times behind an ice cream cart, and then curled up to take a nap under a bench in spite of Soviet mothers with small children sitting on it.

Sergei didn't like this behavior. The director of the collective farm didn't approve of Lumumba's wild pranks either. Patrice had managed to make friends with a dozen persons of dubious reputation near the *Ryumochnaya*, who followed him faithfully begging the foreigner to give them a stick of deodorant.

When Patrice Lumumba decided to bathe himself in the Friendship of the Nations fountain, which was sacred to the Soviet people, Sergei ran out of patience. Disregarding Sergei's remark to be more restrained in public and not scare people, Lumumba undressed himself arbitrarily and plunged headlong into the water.

In the Congo, Patrice must have seen so much water a long time ago, because he didn't want to get out of the fountain for a long time. The director of the collective farm had to take off his underwear and wade into the holy water together with Galina and Zina. This, of course, caused anger among the locals and even Moscow guests, as the Soviet man, cherishing the traditions of chastity, had never liked nudity.

Soon, as the children began to scream and their loud-voiced mothers accompanied them, the militia turned up. After firing a few warning shots, Patrice Lumumba, Galina, Zina and Vytautas were somehow pulled out of the Friendship of the Nations fountain. The hooligans were handcuffed and taken to a militia department, where they were locked in KPZ – temporary detention cells.

Bathing naked in the Friendship of the Nations fountain was an extremely serious crime back then. It was tantamount to anti-Soviet activities, looting of socialist property or high treason; therefore, the Criminal Code provided for long years in prison

and, sometimes, even capital punishment for that. Suspecting that this event was not going to end well for him, the director of the collective farm decided to deny everything during the interrogation.

When summoned before a grim-faced sergeant who was to take down the examination record, the director of the collective farm initially said he didn't remember anything because he was fairly drunk. When the sergeant sanctified him with his billy club, he, however, began to excuse himself by saying that he didn't want to violate public order and was only fulfilling his civic duty – rescuing the person drowning in the fountain. Moreover, he thought it was a swimming pool rather than a sacred place for the Soviet people.

After a few more rounds of the billy club, the director of the collective farm was obliged to confess that he knew Patrice Lumumba a little by sight, but as to Galina and Zina, he was seeing them for the first time in his life. The sergeant, certainly, did not find it convincing, so, to revive the director's memory, he began kicking him and banging his head against the wall, promising to let him rot in prison or put a bullet into his forehead soon.

This made the director of the collective farm change his defense tactics. Revealing the state secret that Patrice Emery Lumumba was a progressive trade unionist from the Congo, Vytautas stated that he wanted the man to refresh himself and help him overcome the cultural shock he was experiencing in Moscow; this was the only reason why he had suggested to him to put his head into the fountain. To be on the safe side, he was going to hold him, but Lumumba slipped out of his hands like a fish. Why he was naked, the director of the collective farm was unable to answer. Without concealing his disappointment, he was also unable to answer why he was going to have sex with Galina and Zina in the fountain.

While the sergeant was diligently recording everything in the examination record, the director of the collective farm was flooded with gloomy thoughts. He imagined the further sequence of events. Of course, the "Lenin's Way" collective farm

will receive a letter from the Moscow militia, and the Board will have to respond to it. An extraordinary meeting of the collective farm will be summoned. It will consider the director's behavior. He will be removed from office by a majority vote. Then the People's Court will await him. This court will confirm his guilt by the testimony of a few collective farmers. Then the director of the collective farm's case will be sent to the prosecutor's office. After collecting additional evidence of what the director of the collective farm was doing in Moscow, he will be tried by the Supreme Court of the Lithuanian SSR. Vytautas will refuse a lawyer and will try to defend himself on his own, but the prosecutor will demand capital punishment and the president of the court will satisfy his demand. After being taken out of the courthouse, the director of the collective farm will be shot on that same day.

However, when the director of the collective farm was about to humbly sign the interrogation affidavit that he deliberately sought to profane the friendship of the Soviet peoples, betray the ideals of socialism and undermine the foundations of Soviet power, Sergei turned up in the interrogation chamber. He responded to the sergeant's silent question by showing a KGB's senior lieutenant's certificate, thus dispelling the officer's doubts that he might be just an outsider. Crying out that he would not allow them to act willfully and ruin the secret KGB operation, he ordered the sergeant to tear up the interrogation affidavit and swallow it without chewing, as Sergei put it, "without stepping aside from the counter." After the sergeant did what he was told, Sergei took the director of the collective farm out of the KPZ, where Patrice Lumumba, with an already brightened consciousness, and Galina with Zina were waiting for them. After apologizing to everyone for the unfortunate misunderstanding that since there was no room left for him in the militia car, *voronok*, he was forced to run after it, Sergei suggested to everyone that they regain their composure at the *Ryumochnaya* that all of them had liked before, and then continue their acquaintance with never-sleeping Moscow.

Everyone found Sergei's proposal agreeable. Reassured that his collective farm will not receive a letter from the militia and he won't lose his responsible position in his home place, the director of the collective farm, Vytautas, now felt more confident. After joining the queue to the *Ryumochnaya* five times, he was ready to blindly follow Sergei, who promised to show them something that no one had ever seen in Moscow before.

However, to Vytautas' surprise, Sergei did not show his friends the Bolshoi Theater, the Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Lenin's Mausoleum or the famous Tretyakov Gallery, but took them to a five-room communal flat. The room, once meant for a maid, was crammed with about twenty young persons whom the senior KGB lieutenant introduced to his friends as future dissidents or influential party figures in the future.

The premises, no more than ten square meters large, was thick with smoke and the floor was lined with lots of cheap Port wine and luxury cognac. Some dissidents were sleeping blind drunk, and the future party nomenclature, refreshing themselves with the short supply of sprats, were listening to Bulat Okudzhava's songs.

Spiritual-faced Bulat, with a guitar in his hands, sang in a trembling voice about battalion No. 9 of paratroopers and, salivating, complained to the Soviet youths about his old friend not visiting him anymore, because he found the chaos of everyday life closer to him.

Everybody listened to the bard intently; some even tried to accompany him. By the way, the director of the collective farm, Vytautas, was not moved either by the manner of performing the songs or their content. Bulat's voice was weak by nature, and he strummed the guitar just moderately. Yet Vytautas, realizing that, in this communal flat, the bard was respected like some Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, remained silent and did not pass on his opinion to anyone.

Sergei knew everyone here well and was always welcome. Some, as he said, were his best friends and colleagues. When the collective farm director asked who that dandy in a brightly-col-

ored jacket, aesthetically matching the smart dressers, *stiliagas*, was, Sergei, in a moment, introduced him to the poet Yevgeny, who, he said, was not only the great hope of Soviet poetry but its conscience as well.

Once Bulat finished bleating, Yevgeny, getting on a stool and putting his hand pretentiously in his pocket, now recited about scouts of the future, a station of enthusiasts, the third snow, and a mysterious promise. The girls absolutely loved it. Holding their breath, they listened carefully to the Soviet lyrics, and when the poet fell silent, they demanded him to read more.

A break was announced, and a spontaneous discussion erupted in the room. Some, jostling, began to vociferate that the world would be saved by the Soviet lyricists, while others flatly asserted that only the Soviet physicists would do it. The argument was heated, sparing no wild cries, slaps on the face and fists.

The poet Yevgeny, having poured a bottle of Port wine onto his opponent's head, was 100 percent convinced that, in the country of the Soviets, lyrics was incomparably stronger than physics. He was opposed by an academician of older age, Andrey. Grabbing a fork and sticking it into the hot-headed poet's neck, he reminded him that the works of physicists, even though they are not as numerous as those of lyricists, but – just look! – the Soviet country has recently produced the atomic bomb, and he himself has developed the hydrogen one too, for which he is proud... and a little regretful.

Then the poet Yevgeny, whom Sergei familiarly called Zhenka, took the fork away from the academician and suggested he put his hydrogen bomb up his ass, and arrogantly announced in the small room of the communal flat that his Soviet poems would be eternal – they would bring up the Soviet man, enlighten and comfort him. This caused an ovation from Zina and Galina, who were hurriedly translating the discussion to the stupefied Patrice Lumumba into French, who complained that he couldn't understand everything.

After some time, when the lyricists and physicists pulled out more knives, Patrice Lumumba, electrified by the discussion,

asked to speak, although he had a very vague understanding of what was being discussed.

As the physicists and lyricists put their weapons aside, Patrice Lumumba confessed that he liked visiting the Soviet state. He had never met so many hospitable people before; you see, in the Congo, which was exploited by the Belgians, you could go for hundreds of kilometers and no one would invite you to be their guest. Therefore, upon returning home, following the example of the Soviet people, he intended to establish an equally frenzied Congolese National Movement, seek the post of Prime Minister, liberate the country from colonialism, establish the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and create communism in it as early as the next year.

On hearing about Lumumba's noble plans, Sergei brightened up. He wanted to rush headlong to the head of the KGB, Ivan Serov, and share with him the good news that from now on, the USSR would have a loyal friend in Africa. Yet he managed to somehow take control of himself. Grabbing the first bottle of cognac that came into his hands he offered everyone to raise a glass to Patrice Lumumba and, promising him any kind of military, industrial, financial and moral support from the USSR, called him the USSR's closest friend and a fearless fighter – after all, in the militia department, he behaved himself heroically and didn't give himself away to be a foreigner.

Injecting a double dose of Port wine down his throat on that occasion, the bard Bulat picked up the guitar again and was about to leave. But no sooner had he publicly promised in a weak voice that he would only come back when the trumpet would call him back to get to sleep, someone began to knock on the door.

When the door was opened, a half-naked neighbor with a hangover walked in with an ax raised. The veteran of the Great Patriotic War initially threatened to evict this whores' nest as early as tonight, because it was not giving peace to the neighbors, then flew at the hostess Irina, who, although having plenty of sympathy for the poet Yevgeny, vigorously supported the physicists during the party. Amid the uproar, the lyricists and phys-

icists suddenly united. Now it made no difference which of the two was superior, as the enraged neighbor threatened the lives of the future dissidents and party nomenclature.

After the KGB officer Sergei skillfully used several acts of self-defense, the veteran neighbor was soon tranquilized and tied up, and then, after hitting him over the head with a bottle, quite hospitably laid on the coach. The party could keep going. A scuffle broke out between the lyricists and physicists again.

And yet, no matter how enjoyable holidays can be, they have a way of coming to an end. The Third World Youth Festival was coming to an end too. The Soviet and progressive foreign press covered it as having been organized extremely smoothly. The smallest detail there was skillfully thought out. Any provocations were prevented. Diversions barred. Care was taken of neutralizing the malicious propaganda of the capitalist countries, which had barked and continued to bark non-stop that the festival would fail.

The headquarters of the Lithuanian SSR delegation had something to celebrate as well. The ensemble of Vilnius Vincas Kapuskas University, which had overcome their small internal issues in time, performed commendably during the festival's closing concert; even Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev himself applauded them. However, the joint youth choir of the Lithuanian SSR went beyond everyone's expectations, winning a silver medal at the festival and the right to present their concert program in the People's Republic of Hungary. It was a great commendation of the Lithuanian SSR's maturing culture and trust in the youth of the Republic, given the hell, inspired by the world's imperialist powers, that was taking place in the young republic of late.

As the train started from Belarus Station for Vilnius, the director of the collective farm, Vytautas, was happy about the time he spent in the capital of the Soviet country. It was hard for him to leave this wonderful city. The collective farm director had fallen head over heels in love with Moscow, its great people, public transport, its catering establishments. While recollecting the most memorable events in his mind, he regretted having

never asked the physicists and lyricists what they thought about collective farms. But his friend Sergei's promise that from now on he would always be welcome in Moscow, soothed his heart. Now Vytautas had far-reaching international plans too. Having exchanged addresses with Patrice Lumumba, he intended to invite him to his collective farm in the near future, so that the African could see with his own eyes not only how the Muscovites live, but also the collective farmers in the Lithuanian SSR. This must be interesting for him, who set out to create communism in the Congo.

On getting to know Moscow from different angles, the director of the collective farm felt like his horizons had broadened, he had gained new knowledge and valuable experience for a leader. He now felt himself not as a yesterday's villager, but an ideologically stronger and politically motivated person. Having experienced first-hand what detente really is, the director of the collective farm was ready to return to his native place and roll up his sleeves to not only carry on his old works, but also undertake new ones.

Translated by Kerry SHAWN KEYS and Dalia ŠATIENĖ

Stories of the (un)gone World

Interview with Author HERKUS KUNČIUS



HERKUS KUNČIUS is one of the most prolific of contemporary Lithuanian writers. He creates novels, short stories, theatrical and radio plays, librettos, as well as literary essays. His works have been translated into many languages and are published readily outside Lithuania, especially in Eastern Europe. Kunčius' works have a clear historical dimension, with a focus on the realities of the Soviet era which are slowly sinking into oblivion. We interviewed the author of the

novel *Chronicles of the Collective Farm* and of many other works of this genre about the history of the Soviet era, its reflections and contemplation in his works.

You are one of the few, and perhaps the only Lithuanian writer to purposefully create narratives about the Soviet era in the form of a novel. It seems you have already published a good half dozen novels on Soviet era problems. What is it that attracts you to the Soviet period as a writer? Is it (and why) more interesting than the period of colonization by Tsarist Russia which you had also taken an interest in? And why in your opinion do your colleagues take so little interest in it?

Let me begin from the fact that I happened to live in the Soviet era, witness its stagnation and then its collapse. The Soviet period I have lived through does not evoke any nostalgia or sentiments for me, but it's interesting in an anthropological sense. I mean the goal of the Soviet government – to create the Soviet man – the builder of communism, who blindly obeys the

will of the only and “infallible” Communist Party of the USSR. On the other hand, the Soviet period in the USSR-occupied Lithuania went through several phases: Stalinism, Khrushchevism, stagnation, and agony. They were not identical. In the last years of the Soviet era, there was a lot of tragicomic absurdity there, which is an inexhaustible pabulum for a writer. I mean not only the official Soviet rituals and customs that they tried to introduce, which – in today’s view – mostly went beyond common sense, but also the complete inability of the authorities to get people on their side with meaningless slogans and promises. At that time, people in Soviet Lithuania were obliged to adapt, to forget dignity and dreams of freedom, because they had to live in the kingdom of lies. At that time, everybody lied left and right – teachers, authorities. Numbers lied too. Officially, one thing was said, a different thing was believed, and still a different thing was done. It was a traumatizing experience, the consequences of which are still felt by the older and my generation. Therefore, in my books, I write not only about the so-called “values” of Soviet power, but also about the feeling of people forced to make compromises with their conscience.

What does cultural memory mean to you? Is it possible to have coherent memories of the past, especially when talking about such a complicated period, the realities of which many would like to bypass or forget for very different reasons? It is no secret that it has had an impact on the biographies of almost all people who lived at that time and on their families; it has left scars that are painful for some, and those who actively participated in the creation of the Soviet way of life tend to forget that today.

Human memory is selective. It is not uncommon to want to forget the traumas experienced, to push into oblivion facts one is not proud of today. This is one more subtopic of my novels about the Soviet era. In addition, it should be borne in mind that the so-called Soviet architects of the soul (Communist Party ideologists) had the task of depriving a person of their historic-cultural memory, because a person without memory can be easily

manipulated by feeding delusions of propaganda into their head on a daily basis. So, it is not all that people want to remember today nor do they want to see themselves in a skewed mirror. This is natural. If a person had enjoyed at least any of the government favors, he or she will want to whitewash their past. On the other hand, the Soviet era was full of contradictions. We probably won't find the pure truth when talking about that period. Every witness or their descendants will tell or write about that period through the prism of their own experience or the story lived through by their family.

It should be noted that your novels are based on the studies of historic material. How do you collect material for your future novels: in archives, libraries, or do you listen to individual stories about the realities of the Soviet era and the scenes and behind-the-scenes of that life? Are you assisted by professional historians in finding material?

Indeed, in writing on this topic, I use a lot of historic material, quote documents, resolutions and ordinances of the time. They can be found today in books published by the Lithuanian Institute of History or the Genocide and Resistance Research Center of Lithuania. Books published in Soviet Lithuania comprise a separate part of my personal library. I collect them greedily so that I can later use some quotation or fact that stuck in my mind. Although they should be treated as waste paper, for me, they are an inexhaustible source for my creative work. Given that at that time, every self-respecting, high-ranking Soviet nomenclature figure felt obliged to issue a weighty book about themselves, I carefully read memoirs of Soviet figures, their reminiscences and collections of articles about them, their allegedly heroic struggle for the victory of communism in Lithuania. I have accumulated and I'm still adding to my collection of Soviet "wealth" that no longer fits on my shelves. It includes the book *Kovų verpetuose* (In the whirlwind of fights) by comrade Motiejus Šumauskas (Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR, 1905–1982), consigned to the dustbin of history today; memoirs of comrade Justas Paleckis (Chairman of

the Soviet of Nationalities of the USSR, etc., 1899–1980) in his *Du pasauliai* (Two worlds); memoirs of contemporaries about comrade Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas (Prime Minister of the Lithuanian-Byelorussian Socialist Republic, Litbel, 1880–1935); comrade Antanas Sniečkus (leader of Lithuanian communists, 1903–1974); comrade Zigmas Aleksa-Angarietis (Lithuanian and Russian political figure, 1882–1940); and other Soviet figures and revolutionists who served Russia. All of them, if we believed in what was written in the books, were very noble examples to be followed of how to live a meaningful life. These as well as other names say nothing to today's youth. However, at that time, these Soviet figures, under the direction of Moscow, not only projected the future of Lithuania, but also decided the fates of all the residents of this country. Besides that, I devote a lot of my time to the feature films, music and documentaries of the time that convey the spirit of the Soviet era.

A significant number of characters in your novel are Lithuanians or residents of Lithuania who diligently served the regime imposed by the strangers; for instance, the protagonist of the novel Stalin's Iron Glove. Are you consciously interested in the psychology of compatriots who joined the Soviet repressive bodies, or do they become heroes (or anti-heroes) for other reasons?

The geographical field of my interests and also of my novels, is Lithuania and Eastern Europe. It is the axis around which the events I describe unfold. Until recently, the people living in these latitudes, consciously (or not), tried on national identities, which largely determined their destiny, like clothes. As an example, I will remind you of the signatory to the Act of Independence of Lithuania, Stanisław Narutowicz (1862–1932) and his younger brother, the first President of Poland, Gabriel Narutowicz (1865–1922). Or the three brothers from Lebiodka – the famous Lithuanian naturalist, academician Tadas Ivanauskas (1882–1970), the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Polish Central Lithuania, Jerzy Iwanowski (1878–1965), and the Minister of the People's Education of Byelorussia and later the burgomaster of Minsk, Vaclavas Ivanauskis (1880–1943).

All three chose different national identities. Hence, reverting to the then realities, the situation was not unambiguous. Confusion reigned. The protagonist of *Stalin's Iron Glove*, Nikolay Yezhov (Commissar General of the NKVD and the main executor of Stalin's repressions, shot in 1940 in Moscow) was born in 1895 in Veiveriai – into the family of a Lithuanian mother and a Polish father who became Russified. After joining the Bolsheviks, he chose a Soviet identity. This also holds good for the former *varpininkas* (a member of the patriotic organization named after *Varpas* newspaper), Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas, who chose to be a communist.

I am curious why a man chooses evil – despite having various options. I am looking for answers in documents and biographical facts. In my novels – i.e. fictional texts, I try to examine this by presenting my own versions of why some went to serve the Russian Bolsheviks and others found it meaningful to fight for Independent Lithuania. Of course, we will never learn about all the circumstances why, e.g., Iosif Grigulevich (1913–1988), a Karaite born in Vilnius and educated in the Panevėžys Gymnasium, became a Soviet spy-saboteur who planned an assassination attempt of the President of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980).

Later by the way, this academician of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, Iosif Grigulevich, who ended his life safely in Moscow, will write: “After my death, you can write whatever you like about me.” I mentioned this Soviet spy deliberately, because I am collecting material and intend to write about him in the future.

You come to communicate with different audiences of your readers not only in Lithuania, but also in countries in which your novels are published and into the languages of which they are translated. What about the reactions of the readers? How different are the attitudes of different generations of your readers? Is this just exoticism for younger readers or do they search for existential aspects or human experiences as well?

A couple of my novels came out in Poland lately – the novel of sketches *Lietuviškos apybraižos* (Lithuanian Sketches) and *Ge-*

ležinè Stalino pirštine (Stalin's Iron Glove). A collection of short stories, *Išduoti, išsižadėti, apšmeižti* (Betray, Renounce, Slander) is soon to come out. When communicating with the Polish audience during presentations of my books, no questions why I write about the Soviet era arise. We and the Poles share the common history of Eastern and Central Europe, similar traumas, and the desire to free ourselves from communism.

We unanimously agree that it is us (!) who must describe this era; otherwise, others will do it for us. I agree that some realities of the Soviet era are hard to understand for the younger generation. Like, e.g., the so-called intensifying class struggle, democratic centralism, the search for people's enemies, the law of the unity and struggle of opposites, the Red terror, military communism or socialism with a human face which was attempted during *Perestroika*. In such cases, I have to patiently explain things that are incomprehensible today since they go beyond common sense: slave labor, deportations of people of different nationalities, adding stories about dreams of having an electric kettle, a carpet, and supernatural efforts to buy an imported iron. Therefore, when I write, I have to take into account that the younger generation of readers may not understand why people in the late Soviet era only ate stale fish in restaurants and canteens on Thursdays, and a career-seeking young man had to know what orders the Komsomol, i.e., the reserve of the Communist Party of the USSR was awarded with. For a man who has never faced the Soviet era realities, it is problematic to make them out in this strange labyrinth of expectations and rules. That is why I call all this madness born by Soviet totalitarianism, socialist surrealism in which more than one generation lived.

Your novels are full of jokes, irony, black humor and, occasionally, sarcasm. Is this a conscious narrative strategy or simply a desire to keep the narrative from being too serious and at the same time less engaging? On the other hand, doesn't this manner of narrative creation prevent the reader from understanding what really matters to you?

I write from the distance of time. I look at the Soviet era with irony because some situations just call for it. Let's give an example

from the Soviet reality. Before that, I would like to explain something. As I mentioned above, the highest-ranking (and not only) Soviet figures felt obliged to write at least one book about themselves, party work, and the building of communism. Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev (1906–1982), Secretary General of the USSR and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, overtaken by the desire to become a respected writer, was not an exception. With the help of anonymous assistants, Brezhnev's trilogy, *The Minor Land*, *Rebirth*, and *Virgin Lands*, published in millions of copies, saw daylight. This illegible piece of writing, analyzed during history, literature and social science lessons in schools, was then awarded the Lenin Prize, the highest Soviet literary award. This seemed to be not enough though. An even wider spread of the trilogy for the public was desired. Given that only two TV channels (Moscow and local) broadcast in the USSR, every evening after the information program *Vremia* (Time), during which it was repeatedly told how capitalism was rotting or how many liters of milk were milked that day, fragments of these books were read out successively throughout the year. A chosen established actor (People's Artist of the USSR) told in a pathetic voice about Brezhnev's path of life.

Now let's look at this story from a slightly different perspective. Considering that the USSR TV broadcast nothing else, and the USSR occupied one-sixth of the planet, the then 250 million of its population (including the mentally ill) were forced to listen to delusions allegedly written by Brezhnev on a daily basis. In this case, reality surpassed imagination. How was one to look at this madness? Cry? Laugh?

It can be noticed that lately readers in Lithuania and not only there, are interested in fictional historic narratives. What do you think about this kind of interest rising? What are the reasons behind that interest? Perhaps professional historians do not say something or do not know how to present information in such a way that everyone could understand it? Or maybe the reasons lie elsewhere, maybe it is at-

tempted to compensate for the lack of historic narratives during the Soviet era and later?

The works of historians are of a specific character; they will never be intended for the public at large. As often as not, they serve as a substitute for fiction to me. As, e.g., *Lietuvos vyriausybių 1918–1920 m. posėdžių protokolai* (Minutes of the sessions of the Lithuanian governments in 1918–1920) in two volumes compiled by Alfonsas Eidintas and Raimundas Lopata, or the set of documents *Lietuva-Rusija 1917–1920 m.* (Lithuania-Russia, 1917–1920) issued by the Lithuanian Institute of History in 2020. Without these books, I would not have been able to write my latest novel *Litbelas. Neišnešiotas vaiduoklis* (Litbel. A Premature Ghost) about the quasi-Soviet Lithuanian-Byelorussian republic that existed for seven months in 1918–1919.

Looking back to the Soviet era, at that time the possibilities for writers to reflect on the topics of Lithuanian history were limited. The writer was a front-line soldier of ideology. True, some could afford a little more, as, according to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, they were more equal than others. So today, if the reader is interested in fictional historic narratives, I can explain that not only by the need to fill the gaps created in the past, but also by the desire to learn as much as possible about one's past, which for many decades had been hushed up or presented in a distorted way. At this point, I would like to add that every generation has the right to describe and depict their past as they currently see and understand it.

Sometimes it is common to say that history teaches. Do you think that literary excursions can teach us lessons or teach us something? Finally, have you, as an author looking to the past through literary forms, understood or learned something?

As I observe the events unfolding in the present, I see more than one parallel with the past. I can't avoid it. It so happens that even the most painful past, although already in another form, knows how to settle in the present. At first it is difficult to

recognize it, but sooner or later it reveals itself. Unfortunately, it is often too late when we realize we have again found ourselves its captive. Then it is too late to cry over spilt milk and try to change something.

Perhaps this is human nature, people unconsciously fall into the same trap. Therefore, it seems natural that individual nations or states periodically lose their wits, get overcome with rage, human life becomes worthless, and the phantasmagorical ideas of totalitarianism bring the bewildered masses to ruin. And nothing can be done in this regard, let alone be taught.

The eighth commandment of God says: "Thou shall not bear false witness". On that matter – when I think today about the future characters of a forthcoming book, I am reminded of what Plato writes in his *The Republic*: "If it is okay for someone to lie, it is even more so for heads of states, when they want to lie to their enemies or their citizens for the sake of their state; but everyone else must not resort to lying." So, in my opinion, there's nothing new under the sun. And probably there won't be.

Translated by Kerry SHAWN KEYS and Dalia ŠATIENĖ

BOOK REVIEWS



Urban Culture
and Everyday Life in
Lithuania in the
17th and 18th Centuries

Stasys Samalavičius

Stasys Samalavičius
*Urban Culture and Everyday
Life in Lithuania in the 17th
and 18th Centuries*,
Cambridge Scholars Publishing,
2023, 195 p.

A New Book about Lithuania's Historical Urban Culture

The book by cultural and architectural historian Dr. Stasys Samalavičius opens up to the readers the interesting, intriguing and colorful life of the townspeople in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and especially in its capital, Vilnius. The author of the book is a well-known Lithuanian historian, who for several decades thoroughly researched the culture of Lithuanian cities and the daily life of their inhabitants, especially in the seventeenth–eighteenth centuries. His special focus was on Vilnius. He is also known as an expert on the history of the construction and decoration of The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul in Vilnius, an object of his studies for more than thirty years.

The book under review was compiled and edited by the author's son Almantas Samalavičius, cultural researcher and professor of Vilnius Gediminas Technical University and Vilnius University. The editor of the volume wrote a detailed introduction presenting the scholarly legacy of Stasys Samalavičius in which he also discussed the historian's contribution to the research of Lithuanian city culture and the everyday life of the Lithuanian burghers as well as connections between local urban culture and the processes that took place in Western Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

During the Soviet era, the author of the book worked on the margins of official historical research: he chose to delve into topics ignored and bypassed by other historians at that time: the material culture and everyday life phenomena of the citizens of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He also focused on Lithuanian Baroque architecture and peculiarities of interior decoration of notable Baroque structures like Vilnius St. Peter and Paul's church. For most of his life, the historian worked as senior researcher at the Institute of Monument Conservation, collecting material for the preservation, conservation, and restoration of significant Lithuanian architectural monuments in the complicated conditions of the Soviet era. He also taught at Vilnius University.

In addition, Samalavičius was a public historian. On the eve of Lithuania's independence, Stasys Samalavičius moved to work at the Lithuanian Institute of History, and until his death headed the historical research of the Vilnius Lower Castle (known these days as the Palace of Rulers). In addition, during this period he actively participated in Lithuanian radio and television programs, introducing the public to lesser-known aspects of Lithuanian history. It is also worth mentioning that a short overview of Lithuanian history written on the basis of Stasys Samalavičius' radio lectures (*An Outline of Lithuanian History*) was published in English just a few years after the restoration of Lithuania's independence. It was perhaps the first popular history of Lithuania ever published in English in independent Lithuania and intended for the general public. In some Western European

universities, it is still used as an introduction to the cultural history of Lithuania.

The book about Lithuanian urban culture during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which is now widely available in English, contains articles and studies by this Lithuanian cultural historian (there are some fourteen of them) covering an extremely wide spectrum of the cultural history of Lithuanian cities. The author examines the history of Vilnius craftsmen's workshops and their houses; as one of its aspects, he discusses the activities of sawmillers' and sculptors' workshops during the mentioned period. The book also presents the structure and activities of other craft guilds operating in Vilnius, and also delves into the history of religious brotherhoods operating in Vilnius. Interesting episodes of the activities of the Vilnius fishermen's workshop and the fishermen's and sawmills' brotherhoods, which were little known in historiography, are revealed here. Even more diverse and valuable material about the life and activities of the citizens of Vilnius can be found in articles about Vilnius warehouses and the Lithuanian merchant fleet that transported goods to Vilnius and from this city to other metropolises of the region. It is interesting to note that unlike most historians of the period, the author was one of the few Lithuanian historians of that time who focused on the Lithuanian river routes and merchant fleet.

The study about the pubs that operated in Vilnius stands out in the book for its scope. The author describes their types – *karczmy*, *szynki*, mead taverns and teahouses and cafes, and also determines the time of their establishment and localization of these enterprises in Vilnius, and provides interesting and valuable comments about their activities and significance in the daily life of Vilnius citizens. Specialists working in the fields of heritage protection, conservation, and restoration can benefit a lot from these studies.

Significantly valuable is the author's text full of data about the musicians and musical culture of Vilnius in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the spread of tobacco in Lithuania, and

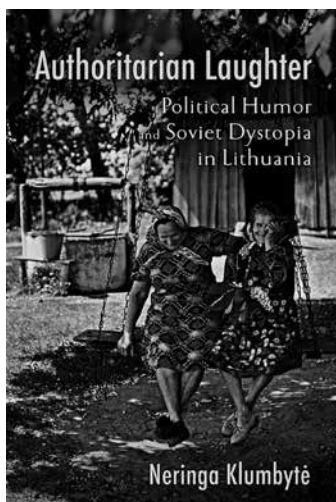
other aspects of the everyday culture of the city that remained outside the limits of historical discourse during the Soviet era. Valuable material can also be found in the article about Vilnius pharmacies. The author discusses their interiors, goods, what was traded, and also determines their localization in the historical topography of Vilnius. Intriguing (and not too long ago became relevant again) topics such as the plague and its effects on Lithuania and its cities are also touched upon, as well as a short, but based on archival sources and otherwise just an interesting chapter about the freezing of corpses, i.e., discussions about burial customs in seventeenth–eighteenth centuries Lithuania. This seems to be an extremely interesting and intriguing topic that deserves a follow-up. It is strange, except for the fact that, apart from the author of the book, other Lithuanian historians and ethnologists so far showed little interest in it.

As I have already mentioned, the author of the book purposefully researched the everyday life of the citizens of Lithuania and its capital, Vilnius, which is why he is deservedly considered a historian of everyday life of Lithuanian burghers. It is not surprising that this book reveals its author's special attention to the aspects of the material culture of Lithuanian cities (especially Vilnius). On the other hand, significant aspects of the architectural history of the capital are also given considerable attention in this book. I have in mind the author's detailed (and lengthy) study dedicated to the history of Vilnius Cathedral Square from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century, which completes this volume of Stasys Samalavičius research legacy. The author of the book carefully analyzes the history of the buildings in the cathedral square and their localization, using a large number of archival sources, including inventories compiled in various periods. This, by the way, previously unpublished material in Lithuanian not only expands the knowledge of the history of architecture and urbanism, but also presents many new facts about the twists and turns of Vilnius' history and significantly supplements the current knowledge concerning this important area.

It can be added that some of the historians' texts published in this book have previously been published in English (notably in *Lituanus Quarterly*); however, more than half of the texts collected in the book were previously not available in English until now. Bearing in mind that although more and more works of Lithuanian historians are being published in English during recent years and though some aspects of our history are becoming more accessible to an international readership, this volume is exceptional in many ways. It is particularly significant in that it presents valuable and still relevant research dedicated to the material culture of Lithuanian cities and its burghers, and also integrates the architectural phenomena of the Lithuanian capital into a broader and multi-layered theme of urban culture.

In summary, I believe that this newly published book about the culture of Lithuanian cities will have many academic and non-academic readers outside Lithuania and the Baltics. I think that it can be of some interest not only for historians or researchers of Lithuanian architecture, but also for everyone who maintains at least some interest in Lithuanian culture and its historical forms (including architecture) and those who wish to get to know the cultural realities of the Baltic cities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries better.

Dr. Arnoldas GABRĖNAS



Neringa Klumbytė
*Authoritarian Laughter: Political
Humor and Soviet Dystopia
in Lithuania*
Cornell University Press, 2022,
306 p.

Authoritarian Laughter culminates Klumbytė's research on Soviet humor. This book is a beautiful example of historical ethnography. It takes the case of *Broom* (Šluota), a popular satire magazine in Soviet-occupied Lithuania, to explore the role of humor and delves into the questions of freedom, opposition, censorship, and political intimacy.

Klumbytė's book is grounded in extensive archival research and interviews with journalists and artists who worked for the magazine. It traces the life of the *Broom*, from its inception in 1956 to the last issue published in 1998. Readers learn about the complex lives of artists and editors and the choices they were compelled to make. Stories of red ink, artistic subversions, relationships with readers, and the rich details of the everyday make this book approachable to a broader audience of readers despite its elaborate conceptual apparatus. At the book's heart is the paradox of authoritarian laughter and its twofold function – to advance and undermine the Communist Party agenda. The author reminds us that laughter is ambiguous and contextual, situating post-war Lithuania and its difference from the USSR.

One of the crucial questions explored in the book is the intimate experience of power. It unfolds through a detailed history of the *Broom* and its relationship with the Soviet authorities. The editors of the *Broom*, particularly Juozas Bulota, the chief editor, cultivated personal relations with the high-ranking Communist Party officials of the Central Committee of Soviet Lithuania and the officials in the censorship apparatus (Glavlit). Bulota was a very well-networked person who went on hunting trips and socialized drinking with those in power. Klumbytė defines these client-patron relationships that enable navigating invisible currents of Soviet politics as political intimacy. This political intimacy ensured Bulota's very long tenure as the editor of the *Broom*, all the benefits of Soviet nomenklatura (prestigious housing and so on), and also secured the stability of the *Broom's* production. The notion of political intimacy is novel as it stresses vertical relationships with those in power and is different from the notions of *svoi* – a trusted network of horizontal relations explored by Yurchak (2006).

Klumbytė argues that the editors of the *Broom* lacked deep commitment to the Soviet State and communism, despite their participation in the “production of Soviet laughter” (10). This stance she defines as *banal opposition* and *antagonistic complicity and dissensus*.

This book beautifully reveals the banality of Soviet power. People of different backgrounds, so-called “children of war” (29), worked for the *Broom*. Some were children of interwar leftists (Tilvytis, Cvirka), while others (Bulota) were married to Soviet enemies. All of them were implicated within the dominant system without being committed, nor were they direct agents of harm. They benefited from the system that they didn't control. Klumbytė conceptualizes this as the banality of Soviet power, drawing from Mbembe's work on post-coloniality to show how the systems of power are being reproduced without deep commitment. She explains how this mode of power functioned in the *Broom* via antagonistic complicity, disagreeing consensus with authorities, and editor's dissensus. (43)

Dissensus was embedded in the Aesopian language and, unlike Yurchak's (2006) way of being Soviet, which combined both – admiration for Western music, fashion, and Soviet belonging. In contrast, the *Broom's* modernist art choices marked its distance from Sovietness. Lithuania was a site where that Soviet belonging was contested. "Living with a lie," "disillusionment," and the Aesopian language don't capture the whole complexity of the *Broom's* ideological work. The magazine contributed to the Sovietization of everyday life, expressing the boundaries of what was allowed to laugh at and ridicule, playing with transgressions yet tacitly knowing the limits of the possible (not ever criticizing the Communist party's highest authorities or healthcare). That contribution without commitment to ideological work is how the magazine's staff felt about the Soviet predicament.

"We were more free than others," a quote by Romualdas Lankauskas (90), reflecting his Soviet experience, might seem a bit naïve to the reader, but what it entails is a belief in relative freedom under conditions of the absence of clear censorship rules and within relations of political intimacy. This relative freedom seems to express mastery of ideological correctness and the opacity of ideological censorship. Klumbytė masterfully shows all the dancing games with censorship authorities and internalized notions of the possible. The transgressions or expressions of relative freedom, such as chosen modernist aesthetic or veiled statements, are defined as *banal opposition* (rooted within the system) rather than dissidence.

The *Broom* editors were engaged in the authoritarian aesthetic project. They had to communicate that "life is beautiful" despite shortcomings. The author describes in detail the editorial process – which texts were accepted and which were not. The space for ambiguity was very limited. Writers were urged to engage in "reality-based writing" (125). Of course, the notion of what reality is and its limits were defined by the CP and executed by the editors. To portray reality in "dark colors" was off-limits (125). Still, one could paint in dark colors the West or "bour-

geois" Lithuania, thus allowing the readers to entertain different points of view.

Klumbytė states that most of the artists and contributors did not try to submit openly transgressive content (139). Internalized limits of what was acceptable functioned quite well. Yet, laughter is impossible to control. A sizeable wooden sailboat on the cover of 1972 commemorated the 50th anniversary of the USSR. This Andrius Cvirka's drawing contrasted with the standard symbol – the military battleship *Aurora*. The *Broom's* sailboat was open for interpretations – instability, dependence, and old maritime technology. This is a vivid example of the multidirectional nature of laughter.

However, drawings like this sailboat, the author argues, can be defined as a *banal opposition* to the regime. Banality in her work diverges from the Lithuanian word *banalus*, marking "a routinized, commonplace disagreement, which is still acceptable within the structures of power" (142) yet still retains its subversive potential. That type of opposition has clear boundaries despite its porous potential.

While reading the chapter on banal opposition embedded, as the author argues, in a "particular form of agency, antagonistic complicity, rooted in authoritarian structures and relations" (143), I was thinking about what disagreement means in this context. Indeed, Jacques Rancière's (*Rancière* 1999) thoughts on what constitutes political action and the notion of *dissensus* (disagreement) marking the distinction between "politics" and "policing" allows us to see how the latter one – redefining what is sayable and visible rather than changing social order is capable of transforming shared notions and creating new meanings. In other words, disagreement is not between "white" and "black" but the conflict between how "white" is understood. This book shows how the banal opposition – the creation of new meaning is much more difficult to control. It does not mean to undermine the role or importance of direct opposition but makes readers dwell on different forms of opposition and their imprint.

This line of argument might look similar to Alexei Yurchak's explanation of the dissolution of the USSR through the loss of meaning due to deterritorialization and re-territorialization. However, there is a significant difference in identification with the state and the Sovietness. Klumbyte's book shows how dissensus in Lithuania was unlike the one in the Soviet metropolis by underscoring the role of historical difference in Lithuania and the other Baltic States. Here, the collapse of the USSR was not only inevitable but highly desirable. No one, not even the highest authorities was proud of its Soviet past, notes Klumbyte.

The stories of discontent and disassociation with life in the Soviet Union and a desire for a better future reframed the positionality of Lithuanian writers and readers. The *Broom* received about 3000 readers' letters of complaint every month. The editors addressed, investigated, and published only ten letters per month. The magazine acted as an institution of satirical justice that was integral to authoritarian governance. In this fascinating chapter, we learn about the readers and their dissatisfaction with life in Soviet Lithuania and their hopes for justice being pinned to the *Broom*. The magazine mainly addressed alcoholism, theft, and unfair treatment, simultaneously warning about the supposed inevitability of punishment. Obviously, the *Broom* knew very well its boundaries as it "never touched anybody above the authorities of a regional executive committee" (184).

The author argues that the readers' complaints in the 1970s and 1980s construct a dystopian world, which "is not a comprehensive vision of reality" (198). By dystopia, she means a utopia that went wrong. Dehumanization, tyranny, and environmental disasters are usual characterizations of dystopia. Disenchanted with Soviet realities, challenging visions of modernity, and consumption experiences, the readers of the *Broom* wrote letters articulating what the author calls Soviet dystopia. From these letters, a landscape of an unsafe world of flooded yards, dumped garbage, and crumbled buildings emerge. The *Broom* captures the affective relation of their readers to the decaying Soviet paradise rotting from the inside.

In the book's Post-Scriptum, Klumbytė reflects on the role of the *Broom* and authoritarian laughter during the Singing revolutions of 1988–1991 and its withering away in the post-Soviet period. While the *Broom*'s staff supported the independence from the USSR, the stigma of the Sovietness and changing choreography of laughter free from authoritarian control put the *Broom* into a janitor's closet, ending its life. The *Broom* didn't survive. Its artists and writers lost their status in the new Lithuania.

The new generation, like myself, who matured in the 1990s, turned to TV and its popular humor shows such as "Dviračio žinios" and "Radio Šou," using the format of "Fake news" that made fun of new money and nouveau riches red jackets, American accents of the Lithuanian president and his advisers, fortunetellers, and simple-minded patriots without challenging the independence. The creators of these outlets posed for photos with the persons they made fun of. While new post-Soviet laughter might not be funny, as the author notes, to the *Broom*'s artists, the new generation didn't care for Aesopian connotations or subtle tones of colors anymore.

The author explains that her book is sidestepping the post-colonial studies approach with its underscoring of victims and colonial identities, and instead underlining antagonistic complicity, an alternative form of agency unrelated to the status of victim or colonizer under the occupational regime (233). I found this statement contradictory, especially when the key concepts are inspired by postcolonial scholars such as Achille Mbembe. Moreover, historical injustices and ethnic differences seemed important for the artists. Colonial and post-colonial experiences and empires are not uniform or necessarily based on binaries. I highly respect Klumbytė's choice to side-step the post-colonial studies approach. I think it is perhaps a missed opportunity to openly challenge post-colonial studies and theories that emerged from the Global South colonial experiences.

The notion of antagonistic complicity indeed captures the lives under occupation, and it also contains traces of colonialism and imperialism that implicated the subjects, such as the land-

scape of Soviet modernity (modes of administration, housing, consumption) that shaped the lives. The book doesn't fully account for the USSR's continued imperialist policies. One example of antagonistic complicity is the artists' refusal to draw anti-imperialist cartoons. I find it quite telling. I wonder how Russian-ness was perceived in relation to the Soviet Union and its imperialism and the Soviet predicament.

The book successfully shows the diversity of "Sovietness," challenging the perceived universality of the Soviet experience. It is hard to overestimate the book's contributions to the field of Soviet Studies and the history of humor. The questions explored in the book are such rich food for thinking and strategizing about the effectiveness of opposition to authoritarianism and the rising illiberal tendencies of our times.

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ABSTRACTS

JUOZAS SKIRIUS

Letter to the editors. Lithuanian Ruler Gediminas – Grand Duke or King? Will We Restore the Rightful Historical Titles of Lithuania's Rulers?

As Lithuania celebrates the anniversary of the city of Vilnius, which was first mentioned in written sources seven hundred years ago, it is only fitting to remember ruler Gediminas, the founder of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. It is also worth remembering the titles of Lithuanian rulers before and after Gediminas. Were they titled only grand dukes of Lithuania? Or did Lithuania have more kings? These are not new questions and the author provides his answers.

DALIA TRAŠKINAITĖ

Legal Regulation of New Architecture on the UNESCO Protected Sites in Lithuania

Changes in the provisions of heritage protection significantly change the heritage policy and the conditions of and requirements for the emergence of new architecture on heritage sites. In order to analyze the conditions of and the possibilities for the insertion of new architecture and the reuse of existing buildings and their reconstruction in their historical environment, as well as the applicable requirements, restrictions and recommendations, an analysis of national and international legal documents was carried out, delving into two World Heritage Sites in Lithuania: The Vilnius Historic Center and the Curonian Spit. The article discusses the key international and national legal documents regulating the aspects of the emergence of new architecture in protected territories, highlighting the most significant principles of the legal regulation of the UNESCO World Heritage sites in Lithuania, which define the architectural, urbanistic, and aesthetic expression of buildings of contemporary architecture (new and reconstructed) in these territories.

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Street Art through the Veil of Snow. Photo by Almantas Samalavičius

MOVING?

We need your old as well as your new address, to correct our records.

FRONT COVER: Vilnius Old Quarters in Winter

Photo by Almantas Samalavičius