

LITHUANIA'S STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL SURVIVAL 1795-1917

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1. Cultural and National Self-defense

After five hundred and fifty years of sovereign statehood, Lithuania lost its independence by becoming militarily occupied by Russia in 1795. From the very first days of occupation, the conqueror did not show any leniency to the victim's aspiration to preserve its national identity and cultural heritage.

The earliest repressive acts of Russia were resisted both actively and passively. There were several insurrections, including the revolts of 1807-1812, 1831, and 1863-1864. Their principal organizers were the gentry, but their participants came from all parts of the population. Each revolt was followed by Russian reprisals affecting the whole nation.

In reprisal against the 1831 revolt, the Russians on May 1, 1832 closed the University of Vilnius, established in 1579, the only institution of higher learning in the country.¹ Its theological school was allowed to function as the Theological Academy from 1834 until 1842, when it was transferred to St. Petersburg, the capital city of the Russian empire. Another exception was made in the case of medical school of the closed university. It was reorganized as the Academy of Medicine and Surgery and allowed to function in Vilnius only until 1842 when it was moved to Kiev.² Thus no institution of higher learning was left in Lithuania after 47 years of Russian occupation.

The Tsarist government's reprisals against the 1831 revolt were not limited to the closing of the University of Vilnius. Many Catholic churches were taken away from their owners and given to the Russian colonists and for the conversion into Orthodox edifices.³

Several high schools conducted by various religious orders were liquidated. Children of the peasants were barred from the admission to high schools and thus they were deprived of any chance to study in the universities in Russia or abroad."

The Lithuanians were permitted only to serve as officials of low rank and then only if they were deemed loyal to the Russification programs and if they had adopted the Orthodox religion.⁵ As Professor Moseley says, a non-Russian, of whatever origin, "once converted to Orthodoxy, was accepted as Russian in every sense of the word."⁶

In 1840, the Lithuanian Statute, the pride of the Grand Duchy's statesmen, was abolished. In 1842, even the name of Lithuania was stricken from all official records. To the Russians, Lithuania then was just a "Northwestern province of Russia," divided into the Departments or Governments of "Vilna, Kovno and Grodno (Vilnius, Kaunas, and Gardinas)," with no indication of any nationality.⁷ In 1852, all official communication was ordered to be conducted exclusively in Russian. In the face of political, national and religious oppression, the Lithuanian people took open steps toward cultural self-defense. The inspiration and incentive to persevere in the spirit of nationalism emanated to a great degree from the former students of the University of Vilnius.

The most outstanding personalities of cultural and national self-defense were Simanas Daukantas (1793-1864) and Bishop Motiejus Valančius (1801-1875).⁸

Upon completion of his studies at Vilnius, Daukantas did research in the archives of St. Petersburg and wrote historical treatises.⁹ To him, history was a means of praising the nation and infusing a deep love for the native land.¹⁰ Daukantas

described the past of his people as a great and glorious one; this he did with a profound poetic inspiration.

During the four years of his studies in Vilnius, Valančius had been in touch with the members of a secret Lithuanian organization led by Daukantas and other students of the University of Vilnius.¹¹ After his ordination (May 6, 1828), Valančius made advancements in his priestly duties quite rapidly. In 1849, Pope Pius IX appointed Valančius as the new Bishop of Samogitia from a list of three candidates submitted by the Tsar in accordance with the Concordat.¹² After his consecration on February 24, 1850, Bishop Valančius had position and power to execute his many preconceived plans which began to unfold very swiftly.

Among his first concerns were the establishment of parochial schools, adult education and visitation of parishes. To him, illiteracy and over-indulgence in drinking were the greatest dangers that confronted the people. In his crusade, Valančius was highly successful. After three years of his leadership, there were 197 parochial elementary schools compared with seventeen established by the government.¹³ Seeking to raise the educational levels of his people, Valančius wrote, published, and distributed several books, mostly religious in nature. This evolutionary process of cultural progress was shattered by the events of 1863.

In 1862, many anti-Russian demonstrations were staged in Poland and Lithuania, organized mainly by the gentry who sought the restoration of the Commonwealth of Lithuania and Poland. As a reprisal and with the aim of preventing revolutionary activities, the Russians effected a conscription program.¹⁴ Instead of obeying the draft call of the army, the Polish and Lithuanian youths left for the forests to organize their own armed forces. A revolutionary committee appealed to the country for a universal revolt. Its program held out promises of equal rights and ownership of land to the peasants and landless workers.

The revolutionists held their own for several months against the numerous and better equipped forces, relying on their romantic enthusiasm and their strong determination to free their land. Many of them also trusted hopefully in the promises of the French Emperor Napoleon III and the Italian statesman Garibaldi "not to forget the brave fighters for freedom."¹⁵ "Do not lose your hope; democratic Europe will not permit your fatherland to perish," wrote Garibaldi on June 25, 1863, to Zigmantas Sierakauskas, one of the leaders of the Lithuanian revolt. It was written at the very time that Sierakauskas was to be hanged in the public square of Vilnius by the Russians. The revolt was extinguished by February, 1865 under the personal command of Governor-General Muravev.¹⁶

As a practical man, Valančius knew well enough of the inequality of the forces of the rebels and of the Russian army. To him, revolt meant futile bloodshed, hopeless struggle, new persecutions, great losses.¹⁷ Many of his priests were arrested, deported and executed for their active participation in the rebellion. On November 6, 1864, Valančius was removed to Kaunas from Varniai where the diocesan see of Samogitia had been for 450 years. In further reprisal, the Russian governor closed parochial schools and temperance societies; he ordered the censorship of sermons and replacement of the native teachers by the Russians. One of the heaviest blows of the repression was the governor's decree of 1864 forbidding any Lithuanian publication to be printed in the Latin alphabet; all the books were ordered to be published only in Russian characters in the Cyrillic alphabet.¹⁸

The ban of the Lithuanian press was a blow and a challenge. At first, there was some confusion. Even Valančius showed some willingness to accept books, primarily of religious nature, transcribed into the Russian alphabet.¹⁹ Even Valančius, under Russian pressure, approved the first four Lithuanian books of religious content printed in the Russian alphabet. The reaction of the common people to the Russianized texts was strongly negative. They refused to accept and use those publications. It is reasonable to believe that this action of the people was instigated by the bishop himself through his priests. On June 22, 1866 Bishop Valančius wrote to the Governor Muravev that "Russian alphabet is completely not proper to the Lithuanian language, that it is impossible to print Holy Scripture translation in the Russian characters."²⁰ After withdrawing his previous consent, the bishop immediately initiated a new phase of his struggle to protect his people and his native land from the Russification. He undertook underground activities by organizing the printing of Lithuanian books in East Prussia and smuggling them into the country. His written leaflets and booklets instructed the people never to attend Russian churches, to boycott the Russian schools and to hold back on learning the Russian language.²¹ The parents were urged to teach their children at home secretly, in clandestine schools called "Schools of Want." In a comparatively short time, about 2,000 book carriers or smugglers worked as an effective net throughout the country in aiding Bishop Valančius and his close assistants.²²

The book carriers and distributors included beggars, devotional sellers, young girls, students, farmers, housekeepers, even the large estate owners, such as Prince Mykolas Oginskis, Count Vladimiras Zubovas, and others. Actually, there were several groups of the book carriers.²³ They were able to receive a constant supply of new books printed in East Prussia and also sent from the United States where the Lithuanian emigrants were writing and publishing books in their native tongue and thus extending a great cultural aid to their kinsmen in their homeland.

Many attempts to lift the press ban included the campaigns of petitions and legal actions through the Russian courts. Finally, the Senate, the Supreme Court of Russia, in two instances ruled that there was no law banning the

Lithuanian printing in Latin alphabet, that the illegal decrees of the governor and of the Ministry of Interior were not valid.²⁴ Two court decisions were the final stage in the struggle to win the freedom for a national press. The 40 year old battle in which the fighters had only books and periodicals as their weapons, but who were firm in their determination of resistance against Russianization was finally won on May 7', 1904, when the Russian government rescinded its decree of 1864.²⁵

The total number of Lithuanian publications printed in Prussia and smuggled into Lithuania during the ban period (1864-1904) had reached 1,302 books and periodicals; the total number of printed copies was 5,543,575.²⁶ This is a quite impressive number in comparison to 1,000 Lithuanian books published between 1547-1864.²⁷

Political brochures and various works published in the nineteenth century — before and during the forty-year ban — not only stimulated people's interest in religious, social, cultural and national fields, but provided an instrument through which ideological movements could emerge as distinct political groupings. The first step in that direction was the appearance in 1883 of a new periodical, *Aušra* (The Dawn), founded and edited by Dr. Jonas Basanavičius (1851-1927), a man of action and a great romanticist.²⁸

Although *Aušra* was published only for three years, it aroused ardent manifestations of love for the Lithuanian language, for the history of the nation, for the ideas advocated by Daukantas and Valančius. Many students and professionals found in the pages of *Aušra* a vital call to ally themselves with the cause of the common people. One of the most prominent followers of Dr. Basanavičius was Dr. Vincas Kudirkas (1858-1899), the founder and chief guiding personality of another periodical, *Varpas* (The Bell), established in 1889 and published until 1905. Originally, *Varpas* had been interested in continuing the ideals of *Aušra*; to awaken the nation, to instill love of the native language, and to reawaken patriotism.²⁹ This magazine was also deeply interested in improving the economic status of the peasants. For some time *Varpas* sought to unite the intelligentsia — both laymen and priests. However, it soon became apparent that it could not satisfy the Catholics, especially their clergymen, active in the national movement and eager to foster continuous loyalty of the people to the Catholic Church. In 1889, a group of active priests published a new magazine, *Apžvalga* (The Review), which devoted its pages mainly against the efforts to Russify the people through the Orthodox Church.³⁰ Seven years later, *Apžvalga* was replaced by *Tėvynės Sargas* (The Guardian of the Fatherland), edited by the Reverend Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas, one of the most colorful personalities in religious, social, cultural and national life.³¹ The new periodical chose as its motto, "Love God above everything else, your neighbor as yourself, and your fatherland — more than yourself." The people around *Apžvalga* and *Tėvynės Sargas* wanted to protect the masses from being influenced by materialistic philosophy and from liberals who advocated indifference toward religion.

The first almost entirely political periodical was *Lietuvos Darbininkas* (The Worker of Lithuania), published on May 1, 1898 in Switzerland.³² Later it was issued from Tilsit (Tilžė), after an effort to print it in London had proved unsuccessful.

Eventually, the above-mentioned periodicals became a nucleus for political movements.

2. The Origin of the Political Parties

The first group to initiate a political party was the Social Democrats. Their first chapter was organized in 1893, in Vilnius. Their first national meeting, held in May, 1896, coincided with the publication of *Lietuvos Darbininkas*. The conference adopted the party's program, based on both Marxist principles and the national aspirations of the Lithuanian people.³³ In defining their objectives, the Social Democrats came out for the independence of Lithuania within a Federation or Confederation of the Northeastern States including Poland and Belorussia, but excluding Russia.³⁴ They envisaged a republican form of government, established through general, secret, equal and direct voting. The party's most effective media were publications smuggled from East Prussia and the United States.

A group of intellectuals, gathered around *Varpas*, decided to establish the "Democratic Party of Lithuania" which would seek "a political autonomy for Lithuania with a democratically elected Seimas to be seated in Vilnius."³⁵ The organizational meeting took place on October 17, 1902.³⁶

The Democrats declared themselves concerned with the welfare of all inhabitants, but they pointed out their party's specific interest in the peasants. They advocated a return of land confiscated by the Russians to its original owners, a distribution of state-owned land to the landless workers, an end to Russian colonization and freedom for peasants to form their own cooperatives and associations. The party's ideas were disseminated through two clandestine publications; *Varpas* served the intelligentsia and *Ūkininkas* (The Peasant) was designed for the peasants.

The latest to appear actively on the political scene were the Catholic intellectuals, mostly priests, grouped around *Apžvalga* and *Tėvynės Sargas*, the publications which became protagonists of the Christian Democrats. According to Monsignor Mykolas Krupavičius, a long-time leader of the party, the movement was inspired by Pope Leo's encyclicals: *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and *Craves de Communi* (1901).³⁷ However, the party's program was written only in 1904.³⁸

The preamble of the program³⁹ stated that the new political movement would stand for three principles: Lithuanian national heritage, Democracy and Christianity. Guided by these principles, the party committed itself to seek "autonomy for Lithuania with its own Parliament elected through universal, equal, direct and secret ballot." In defending the cause of their country, the Christian Democrats were to cooperate with other parties. They stood for equal rights for all nationalities and against all religious persecution. The concept of autonomy was defined as follows:

- a. A parliament, seated in Vilnius, empowered to adopt laws and to impose taxes throughout the whole autonomous territory;
- b. Courts and administration personnel selected from the native people;
- c. administration responsible to the Parliament;
- d. military service fulfilled in the territory of Lithuania;
- e. police appointed and controlled by the municipalities.

The program was presented to the Bishops of Lithuania for approval, which was not officially granted. That prevented the organizers for some time from forming the Central Committee and from establishing regular chapters throughout the country. No centralized Catholic political organization was feasible because most priests preferred not to incur the displeasure of their hierarchy, and there were too few laymen willing to plunge themselves into organizational party activities.

3. The Struggle for Political Freedom

The Russian defeat at the hands of the Japanese in 1904-1905 encouraged the more active groups to participate in the revolt of 1905. Lithuania was flooded with leaflets urging the people to rise against the Tsar, to demand smaller taxes, to insist upon equal rights for native language, etc. A group of activists under the leadership of Dr. Jonas Basanavičius seized an opportunity to call a National Conference which would represent all the social strata and all the political views of Lithuanian life.⁴⁰

The conference, aiming to coordinate the activities and formulate the peoples' demands, convened in Vilnius on December 4-6, 1905, and it was called "The Grand Seimas (Diet) of Vilnius." Its participants numbered about two thousand, most of them elected by various organizations in Lithuania proper and in Russia. In the words of Professor Graham, here "for the first time in the modern history of the Lithuanian people, representatives of all classes met to formulate their demands and press them upon a cringing but reluctant Tsar."⁴¹ Its representatives included peasants, city workers, priests, physicians, lawyers, teachers, professors, and university students. Most of them were elected democratically and instructed by their respective communities to represent their firm convictions and attitudes.⁴² The election of the Seimas' presidium demonstrated the political maturity of young leaders representing different movements.⁴³

After long debates and discussions, the Seimas adopted a series of resolutions, one of which demanded autonomy for all of ethnographic Lithuania with a legislature in Vilnius, elected by universal, equal, direct and secret ballot.⁴⁴ Other resolutions urged the people to stop paying taxes, to close liquor monopoly stores, discontinue sending children to Russian schools, to refuse to report for military duty, to disband all Russian administrative centers, to replace the Russian language with the Lithuanian in all schools and all state offices.⁴⁵

The Seimas, however, recessed without electing any central leadership to carry out its resolutions and instructions. Nevertheless, its decisions became known to the population throughout the country.

The Tsarist regime reacted very quickly. Martial law was enforced, "punitive" troops were dispatched, and the revolutionary movement was crushed.⁴⁶ The Russians kept

only a few of their promises given to the restless people: teaching of religion in Lithuanian, establishing of private schools and participation in the election of the Russian State Duma which, in accordance with Tsar Nicholas's Manifesto of October, 1905, was to provide a representation of all the peoples of the empire.

Representation for Lithuania in the Duma was fixed by quota, and the elections were indirect. Since the most important phase of election was the selection of the electors from the Governments (Departments), it was there that political leaders sought to use their influence. The election to the Duma meant a great deal to Lithuanian national enlightenment, to the development of political art and discipline. The elections were a *sui generis* test of discipline and solidarity as well as a demonstration of national strength. The Duma was more like a scene which furnished a training ground for national leadership among the political parties.⁴⁷

Although an insignificant minority,⁴⁸ Lithuanian representatives did raise their voices of protest against the Russian repressions in their country. For instance, Petras Leonas in the Second Duma proposed a land reform in Lithuania which would rectify many of the Tsarist injustices toward peasants who had been deprived of their land for political reasons.⁴⁹ In the Fourth Duma, deputy Martynas Yčas advocated a special legislative bill which would grant autonomy to Lithuania. All Lithuanian representatives at the Duma, whatever their party affiliation, took the Autonomist position.⁵⁰ Such a stand demanded courage because the Tsarist regime expected its created assembly to represent the ideal of "Russia, one and

indivisible."⁵¹ As the Imperial Manifesto of June 3, 1907 stated, other peoples who are included in the empire "shall not be represented in such numbers as to enable them to decide purely Russian questions."⁵²

At the outbreak of the Russian-German war in 1914, a group of Lithuanian activists in Vilnius set up a Central Committee for the Relief of War Victims. Under the chairmanship of Martynas Yčas, the Committee included many outstanding personalities from social, cultural, religious, political and national life. When the Lithuanian territory fell under the German occupation in September, 1915, more than 250,000 Lithuanians found themselves in Russia⁵³ as voluntary refugees or evacuees, brought there by the retreating Russians. In order to help and aid them, several members of the Committee including the chairman, withdrew to Russia and organized branches wherever larger numbers of Lithuanians found a refuge. Mr. Yčas was succeeded by Antanas Smetona as a new chairman of the Committee in Vilnius.

Despite the difficulties of war, political and educational activities went on. New political groupings were formed and new publications appeared. An important decision for united political action was reached February 3, 1917, in Petrograd by the representatives of five parties when they agreed to establish the National Council of Lithuanians in Russia.⁵⁴ Under the sponsorship of this new organ, a Lithuanian conference was called in Petrograd on May 27, 1917. It was attended by 366 delegates, each chosen from a group of two hundred adults and representing communities scattered throughout Russia.⁵⁵ The Petrograd conference by the majority of its delegates demanded that all ethnographic Lithuania should become an independent state, that representatives of its people should take part at the Peace Conference, and that a constituent assembly should be called upon to settle the country's internal affairs. A second conference convened at Voronezh, on November 16-19, 1917, attended by representatives of various parties and the Lithuanian officers serving in the Russian army. The Voronezh Conference demanded emphatically that the independence of Lithuania must be based on both historic rights and the general principle of self-determination.⁵⁶ It envisaged for the country

. . . the application of a system of guarantees of civil liberty, the protection of national minorities, the concession of universal, equal, secret and direct suffrage with proportional representation without distinction of sex, religion or nationality.⁵⁷

To implement its decisions, the Conference elected the fifteen-member Supreme Lithuanian Council in Russia, the presidium of which represented a working coalition of five parties.⁵⁸

The kaleidoscopic events in Russia — various upheavals, the Tsar's abdication, the overthrow of the provisional government, the October revolution and the rapid deterioration of all order — deprived the Lithuanian organizations of any chance to carry on their patriotic endeavors. Many leaders were arrested by the Bolsheviks. Any activities on behalf of Lithuania had to be carried out in other parts of the world.

The greatest moral and material aid to the cause of Lithuania's independence came from the United States, where first and second generation Lithuanian-Americans expressed their vital interest in the land of their forefathers.

This interest had grown gradually since 1906, when the first Lithuanian political Congress, held on George Washington's birthday, at Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, demanded autonomy for Lithuania.⁵⁹ During World War I, several conferences and other groupings of the Lithuanian Americans took place on behalf of Lithuania. As a result of united efforts, President Woodrow Wilson declared November 1, 1916, as "Lithuanian Day," during which funds were collected for financial aid to the cause. This also implied political achievement, for it acquainted the American people with the zeal for a small nation's freedom.⁶⁰ The Lithuanian American Council helped to maintain Lithuanian information bureaus in Washington, New York, Paris, and Berne where they worked hard to win Western recognition of Lithuania's rights towards independent statehood.⁶¹

When Lithuania found herself confronted with the German military occupation, she had no authoritative center or organ to coordinate or carry into execution the decisions adopted at the Grand Seimas of Vilnius in 1905. The political parties lacked any means of mutual exchange of plans or ideas. The German military regime stepped in and summarily suppressed all public life. Only one Lithuanian newspaper was permitted, and it was in the hands of German military authorities.

Initiative for a coordinated action was assumed by the members of the Central Committee for the Relief of War Victims who remained in Vilnius. This Committee, now under the chairmanship of Antanas Smetona,⁶² in addition

to its initial concern with relief problems, kept the people informed about the problems of national survival and the quest for freedom. It organized the establishment of schools and special courses for teachers. From time to time it appealed to the occupation authorities for better treatment and living conditions. Wherever it could, the Committee tried to seize its chance to take an active part in political life. Three of its members attended the "Enslaved Nations' Conference" held in June, 1916, at Lausanne and raised their voices on behalf of Lithuania against any return to Russia.⁶³

This they did with German consent, but they went further than the Germans expected in making a plea for the complete independence of Lithuania. Such a "deviation" from instructions highly displeased the German authorities⁶⁴ who were only interested in a "Voice of Lithuanians" which could be used for German political purposes.⁶⁵ The occupational regime wanted to create its Vertrauensrat (Council of Trust), the members of which would be appointed by the Germans and not

selected by the people themselves. The Relief Committee members argued for a Council which would reflect public opinion, and, therefore, it was to be elected from the bottom and not appointed from the top.⁶⁶ To German dismay, no one agreed to be a member of their Vertrauensrat, nor to nominate any candidate for such an organ. Among the invited personalities were Bishop Pranciškus Karevičius in Kaunas, Dr. Jonas Basanavičius and Mr. Antanas Smetona in Vilnius.⁶⁷ They all refused, with an emphatic "no."

Lithuanian national "Credo" was declared very emphatically to the German military authorities in occupied Vilnius already on June 6, 1916. Twelve leading activists in their memorandum to the Germans stated that "now it is time to create our own national life," that Lithuania must be a democratic state with a parliament elected by the people, that Lithuania wants to be equal with other independent nations. The signers of this memorandum included Dr. Basanavičius, Steponas Kairys, A. Smetona, A. Stulginskis, M. Biržiška, P. Klimas, Dr. J. Šaulys, J. Vileišis, Rev. P. Dogelis.⁶⁸

The establishment of the Taryba

After the refusal of prominent Lithuanians to accept any appointments to the German *Council of Trust*, the occupational authorities somehow shifted their previously taken stand against any representative organ created through elections. The military situation now went into unexpected phase. The United States was in the war; the Austrian-Hungarian Empire was showing visible signs of deterioration. Thus, the Germans began to realize the need of some way toward peace.

On July 19, 1917, the Reichstag's *Resolution of Peace* came out for permanent conciliation, friendly cooperation among the nations, etc. In drawing up the resolution, Mr. Erzberger, the leader of the Catholic *Zentrum* party, who had known a few Lithuanians from his meetings with them in Switzerland, voiced openly the need for a change in the relations with the people of Lithuania.⁶⁹ He advanced the idea that Lithuania should be declared independent in a few months and that its constitutional structure should be decided by an elected National Council. Dr. Erzberger's views were also shared and supported by such German Social Democrat leaders as Edward David and Hugo Haase.

The members of the Lithuanian Relief Committee in Vilnius proceeded with their requests for the establishment of an elected institution to represent the nation and to work for independence. In July, 1917, they appealed directly to the Reich's Chancellor with their arguments in favor of a conference consisting of delegates elected by the people.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the German occupational regime prohibited conducting elections. They insisted and demanded that a Lithuanian conference had to be limited to a representation of three to five delegates appointed for each of thirty-three districts of the country. Having accepted this condition, the organizational Committee for the Lithuanian Conference visited the country consulting many leaders and drawing a list of possible representatives to the Conference. 264 delegates were chosen from various professional and political strata of life.

The Conference opened September 18, 1917, at Vilnius, with 214 delegates from 32 districts in attendance. Its closed sessions lasted until September 22 of that year. The presidium was elected under the aegis of great unity; it was very similar to the one chosen by the Grand Seimas of Vilnius in 1905. Dr. Jonas Basanavičius was acclaimed with great enthusiasm as Chairman and the presidium embraced Socialist Steponas Kairys, Nationalist Smetona, Christian Democrats Msgr. Justinas Staugaitis and Msgr. Kazimieras Šaulys and Populist Jonas Vileišis. The secretariat consisted of two Christian Democrats and two Social Democrats.⁷¹

After discussions and debates on general subjects, the Conference concentrated on such questions as: (1) Political future of Lithuania; (2) relations with Germany; (3) relations with national minorities; and (4) the establishment of the Council of Lithuania.⁷²

Regarding the political future of its country, the Conference unanimously declared itself for an independent and democratic Lithuania within ethnographic frontiers which could be adjusted to a new consideration of the interests of economic life. The constitutional foundation of the state and its foreign relations were to be established by the democratically elected Constituent Assembly to be called in Vilnius. National minorities were to be granted every guarantee for their cultural needs.⁷³

As to the future relations with Germany, the Conference compromised by adopting a resolution in favor of "certain relations" with the Reich, but it also inserted its own conditions: the Reich should recognize Lithuania before the convocation of the Peace Conference and support its statehood.⁷⁴ This resolution, prepared and proposed by the Organizational Committee reflected a concept of simple political pragmatism: in the event of German victory, Lithuania would not be able to avoid close ties with the Reich; in the event of German defeat, it would be up to the victorious Allies to break those "certain relations." This concept prevailed in the Conference. To the Lithuanian leaders it seemed very important to bring the name of their country into the international forum at any cost.⁷⁵

The last act of the Conference was to elect a twenty-member Council of Lithuania (Lietuvos Taryba) which was directed and empowered to carry out its principal resolutions, i.e. to re-establish and organize the independent and democratic State of Lithuania. The Council was authorized to invite from five to six members representing the national minorities.⁷⁶ Apart from this, the council was given the right to co-opt new members, not exceeding one-fourth of the elected membership.

The conduct and work of the Conference went smoothly. Common want, a common burden of occupation and the common hope of a free and independent state solidified all factions into a common unity.⁷⁷ This unity was very evidently demonstrated in the formation of the Council (Taryba). After the Council's election results were announced, the left factions (Populists and Social Democrats) expressed their dissatisfaction at having only two or three members in it while the Catholic representation included six priests. Immediately, in the name of loyalty and solidarity, two priests resigned in favor of two leftists.⁷⁸ Thus, the Conference ended as it began, a unanimously devoted group of patriots dedicated to the future of free and independent Lithuania.

With the election of the Taryba, the Lithuanian nation began a new chapter in its struggle to regain its independence and to establish a democratic republic. This will be a subject for another presentation.

1 Vanda Sruogienė-Daugirdaitė. *Lietuvos Istorija* (History of Lithuania) (Chicago: Tėvynės Mylėtojų Draugija, 1956), p. 799.

2 Constantine R. Jurgėla, *History of the Lithuanian Nation* (New York: Lithuanian Cultural Institute, 1947), p. 420.

3 Kazys Gečys, *Katalikiškoji Lietuva* (The Catholic Lithuania) (Chicago: 1949), p. 108.

4 Sruogienė, op. cit., p. 790.

5 Konstantinas Avižonis, "Bendroji Rusinimo Politika" (The General Policy of Russification), in V. Bagdanavičius (ed.), *Kovos Metai dėl Savosios Spaudos* (Chicago: 1957), p. 43.

6 Philip E. Moseley, "Aspects of Russian Expansion," *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. VIM, No. 1 (1943), p. 199.

7 Jurgėla, op. cit., p. 421.

8 Gečys, op. cit., p. 237. ²*Ibid.*, p. 241.

9 Sruogienė, op. cit., p. 302.

10 A. Vaičiulaitis, *Outline History of Lithuanian Literature* (Chicago: Lithuanian Cultural Institute, 1942), p. 20.

11 Vaclovas Biržiška, *Vyskupo Motiejaus Valančiaus Biografinės Bruožai* (Biographical Sketches of Bishop M. Valančius) (New York: 1951), p. 9.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

13 Gečys, op. cit., p. 132.

14 Adolfas Šapoka (ed.), *Lietuvos Istorija* (History of Lithuania) (Kaunas: Švietimo Ministerijos leidinys, 1936), p. 470.

15 Sruogienė, op. cit., pp. 319-327.

16 According to the report of Muravev to the Tsar, 9,361 persons were punished for the revolutionary activities. Whole villages were wiped out, homes were burned to the ground, people were deported to the distant parts of Siberia. See Šapoka, op. cit., p. 474.

17 Biržiška, op. cit., p. 75.

18 Vaičiulaitis, op. cit., p. 26. See also Clarence A. Manning, *The forgotten Republics* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 111.

19 Biržiška, op. cit., p. 30.

20 Jonas Matusas, "Lotyniškojo Raidyno Draudimas" (The Ban of Latin Alphabet) in Bagdanavičius (ed.), op. cit., p. 127-128.

21 Gečys, op. cit., p. 140.

22 The carriers, when caught, were given severe penalties — deportations, fines and imprisonment. For example, in one case thirty-eight persons, including several physicians, teachers and lawyers, were sentenced to deportations to Siberia. See V. Sruogienė, "Knygų platinimas," in Bagdanavičius (ed.), op. cit., p. 213.

23 Sruogienė, op. cit., p. 212.

24 Šapoka, op. cit., p. 514.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 515.

26 Vaclovas Biržiška, "50 metų spaudos laimėjimo sukaktį minint" (In commemoration of the 50th anniversary of press freedom) in *Aidai*, Nr. 4 (1954), Brooklyn, N.Y.

27 Gečys, op. cit., p. 148.

28 Vaičiulaitis, op. cit., p. 26.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

30 *Vyskupo P. Bučio Prisiminimai* (The Memoirs of Bishop Būčys), Chicago, 1966, p. 303.

31 Vaičiulaitis, op. cit., p. 27.

32 Steponas Kairys, *Lietuva Budo* (Lithuania Was Awakening), New York, Lietuvių Social-Demokratų Sąjunga, 1957), p. 274.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 389.

34 Mykolas Romeris, *Lietuvos Konstitucinės Teisės Paskaitos* (Constitutional Law of Lithuania) (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo Universiteto Teisių Fakulteto leidinys, 1937), p. 11.

35 B. Almantas, "Vidurinio Lietuvos Politinės Srovės Kelias" (The Road of the Lithuanian Political Center), Varpas (1953), p. 19.

36 One of the original committee members later became the Prime Minister and the third President of the Republic (Dr. Kazys Grinius); another, a signer of the Declaration of Lithuanian Independence, later Minister in Berlin, Berne and Warsaw (Dr. Jurgis Šaulys); the third, a signer of the Independence Declaration, first Chief of the Lithuanian Mission in the U.S., a long-time Mayor of Kaunas (Jonas Vileišis).

37 M. Krupavičius, "Krikščioniškoji Demokratija Lietuvoje" (Christian Democracy in Lithuania), Tėvynės Sargas, V (1954), p. 2.

38 It was authored by three professors of the Technological Academy of Petersburg: Jonas Maciulevičius-Maironis (1862-1932), Aleksandras Dambrauskas-Jakštas (1860-1938) and Pranciškus Būčys (1872-1951). All three were well known personalities and closely connected with the national renaissance: Maironis, a national poet (whose lyrical verses from the first issue of *Aušra* were rousing the nation to be proud of its past and to aim for freedom) and later the Rector of the Theological Seminary in Kaunas; Jakštas, a poet, critic, mathematician, editor and publisher of periodicals and books; Būčys, a great moral theologian, publicist, later Rector of the University of Lithuania, Bishop of Eastern Rites, General Superior of the Marian Fathers, and author of several books.

39 A full text in Lithuanian can be found in the Tėvynės Sargas, II (1949), 125-136.

40 Alfred Erich Senn, *Jonas Basanavičius: The Patriarch of the Lithuanian National Renaissance* (Newtonville, Mass.: Oriental Research Partners, 1980), p. 25.

41 Malbone W. Graham, Jr., *New Governments of Europe* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1927), p. 357.

42 Pranciškus Būčys, "Ši tą prisiminus iš Didžiojo Vilniaus Seimo" (Some reminiscences from the Grand Seimas of Vilnius), Tėvynės Sargas, No. 4

(1948), p. 254.

43 Dr. J. Basanavičius, a non-partisan, was unanimously acclaimed as the chairman; four vice-chairmen were elected as follows: Democrat Antanas Smetona, Social Democrat Steponas Kairys, Christian Democrat Reverend P. Būčys, and non-partisan peasant Jonas Stankūnas. See Pranas Klimaitis, "Didysis Vilniaus Seimas" (The Grand Seimas of Vilnius), *Židinys*, No. 2 (1931), p. 149.

44 Sruogienė, *op. cit.*, p. 862.

45 Senn, *op. cit.*, p. 27 and Jurgėla, *op. cit.*, p. 492.

46 Šapoka, *op. cit.*, pp. 517-518.

47 Romeris, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

48 The First (1906) and Second (1907) Dumas had seven Lithuanians, the Third (1907-1912) and Fourth (1912-1917), only four. See Chase, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

49 Šapoka, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

50 Stanley W. Page, *The Formation of the Baltic States* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 9.

51 Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

52 W. R. Batsell, *Soviet Rule in Russia* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 99.

53 A. Rūkas (ed.), *Mykolas Sleževičius* (Chicago: 1954), p. 58.

54 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

55 The delegates listed themselves according to their political beliefs as follows: Christian Democrats and Catholic Peoples' Alliance — 71; Social Democrats — 39; Socialist Populists — 90; Santara Liberals — 30; Non-partisans — 51; Nationalists — 20; unknown political leaning — 34; and 1 Communist. See Vytautas Vaitiekūnas, "Rusijos Lietuvių Seimo 40 Metų Sukaktį minint" (The 40th Anniversary of the Lithuanian Conference in Russia), *Laisvė*, No. 13 (1957), p. 49.

56 Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 366.

58 Rūkas, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

59 It was called at the initiative of three Catholic priests (Jonas Žilinskas, Juozas Kaulakis and Jonas Dumčius) and Dr. Jonas Šliūpas, one of the *Aušra* editors and leading personalities of national struggle. See Antanas Kučas, "J.A.V. Lietuviai" (The Lithuanians in the United States of America), *Lietuvių Enciklopedija*, Vol. X, p. 54. See also: Juozas Jakštis, *Dr. Jonas Šliūpas* (Chicago: Akademines Skautijos leidykla, 1979), p. 176.

60 Antanas Kučas, *Lithuanians in America* (Boston: Encyclopedia Lituanica, 1975), p.p. 149-150.

61 Page, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

62 Later he became the first president of the Republic and leader of the Nationalists.

63 Romeris, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

64 Šapoka, *op. cit.*, p. 538.

65 Zenonas Ivinskis, "Lietuva 1917 m. ir Vasario 16 Aktas" (Lithuania in 1917 and the Act of February 16), *Židinys*, XXVII (1938), p. 616.

66 Romeris, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

67 P. Klimas, *Der Werdegang des Litauischen Staates* (Berlin: Pass and Garleb G.m.b.H., 1919), p. xiii. See also Petras Klimas, *Iš mano atsiminimų* (Boston: Juozas Kapočius, 1979), p. 104.

68 Aleksandras Stulginskis, *Atsiminimai* (Memoirs) (Chicago: Pedagoginis Lituanistikos Institutas, 1980), p. 127.

69 M. Erzberger, *Erlebnisse im Weltkrieg* (The Experiences in the World War) (Stuttgart and Berlin: Deutsche Verlags-Antstalt, 1920), pp. 184-196.

70 Šapoka, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

71 Klimas, *Iš mano atsiminimų, op. cit.*, p. 110.

72 Romeris, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

73 Romeris, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

74 Klimas, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

75 Ivinskis, *op. cit.*, p. 622.

76 Klimas, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

77 Ivinskis, *op. cit.*, p. 619.

78 Klimas, *op. cit.*, p. 110.