VINCAS KUDIRKA'S CONCEPT OF LITHUANIA

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ABSTRACT. *The vision of Lithuania presented by Vincas Kudirka (1858-1899), a prominent leader of the Lithuanian national revival movement, was conditioned by radical social, national, political and cultural changes in Eastern and Central Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. Being subjected to the above-mentioned processes, Kudirka's concept of Lithuania was not unchanging. Interpreting Kudirka's own 'confession' too literally, historians, literary historians and writers of reminiscences tended to simplify the changes of Kudirka's viewpoints, especially dealing with his allegedly sudden Lithuanian transformation. A closer analysis of the relationship between the external factors and the personal attitudes of this outstanding public figure reveals his gradual conversion to and development of national consciousness, as well as the motivation of his active involvement in the Lithuanian national movement and in the struggle against the Russification and Polonization of his people. The changes in Kudirka's viewpoints towards the role of various social layers of Lithuania in different periods are also dealt with in this study.*

Modern scholarship treats the relationship between the individual and society as one of the most topical problems of history. The English historian E. H. Carr emphasizes that the inevitable outcome of the rise of society to higher stages is the potentiality of the expression of the abilities and skills of the individual. In his words, 'the development of society and the development of the individual go hand in hand, and condition each other'.¹ Taking into consideration such modern personalities as Vincas Kudirka,² it would be difficult to devise a more

¹ E. H. Carr, *What is history?* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1961), p. 38.

² The physician Vincas Kudirka (1858-1899) was one of the most prominent leaders of the Lithuanian national liberation movement, the author of the hymn of the future Republic of Lithuania, a writer and publicist. In 1889, in co-operation with his like-minded colleagues, he started the publication of the *Varpas* newspaper to rally Lithuanian liberal democratic intellectuals.

suitable classical definition of the great historical celebrities than that given by Hegel –

They may be called Heroes, inasmuch as they have derived their purposes and their vocation, not from the calm, regular course of things, sanctioned by the existing order; but from a concealed fount – one which has not attained to phenomenal, present existence – from that inner Spirit, still hidden beneath the surface, which, impinging on the outer world as on a shell, bursts it in pieces, because it is another kernel than that which belonged to the shell in question.³

The peculiarity of Kudirka's activity consists in that that he perceived the rising modern Lithuania almost from before it existed and devoted himself entirely to its foundation, at the same time challenging the moribund political and social structures of the Russian Empire.

It is a commonplace that the term 'Lithuania' is many-sided and can be treated as a geographical, political, ethno-cultural, or ethno-linguistic concept. The content of this term inevitably underwent modification as a consequence of social changes. The same holds true of the period under consideration. Kudirka lived at the time of far-reaching ethno-political and ethno-cultural collisions in Eastern and Central Europe and was influenced by them and he himself was an object of those processes. No wonder that his perception of Lithuania was not stable, it fluctuated with the development of his own treatment of Lithuania and its ethnosocial designation. Consequently, the principal aim of this article is a study of the development of Kudirka's interpretation of the social structure of Lithuanian society, of its main layers and of the territory of the country.

Historians, literary historians and, in particular, writers of reminiscences are inclined to simplify the alteration in Kudirka's viewpoints, especially dealing with his allegedly sudden Lithuanian transformation and his getting rid of the Polish orientation having just read the monthly *Aušra* 'The Dawn', a copy of which he received almost accidentally. In this respect the views of four well-known biographers – Julius Būtėnas, Aleksandras Merkelis, Vytautas Kavolis and Aldona Vaitiekūnienė are worth noting.

Būtėnas writes that in the Marijampolė grammar school and in the Seinai seminary Kudirka was fully Polonized, he behaved like a genuine Pole, that he shied away even from his parents in public as from simple folk Lithuanians. True, in the second edition of his book, in a quotation, the author no longer denies that Kudirka considered

³ G. Hegel, *The philosophy of history* (New York, Inc., 1956), p. 30.

himself both a Lithuanian and a Pole.⁴ Furthermore he presents a passage from Kudirka's 'confession' on his reversal to Lithuanian orientation. Such a sudden turn probably seems not quite convincing to Būtėnas, therefore, he deliberates whether or not the former patriotic letters of Jonas Jablonskis, a student at the University of Moscow, 'or the effect of some other friends'⁵ could have contributed to it.

Aleksandras Merkelis adheres to just the same view on Kudirka's reversal, acknowledging both the preparatory impact of Jablonskis's letters and the shock after having read the *Aušra*.⁶

Vytautas Kavolis and Aldona Vaitiekūnienė are much more reserved with regard to Kudirka's Polishness – they argue that his Lithuanian orientation did not end with his life in the home of his parents. Kavolis considers that Kudirka had never torn his Lithuanian connections, he maintained close ties with his parents' home and with some of his guardians of the Lithuanian environment, he constantly dealt with the Lithuanian propaganda at secondary school (Petras Kriaučiūnas, Jonas Jablonskis) and with the patriotism of the students at the University of Moscow (Jonas Jablonskis).⁷ Neither does Vaitiekūnienė consider Kudirka's Polishness absolute: 'V. Kudirka had never fully lost his national consciousness. His ties with the Lithuanian identity had never been broken entirely'.⁸

In my opinion, a certain confusion in the solution of the issues under consideration is caused by the inadequate use of some ethnic concepts, such as *the Poles*, *Polishness*, *the Lithuanian nation*, *Lithuania*, etc, disregarding the change of their content and the contemporary sense in the course of history.

Already in his youth Kudirka got in touch with three ethnocultures – firstly with folk culture, in which both his parents and he grew and

⁴ Julius Būtėnas, *Vincas Kudirka* (Kaunas, 1937), p. 51, 61-63; 2nd edition (Vilnius, 1988), p. 22-23, 46-47.

⁵ Būtėnas, *Kudirka*, 2nd ed., p. 62.

⁶ A. Merkelis, *Didysis varpininkas Vincas Kudirka. Jo asmuo ir gyvento laikotarpio paveikslas* (The great 'bell-ringer' Vincas Kudirka. His personality and the portrait of his time). (Chicago, Ill., 1989), p. 58-66.

⁷ V. Kavolis. *Žmogus istorijoje* (The human being in history). (Vilnius: 1994), p. 33-34. This biography was written in 1958-62. Recently it was re-issued in the book *Mūsų Kudirka* (Our Kudirka) (Marijampolė, 1998), p. 9-50; however, it would be risky to rely on quotations from this source, since its publishers wilfully made changes and cuts both in Kavolis's work and in the previously published reminiscences of other people.

⁸ Vincas Kudirka, *Raštai* (Works), introd. by Aldona Vaitiekūnienė, vol. 1 (Vilnius, 1989), p. 12.

lived in the Lithuanian countryside, and secondly, with two élite cultures of civilized societies: the gentry culture of the historical Lithuanian nation, in his time already developing into a subculture of Polish culture, and with Russian culture, forcefully implanted on the local population through the state school, in which Kudirka was taught as well, and through other official channels of administration.

There was no identification with Russian culture, whose spread in Catholic Lithuania was obstructed by its being pervaded with the Orthodox religion and by the political and administrative, even repressive, ways of its introduction. Only gentry culture was attractive, since it had grown on the substratum of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Kudirka's school-friend Jablonskis remembers the immense prestige of Polish among Lithuanian students of Marijampolė – a language, which officially was in no way tolerated as it was a rival of Russian, the official language. One cannot help agreeing with Kavolis's statement:

The contrast between the primitive Lithuanian countryside culture and Polish culture as a carrier of Western civilization was so starkly evident that many felt ashamed of their Lithuanian origin, while Polish culture seemed the only worthy of the person, going to school.⁹

The Polish literature which Kudirka used to read at that time can shed light on how he perceived Lithuania. While studying at the Seinai Theological Seminary he and his colleague Justinas Pranaitis applied to the seminary authorities requesting to buy books rather than give feast parties to the seminarians from the donations. Antanas Milukas remembers:

The outcome of that action was a collection of nearly all the Polish books, related to Lithuania in one way or another, let alone such masterpieces of Polish literature as *Litwa* and *Witoldowe Boje* by Kraszewski, *Historia Litwy* by Narbutt, works of Niemcewicz, Kondratowicz, Odyniec and others, which became available to all the Seinians.¹⁰

Another seminarian indicates that Kudirka would get historical works by Jan Długosz and Wincenty Kadłubek, and Adam Mickiewicz's poetry from the intellectuals of the city.¹¹ Kudirka enjoyed reading those books. There is no doubt that his understanding of Lithuania

⁹ Kavolis, *Žmogus*, p. 28.

¹⁰ 'Seinų seminarija (kun. A. M. Miluko paskaita 4 d. III. 1926)' (Seinai Seminary, lecture of the Rev. A. M. Milukas on 4 March 1926), *Spaudos laisvės ir Amerikos Lietuvių organizuotės sukaktuvės*, 2 leid. (Philadelphia, Pa., 1929), p. 377.

¹¹ J. Kačergius, 'Iš Vinco Kudirkos jaunystės dienų' (On the young days of Vincas Kudirka), *Varpas*, 1924. V. Kudirkos jubiliejinis numeris (The issue devoted to Kudirka), p. 128.

was adequate to that of the above-mentioned authors, orientated to the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania prior to the partitions of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. That conception of Lithuania was defined by the power of the sovereign, the estates of the nobility and the clergy, and the 'citizens' of the Kingdom. The common people were not taken into account in that perception.

Kudirka's concept of Lithuania was radically transformed by the aforementioned dramatized conversion of his from the Polish to the Lithuanian orientation, or to put it differently, by his turn from the historical gentry society to the modern, democratic, *classless* Lithuanian nation.

The column 'Tėvynės varpai' (Bells of Homeland) in *Varpas* (no. 3, 1893, p. 34) carried an article,¹² which is considered a confession of the author's conversion, experienced a decade ago. The essay was not signed, therefore its author could be known only to the closest friends of Kudirka. In it he wrote that being a student he got the first issue of *Aušra* monthly, edited by Jonas Basanavičius. Reading the magazine he heard the voice of Lithuania, recognized his national fallacy, burst into tears and understood that he was a Lithuanian. He named that delusion of his as a unionist orientation:

I used to declare that I am both Lithuanian and Polish at the same time, since history united the Lithuanians and the Poles. Thus, confessing myself being *half* Polish, I thought I would redeem at least a half of my *fault* [original emphases] that I am a Lithuanian.¹³

It is a paradox that some of Kudirka's close associates included that 'confession' into their own memoirs as an authentic testimony. Thus, Jablonskis, recounting Kudirka's words, merely added that he had read *Aušra* 'some time later', i.e., not its first fresh copy 'and several issues at one stroke'.¹⁴ Basanavičius reiterates Kudirka's memoirs about their meetings in Marijampolė, though he does not remember exactly Kudirka's participation in the described events. Further, he also cites the 'confession' episode, related to the impression after having read *Aušra*.¹⁵ Those reminiscences influenced all the nuances of Kudirka's conversion, found in historical scholarship.

¹² Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol.2 (Vilnius, 1989), p. 540-43.

¹³ Ibid., p. 542.

¹⁴ Kirvelis Nusmuko [Jonas Jablonskis], 'Iš atsiminimų vieno iš daugelio' (From the reminiscences of one of the many), *Varpas*, no. 3, (1903) p. 98; Jonas Jablonskis. *Raštai*, vol. 1 (Kaunas: Švietimo ministerijos leidinys Nr. 344, 1932), p. 73.

¹⁵ 'D-ro Jono Basanavičiaus autobiografija. Mano gyvenimo kronika ir nervų ligos istorija 1851-1922' (Autobiography of Dr Jonas Basanavičius. The Story of my Life and the Case of my Nerve Illness; 1851-1922), *Lietuvių tauta*, kn. 5 (Vilnius, 1935), p. 17, 28-9, 44-5; Jonas Basanavičius, *Mano gyvenimo kronika ir nervų ligos istorija* (Vilnius, 1997), p. 27, 78-9, 81.

So far no researcher seems to have paid attention to the timing of the appearance of Kudirka's 'confession' and its didactic intention. It was published in connection with the tenth anniversary of *Aušra*, concurrently stressing the role of Basanavičius and the national ideological ties between *Aušra* and *Varpas*. For the sake of greater suggestiveness, Kudirka addresses his readers in the autobiographical form, which was usually used by writers of fiction and sometimes by the publicists. The minutiae of the 'confession' should not be taken too literally without any reservation. Of particular importance for the interpretation of the content and form of the 'confession' is its didactic purpose – 'schismatic' Lithuanians should not be blamed, but conditions must be created for their conversion and the development of their national consciousness; in the opinion of *Varpas* ideologists, crucial in this respect is national education and national propaganda in the newspapers and, in general, in the correspondingly orientated press.

Lithuania had been dear to Kudirka prior to the 'conversion' as well. As has already been mentioned the finest biographers of Kudirka do not acknowledge his total alienation from his own people and ethnicity. An additional argument would be Jablonskis' account about their collaboration in the higher forms of the grammar school in Marijampolė:

... in our talks we would come to the conclusion that we should not be ashamed of our language, we only considered that we should not use it in all cases, and only crackpots (*szalency*)¹⁶ could dream about the domination of Lithuanian in the public life of our country, about all kinds of *our own* writings, about *our own* newspaper, about *our own* literature, about *our own* [original emphases] Kraszewskis and Mickiewicz...¹⁷

Already before the appearance of *Aušra*, Kudirka had been collecting Lithuanian songs and their melodies. During his studies at the University of Warsaw, the priest of Zapiškis (near Kaunas) Andrius Barkauskas used to send him such records (e.g., in 1882).¹⁸

In our opinion, Kudirka's Lithuanian 'conversion', in the first place, should be understood as his resolute determination to get involved

¹⁶ We talked about those things *in Polish*. J.J. (emphasis of Jablonskis).

¹⁷ Jablonskis, *Raštai*, vol. 1, p. 281.

¹⁸ Russian translation of Barkauskas letter of 23 Sept. 1882 to Kudirka. Lietuvos valstybės istorijos archyvas (hereafter LVIA), f. 446, ap. 2, b. 245, l. 189. The letter was discovered by the gendarmes in Kudirka's home in Šakiai on 13 July 1895. In it Barkauskas wrote: 'enclosed you will find several songs, they could be of some use to you. Only I would like you to preserve the original and bring it to me, as I have not made any copy for myself'.

actively in the Lithuanian national movement, which replaced the old traditional or historical interpretation of Lithuania with a new modern one – a point of particular importance for the topic under consideration. The very 'conversion' does not seem to have been so radical as it has been looked upon until now. For several years Kudirka had been maturing as a participant and an active figure of the national movement. He subscribed to *Aušra* through Martynas Jankus and to *Unija* (Union) from Jonas Šliupas, and in 1885 sent his verses to *Aušra*, some of them composed in hexameter.¹⁹ One of his poems (an imitation) was published in 1885,²⁰ however, apart from its linguistic form, it had no national colouring yet.

Kudirka's new patriotism, in a way, was fostered by his favourite Polish literature, which previously had nurtured the consciousness of the 'Lithuanian and Pole' as a representative of the historical Lithuanian nation. After the 'conversion' he considered that not merely the gentry, but also the common people were the object of the Lithuanian state and its history, and perceived Polish literature as a catalyst of the democratic Lithuanian national movement. It was not by accident that Kudirka translated and published the works of Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, Tekla Wróblewska, Adam Asnyk and Maria Konopnicka in *Varpas* or in separate editions. The changing attitude towards Mickiewicz can be illustrated by the following statement of Kudirka: 'He learned to sing from the Lithuanian nightingales and it was only Lithuania that he sang about, though he did that in Polish words; he, who was forced by the forerunners of the Hangman (governor general Mikhail Muraviev's nickname – the author's note) to leave Lithuania, in a foreign country longed for his homeland:

Litwo! Ojczyzna moja! ty jesteś
jak zdrowie.

Ile ciż trzeba cenię,
ten tylko siż dowie,

Kto ciż stracil. ...²¹

Lithuania, My country, thou art
like health;

how much thou shouldst be prized
only he can learn

who has lost thee. ...²²

¹⁹ In greater detail, see Vytautas Merkys, '1895 metų Vincas Kudirkos byla' (The 1895 prosecution against Vincas Kudirka), *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis, 1984 metai* (Vilnius: Mokslo, 1985), p. 70.

²⁰ Vinc. Kapsas.[V. Kudirka], 'Kodėl žydai nevalgo kiaulienos' (Why the Jews do not eat pork), *Aušra*, no. 6, (1885), pp.168-9.

²¹ Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz* (Warszawa, 1968), p. 7; 'Tėvynės varpai', *Varpas*, no. 1 (1899), p. 14; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 665.

²² Adam Mickiewicz, *Pan Tadeusz*, transl. from the Polish by George Rapall Noyes (London-Toronto, 1930), p. 1.

These lines were written by Kudirka after he had composed his *Tautiška giesmė* (National song), which in due course became the national anthem of Lithuania, the beginning of which was analogous to that of Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*; the difference was only in the extension of the romantic 'Litwo! Ojczyzna moja!' (Lithuania, my country) of the individual to the appeal of the entire nation 'Lietuva, tėvyne mūsų' (Lithuania, our homeland) [emphases of the author].

The Lithuania of the Kudirka's *Tautiška giesmė* actually differed from Mickiewicz's Lithuania not only with respect to its territory but also to its social structure. Mickiewicz's Lithuania was limited to the élite estates, the gentry, which was tied to the traditions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and to the Polish language as a peculiar expression of local culture and a medium of communication. In his debate with a *Varpas* proponent and future Social Democrat Stasys Matulaitis on the possibility of the selection of Lithuanian wives by intellectuals, Kudirka wrote: 'You know, Lithuanian society is too democratic. Those, who belonged to the gentry, went over to the Polish side and remained there. Thus, the society of Lithuanian girls consisted from the so-called countryside people'.²³ Correspondingly, he already treated the common people – the peasants, but no more the gentry, as Lithuania's social basis and her determinant.

In general, Kudirka, as an ideologist of the enslaved nations of Central and Eastern Europe, was guided by the German rather than the French concept of the modern nation. According to Rogers Brubaker,

French understandings of nationhood have been state-centered and assimilationist, German understandings ethnocultural and 'differentialist'.²⁴ Yet while the French understanding of nationhood – state-centered and robustly assimilationist – engendered an interest in the civic incorporation of second-generation immigrants, the German understanding of nationhood engendered an interest in their civic exclusion.²⁵

In other words, some states formed their present-day nations, while other nations established their own states. In the last days of the Polish-Lithuanian Republic 'citizenship' transformed itself into nationhood, and that development started in the social élite. It

²³ 'Tėvynės varpai. Pasikalbėjimas su S. M[atulaičiu]' (Bells of the Homeland. Conversation with S. Matulaitis), *Varpas*, no. 1 (1899); Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 665.

²⁴ R. Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), p. xi.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

must be noted that Kudirka was familiar with both the Polish and the German consolidation processes; he translated Schiller's patriotic dramatic works *Die Jungfrau von Orléans* and *Wilhelm Tell* into Lithuanian.

Without any hesitation Kudirka considered the Lithuanian-speaking common people the dominant subject of Lithuanian nationhood: 'The native tongue is the most solid basis of nationhood and its main support. Nationhood and all its attributes will disappear if a group of people is deprived of its language'.²⁶ The advancement of the new democratic Lithuanian-speaking subject of the Lithuanian nation was accepted by a large part of the local gentry and by the leaders of the Polish national movement as a betrayal of the old national traditions and as a split of the historically shaped area of the 'Two Nations' and that of historical Lithuania as well. The point was that the previous unifying factors of that area – the gentry and the Catholic clergy – were shifted to the ethno-political periphery and had to give way to a new element of several modern nations – the common Lithuanian, Latvian, Ukrainian and even Belorussian people. With a view to acquainting his readers with the Polish national programme and starting a polemic in *Varpas*, Kudirka published the proposals of the Polish National Democratic (*Stronnictwo Narodowo-Demokratyczne*) Łwów newspaper *Przegląd Wszechpolski* for the Lithuanians, related to the 'reconciliation', the essence of which would be a common joint homeland with peripheral rights for the Lithuanian language and culture.²⁷

Attaching great significance to the Lithuanian speaking common people and their culture, Kudirka did not intend to eliminate the gentry from the nation. After all, the gentry made up 5.3 per cent of the total number of the population in ethnic Lithuania, and 27.7 per cent of the gentry considered Lithuanian their mother tongue. The criterion of the reliability of the gentry for Kudirka was their relationship with the Lithuanian nation. His attitude was particularly favourable to those who contributed to *Aušra* and *Varpas*. He wrote: 'It is understandable that the gentry *can* [original emphasis] become and be Lithuanians, and even good ones'.²⁸ Among the representatives of this kind of gentry he indicated Gabrieliūš Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, a contributor

²⁶ 'Tėvyniški varpai' (Homeland Bells), *Varpas*, no. 9 (1891), p. 133; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 487.

²⁷ 'Tėvynės varpai', *Varpas*, no. 12 (1895), p. 188; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, pp. 609-10.

²⁸ 'Tėvynės varpai', *Varpas*, no. 1 (1893), p. 12; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, pp. 539-40.

to *Varpas*. On the other hand, Kudirka was merciless to those noblemen (and not only to them), which damaged the interests of Lithuania, 'which forsook the Lithuanians and did not catch up with the Poles', which treated the Lithuanian language merely as a peasant tongue²⁹ at the time when the national revival movement endeavoured to establish it as a prestigious language of Lithuania.

In Kudirka's opinion, the role of history was of crucial importance in the restoration of the national identity of the Lithuanian gentry. He meticulously described the Lithuanian finds of the archaeologist and artist Tadas Daugirdas presented in a Warsaw exhibition of prehistory. Kudirka ruthlessly challenged the 'ex-Lithuanian' and 'pseudo-Lithuanian' visitors of the exhibition: 'We have taken pride in calling ourselves Lithuanians, while you are ashamed to admit that name! Really you ought to be ashamed, because you have done Lithuania wrong!' The author believes that the Lithuanian past will appeal to 'the alienated Lithuanian hearts'.³⁰ It has been considered since Simonas Daukantas times that the history of Lithuania prior to the unions with Poland excites the feelings of national pride and anti-union consciousness.

Kudirka was an adherent of economic liberalism and even its ardent advocate, however, only as far as it dealt with the restrictions and various obstacles in the development of Lithuanian economy. He did not support the landed gentry, which had dominated Lithuanian agriculture since serfdom. He simply hated them when by their indifferent actions they contributed to the Russian policy aimed at Lithuania's colonization. In this connection he indicated Count Jan Tyszkiewicz of the Vilnius province, who sold one of his large estates (1,250 *valakas*) possibly to a Russian newcomer. 'This is the way the Lithuanian landlords defend the land of the country!'³¹ was his laconic and unequivocally categorical remark.

Under the circumstances of the rising Russification, the Lithuanian-Russian confrontation was a natural sphere of activity for Kudirka as an ideologue of national revival. That was clearly evident in his poetry and, in particular, in his famous satires. The order of Vakanalijus Vziatkovičius Kruglodurovas, the hero of the satire 'Viršininkai' (The Bosses) to take away public Lithuanian signboards,

²⁹ 'Tėvyniszki varpai', *Varpas*, no. 1 (1891), p. 7; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 466.

³⁰ Q.D. ir K. [Kudirka]. 'Isz tėvyniszkos dirvos' (From the homeland), *Varpas*, no. 12 (1889), p. 180; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 415-16.

³¹ Q.D. ir K. [Kudirka]. 'Isz tėvyniszkos dirvos', *Varpas*, no. 8 (1889), p. 119; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 400.

because 'this is Muscovy, not Lithuania',³² revealed the essence of the Russian nationalities policy. In his journalistic writing, Kudirka often stressed that 'Muscovites do not use the word "Lithuanian" in order to show the world that Lithuanians have already agreed to be Muscovites',³³ he also spoke about 'the traps set to eradicate Lithuania from the ethnographic map of Europe'. However, in Kudirka's words, 'the Northern eagle' has too few heads to swallow three 'daintiest vital beings' – the Poles, the Baltic provinces and the Lithuanians.³⁴

Kudirka was a founder of *Lietuvos draugija* (Lithuanian Association), and one of its aims was 'the extension of the boundaries of "Lithuanianness",' the internal and external 'boundaries' of the Lithuanian nation. For Kudirka, the historical capital of Lithuania, Vilnius was an inherent part of the modern Lithuanian nation. Writing about the scheme of the Vilnius governor general, Ivan Kakhanov, to build a splendid theatre as befitting an old Russian city, Kudirka objected to 'the brazen impudence of the dictator of Vilnius, considering that he can make all the citizens call Vilnius *an old Muscovite city* [original emphasis] and its present-day inhabitants only Muscovites'.³⁵

Regarding the territory of Lithuania as a whole, Kudirka considered the rivers Vilija (Neris) and Nemunas as bonds linking the country in the geographical and symbolic senses; he expressed that idea in a poem, imitating Mickiewicz.³⁶ He says that he has made a vow to visit the Nemunas which 'gives so much strength to the troubled soul'.³⁷ The Lithuanians live on both sides of the Nemunas, but they are divided by an administrative boundary and different calendars.³⁸ The Nemunas joins not only the Lithuanians of the provinces of Suvalkai (Suwałki), Kaunas, Vilnius and Grodno. The Lithuanians, living in the lower reaches of the Nemunas in Lithuania Minor, were also taken into account by Kudirka. Basing himself on the statistics of Prussia, he regretted the wave of denationalisation, moving from the

³² Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 1 (Vilnius: Vaga, 1989), p. 105.

³³ Q.D. ir K. [Kudirka], 'Tėvyniški varpai', *Varpas*, no. 11 (1889), p. 169; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 461.

³⁴ Q.D. ir K. [Kudirka], 'Tėvyniški varpai', *Varpas*, no. 1 (1890), p. 11; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, pp. 423-24.

³⁵ Q.D. ir K. [Kudirka], 'Tėvyniški varpai', *Varpas*, no. 10 (1890), p. 152; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 456.

³⁶ V. [Kudirka], 'Vilija', *Varpas*, no. 2, (1896), p. 54-55.

³⁷ 'Tėvyniški varpai', *Varpas*, no. 9 (1892), p. 129; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 524.

³⁸ Q.D. ir K. [Kudirka], 'Tėvyniški varpai', *Varpas*, no. 6 (1890), p. 91; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 444.

south northwards. He merely consoled himself with the thought that 'only in the county of Tilžė, in Pakalnė, Šilokarčema, Klaipėda and Labguva the Lithuanian element has been retained as formerly, and in some places it even grew stronger. Nevertheless, even here the German language gradually is ousting Lithuanian'.³⁹

In general, Kudirka valued statistical information even in the form of ordinary letters to *Varpas*, which contained reliable data for the definition of the territory of Lithuania and gave some insight into the understanding of the homeland. He wrote: 'We must know the feelings, thoughts and actions of all Lithuanians so that we could be aware of how to defend our homeland and give it happiness'.⁴⁰

The expected letters and statistical data were supposed to indicate, at least approximately, the south-eastern and, in particular, the eastern borders of Greater Lithuania, which at that time were very obscure. Kudirka himself did not even make attempts to define them more accurately. He concentrated his attention on those provinces, in which there were Lithuanians, and, no doubt, did not disregard the larger areas of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania and he was interested in their fate and the prospects of their development. He treated the greater portion of the Suvalkai province as Lithuanian and only as a stepdaughter of Poland according to its situation.⁴¹ In the same issue of *Varpas* he published an extensive Pranas Mašiotas review of *Pamiatnaia knizhka*, containing the national composition and other data, related to the Suvalkai province in 1890.⁴² For a more precise definition of the situation in this province Kudirka resorted to the statistics of the diocese of Suvalkai on the national distribution of Catholics according to the deaneries.⁴³ It appeared that in all the deaneries the Lithuanians constituted the

³⁹ Q.D. ir K. [Kudirka]. 'Iš tėvyniszkos dirvos', *Varpas*, no. 11 (1889), p. 167; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 413.

⁴⁰ Q.D. ir K. [Kudirka]. 'Iš tėvyniszkos dirvos', *Varpas*, no. 7 (1889), p. 104; Kudirka *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 393.

⁴¹ 'Tėvyniški varpai', *Varpas*, no. 6 (1892), p. 84; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 508.

⁴² A-P., Gryžilas [P. Mašiotas], 'Uždarbiai ukinikų Suvalkų rėdybos ir emigracija į Ameriką' (Farmers' earnings in the Suvalkai province and their emigration to America), *Varpas*, no. 6 (1892), pp. 86-89.

⁴³ This statement is based on *Directorium divini officii ad usum universi cleri saecularis diocesis seinensis seu augustoviensis... pro anno Domini 1897, Varsoviae* [1896]. However, this source contains only the number of the Catholics in the deaneries, and their national identity is not indicated. The data about the national composition of the population are taken from some other document.

majority, with the exceptions of the Suvalkai deanery where that number was 22.5 per cent and of the Augustowo deanery of which there was no information.⁴⁴

The provinces of Vilnius, Kaunas and Grodno were also considered Lithuanian by Kudirka, and such a treatment was conditioned probably not only by the dominating nationality there, but also by the historical tradition going back to the official early-nineteenth-century nomenclature (Lithuanian Vilnius and Lithuanian Grodno provinces). Certainly, Kudirka did not doubt the on-going process of assimilation in Eastern Lithuania. Bearing in mind the future political situation, Kudirka considered that if local languages were given equal rights, the official language of the self-government and dietines of the Vilnius province should be the language of the majority of the local population – either Lithuanian or Belorussian. He rejected the perspective of the use of the so-called ‘civilized’ Russian or Polish languages and the respective hegemony of these nations in the province.⁴⁵

In Kudirka's opinion, fostering the Lithuanian identity, the national consciousness and patriotism of the population and the struggle against Russification and Polonization had to protect the boundaries of modern Lithuania. The main means of this activity had to be national publications, their dissemination, education and attention to the role of the Lithuanians in the national economy. Lithuanian national consolidation, led by the new intelligentsia, was the principal concern of Kudirka, *Varpas*, *Ūkininkas* (Farmer) and other publications. However, as it is common for the adherents of positivism, relatively little attention was paid to the formation of the political programme, and the ethnopolitical vision remained in the shadow. Thus, writing about the ‘Matice českí’ society, Kudirka urged his readers to follow the Czech example and confined himself to very general programme slogans: ‘Our labours will not be lost if we persevere with them! To make the task easier and win through in the end, let us not look about, let us get together, be unanimous and pool our efforts together, because the aim of our toil and sacrifice is the same – it is Lithuania!’⁴⁶

It would not be correct to say that Kudirka ignored the issue of Lithuanian sovereignty and statehood in the journal that he edited. Thus, *Varpas* propagated the idea that ‘Lithuania is not yet entirely lost’, that in Europe there are states, whose population is smaller than

⁴⁴ ‘Statistikos smulkmenos’ (Statistical details), *Varpas*, no. 4 (1897), p. 60. In the Suvalkai province the diocese presented the following figures: the total number of Catholics – 431,396, among them – 316,422 Lithuanians and 114,974 Poles.

⁴⁵ ‘Tėvynės varpai’, *Varpas*, no. 6 (1896), p. 88; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 618.

⁴⁶ ‘Tėvynės varpai’, *Varpas*, no. 9 (1896), p. 132; Kudirka, *Raštai*, vol. 2, p. 628.

the number of the Lithuanians, that great political changes are imminent on the Continent, and Lithuanians must be ready to face them and be able to exploit them.⁴⁷ He hoped that after a decade or so, the Russian despotism will come to an end, the political map of Europe will undergo radical changes and the Lithuanians would obtain freedom.⁴⁸

As an eventually independent subject of cultural, economic and political evolution, Kudirka's Lithuania was one of the territories of the Russian and German empires, the peculiarity of which was conditioned by a democratic ethno-social community - the Lithuanian nation undergoing a process of modernization. Kudirka and the people, working in conjunction with him, made every effort for the progress of that development.

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VINCO KUDIRKOS LIETUVOS SAMPRATA

Santrauka

VYTAUTAS MERKYS

Įžymiojo tautinio atgimimo žadintojo Vinco Kudirkos (1858-1899) Lietuvos vizija buvo sąlygota esminių to meto nacionalinių, politinių ir kultūrinių pokyčių Rytų ir Vidurio Europoje. Šių procesų veikiama V. Kudirkos Lietuvos samprata tolydžio keitėsi. Pernelyg pažodiškai interpretuodami V. Kudirkos „išpažintį“, istoriografiškai literatūros istorikai ir memuarų autoriai dažnai supaprastindavo jo požiūrių kitimą, ypač tariamai staigų posūkį į lietuvių. Nuodugnesnė išorinių veiksmų ir asmeninių požiūrių santykio analizė atskleidžia, kaip brendo šio žymaus veikėjo tautinis sąmoningumas ir palaipsnis persiorientavimas į lietuvių. Kartu išryškina mi ir V. Kudirkos aktyvaus įsitraukimo į lietuviškąjį sąjūdį bei kovos prieš rusifikaciją ir polonizaciją motyvai. Straipsnyje taip pat atskleidžiama, kaip V. Kudirka nevienodai vertino atskirų Lietuvos socialinių sluoksnių vaidmenį įvairiais periodais.

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⁴⁷ -j-g- [J. Gaidys-Gaidamavičius], 'Pro domo sua', *Varpas*, no. 6, (1893), p. 87.

⁴⁸ Paulius [P. Matulaitis], 'Istorija lietuvių krutėjimo paskutiniame dešimtmetyje Maskolijos ir Prūsų Lietuvoje' (The story of the Lithuanian movement in Muscovy and Prussia in the last decade), *Varpas*, no. 6 (1893), p. 87.