GULF OF RIGA

LATVIA

KLAIPĖDA

RUSSIA

VILNIUS

POLAND

BELARUS

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CULTURE OF MEMORY AND POLITICS OF HISTORY

IN LITHUANIA IN 1989–2018

Abstract

This article aims to analyse the transformation of the culture of memory in Lithuania and the most important directions of Lithuanian politics of history in the period from 1989 to 2018. While discussing these questions, special attention is paid to the role of political factors (internal and external) and inter-state relations, as well as to changes in the relationship between Lithuania's culture of memory, and the cultures of memory and identity of the national minorities in Lithuania. The paper emphasises the processes of transformation of the Lithuanian culture of remembrance which started around 2005, when it was most recently updated. The research material presented herein shows that Lithuania's culture of memory is full of contradictions and conflicts, and that its central figure has changed.

Keywords: culture of memory, politics of history, identity, inter-state relations, national minorities

In recent years, a number of works have been published on the culture of memory and politics of history (Erll, Nünning 2008). I have discussed the terminology of these concepts in other publications (Nikžentaitis 2013, pp. 517–538), throughout which one can clearly see a certain trend: these concepts are often used interchangeably (synonymously) (Łuczewski and Bednarz-Łuczewska 2011), although in my opinion they should not be. We could define 'culture of memory' as the entirety of the historical narratives which help the public understand the present time and mark out specific landmarks for the future. These narratives play an important role in mobilising the public to action, and are an essential part of national identity (Assmann 1988, pp. 9–19). The culture of memory includes different historical narratives which transcend the limits of a single era. The integration of different historical eras with the culture of memory characterises the collective memory of many countries; those societies whose culture focuses on the memory of a single era or event could be the exception (Nikžentaitis 2011, pp. 439–458). The examples of Germany, the former Soviet Union, and recently also France, show that such 'anomalies' appear in response to epochal events which shock a society, such as the loss in the Second World War, the Bolsheviks' October Revolution and the French Revolution. In 'great narratives', the past is simplified to a myth; and because the culture of memory is made up of different narratives, it is obvious that numerous myths operate within it. The theoretical literature on this subject includes the category of foundational myths, as well as auxiliary myths (namely, those myths that support the former). And although it is not a rule, it is worth noting that the central figure of cultural memory is most often the more recent past, although the example of Belgium shows that this is not always the case (Langewiesche 2009, pp. 27–41).

Whereas the culture of memory is a relatively complex issue, politics of history is easier to characterise. Its purpose is to preserve, change or popularise new narratives in society. The subject of politics of history is not the entire culture of memory, but only individual (separate) objects (Schmid 2008, pp. 75–98). When we discuss politics of history, we must define its instruments, its 'soft' and 'hard' tools. It has been repeatedly emphasised that the culture of memory changes in times of social debates about the past. Most often these

debates are caused by socially sensitive topics that are reflected in literary works, historical films, studies or the speeches of politicians, public representatives and so on. Often such debates result in political decisions shaping laws, resolutions or commendations – in whose wake follow resolutions to construct monuments or establish new museums (Berek 2008, pp. 71–88). The objectives of politics of history can also be realised with the aid of school textbooks, in particular the practical exercises addressed to the students. During the twentieth century it was such exercises which effectively contributed to the consolidation among German youth of a sense of German guilt and responsibility for the Holocaust; and in today's Russia, by popularising the myth of victory in the Great Patriotic War, they have helped to rebuild generational ties between teenagers and their grandparents.

In an attempt to identify which events and characters from the past have already become part of the culture of memory, it is necessary to examine a variety of factors. There are situations when, despite attempts to consolidate some artefact of the past by the power of government legislation, it nevertheless fails to become an important figure of memory. After all, there are lobbyists participating in politics of history who work to get laws adopted which will only be of importance to a certain segment of society.

The culture of memory only has the power to influence society through the constant replenishment of its resources with new content, or through the reinterpretation of existing resources by giving them new meanings (Nikžentaitis, Čepaitienė 2014, pp. 115–130). This is why politics of history also plays such an important social role.

Although we should emphasise the collective nature of cultural memory, we cannot ignore its relationship with familial and generational memory. Events discussed within the family circle often join the cultural resources of memory. In post-totalitarian societies, however, we have to take into account the fact that in most cases – to ensure their children's safety and protect them from dangerous information – some of these topics have become taboo.

After these introductory remarks about the culture of memory and politics of history, we can proceed to discuss the case of Lithuania.

Lithuania's culture of memory in the period 1989–2004: the struggle with the legacy of communism

The beginnings of Lithuania's contemporary culture of memory date back to the restitution of the country's independence and the activities of Sąjūdis (*Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sąjūdis*, the Lithuanian Movement for Reconstruction). These processes clearly intensified in 1989: Sąjūdis demanded more and more freedoms from Moscow, and at the end of the year it openly declared its desire to reconstruct an independent Lithuania. In Lithuania, the struggle with the legacy of communism developed along similar lines as in other post-communist countries. Immediately after regaining of independence, the process of removing the monuments which served as symbols of communism from public spaces began (extensively described by Ekaterina Makhotina, cf. Makhotina 2017, pp. 260–266). The first stage of the fight against the idols of the previous system lasted until 1998, until the creation in Grūtas (near Druskininkai) of a park-museum of Soviet sculptures. It is not known exactly how many monuments disappeared from public space in total. Conservationists say that there were 89, of which 39 were transferred to Grūtas Park (Jančys 2015). The process of their removal was not consistent. The debates that accompanied the creation of the park, as well the fears associated with the bygone era (which were clearly visible at the time) showed that the final mental conquest of its legacy will be continued in the twenty-first century (Nikžentaitis 2006, pp. 67–78). The process of changing street names in autumn 1990 was similar. In Vilnius a working group was established to address the submission of new street names, and the work got underway (Čaplinskas 2000, pp. 21–22). Although this process took almost six years, it cannot be said that today there are no longer any traces of Soviet heritage on the streets of Lithuanian towns (Nikžentaitis 2007b, pp. 236–249).

It was no different in the case of lustration. In fact, this process turned into a persecution of KGB agents, and was strongly politicised until the end of 2006, when it was recognised that the process had stalled, and it has since never seriously been resumed (Safronovas 2011, pp. 358–359).

The process of lustration, which was not completed immediately after restitution of independence, still inflames emotions, and some politicians are still unsatisfied with its results. Recently this issue has been raised more frequently by the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania and some of the more radical members of the Homeland Union party (the conservative party) (Skėrytė 2018). And although these politicians do not have great influence on Lithuanian political life, it is possible that in future Lithuania will witness a change in the current balance of forces, as has happened in Poland.

Characteristic of Lithuania and the other Baltic states is the granting of special significance to the secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The Baltic republics' new political elites have made particular efforts to prove the illegality of the Soviet Union's annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia (Christophe 1997, pp. 104–122). Initially this was done for political reasons, but over time it has become an important part of cultural memory in the Baltic states.
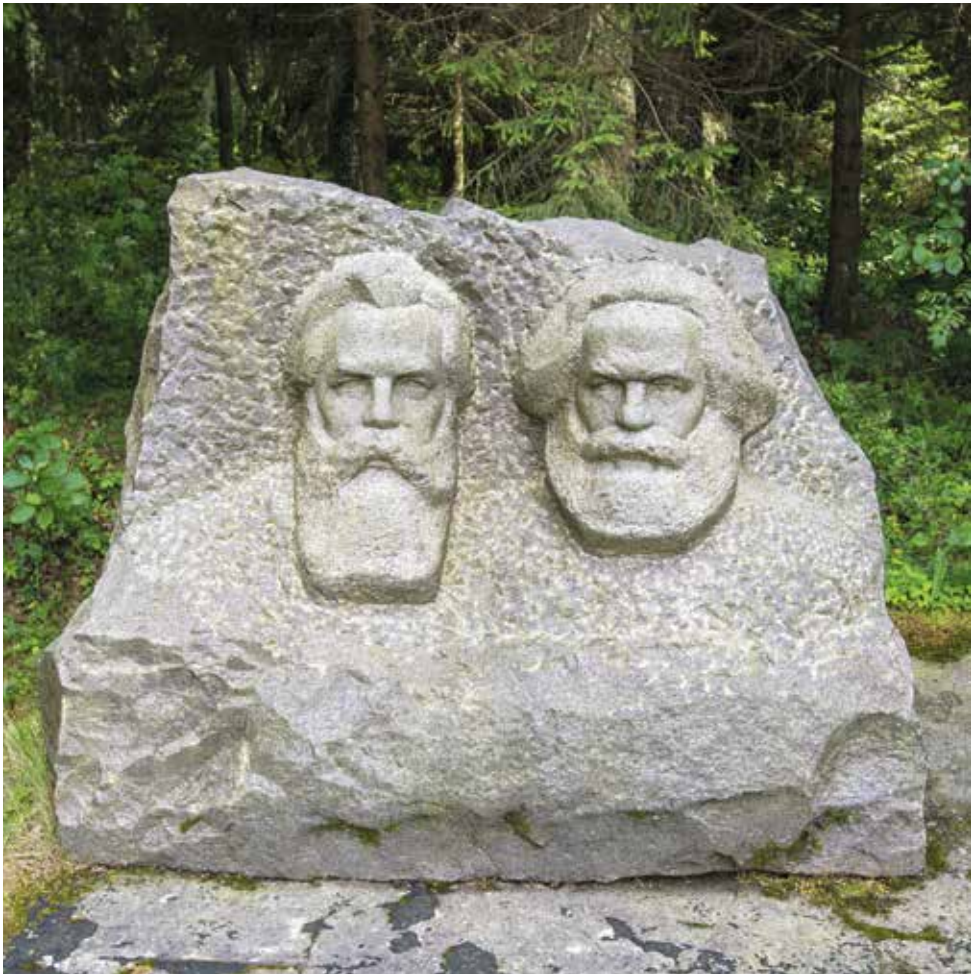
Creating a new culture of memory

However, towards the end of the twentieth century attempts were made not only to overcome the legacy of communism, but also to create a new culture of memory. In the first years of independence, much was done to give it an institutional framework. As early as 1992, the Centre for Research into Genocide and the Resistance of Inhabitants of Lithuania and the Museum of Genocide Victims (*Genocido ir rezistencijos tyrimo centras*, *Genocido muziejus*) were created by a government decision, and the related laws were adopted. Those who fought for freedom and those deported were fully rehabilitated, and an initiative by the influential Lithuanian Union of Political Prisoners and Exiles (*Lietuvos politinių kalinių ir tremtinių sąjunga*) led to the establishment of corresponding days of remembrance in the national calendar: the fourth Sunday in May became Partisans' Day; 14 June the Day of Mourning and Hope; 23 June became the June Uprising Day, commemorating the beginning of the 1941 uprising (Stenographic record of July 3, 1997); and 15 June became the Day of Occupation and Genocide (Act VIII-397 of 1997).

Despite all these activities, however, this subject did not form the axis of Lithuania's newly-created culture of memory. It is enough to mention that the Museum of Genocide Victims created at that time, simply vegetated in the first years of its activity, and the first permanent exhibition in the former KGB building (the museum's seat) was only displayed in 2000 (Museum of Occupations website).

In the end, the central theme of the new culture of memory became the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a logical step, responding to the trends towards forming a common cultural memory which had become universal in post-communist societies. According to the theory explaining these trends as a 'return

Sculpture of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the Grūtas Park in Druskininkai, Lithuania. July 23, 2016.
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to normality', most post-communist societies (with the partial exception of modern Russia, which has chosen a different path) treated the communist ideology as something alien which had been imposed upon them; this is why their further development was based on earlier, interwar traditions (Niedermüller 2004, pp. 11–27). In Lithuania, this was manifested in the 11 March celebrations commemorating the events of the same day in 1990 when the politico-legal continuity of the Constitution of 1938 was announced, and (of course) the pre-war historical narrative was revived as the central figure of the culture of memory (Laurinavicius and Sirutavičius 2008, p. 528).

That 'golden age of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania', and its leading figure Duke Vytautas, became the central theme of interwar Lithuania's culture of memory. It must be admitted that the culture of memory in that period had a clearly anti-Polish character (Nikžentaitis 2000, pp. 24–28), a certain amount of which was retained even after 1990. However, towards the end of the twentieth century its purpose was different. In Lithuania, the restitution of independence and the departure from the structure of the Soviet Union was understood as a return to Europe. Later, the European dimension was strengthened further with the 1994 declaration by the President of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas, of his country's aspirations to join the European Union and NATO. In a historical sense, such efforts were a kind of legitimation of the Grand Duchy. Compared to the interwar period, then, Lithuania's culture of memory after 1990 was modified accordingly. In time, the central place in the Republic of Lithuania's recent culture of memory was taken by Mindaugas, Lithuania's only crowned king. His baptism in 1251 and coronation in 1253 were emphasised particularly strongly. These events were understood on the one hand as a testimony that Lithuania had been part of Christian Europe since the Middle Ages, and on the other that Lithuania had legitimate aspirations to return to its historical place in Europe. In parallel with discussions concerning the future of the Grand Dukes' palace in Vilnius, the restoration of monuments destroyed by the Soviet authorities began. In the interwar period many monuments were erected to Duke Vytautas, so the process of restoring them became another important source for renovating the heritage of the Grand Duchy. During

the lively debates on a new location for the reconstructed monument to Duke Vytautas in Kaunas, the memory of the medieval ruler was re-processed and became an anti-communist symbol. This reinterpretation of the historical past should not be surprising; after all, this also happened in the interwar period, when the figure of Duke Vytautas was closely linked to the idea of liberating Vilnius from Polish rule (Nikžentaitis 2000).

In addition to the restoration of monuments from the interwar period, the construction of new ones was initiated. Some of the ideas that had been considered in the last years of Soviet Lithuania were implemented after independence; in 1996 a monument to Gediminas, the founder of Vilnius, was unveiled there; and in 2003, a statue of Mindaugas, the only king of Lithuania, was unveiled during the celebration of the anniversary of his coronation (BNS Communique July 6, 2003).

The revival of the past of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was reflected in a law on state holidays. A law adopted in 1990 declared the probable date of Mindaugas's coronation, 6 July, a public holiday (Act 712 of I-1990).

It should be noted that Lithuania's accession to the EU and NATO has exhausted the symbolic potential of the Grand Duchy's past. This heritage quite rapidly lost its relevance looking toward the future which has significantly influenced Lithuania's culture of memory. Of course, this subject still interests Lithuanian society, and is sometimes used in descriptions of Lithuania's relationship with Poland, Belarus and Ukraine.

After the restitution of Lithuanian independence, the culture of memory acquired clearly defined pro-European contours, although we may also notice the characteristic features of a hermetic, closed nationalism. When we discuss cultures of memory, we cannot lose sight of their relationship to national identities. As is well known, national identity, in addition to being an important component of the past, also contains other elements; the language factor plays an important role in its definition. In the case of Lithuania this has a special importance. It suffices to recall that when Lithuania was still a component of the USSR, one of the first laws adopted by the partially independent Supreme Council (parliament) of the Lithuanian SSR concerned the status of the Lithuanian

language, something which has become the principal cause of the conflict between the Lithuanian and Polish communities in Lithuania (Sirutavičius 2017, pp. 34–35). After restitution of independence a State Commission of the Lithuanian Language (*Valstybinė lietuvių kalbos komisija*), financed from the central budget, was immediately set up; this body had the right to impose penalties for the inappropriate use of the Lithuanian language. The language factor is extremely important when one wishes to understand not only the essence of the internal Lithuanian conflict with the Polish national minority, but also Lithuanian nationalism itself, which has become an important element and remains so to this day.

To better understand the culture of memory and politics of history of independent Lithuania, a separate space should be given to the tradition of assuming the scope and use of the term 'genocide'. The use of this term became established just after Lithuania regained its independence, but unlike in most other countries in the world, it was used almost exclusively in the context of the wrongs done to the Lithuanian community. The result of this attitude was the establishment of the Museum of Genocide and Resistance (*Genocido aukų muziejus*), whose exhibitions almost exclusively concern the Lithuanian experiences of the Soviet era.

This concept of genocide has a more significant meaning than the name of the museum, which is rather misleading (especially for visitors from abroad). After restitution of independence, the figure of the Lithuanian as a victim came to predominate, thus preventing the presentation of competing narratives showing other victims. However it should be noted that despite the dominance of this symbolic figure in Lithuania's culture of memory, two new approaches to the past emerged at the end of the twentieth century: the first was seen in Vilnius, and the second in Klaipėda. These two cities are linked by their multicultural histories, but are divided by their attitudes towards them.

In the case of Vilnius, its attitude to its non-Lithuanian heritage is best reflected in the history of the architecture of Vilnius University. Although the university is also an important site of Polish culture, the signs and plaques are mainly written in Lithuanian, and the Polish language is ignored. This process had already begun in Soviet times, when

the architectural fabric of the university began to include new elements. In response, as early as 1964, a memorial to Kristijonas Donelaitis, a pastor and writer from Lithuania Minor, was installed in a niche of the facade of the main building (*VU Bibliotekos* 2014); and after Lithuania became independent the facade of the university library was decorated (in 1996) with a composition commemorating the 450th anniversary of the printing of the first book in Lithuanian language (Bulotaitė 2009). The Lithuanian attitude to the city is also shown by the particularly negative attitude to its Polish name, *Wilno*.

A kind of alternative to Vilnius's approach was put forward by Klaipėda. It is worth noting that this was the first city in Lithuania where a monument to the German poet Simon Dach was rebuilt (in 1989) (Nikžentaitis 2007a, pp. 148–159). Although this was an initiative of German emigrants from the Klaipėda region, no less important is the fact that the city authorities agreed to reconstruct the monument. Klaipėda's residents internalised the German heritage of their city quite quickly. Shortly after independence, a decision was taken to rebuild Klaipėda Castle, which had been considered a flagship of Germanity in Soviet times (Safronovas 2015, pp. 253).

The Klaipėda region was attached to Lithuania in 1923, during a coup which imitated an uprising. For a long time this circumstance was overlooked in silence, although immediately after independence the issue was raised for the first time by the inhabitants of Klaipėda themselves. At their initiative, open discussions were initiated about the Lithuanian government's policy towards the Klaipėda region in the interwar period (Žalys 1993). For a time, the German name of the city, Memel, was avoided; in the last decade of the twentieth century, the chairman of the city council even launched an initiative to remove a 'Memel' sign from a café. However a breakthrough in this regard was made relatively swiftly. In 2002, during the celebration of the 750th anniversary of the city, a beer restaurant called 'Memel' was officially opened, and the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, then resident in Vienna, was invited to participate in the celebrations. It should be added that in addition to the above-mentioned restaurant there are dozens of companies which have 'Memel' in their names. Of course, there are also weak points in this strategy. The heritage

of the city strongly accentuates the history of Lithuania Minor, as is illustrated by the numerous monuments referring to it. Although the inhabitants of Klaipėda have openly discussed the circumstances of the city's incorporation into the Lithuanian Republic, this did not stop them from setting up a monument commemorating the merger of Lithuania Minor and Major in the city centre (Nikžentaitis 2007a, pp. 157–159). However the Klaipėda strategy, while somewhat limited, does not prevent the city from cherishing its inheritance from other nationalities.

It is entirely justified to ask: what influenced the appearance of these two quite diverse approaches towards the past? The reasons are various, and the following factors should be mentioned:

1) The myth of Vilnius. Formed in the interwar period, the myth of Vilnius as the historical capital of Lithuania and an imagined ethnically Lithuanian city (Mačiulis, Miknys, and Nikžentaitis 2014, pp. 91–100) undoubtedly influenced the current 'Lithuanising' trends. It is noticeable that another component of the myth of Vilnius is the fear of its loss. The theoretical literature has long noted a pattern: where the inhabitants do not feel confident in their future, they often erect memorials and other cultural symbols to serve as proof that the territory belongs to them (Plagemann 1972, pp. 217–252).

2) Klaipėda, unlike Vilnius, had no residents of ethnic origins other than Lithuanian who could have laid claim to the city. In the imagination of the Lithuanians, the small German minority accounted for less of a problem than the Polish national group. It seems that the lack of competitors for the city was undoubtedly a relevant factor which facilitated a more open look at its past. Due to the importance of this last point, this article will also discuss the role of international relations and their impact on the culture of memory.

At the end of these general comments on the trends in Lithuania's culture of memory, we need to add that these two strategies towards the past only began to differ clearly from each other during the first decade of Lithuania's independence. The policy towards the past adopted by Klaipėda was often met with criticism in Vilnius. But later there was a kind of diffusion of these two strategies, forming

a strange mix of hermetic (closed) and open attitudes towards others. However, this issue will be discussed in the final section of the article.

Relations with neighbours and their impact on the culture of memory

The policy of memory is affected not only by the demands of internal policy, but also by international relations. In these relationships, the culture of memory is the source of a kind of symbolic power, so it is not surprising that countries devote much attention to getting the most important elements of their own cultures of memory accepted on the international stage. In this sense, the most significant for Lithuania's culture of memory are relations with Russia (as the country that became the legal heir to the Soviet Union), Poland, Belarus, as well as Israel and the global Jewish community. Over a period of twenty-five years these relationships have developed in very different ways. With Russia they have frequently become combative; with Poland, there has been both combat and dialogue. As for Belarus, because of the country's internal situation, relations connected with the culture of memory have been sporadic.

It can be said that the main source of the Lithuanian-Russian conflicts over the past was the referendum held in Lithuania in 1992 on removing Soviet troops from the territory of the independent state, and the issue of compensation for the damage caused to Lithuania (Žilys 2011, pp. 467–496). Even if Russia really did come to terms with the first claim, it nevertheless completely ignored the topic of compensation. In this way a problem arose between Lithuania and Russia which is difficult to resolve, and which has negatively affected (and continues to affect) Lithuanian-Russian relations in independent Lithuania. In addition, as the Lithuanian side raised the question of compensation, the matter of whether Russia recognised the fact of its occupation of Lithuania was also broached. Unfortunately, this case also ended in an unsatisfactory manner, although some positive action should be noted. On July 29, 1991,

a Lithuanian-Russian agreement on interstate relations was concluded in which Russia recognised the annexation of Lithuania in 1940 (*Treaty* 1991), although this did not satisfy the Lithuanian side, which demanded formal recognition of the fact of occupation. It is known that 'annexation' and 'occupation' are synonymous concepts, defining the unlawful deprivation of a state's sovereignty; nevertheless, Lithuania has consistently clung to its demands.

This topic was more frequently raised in Lithuania at the end of the twentieth century, but Russia often failed to pay any attention to Lithuania's requests. The situation changed significantly in the twenty-first century, when Russia began to actively pursue its own politics of history (Torbakov 2013, pp. 97–101; cf. Nikžentaitis 2018). The reasons for this are quite obvious: At the beginning of the twenty-first century, an economically strengthened Russia began to focus on getting its status as a great power more widely accepted. An important role in this process was to be played by the symbolic capital accumulated by other states acknowledging the most important elements of Russian memory as momentous (also on a global scale). As it is known, the central myth of Russia's modern history is its victory in the Great Patriotic War. Therefore, defending this fact against attacks from Lithuania and other post-communist countries marked by the experience of Soviet occupation became, and still is today, the most important task of Russia's current politics of history (Nikžentaitis 2018).

The first confrontation after the collapse of the Soviet Union between Lithuania and Russia over the past occurred in 2005. Celebrations were held in Moscow to mark the 60th anniversary of victory in the Great Patriotic War, to which leaders of many states from around the world were invited. Such an invitation was also issued to the President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus. His participation in the celebrations in Moscow became the object of heated discussions. During the debates many different opinions were expressed, but two camps clearly emerged: businessmen, or more specifically intellectuals with close ties to business, who supported the president's visit to Moscow; and those who had no such ties, and were against the trip. An open letter persuading the president to reject the invitation to celebrate

Victory Day was signed by well-known Lithuanian historians. In the end President Adamkus, together with the leaders of Estonia and Ukraine, decided to reject the invitation, and to instead organise a joint commemoration on May 9, 2005 in Vilnius (Zubkov 2011, pp. 89–110).

The absence of President Adamkus and the other leaders was treated in Russia as a personal affront to Vladimir Putin. This incident, and the history of the transfer of the Bronze Soldier's ashes to a cemetery in Tallinn in 2007, finally convinced the Russian authorities to take retaliatory action (Brügemann and Kasekamp 2008, pp. 425–448). The first reaction came a year earlier; in 2006 Russia and the Republic of Lithuania began a discussion at almost the same time on the evaluation of World War II. It was initiated by a set of documents prepared by the Lithuanian-Russian Historical Commission entitled *СССР и Литва в годы Второй мировой войны* (The Soviet Union and Lithuania during the Second World War) with an introduction by the well-known Russian historian Natalia Lebedeva (Наталья Сергеевна Лебедева). Analysing the events in Lithuania in 1940, she clearly described the Soviet Union's actions as an occupation, and then attempted to answer questions regarding the timeframe of the occupation and annexation of Lithuania (Lebedeva 2006, pp. 23–65). Her prioritising the fact of the annexation caused dissatisfaction among right-wing politicians. Vytautas Landsbergis called those historians who had selected the documents 'revisionists of history' (Landsbergis 2008). However, the volume's publishers received support not only from some of their colleagues, but also from well-known foreign researchers of World War II (cf. Sennas 2007). In Russia, the publication came in for trouble for confirming the occupation as a fact, and for some time Lebedeva was even threatened with dismissal. The accompanying debate on the book revealed specific, significant changes of mood within both Lithuanian and Russian society. Before its publication even Russian researchers were able to use the term 'occupation' in the context of the events of 1940 in the Baltic countries; but after 2006 this was no longer possible. On the other hand, the discussions in Lithuania revealed the significant importance of the events of World War II to the collective memory, and

stressed that issues such as the occupation of Lithuania no longer belonged to historians, but had been appropriated by politicians.

Of course, the battle for history was also influenced by the new political situation. In 2004 Lithuania joined the EU and NATO, which ensured its greater geopolitical security. This was also probably one of the reasons why less attention was paid to Russian interests in the region, and why support for Ukraine became more active, both during the Orange Revolution and later. Clearly, this behaviour irritated Russia greatly, which treated it as a violation of its immediate sphere of interest. In response, in 2006 Russia closed a section of the '*Druzhba*' ('Friendship') pipeline. In this way, Russia was able to punish two countries at the same time: Lithuania and Poland – the latter also for its acquisition of the refinery in Mažeikiai, which Russian energy companies had had their eyes on.

The Lithuanian-Russian controversies over the past which began in 2005–2006 became more confrontational in nature. Both countries started work on draft laws providing for criminal liability: in Lithuania, for propagating Nazi and Soviet ideology and its symbols; in Russia, for denying the Soviet victory in the Great Patriotic War. According to the latter project (although in the end it was not adopted), the law's validity was even extended to cover the whole territory of the former USSR as of June 22, 1941, which meant it was targeted against the Baltic states and Ukraine. Russia did adopt a similar bill, but without such a wide scope, in 2014 (Becker 2016, pp. 124–125). Earlier, in 2009, it created a Committee to Counteract the Falsification of History, which operated for several years under the Russian President Dmitri Medvedev (*Russland* 2009, pp. 273–276).

The confrontation over the past in which Lithuania and other post-communist countries were participating then moved onto the international arena. At a meeting of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly in Vilnius in 2009, Lithuania adopted a resolution essentially equating Soviet and Nazi crimes. Meanwhile, the new EU members managed to pass through the European Parliament a resolution adding to the list of European days of memory the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and propose that the other member states commemorate the date when this Hitler-Stalin pact was signed (*Rugpjūčio 23,* 2009).

In recent years, the post-war Lithuanian armed resistance has become Russia's most frequent target. In 2017, in response to an official NATO video posted on *YouTube* commemorating the so-called Forest Brothers (the partisans operating in the Baltic countries), Russia announced to all and sundry that NATO was thus honouring the memory of those who had murdered Jews.

The Lithuanian side has tried only once – on May 8, 2005 – to alleviate some of the tensions between the Lithuanian majority and the Russian national minority, by inviting all who fought in World War II to a joint celebration of its end. However, Lithuania's uncompromising stance towards the myth of the Soviet victory has provoked a conflict between the cultures of memory in Lithuania, mainly with the Russian ethnic group. In the twenty-first century, the most important attribute of the celebration of 9 May is the St. George ribbon (*Георгиевская ленточка*, a special symbol commemorating Victory Day), which the Russian community consistently display during their protests against Lithuania's policy of memory. In this way, the confrontational Lithuanian-Russian relationship, albeit on a smaller scale, has been transferred into Lithuania itself, and is influencing domestic Lithuanian-Russian relations (Makhotina 2017, pp. 419–431).

Whereas in Russian-Lithuanian relations the past is most often used to exacerbate already existing political conflicts (mostly associated with Ukraine), in Lithuanian-Polish relations the past is easily manipulated for different ends. In the first years after the restoration of independence, despite the good relations between the leaders of Sąjūdis and Solidarity, the past and its inherent conflicts predominated, especially in discussions concerning Vilnius.

The return of the discussion about Vilnius was caused by several factors: first, the Polish national minority's pursuit of territorial autonomy, which the Lithuanians perceived as an attempt to detach the Vilnius region from the rest of Lithuania. During negotiations with the Polish government on signing an interstate treaty, attempts were made to obtain territorial guarantees, and even an apology for annexing the Vilnius region to the Polish Republic in 1920 (*de facto* 1920; formally in 1922). For the Lithuanian side, this would have

been the most convincing argument that post-communist Poland had no plans to annex Vilnius. Such apologies were also intended to satisfy the Lithuanians' complexes of being the historical victims of their neighbours.

In the context of the debate on this topic in Lithuania, not only were the actions of Gen. Żeligowski in 1920 (the staged 'mutiny' of the part of the Polish Army, that led to the detachment of the Vilnius region from Lithuanian state in 1920, and to the absorbing of Middle Lithuania statehood by Polish Republic in 1922) discussed, but much attention was also paid to the Polish Home Army's operations in Lithuania, which had a distinctly anti-Lithuanian character. The government committee established in 1993, which also included historians, concluded that the Polish Army's actions in Lithuania did target Lithuanians, and publicly recognised it as a criminal organisation (Safronovas 2011, p. 353), a decision which had its own specific consequences: until 2004 the Army's veterans did not have the right to establish their own veterans' organisation in Lithuania.

The story of the problems with the ongoing negotiations around the Lithuanian-Polish treaty signed in 1994 is well

The Museum of Genocide Victims located in the former KGB headquarters across from the Lukiškės Square. © villorejo

described in the literature (Sirutavičius 2017, pp. 370–424). They ended in a compromise accepted by both parties, expressed in the rather strange form of a preamble to the treaty which confirms the "integrity, both today and in the future, of the current territories with their capitals in Warsaw and Vilnius" (*Treaty* 1994). Although both parties agreed in the document that each of them had the right to their own interpretation of their common past, unofficially it was decided to 'leave history to the historians'.

At the start of the twenty-first century, the politicians took some more important steps. At the initiative of the presidents of Lithuania and Poland, Valdas Adamkus and Aleksander Kwaśniewski, a new tradition of jointly celebrating independence holidays was begun (16 February and 11 November). And although the president of Lithuania, Dalia Grybauskaitė, began to neglect this tradition, the Polish president Andrzej Duda's visit to Lithuania on February 16, 2018 showed that it could be easily renewed. The introduction of this custom had an important symbolic meaning; for the Polish and Lithuanian peoples, it was a kind of demonstration of the view that in the twenty-first century, the heads of their countries did not even consider the interwar period – the worst time in the history of Polish-Lithuanian relations – to be a sufficient reason for conflict.

Another positive influence on Lithuanian-Polish relations had the deteriorating relations between those countries and Russia. This was substantially influenced by another important initiative to reconcile both nations taken in 2004. The initiative mentioned was a declaration of reconciliation between the former soldiers of the Lithuanian Auxiliary Corps under Gen. Povilas Plechavičius and the veterans of the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*), in which both signatories of the document expressed their regret that innocent victims, both Lithuanians and Poles, had been affected because of those events; they also pledged to undertake all measures to prevent similar incidents between the two nations in the future. The signing of the declaration was treated with the utmost seriousness in Lithuania. Even before its announcement, the Lithuanian government took the opportunity to register the Home Army's Veterans Club (previously considered criminal) as a social organisation, and the very act of announcing the declaration

took place in the Lithuanian Presidential Palace with the participation of President Adamkus (BNS Communique September 2, 2004).

Because of the specificity of their culture of memory, the Lithuanian people attribute importance not only to selected events of the twentieth century, but also to older history. That is why another symbolic action, initiated by the then Polish President Lech Kaczyński, was also therefore extremely important – a joint celebration in Lublin of the anniversary of the 1569 Union of Lublin in 2009. Not only was President Adamkus of Lithuania invited to the ceremony, but also the President of Ukraine Viktor Yushchenko; the speaker of the Belarusian parliament which declared its independence in 1991, Stanislav Shushkevich; and of course the Polish President Lech Kaczyński. The ceremony was accompanied by a full programme of events, during which the guests and President Lech Kaczyński were awarded honorary doctorates at the University of Lublin; the topic of the Union of Lublin and its relevance to the present day was also discussed.

As we know, today the Union of Lublin does not enjoy sympathy among the Lithuanians, although their attitude towards it has clearly changed. Today the union is not judged negatively, but more neutrally. The joint celebrations of the anniversary of the Union of Lublin did not bring about a mass change in the Lithuanian people's view of this important historical event, but it is important to emphasise something else: the participation of the president of Lithuania in these celebrations showed that the Lithuanian political elites were ready to celebrate an event which was important for their neighbours, as well as their desire to implement a non-confrontational politics of history.

The search for points of contact in evaluating the common themes of the Polish-Lithuanian past fell not only to the Poles; in 2008 this initiative was also undertaken by the Lithuanians, who initiated an internal discussion on the Constitution of May 3, 1791. In the debates on this historical event, the so-called 'reformers' clashed with the 'traditionalists'. According to the latter, the Constitution was the last nail in the coffin of Lithuanian statehood; meanwhile, the 'reformers' stressed the global importance of the event, and by recalling the Act

of Mutual Affirmation of the Two Nations in 1791, hoped to prove the groundlessness of the opposing party's arguments. The discussions also highlighted the importance of culture in the search for consensus in Lithuanian-Polish history. The main objective of the 'reformers' was to change the law on days of remembrance and to add the historical dates of the Constitution of 3 May and the Mutual Affirmation of the Two Nations. Emanuelis Zingeris, a member of the Lithuanian Homeland Union (*Lietuvos Tėvynės Sąjunga*), who put forward the amendment, may also have had some other aims in mind; Polish-Lithuanian relations had cooled at that moment, and this kind of symbolic step by the Lithuanians offered some hope that Warsaw's attitude to Vilnius could change. Unfortunately, such hopes were in vain; for opponents of the amendment, the deterioration in relations between Poles and Lithuanians became an argument in favour of its rejection. Although the Lithuanian right brought in their strongest arguments to hold their position, the conservatives' patriarch Vytautas Landsbergis advocated in favour of the amendment, and so after many long and complex debates it was adopted. However, we should probably admit that Raimundas Lopata, the author of a study of these discussions, was right when he said that the adoption of the amendment had not had any real influence on those who wished to boost the political importance of this historical event (Lopata 2011, pp. 43–113).

It is not always true that the actions relating to controversial views are accompanied by heated debates; it happens that generational changes naturally produce new approaches to the past in society. This process was very well illustrated in Lithuania in 2017, by a series of projects dedicated to Józef Piłsudski.

The idea of organising a conference in 2017 devoted to Piłsudski was born at the Lithuanian Institute of History. It was quickly accepted by the academic community of the Faculty of History at Vilnius University, the Institute of National Remembrance in Warsaw and the Polish Institute in Vilnius. A similar position was also adopted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, which, despite its great distance towards the subject, did not create any obstacles.

The big unknown, of course, remained the reaction of the Lithuanian public. In connection with this, a public open lecture was given in Vilnius in 2017, in preparation for the conference, by the Polish historian Adam Michnik, who enjoys great esteem in Lithuania as one of the ideologues of Solidarity. The reaction from the audience and the media showed that there had probably been a change of views in Lithuania regarding Piłsudski. One of the largest halls in Vilnius could not accommodate all those who wished to attend, and the reactions from the media were almost entirely positive (Grigaliūnaitė 2017).

The conference itself, held in December 2017, also turned out to be a great success. It was attended by not only professional historians but also representatives of other communities, who well understood the importance and the differences in the assessment of Piłsudski between the Polish and Lithuanian peoples. And although the organisers asked the police for help in order to guarantee the participants' security, their intervention was not needed. The sizeable audience and the media's positive reaction proved that a real revolution in Lithuanian thinking about one of the most important founders of contemporary Poland had taken place (Akińczo 2017).

But the most important events did not take place in the conference hall. As part of the conference, which was held on the date of Piłsudski's birthday, Vytautas Landsbergis laid flowers on the grave of the Marshal's mother (which also holds his heart) in the Rossa cemetery in Vilnius. On the same day Lithuanian public television showed a special broadcast dedicated to a celebration of Piłsudski's birthday (Nowak 2017). These events, which had not been coordinated in advance, showed that more had been achieved in those days than had been expected by one of the participants, the renowned Lithuanian intellectual Tomas Venclova. The Lithuanian public's attitude showed that not only did they no longer equate Piłsudski with Stalin and Hitler, but that they were now able to positively assess his victories, such as his defeat of the Bolsheviks in 1920, from a Lithuanian perspective.

Although the Lithuanian-Polish rapprochement can be considered a dialogue about the past, there is still no shortage of controversial topics within it. These issues became particularly

clear after the freeze in Lithuanian-Polish relations in 2009–2017 (cf. Sidorkiewicz 2015). It is quite easy to list them: 1) The issue of the occupation/non-occupation of Vilnius and the exchange of views between Vygaudas Ušackas and Radosław Sikorski on the subject (BNS Communique July 3, 2009); 2) Lithuanians as murderers of Poles in Ponary/Paneriai, as reported on the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' website; 3) The conflict over the monuments at the cemetery in Berżniki/Beržininkai (Radczenko 2014); and 4) The attempt to use an image of the Vilnius Gates of Dawn in Polish passports (Valatka 2017). Most of the issues listed above – except in the case of the cemetery in Berżniki – triggered negative but brief reactions, and did not become the objects of aggressive debate. However, these individual events testify to the fact that there are still many painful issues from the past between Poles and Lithuanians, and the tragic legacy of the first half of the twentieth century has still not been definitively overcome.

In Lithuanian politics of history, the third most important group for the Lithuanian people is the Jewish community, and in some cases also Israel. Jewish-Lithuanian problems are difficult to resolve, as they stem not so much from Lithuania's past and its role as an important centre of Jewish culture as from the active participation of Lithuanians in the Holocaust, during which nearly 200,000 Lithuanian Jews were killed.

After 1990 this situation was exacerbated by two further matters:

1) The rush to rehabilitate the victims of the communist regime. In the first years of independence, the mass rehabilitation of persons convicted by the Soviet regime took place without proper analyses of the specific cases. This group also included individuals who had actively participated in the extermination of Jews in Lithuania. Although this was not a deliberate act on the part of Lithuania, the West interpreted it as an attempt to justify the murderers of the Jews (Eidintas 2002, pp. 379–382).

2) The premature accusations of the involvement of Lithuanians in the Holocaust by foreign Jewish organisations, primarily the Simon Wiesenthal Centre under Efraim Zuroff. Quite often such accusations coming from outside – as demonstrated by the example of Jedwabne in Poland – further hinder the search for answers to difficult questions within the country.

Moreover, it is doubtful that during the first years of their independence the Lithuanians, who predominantly saw themselves as victims, would adopt a different attitude to the Holocaust because of foreign accusations. Towards the end of the twentieth century the West established a consensus on the Holocaust, which then became one of the most important symbols of its identity (Smolar 2008, p. 59). No wonder that when Lithuania declared its desire to join the EU and NATO, suggestions from the Western organisations on how to explain the darkest days of Lithuania's history intensified.

In the first years of independence, the first cautious questions on this issue had already been raised by senior Lithuanian politicians. However, the first to publicly and unequivocally apologise to the Jews was the Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazauskas. During a visit to Israel in 1995, the Lithuanian president publicly apologised in the Knesset for the participation of Lithuanians in the extermination of the Jews. This gesture was received rather unfavourably in Lithuania, and clearly demonstrated Lithuanian reluctance to feel guilt for taking part in the Holocaust (Safronovas 2011, p. 351), and the resolution of this issue was postponed. It should be emphasised that the Seimas caught up with some of its 'homework' after independence, and added not one, but two dates associated with the Holocaust to the calendar of national days: the anniversary of the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto (1997) and the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, as International Holocaust Remembrance Day (the Day of Memory). It is important to note that these events were commemorated on those days almost exclusively by Jewish Lithuanians, in the company of representatives of international Jewish organisations and the Lithuanian authorities – and without much interest and participation from ethnic Lithuanians. It was a rule of sorts that Lithuanians also did not participate in the ceremonies commemorating the Holocaust's victims which were held in smaller towns in Lithuania. Despite the efforts of politicians and numerous historical works, the extermination of the Jews was not seen as part of the history of Lithuania. In order to break the deadlock, in 1998 President Adamkus appointed an International Commission for Evaluating the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Regimes (*Tarptautinė komisija nacių ir sovietinių režimų nusikaltimams Lietuvoje įvertinti*) (Decree

No. 159 of September 7, 1998). Although the historical research it initiated gave additional impetus to the study of the Holocaust in Lithuania, it was not possible to avoid misunderstandings. In 2007 representatives of the judiciary in Lithuania expressed a desire to interview one of the Commission's members (who came from Israel) on suspicion of criminal activity directed against the civilian residents of Lithuania during World War II. This move by Lithuanian prosecutors slowed the work of this international body by several years (Makhotina 2017, p. 369).

As we know, the situation in Lithuania during World War II was very complex, not only because of the Nazi occupation, but also because of the activity on its territory of various resistance organisations: the Polish Home Army, Soviet partisans, and Lithuanian anti-Nazi organisations. It is no secret that the organisations fighting against the Germans often also fought among themselves. It was not

The Memorial Complex of the Tuskulėnai Peace Park, where the victims of 1944–1947 Soviet NKVD-KGB repressions are buried. Vilnius, Lithuania. July 15, 2017. © krivinis

an easy situation for the Jews who were fugitives from the ghettos. Quite often the only option for joining the armed struggle was to join the Soviet partisans, whose actions against the civilian population were far from humane. This was the reason behind another conflict in Lithuania, similar to that described above. In 2006, Lithuanian prosecutors wanted to question two Soviet fighters of Jewish origin, Rachel Margolis and Fania Brantsovsky (Фаниа Брантсовская) with regard to their participation in the extermination of civilians. This caused an international scandal, which not only hindered the activities of Lithuanian justice but cemented the stereotype of Lithuanians as murderers of Jews even more deeply in global opinion (Makhotina 2017, pp. 368–369).

However, we must be wary of thinking that Lithuanian-Jewish discussions about the past can only cause conflicts. First of all, the Lithuanian Jewish community has tried to avoid serious conflicts with the Lithuanian people, and has very often (while not forgetting those elements of the past which are important to them) tried to introduce them into the public sphere with great subtlety. An excellent illustration of this attitude was the exhibition (presented in Vilnius's Jewish Museum until 2012) dedicated to the Jewish resistance against the Nazis in Lithuania during World War II. The exhibition took Lithuanian sensitivities to Soviet history into consideration, and examples of Jewish resistance were shown as being almost entirely Jewish in nature, deliberately passing over contacts with the Soviet partisans (Makhotina 2017, pp. 356–359). It is possible that this approach by the Jewish community of Lithuania also encouraged the Lithuanians to change their attitude towards the Holocaust.

The impulse to revise the Lithuanian people's attitude came from two unrelated events in Lithuania at the beginning of this century.

The year 2016 saw the publication of a book by Rūta Vanagaitė, which she had prepared in collaboration with the above-mentioned Efraim Zuroff. Its title was *Mūsiškai* (roughly 'our guys' or 'our people'), and it made great impression in Lithuania. During her analysis of interrogations conducted by the KGB in Vilnius, the author interviewed witnesses of the Holocaust, and in this way she came to the conclusion that Jews had been murdered by 'our people'. And although

some of the author's statements were justifiably criticised, for the first time in independent Lithuania the most important mass media groups, and the most influential journalists and intellectuals unanimously took her side (Jackevičius 2016). In addition, a substantial part of society also signalled that it was prepared to accept the painful truth that Lithuanians had taken part in the extermination of Jews in Lithuania. What the media stated was confirmed by the annual Memorial March commemorating the victims of the Holocaust held in the village of Molėtai. The march was traditionally attended mainly by the victims' relatives, and did not attract the interest of Lithuanians. However in 2016, when the Memorial March was joined by the well-known Lithuanian writer and playwright Marius Ivaškevičius, the commemoration was massive. Lithuanian politicians, seeing the social acceptance for such activities, also took part in the commemorations in Molėtai (Antanavičius 2016). The March again sparked media attention, and the subject of the participation of Lithuanians in the Holocaust, which had not hitherto received much attention, became more popular as the year went on. The readiness of most inhabitants of Lithuania to open up to this difficult issue was surprising, just as the public revaluation of Piłsudski was. Of course, not enough time has passed since the events described took place, and we should be careful not to generalise and draw far-reaching conclusions on the basis of these one-off events.

Recent transformations of cultural memory in the period 2005–2018

This merely surface-level glimpse into Lithuania's relations with its neighbours reveals that the predominant topics in the Lithuanian culture of memory have gradually changed: the threads of medieval history have increasingly given way to the events of the twentieth century, starting with the Soviet occupation of 1940.

Therefore, the literature devoted to Lithuania's culture of memory and politics of history begins to speak more and more frequently about a transformation of the culture of memory in Lithuania at the beginning of the twenty-first century. When

discussing important social changes, it is always difficult to attribute specific dates to when a process starts and when it ends. One can only propose/select symbolic dates. One of those could be the year 2005, which was marked by debates about the importance of World War II for Lithuania, which led to President Valdas Adamkus debating on whether to attend the celebration of Victory Day that 9 May in Moscow.

What has changed in Lithuania's culture of memory since 2005? We should talk in terms of the language of facts. In the period 2004–2019, at least seven more or less dynamic discussions on the occupation and the fight to regain statehood were held in Lithuania:

– in 2004, on the posthumous decorations of the Lithuanian Auxiliary Corps' commander, Gen. Povilas Plechavičius (BNS Communique February 18, 2004);

– in 2005, in connection with the end of World War II and its significance for Lithuania;

– in 2006, on the use of the terms 'occupation' and 'annexation' of Lithuania;

– in 2009, on the recognition of the partisan commander Gen. Žemaitis, the *de facto* leader of Lithuania (Nikžentaitis 2013, p. 536);

– in 2016, after the publication of Rūta Vanagaitė's book *Mūsiškiai*, on the participation of Lithuanians in the Holocaust;

– in 2018, on the subject of the partisan commander Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas (Nikžentaitis and Tauber 2018, pp. 83–91); and

– in 2019, the debate around the Lithuanian State Prize awarded to the writer and playwright Marius Ivaškevičius, who allegedly desecrated the memory of the Lithuanian partisans (BNS Communique February 11, 2019).

Four amendments to the parliamentary law on days of commemoration were announced:

– in 2005, 8 May was declared the Day of Remembrance of the Victims of World War II;

– in 2006, a day commemorating the victims of the Soviets murdered at Tuskulėnai Park in Vilnius, and Lithuania Minor Genocide Day was announced;

– in 2008 legislation was adopted to ban communist and Nazi symbols; and

– in 2010 amendments to the Criminal Code were adopted which provide for criminal responsibility for popularising Soviet and Nazi ideology and denying their crimes (Act XI-901 of 2010).

It should be added that a museum was opened at Tuskulėnai Park in 2004, and two years later, a monument to Lithuanian exiles was erected next to the Museum of Genocide and Resistance, which initially was to have been unveiled in Siberia (Puodžius 2006). One more thing: in 2018, the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture, together with the Vilnius city council, adopted a resolution to erect a monument in memory of the Lithuanian partisans in one of Vilnius's most important squares (BNS Communique November 30, 2017). The list of such activities does not often include much discussion on the Lithuanian provisional government or assessment of its individual members; or the commemoration of certain Lithuanian partisans, or the recurring debate about the fate of the Soviet sculptures on Vilnius's Green Bridge.

We should list some characteristics of the transformed culture of memory in Lithuania:

1) **Today's culture of memory** not only draws upon themes from recent history, but it also **has a clearly anti-Soviet character**. Whereas the elements of the culture of memory referring to the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania used before were in fact aimed at achieving the objective of European integration and strengthening national identity, and did not express aggression towards others, the new culture of memory is strongly characterised by its anti-Soviet nature. An important instrument for achieving these objectives is the increase in the number of days of remembrance, which now include events commemorating the Stalinist repression, such as the Day of Remembrance for the Victims of Tuskulėnai Park (*Tuskulėnų parko aukų diena*). To broaden this subject, actions comparable with the direct falsification of history are sometimes undertaken. For example, the Lithuania Minor Genocide Day (*Mažosios Lietuvos genocido aukų diena*) on 16 October simultaneously recalls and updates the events at Nemmersdorf (present-day Mayakovskoye, Kaliningrad oblast; Lit. *Nemerkiemis*) in 1944. This event was intensively exploited in Nazi propaganda, which was aimed at exposing the Red Army's crimes against the civilian German population; from

time to time this fragment of history is also raised in today's Germany in attempts to present the Germans as victims of the Second World War (Darnstädt, Wiegrefe 2002; for more on this topic see Roeger 2011). Current historical data do not allow us to conclude that there were also persons of Lithuanian origin among the murdered German civilians. Another important way of emphasising the anti-Soviet component in Lithuania's culture of memory is the fight against Soviet monuments on Lithuanian territory. Its first wave began immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union and as Lithuania regained its independence, when most Soviet monuments were dismantled. Another initiative dealing with the remaining monuments appeared in 2014 as a specific response to Russia's actions against Ukraine. Russian aggression became one of the major arguments for dismantling the socialist-realist sculptures on the Green Bridge in Vilnius in 2015 (BNS Communique May 3, 2016). However, the source of such actions is most likely the anti-Soviet nature of the Lithuanian culture of memory, as has been confirmed by a new wave of struggle against relics of the Soviet past, something which had already been noted in 2013. It started with the removal of the bust of the writer Liudas Gira (who legitimised the Soviet occupation) which had been standing by the Ministry of Education and Science (Čerkauskas 2013). The ever louder calls to remove other Soviet sculptures, primarily those commemorating the writer Petras Cvirka (who collaborated with the Soviet regime), indicate that the second stage of removing Soviet monuments from Lithuanian territory is not over yet (BNS Communique April 19, 2018).

2) **The desire to perpetuate specific elements of the culture of memory in the international arena**. Lithuania's entry into the EU and NATO meant not only finding its place inside the most important European and trans-Atlantic structures, but also confronted the country with the task of finding an appropriate position for itself within those structures. To achieve this goal, some symbolic capital was needed, as well as the desire to get other countries to recognise the main elements of the country's culture of memory. On the one hand, the Lithuanian political elite well understood that the Holocaust is an indisputable element of both European and trans-Atlantic identity, and so they consciously undertook tasks related to this topic. On the other

hand, in parallel with the commemoration of the Holocaust's victims, Lithuania sought to commemorate the victims of communism. These efforts were implemented in cooperation with other post-communist states and EU members, and produced the expected results. During a session of the OSCE in Vilnius in 2009, a resolution important for the states of this bloc was adopted, which essentially equated the crimes of the Holocaust with those of communism. The joint efforts by the new EU member states led to the European Parliament recommending that all the member states commemorate 23 September as a memorial date – this is the anniversary of the signing of the Hitler-Stalin pact.

3) **Criminalising elements of the culture of memory**. Those acting in defence of the culture of memory were permitted to take such steps by a resolution of the Seimas in 2010, under which the penal code was changed. Specific punitive measures were provided for denying Nazi or Soviet crimes. As of the start of 2019, such proceedings have been initiated on four occasions.

The first person so charged was an extreme leftist politician, fined at the beginning of 2013 for saying that the people shot on January 13, 1991 at the Vilnius TV tower were killed not by bullets from Soviet soldiers, but from Lithuanian snipers shooting into the assembled crowd (Chadasevičius 2013). In the second and third cases, the attempts to prosecute were unsuccessful; first, the writer and dramatist Rūta Vanagaitė was held criminally liable – not in respect of her book *Mūsiškiai*, but rather her statement which acknowledged that one of the most famous Lithuanian partisan leaders, Adolfas Ramanauskas-Vanagas, could have participated in the murder of Jews at Druskininkai. In addition, she accused the wartime leader of betraying his comrades, and said that his terrible wounds were not the result of a KGB interrogation, but were self-inflicted. After her statements, Vanagaitė's private publishing company ceased cooperation with her and stopped selling her previously published books.

Vanagaitė's statements and the publisher's attitude caused a strong reaction in Lithuania and abroad. Pretty soon it turned out that none of her claims were confirmed: the partisan commander certainly did not participate in the murder of Jews in Lithuania; he had been cruelly tortured

by the KGB, and the information Ramanauskas-Vanagas revealed about other people during his interrogation had been assessed by the KGB officers as irrelevant. Finally, after several weeks of exceptionally febrile and emotional discussions, the author of these scandalous statements made an apology; the publisher adjusted its previous decision and returned the unsold copies of the book to Vanagaitė. However, some elements in Lithuanian society were not satisfied with this, and a request was made to the General Prosecutor's Office to initiate a criminal case. The prosecutor fairly quickly issued a decision favouring Vanagaitė, and no proceedings were initiated (BNS Communique January 3, 2018).

The Lithuanian prosecutor's office behaved similarly in the case of the writer and playwright Marius Ivaškevičius, in connection with accusations that he had desecrated the memory of the partisans in his 2002 novel *Žali* ('The Greens'). However, the prosecutors were not so lenient towards Vyacheslav Titov, a member of the Klaipėda city council, who in 2018 protested the commemoration of the partisan commander Ramanauskas-Vanagas in Klaipėda. He also claimed that the commander's hands were "stained with the blood of innocent people". The politician was forced to resign and quit the city council. The General Prosecutor's Office started an investigation into his comments, while expressing the suspicion that the statement had been previously agreed upon with the relevant Russian services (*Titovo* 2018).

In the scientific sense, the above actions taken by the Lithuanian judiciary are interesting for another reason. It is clear that the people of Lithuania react especially emotionally to two topics: the post-war resistance and the Sąjūdis movement. This is a clear sign that Lithuania has gone through another update of the narrative of the struggle for freedom in recent years, displacing from first place the deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia and the Ribbentrop-Molotov secret protocol, and replacing them with the topics mentioned above.

4) In addition to the promotion of the partisan struggle, in 2009 the name of the day commemorating the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was altered; it was expanded to include the 1989 Baltic Trail (*Baltijos kelias*) (Act XI-435 of 2009). The emphases in the commemoration of 13 January were also altered; whereas previously the event had accentuated the

tragic experience of the victims, in more recent years the theme of victory came to the fore (Gudavičius 2019). These modifications seem to be entirely justified. The prevailing culture of memory can only retain its social impact if it changes and updates specific elements of the 'grand narrative'. Such trends in the prevailing culture of memory are not specific to Lithuania alone. When comparing Lithuania's culture of memory after 1989, we should pay attention to the change in its central figure. Whereas until 2005 the theme of the **defenceless victim** had prevailed in Lithuania, in today's culture of memory this figure has undergone a transformation, and it is the **fighting victim** (the sacrifice) which has become the central theme (Assmann 2006, pp. 237–238).

5) The fact that **Lithuania's culture of memory involves two perspectives – the hermetic and the open** – which are so logically difficult to combine harmoniously, is very surprising. The presented research material illustrates the defence of the central narrative – the struggle for freedom, which employs even the most extreme forms of persecution by the judicial apparatus. In addition, we cannot fail to notice how Lithuania's policy of memory is opening up to the experience of others: its neighbours (mainly the Jews, and to some extent the Poles). It is symbolic that these transformations were also accompanied by the renaming in 2018 of the Museum of Genocide Victims, to the Museum of Occupation and Freedom Fights (*Okupacijos ir laisvės kovų muziejus*) (Andrukaitytė 2018). It is still too early to state that this opening-up to its neighbours is now a fixed element in Lithuania's memory of culture; however, it is possible that in this case we are encountering the phenomenon of a transitional period.

6) **Lithuania's memory of culture is not monolithic**, although it may seem so at first glance. Here also we can encounter phenomena linked to the competing cultures of memory. However, this competition is not only waged among the Lithuanians themselves (Lithuanian-Lithuanian competition), as seen from the Polish or Russian perspectives, but also by ethnically diverse national groups. While the Jewish community presents images of its own past, trying thus to draw upon the dominant Lithuanian culture of memory, such confrontational trends are also clearly visible in Lithuanian-Russian relations in Lithuania.

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