SOVIET VILNIUS: IDEOLOGY AND THE FORMATION OF IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT *This article analyses the importance of historical narratives, myths and symbols in the process of the formation of the Soviet identity of Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania.*

Throughout the Soviet period Vilnius was one of the Soviet capitals where the regime made every effort to modify the identity of the city in compliance with the prevailing Soviet ideology: to establish the ideological centre of the country, to shape the city so that it would meet the needs of the new ‘Soviet citizen’ and to alter its historical identity – erase the old historic sites, historical memory and form the new identity of the city. The most obvious manifestations of ‘rewritten’ history can be observed in the physical shape of the city – its architectural/urban development, changes of street names and the erection of new Soviet monuments. The said tangible signs and symbols of authority as well as the intangible ones – new historic narrative of the Soviet city, myths about its having a revolutionary past, the Great Patriotic War and the idea of progress were aimed at the legitimization of the regime, the formation of the citizenry’s new identity and social indoctrination.

Introduction The segment in the history of Vilnius embracing Soviet times has received little attention from researchers. Paradoxically, the last fundamental history of the city was published in the late 1960s and early 1970s: in 1968 ‘Vilniaus miesto istorija nuo seniausiu laikų iki Spalio revoliucijos’ (The History of the City of Vilnius from the Ancient Times to the October Revolution)’ by J. Jurginis, V. Merkys and A. Tautavičius was published; in 1972 ‘Vilniaus miesto istorija nuo Spalio revoliucijos iki dabartinių dienų’ (The History of the City of Vilnius: From the October Revolution to the Present; ed. by J. Žiugžda) appeared. Actually there has been a recent attempt to fill the gap with the publication of A.R. Čaplinskas’ book¹ as well as a collection of articles, called ‘A New Reading of Vilnius: Lithuanian

¹ A.R. Čaplinskas, *Vilniaus istorija: legendos ir tikrovė* (Vilnius, 2010).

Master Narratives and the Multicultural Heritage of the City'² devoted to the heritage of the multicultural city. Some discussion of the Soviet period is presented. A collection of articles, 'From Basanavičius, Vytautas the Great to Molotov and Ribbentrop', should be mentioned as one of the latest works on the transformations of memory culture.³ This contained studies of memory culture transformations in the city landscape not only in Vilnius but also in Kaunas, Klaipėda, and Šiauliai. Nonetheless, the analysis of Soviet times that has received considerable attention from researchers recently dealt only in a fragmentary fashion with the city as a subject of research. The void can be detected particularly in analyses of the expression of Vilnius' cultural memory in Soviet times. Despite the seemingly obvious significance that Vilnius had in the development of society as the political, economic and cultural centre of Lithuania, its socio-cultural and political changes as well as the analysis of the expressions of Vilnius cultural memory remain underestimated.

Vilnius was no exception in the context of the development of Soviet capitals – the prime aim was to establish the ideological centre of the country. The regime made every effort to shape the city so that it would meet the needs of the new 'Soviet citizen' and to alter its historic identity; to erase its identity from the memory of its citizens, or, according to the dominant canons of Soviet ideology, to reinterpret the history that had been created for centuries and form a new version of it.

The most obvious manifestations of 'rewritten' history can be observed in the physical shape of the city, namely its architectural/urban development. The Socialist 'content' of the city was reorganised and reinterpreted in Soviet times. The process of the formation of the city's new identity can be observed in the tangible signs representing the authority of the Soviet regime in public spaces – changes in place-names and the building of monuments and memorials, and representative buildings. Tangible signs of authority as well as intangible ones, including the new historic narrative of Soviet Vilnius and myths legitimating political power, were aimed at the formation of a new city identity. This complex system of symbols and values – a certain 'cultural stratum' in the collective memory – is undoubtedly

² *Naujasis Vilniaus perskaitymas: didieji Lietuvos istoriniai pasakojimai ir daugiakultūrinis miesto paveldas* (Vilnius, 2009).

³ *Nuo Basanavičiaus, Vytauto Didžiojo iki Molotovo ir Ribbentropo: Atminties ir atminimo kultūrų transformacijos XX–XXI amžiuje*, ed. A. Nikžentaitis (Vilnius, 2011).

one of the most important subjects of research. Thus, bearing in mind that Vilnius in Soviet times was just one of the ideological points in the chain of formation of 'Soviet capital cities', it is important to ascertain its specific character and place in context – what political and ideological levers influenced the development of Vilnius in Soviet times and how the new identity of the Soviet city was formed.

This article will not provide full answers to all these questions. This would be the goal of a more detailed and thorough analysis. Our current aim is to sketch out certain aspects of the formation of the city's new identity and explore nuances in the expression of its cultural memory – the development of myths that legitimised Soviet rule and their reinforcement with the help of symbols of authority in the cityscape as well as supporting rituals.

Strategies for interpreting the city We take an integral approach to researching Vilnius as a city, whereby the 'city' comprises not only people, streets and buildings but also the 'way of thinking' or world-view, traditions, customs, and diversity of opinions.⁴ The city is also perceived as a cultural phenomenon integrating space, time and social agents. It is a system of values, which consists of objects and values attributable to them. The city is viewed as a 'cultural text', the reading of which involves rendering significance to the 'encoded' values of buildings, spatial structures, urban plans and other aspects of city life such as the citizens, their behaviour, hierarchal system and the rules which control social order, rituals, conflicts, and so forth.⁵ The decoding of this complex system of values requires more than the interpretation of historical facts – one should learn 'to read between the lines'. The theory developed by G.J. Ashworth, the Dutch cultural heritage protection specialist, embraces the said conception of a city as a system of values. Accordingly, the city is a symbolic formation reflecting the needs, values and standards of the society that originated and is still developing it.⁶ The above interpretation of the concept of the city facilitates viewing the development of Vilnius in Soviet times

⁴ D. Kalwa, 'Reading the City. Methodological Considerations on Urban History and Urban Studies', *Frontiers and Identities. Cities in Regions and Nations*, ed. L. Klusáková, L. Teulière (Pisa, 2008), p. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶ G.J. Ashworth, 'The Conserved European City as Cultural Symbol: The Meaning of the Text', *Modern Europe, Place, Culture and Identity*, ed. B. Graham. (London, 1998), p. 262.

in the context of political and ideological leverage. Seeing that the formation of a city embraces the identity of a location based on both tangible (public spaces, districts, streets, buildings, etc.) and intangible elements (cultural and ideological significance of certain objects in the city, personalities, legends and myths of the city), the city can be the subject of a multidimensional analysis. The spectrum of urban research is expanded to an even greater extent with the introduction of the aspect of expression of power and dominance in public discourse. New interpretations of the city drew inspiration from M. Foucault's theoretical insights. They appeal to the conception that the city is a kind of battlefield in which different social agents or groups thereof aiming at controlling the values system compete to legitimise their authority. One of the most significant moments in the process of assuming control over the city space in both material and symbolic senses is the minting of interpretations of the past of an historic city which normally create the myth of the past rather than reflect real events in retrospect. The importance of such myths is emphasised especially in studies of cultural memory, which analyse and interpret the phenomena of the functioning of past images in the present, and mechanisms facilitating the formation of the culture of memory. According to J. Assmann, cultural memory is a system of values manifested in communication practices, an expression of various forms of making the past relevant or otherwise in collective memory.⁷ Cultural memory is characterised by the following features: it is designed, and formal; it is rendered via texts, images and rituals, and is symbolically encoded. Its object does not cover specific historic event or personalities but recollections about them.

A. Assmann claims that every thought about memory should start with oblivion.⁸ The problem of memory-oblivion has been actively explicated in the research of the cultural memory of cities. T.R. Weeks, who analysed the consolidation of the Soviet regime in Vilnius in 1944–1949, arrived at the conclusion that the communists aimed at altering Lithuanian identity by emphasising new and up-to-date interpretations of history based on 'progressive' political attitudes, increasing numbers of industrial workers, 'high educational

⁷ J. Assmann, 'Collective Memory and Cultural Identity', *New German Critique*, No. 65, *Cultural History/Cultural Studies* (Spring-summer, 1995), pp. 125–133.

⁸ A. Assmann, 'Canon and Archive', *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. A. Erl, A. Nunning (Berlin, 2008), p. 97.

culture' (network of schools, the Academy of Science, publishing) and the idea of friendship of the peoples of the USSR⁹. In the meantime, oblivion played an equally important role in the formation of the new capital of Soviet Lithuania. The historical situation – the tragic aftermaths of the Nazi occupation and World War II – for the most part facilitated the 'oblivion'. Prior to the war Vilnius was the international centre of Jewish cultural life. There also was another Vilnius – a Polish city. Migration and the politics pursued by the Polish authorities are accountable for the fact that some 220 thousand Vilnius citizens considered themselves Polish (some of them were Jewish or descendants from Belarusian families who learned the Polish language at school, in the army or at a mature age).¹⁰ The occupation of Vilnius by the Nazis in June 1941 was followed by a large-scale massacre of Jews. When the Soviet army approached Lithuania in 1944, only one tenth out of the about 70 thousand Jews that inhabited Vilnius prior to the war were still alive.¹¹ Thus, the Jewish community and culture in Vilnius were almost wiped out. Due to the voluntary post-war relocation of Polish citizens and their compulsory deportation, substantial changes could be observed in the identity of Polish Vilnius. In general, with the extinction of the old citizens of Vilnius the links of communicative memory were broken. Per Brodersen, a German researcher, analyses a similar situation investigating the issue of how Königsberg became Kaliningrad.¹² Analysis of numerous archival materials facilitated the disclosure of a complex process of the incorporation of a territory alien in its historic and cultural heritage into the USSR. The change of place names and the names of the streets, the demolition of old and the erection of new monuments were aimed at the legitimisation of the Soviet regime. Moreover, the relocation of people from other parts of the USSR to the region was of utmost importance in the transformation of the city's identity. Similar processes employed in the formation of the new identity of Soviet cit-

⁹ T.R. Weeks. 'Remembering and Forgetting: Creating a Soviet Lithuanian Capital' (Vilnius 1944–1949), *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 39(4), (2008) p. 518.

¹⁰ T. Snyder, *Tautų rekonstrukcija: Lietuva, Lenkija, Ukraina, Baltarusija 1569–1999* (Vilnius, 2008), p. 88 [Lithuanian tr. of T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999* (New Haven-London, 2004)].

¹¹ Ibid., p. 99.

¹² P. Brodersen, *Die Stadt im Westen. Wie Königsberg Kaliningrad wurde* (Göttingen, 2008).

ies are also observable in the capitals of other Soviet republics – Riga, Kiev and Minsk and elsewhere.

In Vilnius another tendency characterised not only by the aspiration to ‘erase’ the old history of the city from the memory of its dwellers but also to use the selected motives of the national history in the legitimisation of the authorities demonstrating that communist rule was a natural course of history rather than a coincidence could be observed. The ‘inclusions’ from national history were employed by the communist authorities in pursuance of their aims (the formation of supranational identity was supposed to secure the support of the majority of the population, the past helped control the people). However, the revelation of this aspect requires a separate more thorough analysis.

Referring to strategies for forming a city’s historic narrative, it should be mentioned that the so called ‘foundation myths’ are of utmost importance to any system seeking the legitimisation of authority and consolidation among the people at large. Generally these are mightily dramatic stories depicting the creation of the political system in operation by an idealised leader or leaders.¹³ In the case of the Soviet system, these were the myth of the October Revolution of 1917 and the cult of Lenin. This myth served as an important symbolic link between Soviet society and the Communist Party, institutionalised expression of revolution and Leninist mythology. The scheme of incorporation into Soviet identity was designed on the basis of the said ideological foundation. Various means of propaganda were employed to serve its needs – immortalisation of the memory of revolutionaries (content), and monumental propaganda, festivals and rituals (form).

In his analysis of the identity-building in Soviet Klaipėda V. Safronovas singled out the following features of incorporation into Soviet identity:

The leading and patronal role of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party and their influence (the USSR and the Communist Party were the prime advocates of people’s interests and safeguards of workers’ concerns);

- The ideologeme of ‘friendship of peoples’, internationalism;
- Recognition of the role of work and progress in the course of

¹³ T. Sherlock, *Historical Narratives in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Russia: Destroying the Settled Past, Creating the Uncertain Future* (London, 2007), p. 8.

‘building socialism’;¹⁴

- In addition, the features of the ‘new Soviet citizen’ have been defined by other researchers analysing the Soviet period¹⁵:
- Concern with the public interest;
- Conscious and responsible approach to work;
- Political activity;
- Socialistic patriotism;
- Spirit of collectivism.

The revolutionary tradition was embodied in public discourse with the help of exalted revolutionary heroes, symbols and rituals employed in the observance of the two main political holidays in the Soviet ritual calendar – 1 May and 7 November. Their scale in Soviet times was of ascending importance yet their substance underwent few changes. The researcher C. Lane names the following basic aspects of the significance of the holidays: 1) to remind the working class of their achievements and glorify the heroes of labour and the revolution; 2) to foster unity and solidarity among workers; 3) to demonstrate the significant achievements of the new generation and glorify the heroes who continue the work of their predecessors; 4) to employ certain actions, customs and rituals in order to demonstrate the coherence between the public at large and the surrounding reality, revealing the unity of people, party and the state, to display love for the vast motherland, the USSR, its system of government and communist ideas.¹⁶

After World War II, the promotion of Soviet patriotism acquired new forms. The victory in ‘the Great Patriotic War’ that cost an enormous number of lives consolidated the position of the USSR internationally and encouraged Soviet ideologists to milk the arguments of the victory consolidating political, social and economic order within the country, motivating the people for new achievements. Victory Day (9 May, an official holiday since 1965) was aimed at fostering military-patriotic traditions.

¹⁴ V. Safronovas, ‘Tapatybės ideologijų konkurencija Pietryčių Baltijos jūros regiono mieste: XX amžiaus Klaipėdos atvejo tyrimas’. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Klaipėda, 2011, pp. 86–87.

¹⁵ See: G. Durkham Hollander, *Soviet Political Indoctrination: Developments in Mass Media and Propaganda since Stalin* (New York, 1972), pp. 8–9; R.J. Hill, P. Frank, *The Soviet Communist Party* (Boston, 1986), p. 77.

¹⁶ C. Lane, *The Rites of Rulers. Ritual in Industrial Society – the Soviet Case* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 155.

Thus, the two fundamental legitimisation myths developed in Soviet times served as the basis for the consolidation of Soviet authority and the formation of an official ideological narrative legitimising Soviet Vilnius. The following aspects were emphasized in it:

- Vilnius – the cradle of the revolutionary workers' movement in Lithuania (from 1940 onwards the history of the 'new city' was being created);
- The proclamation of the Lithuanian Soviet Republic and its recognition by the Russian Socialist Republic at the end of 1918;
- Transferral of Vilnius to Lithuanian control – the USSR and the Red Army generously 'presented' Lithuania with its own capital (arguments for the legitimisation of Soviet rule): 1) On 10 October 1939 following the Soviet-Lithuanian Mutual Assistance Pact Vilnius was transferred to Lithuanian control. It is emphasised that the people of Lithuania enthusiastically accepted the fraternal helping hand offered by the Soviet Union during that period of hardship; 2) On 13 July 1944 Vilnius was liberated from the occupation of 'German invaders' (the official historic narratives maintain that 'the people of Lithuania were profoundly grateful to the valiant Red Army, Communist Party, Soviet government and Soviet people for the liberation of the capital of Lithuanian SSR from the barbaric Fascist occupation'.¹⁷).

How were these most significant stories and myths of the city's past employed in the formation of the new identity of Soviet Vilnius?

The Myth of the City's Revolutionary Past The narrative of the city's revolutionary movement was formed strictly on the basis of the leading Soviet ideological plot – the revolutionary history of the USSR. However, following the general Soviet canon, attempts were made to disclose the specific character of the local movement, to reveal the input of Vilnius citizens in it and thus to implant images testifying to the history of the revolutionary movement in society as well as to promote Soviet patriotism. On 10 July 1940 the article 'The History of New Vilnius' written by someone under the pseudonym Benediktas was published in the newspaper *Vilniaus Balsas*. It is considered to be one of the first attempts to convey via the media the newly formed interpretation of the city's history or the historic narra-

¹⁷ *Lietuvos TSR istorija nuo seniausių laikų iki 1957 metų*, ed. K. Jablonskis, J. Jurginis, R. Šarmaitis, J. Žiugžda (Vilnius, 1958), p. 437.

tive of the 'new city' to wider strata of the population. The author of the article claims that 'romantic stories of the Vilnius of ancient dukes and kings might have some appeal, but they are long out-of-date. The history of Vilnius that had been related to Lithuanian society for many a long day is saturated with legends and fairy-tales to the extent that it is often difficult to tell the truth from lies. (...) At present people view the past of Vilnius from different perspective. Legends and fairy tales though beautiful should remain with the sentimentalists. After all Vilnius has been the leading centre of political movement of workers on a professional and purely revolutionary basis since the first attempts of liberating the region. The germs of all revolutionary trends that were in operation in our country could be found here – in Vilnius'.¹⁸ Thus, the formation of the myth of Vilnius as the cradle of the workers' revolutionary movement was started prior to the official incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR. It should be mentioned that the history of revolutionary-Bolshevik movement in the USSR had remained the leading historic narrative not only during 1940–1941 but throughout the whole Soviet period. The narrative of the city's revolutionary movement strictly followed the history of the Bolshevik movement in the USSR, yet revealed the specific nature of the local movement. The narrative of the 'revolutionary movement' was aimed at disclosing the input of Vilnius citizens in the said movement – revolutionary past of the city – with emphasis on such facts as the dissemination of the illegal revolutionary press, the first Congress of the Communist Party of Lithuania in Vilnius and the proclamation of the Soviet rule. The said historic narrative was embedded in the collective memory and embodied with the help of symbols and rituals developed in the Soviet times.

The aspiration to consolidate the revolutionary past in the collective memory is reflected in the resolution regarding holidays in LSSR adopted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Lithuania in September 1940. It provided for the following holidays: 1 January (New Year), 22 January (in memory of Lenin), 1–2 May (international workers' solidarity day), 21 July (proclamation of the Lithuanian SSR), 7–8 November (Great October Socialist Revolution Day) and 5 December (day of Stalin's Constitution). Meanwhile former state holidays, including 16 February

¹⁸ Benediktas, 'Naujojo Vilniaus istorija', *Vilniaus Balsas*. 10 Jul. 1940.

and 8 September, 'proclaimed by the former bourgeois government of Lithuania' were repealed.¹⁹ The incorporation of values and symbols of the ideology of Soviet identity into the system was manifested through commemorations organised on the abovementioned days accompanied by memory rituals: rallies, parades, propaganda lectures, the demonstration of propaganda films as well as various conferences and exhibitions, the unveiling of monuments and the opening of new institutions.

As mentioned above, the myth of the city's revolutionary past was sustained throughout the Soviet period. The building of the National Philharmonia in Vilnius where in 1918 the Soviet rule was first proclaimed in Lithuania, the building which housed the first Congress of the Communist Party of Lithuania, F. Dzerzhinsky's memorial museum opened in 1959 and the Museum of Revolution were the symbols of the said myth in the city's cultural memory characterised by illustrative and battle cry-style and ideologised content which rendered the message of the significance of the past. Monuments to P. Eidukevičius (1959), V. Mickevičius-Kapsukas (1962), Z. Angarietis (1972) and the streets named in their honour as well as the prominence given to Lenin's short stop in Vilnius in 1895 (in 1955 a memorial board signifying the occasion appeared on the façade of the railway station in Vilnius) which are also attributable to the symbols of the revolutionary past became the tangible signs embodying the memory of the 'revolutionary movement' in the landscape of the cultural memory of Vilnius. Meanwhile former signs of the past were doomed to removal. Back in 1945 at the seventh plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Lithuania A. Sniečkus encouraged the demolition of monuments erected in the years of independence as 'having little to do with the history and culture of the Lithuanian people and reflecting the struggle against the Soviet rule and against the people'.²⁰ Vilnius was no exception in the context. The arrows of the ideologists of the Communist Party of Lithuania were first and foremost pointed at the symbols of the statehood of independent Lithuania and religion. In 1945 the implementation of the plan providing for the change of street names, which failed to materialise

¹⁹ Minutes No 3 of the meeting of the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Lithuania on 26 Sept. 1940, LYA, f. 1771, ap. 1, b. 5, fo. 4.

²⁰ V. Tininis, *Sniečkus: 33 metai valdžioje* (Vilnius, 2000), p. 99.

in 1941²¹ was started. New names were attached to more than forty streets and squares.²² Bajorų (noblemen) Street became Darbininkų (workers), Bažnyčios (church) – Šviesos (light), Maldininkų (worshippers) – Braškių (strawberries), Šv. Ignato (St. Ignatius) – Giedrio, Marijos Magdalenos (Mary Magdalene) – J. Janonio, A. Jakšto – Komunarų (Communards), Šv. Stepono (St. Stephen) – Tarybų (Soviets), Lukiškių aikštė (Lukiškių square) – Tarybų aikštė (Soviet square), Vasario 16-osios (February 16) – Liepos 21-osios (July 21). In 1947 Kalvarijų Street became F. Dzeržinskio Street, Vilnius Corps d'Elite Street – P. Eidukevičiaus Street, Z. Tiškos Street – J. Greifenbergerio Street.

Huge waves of revolutionary propaganda flooded the country in 1967 due to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. In that context, the first, and five years later, the second parts of a history of Vilnius were published. The second part 'The History of the City of Vilnius: From the October Revolution to the Present' covered, generalised and evaluated the most prominent moments in the history of the city: the leading role of Vilnius workers in the struggle for the Soviet rule in Lithuania in 1918–1919; the new stage in the history of Vilnius, which started in 1940 when 'the workers of the city together with the people of Lithuania undertook the building of Socialist life and Vilnius became the capital of Soviet Lithuania'; the struggle of Vilnius workers against 'the German fascists' in the course of war and fascist occupation; and the fundamental changes in the structure of the social life of the city, which occurred after the war and were marked by the development of Socialism and first steps in the direction of communism.²³

The 650th anniversary of Vilnius, which was commemorated solemnly in 1973 and widely covered in the press, was also incorporated into the frame of the 'revolutionary past'.²⁴ The example was

²¹ In 1941, there were plans to change about 100 names of streets and squares. This project provided for the coming into use of the following street/square names immortalising the memory of Marx, Engels, Stalin, Lenin, Gorky, Voroshylov, Sverdlov, Kirov, and Mayakovsky as well as monumentalising the revolutionary past with the help of such street names as Giedrio, Eidukevičiaus, Greifenbergerio, Dzeržinskio, Proletarų.

²² A.R. Čaplinskas, *Vilniaus gatvės: Istorija, vardynas, žemėlapiai* (Vilnius, 2000), p. 18.

²³ *Vilniaus miesto istorija: nuo Spalio revoliucijos iki dabartinių dienų*, ed. H. Šadžius, R. Žepkaitė, J. Žiugžda (Vilnius, 1972), pp. 5–6.

²⁴ *Tiesa*, 28–29 Jun. 1973.

set by the commemoration of the 800th anniversary of Moscow in 1947, which moulded the traditions for the commemoration of the jubilees of Soviet cities – a particular canon bearing its own ideological semantics and celebratory rituals. The focus of attention in the preparation for the anniversary and the propaganda campaign as well as cultural work was directed at the ‘vivid reflection and suggestive demonstration of the city’s revolutionary past, tactical and work traditions of the working people in the city, achievements in all sectors of economy, multidimensional political and cultural links between Vilnius and other cities as well as capitals of the brotherly republics of the USSR’.²⁵ The date of the city’s founding was merely a symbolic starting point in the rhetoric of the commemoration of the jubilee. The focus was on the history of the Soviet period emphasising the achievements of the people under the leadership of the Soviet authorities.²⁶

The Significance of the Collective Memory of World War II in the Formation of the Identity of the Soviet City Soviet ideologists actively incorporated the collective memory of World War II (emphasising the defensive, nation-wide character of the war which Soviet ideologists named the Great Patriotic War) in the formation of the collective memory. This war narrative and the story of the liberation of Vilnius (13 July 1944) were equally important in the formation of the new identity of Vilnius as the myth of the revolutionary past of the city. In 1946 J. Paleckis, the chairman of the Supreme Council of Soviet Lithuania, echoing Stalin’s idea pointed out that the third significant victory following the triumph of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the final victory of Socialism in economics and social order facilitated by Stalin’s five-year plans was the victory in the Great Patriotic War.²⁷

It has already been mentioned that on the one hand the liberation of Vilnius was a weighty fact facilitating the legitimisation of the regime in the city. Yet on the other hand, it was employed as an important instrument helping to form the identity of the new Soviet

²⁵ The minutes No. 39 of the meeting of the bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania on 16 Feb., 1973, LYA, f. 1771, ap. 248, b. 38, l. 7–8.

²⁶ For more information, see Vilniui 650 metų (Vilnius, 1976).

²⁷ J. Paleckis, ‘Einamasis momentas ir Lietuvos liaudies uždaviniai’, *Vienybė*, Nr. 2 – Gruodis, 1946, Buenos Airės, p. 3.

citizen emphasising the heroism of the Soviet people (heroic soldiers were set as an example; to bring nearer to the local specifics the merits of the 16th Lithuanian Riflemen's Division were emphasised, heroes of Socialist labour, Stakhanovites) thus motivating the people for new achievements in the development of Socialism. The myth was an influential source of Soviet patriotism. The reconstruction of Vilnius destroyed in the course of war served as an excellent platform for the manifestation of such patriotism (naturally Soviet ideologists did not fail to remind people constantly that not only the Lithuanians but all the people of the Soviet Union participated in the reconstruction of the capital). The appeal to all working people of Soviet Lithuania 'The Reconstruction of our capital, Vilnius, is the Cause of all Working People of Lithuania' which appeared on 4 April 1945 in one of the official newspapers of Soviet Lithuania 'Tiesa' can be considered an example of such patriotism. The first part of the invitation to join the reconstruction works of Vilnius featured the appeal of workers from the Zarasai region (as 'the voice of the people') to the people of Lithuania to join forces in the reconstruction of the capital. In the second part, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Lithuania urged to 'support the valuable patriotic initiative of the workers of Zarasai and transform 'our old capital Vilnius into an exemplary blooming city'. The third part called 'New Cadres are Pouring into Vilnius' disclosed a particular plan for the 'Lithuanisation' of the city: people were urged to say goodbye to the citizens of Polish descent who were repatriated to Poland (many against their will) and Lithuanians were encouraged to relocate to the capital. The slogan ran: 'Aukštaitijans move to Vilnius, Žemaitijans move to Vilnius'. Sniečkus in his speeches repeatedly emphasized that Vilnius 'should become the largest industrial centre and the heart of cultural life of Lithuania'. At first sight, this 'patriotic' initiative was merely a part of Soviet propaganda, yet it opened the door for the Lithuanisation of Vilnius from the ethnic point of view. Another aspect of the promotion of Soviet patriotism was the resolution of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Lithuania and the Council of Ministers of the USSR (most likely initiated by the Communist Party of Lithuania) 'On the Reconstruction of the Capital of the Lithuanian SSR Vilnius' adopted in 1948 and received with enormous pathos and enthusiasm. The resolution provided for the further perspectives of the restoration and development of the city's economy and industry. Constantly referred to as 'Stalin's generous gift' the restoration plan of Vilnius also

facilitated the legitimisation of Soviet rule. In public rhetoric, it was also emphasised that ‘the historic resolution of the Soviet government inspired the working people of Vilnius for the general patriotic campaign – the reconstruction of the capital’.²⁸ Similarly, to the appeal of 1945 workers and civil servants of Vilnius invited all the working people of the republic to rebuild Vilnius.²⁹

It is no wonder that the late 1940s and the early 1950s witnessed the height of the implementation of the plan of Soviet monumental propaganda. New symbols of the regime – monuments to Stalin (1950), Ivan Chernyakhovsky (1950), Lenin (1952) and sculptures on Chernyakhovsky Bridge (now Green Bridge, in 1952) – erected in the public spaces of Vilnius facilitated the anchoring of Soviet patriotism.

One of the strategies practiced by the Soviet authorities – to employ objects-symbols in the formation of a Soviet city and an individual version of Socialist culture – accounts for the boom of monumental propaganda. National symbols reflecting the power of Soviet rule were aimed to help new Soviet citizens identify with their cities. Entire ‘units of symbols’ rendering the unambiguous ideological ‘message’ to the society were created in Vilnius in Soviet times. A body of objects and place-names was employed in order to achieve the aim – a visual component (monument), street names and the function of neighbouring buildings (government buildings).³⁰ Vivid examples testifying the implementation of the propaganda plan were Lenin Square (now Lukiškių Square) and Chernyakhovsky Square (now Kudirkos Square). Thus, the new symbolic centres of the city represented the official culture of memory.

Undoubtedly the memorial in honour of Chernyakhovsky and the military cemetery at Antakalnis became the symbols representing the memory of World War II. The symbolic dates – 13 July (liberation of Vilnius from the fascist occupation) and 9 May (Victory Day) – were solemnly commemorated there. The ranks of the monuments-symbols augmented in 1982 with the erection of the monument to Soviet partisans and underground activists and a few years later with the unveiling of the monument to Soviet soldiers in Antakalnis cemetery.

²⁸ H. Šadžius, *Socialistinio Vilniaus darbininkai* (Vilnius, 1980), p. 88.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

³⁰ R. Čepaitienė, ‘Interpretuojant daugiakultūrį Vilnių: kontekstai, problemos ir galimybės’, *Naujasis Vilniaus perskaitymas: didieji Lietuvos istoriniai pasakojimai ir daugiakultūrinis miesto paveldas* (Vilnius, 2009), p. 59.

Besides, the memory of World War II was represented by the new place-names in the city: Chernyakhovsky Square, Red Army Avenue and the new street names: F. Žemaitis, I. Jaborov, N. Krylov, V. Obuchov, I. Bagramian. However, it should be mentioned that the number of streets named in honour of World War II and its heroes in Vilnius was minor, for example, in 1969 such streets made up 1.5 per cent of all the city's place names whereas in Minsk or Kiev their number was much more considerable.³¹

The Importance of the Idea of Progress in the Formation of the Image of a Modern City The third pronounced and important factor that helped form the Soviet identity of Vilnius – the idea of progress that served as the basis for the myth – should be given separate consideration. The cultivation of this idea that started in 1940 was resumed after World War II; in the late 1950s and early 1960s, a dramatic change could be observed in the culture of memory. After the post-war plan of the reconstruction of Vilnius that promoted Soviet patriotism ideological values were transferred to the new spaces of city development.

The idea of progress embraced the aspects of modernisation, industrialisation and urbanisation. The creation of the 'new Soviet citizen' was an inseparable part of the plan for implementing this idea. The commemoration of the twenty years of Soviet Lithuania in 1960 was a vivid example of the escalation of this idea. 'When you climb the tower of Gediminas castle the capital of Soviet Lithuania looks like a gigantic glass filled with air shimmering in the heat, greenery and buildings of every form and shape. And almost on every street you spot towering walls of new houses and steel giants – cranes. The capital of Soviet Lithuania rapidly grows and flourishes. Someone who left it twenty years ago would fail to recognise it now. Since the day when the Soviet flag was finally raised above the castle, the working people of the city under the leadership of the Communist party have created real miracles'.³² The representative publications and city guides of those times which were aimed at the formation of the city's image alongside such features of Vilnius as its glorious revolutionary past, its role as a cultural and educational centre, a city of picturesque

³¹ R. Baločkaitė, A. Kazakevich, A. Lastousky 'Memory of World War II in the City Landscape of Eastern Europe, *Geschichtswerkstatt Europa*, July 16, 2009, in: <http://www.geschichtswerkstatteuropa.org/media/projekte/Methodenpapier/Layers_City_Landscape_Eastern_Europe.pdf> [address visited on 4 Oct. 2009].

³² 'Klesti tarybinis Vilnius', *Tiesa*, 16 Jul. 1960.

architecture and art and a place for fraternal nations to meet, emphasised the idea of modern and rapidly developing city.³³

The pride of the city, the Lazdynai suburb, developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s was considered one of the ‘miracles’ created by the Soviet people. Its development was induced by the turning point in the urban planning of the USSR and Lithuania, which occurred in 1958 following the international congress of architects in Moscow. The idea of ‘satellite cities’ introduced at the congress inspired Soviet architects to start planning city ‘suburbs’ or the so called ‘residential areas’. The adaptation of the philosophy in Vilnius was the project and development of the Lazdynai suburb started in 1962 by architects V. Čekanauskas and V. Brėdikis. In 1974, the project received the Lenin Prize – the highest award for an urban project in the USSR. Due to the above reason Lazdynai became a symbol of the idea of progress in Vilnius and the expression of new focuses in the cityscape. Paradoxically Lazdynai planned by the architects as an antipode to the dreariness of Soviet architecture turned out to be not only a highly rated and recognised example of urban construction but also served as the means of propaganda representing the achievements of Soviet architecture.³⁴

The idea of progress marked a certain change of the ideological content in Vilnius and found its realization in the field of monumental propaganda with the erection of such sculptures as Builder in 1980, Worker in 1982 and First Swallows dedicated to the conquest of space which was unveiled in 1987 next to the then Museum of Revolution as if marking the completion of the plan. These examples show the shift of the monumental stylistics, as it became more modern. The implantation of the idea of progress into the collective memory was also reflected in street names: in commemoration of Yu. Gagarin’s ‘heroic deed – journey into outer space’ Jaunimo (Youth) Street was renamed Gagarino (Gagarin’s), Kosmonautų (Cosmonauts’) avenue appeared in 1967; Architektų (Architects’), Darbininkų (Workers’), etc. were named in honour of the creators of the new cityscape. On the other hand, monuments to such historic personalities as A. Mick-

³³ The above image of the city was presented in the booklets aimed at the representation of Vilnius published in 1965: *Tarybinis Vilnius, Istorijos pėdsakai Vilniuje, Vilnius – broliškų kultūrų miestas, Vilniaus architektūra šiandien ir rytoj*, (Vilnius, 1965).

³⁴ M. Drėmaitė. ‘Sovietmečio paveldas Vilniaus architektūroje: tarp lietuviškumo ir sovietišškumo’, *Naujasis Vilniaus perskaitymas*, p. 102.

iewicz (1984) and L. Stuoka-Gucevičius (1987) testifying changes in the process of formation of cultural memory emerged in the landscape of the city's cultural memory in 1980s. However, this is the topic of the more detailed research.

Conclusions When analysing the processes of shaping Soviet Vilnius' identity, tendencies common to all Soviet republics' capitals and cities could be observed – generally speaking, the main aim of the Soviet authorities was to transform them into centres embodying Soviet ideology. However, some specific features could be felt. In Vilnius, as in other Soviet cities, attempts were made to reshape it into the ideological centre of the republic's life. This goal was accomplished not only making every effort to shape the city externally so that it would meet the needs of the new 'Soviet citizen' but also to alter its historic identity; that is, to erase from the cultural memory of the citizens or reinterpreting the history that had been created for centuries and form a new version of it, namely a Soviet one.

When creating the identity of the new Soviet city and implanting the content of Soviet ideology in the collective memory three legitimising motives played a main role: the foundation myth common throughout the Soviet Union with the central figure of Lenin and Vilnius as the revolutionary movement centre (a focus on the 'deep revolutionary traditions' of the city and emphasis on the fact that Lenin visited Vilnius in 1895); the memory of the World War II (or, in Soviet rhetoric, 'The Great Patriotic War') and the idea of the Progress. These features, common throughout Soviet city landscapes, were embodied in changed place-names, new monuments and memorial places, and the construction of public buildings, symbols representing the power of the Soviet regime in public spaces.

The process of constructing the identity of Soviet Vilnius may be characterised too by certain specific nuances. First of all, in the Soviet period (which should not be understood as a monolithic period but as one which underwent changes in the course of time) a tendency for narrative change can be noticed. Whereas in 1940, soon after the first Soviet occupation of Lithuania, the legitimising narrative of Vilnius as the Soviet capital was based mainly on the motif of the revolutionary past, and revolutionary personalities and events, illustrating 'rich revolutionary traditions' were sought out and emphasised in the city's history, soon after WWII, or more precisely, after 13 June 1944, the date of Vilnius' liberation, the memory of the 'Great Patriotic

War' was particularly relevant. Throughout the Soviet period these two narratives went hand in hand in the formation of the city's new identity and ideological indoctrination of the society and promoting socialistic patriotism

At the end of 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s these ideological narratives were supplemented by the third narrative based on the idea of progress. This new tendency of 'great progress' appeared in order to stress the modernity and progressiveness of Vilnius rebuilt after the war as Soviet Lithuania's flourishing capital and also to elevate the deeds of the Communist Party and all Soviet society creating this city.

When talking about the mechanisms and tendencies for implementing general Soviet themes to form the identity of Soviet Vilnius, one important characteristic should be noted, namely that these general themes were localised in the Vilnius cultural memory landscape through the invocation of 'Lithuanian' symbolic figures (Lithuanians, derived from Lithuanian personalities of the revolution or 'the Great Patriotic War') and appeals to events from local history. Analysing the process of constructing the identity of Soviet Vilnius hierarchically, it is possible to distinguish 'general' Soviet themes (or myths) and their representations in the form of monuments and place-names and their 'local' variations, which hierarchically took a lower, position but were used more widely.

Precisely the abundance of the 'localised' Soviet themes in the landscape of the cultural memory of the city of Vilnius allow us to speak about one of the exclusive features of the construction of Soviet Vilnius identity— its local, *Lithuanian/national* nuance. Generally speaking, in the Soviet period Vilnius did not experience the fate of, for example, Minsk or Kiev, cities whose landscapes were totally transformed according to the logic of Soviet urban planning; when the cultural memory of the city of Vilnius was reconstructed note was taken of more than just tendencies within the 'common' Soviet historical narrative.

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SOVIETINIS VILNIUS: IDEOLOGIJA IR TAPATUMO FORMAVIMASIS

Santrauka

ŽIVILĖ MIKAILIENĖ

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama istorijos naratyvų, mitų ir simbolių reikšmė Vilniaus, kaip sovietinės Lietuvos sostinės, naujojo tapatumo formavimuisi.

Vilnius nebuvo išimtis sovietinių sostinių kūrimo kontekste – konstruotas ideologinis šalies gyvenimo centras. Sovietinis režimas, siekdamas šio tikslo, pertvarkinėjo miestą taip, kad šis ne tik tiktų gyventi „naujam sovietiniam žmogui“, bet ir pasikeistų jo istorinė tapatybė – stengtasi ištrinti iš žmonių atminties šimtmečiais kurtą istoriją ar, atsižvelgiant į sovietinės ideologijos kanonus, perinterpretuoti ją ir konstruoti naują jos versiją.

Vilniaus istorijos „perrašymas“ akivaizdžiai matomas fiziniame miesto paveiksle – architektūrinėje ir urbanistinėje jo raidoje. Taip pat ši naujosios miesto tapatybės kūrimą atspindi sovietmečiu pakeisti miesto toponimai, pastatyti paminklai, memorialinės vietos, reprezentaciniai pastatai – visi sovietinio režimo galią viešojoje erdvėje simbolizuojantys materialūs ženklai. Tiek šie, materialūs, tiek ir nematerialūs galios raiškos dėmenys – konstruojamas naujas sovietinio miesto istorijos naratyvas, politinę galią legitimuojantys miesto mitai (revoliucinės praeities, Antrojo pasaulinio karo, sovietinėje retorikoje vadinamo Didžiuoju Tėvynės karu) bei pažangos idėja – padėjo kurti naująją miesto gyventojų tapatybę ir indoktrinuoti visuomenę.