

LITHUANIA 1863-1893: TSARIST RUSSIFICATION AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MODERN LITHUANIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

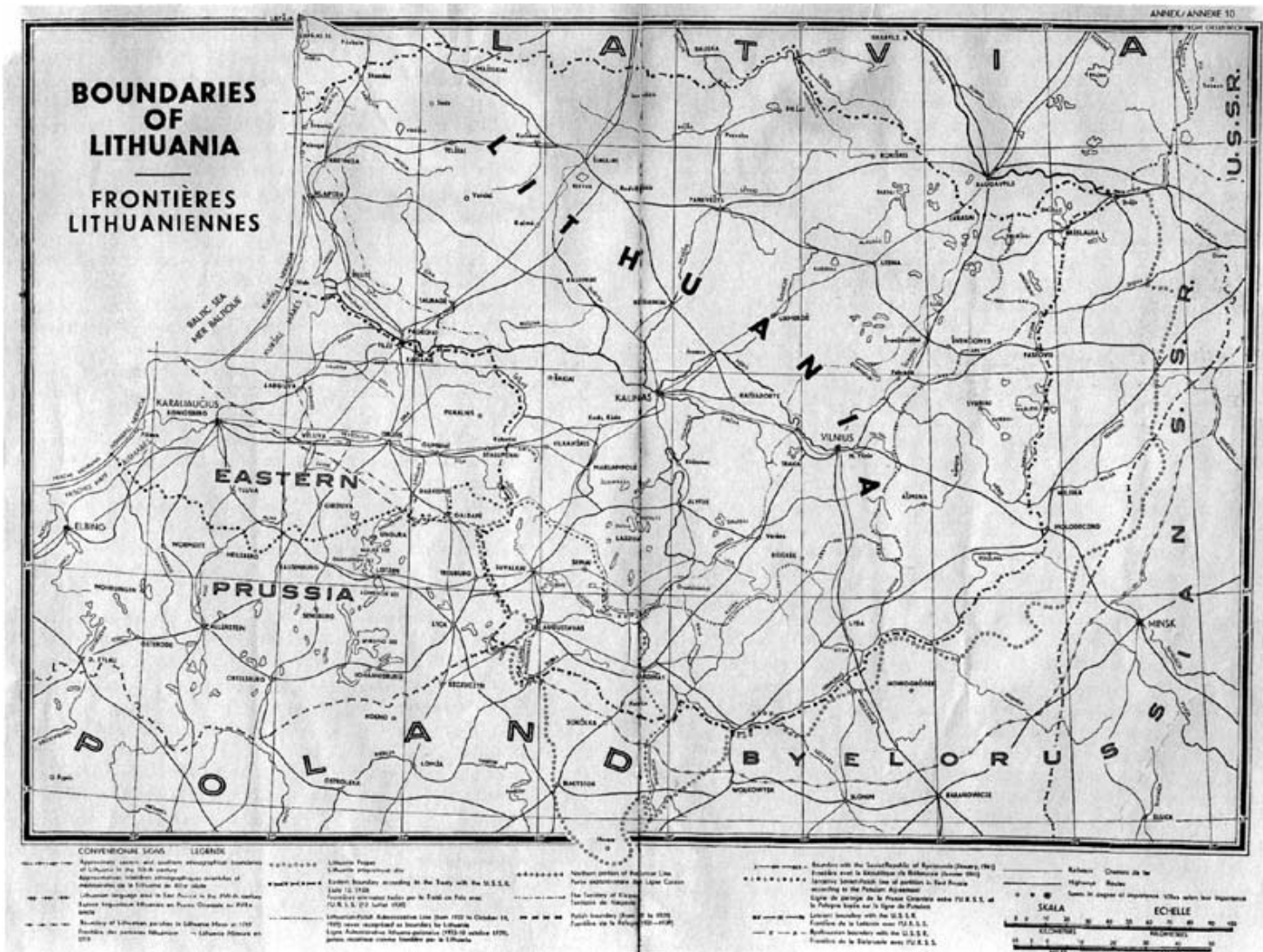
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Lithuania 1861-1917

The years from 1861 to 1917 are a very significant period in the history of the Lithuanian nation. On the basis of previous conditions the formation and consolidation of the Lithuanian nation quickened and then was completed during this period. There was an intensive revival and development of Lithuania's historical traditions in accordance with modern European conditions. At this time in Lithuania a social structure, typical of European nations, was formed, replete with inherent contradictions, but also with factors that stimulated its progress. The abolition of serfdom in 1861 and the insurrection of 1863 in Poland and Lithuania laid the foundation for this development. Aside from the social and economic consequences these events are significant as an important turning point in the history of Polish-Lithuanian relations. Having enriched the Polish nation by some of its brightest minds (writers, political figures and scholars) and having given the Poles the higher strata of its society, the revived and developing Lithuanian nation began to separate itself from Polish life in all aspects. There was now an energetic revival and development of indigenous Lithuanian cultural values whose rich origins lived and survived among the common people. The Lithuanian nation began to realize its own political goals and tasks which were not associated with the purpose of restoring old Polish statehood. However, Lithuanian consciousness of this period grew not only through a confrontation with the Poles, but also in a struggle with Tsarism, since the Russians carried out a policy of Russification and religious anti-Catholic discrimination against the Lithuanians. As a result of this process the Lithuanian nation emerged on the political and national map of the Russian Empire, separate from the Poles, and possessing a self-contained culture, distinctive customs and traditions, and speaking one of the oldest living Indo-European languages.

In reminding the world of its deep historical roots, the Lithuanians at the same time recalled the old Lithuanian state, which had reorganized anew the European East previously destroyed by the Mongol-Tatars, and had constructed a strong barrier against the invasion of destructive forces into the European heartland. Previously, Russian and West European scholars had been interested in the Lithuanian language and its folk culture only in terms of building a monument to a dying culture¹. At the turn of the century Lithuania was seen as an increasingly important cultural and political factor in the Russian Empire. The abolition of the ban on the Lithuanian press in 1904 greatly stimulated Lithuanian culture, while the Revolution of 1905 enhanced the struggle for Lithuanian autonomy. Gradually this struggle evolved into a battle for full independence which was finally attained in 1918.

Thus, the period from 1863 to 1917 can be characterized as one during which the Lithuanian nation separated itself from Polish life, a period of its final formation and consolidation when Lithuanian culture was reborn. At the same time this was when the Lithuanians' political struggle and the fight for independence began. This period is clearly divisible into two parts with the events of 1904-1905 as the dividing line. The first period is marked by the separation from Polish culture, the appearance of higher social strata and influential national figures; also the emergence of a nationally conscious clerical and secular intelligentsia which strengthened the consolidation of the national spirit.



The second period is characterized by the struggle for autonomy which then developed into a struggle for the full independence of Lithuania. The Lithuanian question which had at first arisen only within the Russian political arena gradually acquired an international character until finally the world perceived the reborn Lithuanian state. However, like all historical processes, Lithuania's rebirth did not progress smoothly. It was full of struggles and people's sacrifices and was related to complex historical phenomena which had arisen in Europe and the Russian Empire. Some of these phenomena are analyzed below.

The Fragmentation of the Lithuanian Lands

It is important to remember that at this time the ethnographic territory of Lithuania was politically and economically fragmented. Its various component parts are briefly described below.

Lithuania Minor²

The Lithuanian-inhabited towns and villages of the Klaipėda territory and the areas west of the Nemunas River were called Lithuania Minor. This region made up a part of the East Prussian (Ostpreussen) province of the Kingdom of Prussia called Litthauen which in itself was made up of four districts: Isrute (Insterburg), Tilžė (Tilsit), Ragainė (Ragnit), and Klaipėda (Memel). During the Reformation Lutheran church services were conducted in Lithuanian and in the sixteenth century the Prussian authorities began to translate their decrees into the peasants' idiom. Thus, the Lithuanian language came into public use here considerably earlier than in other parts of Lithuania. In 1547 the first Lithuanian book, Martynas Mažvydas' *Katekizmas*, was published in East Prussia. This was also the birthplace of Lithuania's great epic poet Kristijonas Donelaitis (1714-1780).³

The creation of a united Hohenzollern Prussia in 1701 and the great famine and plague of 1709-1710 marked the colonization of East Prussia with Swabian, Swiss, and other Protestants and the progressive Germanization of this region. This process was greatly accelerated after the emergence of Otto von Bismarck as Prussia's First Minister (1862) and later as Chancellor of Germany (1871). The search for uniformity led to a policy of Germanization in the non-German regions of the Empire, including the Lithuanian areas of East Prussia. The Lithuanian language was gradually eliminated from the schools and in 1876 German was made the sole official state language. Thus, the Lithuanian language was eliminated from public life and now confined to some churches. Lithuanian petitions to reestablish Lithuanian schools (in 1895 such a petition was signed by 27,775 persons) brought no results.⁴ However, Lithuanian traditions continued and were even further developed by social and cultural organizations and institutions, as well as the press.

Of the cultural organizations which had a purpose to preserve Lithuanian culture, one should mention the following: the Birute Association established in Tilsit in 1883 which organized song festivals and Lithuanian theater; the Tilsit Lithuanian Singers' Association led by Vydūnas (Vilhelmas Storosta), 1868-1953); the Lithuanian Religious Association Sandara. A unified organization of Lithuanian associations Santara and the Lithuanian Literary Association were established in 1912. The Lithuanian language seminar at Königsberg University was also important in maintaining the Lithuanian language. All told, about one hundred Lithuanian periodical publications appeared in East Prussia before the First World War, including the notable weekly *Keleivis* [The Traveler] which appeared in the years 1849-1880 and 1883-1886.

The Lithuanians of East Prussia developed dual loyalties: both to the Protestant German Prussian state and to the Lithuanian Catholic nation which lived beyond Prussia's eastern border. This dual loyalty was particularly noticeable when the interests of the Prussian state and the Lithuanian nation coincided and was expressed by the Lithuanian members of the Reichstag. In 1898 a Lithuanian, Jonas Smalakys, was elected to the Reichstag from the Klaipėda and Šilutė districts for the first time. In 1890 he organized the so-called Lithuanian Conservative Committee. These "conservatives" supported the monarchy and the Prussian state system, but, on the other hand, they also defended Lithuanian national interests. M. Mačiulis, elected in 1901, also worked in the conservative vein.

The election of Lithuanian representatives attests to the emergence of a wealthier Lithuanian class at the beginning of the twentieth century. The well-to-do peasant class which emerged was satisfied with the Prussian government's policy of supporting farmers. The election of Lithuanian representatives to the Landtag coincided with the period of Lithuania's growing struggle for political independence. In 1903 a Lithuanian, Vilius Gaigalaitis (Wilhelm Gaigalat, 1870-1945), was elected to the Prussian Landtag for the first time (and was subsequently reelected in 1908 and 1913). Gaigalaitis was a student of Lithuanian letters, a Ph. D. from Königsberg University and a pastor. During the First World War he maintained close ties with the Lithuanian Taryba and mediated between it and the Germans. In 1922 Gaigalaitis led a delegation of Klaipėda Lithuanians to the Ambassadors' Conference in Paris and demanded that the Klaipėda territory be attached to Lithuania. In 1913 the Lithuanians of Gumbine (Gumbinen) elected V. Steputaitis (Steputat) to the Prussian Landtag. As a captain during the First World War Steputaitis was appointed to the press section of the German occupation authorities and edited the German-sponsored newspaper *Dabartis* which was rejected by nationally-conscious Lithuanians. The above-mentioned persons were conservatives and above all defenders of German interest but in the cultural sphere they supported Lithuanian life and the Lithuanian press. In politics they stressed those issues which, in their opinion, united German and Lithuanian interests. This was evident in the Landtag discussions related to Polish issues. In the bitter struggle over the Germanization of the Poznan region, the Lithuanian deputies attacked the Poles. Once Steputaitis defended the extreme Germanizers' organization Ostmarkverein in a speech to the deputies.⁵ The Klaipėda deputy Gaigalaitis also defended Prussia's anti-Polish policy. For Germany he foresaw a world historical mission to "protect small nations, including the Lithuanians, whose land could serve as a good economic hinterland for Prussia's cities and harbors" and would be a "fortress directed against insatiable Pan-Slavism."⁶ For a long time the nationalists of Lithuania Proper stood aloof from such Prussian "Lithuanian politicians," but they used their services when this seemed useful.⁷

It is important to keep in mind that the Lithuanians of Lithuania Minor who, according to J. Safarik, numbered about 156,000 in the middle of the nineteenth century, were involved in a different process of social development than those in Lithuania Proper. When serfdom was abolished in Russia in 1861, the formation of a class of free peasant landowners was already complete in Prussia.⁸ As a result of such a social differentiation there emerged a wealthier and better-educated class of Lithuanians in East Prussia. This stimulated the development of nationalism. At the same time, the emergence of well-to-do peasants and even large landowners increased the Lithuanians' loyalty to the Prussian authorities. The Prussian and German governments were well able to exploit the dual loyalties of East Prussia's Lithuanians for their own political ends. When Bismarck unexpectedly turned his foreign policy against his "traditional friend" Russia at the Berlin Conference of 1878, the activities of East Prussia's Lithuanians in helping to overcome the Russian ban on the Lithuanian press and, thus, deepening the tensions between Lithuanians and Russians, fully corresponded to Germany's political interests.

Considering the fact that, in contrast to the predominantly Catholic Lithuania Proper, the Lithuanians of East Prussia were Evangelical Lutherans, the peculiarities of their historical development made them seem a separate "tribe." For this reason German historians have mistakenly portrayed these Lithuanians as a separate ethnic group rather than as a part of the Lithuanian nation.⁹

The Užnemunė Region

Another part of Lithuania which had its historical peculiarities since the end of the eighteenth century was Užnemunė, otherwise known as Suvalkija (the Suwałki Region), that is, the region on the western bank of the Nemunas, stretching from Lithuania's southern border to the East Prussian border in the north. During the Third Partition of Poland in 1795 Lithuania experienced its own additional partition: Užnemunė was set off from the Lithuanian-inhabited areas which had been assigned to Russia and was incorporated into Prussia. This land remained under Prussian rule until 1897.¹⁰ Although Prussian rule here was relatively brief, nonetheless it left its mark on the history of this region. First of all, the royal Prussian government made every effort to isolate Užnemunė from the other Lithuanian lands. This region was created as a separate province, New East Prussia, Neu-Ostpreussen. Attempts were also made to isolate New East Prussia from those Lithuanian lands which had fallen to Russia.¹¹ German colonists were settled and a part of them remained here after 1807. In 1897 the Germans made up 5.23% of all inhabitants in Užnemunė, including 15.92% in Vilkaviškis district and 7.06% in Naumiestis.¹²

As a result of her disastrous defeat at the hand of Napoleon, Prussia lost half of its territory. After the Treaty of Tilsit in 1807, Užnemunė became a part of the newly-created Duchy of Warsaw. The Napoleonic Code was introduced here in 1808-1809 and in this manner serfdom was abolished; however, the peasants did not receive land and were forced to become renters. But the abolition laws created better conditions for the development of a modern economy and for the creation of a new social structure.

In 1815 the Congress of Vienna replaced the Duchy of Warsaw with the Kingdom of Poland, an autonomous constitutional monarchy in union with the Russian Empire. Thus, the Lithuanian Užnemunė region became a part of this autonomous Kingdom and was administratively separated from the remaining Lithuanian lands. The Napoleonic Code remained in force and this meant that conditions for the development of a modern society were different here than in the rest of Lithuania. After the 1830-1831 insurrection

against Tsarist Russia, the autonomy of the Kingdom of Poland was gradually abolished. Nicholas I significantly narrowed Poland's political rights which had been introduced by the 1815 constitution. The parliament, the army and other signs of Polish statehood were abolished.¹³ In 1837 the provincial administration was changed and gubernias were introduced as in Russia. At this time the Lithuanian areas of Užnemunė became part of the Augustow gubernia (with the districts of Augustów, Łomża, Sejny, Kalvarija, and Marijampolė). Since the peasants of the Kingdom of Poland, including Užnemunė, were personally free, the Tsar's Manifesto of 19 February 1861 abolishing serfdom did not affect them. However, the peasants continued to perform various obligations for use of the land which remained the property of the landowners. After the insurrection of 1863 in which the Polish nobility played the leading role, the Tsar's government sought to undercut the economic power of the landed gentry. Therefore, on 19 February 1864 a decree was issued stating that "the land, which is being used by the peasants, is transferred to the... absolute ownership of the peasantry." The decree further stated that as of 3 April 1864 "the peasants are released without exception for all time from all obligations which had been placed on them by the landowners.... All suits related to the non-payment of obligations are cancelled..."¹⁴ At the same time landless peasants were provided with six morga (3.54 hectares) of land. In this way the peasants of Užnemunė were placed in a better position than the Lithuanian peasants in other Russian gubernias.

There is reason to believe that, as a result of the struggle between the Lithuanian peasants and the Polish landowners during the implementation of the reform, the Tsarist government hoped to find in the Lithuanians a social support in its conflict with the Polish nobility. The Russian government was well able to distinguish the Lithuanian part of Augustow gubernia from the Polish areas. When the Governor-General of Vilnius Mikhail Nikolaevich Murav'ev (1796-1866), titled "The Hangman" for his cruelty, sought to exploit the Lithuanian peasants' hatred of the Polish landowners, Užnemunė, that is, the Lithuanian part of Augustow gubernia, was temporarily assigned to him.¹⁵ After the insurrection, however, Užnemunė was again separated from the rest of Lithuania.

After the suppression of the insurrection of 1863-1864 the process of unifying the Russian lands gained strength and the Kingdom of Poland lost the last remnants of its autonomy. In 1874 the office of Viceroy was abolished and was replaced by that of Governor-General. In this way Užnemunė became subject to the Governor-General of Warsaw from 1875. At the same time, Russification intensified in the administrative apparatus, in schools and in the judicial system. Gradually, even the name of the "Kingdom of Poland" was eliminated and replaced by the term Privoslinsky Krai (The Vistula Region).

In 1867 a new gubernia of Suwałki was created which contained the larger part of the former Augustow gubernia. From this time Užnemunė constituted the main part of the Suwałki gubernia (which included the districts of Sejny, Suwałki, Kalvarija, Marijampolė, Naumiestis, Vilkaviškis and Augustow). In 1872 this gubernia contained 54,000 people. In 1904 the population was 625,600, while in 1914 it was 718,000. In 1912 there were 207,300 inhabitants in the Suwałki and Augustow districts (where the Lithuanians were in the minority), while the entire gubernia contained 693,000.¹⁶ Thus, the entire gubernia had a Lithuanian character. For this reason Užnemunė became known as Suvalkija and this name remained in practice after the establishment of the Republic of Lithuania, even though the Suwałki district (Augustow and Sejny) was not in its jurisdiction.

In addition to differences in administration, the conditions in Užnemunė were distinct from the rest of Lithuania in social development as well. As indicated above, serfdom was abolished here considerably earlier (1808), while the 1864 land decree created better conditions for the peasants than elsewhere. According to this decree (ukaz), the peasants of Suwałki gubernia received as property 613,200 desiatinas of land (one desiatina equals 1.0925 hectares). In addition to the land which had been under peasant ownership previously, the peasants now controlled 624,900 desiatinas of land (the area of the entire Suwałki gubernia was 1,429,520 desiatinas).¹⁷ An agrarian crisis began with the export of agricultural products from the United States, Australia and other countries during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Russia suffered in particular on account of the German duties: Germany had formerly been a convenient market for Russian agricultural exports. This crisis was felt at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁸

Larger farms, which were directly or indirectly tied to the export trade, suffered the most. Meanwhile, the peasant economy expanded and peasant arable land grew from 624,900 desiatinas in 1865 to 819,115 desiatinas in 1905.¹⁹ As a result of the peasantry's social differentiation, which was accelerated by the abolition of serfdom in 1808, there emerged a comparatively larger class of well-to-do peasants than in the other Lithuanian-inhabited gubernias; at the same time, a part of the peasantry became impoverished and, having fallen into debt, was forced to sell their farms. The economically stronger peasants sought to acquire such farmland. However, the price of land in Suvalkija was higher than that in other gubernias, which made it easier for the landless peasants to settle in the cities. In 1905 the middle (10-30 morgas, or 5.6-16.8 hectares) and large (30-100 morgas or 16.8-56 hectares) villagers constituted the largest group of peasants. They possessed 26,898 and 15,900 farms respectively and owned about 72% of the land. At the same time there were 10,868 smallholders who owned only 3% of the gubernia's land.²⁰

The well-to-do peasants of Suvalkija were able to educate their children and for this reason a group of Lithuanian intelligentsia, who served as educators for all of Lithuania, emerged rather early. There were four important centers of education: the Catholic seminary at Sejny, (Lith. Seinai) established in 1826; the Suwałki secondary school, established in 1839; the Marijampolė secondary school and the Veiveriai teachers' college, both established in 1866. It is true that the Lithuanian language was not taught at the Sejny seminary; however, many of the Lithuanian peasants' sons were educated here and, as priests, began the struggle against the exclusive use of Polish in churches and for services and sermons in Lithuanian. The Lithuanian regions of Suwałki brought forth a large number of scholars, writers, poets and public figures of both a nationalist orientation and belonging to various social ideologies. One of the most famous Lithuanian writers, Vincas Kudirka (1858-1899), was born into a well-to-do peasant family from Užnemunė (Paežeriai village, Vilkaviškis district) and spent the major part of his short life in his native region. He studied at both the Marijampolė secondary school and the Sejny seminary. Afterwards he spent four years in the town of Šakiai as a doctor. His social and literary activities greatly affected the development of a Lithuanian national consciousness. In his satirical stories and poems he propagated democratic ideas which were acceptable to the predominantly peasant Lithuanians. His correct linguistic usage greatly enhanced the development of the Lithuanian literary language. From time to time Kudirka created musical compositions. The words and music of his "National Hymn" quickly spread among the Lithuanians. Despite the resistance of antidemocratic forces, the "National Hymn," which mentions neither God nor a ruler, gradually became the Lithuanian national anthem. They sang it during the revolutionary period of 1905-1907. It was the national anthem during the period of the independent Republic of Lithuania and even under Soviet rule from 1944 until 15 July 1950. Kudirka was also considered the best literary translator of the end of the nineteenth century.²¹ His correct Lithuanian usage is mainly the result of the influence of J. Jablonskis (pseudonym Jonas from Rygiškiai). J. Jablonskis (1860-1930), born in Kubiliškiai,

Vilkaviškis district, studied at the Marijampolė school at about the same time (1872-1881) as Kudirka.²² For forty years he corrected various Lithuanian writings, published numerous articles on practical linguistic usage as well as textbooks. This activity coincided with a time when the Lithuanian literary language was developing rapidly on the basis of the southwestern Highland (*aukštaičiai*) dialect of the Suwałki region. At that time Jablonskis' work had enormous significance. Jablonskis' Lithuanian grammar (1922) was widely current and highly valued as a foundation from which the new Lithuanian literary language developed.

Perhaps the central place among the Lithuanian national figures who were born and raised in Suwałki gubernia belongs to Doctor Jonas Basanavičius (1851-1927), who was known as the patriarch of the Lithuanian renaissance.²³ He was born in Ožkabaliai, Vilkaviškis district, and during 1866-1873 studied at the Marijampolė secondary school. He later studied at the Historical-Philological and Medical Faculties of Moscow University. In 1879 he became a doctor, worked in Bulgaria and furthered his medical studies in Prague and Vienna. While studying in Moscow, and later working abroad, he constantly concerned himself with the education, science and culture of his people and made efforts to restore the rights of the Lithuanian press in Russia. As a scholar he was more noted for his writings on Lithuanian history, archeology and ethnography than his medical works. The idealization of Lithuania's past in Basanavičius's writings lessened their scholarly value but roused Lithuanian national consciousness during this last period in the formation of the Lithuanian nation. In this respect his works about the Lithuanian struggle with the Teutonic Knights, in which he revealed the atrocities of the Order and the harmful role of the popes regarding Lithuania's struggle for freedom, had great importance. As if writing a sequel to his depiction of the cruelties of the Teutonic Knights, he published in 1919 a booklet entitled "Of Lithuanian Life under the German Yoke 1915-1917."

In order to mention only a few aspects of Basanavičius' great and many-sided contribution, it is necessary to remember his participation in establishing and publishing the journal *Auszra* (which came out in Ragainė and Tilsit in 1883-1886), and in the creation of the Lithuanian Scientific Society in Vilnius in 1907. His political activity during World War I is examined below in more detail.

Auszra (The Dawn) was the first Lithuanian monthly printed in the Latin script which was dedicated to a discussion of social, political and literary questions.²⁴ It was published by a group of activists called "The Lovers of Lithuania." Basanavičius sought to utilize the journal to propagate the idea of Lithuanian unity. The "Marijampolė Group" inspired by Basanavičius, along with the "Raseiniai Group" led by the writer and folklorist Mečislovas Davainis-Silvestraitis, made unsuccessful efforts to persuade the Tsarist regime to permit the publication and distribution of *Auszra* in Lithuania Proper.

The group of editors and publishers, which was made up of Lithuanian figures from various parts of the country, itself reflected the formation of national unity. Aside from the persons mentioned above, this group included: Juozas Andziulaitis (pseudonym J. Kalnėnas, 1864-1916) who hailed from Marijampolė district; the famous social activist and publicist Jonas Šliūpas (1861-1944), born in Šiauliai district; the noted Lithuanian activists and fighters against Germanization from Lithuania Minor Martynas Jankus (1858-1946) and Jurgis Mikšas (1862-1903).

In his introductory article characterizing the aims of the editors, Basanavičius emphasized that the journal was purely secular and would "bring news only from universal science," and would especially spread news of national history, thus shedding light on present-day goals as well.²⁵ The establishment of the Lithuanian Scholarly Society is an important part of Jonas Basanavičius' social and scholarly work.²⁶ Forty-four persons from various professions took part in the inaugural meeting. For twenty years from its establishment Basanavičius was the chairman of this much-deserving society, and until his death edited its collections of scholarly articles in *Lietuvių Tauta* published in Vilnius from 1907 until 1936. The Society's stated purpose was to research various scholarly problems associated with Lithuania and to collect folklore, archeological material, statistical data, manuscripts and books dealing with the country.²⁷ The Society included the most noted Lithuanian scholars, literary figures and artists as well as non-Lithuanian researchers who studied the history of the Lithuanian language and other problems related to Lithuania.²⁸

An important aspect in Basanavičius's work was his election to the Lithuanian Taryba. When the German occupation authorities sought to create a Taryba, or Council, of its appointees in June of 1917, they turned to Basanavičius with an appropriate request. However, he refused to become a German trustee and his example was followed by others. This noble attitude of Basanavičius was met with approval and respect in Lithuania and won praise in the world press.²⁹

Aside from the liberal and Christian Democratic figures such as Jonas Basanavičius, Pranas Dovydaitis, Petras Klimas, Justinas Staugaitis and many others who contributed to the spread of national consciousness and the establishment of independent Lithuania, some noted leaders of the Left also came from the Suwałki region and the very same secondary school in Marijampolė. The peasant origins of the national movement determined its democratic character. However, with the rise of the working class in Lithuania, activists of a socialist bent came out from among the democratic figures. A deep ideological struggle developed, for example, between the sharp polemics of the liberally-inclined editors of *Varpas*, Vincas Kudirka and Jonas Kriaučiūnas (1864-1941), on the one hand, and the radical democrats Juozas Adomaitis (1859-1922) and his friends on the other. The jurist and publicist Motiejus Lozoraitis (1866-1907), who defended the rights of the landless peasants and smallholders and who raised the demand of "land to everyone," began his work in Suvalkija. Juozas Bagdonas (1866-1956) who smuggled not only Lithuanian literature from abroad but Polish Social Democrat publications, and who translated the works of Wilhelm Liebknecht and other German socialist ideologues into Lithuanian, was also born and raised in the Suwałki region. One of the most noted Lithuanian national figures from the Suwałki region was the doctor and politician Kazys Grinius (1866-1950), a leader of leftist democratic persuasion who became Prime Minister (1920-1922) and President (June 7-December 17, 1926) of independent Lithuania. The founder and leader of the Lithuanian Communist Party Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas (1880-1935), who was born into a well-to-do peasant family in Vilkaviškis district, received his education in the two centers of the Lithuanian intelligentsia: the Marijampolė secondary school and the Sejny seminary. He began his social and political work as a Lithuanian nationalist, contributed to the liberal journals *Varpas* and *Ūkininkas* but, in fighting against Tsarism, he gradually evolved towards Communism. Another well-to-do peasant son from Vilkaviškis district who received his first schooling in Marijampolė was Mickevičius-Kapsukas's comrade, Zigmantas Aleksa-Angarietis (1882-1940). Another prominent Lithuanian Communist who was raised in Suvalkija was Pranas Eidukevičius (1869-1926). Born in Kybartai, he had participated in establishing the Lithuanian Taryba but later became a leading organizer and leader of the Lithuanian Communist Party. The appearance of leftist political groupings, including the extreme ones, reflected Lithuania's social fragmentation. The struggle of various ideologies among Lithuanian

social leaders, during which attempts were made to reach the Lithuanian people in their native language, was an important factor in the development of Lithuanian mass consciousness, including national self-awareness.

In considering the relative role of the Užnemunė intelligentsia in the maturation process of the Lithuanian nation, one can utilize the data provided by a sociologist Miroslav Hroch: of 235 "leading fighters" (Vorkaempfer) of the Lithuanian national movement at the end of the nineteenth century, 114 came from Suwałki gubernia where the population was considerably smaller than that in Vilnius and Kaunas gubernias.[30](#)

Thus, the development of a modern social and economic system, which began earlier in Užnemunė than in the other Lithuanian-inhabited areas, the early abolition of serfdom and the development of capitalist relations, hastened the maturation of the Lithuanian nation. The national leaders of Užnemunė performed this role of catalyst for all of Lithuania.

The Other Lithuanian-Inhabited Gubernias

After the Partitions, Russia's ethnographically Lithuanian territory was included in the Vilnius and Grodno gubernias, which until 18 July 1840 were officially termed the "Lithuanian" gubernias. According to the decree of 18 July 1840 the gubernia of Kaunas was created from a part of Vilnius gubernia. At the same time, parts of the Minsk and Grodno gubernias were added to Vilnius. Thus, in addition to Lithuania Minor, ethnographically Lithuanian territory was included in the Vilnius, Kaunas, Suwałki and Grodno gubernias. Presented below are the official Russian statistics of the time, which were later supplemented by the official institutions of the Republic of Lithuania. These data show that, as a result of a growing economy now freed from the shackles of serfdom, the population grew relatively quickly[31](#):

Ethnic Lithuania's Inhabitants by Gubernia and Year

Gubernia	1897	1904	1910	1914
Vilnius	1,591,207	1,770,300	1,926,900	2,075,900
Kaunas	1,544,567	1,660,900	1,775,900	1,857,100
Grodno	1,603,409	1,788,900	1,951,700	2,048,200
Suwałki	528,913	625,600	667,200	718,000

Population Density Per Square Kilometer

	1897	1914
Vilnius	38	49.5
Kaunas	38.4	46.2
Grodno	41.6	53.1
Suwałki	47.3	58.3

These official statistics can be reliable in terms of the general population, but they are doubtless inaccurate when considering the number of Lithuanians. This is clear from the fact that the 1897 population census found no Lithuanians in Grodno gubernia although it included the southern half of the Lithuanian Varėna and Lazdijai districts as well as the town of Druskininkai.

In other gubernias the following numbers of Lithuanians were found (including the Samogitians, or *Žemaičiai*, who were counted separately[32](#):

Vilnius	279,700
Kaunas	1,019,800
Suwałki	304,600
Total	1,604,100

In addition the Courland gubernia counted 18,000 Lithuanians, of whom 12,000 lived in the districts of Iluksta and Grobin. According to some sources, about half a million people emigrated from Lithuania between 1897 and 1914.[33](#)

The four gubernias which included ethnographic Lithuania were typically agrarian with the villagers making up the overwhelming majority of the population. In 1904 the village population was 87.93% of the total, while in 1914 it was 85.91%.[34](#) Kaunas gubernia which, in comparison to the other provinces, had the highest percentage of Lithuanians (66.62%), also contained the highest percentage of peasants: 90.79% in 1904 and 89.4% in 1914. Keeping in mind that the majority of the Jews and Germans, and a part of the Poles, lived in the towns, and that these nationalities made up almost a fourth of the gubernia's inhabitants in 1897, it can clearly be seen that there were very few Lithuanians in the cities.[35](#)

A similar situation prevailed in Suwałki gubernia where the Lithuanians also constituted the majority of the inhabitants (52.25%). In 1904 and 1914 the urban inhabitants made up 12.8% and 13.64% of the population respectively. According to 1913 data the predominantly urban Jews (10.14%) along with the Poles (22.09%) and Germans (5.23%) made up 37.46% of Lithuania's population. Thus, the peasants and other villagers constituted the majority of the Lithuanians. Among the inhabitants engaged in agriculture, households holding between 10 and 50 desiatinas (11-55 hectares) of land predominated. For example, of 132,362 farms in Kaunas gubernia in 1905, there were 104,424 farms of such size and only 23,818 smaller ones. A similar situation existed in Suwałki and Grodno gubernias. A somewhat different situation prevailed in Vilnius gubernia where farms of less than ten desiatinas made up 34.5% of all peasant households.[36](#)

Compared to Western European countries, Lithuania had a significantly lower agricultural surplus for internal and external trade. Since we lack accurate data about the export of food products from ethnographic Lithuania, we must utilize information on foreign trade conducted through and from Lithuanian territory.[37](#) Because of international politics and protectionism in agricultural trade which had begun in Bismarck's time, the export of agricultural products to neighboring Germany was of considerably lesser extent than that to

England and France.³⁸ At a time when cheap agricultural products imported to England and France from America and other overseas sources competed successfully with the products of European countries, the prices in neighboring East Prussia were very favorable to Lithuanian trade.³⁹

Such a situation greatly stimulated contraband.⁴⁰ One can understand the sympathies of informed Lithuanians for the West, where their countrymen farmed much more efficiently and where peasant work brought a much higher profit. This economic factor may be one of the many circumstances which influenced some leading Lithuanians to a cooperation with Germany during the decisive phase of the struggle for independence. The development of Lithuanian agriculture was hindered by the low economic level of the Russian Empire, including the extensive (rather than intensive) agriculture, the lack of commerce, and the like. This development was not related to Lithuania's own unique possibilities and needs. It is noteworthy that, despite the growth in population, the number of domestic animals not only did not increase, but at times even declined. In 1910 cattle numbered 1,893,851, while in 1911 there were 1,844,572.⁴¹

At the same time, within the much smaller territory which in 1918 was included in the restored Lithuanian state, one could see a great potential. When the Germans evacuated most of Lithuania in 1919 there were 480,000 head of cattle, while in 1925 there were 1,339,000. During that time the number of pigs increased from 750,000 to 1,488,000, while that of sheep went from 806,000 to 1,455,000. These figures show the great agricultural potential of Lithuania which was not exploited under the Tsars.⁴²

This was evident in all economic fields. A modest technical base for industry began to form only at the turn of the century. As a result, the level of mechanized industry in 1908 can be characterized by the following table⁴³:

Gubernia	Industrial Enterprises	Workers	Women in Labor Force
Suwałki	98	1,372	—
Kaunas	214	5,988	739
Vilnius	287	9,461	2,288
Grodno	592	14,135	4,922

In the same year of 1908 there began in Russia, as in the other East European countries, an economic crisis which lasted until 1909. As a result, the number of factories decreased but the remaining enterprises as can be seen from the following 1913 data⁴⁴:

Gubernia	Industrial Enterprises	Workers
Suwałki	86	1,648
Kaunas	151	6,603
Vilnius	225	12,291
Grodno	569	17,874

From the available data we can see that in the Suwałki, Kaunas and Vilnius gubernias where most of the Lithuanians lived, there were in 1913 a total of 462 industrial enterprises employing 20,542 workers. Almost a fourth of the workers (4,758) were concentrated in six factories in Kaunas and Vilnius. These were large metallurgical factories which did not have much of an economic future here as they were distant from raw materials. Also many workers were employed in leather enterprises, although the local demand, as a result of the small urban population, was not great. At the same time, the flax industry was weakly developed here as well. The flax was shipped to Western European textile centers.⁴⁵ The same situation prevailed in the lumber industry.⁴⁶

Lithuania's industrial and commercial bourgeoisie was a part of the weakly developed bourgeoisie of Russia and the interests of most of its members were not related to the interests of an emerging Lithuanian nation. Thus, it is understandable that nationally prominent Lithuanians constantly urged their countrymen to join in the economics and life of the urban inhabitants.

Lithuania's economic development at the turn of the century reveals that, within the context of the Russian Empire, the Lithuanians did not possess the conditions to develop a strong modern economy and create a sufficiently large and economically strong leading social stratum, which could successfully lead the nation to economic and cultural progress. Thus, apart from other considerations, the liberation of the Lithuanians from the Russian imperial yoke became an economic necessity.

Lithuania's Social and Political Development in the Period from 1863 to 1904

During the enactment of the agrarian reforms of 1861, peasant unrest against the Polish and Polonized landowners was widespread. The peasants interpreted the Tsar's reform manifesto as an unconditional declaration of their freedom, which was being selfishly misinterpreted by the Polish landowners. The peasants even sent their representatives to the "Tsar-Liberator" to seek justice against the Polish landowners.⁴⁷ The administration utilized all of its punitive powers — the police, the gendarmerie, the army — to defend the landowners, suppress the peasant riots and to force them to perform the old feudal obligations as envisioned in the law on agrarian reform.⁴⁸ However, one can note new aspects in this military-police action. The Russians began to see the Lithuanians as a force separate from Polish society and requiring a unique approach. The reports of governors, police and army officials show that Lithuanian-speaking officials were sent to persuade peasants to peacefully submit to the landowners and the administration. The governors' decrees began to be published in Lithuanian as well as Russian.⁴⁹

This phenomenon was widespread during the insurrection of 1863 when the rebels, as well as the Russian generals who suppressed them, recognized the uniqueness of the Lithuanian nation and found it necessary to turn to it in its native language.⁵⁰

The central rebel leadership in Warsaw also understood that the essence of the developing struggle was the peasants' fight for the land, and also the desire of the former constituent parts of the Polish-Lithuanian state for self-determination, although this latter was still poorly developed; Alexander Herzen's and Ogarev's *Kolokol*, published in London, issued on October 1, 1862 the letter of the

Warsaw Central National Committee, which pointed out that the movement's main goals were the peasants' rights to the land, and the desire of the former areas of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to handle their own affairs.

In his appeal "To the Russian Officers in Poland" of October 10, 1862, Herzen emphatically repeated that national self-determination was one of the aims of the Polish movement. "Let Lithuania, Belorus and the Ukraine" unite with whom they want, or "with no one," Herzen stated.⁵¹

Understandably, the struggles between the Lithuanian peasants and the Polish landowners inevitably initiated a process of social conflicts which increasingly took on the character of national antagonism. Thus, the time of the agrarian reform and insurrection is the period when the Lithuanians began to cut not only the cultural, but also the political ties with the Poles, and gradually sought their own national liberation and political sovereignty.

The Attempts of the Russian Administration to Use the Lithuanians Against the Poles

Considering the complex circumstances in Lithuania, the administration needed to take more subtle political measures to control the country. For this reason, it sought to bribe the peasants of the old Lithuanian areas with the purpose of turning their indignation against the Polish landowners. On March 1, 1863 the Tsar confirmed a series of decrees which envisioned some alleviating measures, as well as state aid for peasants to purchase the land they worked from the landowners. The decrees affected the Vilnius, Kaunas, Grodno and Minsk gubernias, as well as the four Latvian districts of Vitebsk gubernia.⁵² Governor-General Nazimov of Vilnius saw a need to publish, along with these decrees, a statement in Lithuanian, in which he noted the peasants' difficulties in redeeming their land from the landowners, mentioned their complaints in this regard, and stated that the faithful peasants' loyalty to the "Throne and Fatherland" was rewarded with the Tsar's favor.⁵³ However, along with the concessions to the peasantry, the government intended to deal with Lithuania's rebels, especially their leaders, with a firm hand. This tactic required a Governor-General in Vilnius who was not only militarily, but also politically, more experienced, and who would have jurisdiction over all the Lithuanian gubernias. General Mikhail Nikolayevich Muraviev (1795-1866), who towards the end of his life became known as the "Hangman" not only in Lithuania and Russia, but in the rest of the civilized world, was chosen for this role. Although he had been associated with the Decembrists who had organized the 1825 revolution against the Tsar, Muraviev became one of the most merciless supporters of Tsarism.

The Beginnings of Lithuanian-Russian Antagonism

Muraviev was appointed Governor-General of Vilnius on May 13, 1863. First of all, he began to take steps to increase the army and organize military expeditions not only to suppress the rebels, but to instill fear among the civilians.⁵⁴ At the same time, he began to execute the more noted leaders of the rebellion. In June Boleslaw Kolyshka, a twenty-five-year old student of Moscow University's Law Faculty, and Zygmunt Sierakowski, a former staff captain of the Tsarist Army, were hanged. Later the priest Antanas Mackevičius and the jurist Konstantyn Kalinowski, and other noted and less well-known fighters for freedom, met the same fate.⁵⁵

Soviet historical literature has a tendency to either emphasize or exaggerate the sympathies of Russia's intelligentsia toward the rebels, which allegedly evidenced Lithuanian and Russian solidarity in the struggle against Tsarism.⁵⁶ While the power of the Russian democratic intelligentsia greatly influenced some of the rebel leaders, it is essential to emphasize that it was a much different factor that affected the development of the Lithuanian national movement. During the rebellion of 1863, a wave of Russian chauvinism engulfed much of Russia's aristocracy, bourgeoisie and intelligentsia, among them persons who had earlier been known for their liberal, even democratic, views.

Under such conditions, the increasingly politically active Lithuanian people had to see their antagonists not only among the Polish landowners, but in the Russians as well. The explosion of Russian chauvinism could not but evoke a strengthening of Lithuanian nationalism. Muraviev himself distinguished the Lithuanian peasants from the Polish rebel "foreigners." In his brief report about military expeditions (May 30th) to the Minister of War he distinguished "village inhabitants loyal to the government" and mentioned his order "to form and organize, wherever possible, village guard units" from among the local peasantry.⁵⁷ In his attempts to attract the Lithuanian peasants and turn them against the Polish landowners, Muraviev began to appear as the defender of the peasants' economic interests. From April 15, 1864, all suits brought by landowners for nonfulfillment of old obligations and the gentry were strictly forbidden to auction any peasant property to repay old debts.⁵⁸ At the same time, Muraviev sought to provide landless peasants with land, and in his report to the Interior Minister of April 26th, 1865 he explained the political motives behind his action.⁵⁹

However, in distinguishing the Lithuanians from the Polish national movement, Muraviev had no intention of encouraging a Lithuanian national movement. On the contrary, he sought to include the Lithuanians within the sphere of Russian culture. His basic error was to treat the Lithuanian masses as an object to be manipulated in Russia's interests, not as a people with its own national interests.

The Press Ban

This term is understood in Lithuanian history as the ban on the publication of Lithuanian-language books, prayerbooks, yearbooks, and other writings in the "Polish-Latin" script then in use. It was demanded that Lithuanian works be written and published in the Russian alphabet (the so-called *grazhdanka* or Cyrillic script, as separate from the "Latin"). Since the Latin alphabet, in the Polish form then used in Lithuanian literature, was not conducive to the Lithuanian language, such proposals to change to the Russian alphabet did not cause much antagonism among the Lithuanians, especially as these proposals remained in the sphere of scholarly consideration.

The well-known lexicographer of the Lithuanian language, Andrew Ugianski, who saw the use of the "Polish-Latin" alphabet as one of the reasons for Lithuania's Polonization, proposed the use of Cyrillic to Motiejus Valančius (1801-1875), the Bishop of Samogitia.⁶⁰ The noted Lithuanian folklorist and philologist Jonas Juška (1815-1886) was convinced that the Polish script was ill-adapted to Lithuanian and suggested the use of a few new symbols, some of which are currently in use.⁶¹

The Lithuanian intelligentsia and people reacted quite differently in this matter after 1863, particularly when the Tsarist administration intervened and added the element of compulsion. From this moment the printing of Lithuanian publications in the Russian alphabet became an important factor in the development of Lithuanian-Russian antagonism. A Lithuanian-Russian alphabet was prepared by a Russian philologist and employee of the Warsaw Library, Stanisław Mikucki (1814-1890). It is thought that Alexander Hilferding, the noted Slavophile scholar supported the Cyrillic idea.⁶² A. Petkevičius, a Catholic priest who had converted to Orthodoxy, became a member of the commission to publish Lithuanian works in the Russian alphabet, thus adding the element of religious strife to the issue. On June 5, 1864 Muraviev signed a note to the Vilnius censorship committee, suggesting "not to allow the printing of a single Lithuanian textbook, written in Polish letters..." A sample of the adaptation of the Russian alphabet to the Lithuanian language was attached to the note. It is probable that no one paid much attention to this letter since it remained in the Governor's Chancellory, and the "suggestion" was made only orally.⁶³ Muraviev's successor, K. Kaufman, further developed his predecessor's desire "to return the Northwestern Territory to its historical past, " through the unique method of the ban on the Lithuanian press.⁶⁴

The Historical Aspects of the Press Ban

The beginning of the ban on the Lithuanian press under Muraviev coincided with the growth of reaction throughout the Empire. The protests of England, France, Austria and other Western countries (including the Vatican), in favor of Poland, received the same consistent Russian reply: the Polish question was an internal Russian matter. With the West unprepared for concrete actions, these diplomatic gestures only strengthened the forces of Russian nationalism and chauvinism.⁶⁵ In Lithuania, where the national movement was growing, Russian reactionaries attempted to suppress this movement and to hamper the development of a national Lithuanian literary language.

The Strengthening of the Press Ban

The Russians made efforts to widen the use of the Russian alphabet in Lithuanian writings and to encourage local dialects in scholarship and practice. Governor-General Konstantin Petrovich Kaufman, an ardent supporter of Russification and colonialism, decided to strengthen the ban on the Lithuanian press and to expand it into the religious sphere. After consulting with the supervisor of education, Ivan Kornilov, the governor appropriated funds for the publication of five religious books to be published in the Cyrillic alphabet "in the Samogitian and Lithuanian dialects."⁶⁶ In addition Kaufman ordered that the gubernias in his jurisdiction: 1) ban "any publications in Polish-Latin letters in the Lithuanian and Samogitian dialects;" 2) take all means so that one could not "import, sell or in any way distribute any publications in the aforementioned dialects in the Latin-Polish alphabet;" and 3) to confiscate "banned publications" and inform the governor about "violators." In order that these orders be universally enforced, Kaufman asked Interior Minister Valuyev to "expand these measures to the remaining parts of the Empire,"⁶⁷ a request that the Minister granted on September 23, 1865.⁶⁸ In 1866 the Tsar confirmed a decree forbidding state institutions to publish any Lithuanian books in the Latin alphabet. In such a way, the Lithuanian press ban acquired the force of law.⁶⁹ However, although this touched only state publications, virtually all the Lithuanian press was affected.

While Polish-Lithuanian antagonism grew out of the social struggles of the peasantry against the Polish landowners and, at first, was limited to the lower Lithuanian social strata, Russian-Lithuanian national tensions, which were strengthened by the press ban, gradually engulfed the entire Lithuanian nation. For every Lithuanian, the Polish-Latin alphabet brought to mind Catholic prayerbooks and other religious books, while the Russian alphabet symbolized the alien Orthodox Church and Tsarist oppression. The desire for education, which was widespread among the peasantry after the agrarian reform, created a great demand for Lithuanian books. During Kaufman's brief tenure more than 100,000 Lithuanian books were confiscated from printing presses and book sellers. After much protest and litigation the books were returned to their owners in 1870 and, after considerable negotiation with the authorities, permission was granted to sell the religious books. This allowed the distribution of 50,000 "Samogitian prayerbooks."⁷⁰

The Book Smugglers' Movement

The smuggling of books across the border from Lithuania Minor created a difficult problem for the Tsarist administration. Lithuania, as a bridge to Russia's Baltic Provinces which were administered by German barons, was an important link in the German policy of exploiting Russia's difficulties. Thus, the Russian government was quite concerned with this problem. Soon after the first regulations dealing with the Lithuanian press ban, the printing of Lithuanian books in Lithuania Minor increased greatly. As a result of Bishop Valančius's efforts, 19,000 religious books were published in East Prussia. At the same time many elementary textbooks, yearbooks, and works of popular science, fiction, and folklore were printed in the Latin alphabet at Tilsit and Ragainė.⁷¹ These books were illegally brought into Lithuania from East Prussia. An entire movement of "book carriers" (*knygnešiai*), or "book smugglers," emerged. The government publications written in Cyrillic, although inexpensive and sometimes distributed gratis, were unpopular. However, the "foreign publications," despite their high price and the risks associated with the contraband activities, were being distributed by the tens of thousands.⁷² The scope of the movement, and the fact that other oppressed nationalities living in Lithuania came to the aid of the Lithuanian "book smugglers," attest to the great moral and political motivation behind this movement. In their concealment and distribution activities the Lithuanian book smugglers found an especially significant common bond with the Jewish merchants and intelligentsia.⁷³ The book smuggling movement drew together students, intelligentsia of various professions, such as Augustinas Janulaitis (1873-1950), Povilas Višinskis (1875-1906), Stasys Matulaitis (1866-1956) and many others. They were also joined by a considerable number of peasants and workers. Especially notable was the book smuggler Jurgis Bielinis (1846-1918), called "The King of the Book Carriers." He was the son of a peasant from Purviškiai village in Biržai district who, having become active in the national movement, struggled against the policy of Russification and, later, against the German occupation authorities during the First World War.⁷⁴ Many local intelligentsia were active in the distribution of the illegal press among the people, including the doctor and literary translator Jeronimas Ralys (1876-1921), Saliamonas Banaitis (1866-1933), the Catholic priest Juozas Vaitiekūnas, Steponas Rusteika (a colonel and Interior Minister during the independence period). These persons involved some Jews from Jonava in their activities: the latter helped them faithfully, despite the great risks (among them were Baruch, Goldschmidt, Mordchevich and others).⁷⁵

In general, the ban on the Lithuanian press brought harm to the spread of education in society. In the period between 1854 and 1865 171 Lithuanian books were published in Vilnius. During the entire forty-year period of the press ban 44 Lithuanian books of mostly

religious character were published here in the Cyrillic alphabet. Lithuanians refused to accept these books, even when distributed at no cost.⁷⁶ However, with the widespread publication of Lithuanian books in East Prussia and later the United States (where there was a growing number of Lithuanian immigrants), and with the increasing experience of the smugglers in the importation and distribution of publications, the problem was liquidated. The fact that the press ban never received a clear legal definition on an all-Russian scale and the disgust that the press ban evoked among Russian scholarly, liberal and democratic groups, hampered the courts in meting out harsh penalties to the book smugglers.

Without a doubt, the press ban created an obstacle in the national intelligentsia's attempts to stimulate national consciousness among the Lithuanian masses. However, after a few years, with the growth of the book smuggling movement, this harm became minimal. At the same time, the struggle over the Lithuanian press was the most important element in the national movement and became a part of the general struggle for national liberation. Instead of drawing the Lithuanians to Russian culture as Muraviev and Kaufman had intended, the press ban enhanced Lithuanian hatred for the Russians.

Education

The press ban was accompanied by great restrictions in the field of popular education. In the middle of the nineteenth century and, especially after the liberation of the serfs, the striving for education in Lithuania grew constantly. The level of literacy in ethnographic Lithuania was higher than in the Russian gubernias. The Lithuanians were used to attending church with their Lithuanian prayerbooks, which they read freely.⁷⁷ Before 1863 Lithuania contained three types of elementary schools: the parish schools, the state schools (run by the Ministries of Education and State Property) and private institutions. The parish schools had one or two classes and the teaching was primarily in Lithuanian. In 1853 the Diocese of Samogitia (which in the main was Kaunas gubernia) counted 197 parish schools. There were far fewer state schools. For example, the decanate of Rietavas contained sixteen schools of which thirteen were parish institutions.⁷⁸ However, the number of people learning to read grew rapidly. In the aforementioned Rietavas area this number grew from 11,296 to 24,330 between 1853 and 1863.

The language of instruction in the state schools was Russian. Lithuanian language lessons were planned, but often teachers could not be found, since the teachers assigned to the state schools were usually not local people. Before the peasant reform there were six secondary schools and seven middle (district) schools in Vilnius and Kaunas gubernias. In Užnemunė there was one high school and one middle school. There were twenty-one schools for girls (so-called pensions) in Vilnius and Kaunas gubernias.

The non-state parish schools were closed as a result of the harsh Russification policy pursued by Muraviev and his successors. At the same time, the government began establishing new state schools (the so-called narodnye shkoly) and official Orthodox parish schools; however, there was an insufficient number of these due to budgetary difficulties. In 1865 in all of Kaunas gubernia there were only 110 elementary schools. Girls were admitted to the schools this year for the first time. At the same time, the population grew quite rapidly. For this reason, by 1897 there were 263 schools in Kaunas gubernia and 103 in the Lithuanian part of Suwałki gubernia. However, the schools served as an instrument of Russification. The teaching of the Lithuanian language was banned. The pupils were prohibited from speaking Lithuanian among themselves. A system of sudden searches, inspections and spying spread fear among the teachers, parents and pupils who were forced to carry out all regulations. Teachers trained at the Veiveriai institute and the Panevėžys elementary school teachers' college were not sent to work in the Kaunas and Vilnius gubernias. These gubernias employed the graduates of Orthodox seminaries. But the more able Orthodox graduates were dissatisfied with the lowly social status of a state elementary school teachers and tried to use their jobs as a stepping stone to a better position, a practice which, naturally, hindered the teaching process.⁷⁹

The policy of Russification that was carried out through the schools hampered the Lithuanian peasants' struggle for an education. Parents began to withhold their children from the schools. Although the number of schools was in reality insufficient, some state schools closed down for a lack of pupils.⁸⁰ The percentage of educated inhabitants steadily declined. The 1897 census showed that in Kaunas gubernia the percentage of older educated persons was greater than the percentage of educated youth:

Age	Percent of Inhabitants with a Formal Education
10-19	54.68
20-29	65.95
30-39	61.87

Without a doubt, this was the result of Tsarist educational practice and the people's resistance to such a policy.

However, the literacy level in the Lithuanian gubernias was higher than in other areas of Russia. This can be explained by the widely practiced system of secret teaching. The so-called daraktoriai (from the word direktorius, or "director") schools, that is, teaching with groups of children in private homes, was an old Lithuanian tradition, but with the advent of the press ban and the government schools, this practice grew rapidly. The Tsarist administration carried out a constantly intensifying policy of terror against the secret schools but it was unable to put a stop to them. These "hardship schools" taught the children Lithuanian in the Latin alphabet, religion, arithmetic, geography and even Russian.⁸¹

Some Russian intellectuals, especially among the Slavophiles, defended this obscurantist and senseless policy of oppression. They included Y. Aksakov, M. Koyalovich, Y. Samarin and others. In their view, the most important argument in the apologia for Russification was the fact that the eastern half of the medieval Lithuanian state had been Orthodox.

Mikhail Osipovich Koyalovich (1828-1891), a well-known Russian historian and since 1862 a professor in the Religious Academy in St. Petersburg, published his anti-Polish and anti-Semitic "Lectures on West Russian History," in which he idealized the role of the Orthodox Church in Lithuanian history. He emphasized the political intrigues of the Catholic clergy while maintaining that the Orthodox clergy concerned themselves solely with spiritual matters.⁸² The well-known Russian historian and publicist Yuri Fedorovich Samarin

(1819-1876), a former follower of Hegel, wrote much on the rule of the German aristocracy in the Baltic and agrarian relations. He also became a propagandist for "Slavism," the Orthodox Church and Russification in Lithuania and all of Western Russia.[83](#)

The Formation and Growth of a National Catholic Clergy

The Russians identified the Catholic Church with Polish nationalism which was against Russification. For this reason, the work of the Catholic Church in all of Russia was restricted in various ways. In 1864 Lithuania, like all of Russia's northwestern territory, was officially proclaimed as Orthodox since ancient times: it was now the policy to "return" this land to the bosom of Orthodoxy.

Various administrative methods were taken for the practical implementation of this policy. Some Catholic churches were turned into Orthodox ones. A series of restrictions on the work of the Catholic Church was reminiscent of the German Kulturkampf. The Tsarist administration began to interfere in the appointment of priests and in 1865 it refused to approve twenty-eight priests assigned by Bishop Valančius.[84](#)

There were some large landowners who, for their own egotistical reasons, cooperated with the Tsarist administration in Russifying the Catholic Church. There were many instances in which Lithuanian Catholic priests consecrated the schools engaged in Russification and performed services in Russian. There were even instances when Catholic laymen and priests converted to Orthodoxy and even became priests of their new faith. Often priests obediently carried out Tsarist policies and demanded that others do the same.[85](#) However, the attempts to bring the Russian language into the Church under the pretext of fighting Polish influence in the end actually resulted in a large part of the Lithuanian Catholic clergy joining the Lithuanian national and political movement.[86](#)

This process was hastened by the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII (1810-1903) who became pontiff in 1878. In Pope Leo's view, the Church, instead of simply opposing the spirit of the times, would be wiser to stand behind certain political and social currents and direct them in a way desirable for the Church. The Pope's most popular encyclical was *Rerum Novarum* (1891) and it brought him the name of the "Working Man's Pope." While speaking out against Marxism and socialism in general, he nonetheless outlined a program for the betterment of the working class and the establishment of workers' organizations of a religious nature. This and earlier encyclicals were significant in politicizing the clergy. Leo XIII's encyclicals *Libertas praestantissimum* (1888), *Sapientiae Christianae* (1890) and others were intended to portray the Catholic Church as a supporter of modern science and liberalism. According to the Pope, Catholic organizations while required to be obedient to the Church and Pope, could also participate in the political life of the state, even in those states which were not guided by Catholic principles. These encyclicals, which were eventually translated into Lithuanian, affected a part of the Lithuanian Catholic clergy in their decision to act against the ignorant and antiliberal policy of the Tsarist administration in Lithuania.[87](#) During the 1880s secret political associations begin to appear among Lithuanian seminarians. These associations were directed against the strong Polish influence among the clergy. On the other hand, their activities on behalf of the banned Lithuanian press brought them into the struggle against the policy of Russification. The Lithuanian nationalist clergy, along with the students and intelligentsia, propagated the idea of "For God and Country." This corresponded to the spirit of Pope Leo's encyclicals. The strengthening of the Catholic Church in Lithuania was closely tied to the defense of Lithuanian national interests.[88](#) Thus the Catholic Church and the Lithuanian national movement began to draw together. However, the full convergence of Lithuanian nationalism and Catholicism on the Polish example was a somewhat later result.

In the struggle between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches the former achieved some successes: the number of Orthodox believers in Lithuania grew, new Orthodox churches were built, among which were some more notable architectural creations such as the Garrison (Lith. Įgulys) Sobor in Kaunas (1890-1895 by Engineer K. Limarenko).[89](#) At the same time the Russians sought to transform some Catholic Churches into Orthodox ones, a policy which enraged the Catholic masses.

The Kražiai Massacre and its Consequences

The anti-Lithuanian and anti-Catholic measures of the Russian government forced the Lithuanian people to resist, sometimes violently. Serious clashes with the government resulted because of attempts to inject the Orthodox faith among the Catholic population. The violent closing of the Kęstaičiai church in Telšiai district evoked organized peasant resistance which was overcome through floggings, arrests and deportations.[90](#)

The most vivid event of this kind, however, and one that remains embedded in Lithuanian memory, was the so-called "Kražiai Massacre" of 1893 which began with the government's decision to tear down the local Catholic monastery church. While Kražiai (Raseiniai district) was a small town (it had a population of 1,761 in 1897), it was a noted center of Lithuanian culture.[91](#) When a series of petitions to save the church were rejected, the people began to gather frequently in order to prevent the removal of sacred objects. This was a new method of popular resistance which alarmed Kaunas Governor N. Klingenberg who had become especially famous for his struggle against the Lithuanian secret schools and press.[92](#) He chose to use Kražiai to teach the populace a lesson and instill fear among the Lithuanians. He personally led a force of police, gendarmerie and Cossacks which invaded the Church and brutally beat the people as they drove them out. The fleeing believers were driven by the mounted Cossacks into the nearby Kražantė River where, available sources indicate, six drowned. A number of Catholics were publicly flogged and about seventy were brought to trial. Various accounts have both exaggerated and minimized the actual events,[93](#) however, whatever their actual scope, it became entrenched in popular memory as the terrible "Kražiai Massacre," which enhanced both the development of national consciousness and the people's alienation from Russian influence. Anti-Russian and anti-Tsarist propaganda directed at the masses successfully exploited the Kražiai Massacre.[94](#)

Translated from Lithuanian by Saulius Sužiedėlis

Footnotes:

* University professor, presently in Israel.

1 Pranas Čepėnas, *Naujųjų laikų Lietuvos istorija* (Chicago, 1976), pp. 20-21.

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36 *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 82-83, 90.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 20.

38 *Ibid.*, p. 118.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 137.

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41 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

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43 *Statistinės žinios*, pp. 103-109.

44 Based on *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

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