

CONTENTS

1990: Independence declared, by <i>Dr Laima Andrikienė</i>	2
Dr Laima Andrikienė entered politics as a member of the independence movement <i>Sąjūdis</i> and was a signatory of the 11 th March 1990 Act of the Restoration of the Independence of Lithuania. She has served as a Member of <i>Seimas</i> (1990-2000), Government Minister (1996-1998), Member of the European Parliament (2004-2014).	
A new British Embassy for a new era, by <i>Michael Peart</i>	5
Michael Peart was the first British Ambassador to Lithuania after Lithuania regained its independence from the Soviet Union, and served in Vilnius from 1991 till 1994. He is Chairman of The Tiltas Trust and a member of the British-Lithuanian Society Committee.	
Interesting times for a Defence Attaché, by <i>David Holliday</i>	8
Wing Commander David Holliday served as British Defence Attaché to Vilnius in 1992-1994. Upon completing his posting he retired from the Royal Air Force to pursue the Good Life in a village near Klaipėda. He is a member of the British-Lithuanian Society.	
NATO: Disappearing borders and creative ambiguity, by <i>Maria Kielmas</i>	12
Maria Kielmas is a freelance journalist and consultant to energy and financial companies. Previously, she worked in the oil industry and, earlier, as an adviser in the reinsurance industry. She is a member of the British-Lithuanian Society.	
1985: Baltic Peace and Freedom Cruise, by <i>Aleksas Vilčinskas</i>	15
Aleksas Vilčinskas is Acting Editor of <i>Tiltas</i> journal and Secretary of the British-Lithuanian Society.	
Book review by <i>Neil Taylor</i>	16
Roger Moorhouse, <i>The Devils' Alliance – Hitler's Pact with Stalin</i>, Oxford: Bodley Head, 2014	
Book Notices compiled by <i>Aleksas Vilčinskas</i>	17
Žemaitukai – historic (and healing) Lithuanian ponies, by <i>Dr Regina Stančikaitė</i>	19
Dr Regina Stančikaitė is a professional psychotherapist, psychologist and educator. She works at the Dainava Mental Health Centre Clinic in Kaunas.	
Lithuanian and Finnish Tatars , by <i>Prof Harry Norris</i>	22
Harry Norris is Emeritus Professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. His publications include “ <i>Islam in the Baltic</i> ”, Taurus Academic Studies, 2009. He is a member of the British-Lithuanian Society.	
Lithuanian and English bird names: <i>Gegutė</i> – the cuckoo, by <i>Andy Cuckson</i>	26
Andy Cuckson is an amateur ornithologist. He is a long-time member of the British-Lithuanian Society.	
Letter to the Editor, by <i>Barry Ager</i>	27

1990: Independence declared

Dr Laima Andrikienė

The announcement of Lithuanian Independence on 11th March 1990 did not receive much support from the world superpowers. Leaders of the democratic world were confused: how to react? Lithuania still depends on the Soviet Union, Lithuania's borders are guarded by the Soviet Army, USSR military bases are situated on its soil. Mikhail Gorbachev with his slogans of „glasnost“ and „perestroika“ has confused the major Cold War protagonists. Leaders of the countries that are highly important to us - UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, US President George Bush Sr., German Chancellor Helmut Kohl - adore Gorbachev. They wish to avoid any trouble and inconvenience in their relations with the Soviet Union. And we, Lithuania, turn out to be troublemakers.



**Act of 11th March 1990 passed
by Supreme Council of Lithuania**

The TASS [Soviet news agency] propaganda machine is working round-the-clock. They publish only negative or dreadful statements about us, the

Supreme Council of Lithuania and its leaders: “apostates, separatists; announced Independence secretly at night; violators of the USSR Constitution; Landsbergis’s gang, a band of nationalists, without support in Lithuania; the only one way out is to revoke the Act of 11th March; instigators provoking bloodshed, civil war, etc”. Worldwide and internal disinformation and deception overflows to such an extent that the slogan “TASS disinformation induces vomiting” (a pun in Lithuanian: „*Nuo dezinformacijos TASS-o vidurius taso*“) appears on the barricades at the Supreme Council [now Seimas] building.

Blockade

Gorbachev takes advantage of the situation, insists that Lithuania renounces independence, and blames us, the Supreme Council of Lithuania, for allegedly announcing the Restoration of an Independent State against the will of the Lithuanian nation. The threat of sanctions and economic blockade is made to the disobedient Lithuanian Government. On 20th April this proves not to have been an idle threat: a blockade is imposed following an ultimatum from Gorbachev and Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers Ryzhkov demanding immediate cancellation of our newly-adopted laws and return to the status of 10th March, ie the day before the Act of Restoration of Independence. On the 20th, crude oil supply to Lithuania stops, train services delivering goods, cargo and feedstock to Lithuania are suspended.

The most difficult for me to bear is that the USSR’s actions are instantly supported by France and Germany. President François Mitterrand and Chancellor Helmut Kohl propose a temporary suspension of the resolutions of our Supreme Council, as well as the validity of the Act of 11th March re-establishing the State of Lithuania. Both try to act as mediators: supposedly, if the moratorium is announced USSR leaders will come to the negotiating table with the Lithuanian Government. The key decision to be made by us: a vote for “freezing” our adopted legislation (a moratorium), or a vote against?

Kazimiera Prunskienė meets with Gorbachev and Ryzhkov in Moscow on 17th May. After her return, lobbying starts in the Supreme Council: “we have to be more pragmatic and flexible; the moratorium is a good option and will be a temporary one”.

The reaction – an open backlash from the parliamentary majority.

I perfectly remember a talk in the office of Vytautas Landsbergis with the Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Council Česlovas Stankevičius. I told him I could not dishonour myself and vote for the suspension of independence. A sensitive, honest man, Česlovas could barely hold back his tears. I saw how difficult it was for him to choose whether to listen to Landsbergis's request to vote for a moratorium, or to follow his heart and mind and vote against.

Voting was held on 23rd May. The Supreme Council's resolution was adopted by a majority vote. I voted against since I was not persuaded either by the arguments that such a decision would be of a temporary character (required for negotiations with the USSR), or by the wording of the tabled resolution that only those decisions arising out of the Act of 11th March, to be defined by both parties (USSR and Lithuania) as the subject of negotiations, would be suspended.

As I expected, such obsequiousness was not sufficient for the Soviets. The blockade continued. On 29th June we passed another resolution regarding negotiations with the USSR and a 100 day (from the moment of negotiation commencement) suspension of actions arising from the Act of 11th March.

I really don't know how many members of the Supreme Council in the summer of 1990 sincerely believed that the USSR would negotiate with Lithuania. As far as I can see, the USSR's leaders wanted only one thing – the return of Lithuania to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics at any cost. They would take any measures to achieve their goal, and this became evident in January 1991 [see Editor's footnote], the events of which opened the eyes of many in the West. Until January 1991, Western leaders still believed in the possibility of negotiations.

March 1990, my first diplomatic mission Norway – Great Britain – Sweden

Immediately after 11th March, after discussion with the Chairman of the Supreme Council Vytautas Landsbergis and colleagues from the Foreign Affairs Committee, we decided that it was necessary to start visiting Western countries as soon as possible, to ask for support and explain our objectives.

At the end of March it was decided to send several members of the Supreme Council on these missions.

The first was a small delegation: Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee Emanuelis Zingeris, Assistant to Vytautas Landsbergis Ramūnas Bogdanas, and I. Official letters signed by the Chairman of the Supreme Council, Vytautas Landsbergis, were prepared: “on 11th March Lithuania declared the restoration of the Independent State of Lithuania; we request support and recognition of our State from the international community”.

The flight was via Moscow – no other air routes were available. We had Soviet passports. Our plan was to fly from Moscow to Oslo to meet the Prime Minister of Norway. From Norway I had to fly alone to London and deliver a letter to Margaret Thatcher. Emanuelis and Ramūnas were to fly to Copenhagen and deliver a letter to the Prime Minister of Denmark. We carried one more letter, planning to send it to the Premier of Iceland via their Ambassador in Oslo. [Iceland was the first Western state to recognize Lithuanian independence – on 11th February 1991; UK recognition came on 27th August 1991].



Oslo: Ramūnas Bogdanas, Norwegian MP Eric Solheim, three local Lithuanians, Laima Andrikienė, Emanuelis Zingeris.

We are on the way to Oslo. All the letters are carefully placed in my briefcase. At Moscow airport we have to pass border and customs control. The men, Emanuelis and Ramūnas, pass the checks quickly, however I am “shaken out” to the skin – even lipstick and toothpaste tube are opened by the Soviet officers! After a thorough inspection of my handbag the officer demands to open my briefcase and takes out all the contents – my notes and handwritten documents, the official letters in English. After quick look he is confused as he does not understand the language the papers are written in. The officer asks me suspiciously: what is this? Although my heart beats terribly I try to stay calm and reply: *da tak, bumagy...* (nothing important, just papers). I can see Emanuelis

and Ramūnas who have already passed the control and are waiting for me. I try to “talk” to them by means of eye movement, to communicate that they should go and continue the trip and reach the destination in case I am detained. Emanuelis moves a little, Ramūnas remains waiting. At last the officer puts my papers back, pushes the opened briefcase back to me, and I hear the pleasing words: *Prochodytie. Sliedujushchyj!* (Go. Next!). I approached Emanuelis and Ramūnas with my mouth dry. What would we have done if they had seized the letters?

We arrive in Norway. No journalists, no attention. They only person expecting us is Leon Bodd – a Jewish-Norwegian who became acquainted with Emanuelis in Tallinn, at a Jewish convention. He is with Erik Solheim, a young member of the Norwegian Parliament, a representative of the opposition. Norway is governed by the Conservatives, that’s why we chose it as the country to visit first, and here we are: no one from the government meets us, while the left-wing opponent is standing with a reserved smile on his face, shaking our hands. We are brought to the hotel and left there. Tomorrow will show what we can achieve. We avoided planning in advance as there were no guarantees that we wouldn’t be stopped at the first frontier.

We are accommodated at the hotel “Munch”, named after the famous painter. A reproduction of the artist’s “Scream” hangs on the wall of my room. I look at this “Scream” and it seems to me that it’s Lithuania, shouting out “SOS!” to the world. Only, will someone hear us?

On the next day – no meetings, we wait at the hotel. Norwegian journalists help us - headlines in the Norwegian newspapers criticise the government: Lithuanians came, they will leave without receiving any support. We know that Leon Bodd isn’t sitting idle: he is making calls, negotiating, asking, pushing. At around noon we receive a call from the offices of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister. The message is: we are waiting for you. We meet Kjell Magne Bondevik, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Later on we have meetings with State Secretary Kai Eide and Chair of the Commission for Foreign Affairs of the Norwegian Parliament, former Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, as well as other Norwegian politicians. While there, we receive an invitation to come to Sweden: the Minister of Foreign Affairs is expecting us.

Not quite meeting Margaret Thatcher

Our ways part in Norway: I’m flying to London and men are leaving for Copenhagen. While still in Vilnius I had been assured that I would be able to hand Landsbergis’s letter to the addressee – Prime Minister Thatcher. However, when I call from Oslo the answer is completely different, there are problems. Downing Street – in other words the Prime Minister – is not ready to see an emissary from Lithuania. The reason is simple: Margaret Thatcher doesn’t want to spoil her relationship with Mikhail Gorbachev. Having discussed this with the Lithuanians in London and my British friends, as well as with Emanuelis, I make a decision: I have to go, and I will see what happens there. I’ll do everything that I possibly can.

An Immigration officer at Heathrow Airport asks me the purpose of my visit. I reply that I am a member of the Lithuanian Parliament and I have brought a letter signed by Vytautas Landsbergis, Head of our State – the Republic of Lithuania – to your Prime Minister. I am then asked to show the letter, but it is sealed. The officer leaves me to make some calls. Finally, they let me go. At the exit my dear friend Kazys Makūnas is waiting and takes me to Lithuanian House [Headquarters of the Lithuanian Association in Great Britain]. Leaders of the British-Lithuanian community have gathered there, ready to escort me to the meeting with the Prime Minister, if it happens.

From Lithuanian House I call an official at the Foreign Office, Roderic Lyne (he will later be HM Ambassador to Moscow). I inform him that I’m in London and I want to deliver Vytautas Landsbergis’s letter to the Prime Minister. He asks for some time to make arrangements. I wait. Meanwhile, Professor Shanin (from the University of Manchester, who was born in Vilnius) tells me by phone that I’ve been invited to go to the London School of Economics, where an official from the Foreign Office will be waiting for me, and there in a neutral environment I will be able to hand over the letter which will be later be transferred to the indicated addressee. Sometime later the same is suggested by the Foreign Office official. I refuse. My hopes that Mrs Thatcher will stand up for a free and independent Lithuania without delay are fading.

Meanwhile, the London Lithuanian community has decided that they will stand outside Downing Street with Lithuanian flags when I go to deliver the letter. Unfortunately they slightly overreached themselves and accidentally did more harm than good. Before leaving for Downing Street someone in Lithuanian

House lets slip that on the day that I was flying from Oslo to London they had already delivered a letter to the Prime Minister, saying that the British-Lithuanian community was grateful for her positive reaction to the restoration of independence of Lithuania and for meeting me, a Member of the Supreme Council of Lithuania. Only then did I understand what the official from the Foreign Office meant when he said that one shouldn't be handing two letters to the Prime Minister by the same people on the same day and on the same topic.

Regardless, we are going to 10 Downing Street. Romas Kinka and a young British-Lithuanian whose name I can't recall are going with me. That young man says: Mrs Laima, I and my parents have always dreamt that one day Lithuania will be independent. And I couldn't imagine, even in my wildest dreams, that I would accompany a Member of the Lithuanian Parliament who had come to London to ask for the recognition of the restored independent Republic of Lithuania. If my father saw me now, he would be so proud of me!

When we arrive, we deliver the letter to someone from the Prime Minister's Office and we are assured that it will be handed to the Prime Minister. We also get an apology that the Prime Minister is about to leave for Parliament to give a speech, therefore she cannot receive the letter personally. The way they speak is both confused and apologetic. Do you know that feeling when you are doing something wrong, something that you don't like doing, but you are forced to do so by circumstances? The officials looked exactly like that.

At Downing Street, Lithuanians holding our flags, TV cameras around me. The gates open, the Prime Minister's car emerges. We see Mrs Thatcher's face: she is smiling and waving. The Lithuanians' faces are stern.

We receive news later that the letter has been handed to the Prime Minister.



That same evening I am on TV. I explain what we are seeking, why we declared our independence. I also have to answer such questions as: are we separatists, nationalists? Why do we dismember the Soviet Union, why don't we take ourselves out of the USSR in a constitutional manner as such an opportunity is provided for in the Constitution of the USSR? Sainly naivety... or maybe something entirely different. I leave for Stockholm, where the three of us have to face yet another lesson in international politics...

Author's note

This article is based on extracts from my book, in Lithuanian, "*I, Laima Andrikiene, vow...*" Part I: "*Signatory*".

Editor's note

On 13th January 1991 Soviet forces attacked civilians guarding the Vilnius television tower. 12 were killed that night, and one died later from his injuries. Three of the victims were crushed by tanks.

Another attack by Soviet forces took place on 31st July 1991, this time at the Medininkai border post (Lithuanian-Belarusian border). Six Lithuanian border guards were killed during the attack, one died later from injuries.

A new British Embassy for a new era

Michael Peart

"How long will you remain in Vilnius, Mr Ambassador?" said Chief of Protocol, Jonas Paslauskas, as he called on Helena and me in our very small hotel room soon after we had arrived by car from Riga in September 1991. I told him that it

was not yet certain but probably three years. "Oh", he said, "all the other Ambassadors have come, stayed a few days and then returned to finish their previous jobs." I explained that the British commitment to Lithuania was immediate and long-term; we were not

going anywhere, except perhaps to a larger hotel room. We were soon moved to a suite in the Draugystė Hotel [now Crowne Plaza] where we established the first British Embassy in Room 602, with the Union Flag on a pole in the corridor. I then recruited my first staff member, Mida Babilienė, to interpret, translate and guide me around the intricacies of the growing Vilnius bureaucracy. Mida stayed and is now the most senior local staff member.

Not long afterwards, Ambassadors were told that the newly formed Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) had arranged for an English-speaking architect to show us buildings which we might consider as Chanceries. The very friendly Swedish Ambassador, Lars Magnusson, whose viewing day preceded mine, warned me that the MFA had expected us to have arrived with bags of gold which we would use to completely rebuild and refurbish one of the many ruins which then littered the city.

I took this advice and told the architect to scan his long list of addresses for those where I could walk in and turn on a light and find water in the taps. “Oh, you mean no ruins!” he said. On my first day he showed me half a dozen possibilities, all with power and water, but all occupied as offices or residences. I could feel the underlying resentment from the present occupiers that another foreigner was being given the chance to evict them; I found it most uncomfortable and I told my guide so. The next morning he was smiling broadly, saying “Mr Ambassador I really have something good for you!” I asked who lived in this new building – “Nobody!” was the reply. I said that it must be a ruin but was told it was an art gallery and he thought I might like it.

As we drove towards the Church of St Peter & St Paul I could not believe my luck when he pointed out the imposing building just across the road from the magnificent church. It was everyone’s image of an Embassy – an imposing entrance with a crest over the doorway, standing in its own grounds with a stable block to the side and a very Western looking A-frame house in the grounds. To enhance my lucky day yet further, the Curator of the gallery was a smiling English-speaking archaeologist, Remigijus Pocius, who soon made it clear that he would love to remain with the building if I took it for the Embassy. We are now 23 years on and he still works there!



The Embassy at Antakalnio g.2

I implored the architect not to show this building to any other Ambassadors while I spoke to London. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) agreed that I could indicate a firm interest in taking it. The Danish Ambassador had reserved an adjacent building, smaller and a little less imposing than “ours”. The French Ambassador was given no choice – he had to take a ruin in the centre of the Old Town because Napoleon had stayed there on his way to Moscow! [That building is now the Presidential Palace].

Based on what the Dane told me he was willing to pay for his Embassy, I recommended to London that we should offer half a million dollars for the freehold. This verbal offer was accepted by the MFA on behalf of Vilnius Town Council. It was then that all the Ambassadors came upon the fact that no law existed allowing real estate to be sold to foreigners or foreign governments. It took over a year for the law to be amended. By that time the MFA thought that our original offer was rather low. I explained that the verbal agreement on which we had shaken hands was a “Gentleman’s Agreement” and, in Britain, would be considered binding, adding that we were expecting to invest well over a million pounds to refurbish the Embassy to meet modern standards. The deal went through.

The Museum Director, Romualdas Budrys, perhaps seeing that he had “lost” this building, graciously agreed that we could take early possession of the gallery. We moved into the Embassy early in 1992, raising the Union Flag in the grounds on a snowy winter’s day.



Raising the flag

Helena and I moved into the A-frame house as our first Residence. We were in our own relatively spacious Chancery building and we could now begin the real work of creating a functioning Embassy and planning the eventual refurbishment. We recruited a Receptionist, Jolanta Buzelienė, who also remains at the Embassy to this day, having since been Secretary to numerous Ambassadors. With some locally-purchased furniture and rugs we began to feel almost homely!

Then the challenges started coming. We discovered that the electricity supply was very weak: when Helena put the cooker on in the Residence the heaters in Chancery went off. Fuses kept blowing. Fortunately the water supply remained constant. But we made do.

Then a commercial opportunity arose which I was very keen to accommodate. The British security printing company De La Rue asked if I would host a reception for them to make a presentation to President (Chairman of the Supreme Council) Vytautas Landsbergis. They had been the printers of the Lithuanian currency before the War and they wanted to give the President one of the engraved copper plates. This was a clever piece of marketing to get the De La Rue name to the fore again for future

bank note and passport contracts. The foremost restaurant of the day, the Stikliai, did the catering and our first reception was a great success.

The FCO could see that we were taking on an historic building of some stature and style and they hired a firm of consultants specialising in the renovation of such properties to plan and manage the work. It was agreed that the Chancery would only need the rooms on the ground floor, and the second floor could become the Residence. We determined to keep the integrity of the stucco ceilings and the other key features like windows and doorways. Helena and I had a major input into the design of curtains and specially commissioned carpets. We chose a range of traditional hard and soft furnishings.

After concluding the formal purchase came the time for the major works to begin and I had to look for temporary premises for six to nine months both for the Chancery and the Residence. Word got around about my search and one day I had the most unexpected and exceedingly generous offer from my German colleague Ambassador Dr Reinhart Kraus. He had proposed to Berlin that they offer some rooms in his Embassy for us to occupy for the duration of the restoration. Not only that, but he was just moving from a flat to his permanent Residence and we could move into the flat. My huge problem was solved at a stroke. The Germans even put up another flag-pole in front of their Embassy to accommodate the Union Flag. I got a few questions from the Lithuanian public about how we could share a building with the Germans in view of the War. This gave an excellent opening to explain how the EU was uniting former enemies.

During this time we only committed one *faux pas* with the renovation. Our structural engineers decided that the stable block was in serious danger of collapsing. Its layout was not suitable for the plant-room and garage use that we needed so I recommended that it be pulled down and it was, overnight. A week later we had a call from the Vilnius conservation office saying that the stables were listed and should not have been demolished despite their state of disrepair. I invited the conservator lady to the Embassy for a meeting. I started with an abject apology and concluded by inviting her to be a paid member of our consultancy team, which she accepted. She then helped us design the new stable block in the style of that which had been lost. The integrity of the overall design was maintained while we got a practical building.

In the autumn of 1993 the building works were concluding and the furniture and fittings were despatched from London, arriving in December. Although not of Ikea complexity, some of the items were rather large and we had little extra support erecting them. The dining table was about 8 metres long with many parts requiring precise inter-locking. Helena and I clearly remember struggling with this on Christmas Eve, helped by the Deputy Head of Mission (DHM), Tim Brownbill, determined that we would have a table ready for Christmas lunch.

As readers might imagine, after two years in the gestation, Helena and I, as well as our long-suffering staff were delighted to finally witness the birth of a new Embassy so eminently fit for purpose. I felt it was the vindication of what I had told the Chief of Protocol on that first day in Vilnius that the British commitment to Lithuania was whole-hearted and long-term. For the formal opening we took the opportunity of a very special visitor to Vilnius, The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury the Most Rev and Rt Hon Dr George Carey.



The Archbishop of Canterbury, accompanied by Mrs Carey, officially opens the Embassy

When Helena and I left Lithuania in late 1994 to take up a new challenge in the South Pacific, we felt that Britain's presence in Vilnius had been secured, not only by bricks and mortar, but by the team of bright young Lithuanians who were in place and who would ensure that the newly restored bi-lateral relationship would continue to grow; the important roles of Mida Babilienė, Jolanta Buzelienė and Remigijus Pocius to this day is clear testament to our faith.

Interesting times for a Defence Attaché

David Holliday

I have always regarded my appointment as the first Defence Attaché (DA) to Lithuania as a reward for effort. I had been working at the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in London and commuting daily by train from Kent, a journey of 75 minutes each way. For a year I had been taking a refresher course in Russian in order to requalify as an interpreter and the journey to and from work was an ideal time to study. I passed the examination with flying colours and by chance the results arrived the very same day that my appointment was confirmed. Back then, of course, Russian was the common language in the Baltic States and as I would have dealings with Latvia and Estonia, it was more useful than Lithuanian at that time. It was a very unusual assignment inasmuch as I retained my MoD appointment. In fact, it turned out to be an ideal arrangement as I was able work on many issues affecting Lithuania with face-to face meetings in London. It worked out that of my two years as DA I spent only one third of my time in Lithuania.

I first came to Vilnius in the spring of 1992, but I had been working with Lithuania since February, when Audrius Butkevičius, the very young 32 year-old Minister of National Defence (MND), made an official visit to London and I was appointed to escort him to meetings at the Foreign Office with Douglas Hogg, Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind, and my own boss, the Chief of Defence Intelligence Air Marshal Sir Johnny Walker.

At that time Audrius didn't speak very good English, but he was accompanied by Rasa Ališauskienė, whose English was somewhat better. Before each meeting he would ask, "David, how long do I have?" I would say, "twenty minutes, maximum thirty." He planned his time very carefully in order to deal with all the topics he wanted to cover and it worked extremely well. He left a very positive impression with everyone and got most of what he wanted. The main things he requested were a Defence Attaché and a Royal Navy ship's visit in order to confer recognition that Lithuania was a free and independent nation. He also wanted a supply of weapons, which

he didn't get. Instead he was offered English language training for the military, which in the long run proved to be very useful!

I arrived in Vilnius in mid-May 1992 to take up my DA post. I took over the suite in the Draugystė (Friendship) hotel, which had been vacated by Ambassador Michael Peart when he moved into the new British Embassy. He arrived in his Range Rover next morning to pick me up and we drove to the Embassy. The same thing happened for the next two days and I thought, "this can't continue! I can't have the Ambassador acting as my chauffeur!" "I will have to make my own arrangements for transport". So I went to the hotel reception and asked if they knew where I could find a driver to take me around. The young lady said, "Please wait a minute, I'll see if I can find Mr George."

A few minutes later a dapper little man dressed in a suit appeared. At first I thought he was the hotel manager, but it was George. He had a little white Zhiguli and said that he could drive me around town for 10 US dollars a day. Out of town would be 15 US dollars plus petrol. The car was old, but reasonably sound and the tires were as smooth as a baby's bottom! But I soon found out that driving with George was one of the most dangerous things I had ever done. He was the worst driver I have ever encountered, but he was polite and very punctual. Our friendship survives to this day.

One day, just after I had arrived, we were in the north of the city, close to the hospital complex. George offered to take me to a museum in a stately home which was being refurbished. In Soviet times it had served as an officers' mess, but had been badly vandalized. The museum was closed to visitors, but George managed to talk the curator into giving us a private tour. We walked around for an hour or so, then we were ushered into a large ornate hall with rows of white-painted chairs with red velvet seats. At the front of the hall was a white Steinway piano. George beckoned me to a seat in the front, lifted the lid of the piano and sat down to play. And could he play! He was magnificent. He played Mozart, he played Rachmaninov, he played Gershwin. He could play anything! I just sat and listened and tears welled up in my eyes. In real life George was a classical concert pianist, but times were hard and all the orchestras were disbanded. Like many at that time, he was just making a living the best way he could, and I was very glad that I could help out.

In June 1992 the new British Embassy held its first Queen's Birthday Party (QBP). The Embassy building was not yet ready, so the reception was held in what had been in Soviet times the Officers' Club, and is now the Presidential Palace. As it was the first QBP, there was a good turnout of the great and the good and it was a great success for Ambassador Michael Peart. When all the guests had departed he said, "Let's have a sing-song" and asked Donald, his driver, a classical musician, to sit down at the grand piano. Donald walked to the piano, lifted the lid and, lo and behold, it was full of bottles of whiskey, gin, vodka, which the catering staff had hidden to take home. The Ambassador had a quick look, turned to me and said, "David, I'll go away for a few minutes. Sort this out, will you!"



Prof Vytautas Landsbergis, Ambassador Michael Peart, Defence Attaché David Holliday at Queen's Birthday Party reception

In the summer of 1992 Admiral Jon Todd visited Vilnius. He was in the Royal Navy, but holding a senior NATO post. He was accompanied by a couple of British Army majors and a snooty MoD civil servant. I took them to meet the Lithuanian Minister of Defence and his senior team. Later we went to the Parliament to meet members of the National Security Council. There was a frank and useful exchange of views, but the Lithuanians found some of our Admiral's views hard to accept. But then someone on the Lithuanian side pointed out: "Gentlemen, when you talk to us, you must remember that we have all grown up in the Soviet Union, and whether we like it or not, we have all inherited the Soviet way of thinking."

When we had finished that day's work we changed out of our uniforms and strolled down Pilies gatvė towards Cathedral Square. There we found a kiosk selling Lithuanian beer. We sat on a bench and tasted the beer. The Admiral, in his most profound observation of the day said, "David, if the beer is as

good as this, Lithuania won't have any problems!" And so it turned out.

I well remember the early days in the MND. The building had only recently been handed over to the Ministry and was in a very poor state of repair. The rooms were sparsely furnished, dimly lit and with no heating. I remember meeting Povilas Malakauskas, who was responsible for finding military equipment. There was no money in the budget, so he had to look for equipment that was surplus to requirement in other countries. Even when he found something that was available, there was the problem of transportation, which had to be paid for.

Many in the newly formed MND had joined from teaching posts at the university in order to build the infrastructure required in a newly functioning state. It proved to be a great help that many who held senior positions in the MND spoke good English. They worked hard and put in long hours in difficult conditions for not much money. I admired them greatly, for they were building the new Lithuania.



Soviet air force at Zokniai

Throughout most of my time as DA, the occupying forces were in the process of withdrawing. One of the important things that I was able to do was to arrange meetings for the Ambassador to talk to Russian divisional commanders in Kaunas, Klaipėda and Šiauliai. The aim was to find out how the withdrawal was proceeding and to try to ease any tensions between the Russians and the Lithuanian authorities. In Kaunas we met the commanders of the Special Forces Training Brigade, but they had no problems as there was a prepared base to return to in Russia and their expertise was needed to deal with the ongoing problems in the Caucasus. The same was true at the Air Force base near Šiauliai [Zokniai, now a NATO base] where the fighter wing was based. Again the Commander said that they had a

base to go to in Russia and would be flying out very soon.

It was much more difficult when we flew in to Klaipėda in one of Lithuania's newly acquired, but very old, AN 2 bi-planes. Klaipėda was the home of the 3rd Coastal Division and occupied what is now part of Klaipėda University. It was this Division which had played a major role in trying to suppress the push for independence in the west of Lithuania and there was obvious tension between the two sides. It was the 3rd Coastal Division which had threatened to march on Vilnius when their Commanding General was arrested and taken to the Lithuanian capital. The General was soon released and went to Russia, leaving his second in command Col Kirskij in charge. We met him, together with a visiting staff officer from Kaliningrad, in an office not far from the central post office. The visiting colonel was polite and relaxed, but Col Kirskij appeared cold and angry, reluctant to talk and almost disrespectful towards Ambassador Peart. The situation was made even more bizarre because, just as the meeting was getting underway, the carillon started to ring out from the post office tower and went on for some fifteen minutes. It was very loud and conversing was not easy.

Miglė, who is now my wife, was our interpreter (as she was for all the early meetings we had in Klaipėda). Ambassador Peart explained that he just wanted to know whether the Russians were having any problems which he might be able to communicate to the Lithuanian leadership. The tense situation gradually eased and we learned that the main problem was that the division did not know where and when they would be moving, and feared that they would be sent back to Russia to a poor location with no proper facilities for the soldiers and their families. Col Kirskij's body language became more relaxed as the meeting drew to a close and so the Ambassador invited the Russians to join us for a lunch where we would be meeting members of the Klaipėda City Council. They accepted and off we went.

I can't say that the lunch started well. The Klaipėda Hotel at that time was dark and gloomy and totally lacking in atmosphere. Also, Miglė had told us that that Lithuanians were not good at small talk, which the English do so well! But the situation was saved, as usual, by generous servings of vodka and frequent toasts to all sides. Towards the end it was going so well that the Ambassador wondered if he might invite our Russian guests to the official reception on board

HMS Brocklesby which was due to visit the following week. A discrete phone call was made to Vilnius and the hierarchy agreed, albeit reluctantly, that it might be a good idea. In the event, the ship's visit was a great success and Col Kirskej and his deputy attended with their wives. Another diplomatic coup for Her Majesty's Ambassador! The 3rd Coastal Division finally withdrew from Klaipėda and was disbanded.



Reception on HMS Brocklesby:
Vice-Minister of Lithuanian Ministry of Defence,
Šarūnas Vasiliauskas and Col Vladimir Kerskej,
Commander of the 3rd Coastal Division.

One of the most interesting and enjoyable evenings I had in Vilnius was with the Lithuanian Army Chaplain Monsignor Alfonsas Svarinskas. The Royal Air Force (RAF) Chaplain in Chief was about to make a visit to Lithuania and we had to plan his itinerary. We went to a restaurant in the Old Town and began to talk in Russian. Mgr Svarinskas was telling me about the twenty years he had spent as a deportee in Siberia and somehow I learned that he spoke excellent French. He said that he had learned the language from a fellow deportee. So we talked in French, which I could speak better than Russian and with less lubrication! But what was interesting was that he had a very strong Midi accent, which he had picked up from whomever had taught him. Mgr Svarinskas was a real character and a great dinner companion. But he definitely did not like Russians!

The Russian withdrawal continued smoothly and they managed it within eighteen months. (I would suggest that no western army could have done it in such a short time). Defence Minister Audrius Butkevičius

worked tirelessly to liaise with the many Russian divisional commanders, and spent long hours on the road driving his old Zhiguli at break-neck speed. He had great inter-personal skills and I often feel that he never really got the appreciation he deserved from the Lithuanian government for what he achieved for his country.

As we assembled in Parliament Square [now Nepriklausomybės aikštė – Independence Square] on the evening of 31st August 1993 to mark the completion of the withdrawal, there was still some doubt as to whether they would meet the deadline to depart. But, just before midnight, the word came through that the last train echelon carrying Russian troops and equipment had just crossed the Lithuanian border into Belarus. A huge cheer went up in the Square and there was much hugging and rejoicing. It was only the next morning that we learned that there had been a sign in the last window of the rear wagon which read “We shall return!”



David Holliday with Col Tiiu Kera the US DA, in
Parliament Square on the night when the Russians left
Lithuania.

My appointment in Vilnius was to be my last in the RAF. I took early retirement, married Miglė and stayed in Lithuania. I have never regretted my decision even for one moment and have been extremely happy living in a small village not far from Klaipėda. Living the Good Life!

NATO: Disappearing borders and creative ambiguity

Maria Kielmas

It was a London summer sometime during the mid-1990s when I had been invited to give a talk on oil politics at a meeting of the London branch of the Atlantic Council. One long-standing member pointed at an area covering northern Iran and Iraq on a map of the Middle East and said, “Here is where the Atlantic Alliance may fall apart”. Pressing home his point, he added that events in this region had nearly strangled the Alliance before its birth.

He was almost right. NATO suffered its worst internal crisis in the aftermath of a poorly planned and executed 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq that removed Saddam Hussein. Today, NATO’s European member states are surrounded by conflicts along their eastern and southern borders. General Frederick Hodges, NATO commander of US Army Europe, a force of about 30,000 troops, believes Russia is mobilising for a war in five or six years time. Ongoing negotiations with Russia over Ukraine are conducted under the mantra of “there is no military solution” and appear to focus on the degree to which Ukraine will be partitioned. Europe’s NATO members are divided in their approach towards Russia while the majority of European taxpayers certainly do not want to forgo their social welfare benefits in order to fund more defence spending.

Middle East

All this as NATO faces a second potential nuclear power on its southeastern flank: Iran. This is a country with ever more converging regional interests with the US. It has been strengthened by every US intervention in the region since the 1990-91 Gulf War. Iran is a major trading partner for Iraq and trains Iraq’s armed forces. The growing US–Iran relationship frightens Israel, for whom Iran is a deadly enemy, and increasingly, Russia.

“We are standing ready to provide help, assistance to the government of Iraq to help enhance, strengthen their defence capacity.....If there is such a request we will consider how to help,” said NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg in December last year.

Stoltenberg was speaking four months after a US–led coalition began an air strike campaign against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the extremist Sunni terrorist group that is an offshoot of Al-Qaeda. The air strikes have succeeded in pushing ISIS back

from some of its gained territory. At time of writing President Obama requested Congress to authorise the use of military force, including the possibility of special forces deployment, against ISIS. So is NATO heading for another crisis?



USAF over ISIS territory

The 1946 Iran crisis could have halted the creation of the Atlantic Alliance. This erupted when the Soviet Union refused to remove its troops from its occupation zone in northern Iran. Britain and Iran had occupied Iran in 1941 to avoid the country falling into Axis hands. The Soviet Union tried to stir up a barely existent separatist sentiment in Iranian Azerbaijan, and later a stronger one among the Kurds, prompting the Iranian government to lodge a complaint at the United Nations. Britain did not condemn Soviet policy and was ready to divide Iran into Soviet and British zones of interest on the lines of a cross between the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement that divided former Ottoman provinces in the Levant between Britain and France, and the 1939 Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact.

Britain and Tsarist Russia had reached a similar agreement in 1907 but this was stymied by World War I and the Russian Revolution. It took a firm decision by US President Harry Truman to stamp on British duplicity and stand up to the Soviet Union to resolve the crisis, preserving Iranian sovereignty and territorial integrity in the process.

It took over three decades of an often convulsed US–Iranian relationship up to the mid-1970s when Washington first suspected Iran had nuclear power ambitions. Iran had already signed the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), agreeing not to pursue the acquisition of nuclear

weapons. North Korea quit the NPT in 2003 while other later nuclear powers Pakistan, India and Israel are not signatories.

US sanctions against Iran date from 1979 after the seizure of its Embassy and hostages in Teheran following the Islamic Revolution. The sanctions started from freezing Iranian assets, prohibiting weapons sales, opposing international loans and imposing third country sanctions against foreign investors in Iran. The UN Security Council passed eight sets of sanctions against Iran between 2006 and 2012 as negotiations about curtailing the nuclear project failed. The European Union imposed an oil embargo in 2012 together with restrictions on trade, financial services, insurance and reinsurance while Iranian banks were disconnected from SWIFT, the world system of international transactions. Separate sanctions were imposed by China, Canada, South Korea, India, Israel and Australia.

Iran faces economic sanctions orders of magnitude greater than those against Russia following the latter's annexation of Crimea in March last year. Iran's oil exports are limited to 1 million barrels per day (b/d) while Russia exports 4.4 million b/d out of a total oil production of 10.6 million b/d. Iran cannot access its export revenues – these are kept in escrow accounts - so in a way, is not affected by the oil price fall but cannot pay for many imports either. Russia faces restrictions on oil, gas and defence technology imports but can produce and export as much oil and gas as it wants. It will probably damage its oil and gas reservoirs in the process but that's a problem for the future. There is massive scope for further economic sanctions pressure on Russia if, as expected, the Ukraine ceasefire accord reached in February in Minsk collapses.

Negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 group - the five UN Security Council members and Germany - to ease sanctions in exchange for a curtailment of the nuclear programme faces a final June 2015 deadline. The process is mired in internal power struggles within Iran and in the US where critics of President Obama claim his support for a comprehensive nuclear deal acknowledges that Iran is already a nuclear power. Russia also believes Iran to be a potential nuclear power, especially as it played a large part in developing Iran's nuclear technology. In 2010, Russia cancelled a US\$800 million deal to deliver S-300 surface to air missiles to Iran, in accordance with UN sanctions, prompting Iran to demand US\$4 billion in compensation. Other S-300s, originally scheduled for Syria, are now to be

delivered to Egypt, together with Russian technical assistance to develop nuclear power in Egypt.

Nevertheless, Russia and Iran have been discussing military training and co-operation while separately pursuing charm offensives at international meetings to seek foreign investors in the event that sanctions against both countries are lifted or eased in the near future. Iranian oil advisers were disdainful about relations with Russia – Iran has much in common with the US and the opposite with Russia, one Iranian oil executive said - while Russians attending London's annual February oil conference season expressed increasing worries about Iran as a nuclear power, an adversary and especially as a potential gas export competitor to Europe, something Iranians rule out until the long term, even if sanctions are eased. Is NATO really capable of managing these two states on its borders?

Turkey is the weak point as it is caught up in self-inflicted problems arising from the Syrian civil war. It supports the removal of the Assad regime in Syria while the US priority, and Iran's, is the defeat of ISIS. Iran has provided between US\$13 to 20 billion in assistance to Syria since 2011, according to defence analysts. But Turkey enables money laundering and recruitment for ISIS while also providing bases for Hamas, Iranian proxies, to attack Israel. Turkey has refused to assist Kurdish defenders against ISIS, regarding the two sides as equal threats, but has invoked Article 4 of the Washington Treaty three times: first in 2003 by at the outset of the Iraq War and twice in 2012 following Syrian attacks.

Article 4 enables a member state to convene a NATO consultative meeting when it deems that its security has been threatened. NATO responded by boosting Patriot missile battery defence on Turkey's borders. But Turkey has not responded to the downing of its own aircraft or to attacks on villages along its border, prompting suggestions that its armed forces, NATO's second largest, are incapable of defending the country. ISIS expansion has wiped out the borders between Syria and Iraq and threatens Turkey's territorial integrity as the regional conflict heightens ethnic polarisation. There is a serious danger that Turkey may be the second country in NATO's history to invoke the Washington Treaty's Article 5 that triggers a military response from the Alliance in the event of an attack on a member. The US did so in 2001 in the aftermath of the Twin Tower attacks.

Eastern Europe

NATO's eastern member states facing Russian threats have reason to be anxious that the Alliance leadership's latest involvement in the Middle East will divert attention from their problems. The Alliance has remodelled its rapid response force from 13,000 to 30,000 troops, of which an elite 5,000-troop spearhead force should be deployed within 48 hours. Six command and control centres will be set up in the three Baltic States, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria. But details about its deployment, logistics, communications and host country support still have to be worked out.



RAF Typhoon at Zokniai during 2014 visit by HM Ambassador David Hunt

NATO is also working on implementing its Readiness Action Plan that includes threats emanating from the Middle East and North Africa. But this could lead to both overstretch and financial problems. France has deployed 20,000 troops in Central Africa to fight Islamic extremists and has little spare troop capacity. Italy is currently leading the air surveillance operations in the eastern Baltic region but has insufficient funds to continue air patrols around its own coastline against a growing refugee crisis. Neither country is able to counter a fragmenting Libya, the product of NATO's 2011 bombing campaign that removed Muammar Gaddafi but didn't plan for any political system in his place. Britain is poised to implement further military spending cuts and slash troop numbers to 60,000.

Russia, meanwhile, has not only increased defence spending but has also improved the quality of its armed forces. They are better equipped, better trained and have remarkable mobility, says western defence analysts. Russian special forces were trained in Germany prior to the Crimean invasion while France trained the Russian navy to man the Mistral

amphibious assault ships. Delivery of these ships has since been 'postponed'.

During the Cold War NATO elevated tensions between its American and European partners and its entire defence strategy to the principle of "creative ambiguity". This was a way of resolving the confusions and contradictions of its members' national interests while also confusing the enemy about strategy. So in the 1980s Europeans contributed to building gas pipelines from the Soviet Union while the US largely paid for missile deployment. There was little post-Cold War enthusiasm among western governments to admit former communist states to NATO. Existing members did not want to be bound by Article 5 over a greater region. Eventually, Poland, Hungary and an unenthusiastic Czech Republic joined NATO on 12th March 1999. Ten days later NATO began its bombing campaign against Yugoslavia.

The Yugoslavia / Kosovo campaign highlighted not just the insecurity along NATO's southeastern flank, it also gave a green light to countries from the Balkans to the Baltics to queue up for membership. NATO and European Union membership was seen as a passport to respectability for the former communist states in spite of much disdain from the west. There was no choice: either a country is in NATO and the EU or it is marginalised. This rhetoric created a series of expectations among aspiring members states whose fulfilment today remains questionable and underlines the cleavages among the Alliance's newest members.



Baltic air space patrolled by UK, US and Polish planes

Defence spending has always been a sore point as the US effectively bankrolls the Alliance. Countries are supposed to spend 2% of their GDP on defence but only the US, Britain, Greece and Estonia have fulfilled this. Greek spending was fuelled by its arms

race with Turkey – often to the benefit of the French defence industry - and, up to the Syriza victory in January's elections, its defence alliance with Israel. British spending is expected to fall to 1.7% of GDP next year. Germany and Canada derailed a plan by NATO leaders to enforce the 2% GDP target ahead of the Wales summit last year. The Baltic States came in for particular venom from Ted Galen Carpenter, senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a pro-market think tank in Washington DC who contended that the Baltics are “not serious” about defending themselves.

“The geography and vulnerability of the Baltic States, combined with their continuing military

weakness, should underscore to U.S. leaders that such “allies” are strategic liabilities, not assets. Washington is drifting into confrontation with a nuclear-armed Russia over countries that have little economic or strategic relevance to the American republic,” he added.

Such voices from the US right combine with anti-NATO and anti-EU rhetoric from European far left and far right political parties, many of whom express open support for Russia and its annexation of Crimea. If Europeans are serious about NATO being a defence organisation rather than an impotent bureaucracy, they have to become accustomed to paying for it.

1985: Baltic Peace and Freedom Cruise

Aleksas Vilčinskas

This Baltic Peace and Freedom Cruise took place between 25th July and 5th August 1985. It began in Copenhagen, stopped in Helsinki and ended in Stockholm. The Cruise and Baltic Tribunal (see below) were initiated by the Baltic World Conference, which comprised the Estonian World Council, the World Federation of Free Latvians, and the Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania (*VLIKas* in Lithuanian acronym), and were assisted by the Baltic communities in Western Europe and North America. Timing coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Helsinki Accords, which had been signed in 1975 by 35 countries, including the USSR, with the aim of promoting East-West dialogue and the elimination of human rights breaches. The Helsinki Accords anniversary *per se* was being marked at roughly the same time in Helsinki, at a meeting of leaders of the signatory states.

The Baltic Tribunal (25th-26th July 1985) placed the USSR on trial for its 45-year record of criminal actions against Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Sixteen witnesses in the case of ‘Baltic World Conference vs the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics’ included British Vice-Consul in Riga (1938-1941) Sir Kenneth Benton, Soviet defectors such as Valdo Randpere (formerly a high ranking member of the Soviet judiciary) and ex-KGB colonel Imants Lesinskis, former prisoners and deportees, Baltic dissidents in exile. One of the panel of five jurists was Rev Michael Bourdeaux, founder of Keston Institute [now a Life Honorary Member of the British-Lithuanian Society].

The cruise ship “Baltic Star” carried 198 Latvians, 52 Lithuanians, 51 Estonians and 51 others, including press, radio and TV journalists from various European countries. The passengers observed the Baltic Tribunal, listened to on-board lectures, held press conferences, went on demonstrations. In Copenhagen the demonstrators, led by the exiled Russian dissident Vladimir Bukovsky, marched from City Hall Square to the Soviet Embassy. The ship was ceremonially seen off in the evening of 26th July.

On 27th July, while sailing past Gotland, prayers were said for the Baltic refugees who had drowned while fleeing from the Russians in 1944. Lithuania was remembered as the ship approached the 56th parallel. Liūtas Grinius, Vice-chairman of *VLIKas*, in his speech said that at that moment Lithuania was both near and far, and recalled Lithuania's suffering. Patriotic songs and the national anthem were sung; wreaths and messages in bottles were thrown into the waters in the hope that some may reach Lithuania. Similar ceremonies were held as the ship sailed off the shores of Latvia and Estonia.

As the “Baltic Star” passed Lithuania, two Soviet warships appeared and followed it to Helsinki. Swedish and Finnish newspapers reported the Cruise and published photographs, including those of the Soviet warships.

Helsinki was reached on 28th July – Cruise participants were greeted by locals bearing flags, and the passengers were allowed to disembark. Escorted by the police, the voyagers, carrying flags and

banners and chanting slogans, marched to the city-centre memorial to those who had fallen fighting for Finland's freedom. Local residents joined in the march, and thousands lined the streets in a warm show of their support. A giant chain was carried by 45 Balts in prisoner uniforms to symbolise the number of years of occupation. The demonstration outside the Soviet Embassy was, however, dispersed by the police; a few people were arrested.



Balts in chains

On 29th July the ship docked in Stockholm, to be met by a mass of people, perhaps because the demonstrations in Helsinki the previous day had made the front pages of the Swedish papers. There was a march from the dock to the city, watched by

passers-by and press and TV journalists. Swedish parliamentarians greeted the visitors in the city centre; speeches were made; the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian national anthems were sung.

The Cruise was widely reported and commented upon by the European press, radio and TV. The Soviet news agency TASS reported the event spitefully, calling the Balts pirates and provocateurs, and thus inadvertently helping to publicise the event.

In the UK, BBC broadcast a film about the Cruise some months later, on 20th February 1986. The TV programme was part of a series of 40 minute documentaries about ordinary people's lives, entitled "Cry for home". The focus of the film was how and why three British-born people would want to participate in such an event. The main players were Lithuanian Algis Kuliukas (now in Australia), Estonian Carmen Laanemagi and Latvian Pauline Riemere (now Buchanan).

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Algis Kuliukas

BOOK REVIEW

Roger Moorhouse, *The Devils' Alliance – Hitler's Pact with Stalin*, Oxford: Bodley Head, 2014

Little known in Britain, this pact signed in Moscow on 23rd August 1939, would determine the fate of the three Baltic countries for the next 60 years. Whilst at the time still independent, within nine months they would be occupied by the Soviet Union, safe in the knowledge that the Germans would not object. By June 1941, the Germans felt the pact had outlived its usefulness and attacked the Soviet Union, almost defeating them within the next six months. The Baltic countries therefore suffered this second, Nazi, occupation before returning to the Communist one in 1944/45.

The pact was as much as a surprise to those who signed it (Molotov and Ribbentrop) as it would be to the two bemused populations. The only swastikas available in the USSR were in film studios, such had been the hatred for the Nazi regime. Roger Moorhouse skilfully explains how the pact, at very

short notice, suited both sides on a temporary basis; however, if the Germans had not broken it first, it is highly likely that the Soviets would have done so a few months later. An October 1940 meeting of the International Danube Commission, which started in October 1940, was the turning point, since even by December it was impossible to agree on boundaries in south-eastern Europe. The Germans may have gone to war fuelled with oil from Azerbaijan and fed with grain from Ukraine whilst the Russians fought back with T-34 tanks supplied by the Germans just a few months earlier, but they would never have agreed on long-term secure boundaries. In the short-term, a Russian Jewish Major General, Semyon Krivoshein, had to show bonhomie to his opposite number General Heinz Guderian, but soon Stalin would want to appease the Nazis further by dismissing anyone Jewish from his Foreign Office. As a precursor to the pact, Maxim Litvinov, his multi-lingual long-

standing Jewish Foreign Minister, had been sacked in favour of Molotov, who spoke no foreign languages and who had only been abroad once, but simply by not being Jewish could curry favour with the Nazis.

Both governments had a difficult time explaining the volte-face in their policies, although this was probably eased by the fact that both populations had already had many years of bland propaganda. The Nazis could turn their attention to increased anti-semitism, and the Soviets to the evils of capitalism. Delegations went frequently in both directions between Berlin and Moscow. Publically they would exude sweetness and light. In private they would argue over many alleged faults with each other's products and delivery dates. A full state welcome at the Anhalter Bahnhof (railway station) in Berlin was arranged for one delegation led by Molotov, described amusingly by Moorhouse as "looking like provincial accountants who had alighted at the wrong station".

In Britain the cartoonists would have a field-day showing the absurdity of two people determined to rule the world, and the inclusion of their work adds a welcome touch to a book that otherwise has to concentrate on mass executions, deportations and hypocrisy. David Low, probably the most famous British wartime cartoonist, is remembered in this book with his portrayal of Hitler and Stalin in a three-legged walk, happily arm-in-arm, trampling along the border on which they had just agreed.

For British communists, there was little to laugh about, with the pact being quickly followed by the Soviet invasion of Poland and then their attack on Finland. Beatrice Webb must have been like many

others in her confusion. Having spent much of the 1930s lauding the USSR as a "new civilisation" she was suddenly faced with a "holy horror". A few days later, however, she "understood" why Stalin wanted to "keep his 170 million out of the battlefield" but the invasion of Finland would finally change her attitude for good, when she found the "glaringly false accusations so depressing". It was sellers of the *Daily Worker* who probably suffered the most in Britain. The lucky ones just had doors slammed in their faces, whereas the unlucky ones had the contents of chamber-pots emptied on them from upstairs windows. They must have been very relieved when Britain and the Soviet Union suddenly became allies in June 1941.

This book is history at its best, combining research into documents not yet discovered by others with vignettes of day to day life both on the street and in the corridors of power. It is remarkable how many people on both sides had the courage to keep a diary and then to publish it. As current Russian history becomes more and more Soviet, we must hope that English speakers in Russia manage to get hold of this book so that they are exposed to the horror of the regime so beloved by their President.

At Chequers on the morning of 22nd June 1941 Anthony Eden as well as Winston Churchill enjoyed a leisurely cigar. Britain had fought Germany almost alone for a year and the threat of an invasion was now lifted for good. The Devils' Alliance had come to an end, but its successor, the complete opposite, would last a lot longer, even if the result was fortunately only a cold war and not a hot one.

Review by Neil Taylor

BOOKS NOTICES

Compiled by Aleksas Vilčinskas

Endre Bojtár, *Foreword to the past: a cultural history of the Baltic people*, Central European UP: Budapest, 2000

Over time at least four meanings have been attributed to the term 'Baltic' - drawing on thirty years of extensive research, *Foreword to the Past* is the first modern introduction to the enigma of the Baltic origins and the self-identification of the Baltic people.

The book is divided into three distinctive parts: the first part recounts the history of the Baltic peoples relying on archaeological sources; the second part provides an objective linguistic history and a

description of the Baltic languages; the third part provides an original and fresh insight into mythology in the ancient history of the Baltic peoples.

With its helpful maps and figures, *Foreword to the Past* is an un-paralleled and original cultural exploration of the Baltic people.

Bill Browder, *Red notice: how I became Putin's No.1 enemy*, Bantam Press: London, 2015

A real-life political thriller about an American financier in the Wild East of Russia, the murder of his principled young tax attorney, and his dangerous

mission to expose the Kremlin's corruption.

Bill Browder's journey started in Chicago and moved through Stanford Business School to the world of hedge fund investing in the 1990s. It continued in Moscow, where Browder made his fortune heading the largest investment fund in Russia after the Soviet Union's collapse. But when he exposed the corrupt oligarchs who were robbing the companies in which he was investing, Vladimir Putin turned on him and, in 2005, had him expelled from Russia.

In 2007, a group of law enforcement officers raided Browder's offices in Moscow and stole \$230 million of taxes that his fund's companies had paid to the Russian government. Browder's attorney Sergei Magnitsky investigated the incident and uncovered a sprawling criminal enterprise. A month after Sergei testified against the officials involved, he was arrested and thrown into pre-trial detention, where he was tortured for a year. On November 16, 2009, he was led to an isolation chamber, handcuffed to a bedrail, and beaten to death by eight guards in full riot gear.

Rick Derksen, *Etymological dictionary of the Baltic inherited lexicon*, Brill: Leiden, 2015

Like its Slavic counterpart (2008), the *Etymological Dictionary of the Baltic Inherited Lexicon* aims at combining recent insights from comparative Indo-European linguistics with modern Balto-Slavic accentology. While the Lithuanian lexicon serves as a starting-point, the dictionary contains a number of etyma that are unique to Latvian or Old Prussian. Unlike in most other Baltic etymological studies, both Latvian and Lithuanian accentual data feature prominently. The author's renewed attempt to reconstruct part of the Balto-Slavic lexicon has resulted in numerous additions and corrections.

The introductory chapter explains the structure of the dictionary and clarifies its theoretical framework. In addition, it provides a concise introduction to Baltic historical linguistics. The volume concludes with an extensive bibliography and a word index.

Svetlana Savranskaya, Thomas Blanton, Vladislav Zubok (Eds), *Masterpieces of history: the peaceful end of the Cold War in Europe, 1989*, Central European UP: Budapest, 2011

Twenty years in the making, this collection presents 122 top-level Soviet, European and American records on the superpowers' role in the *annus mirabilis* of 1989. Consisting of Politburo minutes; diary entries from Gorbachev's senior aide, Anatoly Chernyaev; meeting notes and private communications of

Gorbachev with George HW Bush, Margaret Thatcher, Helmut Kohl and François Mitterrand; and high-level CIA analyses, this volume offers a rare insider's look at the historic, world-transforming events that culminated in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War. Most of these records have never been published before.

Complementing the documents is the inclusion for the first time of the proceedings of an extraordinary face-to-face mutual interrogation (with scholars and documents) in 1998 of Russian and American senior former officials—Gorbachev advisers Anatoly Chernyaev and Georgy Shakhnazarov, Shevardnadze aide Sergei Tarasenko, US Ambassador Jack Matlock and CIA chief Soviet analyst Douglas MacEachin—aimed at assessing and explaining Moscow and Washington's policies during the miraculous year of 1989.

Ariela Abramovich Sef, *Born in the Ghetto: my triumph over adversity*, Gainsborough House Press: London, 2014

Ariela Abramovich was born in the Kaunas Ghetto. She miraculously survived the Nazi manhunt when her parents smuggled her out of the Ghetto in a potato sack, then left her on the doorsteps of the Kaunas orphanage. From there she was taken in by a fisherman's family and, after the war, reunited with her parents. Ariela recounts the stories of her childhood, about her father who was involved in rescuing and finding homes for many orphaned children after the war; about her parents adopting a girl whose parents were exiled during Stalin's repressions; about her close family life with her two brothers; and about her struggle with ill health. If a writer of fiction had decided to invent the life-story of a heroine for a novel, they would have been unlikely to come up with a more dramatic and gripping plot than the story of this woman whose life was shaped both by circumstances and her determination to overcome them. This is a personal testimony and a family saga played out against a background of some of the most momentous historical events of the 20th century.

Vladas Terleckas, *The Tragic Pages of Lithuanian History*, Petro ofsetas: Vilnius, 2014

The publication follows latest research and newly available sources to review the years from 1918 to 1953 in Lithuanian history. The first part is a summary-style introduction into the life of Lithuania after independence was achieved in 1918, covering the building of the state and the main achievements and challenges in the process. The main part focuses

on the impact that the Soviet (1940-1941) and Nazi (1941-1944) occupations as well as the Stalinist regime of 1944-1953 had on Lithuania. It covers the wave of repression, the sovietisation of all areas of life, and the armed and unarmed resistance to occupation. It also explains the mechanisms of physical and psychological annihilation that the Soviets employed against the population.

Andrew Wilson, *Virtual politics: faking democracy in the post-Soviet world*, Yale UP: London, 2006

States like Russia and Ukraine may not have gone back to totalitarianism or the traditional authoritarian formula of stuffing the ballot box, cowing the population and imprisoning the opposition – or not obviously. But a whole industry of “political technology” has developed instead, with shadowy private firms and government “fixers” dedicated to the black arts of organizing electoral success.

This book uncovers the sophisticated techniques of the “virtual” political system used to legitimize post-Soviet regimes: entire fake parties, phantom political rivals and “scarecrow” opponents. And it exposes the paramount role of the mass media in projecting these creations and in falsifying the entire political process.

Wilson argues that it is not primarily economic problems that have made it so difficult to develop meaningful democracy in the former Soviet world. Although the West also has its “spin doctors,” dirty tricks, and aggressive ad campaigns, it is the unique post-Bolshevik culture of “political

technology” that is the main obstacle to better governance in the region, to real popular participation in public affairs, and to the modernization of the political economy in the longer term.

Andrew Wilson, *Ukraine crisis: what it means for the West*, Yale UP: London, 2014

The Ukraine issue has rapidly escalated into a major geopolitical crisis, the most severe test of the relationship between Russia and the West since the Cold War. And it is far from resolved. Andrew Wilson's account situates the crisis within Russia's covert ambition since 2004 to expand its influence within the former Soviet periphery, and over countries that have since joined the EU and NATO, such as the Baltic States. He shows how Russia has spent billions developing its soft power within central Europe, aided by US diplomatic inattention in the area, and how Putin's conservative values project is widely misunderstood in the West.

The book examines Yanukovich's corrupt “coup d'etat” of 2010 and provides the most intimate day-by-day account we have of the protests in Kiev from November 2013 to February 2014 (at some of which Wilson was present). It explores the military coup in Crimea, the role of Russia and long-term tensions with the Muslim Crimean Tatars. It covers the election of 25th May 2014 and the prospects for new president Petro Poroshenko. And it analyses other states under pressure from Russia - Georgia, Moldova, Belarus. “Russia will clearly not stop at Ukraine”.

Žemaitukai – historic (and healing) Lithuanian ponies *Dr Regina Stančikaitė*

Rumšiškės Folk Museum [see footnote] is open not only to lovers of folk culture but also to all those who seek spiritual health. The Museum, in the very centre of Lithuania not far from its two largest cities, is surrounded by beautiful wonders of nature. The nation's ethnocultural heritage is here, nature continues to astound visitors with its changing colours at different times of the year (capable of healing one's soul), and žemaitukai – the small but uncommonly sturdy and nimble horses of the Balts, which our ancestors rode to far away lands – are bred here. In Lithuania horses were always people's helpers and co-workers in travel, work, hunting, and battle. The Lithuanian word for horse – *arklys* - derives from the verb *arti* (to plough), steed – *žirgas* - from *apžergti* (i.e. straddle, ride).

Symbolism of the horse

The horse has been man's faithful friend for thousands of years. The ancient Greeks and Romans built mausoleums for their steeds and put their images on coins. In myths, legends and fairy tales the horse embodies the powers of the primitive energies. In ancient times Pegasus, the winged horse of the Muses, was associated with the poetic spirit that overcomes the calamities of the planet. In ancient tales the horse is wise and understanding. It often speaks in a human voice, is honest and gives good advice. The ancient Celts regarded horses as symbols of wealth and power. In Christianity the symbolic role of the horse is contradictory and ambiguous. The white steed of the „Triumphant Christ“ is a

symbol of goodness; the horses of the „riders of the Apocalypse“ are symbols of evil. The horse symbolises nobility and intelligence, but when upset and irritated it becomes an aggressive, threatening creature.

In Baltic culture the sacrality of the horse is exceptional. In our mythology the steed is the only earth-bound creature that can fly. Its cult is linked to the Sun and her twin horses Ašvieniai. In Lithuanian mythology, as in that of many other nations, the Sun circles the world in daytime on a chariot with shining wheels. In Lithuanian folk art the Sun is sometimes depicted as a horse or a horse's head surrounded by wheels. In pagan times, white horses were regarded as holy animals of the gods, and could be ridden only by the religious leaders (wizards).

In the 5th-12th centuries, horses played an important part in Lithuanian tribes' funerary rites as escorts to the world of the dead. Horses were buried with their owners as their faithful companions, riding towards the sea where the Sun sets and the world of the dead is hidden.



Roof decoration

According to the belief of the ancient Lithuanians a wooden carving of a horse's head or twin colts fixed to the gable ridge protects the house from various misfortunes: fires, diseases, penury. It was believed that evil spirits would only briefly rest on the horse's head, but would go into houses that were not thus protected.

Žemaitukai

Žemaitukai (singular “žemaitukas” – literally “small Samogitian”) are ponies (small horses), energetic and

obedient, which are an important part of the Lithuanian ethnic heritage - their breed is very old, rare and unique. Most researchers think that their origin dates back to prehistoric times, that they originate from the Eastern Steppes and reached Lithuanian territory with the Indoeuropeans approximately 5000 years ago. Žemaitukai were known from about the 6th-7th centuries, and are one of the oldest breeds in Europe.



Žemaitukai at Rumšiškės

That this unique pony breed survived is a near miracle. The Oginskiai noble family, by establishing stud farms, contributed much to the preservation of the breed at the end of the 19th century. In 1900, the mare Žaibė and stallion Hiršas were awarded gold medals at the Paris International Agricultural Show, and the stallion Keistutis a silver one.

Towards the end of World War II, the Germans seized all the žemaitukai and their genealogical records. It was thought that the breed had become extinct until, after the war, a single young colt Erelis (Eagle), which had escaped from the herd, was discovered. The revival of the breed began at the Vilnius stud farm and by 1991 there were fourteen of them - now in Lithuania there are about 600. The breed's preservation is entrusted to the Association of Žemaitukai Breeders (*Žemaitukų arklių augintojų asociacija*). However, žemaitukai are still considered to be at risk. For this reason the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Mission Conference for Central and Eastern European countries recognized the žemaitukas as an internationally watched breed, and included it in the FAO World Watch List for Domestic Animal Diversity. Three new horse breeds originate from the žemaitukai: large žemaitukai, trakehner, and Lithuanian heavies.

The old breed of žemaitukai are quite small: height of a stallion at its withers 128 – 142 cm, weight 350-450 kg. Their genes have deep-rooted characteristics: they are undemanding, patient, enduring, strong, hardworking, energetic, resistant to sickness, fertile, long-lived. They are good-looking, move elegantly, are agile, non-squeamish, strong.

The toughness of the breed has been demonstrated on long-distance treks. The first such trek took place in 2010 – retracing the route taken by Vytautas the Great (c.1350-1430) from Trakai to the Black Sea - during which nine riders and steeds covered 2,000 km in 38 days, and the žemaitukai showed their exceptional endurance by covering 50-60 km daily. In 2011 the 1,000 km “Love’s march along the Rulers’ highway” took place from Vilnius to Kraków’s Wawel Palace (it was along this route that King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania Žygimantas Augustas took the remains of his beloved wife Barbora Radvilaitė [d.1551], hence its name the „Road of love“). In 2012, Vaidotas Digaitis rode two žemaitukai 6000 km around the Baltic Sea in just six months.

Horse therapy

Horses are not only man’s partners but can also be his healers. Hippotherapy is a treatment using horses (the term derives from the the Greek „hippos“ – horse, and „therapieia“ – curing). The roots of horse therapy lie in the deep past, when man first tamed horses. Already in the 5th century BC Hippocrates wrote about horse riding’s positive effect on health. Hippotherapy as a curative method was first applied the 1960s in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. Later it was authorised in the USA, Canada, Norway. In Lithuania this type of treatment is not yet officially approved but is being propagated by self-taught enthusiasts. In my psychotherapeutic work I use only some of its elements. I have found that because of their nature - small, friendly, affectionate - žemaitukai are very suitable for therapy.

The psychotherapist Karl Jung, when working with mentally ill patients, noticed that spending time with animals induced positive emotions in patients. It has been found that horses have a psychological effect even on non-riders, and even a non-verbal association suffices: sometimes it is enough just to be with a steed, to watch and admire it, to stroke it, to touch it, to speak to it. Just being present next to a steed has a calming effect, leads to happier thinking, positive emotions and reduces symptoms of unease.

By facing a horse one learns to pay attention to another living being. By focussing attention on a steed one withdraws from strong inner emotions. Horses give joy, the possibility to see one’s surroundings from above, to feel brave and strong. Horses help people who suffer from psychological exhaustion, stress at work, cases of personality disorder, they help victims of violence, calm people who tend to violence or suffer from psychological illness (depression, schizophrenia). Association with a horse teaches attention and sensitivity, reduces the effects of stress, helps to control anger, annoyance, to overcome fear, to relax, gives inner calmness, helps to lose negative thoughts and emotions, and makes it easier to understand oneself.

The first stage of hippotherapeutic treatment is to get to know the horse by using ones senses of sight, touch, hearing and smell. This is to try to understand the animal’s body language, to feel safe and brave beside it, to feel the joy of association with it. The steed also helps us to understand our own body language, our own emotional states, as it reacts appropriately to our feelings and how they emanate from our bodies. The second stage is riding. Only when the steed and the rider know, feel and understand one another does the rider begin to feel the joy of association with the steed, confidence in the horse and oneself. Later comes reflection upon this experience, trying to understand the connection between the currently-experienced feelings and the ones that are usually with us, interpreting what the steed is teaching us. Hippotherapy helps one to overcome episodes of destructive thinking, to get to know and recognise one’s feelings and projections.

The purpose of the therapy groups at Rumšiškės is the promotion of solutions to psychological problems so as to restore people’s ability to enjoy life. Important aims of the psychotherapeutic work are the strengthening of contact with feelings and senses of one’s own body, the control of stress, acceptance of new experiences, cultivation of bravery, awareness and healthy sensibility, searching for one’s own sources of strength to enable us to create harmonious links with the world. Sometimes just one weekend at Rumšiškės is sufficient to rouse a person’s inner strength to begin organising their life creatively.

Translated by Paulius Tričys

Editor’s note

The Rumšiškės open-air ethnographic museum (opened in 1974) is one of the largest in Europe. It displays the

Lithuanian rural heritage in 140 authentic buildings from the 18th–19th century. The main ethnographic regions of Lithuania - Aukštaitija, Žemaitija (Samogitia), Dzūkija and Suvalkija – are in separate sectors. Each has the homes, barns, granaries, stables, mills, characteristic to the area, all with their unique furniture, utensils, and home decor. Some buildings are equipped with workshops demonstrating traditional Lithuanian crafts, showing how tools were made and antique farming implements used.

The museum also has a sector dedicated to exile and resistance. Here there is a typical cattle wagon used by the Soviets for deportations to the gulags, a turf-covered yurt (as built by deportees in Siberia), a camouflaged partisan bunker.

The museum, *Lietuvos liaudies buities muziejus*, is at J Aiščio g.2, LT-56335 Rumšiškės, 20 km from Kaunas on the A1/E85 highway to Vilnius. Web site: www.llbm.lt

Lithuanian and Finnish Tatars

Prof Harry Norris

There are at least five broad divisions of the Tatar people. A first division concerns Baltic Tatars (Lipqa Tatars, so-called Lithuanian Tatars) who today live in the Baltic States and Belarus. These Tatars, together with the Jewish Karaites who are directly related to them, ethnically and historically, are substantially descended from the Qipchaq Tatars who were brought to the region by the Lithuanian Grand Duke, Vytautas, and his successors, in the 14th and 15th Centuries.

A second division concerns the Finnish Tatars who are distantly descended from the Mescer Tatars (Mishäärit Tatars), who were inhabitants in Russia in the middle Oka region, and in such regions as Vladimir, Gorochovce, Jur'ev Tula, and Gorbatov; later, they came to Finland from Russia.

A third division concerns the Crimean Tatars, who are historically linked to those who live today along the Black Sea coast, in Romania and Bulgaria. A fourth division concerns Kazan Tatars, of Tatarstan, who today are regarded as being in the heartland of Tatar culture. A fifth division concerns the Siberian Tatars and those of Bashkiriyya. Only the first two divisions are discussed in this article.

Lithuanian Tatars

The Baltic Tatars, or Lipqa Tatars (so-called Lithuanian Tatars), live in the Baltic States and in Belarus today. These Tatars, together with the Jewish Karaites who are directly related to them ethnically and historically, are in the main descended from the Qipchaq Tatars who were brought to the region by Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas and his successors in the 14th and 15th centuries. They served as soldiery and were also settled in villages, as for example the

surviving village of Sorok Tatarų [40 totorių kaimas] outside Vilnius.

The Karaites in nearby Trakai have retained elements of the Qipchaq Turkish language in their rituals in their Kenessa. Among the Tatars, the use of this Qipchaq Turkish language over the centuries has been replaced by Arabic, Lithuanian and Russian, as is the case in Belarus. Very few of the Baltic Tatars speak their former Tatar language. Polish is spoken by the Polish Tatars, who are principally centred in villages around Białystok (Podlasie) and in Gdansk, which has a major mosque.



The Järvenpää Mosque (Prof Norris in foreground): Finland's only purpose-built mosque, built by the Tatars in the 1940's (ref. T. Martikainen, "Finland" in "Islam in the Nordic and Baltic Countries", Routledge, 2009, pp. 84).

Finnish Tatars

The Finnish Tatars are distantly descended from the Mescer Tatars (Mishäärit Tatars), who were inhabitants in Russia in the middle Oka region, and in such regions as Vladimir, Gorochovce, Jur'ev Tula, and Gorbатов. Much later they came to Finland from villages and major cities in Russia. According to Shamil Nasir al-Din of Järvenpää Mosque, the Finnish Tatars came in particular from the village communities surrounding Nizhni Novgorod.

The history of the Mishars (Mishäärit Tatars) has had a major significance for their present role in both Finnish and Russian societies. This has been brought to our attention in Salavat Iskhakov's article in "*An introduction to Mishar history*"¹. We are told that, at the beginning of the 20th century, the Russian Mishars may possibly have numbered 900,000 or even one million people.

While the Baltic Lipqa Tatars were shaped in their culture by that of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, aside from its Christian beliefs, the culture and the character of the Mishars were formed in the Kasimov Khanate. This was created between Moscow and Kazan (Ryazanskaya region), in the 15th century. In the 15th and 16th centuries, they fought the Poles and the Crimean Tatars. Some conversion to Christianity took place amongst them in that early period.

The arrival of the Mishäärit Tatars in Finland is associated with the Russian occupation in the 19th century, and culturally particular with Kazan. However, this does not exclude some cultural contacts over the centuries with the Baltic Tatars, through Poland, the Baltic region as a whole, and possibly even during the time of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The exploits of Grand Duke Vytautas against the Tatars in the Black Sea region and the subsequent participation of Jalal al-Din Khan, a son of Toqtamysh, with Vytautas and Jogaila [Jagiełło, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania] in the battle of Grunwald (Tannenberg), in the year 1410, against the Teutonic Knights, was supported by men from many armies and peoples. These men included Tatars from a number of groups, clans, and localities.

The Grand Dukes of Lithuania were in intermittent contact with frontier districts of "Greater Finland" from time to time. In the well known "Karelia Suite" of Sibelius, the latter introduces the Lithuanian Duke "Narimont", who in the year 1333 collected taxes in the northwestern part of Lake Ladoga. This date precedes that of Grand Duke Vytautas and is during

the time when Grand Duke Gediminas who, together with Grand Duke Algirdas, were not only foes of the Tatars, and who defeated them in the battle of Sinie Vody (Blue Waters), but also who occasionally sought their help against the Muscovites.

The Tatars were to become a people who were to be integrated later into the population of the Baltic States and Finnish territories. In fact, "Tatars", and kindred groups who preceded them, were not unfamiliar to Finnish regions in the Middle Ages. The Volga Bulgars, who according to Shihab al-Din Marjani were unquestionably related to the Kazan Tatars of a far later date, were familiar with part of Finland.

The Eastern Baltic region, including Finland, was a major centre of trade with the East. Quoting al-Idrisi, O. Tallgren-Tuulio and A. M. Tallgren², it is revealed how Finland was such a centre, especially Tabast, the district of Hame, Swedish Tavastland, in south-western Finland. This appears in these Arabic accounts, as does the coast of Estonia and its hinterland, the fortress of Qalawri (possibly Kalvaria in Lithuania), Barnu (namely Pernu), Falmus, Palamuse and its troglodyte dwellers, the Chuds. The same account tells of Jintiyar, on high ground in central Estonia, probably also in Šventoji [Lithuania], and even Novgorod where the wizards and shamans of Russia were to be found. This scattering of tiny details illustrates the importance of the Eastern Baltic for traders of whom many were linked to the Muslim World. This is confirmed everywhere by the presence of Arabic coinage from the Caliphate and from Central Asia.

Tatar faith a 'heresy'

We have some idea of the Lithuanian Tatars from a contemporary view about their faith that was penned by Michalonis Lituani in the tenth section of his *De Moribus Tartorum Lituarnorum et Moschorum*³. Whilst at that time it was appreciated that the local Lithuanian Tatars were historically linked to the Jewish Karaims, it was also believed that they were descended from the "Scythians", or from a kindred breed, though they formed a part of a people of historical importance who dwelt in the northern Balkans, in Russia and in Central Asia, and whose habits and customs contained things that were praiseworthy, benighted though they appeared to be to other men.

To Michalonis Lituani, the religion of the Tatars was clearly that of the Turks and it was also an offshoot

of the faith that was held to be the faith of the “Saracens”. It “savoured” of Judaism and so too of the Nestorian heresy (*et haeresim quondam Nestorianum*).

A belief in God’s unity was jointly claimed by them both, Christ was held to be a Prophet of God, and to be the future judge of the world. The Virigin was pure and undefiled. Circumcision was observed, established by Ishmael, and their rites are centered upon those in the holy city of Mecca. Thus to him, and no doubt to others among the Lithuanians, the Islam of the Tatars was viewed as a “heresy”, rather than as an alien faith *per se*.

Such views and opinions indicate that Michalonis firmly held to a judgement that must have been widely believed, or supported, during the centuries’ old encounter between the Tatars, Catholics, Calvinist Lithuanians, and Poles, and amongst other mainly Lutheran Baltic peoples.

Tatar religious texts

Centuries later, the arrival of Tatars in Finland brought the Mushaf/ the Qur’an al-Karim, their holy book, to Finland. Hacı Hasan Hamidulla, in his Kustantajalta ‘Koran kerim’ (Helsinki), wrote about the passion of his late grandfather, Hamidulla:

“As the Second World War was raging violently, in the year 1943, at the urgent request of Islamitic prisoners of war who had fallen into the hands of German and Finnish powers, I had 20,000 copies of the Koran printed by the Fototyp system and given to these prisoners. The Koran traced its origin from Kazan and was printed in 1897. All the copies of the Koran, cut down to pocket-size to suit the prisoners, were distributed amongst them with the exception of the number needed by the Moslems living here. All this had happened, to the memory of the late, honoured Hamidulla to thank him for bringing us to a happy life 75 years ago, by coming to Finland, as a tradesmen, for the first time. The Printing of the Koran was thus my duty and an order from Allah (quoted in Antero Leitzinger, ‘Suomen Tataarit’, (East-West books, Helsinki, 2006, page 90)”.

Not dissimilar circumstances had occurred in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania amongst the Tatar refugees, and mercenaries and their families in the 15th century. They had established homes and entire settlements and had constructed wooden mosques and had proclaimed the message of the Qur’an.

A later example is found in Riga⁴, where a manuscript copy was brought from St Petersburg. It was dated to the year 1885, although some pages date back to the year 1835. The author was Salayman (Sulayman) Bogdanov Ibrahim. This entire work is filled with quotations from Qur’anic Suras and from Sufi works and prayers.

Harry Halén has found in the private library of Kaj Öhrnberg, in Helsinki, a manuscript of the Qur’an which, in its origin, came from Cairo. It dates from the 11th or 12th century. A description of its content was published in the year 1978, in *Studia Orientalia*, 51/3.

Aside from the Qur’an, the Baltic and non-Baltic Tatars brought with them, or have inherited from Kazan in particular, the Muslim tradition that has been preserved and enriched by the Tatar Imams who have been the guides of the Tatar communities in the Baltic countries throughout the centuries.

The Islamic legacy of the Tatars is perhaps encapsulated in the most remarkable religious works and compositions that have been written by the Tatars themselves. Today, this rich legacy is found in private collections and in mosques and libraries in Belarus, Poland, Lithuania and perhaps particularly (post-year 1870) in Finland. Many of these works, namely “Muhirs”, have been beautifully described, and illustrated, in “*Pismiennictwo i muhiry Tatarow polska-litewskich*”, by Andrzej Drozd, Marek M. Dziekan and Tadeusz Majda⁵. Other publications contain individual examples, especially those that are dedicated to the arts of the Tatars. One such book is: Adas Jakubauskas, Galim Sitdykov, Stanislav Dumin, “*Lietuvos Totoriai*”⁶. Another of the most striking works to appear on this same subject is Shirin Akiner, “*Religious Language of a Belarussian Tatar Kitab, A Cultural Monument of Islam in Europe*”⁷. This is probably the most comprehensive study of the Tatar Kitab in any language.

These Tatar works may be classified as:

- “Tafsirs” (tafasir): commentaries of the Qur’an, as well as “tajwid” (tajawid) a work or works that explain the art of reciting the Qur’an. It contains drawings as well as text and intonation.
- “Khama’il” (hama’il): compositions, often brief in content and topic that are described as “burdens of support”, varied in content and in length and which commonly apply to specific circumstances, and which are frequently local in their topic and in their application. Words in Arabic, Turkish, Polish

and Belorussian are commonly found in these documents; illustrative content can occasionally occur.



Lithuanian Tatar religious imagery

One of the best-known examples is a Tatar khamail (dated pre-1850) in the collection of the National Museum in Vilnius, and another which is specifically dated to 1828 in the British Library. The latter comes from the district of Slonim, in Belarus. The drawings that are placed next to the text depict the fabulous double-bladed sword, Dhu'l-Fiqar, the sword of 'Ali b Abi Talib, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. This is a common feature and marks Shi'ite Islam, though not exclusively. In this instance it is accompanied by the Tree of Knowledge, and also by an axe of a dervish fraternity, together with talismanic seals. This document is clearly influenced by Sufism – Islamic mysticism – and it is an indication that some of the Tatars at that time were Sufis, though the Tatars are not known today for a strong Sufi tradition, except in Kazan. Today, the Tatars in the Baltic region have not continued to cherish the Sufi tradition.

In this khama'il, and in other sources, the Order of Sufism is not specifically identified. Elsewhere, in other manuscripts of Tatar origin, the Sufis are referred to as "Rijal al-Ghayb" "*the men of the unseen and absent (even transcendent) world*". Such thought is akin to the "*Cloud of the Unknowing*" in Christian thought. In Lithuania and in Poland amongst the Tatars, the holy man, "Kuntus", has survived in stories and in Sufi coloured local traditions. Amongst historical Sufism the great thinker and example of Ibn al-'Arabi, Qadi of Seville (dated 1240), in Damascus, has pervaded works of the Kazan Tatars. The text of this document and others about the "Rijal al-Ghayb" have been closely studied by Drs M Tarelko and Irina Sukova of the Academy of Sciences in Minsk.

It is arguable that the "Kitab", "the Book", is the most complete literary revelation of Tatar culture. It has therefore attracted a great deal of attention amongst European specialists. Some are of a considerable antiquity and examples that are dated to the 17th century may be seen in the University of Kazan and also St. Petersburg.

The content is vast in scope and one example, which dates from the year 1645, contains a dispute between a Muslim and a Jew. Later examples from the 18th century are housed in the Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Vilnius. Another, dated from the year 1866, in Poland, the *Hiobie*, the history of the "holy Job", includes part of a Turkish-Polish dictionary. Here and elsewhere are citations of the "Lives of the Prophets" ("Qisas al-Anbiya"). Moreover, there are also found fragments of astrological prophecies (Fal chemlowy) and also the seal of the Prophet Muhammad. Other features include matters that are the concern of the Tatars in the way they live their lives. Additionally, other matters are concerned with religious ceremonies that take place throughout the months of the lunar calendar.

Tales of the Biblical Prophets within the "Kitabs" illustrate the past dialogues between Tatar Islam and Christianity. The biography (Sira) of The Prophet is a central topic. Much, at times, relates to Sufism, especially wise parables, legends of the mystics, as well as magical and Cabalistic formulae.

Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė, in her chapter on '*The Tatars, The People of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*'⁸, describes the prevalence of Biblical motives in "The Kitabs". She has also noted that the Bible translation is commonly that of the Antitrinitarian Szymon Budney (1572), and that it was through this translation that the Tatars were able to dispute with and exchange religious thoughts with contemporary Christians.

Religious imagery

Like the Tatars of Kazan and elsewhere, the Baltic Tatars decorate their mosques and their homes with wall-hangings and framed and unframed pictures and roundles, or medallions, that serve as frames for inscriptions, designs, religious texts and statements, including the "shahada", the confession and creed and attestation and sundry prayers, talismans and calendars of the Muslim faith. The illustrative and calligraphical variety of pictures, banners and

symbolic pictures is enormous in number and in quality and in the variety of pictorial designs.

The Tatar “tughras” and “muhirs” (muhiry) are of the 19th century, or are later, some even contemporary. They are to be seen in the Järvenpää Mosque in Finland, and in Tatar private homes and offices throughout Finland. Many of these “muhirs” are prayers, the names of God, pictures of Mecca (the Ka’ba) and Madina, of Jerusalem, Hagia Sophia, local mosques, the stages of the last Judgement, Sufi symbols and talismanic and calligraphical imagery. Two such “muhirs” are housed in Helsinki University Library - they were once brought from Kazan. The variation in subject matter is a unique resource for the detailed study of the history of the Tatar communities, their beliefs, and of the cultural influences that are a part of their contemporary societies.

Common examples are Qur’anic statements of faith, prayers, passages of Qur’anic suras and a number of Sufi prayers and pious confessions of belief. They include praise of the Prophet. A number of these have peculiar titles, for example, “*The Beautiful One*”, “*The Happy One*”, “*the Harshiyyan prayer*”, “*The ‘Abbas prayer*”, “*The prayer to ‘al-Khidr/al-Khizr Ilyas (Elias)*”, “*The power of Muhammad Mustafa*”, “*The prayer of repentance*”, “*The prayer of Ghawtayni al-‘Azim*”, and the “*Key to Paradise*”.

Muhirs are often indicative of a once active Sufism amongst the Tatar communities, and are an indication of secret societies to which the Tatars and fellow Muslims were affiliated, the so-called “*achretne pobratymstwo*”, that were once known in Poland and Lithuania. Members of these Tatar brotherhoods were initiated by the ritualistic sprinkling of water on sword blades and by an oath on the Qur’an. Several of the Tatar intellectuals in Poland, Lithuania, and Russia, were supporters of the reformism. Moreover, the ideals of Jamal al-Afghani, and of the Egyptian Muhammad ‘Abduh, and other leading reformists in

the Turkish Empire in the 19th Century, and later, is to be noted.

Traces of all this and many other influences are surely to be detected in the art and the literature of the Baltic region Tatars, including the Tatar community in Finland. It merits further research and classification.

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8. Jurgita Šiaučiūnaitė-Verbickienė, “*The Tatars, The People of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*” (Vilnius”, 2002, pp 80).

Editor’s note

This is an abbreviated and edited version of a paper that was presented at the International Conference on the Tatar Communities , at the Academy of Sciences, University of Helsinki, in 2013.

Lithuanian and English bird names: *Gegutė* – the cuckoo Andy Cuckson

The European cuckoo or *gegutė* resembles a small hawk, with long wings and a down-curved though not hooked bill. The male bird has grey plumage with a barred breast, while the female is either grey or reddish brown. It feeds on insects, insect larvae and a variety of other animals, as well as fruit. As is well

known, the European cuckoo parasitizes a few species of small birds by laying its eggs in their nests. The nests in which a female will lay will be of the same species by which she was raised.



Male and female cuckoos have different calls, with the male making the familiar and far-reaching ‘*cuc-koo*’ call to attract a mate. An imitation of this call has provided this bird its name in Lithuanian and English as well as other European languages.

The name was brought to England by the Normans as Old French *cucu*, which dates to at least the 12th century. In England it is first recorded c.1240 in ‘Sumer is icumen in/Lhude sing cuccu!’. It is also used by Chaucer, c.1381 as ‘cokkow’. Since then a number of different spellings have been recorded, until ‘cuckow’ became the most usual, and which survived well into the 19th century until it was mainly replaced by the current spelling. This onomatopoeic representation of the bird’s two-note call replaced the native one-note form, Old English *gēac*, Middle

English *yek*, and in the north of England and Scotland the related Norse *gowk*.

The Lithuanian name *gegutė* consists of a two-note onomatopoeia *gegu-* similar to the Old French and Modern English with grammatical suffix *-utė*. The Lithuanian word for the month of May *gegužė* is derived from *gegutė* by using the suffix *-užė*. It also translates as ‘the cuckoo month’, although the migrant bird actually begins to arrive in April. (Note that all Lithuanian months are named according to seasonal events in rural life.) In a current Lithuanian bird identification guide, published in 2012, the call is rendered ‘ku-kū ... ku-kū’ rather than as the name is spelt.

These Lithuanian and English names are among the most vivid of all imitative bird names, and represent one of the most recognisable animal calls in the world. Using it to name the bird is clear and unambiguous, and it would hardly be a surprise if European people had imitated the cuckoo’s call in prehistoric times, and so named it, when the earliest forms of Indo-European language began to develop.

I am grateful to my wife Rasa for advice on the formation of the Lithuanian name, its derived month name, and the validity of translation.

Letter to the Editor

Jūratė Rosales’ article ‘Gothic heritage?’ in the Autumn 2014 [Vol.14, No.2] issue of *Tiltas* raises the intriguing matter of the part played by Balt peoples in the European Migration Period, which is more usually associated with the migrations of Germanic peoples in the late 4th and 5th centuries AD. She investigates afresh the contribution of the Goths to the cultural heritage of Spain from both Spanish and Lithuanian perspectives. As she shows, there are reasons to call into question the basic equation of the island of “Scandia” of late antique historical sources with modern Scandinavia, thought to be the homeland of the Goths by earlier generations of historians. Instead she discusses the evidence from the Baltic angle, suggesting a possible Balt origin for the name, as well as for that of the Gepids, a people related, culturally at least, to the Goths.

Archaeologists have long been unconvinced by outdated suggestions of early material cultural connections between Sweden and the southern Baltic

region, although the survival of place-names such as Gotland, and Väster- and Östergötland still poses questions about the veracity, or lack of it, of the origin myth of the Goths. Nevertheless, in support of Rosales’ general thesis it might be observed that, although the name of the Balthi, the Visigothic royal family, is usually derived from an ancient common Germanic root cognate with English “bold”, Herwig Wolfram (one of the modern historians she refers to) considers it not entirely impossible that they were initially called “Balti”, or Balts.

But other aspects of Rosales’ argument seem more tenuous, particularly in the linguistic sphere. She is surely right that the language of the Gothic Bible (*Codex Argenteus*) could not have been the original language of the Goths, but only in the sense that it represents a largely artificial construct, translating from the Greek New Testament almost word by word and inventing new words from Gothic stems where the language was inadequate to the task. No modern

linguist, however, would seriously question that Gothic was a branch of early Germanic. While the language may well have adopted a few Balt or Slavic words, this is no more significant in terms of its core vocabulary and structure than the number of French, Arabic, or even Japanese words adopted into English and it would appear to be taking a step too far to propose that the Goths might in fact have spoken a Baltic language on such slender evidence.

Rosales suggests, for example, that the Spanish word “machete” derives from a Balt root, but the Spanish scholar Menéndez Pidal convincingly showed long ago that it comes from the Latin “martulum” (or “marculum”, i.e. ‘hammer’). To him, too, must be left the debate over the development of Latin *f* to *h*, as in “hierro”, which is too detailed to enter into here. Other hypothetical connections alledged between Balt and Spanish grammar fail to account for the same elements appearing in other Romance languages like Italian and Portuguese, which also both have, for example, masculine and neuter endings in *-o* and two forms of the verb ‘to be’. The loss of the Latin *-t* ending in the third person singular of the verb occurs in all the major western Romance languages, including the main conjugations in French, and ascription of such a distinctive and basic phenomenon to Baltic linguistic influence seems

most unlikely to the interested observer. Spanish “godo”, meanwhile, is surely derived from the Latin “gothus” in the same way as “todo” from “totus”, reflecting a common evolution in the language of *t* to *d*, and it is difficult to see how it could realistically owe anything to Balt phonetics.

Rosales is on firm ground, however, with the Spanish name Galindo, known from as early as the 9th century. It is none other in origin than the name of the Balt people known as the Galindi, who are recorded as having joined the Visigoths on their long migration from eastern Europe to Spain. The same element occurs in the names of the villages of Galinduste and Galíndez, which most likely represent the eventual settlements of this people, in the same way as a number of place-names in Italy based on the root “Sarmazz-“ represent the settlements of Iranian-speaking Sarmatians from the steppes during the late Roman period.

In short, Rosales’ hypotheses may be controversial, but her arguments raise a number of points which historians and linguists may wish to ponder in greater depth. It would be good to benefit from their views on this fascinating topic as well.

Barry Ager, London

Editor’s note

Correspondence about articles published in this journal are welcome, as are original articles. Text should preferably be provided as a Word document and e-mailed to blssecretary@hotmail.com.

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