



24 June 1988, meeting in Gediminas Square. Photographed by Raimondas Urbakavičius



The Reform Movement of Lithuania (Sąjūdis), established on the 3rd of June 1988, didn't just rally the Lithuanian nation to rise up again to fight for their freedom and restore the independent state—the nation that had been brought together in Sąjūdis came back into European history and become an active participant and creator of events that changed the world.

Nations are communities of people, and they prosper only with a strong-willed affirmation of their historical existence. The most favourable conditions for a nation to express its creative power appear when it is able to establish itself as an independent political community and create its own state. Not all nations succeed in this. A nation without a state of its own is in danger of simply waning away. Such a fate was met by many nations; the only vestiges of their existence can be found in the names of long-lost nations that flash by in the annals of history.

Sąjūdis began as a movement to support the “restructuring” (*perestroika*) of the Soviet Union. However, the deep seated spiritual and moral spring that awakened it was the understanding of the existential danger to the nation and the desire for freedom. The dream to restore the independent Lithuanian state, which has never faded away, was what protected the newly-forming Sąjūdis from the danger of becoming a tool for the Soviet empire’s plans of “restructuring” and “renewal”.

Only a few months of intensive work and relentless political struggle were needed for the reawakening public, although there were various attempts made to smother them, to wipe away all obstructions and rise up as a great wave of national rebirth. In the Founding Congress of the 22–23rd of October 1988, Sąjūdis finally established itself in the public space as a legal, grassroots public political movement.

Having become a strong and influential political power, Sąjūdis could more and more boldly and openly express the expectations and will of the majority of the nation. Sąjūdis, which was supposed to assist the Communist Party in performing its conceived “restructuring”, rapidly turned into a true movement of national and political liberation.

The goal to restore the state was first publicly and unequivocally named in the Declaration of the Sąjūdis Seimas Council, approved on the 16th of February 1989 in Kaunas, while celebrating Lithuania’s Independence Day.



23 August 1988, meeting in Vingis Park, Vilnius. Photographed by Zenonas Nekrošius

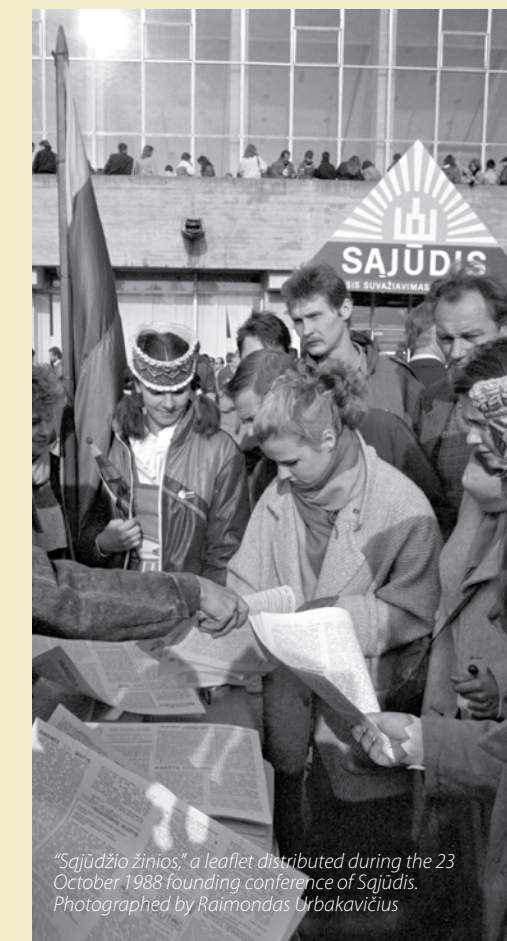


9 July 1988, meeting in Vingis Park, Vilnius. Photographed by Juozas Polis

This goal was pursued consistently and single-mindedly, cleverly exploiting the opportunities of peaceful political struggle that appeared in the conditions of the “restructuring”.

On 26th of March 1989, during the elections to the Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union, Sąjūdis achieved a convincing victory: its representatives gained 36 out of the 42 spots designated for Lithuania. The abundant group of representatives at the Congress helped to more closely cooperate with the delegations from Latvia, Estonia and other Soviet republics. The Congress saw the formation of a broad, democratically-minded camp of deputies, which supported the aims of the Baltic republics. At its request, a committee was formed to politically and legally assess the Soviet Union’s and Germany’s non-aggression pact of 1939. At the Congress of People’s Deputies of the Soviet Union, on the 24th of December 1989 it was decided that the secret agreements between the two aggressors were not legally founded and were invalid from the date of their signing. This was a great political and moral victory for Sąjūdis: the Soviet Union finally officially recognized the fact of the occupation of the Baltic countries.

The efforts of Sąjūdis also changed the international status of Lithuania. The restoration of independence was possible only by having the support of international



“Sąjūdžio žinios,” a leaflet distributed during the 23 October 1988 founding conference of Sąjūdis. Photographed by Raimondas Urbakavičius



23 October 1988 founding conference of Sąjūdis. Photographed by Romualdas Požerskis

public opinion and the democratic countries of the world. Although some Western countries did not acknowledge the occupation and annexation of the Baltic States by the Soviets, after World War II these three states were slowly forgotten and were eventually seen as a "natural" part of the Soviet Union. This wall of oblivion was broken through by the Lithuanian Sąjūdis and the Estonian and Latvian peoples' fronts, which on the 23rd of August 1989 organized the unique "Baltijos kelias" (Baltic Way). Almost two million people, holding hands in a living human chain, with great effect reminded everyone that at the end of the 20th century in Europe there were still three enslaved nations that yearned for freedom. This event was met with huge international response, and it symbolically brought back the Baltic States into the memories of the world's people and awakened the conscience of the politicians.

The 24th of February 1990 elections to the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR were the last step towards independence. Having won 101 mandates out of 141, representatives of Sąjūdis made up the absolute majority of the Council and could legally re-establish the state. The 11 of March Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania began a new stage in the history of the country's statehood.

However, the formally re-established Lithuanian state still had to expect severe trials and tribulations. The leadership of the Soviet Union did not come to terms with the announcement of the independence of Lithuania and resorted to rough political and economic pressure and blackmail. The 13th of January 1991 saw open military aggression by the Soviet Union against the Republic of Lithuania. Defence of the country was led by Sąjūdis, which had brought together thousands of people to protect the independence. Lithuania withstood the attack. The unsuccessful aggression against Lithuania was the start of the downfall of the Soviet empire. The example set by Lithuania encouraged the other nations enslaved by the European Union to also reach for their own independence. The attempts to forcefully smother Lithuania's attempts to gain independence became the moral and political bankruptcy of the leadership of the Soviet Union in the international arena. In the capitals of the most influential nations, faith in the "restructuring" of the Soviet Union faded, and the world's public opinion turned to the favour of Lithuania's independence.

In August 1991, when the last attempts in Moscow to salvage the collapsing Communist empire failed, the great goal of Sąjūdis was finally reached: Lithuania once more became part of the world community of nations and, as a member, was their equal.

Prof. Dr. Vytautas Radžvilas



28 September 1988 meeting of the Lithuanian Liberty League in Vilnius. Photographed by Zina Jonas Kazėnas



Lithuanian
Collectors
Coins



LIETUVOS BANKAS

COINS DEDICATED TO THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LITHUANIAN SAJŪDIS
(FROM THE SERIES "LITHUANIA'S ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE")

Denomination 50 litas

Silver Ag 925

Quality proof

Diameter 38.61 mm

Weight 28.28 g

Mintage 4,000

Denomination 25 litas

Cu/Al/Zn/Sn Alloy

Quality proof like

Diameter 28.00 mm

Weight 10.00 g

Edge of the coin: rims

Mintage 25,000

Edge of the coin: SU SAJŪDŽIU UŽ LIETUVĄ

Issued in 2013

Designed by Rytas Jonas Belevičius

Information is available at the Bank of Lithuania

Tel. +370 5 268 0316

Fax +370 5 268 0314

www.lb.lt



LIETUVOS MONETŲ KALYKLA

The coin was minted at the UAB Lithuanian Mint

www.lithuanian-mint.lt

Lithuanian Collectors Coins

© Lietuvos bankas, 2013

This publication uses exhibits and photographs by Raimondas Urbakavičius from the collection of the National Museum of Lithuania and the symbol of the founding conference of Sąjūdis from the private collection of its author, artist Giedrius Reimeris.

Designed by Ilona Daugelaitė

The coins were photographed by Arūnas Baltėnas

Published by Lietuvos bankas, Gedimino pr. 6, LT-01 103 Vilnius, Lithuania

Printed by UAB "Lodvila", www.lodvila.lt



COINS DEDICATED TO THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LITHUANIAN SAJŪDIS
(FROM THE SERIES "LITHUANIA'S ROAD TO INDEPENDENCE")