

What is the Millennium Message of Vilnius and Lithuania to Europe?

Prof. Dr. A. Bumblauskas

1. Introduction

An international JCI TWINNING project with the aim to sail the yacht round the Mediterranean is organised on the initiative of Junior Chamber International - (JCI) Vilnius. There occurs the question of the historical background for the ambition to sail round the Mediterranean on the date of Lithuanian Millennium and the possibility to identify specific historical ties between Lithuania and certain Mediterranean cities. Unfortunately, the investigation like this is the subject of complex historical research. Yet, I decided to contemplate this as these active forms of historical culture comply with the objectives of the **Academy of Historical Memory**, and, in particular, the project **Virtual Historical Vilnius** that it is being developed now. Therefore, I propose to take **1583-1584** route of **M.K.Radvila Našlaitėlis' (the Orphan)** (he was best known for ordering the first accurate map of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) in 1613) journey to the Holy Land. This historical figure is important in a deeper perspective, too. In 1586, right upon returning from this journey, he funded early baroque Jesuit Church of Nesvyžius built imitating Il Gesù of Rome consecrated in 1583. This fact testifies that the cultural phenomena of Western Europe reached Lithuania and the GDL without delay. Thus, the fact may be deeply conceptualised envisaging in it Lithuania's becoming a genuinely integral part of Europe as early as in the 16th c.

To sail to the ports included into the route with the message saying that Lithuania was the last to enter Europe but not the least with relevant contemplations of the idea of Europe. And to raise two objectives: to remind Lithuania of its European roots, and to send the message to the ideological centres of Europe on the European phenomena of Lithuanian history and culture.

2. Lithuania's Millennium and the Idea of Europe

The idea of Millennium occurred in the Christian Europe in the 10th c., the epoch of St. Brunon Bonifacius, discoverer of Lithuania, the time when pending new advent of Christ people needed not only to celebrate what was done but also to contemplate what was failed to be done. Millennium is the threshold to wait for the great account. The subsequent history of Europe secularised this idea but retained the most important characteristic - to contemplate not only the past but also the present and the future. As a result, Lithuania is forced to do this ipso facto because in its Millennium epoch on the threshold of the 21st c. it has restored its Independence, returned to Europe and became a member of the Euro-Atlantic community. Lithuania's Millennium makes one contemplate new opportunities and new challenges. To think how we are going to live in the next centuries.

3. Lithuania's Millennium Means Lithuania's Discovery in 1009

It happened as a result of St. Brunon Bonifacius' mission. He was directly associated with both the Millennium idea of the Christian Europe and the millenarian movement of the 10th c. when the Christian missions and the Christening of states or their parts pervaded Central, Eastern and Northern regions of Europe: Christening of Poland (966), Christening of Rus' (988), St Adalbert's mission in Prussia (997), Christening of Norway started by Olaf (997), Christening of Iceland (1000), Crowning of Hungarian King St Stephen (1000), Christening of Southern Sweden's Duke Olaf (1008) and Christening of Lithuanian "King" Netimeras (1009). At this time, Lithuania (like Prussia) failed to become an integral part of Europe. It had to wait for the Christening of Mindaugas (1251) and the subsequent Christening of Lithuania (1387, however, the Christening of Samogitia was completed only in 1413-1417). Yet, it only highlights Lithuania's uniqueness: as Werner Conzes maintains, the Central Europe completed its formation namely about 1400. If we take that at that time the Latin Western Europe and Byzantine Eastern Europe were fully formed regions, then the Christening of Lithuania completes the formation of Europe.

Strasbourg fresco: Strasbourg's St. Pierre-le-Jeune Church has a fresco showing the nations of Europe marching towards the cross. This is the personification of Christianisation and, in general, Europe at the turn of 15th c. Strasbourg fresco depicts several figures. There is *Germania*, i.e. Germany, (at the moment of fresco making Strasbourg was in the German lands) and *Gallia*, i.e. France, Italy, England, etc., riding in the forward ranks. However, what concerns us most is the end of the procession. The last riding figure is *Polonia*, i.e. Poland, followed by two walking figures - *Litavia*, who

politely allows *Orient* to go first. For the first time Lithuania appears among the European states. This place and respect was the result of the Christening of 1387. So, Lithuania is last in the Catholic Europe but not the least in the contemplation of the idea of Europe.

4. Four concepts of Europe and Lithuania.

4.1. Concept of “Europe of the Nations”. Symbolical Father - Winston Churchill.

Capital: Brussels. Vilnius as the trigger of the collapse of the USSR. Today this is a bureaucratised and politicised concept of Europe in the form of the European Union embracing 27 states, plus the issues of the Balkans, Ukraine, Belarus, Turkey and Georgia concerning the EU expansion to the East. Lithuanian position here is especially significant: it is not only the easternmost EU member state, but has also played globally significant historical role with its Singing Revolution and 11 March 1990: Lithuania was the first both to challenge one more echelon of colonialism and empires and to break through the Communist citadel. And so, the 11th of March triggered a chain reaction that caused the collapse of the Soviet empire and, in the opinion of Edvardas Gudavičius, became "the central pillar of the make-up of velvet revolutions instead of an ordinary brick". This was recognised not only by historians. In 2000, on the celebration of 10 years of Lithuanian Independence, the resolution of both houses of the US Congress read that “the declaration of 11 March 1990 concerning absolute sovereignty and restoration of Independence of the Republic of Lithuania caused the collapse of former Soviet Union”. The subsequent Russian revolution in August 1991 that further changed the balance of global powers, first and foremost, followed Lithuanian experience. World democracy gained a huge victory. Thus, Lithuania found itself on the axis of world history: for the first time Lithuania has become a factor in world history.

Lithuania travelled to the year 1990 through the year 1918, the uprisings of the 19th c. (the connection of Giuseppe Garibaldi and Zigmantas Sierakauskas as well as the participation of Vištelis-Višteliauskas in the Italian revolution are very significant in this aspect) with the Constitution adopted on their threshold, i.e. 3 March - 20 October, a few months earlier than the French revolution giving birth to the phenomenon of Napoleon, who was directly related to Lithuania.

4.2. Europe is based on the Western Christianity. In this concept, the symbolical father of Europe is Charles the Great. Vilnius was the last to enter Western Europe.

The issue of Preamble of EU Constitution and the mentioning of Christianity in this Preamble shows the existence of other concepts of Europe. First of all, this is the identification of the old EU member states, in the 20th c., only with the space of Western Christianity that emerged in Western Europe. European genesis is sought in Europe of the Middle Ages, in Francia of those days. However, in this respect Lithuania's position is exceptional: it belongs to the easternmost link of the countries of both Western civilisation (according to S. Huntington) and Central Europe (according to the above-mentioned W. Conze). Yet in this chain Lithuania is also distinctive: it is a place of the northernmost split of Western Christianity into the southern (Catholic) and Northern (Protestant) branches, while Lithuania has become the northernmost and easternmost Catholic country with Vilnius University that 200 years after its founding in 1579 was the easternmost point of Western university network. Professors from all round Europe from Spain to Norway, from England to Croatia and Austria gave lectures in this University, while the works of Vilnius professors Martynas Smigleckis, Maciej Kazimierz Sarbiewski or Žygimantas Liauksminas became popular all over Europe of those times.

4.3. Integral Christian Concept of Europe. Symbolical Father is Christ. Capital is Jerusalem and the successors of its idea, Catholic Rome and Orthodox Constantinople, as well as Vilnius embracing both traditions.

There exists not only "Western" concept of Europe. It defines Europe much broader in both geographic terms - including Eastern Christian states (the admission of Greece, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Rumania into the EU allows one to apply this concept even to the EU enlargement) - and chronological terms - the genesis of Europe is identified in the Antiquity epoch. In this case, the role of the Christian Roman Empire emerges (from Constantine and, in particular, the end of the 4th c. when Christianity became the official religion of the Empire). Both Latin and Greek Byzantine civilisation traditions are considered its legacy.

The dimensions of Eastern Christianity in the definitions of Europe especially stress the legacy of the GDL as this is the only European state that has encountered the issue of crossing and integration of two cultural traditions on a large scale. Vytautas and Jogaila raised the question of universal church union already in the church meeting of Constanta, while Gregory Camblak, the metropolitan bishop of Kiev and all Rus, who

resided in Vilnius on the bank of Vilnelė River, celebrated ecumenical Mass in 1417. During the times of Alexander Jagiellon, the idea of one chapel for both liturgies emerged in the milieu of Chodkevičiai and Sapiegos families following the Jerusalem spirit (it seems it was implemented only in Crete, Greek island ruled by Venice, in the 16th c.). In 15-16th c. Vilnius became the only European capital where the boundary between the Greek *civitas ruthenica* and the Latin city was located right on its axis - from Rūdninkai Gates via the City Hall Square to the Didžioji and Pilies Streets.

4.4. Integral Civilisational Concept of Europe. Father - Plato and other Great Greeks. Capital - Athens. Vilnius as Northern Jerusalem or Northern Athens. The understanding that the European culture is based not only on Christianity but also on Roman law and Greek philosophy has been well-known for a long time. So, the roots of the European civilisation could be traced back to the Greek philosophical and overall civilisational tradition coming from Athens and Crete with the plane tree of Zeus and Europa, where the legendary cradle of Greek civilisation and Europe lies. The democracy and cultural and confessional diversity of Europe is based on the Greek substantive individualism. Namely this fact enables one to see in the roots of Europe the Judaic tradition, also important for Islam, which, in its turn, allows envisaging even non-Christian regions in the constitution of Europe.

In terms of diversity of cultures and confessions, the GDL and Vilnius with its 11 confessions dating back to the 15-17th c. have no equals in Europe. Confessional tolerance was recorded as early as in 1563 when religious intolerance settled in Western Europe (for example, St. Bartholomew's Day massacre in 1572). Later uniates or Greek Catholics and Russian Old Believers emerged in the Greek quarters of Vilnius, while Protestantism branches (Lutheranism, Calvinism, Arianism), Armenian Catholics and Jews settled in the Latin quarters, and Caraites and Tartar Muslims lived in the outskirts of the city (Lithuania and Vilnius historically form the northernmost Islam region). Therefore, Vilnius deserves the name of Northern Jerusalem or Northern Athens not only because of its global role in the Jewish culture (Vilnius of the 18th c. now enters the top ten of Jewish culture centres worldwide). Given all these facts, Vilnius embodies European culture in miniature and at the same time it is a genuine capital of culture.

5. What is the message to both Lithuania and Europe?

Lithuania. Lithuanian Millennium in the Mediterranean Region and the idea of Christian Millennium as a threshold is first and foremost significant for Lithuania in order to reminisce and give weight to the ideological capitals of Europe:

- Both old capitals - Crete with Zeus and Europa's plane tree at Gortys, Athens and Jerusalem, Rome and Constantinople;
- And the younger ones - Ravenna of Early Middle Ages and Avignon of Late Middle Ages, Florence, Rome and Venice of Renaissance, again Rome of Baroque and a number of other Italian and Spanish cities;
- To associate the beginning of Modern Times not that much with Amsterdam, London or Paris, but to remember Napoleon's Corsica and Elba Island as well as Garibaldi's Naples instead.

Europe. On the occasion of its Millennium, Lithuania sends a message about itself and its unique cultural heritage and place in Europe as well as about Vilnius - European Capital of Culture 2009.

- It reminds EU capitals and ports: about 2004 (the easternmost EU member state), Singing Revolution of 1990, 1918 and 1863, about the first written Constitution of Europe drawn up in 1791;
- It reminds all capitals and ports: about the land, the discovery of which in 1009 launched the process that will complete the formation of Europe about 1400, about eleven confessions and the tolerance in 1563, about architectural and civilisational symbiosis of Western and Eastern Christianity traditions, and about Northern Jerusalem or Northern Athens;
- It reminds Western Christian countries, their capitals and ports about the easternmost Catholic land and its capital, and reminds Central Europe's southern countries of Slovenia and Croatia with Ljubljana, Split and Dubrovnik about the northernmost Catholic land and its capital. It also reminds about the easternmost Gothic, easternmost and northernmost Italian Renaissance and Baroque, especially to those cities that are rich in architectural monuments of all epochs (such as Split, Dubrovnik, Palma de Mallorca, Valencia, Barcelona, Rome, Naples, Bari, Ravenna and Venice). It will remind about the easternmost university in Europe, i.e. Vilnius

University of 16-18th c., esp. to university cities of Palma de Mallorca (1483), Valencia (1500; with neighbouring Gandia with a Jesuit University founded in 1547), Barcelona (1401), Montpellier (1181-1289), Genoa (1471), Rome (1318-1556), Naples (1224), Catania (1434), Palermo (1578) and Venice (1470).

- It will remind Eastern Christian countries, their capitals and ports about the westernmost Orthodoxy, about two sides of Vilnius - Latin and Greek, about Gregory Camblak in Constanta and Strasbourg fresco.
- It will remind the Jews about the role of Vilnius in the global Jewish culture.
- And it will remind to Muslim countries about Lithuanian Tartar community and northernmost Islam.

6. The pretext of the journey: Following the route of Mikalojus Kristupas Radvila Našlaitėlis

Actually, the route of M.K.Radvila Našlaitėlis' journey finely corresponds to the proposed objective of the journey via ideological centres of Europe.

Nesvyžius (16 September 1582) - Venice. **Venice** (16 April 1582) - Zadar (Zara) - [along Split, Dubrovnik, Durres] - Corfu Island - Kefalonia Island - Zakynthos in Zakynthos Island - Kityros Island - Heraklion (Candia) in Creta, Labyrinth, Gortyna. **Heraklion** (19 May 1582) - Rhodes - Pafos in Cyprus Island, Limassol, Larnaca (31 May). **Larnaca** - Haifa (07 June) - [along Tyre, Sidon, Beirut] - Tripoli (08 June) - Damascus - Galilea - Jerusalem (25 June). **Jerusalem** (11 July 1583) - Haifa - Sidon - Tyre - Beirut - Tripoli (18 July). **Tripoli** (29 July 1583) - Larnaca and Limassol in Cyprus Island - Cairo (08 August) - Alexandria (19 September). **Back from Alexandria** (09 October 1583) - Rhodes (18 October) - Sitia in Crete (25 October) - Malia - Heraklion (Candia) - Rethymno - Chania (or Sidon) (08 December). **Chania** (04 February 1584) - Kityros Island (11 February) - Zakynthos (19 February) - Kefalonia Island - Corfu Island (25 February). **Corfu island** (03 March 1584) - Otranto (Italy, 07 March). **Further by land:** Lecce - Ostuni (city of Bona Sforza) - Bari - Molfetta - Barletta - Foggia - San Severo - Vasto - Pescara - Giulianova - Tronto - Loreto - Ancona - Senigallia - Pesaro - Rimini - Ravenna - Argenta - Ferrara - Chioggia - Venice (03 April). **Venice** (03 May 1584) - Trento - Innsbruck - Vienna - Hrodna (22 June) - Nesvyžius (07 July 1584).

The journey of Vilnius prophet J. Slovackis in 1836-1837 could serve as an additional metaphor: Naples - Corinth - Mycenae - Athens - Alexandria - Cairo - Jerusalem - Tripoli - Livorno.

7. Additional route comments and extensions:

7.1. Comments on the route of Mikalojus Kristupas Radvila Našlaitėlis:

Zadar (as well as Split, Dubrovnik and more remote Ljubljana, Slovenia): Cz. Milosz on the cities of Central Eastern Europe.

Durres: subject of Stalinism and freedom, subject of confession synthesis.

Crete: Realisation of Supraśl programme of Chodkevičiai and Sapiegos.

Cyprus: multiculturalism.

Alexandria: Islam in the North, Kernavė glass, J. Slovackis.

Bari: Bona Sforza and her tomb in Basilica of St. Nicholas. Next - Bona's Ostuni.

Ancona: university, next - Loreto called Italian Lourdes, one of the most important places of pilgrimage in Europe (a copy of Loreto's Mary is in St Johns' Church in Vilnius).

Ravenna: Petrus Damiani, biographer of St. Brunon Bonifacius (lived and studied here); St Romuald was born in Ravenna and spent a while in the Monastery of St. Apollinaris near Ravenna.

Venice: Venetian seal was found in Kernavė; Amber Road, university.

7.2. Našlaitėlis intended travelling via Constantinople but later changed his mind:

Constantinople / Istanbul: Vaišelga, Algirdas, Vytautas, in 1390 Camblak was frocked in Constantinople, Constantinople patriarch of Vasa times in Vilnius, GDL-Turkey, Chocim, Tartars, Rustem, A. Mickevičius.

Athos: Vaišelga, Metropolitan Cyprion Camblak of Kiev since 1375, Gregory Camblak, Vilnius Orthodoxy and the GDL.

Athens: J.Slovackis.

7.3. Route extensions:

Malta (Valletta): multiculturalism, all styles.

Palma de Mallorca: university. All Spanish universities could be reminded Spanish professoriate of Vilnius University, the symbol of which could be Miguel Ortiz, rector of Vilnius University in 1605-1608. He was born in Vittoria (Castilia) in 1560, died in Nesvyžius in 1638.

Valencia (Gandia): twinning university with Vilnius University, Jesuits, Baroque, all styles.

Barcelona: university.

Montpellier: university, subject of liaison between France and Lithuania: Gediminas and Avignon, Henry of Valois, Stanisław Leszczyński.

Genoa: university, Garibaldi and Sierakauskas, Polish military school *Spring of Nations*.

Corsica (Ajaccio) and Elba (Portoferraio): place of Napoleon's exile. Napoleon and his relationship with Lithuania. Constitution of 3 March - 20 October and French illuminators, Napoleon's soldiers in Vilnius.

Rome: theory of Lithuanian origin from Romans and Palemon, 1009, Otto III and Aventine Hill, university, M.K. Sarbiewski's poetry in Rome, A. Mickevičius (meeting with Pope and Mickevičius' Legion).

Naples: centre of Garibaldi's revolution, Gothic, all styles, Baroque, university, Garibaldi and Sierakauskas, Vištelis-Višteliauskas.

8. Route of the journey

Split - Dubrovnik - Montenegro's Budva (?) - Albanian Dures - Corfu Island - Kefalonia Island - Zakynthos Island - Crete's Chania - Crete's Heraklion - Athens - Athos - Istanbul - Rhodes Island - Turkey's Antalia (?) - Cyprus' Limassol or Larnaca - Syria's Latakia or Tartus (?) - Liban's Tripoli (?) - Israel's Haifa - Egypt's Alexandria - Crete - Malta's Valletta - Palma de Mallorca (?) - Spanish Valencia and Gandia (?) - Catalonia's Barcelona (?) - French Montpellier (?) - Italian Genoa (?) - Corsica's Ajaccio - Elba Island (or Catania and Palermo in Sicily) - Rome - Naples - Bari with Ostuni - Ancona (?) - Ravenna - Venice - Trieste (?) - Slovenian Koper (?) - Zadar.

Possible omissions:

- a) Omit Athos and Istanbul;
- b) Omit Syria's Latakia and Liban's Tripoli (go straight to Haifa);
- c) Omit the line of Palma de Mallorca - Valencia - Barcelona - Genoa (go straight from Malta to Corsica via Sicilian university towns of Catania and Palermo).

Despite these omissions, the journey would be almost identical to that of Mikalojus Radvila Našlaitėlis (it would be significant to complement it with the route of J.Slovackis journey: **Naples** - Corinth - Mycenae - **Athens** - **Alexandria** - Cairo - Jerusalem - Tripoli - Livorno).