

Lithuanian Commemorative Coins

**50 LITAS COIN
COMMEMORATING
VINCAS KUDIRKA
(1858–1899)**

Silver 925

Diameter 38.61 mm

Weight 28.28 g

The words on the edge of the coin:
**VARDAN TOS LIETUVOS
VIENYBĖ TEŽYDI
(FOR LITHUANIA'S SAKE
LET OUR UNITY BLOSSOM)**

Designed by sculptor
Gediminas Karalius

Mintage 4 000

Issue 1999



**Dr Vincas Kudirka
(1858–1899)**

Deeds of a person preserve a remembrance of him for decades or centuries. A distance of 100 years separates the epoch of Vincas Kudirka from us, but his endeavours, commitment and dedication to the ideals of the Lithuanian nation, as well as his versatile work inspired by several muses closely link him with present-day Lithuania. This linkage exists not only because his literary works are included in secondary school curricula and the poem "The National Song" written and composed by him is used as the national anthem of the State of Lithuania nowadays. The main reason is that in the 19th century – an epoch of the national rebirth of the Lithuanians – Vincas Kudirka was wakening the nation for meaningful, decent, bright and active life and was teaching people to love their Homeland, to work for the benefit of the country. He was not just teaching others, but was behaving accordingly himself and set a good example to the rest. In view of this it can be stated that the national rebirth of the Lithuanians has had the beginning, but has no end, as these aspects are of the same importance today. Therefore Vincas

Kudirka is reasonably considered to be a fellow traveller in our life.

But his epoch was essentially different from the present of Lithuania. The Lithuanian nation, the rights of which Vincas Kudirka was defending and leading people to the light at the end of the tunnel, was subjugated by Russia. Lithuanians were tyrannized and humiliated: in Lithuania they were not allowed to hold administrative posts; officials, policemen and gendarmes, sent by Russia, became the lords and oppressors of Lithuania; the Lithuanian language, press and schools were banned. Vincas Kudirka lived, worked and created in the period of the Russian oppression. The fight against it was the primary task for him and the greatest aim in his life.



"The National Song"

Vincas Kudirka was born on December 31, 1858 in the family of wealthy farmers in *Paežeriai, Vilkaviškis* region. His mother died when he was ten. Tenderness of his character, as well as inclination for painting and music were inherited from her. His father was a noble and determined farmer from *Suvalkija*. Those features were obviously transferred to the son.

Almost all the time, excluding the period of studies in Warsaw and medical treatment in the Crimea, Vincas Kudirka lived in *Suvalkija*. *Suvalkija* is a specific region where many prominent personalities of the Lithuanian national movement were raised. One of his contemporaries from central Lithuania after visiting Vincas Kudirka in *Suvalkija*, noted: "...I found people of *Suvalkija* to be different from us. They are more daring, have more clearly expressed national identity, though, to tell the truth, they are rather blunt, but they are better prepared to accept culture than we are. They are much healthier spiritually, as they are definitely isolated from the decaying demoralised gentry". Vincas Kudirka could gain much from such an environment for the development and realization of his ideals. However, not everything went smoothly at first.



The Hut (constructed in 1867) –
Memorial Museum of Vincas Kudirka



While Vincas Kudirka was attending primary school in *Paežeriai*, secondary school in *Marijampolė*, the Priest Seminary in *Seinai*, for which he had no vocation and which he left against his father's will, and studying at Warsaw University, he was greatly influenced by Polonization. Impressed by works of Adam



Organizers of "The Bell" in Warsaw
Sitting: V. Kudirka, J. Adomaitis,
J. Gaidamavičius, J. Kaukas
Standing: J. Kasakaitis, B. Vabalas, J. Seniūnas,
J. Staugaitis, J. Gediminas-Klausutis-Beržanskas,
Moravskis, J. Byla

Mickiewicz, Jozef Ignacy Kraszewski, Syrokomla (Ludwik Kondratowicz) and other Romantics and prominent European philosophers that were published and more available in Polish, he became Polish inclined, adhered to the urban and Polish culture of the gentry, felt aversion to his peasant origin and the Lithuanian language. However, during the time of his studies at Warsaw University a turning point of his life – a return to his natural origins – occurred.

After he got acquainted with the newly appeared Lithuanian periodical *The Dawn* ("Aušra"), he felt pangs of consciousness, as



The Museum of Vincas Kudirka in Kudirkos Naumiestis opened on December 5, 1998

Vincas Kudirka wrote himself later, because of irreversibly lost hours of his life as a Lithuanian. When the sense of being a Lithuanian overcame him he felt noble and great. Thus Kudirka commenced a new, the most meaningful and fruitful period of his life.

Influenced by the ideas of positivism Vincas Kudirka began definite undertakings, awakening and enlightening the Lithuanian nation, defending the rights of the nation and leading it to a brighter future. In Warsaw, together with other Lithuanian students, he established an illegal society *Lithuania* ("Lietuva") and worked out its program based on the principles of positivism. The aims set by the Society became the program of the underground publication *The Bell* ("Varpas"). Kudirka was the soul of *The Bell*. Up to his early death all his efforts were devoted to that publication. It is not possible to imagine *The Bell* without Kudirka and vice versa – Kudirka without *The Bell*. Vincas Kudirka considered his commitment of writing the column "The Bells of Homeland" for the publication to be of great importance. This could be illustrated by the fact that over five last years of his life he discontinued his practice of a certificated physician that would have ensured a wealthy life for him and gave himself up to creative work. In the "Bells of Homeland" he sharply chastised everything he considered as a threat to the Lithuanian nation, everything that hampered the nation to use its rights, even those already restricted by the regime, and always used to emphasize the consequences of Russification.

Vincas Kudirka treated the regime enforced by Russia as a yoke thrust upon the Lithuanians and rallied the forces to fight against it. He satirised the Russian executives, as well as the cowardice, "quaking in one's shoes" and selfishness met among the Lithuanian intelligentsia. Participating personally in the resistance movement Kudirka rejoiced each step made in defence of Lithuanian's rights and described them publicly in the press. He publicized bravery and courage of the common people in their clash with the Russian government which intended to close the church in *Kražiai* (1893), the resistance of the Lithuanian secondary school students in *Mintauja* to praying in the Russian language (1896). Vincas Kudirka asserted them to be heroes.

Vincas Kudirka was convinced that enlightenment would teach the nation more advanced farming, would give better understanding of its rights and prepare the people to fight for those rights. He considered the ban of the Lithuanian press to be the main obstacle in bringing enlightenment. In his proclamation "To Fellow Lithuanians" Kudirka urged the people to rally and strive



The monument to Vincas Kudirka in Kudirkos Naumiestis
Sculptor Vincas Grybas

for the abolition of the drastic ban and pointed out legal ways to achieve that aim. "Brothers, – he wrote, – the truth is ours, and ours will be victory, but we are to hold out firmly".

In his poem "The National Song", which was published along with the score in the last issue of *The Bell* in 1898, Vincas Kudirka declared that our Homeland is Lithuania. The words of the anthem were guidelines to a Lithuanian of the reviving Lithuania how to work and what to strive for. "The National Song" is a very meaningful and rational piece uniting the people to work for the welfare of Lithuania in the manner so peculiar to Vincas Kudirka. It closely relates us to Vincas Kudirka, as today we are repeating the words and the melody once created by him.

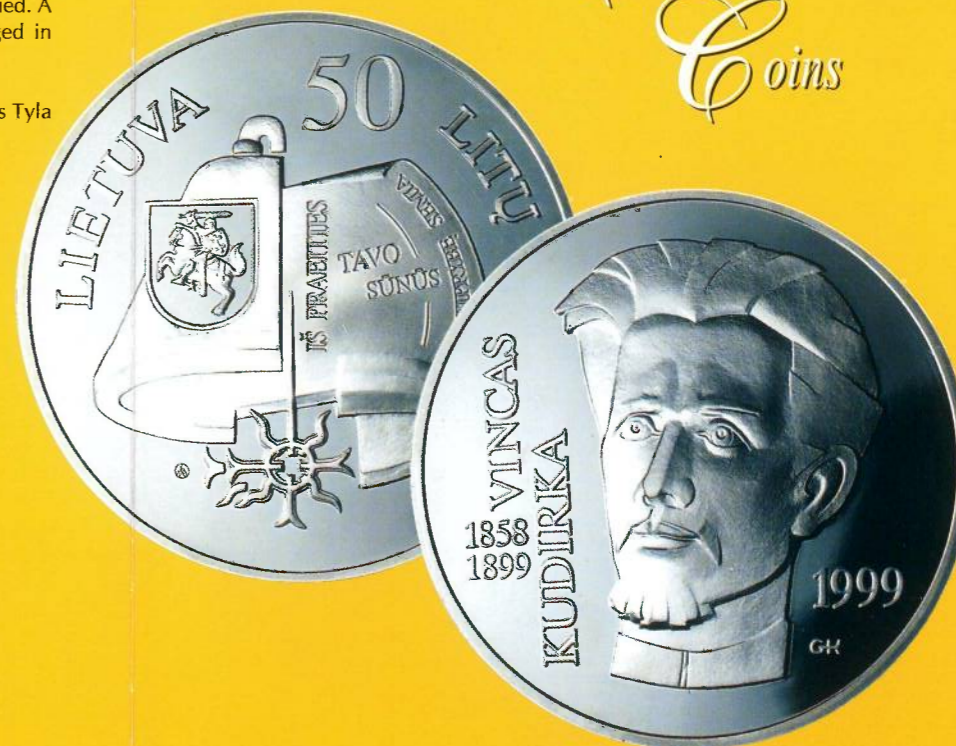
Vincas Kudirka was rational in estimating the economic difficulties the Lithuanian farmers were encountering and encouraged them to learn different trades and try to succeed in trading. He considered the emigration of young people a wrong way of resisting against the oppression and solving economic problems.

Heritage of the works by Vincas Kudirka is very diverse. As a student at the secondary

school in *Marijampolė* he used to play the violin in the school orchestra, had a nice voice and was a member of the church choir. He did not abandon the violin later. He composed musical pieces and harmonized Lithuanian folk songs. Besides, he wrote poems, satires, translated into Lithuanian the works of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Slowacki, Friedrich Schiller and other authors. Kudirka was a tireless creator, awakening and uniting the nation for common and honest work and for the fight against the yoke of the invaders.

In 1998–1999 Lithuania is celebrating the 140th birth anniversary of Vincas Kudirka and commemorating the centenary of his death. 100 years have passed also since the national anthem – "The National Song" was written. To mark these dates the monuments to Vincas Kudirka have been erected in *Šakiai* and *Vilkaviškis*, and in *Kudirkos Naumiestis* a Museum of dr Vincas Kudirka has been opened. Many publications dedicated to Vincas Kudirka were issued. A grand public celebration was arranged in Vilnius.

Dr Antanas Tyla



The coin is minted at the Mint of Lithuania

Information available at the Bank of Lithuania
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LIETUVOS BANKAS

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