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THE ŽALGIRIS MOVEMENT
AND THE FORMATION
OF AN ALTERNATIVE
FOREIGN POLICY
PHILOSOPHY (ON THE BASIS
OF THE ŽALGIRIS APPENDIX
TO THE RESPUBLIKA
NEWSPAPER)



After Lithuanian accession to the European Union and NATO, a cross-party political consensus has existed regarding the state's foreign policy objectives. Against this background, the Žalgiris national resistance movement, which was established by eminent politicians, journalists, and public figures in 2009, posed a certain intellectual challenge. This article concentrates on the development of a new foreign policy philosophy — the focal point of the interviews, round tables and press conferences held by the Movement.

Key words: Lithuania, Lithuanian foreign policy, “Žalgiris” movement, Russian-Lithuanian relations, Lithuania and the European Union.

The accession of Lithuania to the major Euro-Atlantic organizations (EU and NATO) in 2004, was the implementation of the key foreign economic policy objective set for the previous decade and incorporated in the motto “*Back to Europe!*” It challenged the elites with the need to find new targets in the field of foreign policy that could mark a new stage following the 1991—2005. In Lithuania, the 2000s saw a considerable economic growth, which became an important factor of the legitimation of the current policy in the public consciousness (both in the country and abroad). However, the aftermath of the world financial and economic crisis, which hit Lithuania in 2008, exposed systemic deficiencies of the chosen political and economic model. It became obvious that, in an unstable economic situation, the logic of adaptation to new circumstances creates the need to reconsider the foreign policy priorities.

Differences in political preferences among the Lithuania political elite came to the fore as the economic crisis commenced. If the first stage (2004—2008) was characterised by a strong consensus (see the *Agreement between Political Parties of the Republic of Lithuania on the Main Foreign Policy Goals and Objectives for 2004—2008*, which give a comprehensive account of the key foreign policy issues [1]), the second one (from 2008 onwards) has been marked with the formation of a trend towards the search for a political alternative: a similar document (the *Agreement of the Political Parties of Lithuania on Foreign Policy Principles, Strategic Guidelines and Goals for 2008—2012* [2]) had a more general nature. At the same time the so called programme of the “new majority government”, or the “broad coalition” («Plačioji koalicija») [3], developed by oppositional parties (the Social-democratic Party, the Order and Justice, the Labour Party, and the Christian Party) and signed on March 9, 2010, emphasised the differences between the presented stance and the programme of the ruling coalition, al-

though these differences mostly concern the methodology of implementing foreign policy rather than its content.

Against the background of the existing consensus over the principal areas and priorities of Lithuania's foreign policy, the activity of the national resistance movement — Žalgiris (*Žalgirio nacionalinio pasipriešinimo judėjimas*) — posed something of an intellectual challenge. It is important to refer to the most significant pages in Lithuanian history — the battle of Žalgiris (called the battle of Grunwald in Polish and the battle of Tannenberg in German and Western historiography) on July 15, 1410, which became an import symbol of the strengthening of Lithuanian statehood, when “it was proven with a sword that Europe must take Lithuania into account” [4, p. 4].

In the year of the 575th anniversary of the battle, the Russian historian B. N. Forlya emphasised that the battle of Grunwald went down in history not only as a symbol of courage and heroism in the fight for the native land against foreign invaders, but also as a proof that a union of people brought together to oppose an aggressor and defend their freedom and independence is always victorious [5, p. 112]. This allusion is corroborated in a text available on the official website of the movement stating that the word *Žalgiris* “has been long known in the Lithuanian language... When it is pronounced, the heart of every Lithuanian citizen swells with pride in their country. For us, Žalgiris is a symbol of victory, our revival as a nation. It is the revival we need now more than ever over the last 20 years of independence — national, cultural, value, educational and economic revival” [6].

The phrase “national resistance” found in the title of the Movement requires a comment. It alludes to maintaining Lithuanian identity, which is interpreted very broadly by the Žalgiris initiators: from maintaining traditional Lithuanian culture, history (one of the discussions, for instance, even centred on a special “Baltic civilisation” [7, p. 3] that existed prior to the Christianisation of Lithuania by Mindaugas) and language to the resistance to the inflow of foreign capital (first of all, from Scandinavian) and the protection of national interests in international affairs.

The Žalgiris movement was founded at the beginning of 2009 as a “reaction to the persistent injustice and corruption of national values and traditions” in order to evolve into a “social force representing an alternative patriotic antiglobalism position” [8], as well as to oppose de-Lithuanianisation (*nulietuvinimas*) [9, p. 3]. Its social activity (mostly of philosophical and educational nature) brought together or, at least, won the approval of a great number of politicians — both former and acting ones: scholars, journalists, artists and cultural figures. It is headed by the philosophers, Arvydas Juozaitis, Arvydas Šliogeris, Krescencijus Stoškus, the politicians, Gediminas Jakavonis, Rolandas Paulauskas, and the journalist and the editor-in-chief of the *Respublika* newspaper, Vitas Tomkus. The chosen priorities, typical of conservative and traditionalistic movements are established, are as follows: 1) national culture, 2) national values, 3) patriotism, 4) education, 5) economy.

The national newspaper *Respublika* — the second most important and the main oppositional periodical in Lithuania — started publishing a free

appendix *Žalgiris*¹ covering the movement's activity. Its first issue (as of today, 106 issues have seen the light of day), which came out on March 11, 2009 to coincide with the 19th anniversary of the restoration of Lithuanian independence (on March 11, 1990, the Supreme Council of Lithuanian SSR adopted the *Act of Independence of Lithuania*), opened with the manifesto of the *Žalgiris* movement. Since this article is the first one dedicated to the activity of this public association, it seems sensible to offer a translation of the founding manifesto, especially, because most of it is dedicated to the foreign policy or closely related issues [9, p. 1].

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

A manifesto

On March 11, 1990, when proclaiming independence, we believed we would have a STATE! OUR OWN STATE! A HOME TO THE NATION! We believed that the authorities chosen by people will serve the people. And throughout all 19 years, we have not seen or, maybe, have not wanted to see that the sovereign power and the abilities of the nation have been vested in a clan, hiding behind different party names and consisting of people working only for themselves. OUR state has become THEIR state. In OUR State, every citizen would be valued; in THEIR State, citizens are forced to emigrate. In OUR State, the middle class would be the driving force; in THEIR State, everything is given to the monopolist clans. In OUR State, no one would rush to be the first to vote for the Constitution of the European Union, or the Lisbon Treaty, which are not understood in Europe itself; in THEIR State, everyone votes for anything to please the masters, even if it acts against our own interests.

OUR State would be a member of the union of European nations in the EU; THEIR State has almost melted down in the pot of unitary Europe.

OUR State would find its proper place among the high and mighty; THEIR State caters for the interests of the high and mighty.

In OUR State, the army would protect Motherland; in THEIR State, our soldiers execute the orders from Washington.

In OUR State, the Lithuanian language would dominate; in THEIR State, English prevails even more than Russian did in the Soviet years.

In OUR State, especially, during crises, electricity prices would become lower; in THEIR State, they go up despite going down in the world market.

OUR State would retain the fleet and the status of a maritime nation; in THEIR State, ships were turned into scrap metal, or were sold.

OUR State would be impossible without a national banking system; THEIR State is impossible with it.

In OUR State, people would trust courts, which would protect the interests of individuals; in THEIR State, courts protect the interests of clans.

¹ The full text versions of *Žalgiris* issues are available on the *Respublika* newspaper website [10].

OUR State would support small and medium enterprises by deeds, not words; THEIR State supports small and medium enterprises by words only and forms a monopolist economy with their deeds.

In OUR State, the taxation policy would not be a tool for making the poor poorer; in THEIR State, it serves the oligarchic power.

In OUR State, every field would be cultivated; in THEIR State, fields are overgrown with shrubs and weeds.

OUR State would not even discuss the closing down of the Ingalina nuclear power plant; THEIR State easily gives up this strategic site and creates conditions for the establishment of the likes of LEO LT.

In OUR State, public mass media would be open for all opinions; in THEIR State, mass media cater for the interests of clans.

So, let us honour the illusions of nineteen years with a minute of silence.

It is high time we reclaimed OUR STATE.

We should be masters in our HOME OF THE NATION!

WE SHOULD BE MASTERS OF OUR STATE!

A manifesto for your and our freedom has been signed by ordinary Lithuanian citizens

Audrius Butkevičius, Rolandas Paulauskas, Kostas Smoriginas, and Vitas Tomkus

The manifesto was published in issues 1—4 of the *Žalgiris* and was illustrated with a reproduction of the world-famous picture by the Polish artist, Jan Alojzy Matejko, *The Battle of Grunwald* (1878). The translation above is based on the text of manifesto published in issue 1. It is of interest that this text differs from those published in issues 2—4. For instance, the order of theses was changed after the revision. So, paragraphs 1—5 in issues 2—4 were constituted by paragraphs 4—7 from issues 1, i. e. it was the foreign policy issues that were foregrounded in the revised version. Certain amendments were made to the text itself.

The euroscepticism, anti-Americanism and antiglobalism of the manifesto are of an obviously ideological and populist character. The manifesto was published prior to the presidential and European parliament election, which took place several months after its publication (on May 17 and June 17 2009, respectively). At the same time, The manifesto points to crisis tendencies and disappointment with the changes of the last twenty years expressed by a part of the Lithuanian ruling class and expert community; the document also demonstrates deep public reflection on the situation that was triggered by the global financial and economic crisis. It is worth noting that many members of the Movement, as well as guest speakers invited to open discussions, were the founding fathers of independence — activists of the Sąjūdis movement, who signed the Act of March 11.

However, their euroscepticism and systemic antiglobalism are peculiar of European political life; it holds true not only for smaller states, whose population feels vulnerable in terms of politics, economy, and culture, but also the largest countries of Europe (the “right wave” of recent European political life covers growing nationalist attitudes in Austria, Hungary, Ger-

many, the UK, the Netherlands, France, etc.). As R. Kh. Simonyan emphasises, “growing nationalism is a natural reaction to the standardisation of social life. Cultural heterogeneity and national traditions are threatened today. A single model is being imposed on the humanity as the only right answer; diversity is being squeezed into one pattern, which provokes a natural reaction from the population — an aspiration to protect themselves, their uniqueness [11, p. 17]. This thesis can be applied to the formation of an alternative Lithuanian foreign policy examined in the context of the Žalgiris movement activity.

However, if one takes into account the systemic effect of one-sided Euro-Atlantic preferences in the field of foreign policy announced by Lithuanian leaders in the early 1990s (for instance, in A. Brazauskas’s *European speech* delivered at Vilnius University [12, p. 232—243]) on internal policy and economy, it is no wonder that most round table proceedings and interviews published on the pages of *Žalgiris* are dedicated to internal policy issues. It is the heedless desire to join the EU and the Eurozone that resulted in such socioeconomic situation, which was described by a signer of the Act of March 11, philosopher, public and political figure, Romualdas Ozolas as follows: “Lithuania is overrun with foreign capitalists, such as French heat power experts, Danish pig breeders and Polish oil industry specialists” [13, p. 4].

The reason for the lack of alternatives, according to Povilas Gylys, professor of Vilnius University and the foreign minister of Lithuania in 1992—1996, lies in the prevalence of ideological programmes in the media space (he mentions Lithuanian television and the *Lietuvos rytas* newspaper) and the lack of a „real national broadcasting body” (nacionalinis transliuotojas): „For example, as to economic growth rates, experts from Scandinavian banks and representatives of the Lithuanian Free Market Institute (LFMI) are interviewed by the national broadcasting company almost every day, despite the fact that LFMI is an antistate institution, they consider state to be evil. The national broadcasting company does not know, or does not want to know that, for example, there are people at universities who hold or express another opinion [14, p. 1]. However, the opinion of such „experts from Scandinavian banks” was presented in the framework of some round tables. So, one of the recurrent guests has been an influential economist, an advisor to the president of one of the largest Lithuanian banks — SEB Vilniaus bankas — Gitanas Nausėda. Although his opinion differs from that of the organisers, one cannot but mention the relevance of his statements. When addressing the issue of Lithuanian government pursuing a rigid neoliberal monetarist policy, he emphasised that, under the conditions of the 2008—2009 crisis, “there was no other choice” and, as opposed to the case of the old EU countries, “no one could give money” to save Lithuanian economy [15, p. 3].

As to foreign policy issues, the titles of the round tables held by Žalgiris speak for themselves: “How will the Lisbon Treaty turn Lithuania into a municipality” (No. 5, 04.09.2009), “IMF: a bankruptcy or salvation for Lithuania?” (No. 6, 16.04.2009), “EU: a new prison for peoples” (No. 7, 23.04.2009), “For whom — Lithuania or Africa — do our EP members work?” (No. 14, 11.06.2009), „Who needs the nuclear power plant closing

down?“ (No. 43, 07.01.2010), “How much independence is left in independent Lithuania?” (No. 52, 10.03.2010), “How long will Lithuanians live in Lithuania?” (No. 54, 25.03.2010), “Can Lithuania leave the EU?” (No. 60, 06.05.2010), “Why does Lithuania play the role of a stepdaughter in the EU foreign policy?” (No. 65, 10.06.2010), “What would have happened if our country had not joined the EU six years ago?” (No. 79, 23.09.2010), “Why are we losing so easily our hard-earned independence?” (No. 89, 02.12.2010), “Will Lithuania celebrate its independence once again?” (No. 99, 11.02.2011, etc. These are the most contentious topics for discussion. All in all, more than a third of all materials offer in the *Žalgiris* were dedicated to foreign policy and related issues. Moreover, nine of the first thirteen issues, which came out prior to the European Parliament elections, were devoted to foreign policy.

The conducted analysis of the *Žalgiris* appendix makes it possible to identify the key problems addressed in discussions and interviews dedicated to foreign policy issues: EU membership (75—80% of all topics), reconsideration of the general strategy and principles of Lithuanian foreign policy, the search for the country’s place in worldwide political processes given globalisation, and relations with Russia. It seems that the philosophical essence of the issues under consideration was explicitly formulated by the famous politician, a member of the Seimas (Order and Justice), deputy chair of the Committee on Economics, Julius Veselka: “I think our strategy is very good. There are human rights and freedoms, the accession to the EU, and you will be able to travel everywhere, earn decent money, learn and then come home. It is only a part of our strategy. It is based on the philosophy of globalism, and this globalism is a new form of colonialism. The advantage of colonialism is that you are conquered with arms, you see the enemy clearly and you know what to do. Globalism buys everything with money [16, p. 2].

The most important objective of the discussions held can be formulated as “the search for new priorities” within foreign policy, the need for which arose after Lithuania’s accession to the EU and NATO. One of the founders of the *Žalgiris* movement, a signer of the Act of March 11, Rolandas Paulauskas, said: “There was an aspiration to join NATO and the European Union; after it had been achieved, nothing was left. Nothing else has been devised over 20 years, one cannot but come to a conclusion that our policy is dominated by emotions (for instance, the belief that West is good, and East is evil) rather than by true perspectives” [17, p. 2]. It is corroborated by the ex-president of Latvia, the leader of the Order and Justice, a European Parliament member, Rolandas Paksas. In his opinion, no one “knows or thinks” what Lithuanian strategy is, what goals the country wants to achieve in 20 or 50 years are [18, p. 3].

Dissatisfaction with the country’s current foreign policy, which, according to the members of the *Žalgiris* and a number of guest speakers participating in the discussions organised by the movement, leads to an almost complete loss of sovereignty in political and economic affairs and makes it impossible to protect the national interests of Lithuania in the EU, It also

worsens the internal economic situation, contributes to an increase in emigration (which is according to the philosopher Gintautas Mažeikis “a form of political declaration that emphasises the rejection of key social and economic relations in the state for people belonging to a certain social layer [19, p. 1]), corrupts Lithuanian identity, and requires not only new foreign policy objectives and principles, but also an update of its conceptual content, which will add sense to the implementation of the *Global Lithuania* project proclaimed by the government [20, p. 3].

The foreign policy update should be based, first of all, on national interests, in contrast to the policy pursued by President Valdas Adamkus, when, according to Algirdas Butkevičius (a politician, a signer of the Act of March 11, the first minister of defence in 1991—1993) “Lithuania implements either the policy of the USA, or that of some EU partners” [21, p. 3]. Pragmatism should become a new foreign policy principle. It is the pragmatic foreign policy oriented towards national interests (which is the essence of pragmatism) rather than the achievement of illusionary targets, as it has often happened before, that was one of the elements of Dalia Grybauskaitė’s election campaign. One cannot but admit that she manages to follow this principle in the country’s political affairs. The actions taken by D. Grybauskaitė demonstrate a great degree of independence in choosing a foreign policy path. One might recall her refusal to visit both the Victory Day celebrations in Moscow and the meeting of Eastern European leaders with President Obama, where she did not want to be a mere bystander, her readiness to make the first step in solving complicated problems of bilateral relations with Moscow (for instance, after a phone conversation with President Medvedev initiated by her, the issue of Lithuanian lorries at the Russian border was settled in several hours), the improvement of relations with Belarus, and apparently sanctioned by her Andrius Kubilius’s bicycle diplomacy.

The Eastern dimension of Lithuanian foreign policy has never become the topic of a round table, or an interview; however, it has been addressed in several materials. For instance, during the press conference entitled “What are the priorities of Lithuanian foreign policy?”, the economist and politician, one of the founders of Lithuanian independence (the first prime minister after it was proclaimed) a recurrent member of the Seimas, the minister of agriculture in 2004—2008, the current chair of Lithuanian People’s Party, Kazimira Prunskienė, speaking about the importance of Russian market for Lithuania, arrived at a conclusion: „Russians, I think, because of our statements in mass media, are used to thinking that Lithuanians do not like them. But foreign policy should not scare away the neighbours, we have to improve our relations with them” [22, p. 3]. The need to „add new dynamics to the relations between Moscow and Vilnius”² was emphasised by the Russian

² For the transcript of the presentation and the responses given by S.V. Lavrov to the questions from journalists in the course of a joint press conference on the outcomes of negotiations with the acting chair of OSCE, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Audronius Ažubalis, in Moscow on February 2, 2011 [23].

foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, during negotiations with his Lithuanian compeer, Audronius Ažubalis, which took place on February 2—3, 2011.

The complicated issues of Russian-Lithuanian relations were the focus of the greater part of an interview with the famous historian, Česlovas Laurinavičius. Being sceptical of the current foreign policy of Lithuania, he spoke in favour of the implementation of national interests and objectivism in assessing both the present (Lithuanian position on the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict was dubbed “wrong” and “emotional”) and the past (“It is not a coincidence that, in the Interbellum, the diplomatic language called the Baltics “three little proudlings” (pasipūtėliai). In this relation, we have not changed”). Česlovas Laurinavičius arrives at a conclusion that “if we abandon the conflict paradigm and try to communicate with the West and the East rather than individual groups aimed at a conflict, we will be able to solve many problems” [24, p. 1].

It is of interest that many discussions (not only on foreign policy issues) are dominated by a nostalgic favourable attitude towards Lithuanian socialist past (especially when it comes to the problems in the fields of economy, culture, science, and arts). In particular, R. Paulauskas stressed at one of the press conferences: “Unfortunately a few people know that — look it up in the Soviet Lithuanian encyclopaedia and you will see these striking figures. It turns out that Lithuanians had most cars and houses per 100 people in the Soviet Union, and — paradoxically — had money in the saving bank” [25, p. 3].

Returning to the topic of Lithuania’s membership in the EU, one should mention that, as follows from the titles above, it is the focus of many foreign policy discussions. However, I will not analyse their course in detail since it is of a rather unexpected character often contradicting the principal ideological pattern. For instance, the fact that one of the first issues of the appendix lists everyone who supported the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty at the Seimas on May 8, 2008 under the heading “traitors to Motherland” does not require any further comments [26, p. 4—5].

As surveys show, the crisis did not spark off a reconsideration of EU membership among general population. One can just compare the data of 2004—2008 [27] and the last two years, when Lithuanian economy was significantly affected in the aftermath of the crisis [28; 29]. So, after 2004 (when 80—82% of the citizens were in favour of EU membership), it was at a level of 66—75% (69—71% in the last two years). At the same time, there is a stable group of Eurosceptics (14—22% in 2005—2010, 18—20% over the last two years), who assess Lithuanian membership in the EU negatively. The latter means that the position expressed by the members of the Žalgiris movement finds significant support in the society. One of the founders of the movement, K. Smoriginas, made the following conclusion regarding the public attitudes prevailing in Lithuania: “All mass media outlets offer the same opinions. I can hear parts of the manifesto of the Žalgiris resistance movement being quoted both on the radio and television. It means that the Movement is not only ours; it is the movement of everyone” [30, p. 1].

So, the conducted analysis of the foreign policy components of the activity of the Žalgiris movement allows us to make the following conclusions:

-the foreign policy alternative, which is supported both by the members of the movement and participants of round tables organised by them, should be considered in a broader context of its activity aimed at maintaining Lithuanian identity and formulating the objectives of both internal and foreign policy with an emphasis on Lithuanian national interests (which can be interpreted in relation to the EU membership as an aspiration to participate in the construction of a confederative “Europe of nations” rather than federative “Europe of regions” [31, p. 3]);

-of course, these views do not prevail in the Lithuanian public discourse; however, the similarity of attitudes of a stable and percentage-wise socially relevant part of the society, the persistence of negative trends in the socio-economic development of Lithuania, and the access to an important information resource (the national *Respublika* newspaper) make it possible to speak of consolidation of opposition forces on this basis (and a possible transformation of the public movement into a political one) on the threshold of 2012 parliamentary elections;

-the fact that such materials are published (even as an appendix) in the second most important (and the leading oppositional) newspaper of Lithuania is indicative of not only successful postsocialist democratisation of public life, but also of a serious ideological and philosophical crisis in Lithuanian society, which manifested itself in the activity of the Žalgiris movement, whose foreign policy component is a part of the systemic dissatisfaction and disappointment with the home and foreign policy carried out by Lithuanian leaders over the last two decades.

A crisis era, just like a time of sickness, is the period when the viability of any sociohistorical organism is being tested. Historically outmoded systems do not always survive such tests, whereas inveterate social forms and ideological dogmas are not capable of perceiving sometimes chaotic signals of the time of changes. Young systems, on the contrary, in the conditions of flexible systemic attitudes, are still capable of a rapid reconsideration of the development paradigm, which often brings salvation. Maybe, in the conditions of a systemic disease of Lithuanian society, it is the Žalgiris movement that can become a fresh wave capable of creating the framework for the formation of a critical mass of social forces oriented towards maintaining the fundamentals of the Lithuanian state, which, in its turn, will also balance the process of foreign policy formulation and its implementation.

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