HAS THE SOVIET EXPERIMENT TRULY COME TO AN END? HISTORIOGRAPHY, PLACES OF MEMORY AND THE POLITICAL ELITE

Aurimas Švedas

ABSTRACT This article* raises the question of whether the party and political elite in Soviet times succeeded in making a significant impact on the mentality of Lithuanian society, and aims to assess the forms of specific phenomena or processes through which the results of the above mentioned attempts are still apparent after the restoration of independence. Consideration of these points is focused on the discussion of several specific problems lying in the spheres of historical writing and historical memory as well as socio-political factors: 1) the transformations of the great story of Lithuania and the Lithuanians in Soviet and post-Soviet times; 2) the specific features of the 'places of memory' of Lithuanian society created in Soviet times and transferred into a different socio-political period; 3) the ideological forms of the identity of the Lithuanian political elite in Soviet times and after the restoration of independence.

Research has revealed that the great story of the nation's past narrated by interwar historians was apparently 'preserved' in the consciousness of society during Soviet times; moreover, Soviet ideologists artfully used the notional focuses of the interwar narrative related to anti-Polish, anti-German and anti-Christian sentiments.

Certain artistic phenomena produced in Soviet times survived the turning-point of 1990 and the processes of the post-Soviet transformation that followed and became the places of memory of Lithuanian society. Some of them (such as the film 'Niekas nenorėjo mirti' (Nobody Wanted to Die), directed by V. Žalakevičius) still secure the existence of images important to Soviet ideologists in the historical memory of society, others (such as the trilogy of dramas in verse by Marcinkevičius) managed to break free from the notional and emotional canons enforced by the period and already in Soviet times grew as a source of consolidation of ideas related to national identity.

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The socio-political elite of the Soviet times very frequently tried to conceal the lack of ideological and intellectual identity under the ideologically correct 'masks of thought'. Radical change of the political elite that failed to take place during the twenty years of Lithuania's independence for the most part explains contemporary politics, which emphatically disregards values, as one of the quintessential continuations of a Soviet time experiment.

Introduction. Party and political authorities of the Soviet Union consistently aimed at the elimination of the *interpretational context* – the medium in which the societies of the Baltic States lived in the inter-war period.¹ Achieving this objective made possible the transfer to the second, more important: the 'implantation' of communist ideology and value-system as well as the Soviet space and time model into the consciousness of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian societies.²

The turning point of 1990 when the 'Baltic Sisters' set course towards the restoration of their statehood allows the hypothesis that the above mentioned objectives hatched in Kremlin offices were not smoothly implemented.³ It is obvious that the hypothesis still needs verification by means of a thorough analysis in at least three directions and a discussion on the scope of the influence of Sovietisation on people, public institutes and ideas.⁴ Attempting to make a step in

¹ The concept 'interpretational context' adopted from: S.J. Cohen, *Politics without a Past. The absence of history in postcommunist nationalism* (Durham NC, 1999). This concept embraces the whole of postulate constellation of a nation's great story on its past, present and future, settled value-system and traditional religion.

² One of the quintessential constituents of Soviet interpretational context – the image of the alternation of past/present/future – discussed in R. Stobiecki's work: *Bolszewizm a historia. Próba rekonstrukcji bolszewickiej filozofii dziejów* (Łódź, 1998).

³ Historians have made even more severe assessments of the failure of Sovietisation in the Baltic States. See: E. Zubkova, *Pribaltika i Kreml'* (Moscow, 2008).

⁴ The spectrum of the impact of Sovietisation processes, which disrupted traditional interpretational context on people, (public) institutes and ideas comprised: 1) the annihilation of former political, cultural and economic elite, its ejection from public life or 're-education' aiming at the elimination of the medium that accumulates the interpretational context; 2) the education of a new Soviet elite which could be assigned the task of 'implanting' the interpretational model created in Moscow and implemented in other Soviet republics as well as adapting it to regional specifics; 3) the establishment and cultivation of an atmosphere of fear and mutual distrust in society focusing on the destruction of vertical (elite) as well as horizontal (society) structures necessary for maintaining the vitality of the interpretational context; 4) the destruction and deformation of infrastructure essential for the spread of traditional interpretational context (school, church, public organisations) or its replacement with newly formed institutions; 5) the suspension of free circulation of ideas East–Lithuania–West required to maintain the strength of the interpretational context, the physical, intellectual and emotional isolation of society; 6) the substitution of the traditional interpretational context with a new model employing the tactics of intimidation, persuasion and deceit.

this direction and at the same time trying to summarise the work that has already been done by Lithuanian historians, this article focuses on the following issues: how the adepts of the Soviet system succeeded in achieving their goals to alter the framework of the ideas and emotional structure of society in occupied Lithuania; and to what extent the Soviet experiment is still alive in the form of various isolated phenomena and unimpeded processes.

This article focuses on an analysis of several specific problems in the spheres of historical writing and historical memory as well as socio-political factors: 1) transformations of the great story of Lithuania and Lithuanians in Soviet and post-Soviet times; 2) specific features of the 'places of memory' of Lithuanian society created in Soviet times and transferred into a different socio-political period; 3) ideological forms of the identity of the Lithuanian political elite in Soviet times and after the restoration of independence.

The evolution of Soviet Lithuanian historical writing has not been analysed consistently. The monograph penned by the author of these lines could be mentioned in this context.⁵ Topics of historic culture, places of memory and historic politics have been gaining increasing popularity as the field of academic research. Such scholars as A. Nikžentaitis, A. Bumblauskas, D. Staliūnas, D. Mačiulis and D. Baronas should be distinguished for their consistent investigation in the area⁶. The ideological identities of the elite of post-Soviet Lithuanian society and factors that shaped them are under constant focus of scholarly attention.⁷

⁵ A. Švedas, *Matricos nelaisvėje: sovietmečio lietuvių istoriografija (1944–1985)* (Vilnius, 2009).

⁶ A. Nikžentaitis is the pioneer of the topics of historic memory and historic politics among Lithuanian historians, both from the point of view of the presentation of western theoretical concepts in Lithuanian academic discourse and from the point of view of the introduction of specific subjects of research (first and foremost the following study should be mentioned: *Vytauto ir Jogailos įvaizdis Lietuvos ir Lenkijos visuomenėse* (Vilnius, 2002)). A. Bumblauskas focuses on reception of GDL phenomena, personalities and processes in the modern consciousness of Lithuanians, Poles, Russians and Belarusians. D. Staliūnas analyses Russia's ethno-politics in the territories of the former GDL in the nineteenth century and its influence on the historic memory of relevant nations. D. Mačiulis' sphere of interest lies in the character and effects of Lithuanian historic politics generated by diverse socio-political conditions in the twentieth century. D. Baronas analyses the processes of the formation and mutation of specific 'places of memory' in Lithuanian society.

⁷ See below, f. n. 23.

Transformations of the great story. Walking in circles? In Soviet times there were attempts to destroy the great story of Lithuania and the Lithuanians developed in the interwar period. *The History of Lithuania*⁸ edited by A. Šapoka was considered to be a paradigmatic study expressing attitudes towards the history of the nation and state designed by historians in the interwar period. This history was political. Its prime object of analysis was the rise of the Lithuanian state, its development, decline and fall. The latter motive became the basis of periodisation in the synthesis published in 1936. The great story in the synthesis is selective, designed according to the principle of rejection (important, respectable and worthy of attention are exceptionally those periods in the history of Lithuania which depict a strong state, whereas the period between 1569 and 1918 is presented as ‘not our history’), presenting the state as a formation created exclusively by Lithuanians and thus rejecting the political elite (which tended towards Russification or Polonisation) and the creative input of other nations of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Ruthenians, Poles, Jews, Germans). Consequently, in the great story Lithuania appeared as a fortress under siege, located at the junction between East and West and doomed to constantly fight for survival.

The Soviet authorities rejected the great story based on the assumption of nationalism and the time model employed in it which gave prominence to the evolution of the Lithuanian state. Therefore a narrow ethnocentric attitude towards the place Lithuania and Lithuanians occupied in history was opposed with global and synchronic concept of the evolution of the world (which had to veil the ideology of Great Russian chauvinism). Meanwhile the pattern of political history, history of events, which reflected the genesis, evolution, fall and revival of the Lithuanian state, was replaced by a scheme depicting the shift of formations: feudalism–capitalism–socialism, and subjects of class struggle instigating the shift of the above mentioned formations. These fundamental corrections in the great story had to facilitate the task assigned to Soviet ideologists revealing that how Lithuania fell under the patronage of her ‘elder brother’ was an historically predetermined civilisation process which was suspended for more than 400 years by the ‘conspiracy of the Lithuanian and Polish feudal elite’ resulting in the unions of Krėva and Lublin.⁹

⁸ A. Šapoka, *Lietuvos istorija* (Kaunas, 1936).

⁹ These notional focuses appear in three Soviet publications edited by J. Žiugžda, long-time director of the Institute of History: *Lietuvos TSR istorija. Nuo seniausių laikų iki 1861 metų* (Vilnius, 1953), p.1; *Lietuvos TSR istorija. Nuo seniausių laikų*

The efforts that Soviet historians made to ‘implant’ these postulates of the new great story into public consciousness did not bear the expected unambiguous fruit. Several reasons account for that: 1) the ‘skeleton’ of Lithuanian political history was not completely hidden under the ‘façade’ of socio-economic formations – it emerged time and time again both in syntheses written in Soviet times and in works and articles by individual historians; 2) the notional and emotional focuses of the new great story were regarded by Lithuanian historians and society as an inevitable evil bred by the situation of dependency, which had nothing to do with the categories of truth and justice; 3) the period of nearly fifty years and the power of the instruments of historic politics used were insufficient to the task of making Lithuanian society forget the narrative of the interwar period and accept the Soviet great story as true and echoing its aspirations.¹⁰

M. Gorbachev inspired perestroika, which instigated the fundamental transformations in society of his day, produced the right situation for the paradigmatic work of Šapoka and at the same time for the purified story of the historic fate of the Lithuanian nation and state to return to the level of official discourse. It is symbolic that in the years of the national liberation movement, Sajūdis, and during the first years of independence the book was issued in runs of thousands of copies as if marking a return from *abnormal* state of history to its *normal* existence.¹¹ Can the latter process be regarded as a return to the interwar period? It was impossible to do so. However, deliberate or involuntary attempts to move backwards formed a certain ‘time pause’, thus, facilitating the continuation of certain aspects of the Soviet times even after 1990. This thesis can be justified by the following arguments:

1. Soviet times ‘preserved’ the great story on the fate of the state and nation created in the interwar period both in Lithuania and among

iki 1861, v.1 (Vilnius, 1957); *Lietuvos istorija: nuo seniausių laikų iki 1957 metų* (Vilnius, 1958). These focuses remained unchanged in Lithuanian history in Soviet times until the beginning of perestroika.

¹⁰This was admitted by historians themselves. Symptomatic example: exchange of views on the periodisation incongruities found in already prepared syntheses of Soviet Lithuania – a mechanical agreement of the spread of statehood and focuses of economic formations – that took place at the meeting of the small scientific council of the Institute of History on 20 Apr. 1971. See: MABRS, f. 16, ap. 1, b. 300, fo. 80.

¹¹The intention to return from an ‘abnormal’ socio-political and socio-cultural state to the situation of ‘normality’ is one of the most significant imperatives pointed out by authors investigating transformations of post-Soviet societies. See e.g.: S. Rausing, *History, Memory and Identity in Post-Soviet Estonia* (Oxford, 2004).

Lithuanian émigrés, and empowered it to return to the official discourse with new strength in the period of perestroika;

2. The closed-door and selective great story, which in the Soviet times had become an important part of resistance identity, acquired new notional and emotional ‘arguments’ when generating Them and Us oppositions. For example, the consistent anti-Polish propaganda of Soviet historical writing proved very ‘prolific’ as Lithuanian society still finds itself hostage to the stereotype that ‘Poles are the bitterest enemy of Lithuanians’;¹²

3. The ‘legacy’ of the Soviet times – critique of Christian religion and culture, and reinforcement of the myth of the ‘pagan golden age’ smoothly entered the interwar/Soviet great story finding consistent followers/developers of this notional/emotional focus, who are still very active;

4. The great story that prevailed in the official discourse in Soviet times and was defended by repressive mechanisms did not leave space for alternative ideas/germs of original schools of history which might have reduced the ‘time pause’ significantly and minimised the possibilities to relive Soviet phenomena in the new period.

‘Places of memory’ of Soviet origin existing in independent Lithuania. Trojan horses? The results of replacing the traditional interpretational context, created in the interwar period, with a new, Soviet ideological model, employing the tactics of intimidation, persuasion and deceit, were ambiguous to a great extent. The Soviet system which tried to manipulate the quantitatively new elite and society, constantly experienced attempts by the elite/society to manipulate the system, resulting in a frequent failure to achieve unambiguous desired results and the necessity to make do with the ideologically complex and ambiguous results of action on the part of the elite/society, which instigated emotions and ideas that were unnecessary and at times even harmful to the Soviet system.

¹² Historians in Vilnius who were under surveillance by the Soviet authorities had to repeat time and again that the bitterest enemies of the Lithuanian nation in history were the Germans and Poles. According to the great Soviet narrative, the Germans in the shape of the orders strove to destroy the young Lithuanian state whereas the Poles deceitfully denationalised the Lithuanian elite and afterwards consistently eradicated Lithuania’s statehood. These statements, just as in the interwar period, continued the tradition of closed, defensive and selective historic narrative and at the same time contributed to the formation of resistance identity. The vitality and expression of the latter notional focuses (anti-Polish orientation) can be constantly observed in the public life of post-Soviet Lithuania.

Due to the ambiguity of these results and thus their semantic complexity and intricacy certain symbols of Soviet times not only survived all confrontation with censorship in those days but also continue to thrive today; some of them have even developed into the Lithuanian nation's 'places of memory'.¹³ Here we analyse two 'places of memory' designed in Soviet times that have undergone post-Soviet transformation, viz. a film depicting post-war period and a poetic creation portraying development of the state. We shall try to discover whether the existence of Soviet cultural phenomena in the present and their gradual conversion into 'places of memory' induces the qualification of the latter as a continuation of Soviet time experiment.

The 'weastern' film 'Niekas nenorėjo mirti' (Nobody Wanted to Die) created in 1965 and directed by V. Žalakevičius offered people in occupied Lithuania their first opportunity to speak openly about the partisan 'war after the War' of 1945–1953. The film depicts the fate of the Lokys brothers in the uncompromising struggle for life that evolved in Lithuanian villages between the Soviet authorities and those opposing them. At first sight it may seem that the central storyline of the film is an old Soviet cliché exploited in various artistic spheres of those times which stood no chance of attracting sincere public attention in Soviet times, especially after the fundamental transformations of 1990. However, Žalakevičius (director and screenwriter) skilfully designed the plot, dynamic style of narration and gradually increasing tension to make the audience observe the development of events on the screen intently. Furthermore, profound and complex characters with great psychological motivation and attractive in the majority of cases (not monochromatic, exceeding the limits of 'good' and 'bad' assessment scale) caused the audience to identify with the actors, discuss the reasons underlying their behaviour and consider possible options of conduct in analogous situations.

Directorial decisions of this kind (such as the quite realistic, undealised portrayal of the representatives of the Soviet authorities, a

¹³ The term 'places of memory' (*les lieux de mémoire*) was introduced to the discourse by French historian P. Nora, who initiated a protracted research project which was recorded in an academic work in seven volumes (*Les lieux de mémoire*, 7 vols (Paris, 1984–1992)). The explication of the concept 'places of memory' in Lithuanian discourse was performed by D. Staliūnas: 'A place of memory is a part of the past significant to collective identity (event, person, place that witnessed important events, etc.) or historically settled phenomenon (for example, language)'. (D. Staliūnas, *Savas ar svetimas paveldas? 1863–1864 m. sukilimas kaip lietuvių atminties vieta* (Vilnius, 2008), p. 7.

stylised image of Jesus Christ shown in the final stages of the film) helped Žalakevičius' film passing through all ten or more stages of the censorship process¹⁴. The film earned appreciation throughout the USSR and received awards in a number of festivals held both in the USSR and abroad (15th International Karlovy Vary Film Festival, National Film Festival in Kiev, Sixth Film Festival of the Baltic States, Belarus and Moldova).

Despite the emotions, discussions and a trail of ambiguous assessments that surrounded this film after 1990, V. Žalakevičius' work depicting *fratricidal war* still functions as a place of memory for the Lithuanian nation. It is broadcast on Lithuanian television on various occasions, it is frequently used to represent the complex history of Lithuania in the second half of the twentieth century to foreign audiences and is recommended as a significant (or even the most significant) achievement of Lithuanian historic cinematography in the twentieth century. Besides, it can be stated that the resistance of Lithuanian partisans against the Soviet authorities, as the concept of *fratricidal war*, portrayed it with subtlety in the film, still remains in the historical memory of Lithuanian society as one of the most important notional and emotional focuses and this, without reservations, can be considered to be a Soviet 'footprint' in the present, the durability of which was at least partially predetermined by the film's artistic weight and success.

Another 'place of memory' created in Soviet times that still sustains fundamental importance is the drama trilogy 'Mindaugas', 'Mažvydas' and 'Katedra (The Cathedral)' written by J. Marcinkevičius, the most significant part from the point of view of its impact on the cultural memory of those times being the chronologically first drama, published in 1968.¹⁵ This play tells the story of King Mindaugas, who

¹⁴ In this case reference is made to research into the development of Lithuanian cinematography in Soviet times by L. Kaminskaitė-Jančorienė, a post-graduate student at the Faculty of History at Vilnius University. The data she accumulated demonstrate that writers and directors in Soviet Lithuania had to pass through stages of self-censorship and censorship from the Screenplay Department at the Lithuanian Film studio, editorial board and Art Council, Ministry of Culture of the Lithuanian SSR, Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party, Central Screenplay Department or the Editorial Board of the USSR, National Committee of Cinematography of the USSR and Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR.

¹⁵ J. Marcinkevičius, *Mindaugas: dviejų dalių drama-poema* (Vilnius, 1968). See also J. Marcinkevičius, *Mindaugas; Mažvydas; Katedra: dramatinė trilogija* (Vilnius, 1978).

united Lithuanian tribes into one political formation, by means of killing, intimidating and in other ways forcing his noble kinsmen and representatives of the political elite of those times to obey his rule. This poetic creation broke the potent taboo that manacled the possibilities of Lithuanian scholars, artists and other representatives of culture to discuss the topic of the genesis and evolution of their state.¹⁶ It became an important constituent of national culture in Soviet times, aroused national aspirations, lent significance to the past in the eyes of society and served as a pretext to review the reality of those times critically through the confrontation of black and white chroniclers.¹⁷ On the other hand, the poem contained certain 'ideologically correct' postulates that were of the utmost importance to the Soviet authorities about Germans as sworn enemies of the Lithuanian nation, Christianity as a tool to legalise crusades and a force that eradicated Lithuanian cultural identity, fratricidal wars and Lithuania that was being stuck together into a whole with blood, the tragedy of a noble man blinded by his thirst for power when he turned into a despot and a vicious form of love for one's country that breeds violence. It is likely that the above enumerated postulates were accountable for the permission to publish 'Mindaugas' and somewhat for the numerous favourable reviews in the Lithuanian press and of the USSR, that were addressed to both the poem and its author, and opened possibilities for the translation of the drama to other languages and for its production on the stages of various theatres in the country.¹⁸

¹⁶ The first person to start changing the rule of the official discourse to keep silent about the reasons that led to the formation of Lithuanian state, the course of consolidation process and its outcome was the Russian scholar V. Pashuto, who wrote a study of the formation of the Lithuanian state and set new boundaries for historical writing from the Muscovite perspective. See V. Pashuto, *Obrazovanie Litovskogo gosudarstva* (Moscow, 1959.) It should be noted that the abridged Lithuanian version of this book appeared only in 1971 (V. Pašuta, *Lietuvos valstybės susidarymas* (Vilnius, 1971). Thus, Marcinkevičius' drama served as a certain 'icebreaker' that altered the well-established conjunctures.

¹⁷ One example of such informal relation with issues raised in the drama is the review of the performance 'Apie juodą ir baltą metraštininkus' (About Black and White Chroniclers) written by J. Jurginis, one of the most prominent historians of Soviet times, which did not see the light of the day for long decades because of its uncompromising insights into Soviet reality and was eventually published in the magazine 'Kultūros barai' in 2007. See J. Jurginis, 'Apie juodą ir baltą metraštininkus', *Kultūros barai*, 2007, No. 7, pp. 74–76.

¹⁸ Alongside this flow of texts, Marcinkevičius' drama poems very soon became object of academic research. See e.g. J. Lankutis, *Justino Marcinkevičiaus dramatinė trilogija* (Vilnius, 1977).

Nevertheless, the story of the formation of the state is especially important to Lithuanian historical memory as is dramatic personage of the first and the last king of Lithuania, ready to sacrifice his own welfare and that of others for the idea of statehood, and the concept of Lithuania as an object deserving unconditional love and devotion that is given prominence in the drama created a notional and emotional balance to the above enumerated conjunctures and instigated a major interest of the public in the poetic work as well as positive emotions accompanied by the feeling in the consciousness of readers or viewers as if they grasped the poetic language saturated with metaphors, felt what the author really wanted to convey and in the meantime were granted the opportunity, albeit for a short moment, to perceive themselves as being 'in opposition' to the surrounding Soviet reality and the interpretational context that had been reinforcing it.

These recollections as well as the emotional focuses of 'Mindaugas' (and for the most part the whole trilogy) made it possible for this oeuvre to pass the turning-point of 1990 evading a more critical analysis that society could have performed on the cultural phenomenon which functioned smoothly in the Soviet interpretational context and which had become an integral part of that interpretational context, viewing the situation from the perspective that became possible in the new socio-cultural and socio-political reality. Thus, each year on 6 July – Lithuanian State Day (assumed to be the day of Mindaugas' coronation) – a television version of the performance about the king based on Marcinkevičius' drama is shown on national television, while the adaptation of another part of the trilogy 'Mažvydas' finds its place in the schedule of the mentioned television channel on the days of other national holidays. Therefore, it can be stated that this 'place of memory' created in Soviet times has found its place in the fabric of the new great story, establishing a symbiotic relation with it.¹⁹

Soviet time and the post-Soviet elite. Ideological void? The Soviet system, which had huge financial resources at its disposal and had implemented a tested and smoothly operating institutional model in Lithuania, responsible for the ascent of an individual up the rungs of the social and party hierarchy ladder, effectively produced a *quantitatively* new cultural, academic and political elite simultaneously suppressing any possibilities for the formation of an alternative ('shadow') elite.

¹⁹ This concept of July 6 as Mindaugas' coronation day is coherently developed in E. Gudavičius, *Mindaugas* (Vilnius, 1998).

This having been said, it is reasonable that we move on to the qualitative analysis of the phenomenon and raise a critical question, to what extent the quantitatively new Soviet elite was new in the *qualitative* sense. To answer this question it is necessary to comprehend what ideological/intellectual/existential identity was hidden behind the 'masks of thought' publicly demonstrated by this elite.²⁰ In this case it would take a precise analysis to answer the question – what a researcher could find 'preparing' the following ideas: 1) an accurately disguised old 'interwar identity'; 2) the eclectic formation of 'national communism'; 3) the image of the Lithuanian as a flexible 'reed' suffering from various disasters though capable of adapting themselves to circumstances?

There have been attempts to apply the concept of 'national communism' used in Western Sovietological tradition to the period of A. Sniečkus' rule by carrying out a case study.²¹ The characteristics of a 'reed' applicable to the definition of the identity of A. Brazauskas, the last first secretary of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party and the first president of independent Lithuania (and at the same time a certain part of communist–post-communist party/political elite), is suggested by the perspective opened in the recent research by R. Lopata.²² It is probable that the ideological identity of the majority of the Soviet elite lies between eclectic 'national communism' and the image of Lithuanians as 'reeds'. In other words, one 'mask of thought' in Soviet times covered the void of another 'mask of thought'.

'Masks of thought' of the elite that formed in Central and Eastern Europe after 1990 or the one that weathered the challenges of post-Soviet transformations are referred to as the Soviet legacy in research on contemporary society carried out by social scientists or in discus-

²⁰ 'Mask of thought' in this case is an incongruity between the public activities of an individual and their real aspirations (which generally are not explicitly declared). In totalitarian and authoritarian societies 'masks of thought' are worn by the overall majority of members of society from the highest levels of elite to the grassroots (the latter 'wear' the above mentioned masks occasionally in an 'irregular manner'). In democratic societies and in countries of 'velvet authoritarianism', 'masks of thought' are worn primarily by representatives of the political elite (and other public figures) who try to satisfy the aspirations of certain societies or groups of interests, compete for the favourable opinion of electorate or attempt to match the regulations of official discourse formed by public opinion.

²¹ See W.A. Kemp, *Nationalism and Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. A Basic Contradiction?* (New York, 1999).

²² See R. Lopata, *Politikai ir istorija. Algirdo Brazausko ir Vytauto Landsbergio istorijos sampratos* (Vilnius, 2010).

sions that emerge on various occasions.²³ To date, historians have been rather reluctant to research the Soviet and post-Soviet elite.²⁴ However, it is obvious that in the future historians will not be able to avoid taking up thorough analysis of this social group and the task of reconstructing its ideological identity, as one of the most apparent signs of the existence of the past in the present is the fact that there has been no change of political elite in Lithuania in twenty years of independence. People who created Soviet reality or themselves were formed by it as individuals and as specialists of a certain field still contribute significantly to the construction of the post-Soviet state in Lithuania. Thus, it is of the utmost importance to ask what ideological vectors serve these people as the base in their work. In the search for an answer to this question a good contribution could be made by historians who help representatives of other disciplines to define the contours of post-Soviet reality correctly.

For the time being it can only be stated that certain processes and phenomena that were formed in the Soviet times did not even have to undergo substantive transformation after the restoration of independence. This is particularly true speaking about the phenomenon of 'ideological masks' and 'masks of thought' which thrives in a highly favourable environment created in present day Lithuania and post-Soviet space by the practice of politics which emphatically disregards values and outwardly is hardly different from analogous processes that rapidly develop in traditional Western democracies. Hence, continuations of the Soviet experiment still exist in the post-Soviet stage of Lithuanian development. Their vitality is for the most part predetermined by an abundance of emotions presenting axiological assessment of the Soviet period and an obvious lack of critical reflection

²³ Western approach: S.J. Cohen, *Politics Without a Past. The Absence of History in Postcommunist Nationalism*. There are quite a few texts which present the Lithuanian approach to the problem and a number of public discussions which engage representatives from cultural, political and academic spheres. A. Ramonaitė's study, which analyses the negative processes occurring in Lithuanian political life (vanishing distinction of values, fading conflict between the Right and Left, adoption of populist style), stands out against all others: *Posovietinės Lietuvos politinė anatomija* (Vilnius, 2007). In this case it should be noted that Ramonaitė does not attempt to account for the situation, blaming it on the negative influence of Soviet times; she presents a more universal view on the source of the problem.

²⁴ In this case, K. Antanaitis' thesis 'Sovietinė Lietuvos, Latvijos ir Estijos nomenklatūra (1953–1990): Regularities and Peculiarities' prepared in 2001 (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian Institute of History) and S. Grybkas' unpublished doctoral thesis 'Pramonės valdymas sovietinėje Lietuvoje 1965–1985 m.: Įtampų ir konfliktų' (Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuanian Institute of History, 2007) can be considered exceptions to this trend.

which is necessary in phenomenological discussions about the Soviet period and its traces in the present.

Conclusions Attempting to destroy traditional interpretational context of Lithuanian society that was created in the interwar period architects and adepts of the Soviet system inspired the 're-education' of the former political, academic and cultural elite and at the same time developed a new elite and instigated its artistic intellectual activity which should have resulted in a new great story about the past, present and future of the Lithuanian nation and artistic creations that would have helped create the Soviet interpretational context and maintain its vitality.

In fifty years of Soviet rule emotional and notional focuses of the new great story failed to put into the shade the narrative about the past of the Lithuanian nation created in the interwar period. Thus, Soviet times 'preserved' the great story of the interwar period in public consciousness both in the thematic sense and in the sense of the absence of intellectual potential to create alternatives. Besides, Soviet ideologists skilfully used the notional focuses of the narrative created in the interwar period relating to anti-Polish, anti-German and anti-Christian sentiments, thus contributing to the formation of a resistance identity which is still manifested in society.

Certain artistic phenomena produced in the Soviet times survived the 1990 watershed and the processes of post-Soviet transformation that followed and became places of memory for Lithuanian society. Some of them, such as Žalakevičius' film 'Nobody Wanted to Die', continue to secure the existence of images important to Soviet ideologists in the historical memory of society (the idea of fratricidal war). Others, such as the trilogy of dramas by Marcinkevičius, managed to break free from the notional and emotional canons enforced by the epoch and already in Soviet times these grew into a source that consolidated ideas relating to national identity, while after 1990 they established a symbiotic relation with the newly created great narrative.

The Soviet socio-political elite tried very frequently to conceal the lack of ideological and intellectual identity under ideologically correct 'masks of thought'. A radical change of the political elite, which failed to take place during the first twenty years of Lithuanian independence, for the most part allows us to speak of present day politics, which emphatically disregards values, as one of the quintessential continuations of a Soviet experiment in the sense of personages hidden under 'masks of thought' and the ability of social groups to adapt to new favourable situations.

Author details

Aurimas Švedas is a postdoctoral researcher and senior lecturer at the Faculty of History, Vilnius University. In 2006 he received a doctorate for the thesis 'Soviet Lithuanian History Writing: Official Discourse and its Alternatives (1944–1985)'. This article was prepared as part of postdoctoral research on 'Historical Memory in Soviet and post-Soviet Lithuania: Alterations in the Politics of History and Transformations of Lithuanian Identity'.

Address: Faculty of History, Vilnius University, Universiteto g. 7, Vilnius

Email: aurimas.svedas@if.vu.lt

AR SOVIETINIS EKSPERIMENTAS IŠ TIESŲ BAIGĖSI?
ISTORIOGRAFIJA, ATMINTIES VIETOS, POLITINIS ELITAS

Santrauka

AURIMAS ŠVEDAS

Straipsnyje nagrinėjamas klausimas, ar sovietmečių partiniam ir politiniam elitui pavyko iš esmės paveikti Lietuvos visuomenės mentalitetą, be to, bandoma įvertinti, kokiomis formomis šių pastangų rezultatai veikia per konkrečius reiškinius arba procesus jau atkūrus nepriklausomą valstybę. Svarstant šiuos klausimus, straipsnyje aptariama keletas konkrečių problemų, glūdinčių istoriografijos, istorinės atminties ir socialinėje politinėje srityse, būtent: 1) didžiojo pasakojimo apie Lietuvą ir lietuvių transformacijas sovietmečio ir posovietinėje epochose; 2) lietuvių visuomenės „atminties vietų“, sukurtų sovietmečių ir perėjusių į kitą socialinę politinę epochą, ypatumai; 3) lietuvių visuomenės politinio elito idėjinės-ideologinės tapatybės formos sovietmečių ir nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje.

Atliktas tyrimas leidžia teigti, kad sovietmetis „užkonservavo“ tarpukario istorikų didįjį pasakojimą apie tautos praeitį visuomenės sąmonėje, be to, sovietmečio ideologai sumaniai išnaudojo tarpukario sukurtą naratyvo prasminius akcentus, susijusius su antilenkiška, antivokiška, antikrikščioniška orientacija.

Kai kurie kultūrinio elito sovietmečių sukurti meniniai reiškiniai išlaikė 1990-ųjų lūžį bei posovietinės transformacijos procesus ir tapo lietuvių visuomenės atminties vietomis. Vieni jų (kaip režisieriaus V. Žalakevičiaus filmas „Niekas nenorėjo mirti“) iki šiol laiduoja sovietmečio ideologams svarbių vaizdinių gyvavimą visuomenės istorinėje atmintyje, kiti (kaip poeto J. Marcinkevičiaus poetinė draminė trilogija) gebėjo išsilaikinti iš epochos jiems primetamų prasminių bei emocinių kanonų ir jau sovietmečių tapo tautinės tapatybės stiprinimo šaltiniu.

Socialinis politinis sovietmečio elitas po ideologiškai teisingomis „mąstymo kaukėmis“ dažnu atveju slėpė idėjinės ir intelektualinės savasties trūkumą. Nepriklausomoje Lietuvoje per 20 metų neįvykusi esminė politinio elito kaita leidžia kalbėti apie šiuo metu dominuojančią pabrėžtinai nevertybinę politiką kaip vieną iš esmingiausių sovietmečio eksperimento tęsinių.