



*Signatories to the Act of the 16th February 1918*

### The 11th March 1990 – the peak of Lithuania’s millennium?

Before you is a coin with the impressed date of the re-establishment of independence of Lithuania – the 11th March 1990. It is a third coin dedicated to the millennium of Lithuania. The first one was dedicated to the year 1009 – the first mention of the name of Lithuania; the second one – to the old and the longest period of statehood – the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). Thus we have a triptych with a stylish combination of the date numbers: 1009, GDL, 1990. Can’t we, however, take it as a numerological trick if we are aware that Lithuanian history of the modern times has had a whole series of peaks in the fights for freedom? Does the year 1990, made that outstanding, not obscure them? As a matter of fact, the 11th March has already become a

symbol. In Charlottenburg Park Berlin there is an obelisk dedicated to the 11th March, designed by the Bosnian descendent Braco Dimitrijevic. This would be just commonplace were it not for the fact that the obelisk was erected in 1979 and dedicated to a day “that will probably be significant for world history”. What is it – a magic coincidence or a trick? And now let us have a serious look at the last centuries of Lithuania’s millennium.

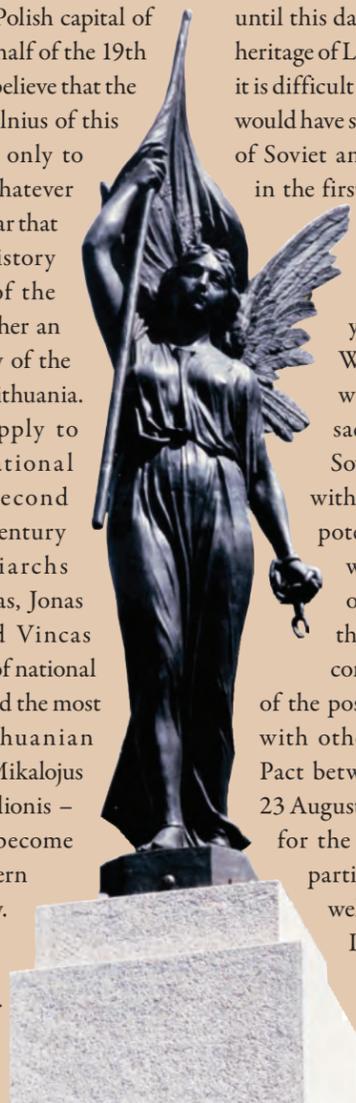
### Lithuania’s highs and lows in the 19th–20th c.c.

In the 19th century, Lithuania was within the Russian Empire. Jointly with Poland, we resisted it by the uprisings of 1830–1831 and 1863. They were led by nobility which mainly spoke Polish; therefore even today Lithuanians sometimes refer to the

epoch as “Poletime” and to all nobles of this epoch – as a dry branch of the nation. Actually, the descendents of Vilnius University Adomas Mickevičius (Adam Mickiewicz) and Julijus Slovackis (Juliusz Słowacki) not only have created the great poetry of the time but a whole field of ideas, referred to as Polish Messianism. They themselves were later named prophets of the Polish nation, and Vilnius – the Polish capital of culture of the first half of the 19th century. Today we believe that the great creators of Vilnius of this epoch belong not only to Polish culture. Whatever the attitude, it is clear that the Lithuanian history of the first half of the 19th century is rather an echo of the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This does not apply to Lithuanians’ national revival in the second half of the 19th century and to its patriarchs Simonas Daukantas, Jonas Basanavičius and Vincas Kudirka, the bard of national revival Maironis and the most outstanding Lithuanian creator of the time Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis – all of them have become giants of the modern Lithuanian identity.

It was namely national revival that has led to the 16th February 1918, when the State of Lithuania was re-established. It is difficult to overestimate the significance of this event – the Republic of Lithuania has created a culture with universal education, modern trends of art and literature, with the architecture of gymnasia or even laboratories arousing admiration until this day. Without the ideological heritage of Lithuania’s interwar culture it is difficult to imagine, how Lithuania would have survived through the epoch of Soviet annexation. Geopolitically, in the first half of the 20th century

Lithuania was nothing but a granule in the niche of empires fallen yet shortly to recover. While we were part of the western world, but with sad neutrality between the Soviet Union and Germany, without true friends and allies: potential union with Poland was ruined by the conflict on Vilnius and the loss of the historical capital, and this conflict, in its turn, deprived of the possibilities to form a union with other Baltic countries. The Pact between Stalin and Hitler of 23 August 1939 not only paved ways for the Second World War, but partitioned Eastern Europe as well. This is what determined Lithuania’s destiny. Being alone, in 1940 Lithuania did not demonstrate



*Laisvės statula Kaune. Skulptorius J. Zikaras*

anything like Finland during the Winter War. So the Republic of Lithuania ended its days sadly, and in the Second World War epoch during the Soviet genocide and Nazi Holocaust Lithuania lost nearly one third of its population. As a matter of fact, Lithuania’s honour was defended in the longest “war after war” – an armed partisan war with the USSR in 1945–1953. Today it is considered Lithuania’s greatest contribution to Europe’s history of the 20th century. We showed miracles of resistance, but, again, we were all alone. While some countries did not recognize Lithuania’s annexation by the USSR, this was not an obstacle to depicting Lithuania on maps in the same red colour. This was not recognised either by the Lithuanian émigré community or the dissidents in Lithuania itself. Perhaps only the Kaunas events of 1972 were a clearer expression of striving for freedom, but that required the sacrifice of Romas Kalanta.

*Recalling the exile of 1941*



### The Singing Revolution and the 11th March 1990 in world history

With the start of Mikhail Gorbachev’s “Perestroika” Lithuania began its way towards restoration of Independence. It was led this way by the Sąjūdis Reform Movement founded in the summer of 1988, and the actions of condemnation of the Pact of 23 August 1939 between Stalin and Hitler became the central part of political rhetoric and practice. These include the great meeting of 1988 in Vilnius, the Baltic Way in 1989, which linked by a live human chain the capitals of the Baltic States, Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn, thus demonstrating a strive for freedom. And Lithuania did it on the 11th March 1990. All this process today is named the Singing Revolution: resisting peacefully on the 13th January 1991 Soviet military aggression and defending the Parliament, the people were singing even as tanks attacked. Today, this Revolution is comparable with the Budapest Autumn 1956 and the Prague Spring 1968. Lithuania, as the leader among the Baltic States, became a catalyst of the europeisation process in the Soviet empire. It took the leadership because of the most ardent manifestations of resistance in this country, which resulted from the historic path covered by the Lithuanian nation. The Baltics’ Singing Revolution was impossible without the historic role of Poland’s “Solidarity”, which began eroding the fundamentals of the communist camp. For Lithuania, however, a role probably not that



*The 13th January Remembrance Medal by P. Repšys. The front side*

powerful yet no less significant was meant – namely Lithuania was the first to defy yet another echelon of colonialism and empires, and the first to break away from the citadel of communism. The axis of this process was March 11th. Thus this day became the beginning of a chain reaction which eventually destroyed the Soviet Union and, in the opinion of Edvardas Gudavičius, was not a routine brick in the assembly of velvet revolutions but its central pillar. This has been recognised not only by historians. Commemorating the 10th anniversary of Lithuania’s independence in 2000, a US congressional resolution read that “the 11th March 1990 declaration on the full sovereignty and re-establishment of independence of the Republic of Lithuania destroyed the former Soviet Union”. The August 1991 revolution in Russia, which changed the balance of global powers, was also guided

by Lithuania’s experience. Global democracy won a huge victory. For the first time Lithuanian history became a factor in world history. Let us just compare: in the 15th century, Vytautas created an empire, but beyond the cartographic majesty were empty spaces; the Grünwald Battle stopped the march of the West eastwards, yet this was a regional, not a world factor. The first written constitution in Europe, created in the late 18th century, was a culmination in the ancient history of Poland and Lithuania, however even then Lithuania needed a great deal of effort to step out from Poland’s shadow – which happened on 20 October 1791. While together with Poland we were part of the West, yet we were not at the rear of the latter: bastions of democracy were far away and we were an island in the sea of autocracy. The Polish and Lithuanian State was divided between Prussia and Austria that were part of the western world, and Russia.

### 1990 – the beginning of Lithuania’s rise into its new millennium

And still the year 1990 is not only significant for Lithuania’s role and image in the world, but for itself as well. On seeing a map of the GDL we as if crouch at the thought, how small we are today; however in the epoch of the GDL’s largest expansion, Lithuania owned just a tiny shore of the Baltic Sea without Klaipėda. And today, for the first time in history, both Vilnius



Meeting in Vingis Park, 23 August 1988

and Klaipėda are part of the State of Lithuania. On his visit in Vilnius in 2002 after Lithuania was invited to join the NATO alliance, the US President George Bush said: "Anyone who would chose Lithuania as the enemy has also made an enemy of the United States of America. In the face of aggression, you will never have to fight alone". Has any powerful country in the world ever been an ally of Lithuania and have we ever had so many – almost thirty – allies? With the NATO membership in 2004, we became safest ever in our history. Should anyone have predicted to the Lithuanian participants in the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan in 1978 the presence of the Lithuanian army with its tricolour here after a few decades, that someone would have been considered telling a stupid dream. Isn't it a miracle? Today, the population of Lithuania

has been thinning in number, but not because of hungers and plagues that had been part of Lithuania's history until the 19th century, not because of such quality of life that we have never had in our history, but because of that quality being still higher in Europe, to which, having become a member of the European Union in 2004, we are free to emigrate without restrictions. It is only now that Lithuania is free to view its émigré community as part of it and, also, to evaluate the former huge emigration waves which have given the world more than one big-name. It is only today that we are free to consider the heritage of Lithuania's millennium scattered across various countries. Furthermore, Lithuania's Millennium in 2009 was a plausible argument for Vilnius becoming a European Capital of Culture. Be this just a declaration,

but then, could we dream of our capital's this high appreciation as little as 20 years ago? This, too, is for the first time in our millennium history.

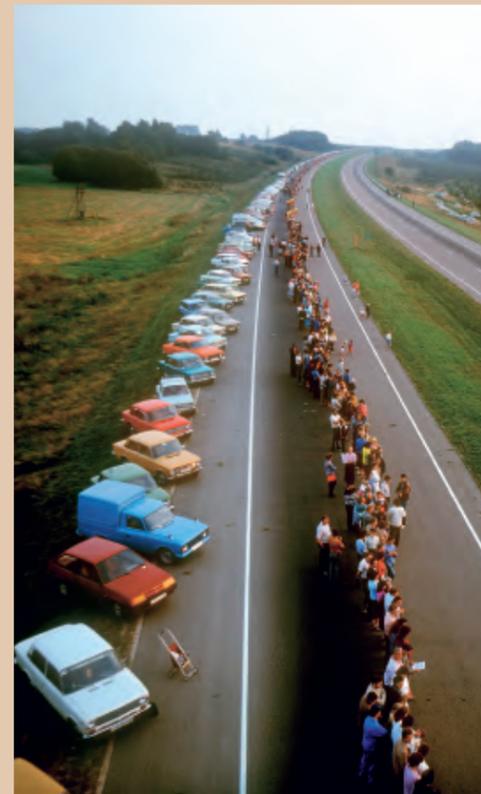
All this enables raising a question: shouldn't namely the year 1990 be considered the beginning of Lithuania's second millennium? Historians are aware of the long centuries, e.g. the 19th century is very often dated 1789–1914. Let Lithuania's first millennium be shorter, after all, the country has evolved to what it is now from 1990. For Lithuania, the year 1990 is the beginning of a second millennium. Anyway, the idea of Lithuania's millennium provides a good chance for contemplating the turns of Lithuania's destiny. For seeing ups and downs, honours and shames, heroes and traitors, what has been created and what has fallen behind. The idea of millennium originated in the 10th century in Christian Europe – the epoch of Lithuania's discoverer St Bruno Bonifacius, when, waiting for a new coming of the Christ, Lithuania not only had to rejoice at what had been achieved, but also to consider what had not been accomplished. Millennium is a threshold at which the Last Judgement is awaited. Europe's subsequent history secularized the idea, but did not abandon the most important – we have not only been contemplating the past, we have been contemplating the present and the future. Thus, Lithuania is made to do that for a single reason that namely in the epoch of its millennium – at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries – it restored its independence, came back

to Europe, and became a member of the Euro–Atlantic community. New opportunities and new challenges – this is what Lithuania's millennium makes to contemplate. Contemplate our life in the centuries to come.

In the coin, we see a Vytis of calligraphic stylistics. By this, it is as if stated: this coin is not a monument for the past, but preparation for drawing and writing. Lithuania is opening a new chapter of the book it has been writing.

*Prof. dr. Alfredas Bumblauskas*

The Baltic Way, 23 August 1989



## 100 LITAS COIN FROM THE SERIES DEDICATED TO THE MILLENNIUM OF THE MENTION OF THE NAME OF LITHUANIA

Gold Au 999.9

Quality proof

Diameter 22.30 mm

Weight 7.78 g

The words on the edge of the coin: LIETUVOS VARDŲ TŪKSTANTMETIS

(Millennium of the name of Lithuania)

Designed by Bronius Leonavičius and Giedrius Paulauskis

Mintage 10,000 pcs

Issue 2009



Vilnius, Cathedral Square, 28 August 1988

Information is available at the Bank of Lithuania  
Tel. +370 5 268 0316, fax +370 5 268 0314, www.lb.lt



The coin was minted at the UAB Lithuanian Mint, [www.lithuanian-mint.lt](http://www.lithuanian-mint.lt)  
Lithuanian Collectors Coins

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## LITHUANIAN COLLECTORS COINS



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