

Common past, divided memories: historical memory of the Polish minority members in Lithuania

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Tiivistelmä / Referat – Abstract <p>The Master's thesis examines historical memory of the Polish minority members in Lithuania with regard to how their interpretation of the common Polish-Lithuanian history reiterates or differs from the official Polish and Lithuanian narratives conveyed by the school textbooks. History teaching in high schools carries a crucial state-supported role of "identity building policies" – it maintains a national narrative of memory, which might be exclusive to minorities and their peculiar understanding of history. Lithuanians Poles, in this regard, represent a national minority, which is exposed to two conflicting national narratives of the common past – Polish and Lithuanian. As members of the Polish nation, their understanding of the common Polish-Lithuanian history is conditioned by the Polish historical narrative, acquired as part of the collective memory of the family and/or different minority organizations. On the other hand, they encounter Lithuanian historical narrative of the Polish-Lithuanian past throughout the secondary school history education, where the curriculum, even if taught in Polish, largely represents the Lithuanian point of view.</p> <p>The concept of collective memory is utilized to refer to collective representations of national memory (i.e. publicly articulated narratives and images of collective past in history textbooks) as well as to socially framed individual memories (i.e. historical memory of minority members, where individual remembering is framed by the social context of their identity).</p> <p>The thesis compares the official national historical narratives in Lithuania and Poland, as conveyed by the Polish and Lithuanian history textbooks. The consequent analysis of qualitative interviews with the Polish minority members in Lithuania offers insights into historical memory of Lithuanian Poles and its relation to the official Polish and Lithuanian national narratives of the common past. Qualitative content analysis is applied in both parts of the analysis.</p> <p>The narratives which emerge from the interview data could be broadly grouped into two segments. First, a more pronounced view on the past combines the following elements: i) emphasis on the value of multicultural and diverse past of Lithuania, ii) contestation of "Lithuanocentricity" of the Lithuanian narrative and iii) rejection of the term "occupation", based on the cultural presuppositions – the dominant position of Polish culture and language in the Vilnius region, symbolic belonging and "Lithuanianness" of the local Poles. While the opposition to the term of "occupation" is in accord with the official Polish narrative conveyed by the textbooks, the former two elements do not neatly adhere to either Polish or Lithuanian textbook narratives. They should rather be considered as an expression of claims for inclusion of plural pasts into Lithuanian collective memory and hence as claims for symbolic enfranchisement into the Lithuanian "imagined community".</p> <p>The second strand of views, on the other hand, does not exclude assertions about the historically dominant position of Polish culture in Lithuania, but at the same time places more emphasis on the political and historical continuity of the Lithuanian state and highlights a long-standing symbolic connectedness of Vilnius and Lithuania, thus, striking a middle way between the Polish and Lithuanian interpretations of the past.</p>			
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1. Introduction

One of the consequences of the eventual collapse of the Soviet Union and the re-establishment of the independent Lithuanian state in 1990 was the revival of the old historical animosities between Poland and Lithuania, particularly on the issue of the interwar conflict over Vilnius. The contestation of the two national narratives of the past, buried under the ideological dogmatism of the “friendship of the socialist nations” during the Soviet era, suddenly re-emerged to the surface of political discussions once the processes of democratization had begun to gain momentum. After Poland took over Vilnius and its surrounding area in 1920, the two countries officially remained in a state of war until 1938. Soon afterwards, the World War II began, bringing about the terrors of totalitarianism and the Soviet occupation in the case of Lithuania, while Poland became a Soviet Satellite state. The mutual dialogue on common historical past and memory remained frozen for 50 years.

Poland strongly supported Lithuania’s independence in the turbulent years of the late 80s-early 90s. However, the common task to agree on the contents of a bilateral treaty in the early 1990s turned out to be a challenging endeavor, requiring extensive negotiations and difficult compromises on both sides. A strong contributing factor to the uneasiness of the negotiation process was a series of autonomy resolutions in 1989-1991, proclaimed by the Polish political activists in the south-eastern Lithuania, who, paradoxically, with the backing of the Soviet authorities, sought to establish an autonomous region, which was possibly to remain within the borders of the Soviet Union. On 23 May 1990, the Šalčininkai district declared itself a Polish National Territorial District where the Soviet constitution had to remain in force. On 7 October 1990, delegates from Vilnius, Šalčininkai, Trakai and Švenčionys districts proclaimed a Polish National Territorial District in the Republic of Lithuania. A referendum was planned in March 1991, in which the accession of the autonomous Polish territory to the Soviet Union was to be decided. Gorbachev in the meantime threatened that if Lithuania gained independence, Vilnius and its surrounding region would be granted to Russia or Belarus¹. As a result, if in January 1991 Lithuanian government initially showed the intention to establish a cultural autonomy for ethnic Poles, already in September 1991 it

¹ Lieven, Anatol, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence*. New Haven: Yale University press, 1994, 167; Czayna, Thomas, *Ethnic Poles in Lithuania and Belarus: Current Situation and Migration Potential*. Santa Monica: Rand Monograph, 1993, 15.

dissolved the Polish local councils in Vilnius and Šalčininkai districts and imposed direct rule. A widespread perception of Lithuanian Poles being against the Lithuanian independence and in a communist alliance with the Soviet Union emerged, although one should bear in mind that Poland officially did not support the autonomist aims of the Polish political activists in Lithuania. However, the events revealed the existence of latent problems in relations between the Lithuanians and the Polish minority – the mutual distrust, confrontation, emotionally charged contestation of Vilnius, dormant throughout the Soviet rule, were all reawakened and re-enlivened, bringing about the grim collective memories of the interwar period.

Hence, what caused most controversy during the negotiations on the bilateral Polish-Lithuanian treaty was, unsurprisingly, the question of historical past and how it should be addressed in the text of the treaty. Prior to the signature of the 1994 Treaty, eleven deputies of the Lithuanian parliament urged Minister of Foreign Affairs Algirdas Saudargas not to sign the declaration of January 1992², demanding that Poland condemn the act of aggression, led by General Żeligowski in 1920, and claiming that if this provision was not included in the bilateral treaty, the results of aggression would be legalized³. Lithuanian side sought that Poland would officially acknowledge the fact of occupation and confirm that the annexation of Vilnius and its surrounding area was an illegal act, in breach of the international law. The president of Poland Lech Wałęsa stated that Poland had no claims on Lithuanian territory⁴. But the Lithuanians still insisted that the treaty could not be signed without an additional declaration on history, whilst Poland repeatedly responded that historical debates should proceed after the treaty had been signed. Ultimately, Lithuania agreed to exclude the historical issues from the treaty and the accompanying declaration. The treaty was signed on 22 February 1994.

Nevertheless, the issue of historical past was not only briefly mentioned in the text of the treaty, but kept its salience in the preamble which states as follows:

² An additional declaration on the historical past was supposed to complement the main document of the treaty.

³ "Saudargas urged not to sign Lithuanian-Polish declaration", Tass World Service in English, 12 January 1992, in: Snyder, Tim, "National Myths and International Relations: Poland and Lithuania, 1989-1994". *East European Politics and Societies*, Volume 9, No.2, Spring 1995, pp. 317-343, 326.

⁴ "Poland 'has no claims' on Lithuanian territory", Radio Vilnius, 18 April 1992, in: Snyder, Tim, "National Myths and International Relations: Poland and Lithuania, 1989-1994". *East European Politics and Societies*, Volume 9, No.2, Spring 1995, 327.

“The Republic of Lithuania and the Republic of Poland, hereinafter referred to as the "Contracting Parties", [...]

Mindful of the complex history of our peoples and the centuries-old closeness of Lithuanians and Poles, and bearing in mind the possibility that the two peoples may have a different interpretation of their common history,

Stressing that awareness of the good and bad pages in the history of our States should help to strengthen mutual understanding between the Lithuanian and Polish peoples in a democratic Europe which is in the process of uniting,

Expressing their sorrow at the conflicts between the two States at the end of the First World War when, after long years of oppression, Lithuanians and Poles began to build a new, independent life, and condemning the violence which occurred in the mutual relations between the two peoples, [...]

Solemnly confirming to one another the integrity today and in the future of their current territories with capitals in Vilnius and Warsaw, irrespective of the way in which their borders were established in the past, [...]

Have agreed as follows”.

Lithuanians, initially determined to achieve Poland’s condemnation of the takeover of Vilnius in 1920, compromised and accepted a much vaguer statement on the “possibility of different interpretations of the common history”. Additionally, the articles concerning the provisions to the Polish and Lithuanian minorities in the two countries were complemented by a statement on the teaching of history and culture:

“Article 15

The Contracting Parties shall, each in its own territory, preserve the ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity of the persons referred to in article 13, paragraph 2, and create conditions for its development. In particular, the Parties shall: [...]

– Take into consideration the history and culture of the groups referred to in article 13, paragraph 2, in connection with the teaching of history and culture at educational institutions”.

The latter statement reveals that both states consider the teaching of history and culture to be one of the crucial state-controlled functions of identity-building. Both countries agreed to take into account the history and culture of the minority groups – the Lithuanian minority in Poland and the Polish minority in Lithuania – in their respective history curriculum in educational institutions due to a shared perspective that history teaching in high schools serves the role of maintaining one’s national identity through a

national historical narrative, which might be exclusive to minorities and their peculiar or contradictory understanding of history. Lithuanian Poles, in this regard, represent a national minority, which is exposed to two conflicting national narratives of the common past – Polish and Lithuanian. As they are members of the Polish nation, their understanding of the common Polish-Lithuanian history is likely to be conditioned by the Polish historical narrative, acquired as part of the collective memory of the family and various social groups which have an exclusively Polish character (for instance, Polish choirs, youth and student clubs, scout associations, etc.) On the other hand, they encounter Lithuanian historical narrative of the Polish-Lithuanian past throughout the secondary school history education, where the curriculum, even if taught in Polish, largely represents the Lithuanian point of view, as the textbooks in Polish are mere translation of the Lithuanian ones.

However, one may also wonder whether there exists an exclusive Lithuanian Polish collective memory which represents yet another point of view, not identical to either Polish or Lithuanian one. In this regard, this constitutes an attempt to step beyond the simplistic “national perspective” and to overcome the equation of the nation-state and collective memory. In effect, the focus on the distinct collective memories of the Polish minority members allows to transcend methodological nationalism by questioning the confinement of collective memory within the borders of the nation-state, problematizing the taken-for-granted coherence of national collective memory and recognizing the internal diversity of these supposedly unified collective storylines. Therefore, the main research question could be formulated as follows: *In what ways do the interpretation and perception of the common Polish-Lithuanian history by the Polish minority members reiterate or diverge from Polish and Lithuanian national historical narratives? What are the differences in the messages and normative evaluations offered in the different accounts of the historical past? What implications does this have with regard to the Polish minority claims and institutional responses to those claims?*

This explains the choice of structuring the analysis into two parts: first, the historical narratives and national memory of the common Polish-Lithuanian history are explored, as presented in history textbooks and national historiographies; second, the collective memory of the Polish minority members is examined via analysis of qualitative interviews by aiming to identify how it can be related to or differentiated from the Polish and Lithuanian national historical narratives. In the case of the former,

we are dealing with publicly available national representations of collective memory, whereas the perceptions of history emerging from the interviews represent collectively framed individual memory, whether it is acquired from textbooks, historical records or family communication.

The study should thus generate knowledge about the patterns and elements of collective remembrance among the Polish minority members, offer insights into thematic and normative contents of Polish and Lithuanian historical narratives, and also allow for a better understanding of the links between collective memory, minority identity and political manifestations of competing social memories. While the last two decades have seen the attempts to examine the Lithuanian collective memory⁵, literature on the social memory of Lithuania's Polish minority has remained scarce, offering random and unsystematic insights within the framework of a more general analysis of the Lithuanian collective memory.

I present my argument by structuring the thesis in the following way. First, an overview of the relevant concepts and themes within the field of social memory studies is offered, concentrating on the issues of collective memory and identity, social memory transfer and competing memory narratives. The following chapter describes methodology, employed in the data analysis, and considers the relevant ethical issues that occurred in the process of conducting research. The subsequent chapter explores Polish and Lithuanian secondary education history curriculum, as presented in textbooks; in order to achieve a more complex depiction of the national historical narratives, it is complemented with the portrayal of chosen historical events or epochs in the national historiographies. By focusing on three historical periods of the common Polish-Lithuanian history, the main thematic and normative elements of both national narratives are highlighted, allowing for their juxtaposition and comparison. The fourth chapter presents the analysis of thirteen qualitative interviews with the Polish minority members, conducted in Lithuania in December 2009 – January 2010, and is followed by a discussion of the findings in the last chapter.

⁵ Insightful studies on Lithuanian collective memory have been carried out by Štutinienė, Irena, "Socialinė atmintis ir šiuolaikinė lietuvių tautinė tapatybė", *Lithuanian Ethnology: Studies in Social Anthropology & Ethnology*, 2008; Čepaitienė, Rasa "Sovietmečio atmintis – tarp atmetimo ir nostalgijos", *Lituanistica*, 2007, No.4 (72); Rubavičius, Vytautas, "Neišgyvendinamo sovietmečio patirtis: socialinė atmintis ir tapatumo politika", in: *Lietuvių tautos tapatybė: tarp realybės ir utopijos*. Vilnius: Kultūros, filosofijos ir meno institutas, 2007; Langer, Johannes, *Current Discourses on the Holocaust in Lithuania: The Impact of Collective Memory*, 2010.

2. Literature review: collective memory studies

Collective memory studies, being still in its “charismatic phase”⁶, do not give in easily to intellectual organization and standardization of theoretical and methodological approaches. It is a highly complex field, encompassing a broad array of disciplines: sociology, history, political science, social psychology, anthropology, literary and media studies, philosophy. Its interdisciplinarity explains the vast diversity of subjects, methods and approaches, used within the field of collective memory studies. Since the upsurge in academic and public interest in collective memory issues in the 1980s⁷, scholars have examined the role of collective memory in multiple aspects. They have addressed the practices of commemoration, the role of memory in ethnic conflicts and reconciliation, political use and the institutionalization of collective memory, the links between group identity and social remembering, the role of myths, as pseudo-history, in organizing and legitimizing the present, etc. The multitude of topics has been commented as resulting from memory studies being more practiced than theorized⁸. However, recent years have seen more attempts to bring some organization into the field, overview and structure the multitude of themes, conceptual tools and methods used⁹.

Some of this major conceptual confusion in the field stems from the fact that the concept of “collective memory” itself has been used interchangeably with that of “cultural memory” and “social memory” by different scholars. Throughout my thesis, however, I tend to use the term “collective memory”, which dominates the majority of debates in recent years and which, according to Olick, “directs our attention to issues at the heart of contemporary political and social life”, despite its breadth and

⁶ Olick, Jeffrey K., “Between Chaos and Diversity: Is Social Memory Studies a Field?”. *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*, June 2009, vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 249-252, 251.

⁷ Olick, Jeffrey K. and Robbins, Joyce, “Social Memory Studies: From “Collective Memory” to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices”. *Annual Review of Sociology*, August 1998, vol. 24, pp.105-140, 107.

⁸ Confino, Alon, “Memory and the History of Mentalities”, in: Erll, Astrid and Nünning, Ansgar (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, 79.

⁹ Olick, Jeffrey et al., *The Collective Memory Reader*; Erll, Astrid and Nünning, Ansgar (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*; the journal of *Memory Studies*, published since January 2008.

imprecision¹⁰. Collective memory can be understood as a broad umbrella definition that encompasses several conceptual elements: Collective memory can be perceived as “collective representations (publicly available symbols, meanings, narratives, and rituals), deep cultural structures (generative systems of rules or patterns for producing representations), social frameworks (groups and patterns of interaction), and culturally and socially framed individual memories”¹¹. However, I will use the term “collective memory” primarily referring to it in the two following ways: as collective representations of national memory (i.e. publicly articulated narratives, meanings and images of collective past in history textbooks) and as socially framed individual memories (i.e. historical memory of Polish minority members, where individual remembering is framed by the social context of their identity). Both of these involve the element of selectivity, inherent in the creation of accounts of the past which inescapably responds to present knowledge and motivations¹².

The pioneering work in social memory studies is Maurice Halbwachs’s “Les Cadres Sociaux de la Mémoire”, published in Paris in 1925. Halbwachs characterized collective memory in relation to history, wherein the former is understood as the past which actively maintains and organizes our identities and the latter is the past which is remembered, but does not sustain a meaningful relation to our identities any longer¹³. The two concepts – collective memory and history – should not be perceived as mutually exclusive, or as two alternative categories to describe the past: Collective memory is not alternative to history – it is largely shaped by it. Another crucial distinction identified by Halbwachs was between autobiographical memory and historical memory. The recollection of the past which we personally experienced constituted the former, whereas the historical memory entailed the recollection of the past of which we learnt indirectly – from historical records¹⁴. Both, however, are to be regarded as part of collective memory, irrespective of whether the process of

¹⁰ Olick, Jeffrey K., “From Collective Memory to the Sociology of Mnemonic Practices and Products”, in: Erll, Astrid and Nünning, Ansgar (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, 152.

¹¹ Ibid, 157-158.

¹² Erll, Astrid, “Cultural Memory Studies: An Introduction”, in: Erll, Astrid and Nünning, Ansgar (eds.), *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2008, 5.

¹³ Olick and Robbins, 111.

¹⁴ Coser, Lewis A., “Introduction”, in: Halbwachs, Maurice, *On Collective Memory*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 23; Olick and Robbins, 111.

remembering entailed a socially framed recollection of personal experience or one recovered by acquaintance with historical records.

A crucial aspect of Halbwach's theory, manifesting the influence of his teacher Durkheim, was the externality of collective memory, presupposing one's membership in a certain group which enabled us of recollecting the past: "it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories".¹⁵ It is always the individual who remembers, but the process of reconstructing the past is dependent upon placing one's individual thought within a social framework of memory of a certain group and adopting its perspective on the past. On the other hand, we should distinguish between socially framed individual memories and the representations of memories by institutions, the media or different social groups, even if these two types of collective memory are highly interdependent. As a result, collective remembering involves numerous different memories, social frameworks of recollection as well as collective representations of the past, making it a highly complex and segmented process.

Out of diversity of work on social memory that addresses the multiple issues in the field, this chapter offers an overview of those themes and concepts that are the most important and relevant for the purpose of my thesis. First, by highlighting the interdependency of collective memory and identity formation, the mechanisms, practices and sites of memory transfer are explored. A more specific impact of history textbooks as means of transmitting social memory is examined in the subsequent part. The issues of selective remembrance and competing memories are explored in the last section.

2.1 Mnemonic communities and memory transfer

Halbwach's and his followers' insight about the impact of social memory on sustaining group identity by adopting group's perspective on the past unveils the link between identity and memory by showing how the process of remembering, requiring individuals to employ a social memory framework of a certain group, performs a function of their initiation into a "community of memory". As formulated by Bellah and

¹⁵ Halbwachs, Maurice, *On Collective Memory*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992, 38.

co-authors, “Communities [...] have a history – in an important sense are constituted by their past – and for this reason we can speak of a real community as a ‘community of memory’, one that does not forget its past. In order not to forget that past, a community is involved in retelling its story, its constitutive narrative.”¹⁶ This relates to the role of the commemoration sites, practices and rituals, which all serve to maintain national identities by retelling a national historical narrative of the past. Annual celebrations of independence, war memorials, commemoration of national heroes, representations of national histories in the media aim at recapitulating the relevance of national histories, as the basis for the “communities of memory”, to our national identities. As Smith notes, “The return to the past is necessary because of our need for immortality through the memory of posterity which the seeming finality of death threatens.[...] Hence our myths, memories and symbols must be constantly renewed and continually re-told, to ensure our survival”¹⁷. In this sense, national histories serve the role of ethnic mythology and symbolism, which unify and integrate the nation as well as provide its members with a sense of belonging and create solidarity, based in common descent and shared memories. “What matters, then”, argues Smith, “is not the authenticity of the historical record, much less any attempt at ‘objective’ methods of historicizing, but the poetic, didactic and integrative purposes which that record is felt to disclose”¹⁸. Following the same line of reasoning, Duara adds that “national history secures for the contested and contingent nation the false unity of a self-same, national subject evolving through time”¹⁹.

On the other hand, a “community of memory” does not necessarily imply a national community. Thus we can refer to a multiplicity of communities of memory, or social groups, which may overlap, form compound groups and maintain identities, based on diverse identity categories. Manifold, often competing, social memories typically represent different social groups which affect the way we remember the past – in this sense, we can speak of remembrance environments, which may be constituted, among other, by the family, the profession, the ethnic group, the religious community or

¹⁶ Neelly, Robert et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985, 153.

¹⁷ Smith, Anthony D., *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986, 208.

¹⁸ Ibid, 25.

¹⁹ Prasenjit, Duara, *Rescuing history from the nation : questioning narratives of modern China*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995, 4.

the nation²⁰. As a result, memories link individuals to a variety of different remembrance environments which all shape our recollection and perception of the past. Zerubavel defines these remembrance environments as “mnemonic communities”, which incorporate new members by essentially familiarizing them with the community’s past, which the new members did not have to experience personally in order to remember it: “being social presupposes the ability to experience events that had happened to groups and communities to which we belong long before we joined them as if they were part of our own past”²¹. The most typical example of such mnemonic socialization is the national history education in schools, which aims to teach a certain account of the past, made universal within the boundaries of a national community by means of the unified and coherent national curriculum administered by the state. Out of all multiple communities of memory, however, the family constitutes the primary environment of mnemonic socialization, which still influences our recollections of the past even after we have entered new mnemonic communities and adopted their mnemonic traditions²².

Belonging to a specific generation may as well leave an imprint of shared collective memories stemming from certain common experiences, which typically will differ from the collective memories of other generations. Mannheim is the originator of the idea that social and political events of one’s youth leave a generational imprint²³. Schuman and Scott draw on Mannheim’s theory by asking different age groups to identify national or world events and changes that occurred over the past fifty years and were particularly important as well as to comment why these particular events or changes were chosen²⁴. The gathered data show a clear generational pattern, wherein the events perceived as most important refer back to the late adolescence or early adulthood of the respondents. The authors further suggest that when shared memories of an event or a social change are analyzed, one should distinguish between personalized recollections of the event – such as loss of hearing on a World War II military assignment – and collective memories, exemplified by a large part of the Vietnam

²⁰ Zerubavel, Eviatar, “Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past”. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 19, No.3, 1996, pp. 283-300, 284.

²¹ Ibid, 290.

²² Ibid, 286.

²³ Mannheim, Karl, “The problem of generations”, in: Mannheim, Karl, *Essays in the Sociology of Culture*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952(1928), pp.276-322.

²⁴ Schuman, Howard and Scott, Jacqueline, “Generations and Collective Memories”. *American Sociological Review*, June 1989, vol. 54, No. 3, pp.359-381, 362.

generation remembering the Vietnam war as the time of distrust and division²⁵. On the other hand, collective memories need not be necessarily experienced personally and can be transmitted to new generations as part of the collective memories of a social group. The crucial aspect of tracing such collective memories is, however, not so much the fact of remembrance itself, but the subjective meaning ascribed to the remembered event, as this is likely to be the factor which might shape and instruct the present behavior. As Schuman and Scott's study showed, larger political meaning was attributed to World War II by the Vietnam generation, which perceived World War II as a "victorious war", rather than by those who actually experienced World War II²⁶. This, in turn, sheds light on how the currently present circumstances may shape the interpretation and significance ascribed to the past events. Further, what Schuman and Scott achieve to demonstrate is that the recollection of certain events and the importance given to them mostly depend on the intersection of personal and national history, whereas only some people make their judgments of the past solely following the perspective of historians²⁷.

Šutinienė, in a similar study on the Lithuanian collective memory, asked different age groups from different ethnic backgrounds to name up to two national or world events and changes since the 1930s which they consider to be most important²⁸. A qualitative dimension of the study revealed the reasons that made people choose those particular events or changes. The "generational imprint" was proven only partly. The re-establishment of independence was identified to be by far the most important event to all age groups as well as all ethnic groups (Lithuanians, Russians, Poles). However, the most recent events – the re-establishment of independence and the accession to EU – were more important to younger age cohorts, whereas the older generations more often named the 1940 Soviet occupation and Stalinist repressions. In the case of the younger generations, the social memory of the events related to the regaining of independence, Šutinienė argues, is still mostly transmitted through mnemonic socialization and rules of remembering within the family. Younger respondents typically underlined that the importance of independence was experienced and later recollected within the context of family – as part of childhood memories and family stories. The latter point is in accordance with the aforementioned Zerubavel's insight on the importance of the family

²⁵ Ibid, 378.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 380.

²⁸ Šutinienė, Irena, "Socialinė atmintis ir šiuolaikinė lietuvių tautinė tapatybė". *Lithuanian Ethnology: Studies in Social Anthropology & Ethnology*, vol. 8, No. 17, 2008, pp. 31-55.

as the primary community of mnemonic socialization, which shapes people's ways of remembering the past later in life. Further, Štutiniene shows how collective national memory and Lithuanian identity are closely knit with the image of roots and the idea of a fatherland, family histories and genealogies. National historical narrative was typically personalized by linking it to family histories and one's perceived rootedness in the fatherland, i.e. where one's parents and grandparents were born and lived. This confirms Schuman and Scott's finding that the recollection of important events is in most cases dependent on intersection of personal and national history, which in this case could be complemented by family history as an extension of one's personal history.

A useful conceptual tool for the analysis of the processes through which collective memory, with its peculiar symbols, narratives and meanings, is transmitted within intergenerational community of memory is Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, or "sites of memory". The seminal multivolume study of French collective memory – *Les Lieux de Mémoire* – carried out under Nora's supervision, provides insights into the vast and diverse array of practices, rituals, traditions, publicly available symbols, narratives and other representations of French collective memory. As a result, *lieux de mémoire* could be constituted by concretely experienced museums, memorials, cemeteries, anniversaries and, likewise, by more vague concepts of local memory, lineage, generation or landscape²⁹. In order to organize the multitude of sites of memory, Nora suggests distinguishing between material, functional and symbolic aspects of different *lieux de mémoire*³⁰. The first group would encompass mostly monumental memory sites, such as statues, monuments, museums, various architectural works of epochal importance. The functional memory sites would include veterans' associations, manuals, dictionaries or testaments, which either aim to preserve an incommunicable experience of the past or have a pedagogical purpose. Lastly, among symbolic memory sites, one could identify official national ceremonies, rituals of pilgrimage, places of burial or sanctuaries.

Ultimately, Nora's *lieux de mémoire* encompass all those mnemonic practices, rituals, symbols, images and narratives which serve the role of maintaining and reviving identities. Memory sites and the meanings attached to them, whether they reflect the original ways of remembrance or are revived and reinterpreted in the recurring cycles of

²⁹ Nora, Pierre, "Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire". *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, Spring 1989, pp. 7-24, 22.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 22-23.

collective memory, are inherent to group identity. Hutchinson, for instance, argues that warfare may generate powerful myths which can be formed and reconstituted long after the actual events had taken place and which are capable of engendering unity of identity within a group by providing a shared framework for explaining and evaluating the present events. Commemorative practices and rituals, through which these myths are reworked, are of crucial importance here, for they enable a constant and cyclical revival of group identities, often by converting the remembrance of war heroes into an institutionalized public commemoration of fallen soldiers. Collective memories of defeat may be maintained for multiple generations and, as a result, generate campaigns of retrieval of lost territories or opposition to the externally imposed treaties³¹. In times of crisis and by means of historical analogies, myths can be retrieved and reinterpreted, adjusted to explain the present situation and to guide collective action.

Zerubavel identifies multiple bridging mechanisms that relate the experiences in the past with the present circumstances. Ceremonies in the same places of the perceived war sacrifice, visits to the relics or memorabilia of warfare, imitation and replication of heroes and martial traditions, re-enactment of battles, historical analogies referring to the past traumatic experiences and discursive continuity between the present and the past experiences – all constitute national mnemonic practices which reiterate the important moral message conveyed by the meanings assigned to the past experiences³².

This argument may be extended to explain, drawing on Osborne, how repetitive, quotidian practices as well as commemorations, rituals and conventions of framing of such mnemonic practices may impart certain places, sites or landscapes with emotionally loaded symbolism, making those locations crucial to one's self-definition³³. Landscapes, in particular, may become visual prompts for collective remembering and define group's identity when they are personified as homeland or fatherland, the land of great ancestors³⁴. In a similar vein, Tilley argues that "places, like persons, have biographies in as much as they are formed, used, and transformed in relation to practice [...] stories acquire part of their mythic value and historical relevance if they are rooted

³¹ Hutchinson, John, "Warfare and the Sacralisation of Nations: The Meanings, Rituals and Politics of National Remembrance". *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 2009, vol. 38, No. 2, pp. 401-417, 402- 407.

³² Zerubavel, Eviatar, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2003, ch. 2.

³³ Osborne, Brian S., "Landscapes, Memory, Monuments, and Commemoration: Putting Identity in its Place". *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, 2001, vol.33, No. 3, pp.39-77, 42-43.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 49.

in the concrete details of locales in the landscape, acquiring material reference points that can be visited, seen and touched”³⁵. As a result, places and landscapes, as culturally loaded geographies, are turned into mythologized constructs of collective memory, evoke strong emotional attachment and become part of our identity and memory. The link between identity and landscape is further clarified by Sack who notes that landscapes are “replete with markers of the past – graves and cemeteries, monuments, archaeological sites, place names, religious and holy centers – that help us remember and give meaning to our lives”³⁶. The identity of a place is tied to certain group narratives and the underlying social patterns or frameworks of remembrance which represent a subjective group’s perspective on the history of the place.

In this regard, a good case in point is the city of Vilnius as well as the imagined landscape of Lithuania which since late 19th-early 20th century were imbued with conflicting mythologies and narratives, representative of contradictory modern Lithuanian and Polish nationalisms as well as the old traditional patriotism of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (the latter expressed by the Polish-speaking Lithuanian gentry loyal to the political tradition of the Commonwealth wherein nationhood was not based on ethnicity or language, but on social class and status). These competing political and cultural visions projected histories with their specific heroes, villains, victories, defeats, events to be remembered and forgotten; they ascribed different meanings and symbolism to the same events of the past, thus, inevitably engendering distinct communities of memory and conjuring up contradictory projects for the future of those communities. Yet a common feature to all of these different national ideologies was the fact that they integrated a highly mythologized idea of Vilnius and Lithuania into their peculiar historical memory and personified it as a sacred homeland, as the heart of group’s national and cultural life, as the inherited land of their forefathers, functioning as an anchor of each group’s sense of national identity.

To construct such coherent national narratives of the past, particularly in the light of changing boundaries and regimes, requires selective choice and consideration of what has to be remembered or forgotten and what meanings should be assigned to and moral

³⁵ Tilley, Christopher, *A Phenomenology of Landscape: Places, Paths and Monuments*. London: Berg, 1994, 33.

³⁶ Sack, Robert David, *Homo Geographicus: A Framework for Action, Awareness, and Moral Concern*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997, 135.

lessons drawn from the various elements of those narratives. These issues will be further elaborated in the following section.

2.2 Remembering and forgetting: competing memories and political use of collective memory

As Ernest Renan first famously pointed out, "forgetting [...] is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation"³⁷. He believed that while forgetting certain elements of the past contributed to the national unity, historical studies, on the other hand, endangered this unity by revealing the forgotten pasts of violence and terror that preceded that national unity. Renan's insight is valuable for two reasons. The more obvious outcome of his statement lies in the fact that national collective memory is selective – only certain events of the past are to be consciously remembered, while others remain unnoticed or ignored, often perceived as threatening the legitimacy of an established national narrative of the past.

Nevertheless, what Renan also implies is the crucial distinction between memory and history, which, though aiming to define two similar mechanisms of recollecting the past, should not be confined. History, according to Renan and his followers, even if it can be derived from memory, should not be reduced to memory³⁸. Ideally, history should be corrective of memory, aiming to disentangle the obscurities of the past and, consequently, potentially delegitimizing certain memories, purifying the national memory³⁹. This reflects, as Olick argues, the position held by traditional historians who would place history and memory in a clear-cut distinction, making a claim that only history is interested in the pursuit of truth⁴⁰. According to this vision, historical research and knowledge should validate memory claims as well as uncover "forgotten" historical facts. The growing contemporary split between memory and history has been stressed by Nora. Memory – multiple, collective and yet individual – is an essentially permanent evolution, an actual phenomenon that links us to the eternal present, remaining "unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and

³⁷ Renan, Ernest, "What is a nation?", http://www.cooper.edu/humanities/core/hss3/e_renan.html. [Accessed 2010 12 15]

³⁸ Müller, Jan-Werner, "Introduction: the power of memory, the memory of power and the power over memory", in: Müller, Jan-Werner (ed.), *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 23.

³⁹ Ibid, 23.

⁴⁰ Olick and Robbins, 110.

appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived”⁴¹. History, on the other hand, is a reconstruction, representation of the past that, being suspicious of memory, calls for analysis, criticism and, as a result, claims universal authority⁴². This process of critical search for “true” history, as Nora insightfully pointed out, has taken a step forward when a growing realization occurred that history, aiming to denounce hypocritical mythologies of the past, is equally susceptible to alien impulses within itself, that it is not exempt from the possibility of being “the victim of memories which it has sought to master”⁴³.

This proves how complex and interdependent the relation between history and memory is, as the assumed source of legitimacy – historiography – is itself malleable to nation-building projects, prioritizing coherence and glory of the national past over controversial facts and conflicting memories. A historical account is always a product of an arbitrary selection of sources and interpretation. The realization of this leads to an evolution of critical history, where historiography becomes the object of history itself, causing, at the same time, blurring of the distinction between history and memory and an ever more clear-cut dissociation between them. Having admitted the susceptibility of historical research and knowledge to nation-building imperatives, we should, nevertheless, avoid collapsing it into national memory and completely ignoring its potential role as a corrective of memory. The conceptual distinction should not be lost for analytical reasons.

In this sense, historical accounts which aim to uncover uncomfortable historical facts of national histories, which place the coherent national historical narrative in a more critical and multi-faceted perspective are to be regarded as corrective of collective memory. Weeks makes such an attempt at “reminding” of the forgotten Jewish and Polish past of Vilnius, when he describes how Vilnius was turned into a Soviet Lithuanian capital during the early years of the Soviet occupation of Lithuania⁴⁴. He shows how the city’s multiethnic past was actively forgotten by excluding references to existence of non-Lithuanian and non-Russian population of the city before the Soviet takeover, by taking down monuments commemorating the Jewish community and its mass destruction by Nazis and their Lithuanian collaborators, by erasing street names

⁴¹ Nora, “Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, 8-9.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, 10.

⁴⁴ Weeks, Theodore R., “Remembering and Forgetting: Creating A Soviet Lithuanian Capital. Vilnius 1944-1949”. *Journal of Baltic Studies*, 2008, vol. 39, No.4, pp.517-533.

that would remind of famous local Jews or Poles, and framing the Lithuanian participation in the Holocaust as a dirty deed of a very few despicable “Lithuanian-German nationalists”, who, conveniently for the Soviet regime, were also portrayed as anti-Soviet partisans. This way the regime could both justify its brutal repression of the anti-Soviet resistance, active in Lithuania until 1953, and appease the Lithuanian population by not examining the Holocaust events too carefully⁴⁵.

The crucial issue at stake in such confrontations of social memory held by different groups is legitimation of memory. Historical narratives represented in history textbooks or evoked in presidential speeches constitute national collective memory which is conceived of as legitimate and is often supposed to convey important moral lessons. In the context of selective construction of national histories which are supposed to communicate a unified and coherent vision of the nation’s past, present and future, forgetting can be perceived as exclusion of certain memories, particularly of those maintained by minority groups, which may advance a competing historical narrative, not represented as a part of the national collective memory and thus lacking the same legitimacy status. The latter thus becomes the target of competing historical narratives, for a particular interpretation of the past carries a normative dimension, a certain national “morality” that may be transmitted to future generations, this way linking them to an intergenerational “community of memory”.

Memories may overlap within different social groups or generations, but they are as much likely to differ to an extent that it may generate tensions or conflicts between those groups. The most obvious example of such social memory conflict would be a national community of memory attempting to impose its memory narrative on all its members, linked to it primarily by means of citizenship, whilst some of these members would happen to belong to a minority group, whose recollections of the past would stand in a sharp contrast to the majority’s memories. What the “correct” way of interpreting the past is, which event should mark the beginning of a historical narrative, which events or persons should be remembered or discarded as irrelevant to group’s history – all these disputes can be considered as mnemonic battles, fought within and between communities over the social legacy of the past⁴⁶.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 529.

⁴⁶ Zerubavel, ”Social Memories: Steps to a Sociology of the Past”, 295.

Taking the argument one step further, the political and social significance of such memory battles and competing historical narratives should be explored, which, in turn, raises the question why certain memories, narratives, symbols representing the past find such wide resonance among people, what is peculiar to those interpretations which makes them powerful enough to mobilize people, to encourage them to think and act in a certain way. The intensity of memory contestation between different groups in some cases remains contained and does not grow into a violent conflict. In other cases, however, collective memory and its various public representations may appear to play a major role in exacerbating ethnic warfare. Historical past or, to put it more precisely, the group-specific way these past events are framed and interpreted, can play an important role in the present-day politics and minority claims-making. Historical narratives can provide legitimacy to the political strategies of action undertaken by politicians, maintain identity boundaries, support and direct demands and the means to attain them. Brubaker offers an example from the conflict between Croatia and Serbia on how Serbian nationalists were able to mobilize the Croatian Serbs by constructing the image of the independent Croatia through the prism of the past, by reviving the old memories and stories about the atrocities Croats inflicted upon Serbs in the wartime Ustasha regime⁴⁷. The power of the nationalist vocabulary which generated the opposition to the Croatian independence was grounded in the persistence of the memories of the past and the fact that the trauma of wartime atrocities was transmitted from one generation to another.

What heightens or diminishes tensions, Ross argues, is the shifting inclusiveness or exclusiveness of cultural narratives enacted by changing attitudes and behaviours⁴⁸. He identifies psychocultural narratives as a resource that groups and individuals may employ to make claims, mobilize support and strengthen identity boundaries. He defines psychocultural narratives as “the aggregation of interpretations into accounts of a group’s origin, history, and conflicts with outsiders, including its symbolic and ritual behaviours”⁴⁹. Cultural expressions and narratives, being at the core of group identity, provide particular frames, interpretive lenses through which groups and individuals define their interests and appropriate strategies of action as well as predict expectations

⁴⁷ Brubaker, Rogers, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 72-73.

⁴⁸ Ross, Marc Howard, *Cultural Contestation in Ethnic Conflict*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 3.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 24.

and motives of other actors. Ultimately, what Ross succeeds to demonstrate is how group identity is articulated through different collective memories expressed publicly through various rituals, practices, narratives and symbols and how this, in turn, may be received by other groups as a threat and lead to increasing tensions. In this regard, explanations of the rise of ethnic tensions and conflicts should emphasize the importance of

"taking seriously participants' own accounts to identify emotionally significant elements that must be part of any settlement; making sense of why and how the narratives are emotionally powerful; examining how the narratives shape beliefs that facilitate the choice of some actions over others; analyzing the power of collective memories in linking individuals to larger social and political identities; emphasizing the widespread use of imaginative and politically effective culturally grounded expressions and enactments to make claims, build commitment, and mobilize action".⁵⁰

As a result, Ross argues that "psychocultural examinations of ethnic conflict can inform us about the ways the parties understand unfolding events, the core issues that are at stake, and the way they express their fears"⁵¹. Psychocultural narratives could be invoked as metaphors and lessons drawn from the past events, as collective memories of the past or messages and symbols written into the works of art, literature and music. Parallely, the focal point of a conflict may be sacred sites, places, landscapes, such as battlefields, monuments or memorials, because of their significance to a group's identity and collective memory⁵².

Snyder, in his insightful study of the national transformations within the territorial boundaries of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, illustrates Ross's argument by showing how Vilnius with its multiple identities – Jewish Vilne, Polish Wilno, Lithuanian Vilnius, Belarusian Vil'nia – became such sacred site and the centre of a conflict, bearing strong emotional significance to different groups⁵³. This was especially visible in the Polish-Lithuanian confrontation, wherein both Poles and Lithuanians attempted to appropriate the city as exclusively "theirs" – as a historical capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, founded by the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas and

⁵⁰ Ibid, 5.

⁵¹ Ibid, 28.

⁵² Ibid, 64.

⁵³ Snyder, Timothy, *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003.

symbolic of Lithuania's continuity of statehood, or the nostalgia evoking centre of Polish culture.

On the other hand, in the 1990s Lithuania and, in particular, Poland managed to attain "sovereignty over memory", to use Snyder's terms. The crucial shift was in the inclusiveness of the Polish historical narrative, brought about largely by Polish intellectuals associated with the Paris monthly *Kultura*, who redefined Polish views on the eastern neighbours by critically reflecting on the assumed Polish superiority in the eastern territories and by highlighting that "we should learn the histories of Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, understand that they treated episodes of their pasts with the same sorts of biases Poles applied to their own past, and appreciate that the eastern neighbours' views of past relations could check Polish prejudices"⁵⁴. Instead of drawing on the diverging collective memories as a resource for political contestation, Polish and Lithuanian leaders managed to neutralise their attitudes to the past by emphasizing shared concerns and superordinate goals and this way preventing the bilateral relations from becoming an arena of historical debate. However, genuine reconciliation has not been achieved, as the latest developments in Polish-Lithuanian relations suggest⁵⁵.

Torsti's study of the memory conflict surrounding the case of the Bronze soldier in Estonia presents yet another example of contradictory historical narratives that ascribe different meanings to an objectified representation of collective memory⁵⁶. What for Estonians ultimately constituted a symbol of Soviet occupation, the Russian part of the population regarded as a "Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn" commemorating the Soviet victory against Nazi Germany. The decision of Estonian authorities to relocate

⁵⁴ Snyder, Timothy, "Memory of sovereignty and sovereignty over memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939-1999", in: Müller, Jan-Werner (ed.), *Memory & Power in Post-War Europe. Studies in the Presence of the Past*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 55.

⁵⁵ Historical disagreements re-emerged in June 2009 after the statement of Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs Radosław Sikorski that "Lithuania thinks we had occupied Vilnius in the interwar period, but we hold a different perspective on this". Waldemar Tomaszewski, the leader of the Lithuanian Poles' Electoral Action, commented that "Minister knows what he claims". Reacting to Sikorski's statement, Vygaudas Ušackas, Lithuania's Minister of Foreign Affairs, issued an official letter to Sikorski, in which he quoted the statement of Mykolas Riomeris (Michał Römer), a prominent Polish-Lithuanian lawyer of the interwar period, who claimed that "Vilnius – Lithuania's creation and capital – is and remains what has been created by an enormous will of generations and the nation [...] all the speculative attempts to fabricate a different origin of Vilnius through an annexation act, Seimas resolution will collapse". However, the main factor, which contributed, in recent years, to the gradual worsening of Polish-Lithuanian relations, was the controversial issue of treatment of the Polish minority in Lithuania. I would argue that the confrontation between Lithuanians and Poles on the issue of the Polish minority's rights in Lithuania has been itself strongly affected by the underlying conflictual national historical narratives.

⁵⁶ Torsti, Pilvi, "Why do History Politics Matter? The Case of the Estonian Bronze Soldier", in: Aunesluoma, Juhana and Kettunen, Pauli (eds.), *The Cold War and the Politics of History*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2008.

the statue of the Bronze soldier caused violent riots and protests of Estonian Russians. More importantly, the clash of two “historical cultures”, to use Torsti’s terms, provoked a major campaign of history politics by Russian government, religious leaders and associations, in which the images of the past were used to support Russian perspective on the present situation: the relocation of the statue was portrayed as the glorification of the collaboration with Nazi Germany and an attempt to rewrite history⁵⁷. This case is illustrative in two regards: it is a good example of an emotionally charged collective memory conflict, where a monument and the message it carries becomes the focal point of contestation and where each contending side believes that recognizing the arguments of the other side negates their own; at the same time, it offers insights into how historical narratives and symbols are employed to serve political interests.

The issue of memory conflicts is a good starting point for a closer examination of how history education in schools contributes to the formation and maintenance of certain historical narratives.

2.3 The role of school history education in transmitting collective memory

As mentioned earlier, collective memory, i.e. shared meanings, narratives and symbols, constitutive of collective memory, are acquired within certain social groups and shaped by their peculiar rules and patterns of remembering. In this regard, history education at school is one of the key social milieus wherein, by learning about national history, students are not only supposed to acquire knowledge about the history of their country, but also to obtain a sense of national belonging to a community of memory connected by a shared historical narrative. The links between mass education and identity building were noted by many analysts of nationalism: Hobsbawm highlighted the crucial role of the school system in mediating the image and heritage of the nation and establishing universal national identification throughout the state territory⁵⁸; Smith, in a similar vein, pointed out that, by adopting an educator role in the 19th century, the state was capable of mass inculcation of standardized, patriotic culture, this way paving the way for the creation of culturally unified nation-state⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 28-30.

⁵⁸ Hobsbawm, Eric, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 91-92.

⁵⁹ Smith, 133-134.

To claim this, however, should not lead to a conclusion that collective memory and national historical narrative, associated with it, is an invariably rigid, stable and uncontested “thing”. Quite the contrary, collective memory should rather be regarded as a process involving multiple competing voices, memories and contradictory meanings assigned to the same events. However, this diversity of perspectives and evaluations does not necessarily enter the pages of history textbooks or the history teaching process on the whole. Rather, history curriculum is more often perceived as an identity building tool which should mediate a coherent and unified master historical narrative and shape students’ interpretations of the past forming the basis for uniform national identification.

Ahonen, drawing on examples of Estonia and Germany, illustrates the argument by demonstrating how history textbooks, conveying certain group-specific historical narratives, tend to exclude minority groups and their vision of history, this way engaging in identity politics⁶⁰. As a result, Estonian textbooks published in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union took a distinctly nationalistic approach, excluding minority narratives from the curriculum. Whereas in the Soviet official narrative, the loss of Estonia’s independence was portrayed as an extension of the happy family of the Soviet peoples, the new Estonian history curriculum largely portrayed Russian-speakers in Estonia as evil occupants, who brought the development of Estonian nation-state into a setback⁶¹. In this regard, Hvostov comments that “a Russian speaker, given a choice, would adopt the Russian view on history, inasmuch as the Estonian view makes him or her feel excluded”⁶². Likewise, the Soviet grand narrative has never acquired the status of a legitimate, “truthful” storyline among Estonians, which, as a consequence turned the family circle into an important remembrance environment where the pre-Soviet Estonian historical narrative was maintained and mediated⁶³.

Bosnia and Herzegovina’s case presents the opposite extreme point of identity politics by means of history curriculum. State decentralization into ethnically

⁶⁰ Ahonen, Sirkka, “Politics of identity through history curriculum: narratives of the past for social exclusion – or inclusion?”. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 2001, vol. 33, no.2, pp.179-194.

⁶¹ Ibid, 182-183.

⁶² Hvostov, A., *Motteline Eesti*. Tartu: Vagabond, 1999, quoted in Ahonen, Sirkka, “Politics of identity through history curriculum: narratives of the past for social exclusion – or inclusion?”, *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 2001, vol.33, no.2, 183.

⁶³ Ahonen, 188; Tulviste, P., “History taught at school versus history discovered at home: the case of Estonia”. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, 1994, vol. 9, No. 1, 121-126.

differentiated entities and cantons led to a parallel segregation of history curricula with multiple respective storylines representing each ethno-national group and its specific perspective on the past. This resulted in a situation wherein Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats would all have different ethnic-oriented curricula and textbooks⁶⁴. Territories with the majority of Serbs would use Serbian curriculum and textbooks; those with Croatian majority would adopt the curriculum of the neighboring Croatian state. Interestingly, the new textbooks had one crucial aspect in common with the old socialist textbooks of the Yugoslav times. While the latter glorified Tito's partisans, achievements of socialism and brotherhood of nations, the former praise the struggle of each national group and emphasize its victimhood, but both are essentially conveying a "doctrine consisting of unassailable and officially sanctioned truth", both exclude contrasting interpretations, minority views and serve primarily as instruments of ethno-nationally bounded indoctrination⁶⁵. This, in turn, makes the unified political community with a shared national identity based on citizenship impossible to achieve.

Juxtaposition of Estonian and Bosnian-Herzegovinian examples, though representing two divergent efforts at nation-building, proves the ineffectiveness of monolithic, singular master national narratives that exclude contradictory storyline, perspectives and experiences of minority groups. By excluding any views that deviate from the established storyline and failing to build an encompassing, open to contending views and critical national narrative, such ethno-nationally bounded narratives lead to deepening of dividing lines, alienation of the excluded groups from the national "community of memory" and, potentially, to conflict escalation.

On the other hand, one might also emphasize the agency factor in the history teaching process. Létourneau and Moisan, for instance, argue that the deeply nostalgic and melancholic historical memory of young Quebeckers was shaped not so much by the contents of textbooks as by teachers' incapacity "to provide young people with nuanced concepts, representations, and interpretations based on adequate, up-to-date knowledge of the subject matter being taught"⁶⁶. In order to deviate from an established

⁶⁴ Bartulovic, Alenka, "Nationalism in the Classroom: Narratives of the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992-1995) in the History Textbooks of the Republic of Srpska". *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 2006, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 51-72, 55.

⁶⁵ Donia, Robert, "The Quest for Tolerance in Sarajevo's Textbooks". *Human Rights Review*, 2000, vol. 1, No.2, pp. 38-55, 42.

⁶⁶ Létourneau, Jocelyn and Moisan, Sabrina, "Young People's Assimilation of a Collective Historical Memory", in: Seixas, Peter (ed.), *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006, 114.

narrative scheme, a teacher needs to be interpretively competent and to have enough factual knowledge and intellectual courage to criticize conventional versions of history⁶⁷. Ideally, teachers should equip their students with “factual and interpretive means to construct a story of the past that takes the world’s complexities, ambivalences and paradoxes [...] into account” without leaving them vulnerable to ideologically driven and abusive efforts at remaking the past⁶⁸. If these skills or competences are lacking, a much safer option is to stay in familiar territory and rely on the existing legitimized storyline. Nonetheless, textbook content, even if it does not directly imply a narrow nationalistic perspective, can accommodate and nurture such simplistic national historical narratives, as the case of Quebec shows⁶⁹. School history education is a complex process of mediating publicly legitimized historical narratives, which, though typically emerging from the textbooks, may be considerably altered by teachers and their interpretation of the past. As a result, the continuity of the ethno-nationally oriented narratives may persist, rendering new, critical textbook storylines that advance multiple perspectives on the past seem “untruthful” or incomplete.

Still, the influence of teachers as the authoritative figures to inculcate certain visions of the past should not be overemphasized as the following example from Northern Ireland suggests. Barton and McCully describe a history lesson where a teacher asked the pupils to discuss the impact of the Easter 1916 Rising on Irish politics in the next six years⁷⁰. In the discussion, students were able to step out of their own political positions in order to understand the meaning of the events from different perspectives. When teacher attempted to connect these events with the more recent violent Republican struggle of the 1990s, it was observed that “an emotional wall” ascended with students refusing to engage with the exercise and draw parallels between the two⁷¹.

Another crucial factor to be taken into account when we consider how well the message in the textbooks is received relates to whether the narrative at school in an accord with the collective memory of one’s family or other important identity-relevant social groups. A research on young people’s ideas about school history and identity in

⁶⁷ Ibid, 115.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 122-123

⁶⁹ Ibid, 112.

⁷⁰ Barton, Keith C. and McCully, Alan, “History Teaching and the Perpetuation of Memories: the Northern Ireland Experience”, in: Cairns, Ed and Roe, Mícheál D. (eds.), *The role of memory in ethnic conflict*. Hampshire and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 109.

⁷¹ Ibid.

the Netherlands and England showed that respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds were much more likely to profess pride in the history of their families (71.5% in the Netherlands and 68.5% in England) than in the history of the national past (21.3% in the Netherlands and 30.5% in England), despite the fact that many claimed that it is important to have a knowledge of Dutch or British history (59.1% in the Netherlands and 71.6% in England)⁷². In the Netherlands, next to the history of the family, the history of one's religion and of the village, city or region, where one was born, was also strongly identified as important among pupils of ethnic minority background⁷³. Quite strikingly, the findings of the study demonstrated that national history was far less relevant to non-indigenous pupils who identified primarily by country of origin of their parents or religion. Moreover, it showed that imposition of a homogenous master national narrative does not necessarily lead to an improved social cohesion and the overall stronger national identity. However, school history curriculum often tends to concentrate on the main political narrative of the national past, leaving little or no possibilities to explore family histories as an additional component of curriculum. As a result, if the patterns and rules of remembrance, meanings ascribed to the recollected events in the family are in dissonance with the narratives conveyed at school, a memory conflict is likely to emerge, the scope and expression of which depends a great deal on whether there is enough political will to reflexively and critically re-examine the past and to make the legitimized national narrative more inclusive to the non-majority groups and their particular histories.

In effect, history textbook writing and history teaching are likely to mirror currently existing views on the past, present needs and motivations, which makes them highly politically relevant enterprises, both in terms of national identity politics and from the perspective of international relations. Openness to the exploration of uncomfortable aspects of the past and dialogue between different groups in society should prevail in order to escape the risky outcomes of memory wars.

⁷² Grever, Maria, Haydn, Terry and Ribbens, Kees, "Identity and School History: The Perspective of Young People from the Netherlands and England". *British Journal of Educational Studies*, March 2008, vol. 56, No.1, pp. 76-94, 83, 85.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 88.

3. Theoretical and Methodological Choices

This chapter offers an overview of theoretical and methodological stances taken during the research process. First, I introduce general ontological and epistemological principles in interpretive political research and their relevance in this specific study. The following two sections present the materials used and methods adopted in the analysis. Lastly, I identify the main ethical concerns that emerged throughout the research process.

3.1 Interpretive political science

The dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative methodologies typically denotes a distinction between positivist and interpretive philosophical presuppositions, where the former is accompanied by large-n studies combined with statistical analysis and the latter is characteristic of small-n studies using ethnographic approaches and non-statistical, interpretive methods. This bipolar counterdistinction, however, has been challenged by those who observed that the requirements of positivist science have been increasingly entering meaning-focused qualitative studies, calling to conform to the validity and reliability criteria⁷⁴. As a result, Yanow suggested a tripartite division between quantitative, positivist-qualitative and traditional qualitative methods⁷⁵.

The latter, based on constructivist ontology and interpretive epistemology, have also been termed “interpretive methods” or “constructivist-interpretive methods”. Constructivist ontology, in opposition to positivist holdings, here implies the primacy of social context, discourses and traditions in construction of meanings attached to language, actions, institutions or physical artifacts. Thus, a moderate constructivist perspective is adopted which underlines the socially constructed character of meanings, facts and ideas ascribed to social reality, yet at the same time acknowledging that not all aspects of reality is a social construct. Such moderate social constructivist views are pursued by Hacking⁷⁶. In a similar vein, Searle has distinguished between those features of the world that are intrinsic to nature and those features that exist because of the

⁷⁴ Yanow, Dvora, “Interpretive Empirical Political Science: What Makes This Not a Subfield of Qualitative Methods”. *Qualitative Methods Section (ASPA) Newsletter*, 2nd issue, 2003, 6.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 8.

⁷⁶ Hacking, Ian, *The Social Construction of What?.* Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1999, 24-25.

intentionality of the users or observers⁷⁷. The latter features are ontologically subjective, as their existence depends solely on observers and users; yet epistemically they add objective features to reality⁷⁸.

At the same time, meaning-focused interpretive (hermeneutic) epistemology highlights the need to identify such discourses or traditions and understand the ways in which they shape meanings and interpretations. In addition, it indicates the possibility of multiple meanings of language, actions, institutions or physical artifacts, derived from different perspectives and interpretations of the same facts⁷⁹. As researchers' explanation itself constitutes interpretation of the meanings that actors interpretively assign to social phenomena, this, in turn, establishes a double hermeneutic⁸⁰.

Yanow describes the task of interpretive researchers as follows: "Interpretive researchers accord legitimacy to the local knowledge possessed by actors in the situations under study of their own circumstances, language, etc., exploring apparent discrepancies between word and deed across various sub-sites within the research setting [...]. And it both is open to the possibility of multiple interpretations of events and analyzes these multiplicities"⁸¹. In other words, interpretive approaches to political studies would set off to explore meanings, beliefs or ideas that people hold in a particular context and their respective influence on actions, policies and practices. Two basic preceding assumptions here would be that, first, beliefs and practices are constitutive of each other; second, meanings or beliefs are holistic, i.e. they are part of the wider web of meanings and beliefs which provides the reasons for holding them⁸².

In the context of this study, two presuppositions serve as the starting point: firstly, historical narratives and, more broadly, collective memory are socially and historically constructed; second, a particular representation and understanding of the common Polish-Lithuanian history has its repercussions on actions and practices, on the ways in which different actors or institutions perceive majority-minority (or bilateral relations) and what is at stake in these respective conflicts of perspective.

⁷⁷ Searle, John R., *The Construction of Social Reality*. London: Penguin books, 1995, 9.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 10.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

⁸⁰ Marsh, David and Furlong, Paul, "A Skin, not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science", in: Marsh, David and Stoker, Gerry (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, 19.

⁸¹ Yanow, 9-10.

⁸² Bevir, Mark and Rhodes, R. A. W., "Interpretation and its Others". *Australian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 40, No.2, June 2005, pp. 169-187, 170-171.

The interpretive approach is then applied to two-fold analysis. First, the representations of national historical narratives conveyed in school textbooks are studied as historically-constructed official storylines about the past constituted by interconnected beliefs, meanings, symbols and normative imperatives. This conforms to the general tendencies in the history textbook research within the discipline of political science, where researchers have been mostly focusing on stereotypes and ideology in school messages, concurrent political histories developed by different textbooks as well as links among power, social requirements, and history teaching⁸³. Second, interview analysis demonstrates to what extent such official national narratives are internalized, reinterpreted or rejected by members of target community, which allows for acknowledgement of agency, even if it still remains conditioned by a certain social context. Thus, collective memory or historical narratives are understood here as traditions which are handed over from generation to generation, whether in a family or national context, and which are not fixed, but rather constantly evolving and transforming due to the influence of agency⁸⁴.

3.2 Textbook analysis: methods and materials

I have chosen to study textbooks which have been in use for the past twenty years, i.e those which were published after 1990. The reasons behind my focus on the more contemporary editions of history textbooks lie in the fact that the storylines of textbooks published prior to 1990 had been strongly shaped by ideological imperatives, the analysis of which does not fall under the scope of this thesis. This, in turn, is methodologically problematic, as the qualitative interviews, which are the source on the collectively framed memories of the Polish minority members, have been mostly conducted with people who belong to the older generation and, thus, have not studied history from the analysed textbooks. There have been only three interviews conducted with young Poles in their 20s. However, the average age of the remaining interviewees is 40-50 years old, thus, they attended secondary education in the 1970s or 1980s. As a result, this implies that their interpretations of the past should have been shaped by the

⁸³ Repoussi, Maria and Tutiaux-Guillon, Nicole, "New Trends in History Textbook Research: Issues and Methodologies toward a School Historiography". *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*, vol. 2, No.1, 2010, pp. 154-170, 156.

⁸⁴ Bevir, Mark and Rhodes, R. A. W., "Interpretive Theory", in: Marsh, David and Stoker, Gerry (eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002 , 140.

textbooks of the Soviet era. However, previous research on the Lithuanian textbooks of the Soviet period demonstrates that, despite strong ideological framing of history events, the portrayal of interwar Lithuanian-Polish relations retained the same basic accents and narrative structure, which were present already in the Lithuanian interwar textbooks and which were transferred, with some changes, to the textbooks published after the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence⁸⁵. For instance, the Polish-Lithuanian antagonism of the interwar period was portrayed as a conflict of two “bourgeois-nationalistic” states, as opposed to the newly defined socialist peoples of Poland and Lithuania which belonged to the common “friendly socialist family”. Thus, normative accents were displaced, but the storyline retained the same structure of epochal development.

As a result, I would argue that the basic narrative structure of the Soviet Lithuanian textbooks was filled out by historical narratives, which were socially maintained in private, informally communicated and transferred, and perceived as legitimate or truthful in opposition to the Soviet storyline. Evidence of this statement could be the fact that after Lithuania re-established its independence, many Lithuanians considered it necessary to buy a copy of the formerly forbidden “History of Lithuania” by the prominent interwar historian Šapoka, which embodied the truthful and official Lithuanian historical narrative. This suggests that historical narratives of the interwar period retained some of their relevance and legitimacy into the 1990s. With the fall of the Soviet Union and ideological control, the school history curriculum could again return to its pre-Soviet storyline, allowing informally transferred narratives enter the newly published textbooks. The continuity of the narrative, in turn, enables a viable juxtaposition of textbook storylines and the narratives emerging from the interviews. However, I see it crucial to highlight here that, by claiming that ideologically driven Soviet textbooks were seen as illegitimate and untruthful, I am not implying that these textbooks could have no influence on collective memory at all or that they were perceived in this way universally.

I sought to include textbooks of different authors and publishing houses into both Lithuanian and Polish samples. Those textbooks which had several consequent editions formed the basis of the sample. Nevertheless, I also read through the more recently

⁸⁵ Vyšniauskas, Arūnas, “Lietuvos ir Lenkijos konfliktas dėl Vilniaus: tarybinio laikotarpio istorijos vadovėlių analizė”. *History. A Collection of Lithuanian Universities’ Research Papers*, 2004, No. 62.

published textbooks in order to trace any possible shifts in the textbook narrative. I focused exceptionally on textbooks for 9-12th grades which offer a more detailed and nuanced historical descriptions. Lithuanian textbooks used in the analysis were: “Lietuvos istorija 11-12 klasėms“ by Kamuntavičius et al., “Lietuva ir Pasaulis. Istorijos vadovėlis XII klasei“ by Gečas et al. and two textbooks by Makauskas – ”Lietuvos istorija. Pirmoji knyga” and “Lietuvos istorija. Antroji knyga”. Polish textbook sample is larger due to higher thematic differentiation within a series of separate textbooks. As the analysis encompasses events from different historical periods, I had to consequently read through more textbooks. Polish sample includes a textbook series by Kamiński, Śniegocki and Pańko (“Historia 1”, two parts of “Historia 2”, “Historia 3”), “Polskie dzieje” by Dybkowska, Żaryn and Żaryn, “Człowiek i Historia. Część 4” by Kochanowski and Matusik, “Śladami przeszłości” by Roszak and “Historia dla Maturzysty” by Radziwiłł and Roszkowski. I read through only those chapters or sections of textbooks that describe the three historical events or epochs of the common Polish-Lithuanian history. The three chosen events/epochs are: i) the 1569 Lublin Union, ii) the Polish-Lithuanian uprisings and Lithuanian national revival in the 19th century, and iii) the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilnius in the 20th century. I have myself translated the relevant passages from Polish and Lithuanian textbooks, quoted in the textbook analysis, into English.

It has to be underlined once again that only the Lithuanian textbooks, translated into Polish and approved by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science, are used in history lessons in Polish secondary schools in Lithuania. In some cases, as revealed by the interviewed informants, these are used in parallel with the textbooks in the Lithuanian language in order to gain a better understanding of certain concepts, especially in the 10th-12th grades when students are preparing for the national school-leaving examinations⁸⁶. Polish textbooks, based on the Polish national school history curriculum, on the other hand, are not allowed to be used in Lithuanian Polish schools, although, as again revealed by a few informants, it was not uncommon to use Polish textbooks, published in Poland, in the 1990s as an additional teaching material to the main Lithuanian textbooks⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ The national school-leaving history examination can be taken in both Polish and Lithuanian.

⁸⁷ The use of these textbooks from Poland, however, caused multiple controversies in the late 1990s, as the officials from the education division of the municipal government used to regularly visit the schools

Textbook analysis was carried out following methodological recommendations outlined in “UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision”, which has been edited by the leading institution in textbook research – Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research. I applied qualitative content analysis, which essentially aims to explain what the text tells us, whether it is in accordance with academic research and sufficiently covers the topic⁸⁸. As a result, I did not focus on the more quantitative aspects of the textbook narratives, which are concerned with the quantifiable repetitions or frequencies of words or topics. The aim was rather to identify the message, values and interpretations that the text conveys. Qualitative approach to content analysis is typically described as a close reading of texts which involves “rearticulation (interpretation) of given texts into new (analytical, deconstructive, emancipatory, or critical) narratives that are accepted within particular scholarly communities that are sometimes opposed to positivist traditions of inquiry”⁸⁹. Systematic analysis of the texts reduces the complexity of the overall textual data into a short description of its main features⁹⁰. As Kracauer underlines, what counts alone in qualitative content analysis is “the selection and rational organization of such categories as condense the substantive meanings of the given text, with a view of testing pertinent assumptions and hypotheses”⁹¹.

Nevertheless, qualitative content analysis, as Berelson notes, is often quasi-quantitative and contains some quantitative statements in rough form or assigns relative frequencies to certain categories or themes⁹². Similarly, Holsti argues that qualitative analysis may be supplemented with some quantitative aspects of the text in order to ensure better insight into the meaning of the data⁹³. This is characteristic of the textbook analysis carried out here as well, as in some instances I specify the number of pages a

in the Vilnius region checking whether the unsanctioned Polish history textbooks were used in the classrooms or stored on the shelves, in which case the school administration was penalized.

⁸⁸ Pingel, Falk, *UNESCO Guidebook on Textbook Research and Textbook Revision*. Hanover: Verlag Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1999, 22.

⁸⁹ Krippendorff, Klaus, *Content Analysis. An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2004, 17.

⁹⁰ Bauer, Martin W., “Classical Content Analysis: a Review”, in: Bauer, Martin W. and Gaskell, George (eds.), *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound*. London: Sage Publications, 2000, 132-133.

⁹¹ Kracauer, Siegfried, “The Challenge of Qualitative Content Analysis”. *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 1952, Vol.16, No.4, pp. 631-642, 637-638.

⁹² Berelson, Bernard, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*. New York: Hafner Press, 1952, 116.

⁹³ Holsti, Ole R., *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*. Reading, Massachusetts: Addison Wesley, 1969, 11.

textbook topic covers or use quantitative terms, such as “repeatedly”, “usually” or “emphasis”.

I explored the representations of three specific historical events/epochs of common Polish-Lithuanian history. Representations are understood here as broad organizing categories which encompass various themes and patterns appearing in the text. Theme, i.e. an assertion about some subject, is a key unit of content analysis in research on propaganda, values, attitudes and beliefs⁹⁴ and, thus, it suits the research focus on interpretations and narratives related to historical memory. The analysis is structured in separate nationally differentiated sections, which include both the textbook analysis and academic historical narratives. I considered it necessary to supplement the actual textbook analysis by placing textbook narratives of common Polish-Lithuanian history into wider historiographical context and demonstrating how the same historical events or epochs were represented by professional historians in both countries. To some extent, this allows to evaluate whether the findings of academic history research are reflected in textbook narratives.

Textbook analysis serves several functions here. Most importantly, it delineates official historical narratives represented in Polish and Lithuanian textbooks and identifies messages and normative values conveyed in those narratives. Comparison of the two accounts enables better understanding of which elements and meanings of the two official storylines are in dissonance, where the crucial contradictions in the portrayal and evaluation lie. The findings are relevant in two regards: first, it will enable comparison of two national textbook storylines with the collective memory of the Polish minority members; second, through identification of similarities and dissonances between these three (Polish, Lithuanian, Polish minority) collective memories we can achieve a better understanding of the role they serve in minority politics, majority-minority relations as well as bilateral Polish-Lithuanian relations.

3.3 Interview analysis: methods and materials

The idea to conduct interviews with the Polish minority members in Lithuania was guided by realization that analysis of representations of national memory in history textbooks could not be completed without exploration of their reception by people who

⁹⁴ Holsti, 116.

encounter those memory narratives in their daily lives. In other words, I sought to examine collective memory by linking its representation and reception, cultural tradition of official remembering and socially framed individual memory, in order to see whether these representations are shared and identified with by the people who are their target. Failing to explore how the memory constructed at the official political level is received by the people, Confino argues, remains one of the main methodological problems in collective memory studies⁹⁵. The official public representation of the past should not be equaled to the actual collective memory without exploring the reception of these official narratives. Reception of certain representations of the past here implies the extent to which memories steer emotions, are relevant in meaningfully explaining one's socio-cultural context, or motivate people to act. The limited scope of thesis as well as scarce previous research on the Polish minority, as mnemonic community, determined my choice to focus on the reception of official national historical narratives only in the case of the Polish minority. In case of a further research, I would aim to include the Lithuanian minority in Poland into the overall research design in order to have a more symmetrical study on the relation between minority collective memory and the national historical narratives conveyed by the history textbooks.

The interview format was semi-structured and did not include any direct questions about interviewees' interpretations or opinions about the past. My concern was to find out not only what respondents thought about the past, but how relevant and emotionally engaging these memories were, how well they were received by the respondents. Therefore, instead of bringing the memory issue directly and this way facilitating externally forced responses about the past (which otherwise may be irrelevant or unimportant to the interviewees), I asked them to comment and share their opinions on the five most problematic and publicly debated claims of the Polish minority: restitution of property in Vilnius region, public use of the Polish language in Vilnius region (street names, information signs), restrictions against Polish education, spelling of Polish names in Polish orthography, restriction of electoral rights. These open-ended questions then served as an interview guide, although the order of the topics discussed varied across different interviews. In almost all cases, the interview topic spontaneously shifted to the issues of history and contradictions in the evaluation of the past. At this point of

⁹⁵ Confino, Alan, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method". *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 102, No.5, December 1997, pp. 1386-1403, 1394.

the interviews, I was using various forms of probing to encourage the interviewees to elaborate on their ideas and stances. In effect, this enabled to access respondents' views about the past, the relevance of which was not imposed externally by the interviewer. Moreover, it demonstrated that historical memory is employed to make sense of and explain the current political situation or even legitimate minority claims. In addition, in case of further research I would probably seek to approach the textbook topic more explicitly and ask the informants to comment on their experiences of using the school textbooks in order to gain wider insight into the reception of the textbook narrative. The partial shift from the content to the teachers' and students' use and reception of the textbooks is identified by some as one of the methodological transformations within history textbook research, where individuals are "considered active negotiators of the messages and the meanings".⁹⁶

The fact that none of the three historical events/periods of the common Polish-Lithuanian history, on which I focused in the textbook analysis, were directly experienced by my interviewees allowed to avoid confusion between collective and autobiographical memory. As Kansteiner noted, "memories are at their most collective when they transcend the time and space of the events' original occurrence. As such, they take on a powerful life of their own, "unencumbered" by actual individual memory, and become the basis of all collective remembering as disembodied, omnipresent, low-intensity memory"⁹⁷.

I have conducted 13 interviews with the Polish minority members in December 2009-January 2010. The principal aim in selecting interviewees was to ensure representativeness of the sample. As a result, the snowball sampling technique was not considered suitable, as this would have created the risk of interviewing people with similar characteristics who belong to a common network and represent views specific to that network. I sought that the sample includes respondents who hold both low-status and high-status in the Polish community. Nevertheless, since I was interested in how particular interpretation of the past shaped and supported the minority claims-making, there was a bias in the sample toward respondents holding high-status in their respective organizations or the Polish minority on the whole. Including low-status respondents in the sample, on the other hand, served as a control mechanism, allowing to better grasp

⁹⁶ Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon, 155.

⁹⁷ Kansteiner, Wulf, "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies". *History and Theory*, vol. 41, No. 2, May 2002, pp. 179-197, 189.

whether the views espoused by the high-status interviewees were relevant and correspondent in describing the views of the low-status respondents. There were three interviewees who were 22 and 29 years old and who attended high school already after the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence and who, as a result, studied history from the most recently published history textbooks, approved by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science. The remaining 10 interviewees were mostly in their 40s or 50s. The more detailed structure of the sample is outlined in the table below.

All the interviews were conducted in Lithuanian. An exception was one interview carried out with a history teacher (I9), who in some instances throughout the interview felt it easier to express himself by speaking Russian rather than Lithuanian. As a result, Russian, Lithuanian and some Polish were used in parallel. To a lesser extent, communication in Lithuanian appeared to be slightly challenging in two other interviews with a political activist (I1) who, in terms of his professional background, was a history teacher, and with a retired political activist (I10). In all these cases, the interviewees were in their 60s or 70s and had had their higher education done in Russian, which was likely to affect their Lithuanian language proficiency. Typically, when they could not remember a certain word or expression in Lithuanian, they would use a Russian word which I then translated into Lithuanian. With these exceptions, all the other interviewees were used to using Lithuanian in their daily lives and did not experience any major difficulties in expressing themselves.

Table 1: Individual interviews with Polish minority members

	Occupation	Sex/Age
I1	history teacher/political activist	M/71
I2	researcher	F/61
I3	journalist/researcher	F/47
I4	economist	M/49
I5	entrepreneur	M/41
I6	politician	M/57
I7	journalist	F/52
I8	researcher	M/55
I9	history teacher	M/64

I10	political activist/pensioner	M/66
I11	civil servant	F/29
I12	student	F/22
I13	student	F/22

The interviews were transcribed in the language which was used in the interviews and analyzed using Atlas.ti software. The analysis of the interview transcripts was made in Lithuanian and only those passages which I saw relevant to quote were then translated into English. In effect, the translation itself often required a certain level of interpretation due to specific linguistic expressions, the meaning of which is hard to capture and convey in English.

The method applied in the interview analysis was qualitative content analysis. The more general characteristics of this method were outlined in the previous section. One of the goals of the qualitative interview analysis was to determine to what extent collective memory of the Polish minority members reiterates national narratives conveyed by the textbooks. Thus, the data coding process was shaped by predetermined categories of the three aforementioned historical events of the common Polish-Lithuanian history. In order to avoid biased reading of the data and possibly overlooking relevant but unsupportive evidence, some codes and categories were derived from the text.

Lastly, the main themes of the narratives emerging from the Lithuanian and Polish textbooks, historiographies and the interviews with regard to the three historical periods are summarized in the Table 2 (page 108). The key elements, themes and perspectives of the historical narratives, juxtaposed in the table, have been identified separately in each specific section of the textbook, historiography and interview analysis, which, in turn, allows for a better evaluation of the overlapping patterns and/or mismatches between the textbook storylines, historiographical perspectives and interviewees' understanding of the past.

3.4 Ethical issues

Ethical concerns in research involving human subjects have usually focused on several main issues: acquiring informed consent of the interviewees, ensuring their right to privacy, avoidance of social and personal harm, and building trust without engaging in deception⁹⁸. As Gregory notes, “[a] person has been fully informed if he has had explained to him anything that reasonably and foreseeably might influence the decision whether or not to agree to be a participant in the research⁹⁹. Thus, if all the relevant information was provided and if a person arrived at a decision to take part in the research without any unwarranted pressures, it is typically assumed that the requirement of voluntary informed consent has been met. In the case of interviews with the Polish minority members, every interviewee was acquainted with the topic, aims and purpose of my research twice: first, when I was approaching the potential interviewees over the phone conversation or e-mail correspondence; and, second, I introduced my research project once again before every interview took place. However, the way in which I presented my research topic had an inherent covert element, as I avoided making an explicit assertion that what interested me most were the interviewees’ views about the past and the common Polish-Lithuanian history. As it was indicated in the previous section, such interview strategy was chosen in order to avoid external imposition of the importance of historical memory issues to the interviewees.

Ensuring confidentiality emerged as another key concern, as some of my interviewees expressed views that contradicted the practices or attitudes of their respective workplaces or organizations that they represented. To guarantee anonymity was equally essential in those cases where the interviewee held a high-status position both within his/her organization and the Polish minority in general, i.e. when the interviewees were publicly recognizable figures. In effect, the issue of confidentiality was related to the issue of interviewees’ protection from any kind of harm, which they might have experienced had I undermined the principle of confidentiality.

⁹⁸ Fontana, Andrea and Frey, James H., “The Interview. From Structured Questions to Negotiated Text”, in: Denzin, Norman K. and Lincoln, Yvonna S. (eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003, 89; Ryen, Anne, “Ethical Issues”, in: Seale, Clive et al. (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice*. London: Sage, 2004, 231-236; Abbott, Pamela and Sapsford, Roger, “Ethics, Politics and Research”, in: Sapsford, Roger and Jupp, Victor (eds.), *Data Collection and Analysis*. London: Sage Publications, 2006, 293-298.

⁹⁹ Gregory, Ian, *Ethics in Research*. London and New York: Continuum, 2003, 37-38.

An unexpected ethical concern which emerged during the interviewing process was the tendency of some interviewees to treat me as an advocate of the Polish minority claims. In other words, a few interviewees more or less explicitly expressed their expectations that I would engage in the “Polish cause” and defend the interests of the Polish minority. This has been partly generated by my interviewing strategy, as I was approaching the issue of historical memory indirectly, by first asking the interviewees to comment on the Polish minority claims-making. Thus, throughout the research process, it was particularly important to ensure that I do not take sides with any of the groups and that I avoid deliberate bias or misrepresentation, whether while collecting or working with and analyzing the data, interviewing or conducting textbook analysis.

In addition, the fact that the interviews were conducted in Lithuanian, with a few aforementioned cases where Russian and/or Polish were used parallelly, can be regarded as constituting an unequal power relation between the researcher and the interviewees, due to the linguistic advantage of the former. The asymmetry in linguistic abilities was most pronounced in the three interviews with informants in their 60s or 70s (I1, I9, I10), whereas the rest of informants appeared to be able to easily express themselves in Lithuanian. The use of the majority (hegemonic) language, not a mother tongue to the informants, may potentially create challenges to establishing a good rapport in the interview setting, complicate the interviewer’s ability to elicit authentic, nuanced responses and to interpret the informants’ statements with some level of deeper cultural understanding. The parallel use of Russian (in which the informants were fluent) and, to a lesser extent, of native Polish in the three aforementioned interviews allowed to minimize the linguistic obstacles, posed by the use of the Lithuanian language, and to increase mutual understanding between the interviewees and the researcher.

Although some of the interviewees were particularly trustful of me and showed willingness to share their personal life-stories and experiences, the issue of building trust with the interviewees generally appeared rather significant, due to the fact that I myself was Lithuanian and thus could be perceived as a representative of the opposing narrative or perspective toward the issues of the Polish minority. Thus, in order to encourage the interviewees to open up and elaborate on their views, I was typically more active as an interviewer in the beginning of the interview, disclosing some of my attitudes toward the discussed topic and this way trying to prevent defensive or reserved answers. Nevertheless, this strategy at facilitating trust was adopted only in the initial

stage of the interview to make the interviewees feel more comfortable and forthcoming. Later throughout the interview, I would take a more passive role in order to avoid too much leading on my part.

4. Lithuanian and Polish historical narratives

Polish-Lithuanian history contains highly disputed issues which, up to the present day, keep the debates between Polish and Lithuanian historians running. However, these contradictory views on shared history take their relevance not only within the field of academic history. They are also evoked in the national political discourses, popular representations of history in the media or official historical narratives in school textbooks. In order to delineate the key themes and elements of the Polish and Lithuanian narratives of the common past, I explore, first, the contents of history textbooks, which have been in use over the past 20 years in both countries. Consequently, this is combined with the portrayal of chosen historical events or epochs in the respective national historiographies.

The following sections will present the Lithuanian and Polish historical narratives of three historical periods of common history: i) the 1569 Lublin Union, ii) the Polish-Lithuanian uprisings and Lithuanian national revival in the 19th century, and iii) the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilnius in the 20th century.

4.1 Lithuanian historical rendering of the Lublin Union

In the history of the Polish-Lithuanian relations, the 1569 Lublin Union is of key importance. It marks the beginning of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – a completely new stage in the development of relations between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Lublin Union as well as the broader process of Polish-Lithuanian unionization had been popularly described by their contemporaries by the metaphor of a “sacred marriage”. Crucially, the Lublin Union created conditions for major linguistic and national identity transformations in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, especially with regard to the Lithuanian gentry, who, over the course of the existence of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, increasingly adopted Polish language and

culture. This section, thus, will delineate the main themes and elements in the portrayal of the Lublin Union in Lithuanian history textbooks.

Unionization with Poland in the Lithuanian history textbooks is generally depicted as “the lesser of the two evils”. It is stressed that, in the 16th century, Lithuanian nobility was mostly against any closer relations with Poland other than those necessary to ensure basic state security in the region¹⁰⁰. However, the intensifying wars with Moscow caused the attitudes of the Lithuanian nobility to change. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, increasingly threatened by Moscow in the Livonian war, was in need of the Union with Poland in order to resist the attacks in the northern frontier. The Lithuanian delegates faced a complicated decision – to unionize with Poland and possibly lose the sovereignty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania or to reject the terms of unification set by Poland and to be possibly defeated in the Livonian war by Moscow.

A lot of emphasis is placed on showing the contradictions that emerged between Poland and Lithuania in the negotiation process as well as the disadvantaged situation of Lithuania vis-à-vis Poland. The negotiations of Lithuanian and Polish delegations, which began already in 1562, were complicated by the initial disagreement of the two states over the terms of the Union. As neither side wanted to compromise on their stance, negotiations were repeatedly breaking off. The most commonplace storyline indicates the following contradiction: Lithuanians proposed a project of the Union of two equal states, whereas Polish delegates sought for the incorporation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into the Polish Kingdom. On the 1 of March, 1569, negotiations broke off – due to the incompatibility of the stances the Lithuanian delegation left Lublin. As an attempt to force Lithuanians to restore the negotiations, the Diet of Poland and Žygimantas Augustas (Sigismund II August), the King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, decided to incorporate more than half of territories of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (Volhynia, Bratslav and Kiev) into the Polish Kingdom. In one of the history textbooks for the 11th and 12th grades, the decision by Žygimantas Augustas is depicted as the result of “Poles“, or the Polish parliament, putting pressure on the King with the aim to break down Lithuanian perseverance and weaken the Grand Duchy, by stripping off a large share of its territories and making it unable to defend itself against Moscow¹⁰¹. Likewise, another textbook of Lithuanian history also

¹⁰⁰ Kamuntavičius, Rūstis et al., *Lietuvos istorija 11-12 klasėms*. Vilnius: Vaga, 2004, 90.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 101.

emphasizes that due to the relentless position of the Lithuanian delegation during the negotiations, Polish parliament, “using coercion against Lithuanians, demanded Žygimantas Augustas” to annex a large share of the territories of the Grand Duchy to Poland¹⁰².

Despite the fact that textbooks usually mention that the Grand Duchy had its own interests in unionizing with Poland – namely, acquiring its help in the war with Moscow, it is implied that the Grand Duchy was largely forced into the union by both the external circumstances and Poland. This is, for instance, exemplified by highlighting that Poland, after several unsuccessful attempts to agree with Lithuanians on the terms of the union, began a military conscription in order to begin a war against the Grand Duchy, which, as a result, broke the stubbornness of the Lithuanian delegation and, thus, the union was created that same year¹⁰³.

In effect, textbooks recognize that the Lublin Union, a troublesome choice for the Grand Duchy, was, at the same time, necessary and inevitable. Nevertheless, there is an obvious tendency to emphasize that it was an inescapable tragedy of the Grand Duchy, forced on it by unfavorable geopolitical situation, to the advantage of the Poles who, by manipulating it, could impose their terms of the Union with Lithuania.

If we turn to examine the representations of the Lublin Union in the Lithuanian historiography, the same “melancholic” evaluation of the event is reflected in the evaluations of many Lithuanian historians. For instance, Bumblauskas emphasizes that, in the end of negotiations, on 28 June, Jonas Jeronimaitis Chodkevičius, who led the Lithuanian delegation, in his speech in the Lublin parliament, addressed Žygimantas Augustas with these words: “The Brightest King! Your Majesty knows that the question of this Union has been thoroughly discussed by the senators and nobles of the Grand Duchy. They find themselves in such conditions where they are forced to do what deeply wounds their conscience. Ordered by Your Majesty, we had to surrender with great pain and grief. We cannot express in words how sorrowful it is for us. Because we, loyal sons of our fatherland, are committed to care for it as much as we are able to. If we cannot defend it now, it is because we are forced to surrender to the obstacles,

¹⁰² Makauskas, Bronius, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Pirmoji knyga*. Kaunas: Šviesa, 2006, 104.

¹⁰³ Makauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Pirmoji knyga*, 105.

destiny and time”¹⁰⁴. The latter excerpt reflects those sentiments of regret with which the Lublin Union is often viewed in Lithuanian historiography.

Equally important in the evaluations of the Lublin Union in Lithuanian textbooks is that they offer numerous evidence of the fact that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania retained its separate political identity and self-consciousness as well as separate institutions, despite the fact that the declaration of the Union stated that the two countries became a single indivisible political body – a Republic, which merged two states and nations into one state and society. Thus, textbooks highlight that after the establishment of the Commonwealth, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania retained its separate state title, territory, the executive branch of government, the treasury and the army¹⁰⁵. At the same time, however, Lithuania acquired only 1/3 of seats in the common Polish-Lithuanian Diet and only 1/5 of seats in the Senate. In a similar vein, it is stressed that the newly elected King of Poland was declared to be the Grand Duke of Lithuania only after he had sworn an oath to the *Pacta conventa*, or a document which listed the conditions raised by the Lithuanian nobility for the King to be accepted as the Grand Duke¹⁰⁶. Yet another argument to prove the separateness of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after the Lublin Union lies on the fact that the two countries “could not merge into one political body because the Grand Duchy was guarded by the first, second and third Statutes of Lithuania, which secured a separate statehood of Lithuania”¹⁰⁷. The Statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, written in the 16th century, were codifications of the legislation, valid in the Polish-Lithuanian state, even if they included laws that were in conflict with the terms of the Union by emphasizing integrity and sovereign statehood of the Grand Duchy. Lastly, somewhat regrettably, Lithuanian history textbooks mention that the residence of the Grand Duke Žygimantas Augustas in the 16th century became the centre of Polonization of the Lithuanian elite, whereas Žygimantas Augustas was himself the first of the Lithuanian dynasty who did not speak Lithuanian anymore¹⁰⁸.

As a result, the ability of the Lithuanian state not to be absorbed by Poland politically has been often presented in Lithuanian historiography, though with some

¹⁰⁴ Bumblauskas, Alfredas, “Unia polsko-litewska: spojrzanie z Wilna. Lenkijos ir Lietuvos unija: žvilgsnis iš Vilniaus“, in: *440 lat Unii Polsko-Litewskiej – 440 metų Lenkijos-Lietuvos Unijai*. Warszawa: Ex Libris, 2009, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Makauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Pirmoji knyga*, 105.

¹⁰⁶ Kamuntavičius et al, 136.

¹⁰⁷ Makauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Pirmoji knyga*, 131.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 98.

exceptions, as the greatest achievement of the Grand Duchy throughout its union with Poland, despite the gradual and overwhelming cultural Polonization of its elite. Yet, even if the underlying theme in the depiction of the Lublin Union is that it did not terminate the statehood and separate identity of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the history textbook acknowledges that “a nation was understood in political, not ethnic terms. For instance, Lithuanian nation consisted of all nobility that resided in the territory of the Grand Duchy – of Lithuanian or Rus’ian origin, irrespective of religious or ethnic differences”.¹⁰⁹

Other examples of the efforts to stress that the Lublin Union did not actually merge the states and nations into one indivisible political body, or that the Lithuanian nobility retained multiple loyalties, are offered by contemporary Lithuanian historians Tereškinas, Gudavičius, Bumblauskas. Tereškinas places emphasis on the multicultural, multiethnic and multiconfessional character of the Commonwealth, which encouraged decentralization of the state as well as emergence of multiple solidarities, loyalties and identities within the same state¹¹⁰. Despite the collective sense of “brotherhood” and belonging to one political nation, nobility of the Polish-Lithuanian state faced many different allegiances. In this regard, the nobility of the Grand Duchy might have identified with the “noble nation” of the Commonwealth, but this did not weaken the self-conscious awareness of belonging to a distinct and separate community of the nobility of the Grand Duchy, as opposed to the nobility of the Kingdom of Poland. Tereškinas criticizes historians who attempt to explain conceptions of nationhood of the early modern period using the language-based categories of nation and ethnicity of the nineteenth century¹¹¹. Thus, a nobleman could at the same time be a “Lithuanian”, that is a member of the community of citizens of the Grand Duchy, and a “Pole”, that is a member of the “noble nation” of the Commonwealth. Citizenship derived from territorial and political descent, land tenure and historical traditions¹¹². Ethnicity or language did not play any decisive role in shaping self-perceptions of the nobility, in the way that they influenced the formation of national identities in the era of nationalism.

Bumblauskas highlights that the Lithuanian nobility retained a sense of separate political identity, based on the traditions of the Grand Duchy, despite the gradual and

¹⁰⁹ Kamuntavičius et al, 134.

¹¹⁰ Tereškinas, Artūras, *Imperfect Communities: Identity, Discourse and Nation in the Seventeenth-century Grand Duchy of Lithuania*. Vilnius: Lietuvių literatūros ir tautosakos institutas, 2005, 45.

¹¹¹ Ibid, 47-48.

¹¹² Ibid, 49.

overwhelming cultural Polonization. This is, for instance, exemplified by the statement of Mutual Pledge of the Two Nations, which, in 1791, accompanied the Constitution of the 3rd of May and which, more than 200 years after the Lublin Union, still stressed the dualistic character of the Commonwealth¹¹³.

Gudavičius advances a similar argument which, nevertheless, acknowledges the positive outcomes of the unionization with Poland in the form of intensification of Lithuania's Europeanization. Gudavičius introduced a pioneering approach by offering to consider the gradual cultural Polonization of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after its unification with Poland as the consequence of Lithuania's Europeanization process and, thus, as a positive and inevitable development which brought Lithuania closer to the Western civilizational field. Gudavičius claims that Poland in the fourteenth century was to Lithuania what Germany was to Poland in the tenth century – the source of the Western civilization¹¹⁴. Rather than seeing the influence of Polish culture and language as a regrettable process of cultural colonization causing the loss of Lithuanian sovereignty and identity, he highlights the role of the Polish language as a medium through which the advancement of Western culture reached Lithuania, located far from the centres of Western culture. At the same time, as the Polish language became the medium of communication in the Commonwealth, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its society retained a sense of separate identity, distinct interests and traditions. In other words, the spread of the Polish language and culture did not erase the separate self-consciousness.

The latter ideas mark an important development in Lithuanian historiography in the 1990s – the turn from the ethnocentric and nationalist to more civic accounts of the Lithuanian history. The accounts of Lithuanian history written after 1990 are somewhat in opposition to the earlier historiographical tradition, exemplified in the works of Šapoka, Daukantas, Narbutas, written in the second half of the 19th – first half of the 20th century, where exceptionally negative attitude towards the Lublin Union and the creation of the Commonwealth are maintained, seen as the loss of independence of the Grand Duchy, forced on Lithuania by the Polish nobility. In these accounts, Lublin Union denotes the end of the grandeur and traditions of the Grand Duchy, which were

¹¹³ Bumblauskas, “Unia polsko-litewska: spojrzenie z Wilna. Lenkijos ir Lietuvos unija: žvilgsnis iš Vilniaus“, 11.

¹¹⁴ Gudavičius, Edvardas, “Lenkų kultūrinio fenomeno užuomazga Lietuvoje“, in: Bumblauskas, Alfredas and Petrauskas, Rimvydas (eds.), *Lietuvos Europėjimo keliais*. Vilnius: Aidai, 2002, 203.

revived again only in the 19th century in the form of Lithuanian ethnic national revival. In effect, these historiographical accounts tended to diminish the significance of the whole historical period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – from the Lublin Union until the national revival in the second half of the 19th century – perceived as irrelevant in the construction and sustenance of national identity.

This raises a question whether these new critical civic accounts of historical past, offered by a new generation of historians, entered the school history curriculum and textbooks. As we have seen, textbooks still convey a rather dim picture of unionization with Poland. In 2005-2006, a survey on forms of expression of the Lithuanian identity through social memory showed that, for Lithuanians, the least important historical period to their national identity is the history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth¹¹⁵. Only 4% of the respondents considered the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth meaningful to their national identity. Meanwhile, the history of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania before unionization with Poland was a much stronger and relevant element of national identity. 25,6% of respondents considered the history of the Grand Duchy before the rule of the Grand Duke Vytautas (period until 1392) to be important to their national identity and 14% identified the rule of the Grand Duke Vytautas and the subsequent period until the Lublin Union (1392-1569) to be the most important.¹¹⁶ This proves that Lublin Union and the ensuing history of shared Polish-Lithuanian state is still regarded by many Lithuanians as “not theirs”, as not ethnically and authentically “Lithuanian” history which Lithuanians would be proud of, but rather as a regrettable “dark age” of Lithuanian history, overshadowed by Polish cultural domination. Thus, despite the fact that nationalist historiographical tradition nowadays receives strong competition from more civic accounts of Lithuanian history, collective national memory is still largely shaped by the long-established grand national historical narrative. One should also take into account that for fifty years of Soviet occupation there had not been any serious discussions and reconsiderations of shared Polish-Lithuanian history, which at least partly explains why such nationalist interpretations of the past, from the era of Lithuanian national revival (late 19th century) and the first interwar republic of Lithuania (1918-1940), may still have strong impact on people’s views.

¹¹⁵ Šutinienė, Irena, “Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės paveldo reikšmės populiariosiose tautinio naratyvo interpretacijose”. *Studies of Lithuania’s History*, No. 21, 2008, pp.102-120, 109.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 109.

In this regard, Bumblauskas explains such generally negative Lithuanian interpretation of the establishment of the Commonwealth by noting two key factors: first, the common Polish-Lithuanian history is traditionally judged through the prism of the Polish-Lithuanian interwar conflict; second, unification with Poland is seen to be the reason of Polonization of Lithuanian culture. The latter view evolved in the late 19th-early 20th century within the rising Lithuanian nationalist movement and is supposed to be exemplified by the case of Adam Mickiewicz¹¹⁷, a Polish-Lithuanian patriot, who wrote in Polish and, thus, for Lithuanian national activists was a symbol of Poland's cultural imperialism and the loss of the old Lithuanian traditions upheld before the union with Poland¹¹⁸. However, Bumblauskas also emphasizes that such pessimistic Lithuanian renderings of the past partly stem from the fact that Polish historical tradition still tends to portray Lithuania prior to the Lublin Union as only “Jogaila's Poland”¹¹⁹, or that the Commonwealth of the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is often named as “the Polish Commonwealth”, ignoring the equal status of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Commonwealth and denoting the Union in terms of incorporation of Lithuania into the Polish Kingdom¹²⁰.

Thus, in popular Lithuanian historical consciousness, the process of rapprochement between Poland and Lithuania is, first and foremost, associated with Poland's territorial interests rather than its civilizational mission in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The expansion of cultural Polonization is regretted. However, increasingly, other dimensions and wider consequences of Polonization are recognized and reflected on. As a result, some historians suggest that the process of Polonization of Lithuanian nobility could be seen as Lithuania's integration into the Western civilizational field. This is also

¹¹⁷ Mickiewicz, although commonly identified as a symbol of Polish nationalism, cannot be neatly categorized as an adherent to any of the modern nationalisms. Born in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the present-day Belarus, he was essentially a citizen of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and thus espoused a different identity constellation. He saw no contradiction in the fact that he was a patriot of Lithuania, which he considered to be his homeland, but at the same time expressed his love for Lithuania in Polish, typically exemplified by the following famous passage from “Pan Tadeusz”: “Litwo! Ojczyzno moja! ty jesteś jak zdrowie; Ile cię trzeba cenić, ten tylko się dowie, Kto cię stracił.” (“Lithuania, my fatherland! You are like health; How much you must be valued, will only discover, The one who has lost you.”)

¹¹⁸ Bumblauskas, “Unia polsko-litewska: spojrzanie z Wilna. Lenkijos ir Lietuvos unija: žvilgsnis iš Vilniaus“, 11.

¹¹⁹ Jogaila – a king of Poland and the Grand Duke of Lithuania before the Lublin Union; he comes from the Lithuanian Duke dynasty.

¹²⁰ Bumblauskas, “Unia polsko-litewska: spojrzanie z Wilna. Lenkijos ir Lietuvos unija: žvilgsnis iš Vilniaus“, 11.

somewhat reflected in the more recently published history textbook where the evaluation of the cultural Polonization of the Grand Duchy is not so categorically negative and is rather left to wider discussions, even if with a slight implication of regret about the loss of the Lithuanian language: “it’s a separate question, how to evaluate the expansion of the Polish culture and language in the centre of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Was the expulsion of the Lithuanian language (exclusion, more precisely) from the public life of the state a historical necessity, a bliss or a curse? Let’s leave these unanswered questions to discuss for present and future generations, which speak and feel in Lithuanian. This question is a real lesson of history”¹²¹. Lastly, a persistently highlighted element in portraying the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth is the state dualism, the separateness and sovereignty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the union with Poland. History textbooks and works of Lithuanian historians consistently emphasize the duality of the state and offer lots of evidence that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania did not merge with Poland and retained its separate national identity, despite the overwhelming Polish cultural domination.

4.2 Polish historical rendering of the Lublin Union

The rapprochement of the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which started already in the 14th century, receives as much attention in the Polish history textbooks as in Lithuanian ones. However, the very first important difference is that Polish history textbooks give much more importance to the discussion of the 1385 Krewo Union and its meaning in the development of Polish-Lithuanian relations, which preceded the establishment of closer bilateral relations after the 1569 Lublin Union. The emphasis is placed on the fact that the Krewo Union marks the establishment of the Jagiellonian dynasty, as the Grand Duke of Lithuania Jogaila (Jagiełło) also became the King of Poland. Polish textbooks generally agree that the Krewo Union did not entail the incorporation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into Poland, that it was only a personal union, embodied solely by the common king and grand duke. Nevertheless, it is stressed that the original intention behind the initiation of the Krewo Union was Lithuania’s incorporation to Poland. The latter can be exemplified by the following sentence from a Polish history textbook: “Jagiełło, in exchange for marrying Jadwiga

¹²¹ Makuškas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Pirmoji knyga*, 188.

and the nomination of the King of Poland promised to baptize himself and all his people, incorporate Lithuania to the Crown and retake all the lost Polish territories”¹²². The words “baptize” and “incorporate” are bolded in the textbook, while later, as an exercise, students are asked to study a text, written by a Polish historian, and identify the fragments which prove that originally, by Krewo Union, it was intended to annex Lithuania to Poland. The text in question, written by a Polish historian Ochmański, however, states that the Latin word “applicare”, used in the Union text to denote the incorporation, remained just a “dead sign on the paper”, whereas in reality the Grand Duchy was a sovereign and separate state, governed by Lithuanians, who regarded Poles as foreigners, belonging to a different nation¹²³. Thus, Polish textbooks, on the one hand, confirm and are in agreement with Lithuanian ones that the Krewo Union did not signify the incorporation of Lithuania into Poland in reality; on the other hand, they give a lot of stress on the fact that the actual text of the union implied the incorporation.

Further, even if both Lithuanian and Polish textbooks seem to agree that after the Krewo Union the Grand Duchy of Lithuania maintained its sovereignty, Polish textbooks, nevertheless, typically identify post-Krewo Lithuania as one of the “Jagiellonian states”, meaning that it was ruled by a member of the Jagiellonian dynasty¹²⁴. In other words, the fact of Lithuania’s sovereignty is somewhat overshadowed by highlighting that the Polish Jagiellonian dynasty’s rule spanned over it, even if, paradoxically, the Polish dynasty was actually stemming from the Gediminid dynasty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

If post-Krewo Lithuania is considered as a Jagiellonian state, tied to Poland only by the personal union, the Lublin union is distinguished as a “real union”, ascribing to it an entirely different level of the Polish-Lithuanian unionization¹²⁵. The “real union” was embodied in the establishment of a common parliament, senate, sovereign, foreign policy and currency. Textbooks usually include a short excerpt from the original text of the Lublin Union. One should take note of the fact that the textbooks which were in use for the past 8-10 years generally present also those paragraphs of the union text, which determine the maintenance of separate institutions and political identity of the Grand

¹²² Kamiński, Marek, Pańko, Grażyna, Śniegocki, Robert, *Historia 1. Średniowiecze. Część 2* (9th ed). Warszawa: Nowa Era, 2010, 157.

¹²³ Ibid, 160.

¹²⁴ Ibid, 189.

¹²⁵ Kamiński, Marek and Śniegocki, Robert, *Historia od renesansu do czasów napoleońskich. Część 1* (8th ed). Warszawa: Nowa Era, 2010, 78.

Duchy of Lithuania, whereas the newly published ones focus solely on those paragraphs that state the indivisibility and homogeneity of the newly established *Rzeczpospolita Obojga Narodów*, or “Republic of Both Nations”. An example comes from the new series of textbooks “Śladami przeszłości”, which will replace the older textbooks in a few coming years due to an undergoing reform of history teaching in Polish high schools.

The comparison of older and more recent history textbooks also reveals that the latter clearly portray the Lublin Union as the end of the independence and separate statehood of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, whereas the older textbooks take note of the separate political identity of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the dualism of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which persisted even after the Lublin Union. For instance, in the new textbook “Śladami przeszłości”, the maps of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth highlight only the common outer border of the Republic, without showing the remaining inner border between the “two nations”¹²⁶. Moreover, past the chapter on the Lublin Union, the textbook refers to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth not only as “Republic”, but increasingly as “Polish state”, “Polish lands” or even “Poland”¹²⁷. In addition, Vilnius is only mentioned as one of the many centers of the Republic and not once it is referred to as the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania¹²⁸. The latter fact is crucial in terms of how the identity and national belonging of Vilnius is constructed – if Lithuanian textbooks unanimously stress that Vilnius was a capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and a heart of Lithuanian lands, founded by the Grand Duke Gediminas (father of King and Grand Duke Jagiełło), Polish textbooks regard Vilnius (Wilno) as just one of the bigger cities in the “Polish state”. Another crucial remark concerns the meaning of “Polishness” and the national identity constellations of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which are not in any way commented on in Polish textbooks, whereas in Lithuanian textbooks, as we could see, it was stressed that the understanding of one’s national identity in the Polish-Lithuanian state and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was based on political, rather than ethnic or linguistic criteria.

The negotiation process between the Polish and Lithuanian delegations before the signature of the union receives very little attention in Polish textbooks. It is typically

¹²⁶ Roszak, Stanisław, *Śladami przeszłości 2*. Warszawa: Nowa Era, 2010, 203, 211, 233.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 203, 205.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 205.

only very briefly mentioned that the Lithuanian delegation, consisting of the powerful lords, was against the unionization with Poland. This stands in stark contrast to the Lithuanian textbooks which cover extensively and with a lot of precision the negotiation process, the positions of both sides and reluctance of the Lithuanian delegation to agree with the terms of the union set by Poland. Such attitudes of the influential Lithuanian lords are explained by the Polish textbooks as motivated by fear of losing their privileged position in the state. This reasoning again stands in opposition to the Lithuanian version of explanation, which stresses the efforts of Lithuanian lords to protect the sovereignty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its independence from Poland, rather than their personal interests of power. Interestingly, Polish textbooks admit that the Polish parliament, during the negotiations, demanded annexation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into Poland which they understood as the full and final implementation of the Krewo Union¹²⁹. Furthermore, the decision of Sigismund II August to annex a large share of the Lithuanian territories to Poland, as a means for pressuring the Lithuanian delegation to accept the union, is portrayed as a legally valid move by the sovereign and “legal inheritor of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania”¹³⁰, which again contradicts the Lithuanian point of view – namely, the strongly highlighted fact that the decision broke the legal statutes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and was legally invalid¹³¹.

Lastly, the evaluation of the consequences of the union differs in the older and more recent series of textbooks. The newly published “Śladami przeszłości” proudly states that the Lublin Union created one of the largest states in Central and Eastern Europe and that because of the union the territory of the Polish Kingdom significantly expanded (after the annexation of the Lithuanian lands by Sigismund II August); that the Polish language and customs grew in importance in Lithuania and Ukraine and the positions of the Polish lords significantly strengthened due to the newly acquired lands

¹²⁹ Kamiński and Śniegocki, 78.

¹³⁰ Roszak, 191; Kamiński and Śniegocki, 79.

¹³¹ Interestingly, a Polish historian Juliusz Mieroszewski is in agreement with the Lithuanian perspective, when he argues that “we cannot claim that every project of Greater Russia is imperialism, while Polish Eastern programme is not imperialism, but only an exalted idea of the Jagiellonids. In other words, we can demand Russia to abandon its imperialist projects only if we ourselves abandon our traditional historical imperialism in all its forms and manifestations. The “idea of Jagiellonian union” only for us has no relations to imperialism. However, for Lithuanians, Ukrainians and Belarusians, it is a pure manifestation of a traditional Polish imperialism.” Mieroszewski, Juliusz, “Rosyjski ”kompleks Polski” i obszar ULB“. *Kultura*, vol. 9, No.324, 1974, <http://www.abcnet.com.pl/node/1021> [Accessed 2010 09 10].

in the territories of the Grand Duchy¹³². Meanwhile the older version of textbooks combines a more general list of consequences with an evaluation of the union offered by a keynote Polish historian Juliusz Bardach, who, not only stresses that the annexation of a part of Lithuanian territories to Poland was regarded by Lithuanians as unfair, but, crucially, claims that “linguistic and cultural Polonization did not lead to the loss of political self-consciousness. Lithuanians – which then were understood as all the inhabitants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, irrespective of ethnic and religious differences – maintained, from the Lublin Union until the end of the Republic’s existence, the law of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, its political and legal subjectivity”¹³³. Thus, the older textbooks, by highlighting that the Grand Duchy retained its political self-consciousness and separate political identity are in agreement with the dominant perspective in the Lithuanian history textbooks and historiography. In the new series of textbooks, however, the duality of the Commonwealth as well as the political subjectivity of Lithuania do not receive any attention.

Perspectives on the Lublin Union and the characteristics of the state that it created in Polish historiography are manifold. Unsurprisingly, there is a stark divergence between the popular historical viewpoints in the Polish historiography of the 19th century and those of the 20th century. As a representative example of the former could be Józef Jaroszewicz and Józef Szujski¹³⁴. They tended to overlook the articles of the Union which implied that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania continued to exist as a separate political entity. As a result, the equal standing of Lithuania in the common state was largely ignored. Analogous historical narrative was maintained by Oswald Balzer in the beginning of the twentieth century who argued that after the Lublin Union the Polish-Lithuanian state had become one legally undifferentiated entity¹³⁵.

A new perspective on the political nature of the Polish-Lithuanian state has been presented by the post-war generation of Polish historians. Henryk Wisner is one of the Polish historians who are in agreement with the Lithuanian historians on the issue of the separateness and sovereignty of the two states after the establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1569. He acknowledges that the Lublin Union did not mean the end of the Lithuanian sovereignty and that the newly formed Republic was

¹³² Roszak, 192.

¹³³ Kamiński and Śniegocki, 82.

¹³⁴ Jaroszewicz, Józef, *Obraz Litwy pod względem jej cywilizacji od czasów najdawniejszych do końca XVIII w.*, vol. 1-3, Vilnius, 1844-45; Szujski, Józef, *Dzieje Polski*, vol. 1-4. Cracow, 1862-66.

¹³⁵ Balzer, Oswald, *Tradycje dziejowe unii polsko-litweskiej*. Lviv, 1919, 16.

comprised of a single nation of the lower gentry, but of two separate states, distrustful of each other¹³⁶. This distrust was maintained first and foremost by the Lithuanian magnate families who were against the union with Poland, seeing it as a danger to the sovereignty of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Wisner quotes Kristupas Radvila Perkūnas, a prominent Lithuanian nobleman (Krzysztof Radziwiłł “the Thunderbolt”), who commented on the Lublin Union after twenty years had passed since the establishment of the Commonwealth: “What else could we do? Being threatened by the enemies and having lost our lands here, the only remedy to our pains is that we see the king who comes from our bloodline”¹³⁷. What Kristupas Radvila Perkūnas implied here was that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was increasingly facing the threat of Moscow and at the same time it lost a large part of its territory to the Kingdom of Poland when the King and the Grand Duke Žygimantas Augustas annexed it to the Kingdom of Poland, trying to force the Lithuanian noblemen to accept the Union with Poland. Wisner stresses that the establishment of the Commonwealth was based on constraining the alternative options of the Lithuanian gentry rather than on the mutual voluntary acceptance of the negotiated terms. Furthermore, he highlights the fact that the gradual cultural polonization of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania did not entail the takeover of the Polish identity, the loss of the self-conscious understanding of being a separate state and society and the obliteration of Lithuania’s history prior to the union with Poland¹³⁸. Despite the fact that Polish became the official state language and the language of communication and literature in the Republic, there remained two distinct states – the Polish Kingdom and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania – each of them possessing their own political identity and “native” citizenry, as opposed to the “foreigners” of the other confederate state.

Samsonowicz is yet another Polish historian who attempts to show the duality of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the equal standing of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in its union with Poland. He argues that despite the gradual Polonization of the Lithuanian gentry and its acceptance of Polish customs and offices after 1569, it still

¹³⁶ Visneris, Henrikas, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės valstybingumo pavojai*. Vilnius: Mintis, 1991, 7.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 8.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 24, 69.

retained continuing consciousness of a separate identity¹³⁹. Moreover, he rejects the idea that the 1385 Krewo union marks the incorporation of Lithuania into the Kingdom of Poland and maintains that the latter was completely unrealistic due to the fact that Lithuania was several times the size of Poland, retained its political vigour and awareness of its sovereignty¹⁴⁰. Furthermore, Samsonowicz highlights the differences of culture and language as well as a long-standing tradition of mutual hostility – all hampering the realization of the Polish-Lithuanian union¹⁴¹.

Similarly, Ryszard Szczygieł argues that despite the fact that the documents of the union began by stating the homogeneity and indivisibility of the newly created state and the merger of two nations into one nation and society, in reality the two states kept their separate territory, institutions, law, treasury and army¹⁴². Szczygieł equally stresses the efforts of the Lithuanian delegation during the negotiation period to preserve statehood of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its equality in the union with Poland and even describes the decision of Žygimantas Augustas to annex a share of Lithuanian territory to Poland as an act of coercion and ”revolt against law and government”, for the legal system of the Grand Duchy forbid the monarch to arbitrarily impose changes on the territory of the state¹⁴³.

Another crucial element in the post-war Polish historiography regarding the considerations of the Lublin Union relates to the question whether the Union was the result of a mutual voluntarily accepted compromise or, either, an act of violence against the Grand Duchy which was forced by Poland to accept the terms of the Union set by Poland. There seems to be an agreement among the majority of Polish historians that the closer union with Poland was firstly demanded and initiated by the Lithuanian gentry who sought to acquire more liberties and rights and were opposed to powerful anti-unionist magnates of the Grand Duchy, who until then held the control of the political power in the state. For instance, Oskar Halecki stresses that Lithuanian gentry were increasingly opposing the oligarchic magnates and began to demand closer

¹³⁹ Samsonowicz, Henryk, “Polish politics and society under the Jagiellonian monarchy”, in: Fedorowicz, J. K. (ed.), *A Republic of Nobles: Studies in Polish history to 1864*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 56.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 55.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 55

¹⁴² Szczygieł, Ryszard, “Unia Lubelska. Liublino Unija”, in: *440 lat Unii Polsko-Litewskiej – 440 metų Lenkijos-Lietuvos Unijai*. Warszawa: Ex Libris, 2009, 19.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 18.

collaboration with the “Polish brothers”¹⁴⁴. Pajewski argues that “apart from the limited group of magnates, all Lithuania desired union with Poland. Moreover, if at Lublin violence had really been committed with respect to Lithuania, [...] the years following 1569 would have witnessed a powerful separatist movement in Lithuania. On the contrary, we see exactly the opposite process – that of ever-closer fusion of the two States”¹⁴⁵. Likewise, Szczygieł complies with his counterparts by highlighting that the terms of union were achieved not by imposing demands or threatening, but was a result of long-term debates and negotiations, mutually and voluntarily accepted¹⁴⁶. Moreover, Zamoyski portrays the anti-unionist standpoint of the Lithuanian magnates as motivated by personal interest of power rather by the efforts to maintain Grand Duchy’s statehood, as exemplified by Mykolas Radvila Juodasis, who, belonging to the most powerful magnate family at the time, contemplated plans of acquiring the grand-ducal throne and turning the Grand Duchy into his own fief¹⁴⁷. The latter point of view, as we could see, is included in the Polish history curriculum. Thus, overall, Polish historiography tends to stress that the Polish-Lithuanian union was mutually accepted voluntary compromise rather than an act of coercion or violence on the part of Poland.

To summarize the main points of the Polish historical narrative on the rapprochement with Lithuania, Krewo Union emerges as an equally important event to the Lublin Union, as it marks the beginning of the Jagiellonian dynasty, considered as Polish, and the expansion of its rule in Central and Eastern Europe. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in this context, becomes regarded as simply one of the Jagiellonian states, tied by the personal union to Poland. Some divergence is visible between the dominant narrative in the textbooks and in the historiography with regard to how much emphasis is placed on the duality of the Commonwealth and the separateness and political self-consciousness of the Grand Duchy in the union with Poland. Especially, if we look to the more recently published history textbooks, there is very little attention paid to the duality of the Commonwealth. More than that, the Republic of Both Nations is often simply identified as the Polish Republic, consisting of Polish lands, where Wilno (Vilnius) is just one of the many bigger centers of the Polish Republic.

¹⁴⁴ Halecki, Oskar, *A History of Poland*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1961, 121.

¹⁴⁵ Pajewski, Janusz, “Zygmunt August and the Union of Lublin, 1548-72”, in: Reddaway, W. F. et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Poland. From the origins to Sobieski (to 1696)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1950, 365.

¹⁴⁶ Szczygieł, 19.

¹⁴⁷ Zamoyski, Adam, *Poland. A History*. London: Harper Press, 2009, 79-80.

The older textbooks, on the other hand, offer a more careful presentation of the characteristics of the Polish-Lithuanian state and society. The issue of Lithuania's "incorporation" to Poland is described by showing the divergences between the statements in the union text and in the actual life of the Commonwealth, by pointing to the fact that the Grand Duchy not only retained separate offices and institutions, army and treasury, but likewise maintained a separate political self-consciousness and a sense of statehood, even in the face of the overwhelming cultural and linguistic Polonization. In that sense, Polish and Lithuanian historical narratives, presented in the textbooks, do not stand in a stark incongruence. However, Lithuanian textbooks tend to consistently place much stronger emphasis on the duality of the Commonwealth, separateness and sovereignty of the Grand Duchy, its political identity as well as its distinctive national identity constellations. Bearing in mind the "young" nature of the Lithuanian nationalism, such emphasis in Lithuanian textbooks just reflects how history serves the nationalist aspirations, which in turn affect the interpretation of national history.

Lastly, Polish historiography draws attention to the opposition to the union from the Lithuanian magnates, but this merely denotes the political power struggles between the different strata of the nobility rather than some sort of conscious efforts to preserve Grand Duchy's independence. The Lublin Union is considered to be the result of mutual agreement, negotiation and increasing demands of the lower Lithuanian gentry rather than of coercive measures undertaken by Poland.

4.3 Lithuanian rendering of the Polish-Lithuanian uprisings and Lithuanian national revival in the 19th century

At the end of the 18th century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was partitioned by Russia, Prussia and Austria. Most of the territory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania fell under the domination of tsarist Russia, with only one region – Užnemunė (The Other Side of Nemunas) – being annexed to Prussia. The territories belonging to the Kingdom of Poland were divided between Prussia and Austria and later transformed into the Duchy of Warsaw by Napoleon I in 1807. The Duchy of Warsaw was taken by Russian troops in 1813 and, after the defeat of Napoleon I by the Russian Empire, re-established as the Congress Kingdom of Poland. The new Congress Poland was de facto

controlled by Russia until 1831, when following the Polish-Lithuanian uprising of 1830-1831, it was annexed to the Russian Empire.

In Lithuanian history textbooks, the two main highlights in the description of the 19th century are the two Polish-Lithuanian uprisings against tsarist Russia and the emerging movement of Lithuanian national revival. Both themes serve the purpose of showing that, despite the tight control of Russia, the old identities and loyalties to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were still strongly present and, at the same time, new ethnicity-based national identities were gradually emerging.

Lithuanian history textbooks, unsurprisingly, place the importance of the 19th century on the fact that a modern Lithuanian nation was born, as a result of identity transformation process, influenced by the uprisings, abolition of serfdom in 1861 and Russification as well as de-Polonization programs undertaken in Lithuania by tsarist Russia. It is crucial to note that even if Lithuanian textbooks emphasize that the goal of tsarist Russia was to de-Polonize, to Rusify and to create a new peasant strata, loyal to the tsarist rule and of a Russian identity, it is not examined too extensively why actually tsarist Russia fought the Polish influences so fiercely in Lithuania. When trying to create a coherent history of the Lithuanian nation, the authors of the history textbooks have avoided identifying a strong presence of Polish culture and language among Lithuanian patriots and intelligentsia. It is generally briefly mentioned that the Lithuanian gentry did not speak Lithuanian, but the latter fact is then counterbalanced by showing evidence of a strong, separate from Polish, political identity of Lithuanian gentry, based on the traditions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Meanwhile, every instance of an attempt to maintain and strengthen Lithuania's independence from the Polish (and Russian) influences is emphasized. Thus, for instance, a project of the Grand Duchy's restoration (under the Russian control), prepared and addressed to the tsar Alexander I by Lithuanian nobility in 1811, is mentioned several times and an excerpt from the original document is included, as a proof that already in the beginning of the 19th century a separate Lithuanian identity was evolving and served as a basis for demands of autonomy from tsarist Russia¹⁴⁸.

Moreover, the description of the Polish-Lithuanian uprisings against tsarist Russia acknowledges that Lithuanian uprisings were closely coordinated or managed by uprising leaders in Poland. The main goal of both the uprising of 1830-1831 and that of

¹⁴⁸ Kamuntavičius et al, 249, 255-256.

1863-1864 was to regain independence from the Russian Empire. It is noted that rebels did not have a clear idea of the state model they wanted to recreate or that there was lack of agreement between different factions of rebels as to what kind of state they sought to establish after having emancipated the Polish-Lithuanian territories from tsarist rule. Lithuanian textbooks, however, state that Polish generals of the uprising tried to take control of the uprisings in Lithuania, to make Lithuanian leaders of the uprisings obey them and envisioned Lithuania being incorporated into Poland in case the uprisings would have been successful¹⁴⁹. The latter point is further emphasized by mentioning twice a quote of a prominent leader of the Lithuanian rebels in 1863-1864, Konstantinas Kalinauskas, who claimed that “we cannot leave the destiny of Lithuania to the stupid Polish heads”, this way protesting the decision to make the Lithuanian uprising committee subordinate to Polish leadership¹⁵⁰. Thus, a generally positive image of common Polish-Lithuanian efforts to fight back Russia is made gloomier by pointing at supposedly overbearing Polish interference in Lithuanian affairs, which further contributes to an overall image of Poland as seeking to culturally and politically dominate, or treating Lithuania as a “younger brother”.

In the uprising of 1830-1831, the main state model envisaged among the Lithuanian rebels for liberated Lithuania, according to Lithuanian history textbooks, was a state, restored with the borders of the Grand Duchy of 1772, which would subsequently seek a union with Poland. In the uprising of 1863-1864, there were several conflicting state models promoted by different factions of rebels. Aristocracy and upper nobility were advancing an idea of Lithuania as a province of Poland. However, the group, which was in charge of organizing the Lithuanian uprising of 1863-1864, consisted of lower gentry and was either in favor of an independent Lithuanian state or a federation with Poland, in which Lithuania would be an equal partner. Key features of its program were abolition of serfdom and granting citizenship rights to the peasantry. In this regard, the Lithuanian leaders of the uprising advanced more radical claims than their Polish counterparts. However, ensuring equal rights to the peasantry was seen by the Lithuanian leaders as the only way to draw peasantry to actively engage in the uprising and crucial for the outcomes of the uprising.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 254, 260.

¹⁵⁰ Gečas, Algirdas et al., *Lietuvos ir pasaulis. Istorijos vadovėlis XII klasei*. Kaunas: Šviesa, 2001, 45, 53.

The distinction between the nobility/gentry and the peasantry in the 19th century in terms of their identity receives considerable attention in Lithuanian history textbooks. It is noted that the idea of Lithuanian identity and state for the majority of the nobility and some of the gentry was based on the traditions and laws of the Grand Duchy, close affiliation with Poland and the Polish language as a mother-tongue. In the first half of the 19th century, gentry and nobility had a strong national identity linked to the tradition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, but it did not in any way entail Lithuanian language as a significant element of identity. Meanwhile, in the first half of the 19th century, Lithuanian-speaking peasants had not yet acquired any considerable level of political self-consciousness.

In the second half of the 19th century, however, the old understanding of nationhood, as belonging to the nation of the Grand Duchy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, was accompanied by a new, ethnic, understanding of a nation – as a sum of vernacular tongue speakers – which emerged from the Lithuanian national revival movement. Gaidis notes that, at the dawn of the modern Lithuanian nation, gentry and nobility faced a complicated decision – to hold onto the old traditions of the Grand Duchy and pay the price of exclusion or to engage with the ideas of modern nationalism and lose a significant share of one’s identity and individuality¹⁵¹. Over the 10 past years, a new generation of Lithuanian historians began to raise and discuss the distinction between two Lithuanian identities or two separate understandings of Lithuanian nationhood, which emerged in the second half of the 19th century and existed until the early years of the 20th century. The distinction is usually described as that between “Old Lithuanians” (*senalietuviai*) and “Young Lithuanians” (*jaunalietuviai*). However, in a history textbook for the 12th grade students, the “Old Lithuanians” and their political aims to re-establish the union with Poland are considered as yet another obstacle, next to the “Russian chauvinism”, to the emergence of the Lithuanian national movement¹⁵². It is broadly acknowledged that the aims and actions of the gentry nation, to which “Old Lithuanians” belonged, were part of a complicated process of formation of Lithuanian nationhood. Nevertheless, the evaluation of their political programs is rather negative, for even if the Lithuanian gentry thought of themselves as having

¹⁵¹ Gaidis, Ryšard, “Kilmingojo žmogaus pasirinkimo dilema: tarp politinės ir modernios tautos“, in: Volkonovski, Jaroslav and Gaidis, Ryšard (eds.), *Lietuvių-lenkų santykiai amžių tėkmėje. Istorinė atmintis. Stosunki polsko-litewskie na przestrzeni wieków. Pamięć historyczna*. Vilnius: Lenkų institutas Vilniuje, Lietuvos lenkų mokslininkų draugija, Vilniaus Universiteito leidykla, 2009, 161.

¹⁵² Gečas et al, 116.

Lithuanian origin (*gente lituanus*), their political aims represented Polish national interests (*natione Polonus*)¹⁵³. Using this line of argumentation in the textbook, the ambiguous identity of the “Old Lithuanians” is denied the membership to the Lithuanian nation.

“Old Lithuanians” denote the Polish-speaking gentry, loyal to the tradition of a Polish-Lithuanian state, either in a form of federation or unitary state, nevertheless, considering themselves to be Lithuanian. Within the group of the “Old Lithuanians” there were various attitudes to the Lithuanian national movement as well as different understandings of what a future Lithuanian state should be. Some pictured it to be a province of Poland and were quite disapproving of the modern Lithuanian nationalism, as, likewise, of the modern Polish nationalism, for they saw such developments of nationhood to be alien and misfitting the local realities and traditions of statehood. Some were not opposed to the newly emerging Lithuanian national revival, but were not involved or contributing to it either, and were in favor of a federation. Lastly, there were those who actively supported the Lithuanian national movement, both financially and by spreading their ideas through local newspapers. For instance, Konstancija Skirmunt, a prominent publicist of the pro-Lithuanian gentry, argued that “we are not strangers here, we are locals, differences between us and peasants are not national, but linguistic [...]. Both sides have to seek for a compromise. Therefore, bilingualism should be seen as a foundation for domestic relations in our state”¹⁵⁴. However, the numbers of the gentry who supported the Lithuanian national movement were low and further decreasing, as many realized they would lose their superior social status in a modern Lithuanian state. Moreover, many already felt to be a part of a modern Polish nation, despite the fact that they often relied extensively on the glorious past of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to further their argument in debates on the future state model of Lithuania¹⁵⁵. In other words, the imagery of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was often used as a powerful resource of proving the superiority of tradition that was behind the claims of the gentry. However, in many cases, its main interest was maintaining one’s

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Skirmunt, Konstancija, “Pod haslem zgody”. *Kurier Wilenski*, 2 (15), December 1905, Nr.78, quoted in: Liekis, Šarūnas, “Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės refleksija Lietuvoje XIX-XX a. pradžioje”, in: Bumblauskas, Alfredas, Liekis, Šarūnas and Potašenko, Grigorijus, (eds.), *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir paveldo „dalybos“*. Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2008, 336.

¹⁵⁵ Liekis, Šarūnas, “Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės refleksija Lietuvoje XIX-XX a. pradžioje”, in: Bumblauskas, Alfredas, Liekis, Šarūnas and Potašenko, Grigorijus, (eds.), *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir paveldo „dalybos“*. Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2008, 338.

social standing in society and drifting towards closer affiliation with the Polish nation, which was further reinforced by the often strong anti-Polish sentiments of the “Young Lithuanians”.

Crucial transformations took place in the second half of the 19th century. A modern Lithuanian national movement emerged along the development of the peasant intelligentsia, oriented in its political aims to the territory of the ethnographic Lithuania. The “Young Lithuanians” and their national movement, more generally, have received a lot of attention in Lithuanian historiography. In history textbooks of Lithuanian history, as well, around 50 pages are usually devoted to different aspects of development of modern Lithuanian nation and state from 1863 to 1918, when the first Republic of Lithuania was established. The creation and programs of the first Lithuanian political parties at the turn of the century are discussed quite extensively, which despite different ideologies all shared the same two goals – to restore Lithuanian independence or at least autonomy and to promote “Lithuanity” and the Lithuanian language.

Interestingly, the textbook also mentions, for instance, that Christian Democrats were fighting against Polonization, sought to strengthen and consolidate “Lithuanity”, often cooperated with and were supported by the government¹⁵⁶. However, the notion of “government” and the possible motives of the government’s support of Christian Democrats’ engagement in the fight against Polonization are not further discussed. Only in another section of the chapter we can find two sentences noting that tsarist Russia sought to provoke conflict and stir negative sentiments of young, less developed nations against stronger ones, because the latter were seen as “dangerous”, and that this Russian policy was applied to the case of Polish and Lithuanian nationalisms¹⁵⁷. Once again, there is no further explanation why Polish nationalism was taken to be dangerous by the tsarist government and why it sought to provoke conflict between the Polish and Lithuanian nationalisms. Therefore, students are not encouraged to critically think about the reasons and consequences of such programs of de-Polonization by the Christian Democrats or the Nationalist party, or why Christian Democrats were so eager to cooperate with the tsarist government. Rather, the latter parties are portrayed as fierce and brave forces promoting the Lithuanian culture and language, without making any direct links to the fact that de-Polonization programs were actually actively promoted

¹⁵⁶ Kamuntavičius et al, 337-338.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 336.

and even possibly rewarded by the tsarist Russian rule, or that the main goal of such policies was to weaken Lithuanian nationalism by isolating it from the Polish-speaking gentry and, in this way, depriving it from the rich cultural and political traditions which the gentry could offer.

According to Bumblauskas, the “Old Lithuanians” were not willing to understand and support the wishes of the “Young Lithuanians” to strengthen the positions of Lithuanian language and culture and to solve the social problems of an emerging modern society, thus, rejecting the idea of a sovereign Lithuania and rather supporting Polish nationalism¹⁵⁸. Meanwhile, “Young Lithuanians”, by holding on to strict anti-Polish views, pushed the “Old Lithuanians” into the arms of Polish nationalists and deprived them of their autochthonous status in Lithuania¹⁵⁹.

Another crucial aspect of how the clash of Lithuanian and Polish nationalisms is depicted in Lithuanian history textbooks is evident in the fact that the faction of “Old Lithuanians”, who supported Lithuanian national revival and who established a political party in 1905, are identified as Polish¹⁶⁰. It is also mentioned that the idea of national cooperation between Lithuanians, Poles and Belarusians in the form of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which was promoted by this party, was not supported neither by Polish, nor Lithuanian nationalists. In the era of modern nationalism, such ideas advanced by the intelligentsia of the “Old Lithuanians” were bound to fail. Lastly, the conflict between the two nationalisms is described as rather mellow and non-aggressive without making any distinctions between Poles in Poland and the “local” Poles in Lithuania¹⁶¹. It is consistently emphasized, however, that, in the beginning of the 20th century, the Lithuanian national movement aimed not only to liberate modern Lithuanian nation from the Russian rule, but also to clearly dissociate itself from the Polish nationalism and the idea of unionization with Poland¹⁶².

Moreover, a few key remarks on how the relations between Poles and the newly revived Lithuanian nation are depicted in the Lithuanian history textbooks come from a more recently published textbook of Lithuanian history for the 11th and 12th grades.

¹⁵⁸ Bumblauskas, Alfredas, “Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos paveldo „dalybos“ ir „Litva/Letuva“ distinkcijos konceptas”, in: Bumblauskas, Alfredas, Liekis, Šarūnas and Potašenko, Grigorijus (eds.), *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos tradicija ir paveldo „dalybos“*. Vilnius: Vilniaus Universiteto leidykla, 2008, 64.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Kamuntavičius et al, 338.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Gečas et al, 133.

Here, under the title “The emergence of a Polish-Lithuanian conflict”, we find the description of the Polish reaction to the intensifying Lithuanian national movement in the second half of the 19th century: “the imperative of national and linguistic equality, raised by illegal Lithuanian newspapers, as well as their negative views on the denationalizing measures taken by the Polish clergy received a public reaction from Poles. In 1884, “Dziennik Poznański”, in the polemics with ”Aušra”, expressed the traditional Polish point of view: Lithuanians are only non-Polish speaking Poles”¹⁶³. Moreover, the textbook presents quite a detailed view of how the Poles and the Polonized gentry considered the Lithuanian national movement to be something abnormal, inconceivable and undesirable and called it a “separatism” or, more commonly, a “litvomania”, associating it with a disease or a disorder, whereas Lithuanian language was regarded as yet not enough “cultured” language, not a language of civilization and culture, which the Polish language was already¹⁶⁴. Emphasis is uniformly placed on the negative Polish reactions to the emerging Lithuanian national revival without any acknowledgement of the existing diversity of views toward Lithuanian nationalism among the Polish-speaking population, which is indicated by academic research.

”Aušra” (“Dawn”), the first Lithuanian newspaper, began to be published in 1883 by Jonas Basanavičius and had an immense effect on strengthening Lithuanian identity, national pride, encouraging debates on the future of the Lithuanian nation and politics. ”Aušra” and many other similar Lithuanian newspapers, published illegally under the tsarist rule, were typically critical of the Polonized Lithuanian gentry and clergy, who were blamed for Polonizing Lithuanians, forgetting and demeaning Lithuanian language. The Lublin Union for them signified the deeply regretted end of Lithuanian traditions, culture, language which were dominated over by Polish cultural imperialism. “Varpas” (“Bell”), published by Vincas Kudirka, usually reminded its readers of the common Polish-Lithuanian state in the past and the value of good neighbourly relations with Poles in future, but equally stressed that the necessary condition for good relations with Poland was the provision that the Lithuanian nation, speaking Lithuanian, continues to exist and thrives¹⁶⁵. Interestingly, Vincas Kudirka, the author of the

¹⁶³ Makauskas, Bronius, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Antroji knyga*. Kaunas: Šviesa, 2006, 52.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Makauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Antroji knyga*, 53.

Lithuanian national anthem, was born in a Lithuanian peasant family and in his early life was deeply ashamed of and hid his peasant family background. In a history textbook for the 11th and 12th grades we find an excerpt from Kudirka's reflections on his identity transformation:

“the instinct of survival demanded me to never speak Lithuanian and watch out that nobody would find out that my father wears peasant clothes and speaks only Lithuanian. [...] I became a Pole and at once a gentleman – aligned myself with the Polish spirit. I failed, but I was innocent, I did not understand back then, while those, who understood, did not warn me. Today, when reminiscing about those times in the past, I am convinced that 1) people who reject their nation and give themselves to the killing influence of foreign nations experience great spiritual damage and, 2) after all, what a strong basis for nationality is the native language”.¹⁶⁶

The latter textbook, out of all the Lithuanian history textbooks, offers the most detailed and critical point of view towards Polish cultural domination and the refusal to accept the sovereignty and separateness of the Lithuanian nation. This emphasis, which is not so strong in other textbooks, may be partly caused by the fact that the author of this particular textbook is a Polish Lithuanian, who was born and studied history in Poland. Therefore, having in mind the minority background of the author, the significance of preserving one's national identity, culture and language receives much more weight in this textbook than in those, written by Lithuanian authors, who grew up and studied in Lithuania.

To summarize, the 19th century is of an extraordinary importance in the Lithuanian narrative of nationhood and independence. As a separate era, it is portrayed with most detail and attention in Lithuanian history textbooks. Most importantly, the roots of the conflict between Lithuanian and Polish nationalisms take place in the 19th century, which different textbooks mention with varied levels of extensiveness. Unsurprisingly, national pride is implied when describing the Lithuanian national revival and its all key figures and their achievements. The distinction between the “Old Lithuanians” and the “Young Lithuanians”, which both could be seen as part of the Lithuanian nation, even if the former spoke Polish and dreamt of a federation or union with Poland, is actively raised by the new generation of historians. However, this idea has not yet become prominent in Lithuanian history textbooks and the general tendency is simply to denote the “Old Lithuanians” as Poles due to their cultural and linguistic leaning toward

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 48.

Poland. As a result, the understanding of Lithuanian identity remains strictly ethnically and linguistically bounded. Further, there is still relatively little attention paid to the aims of and reasoning behind the de-Polonization program by the tsarist Russian regime. Lastly, the separateness, self-consciousness and continuity of the Lithuanian nation *vis-à-vis* the Polish nation is consistently emphasized.

4.4 Polish rendering of the Polish-Lithuanian uprisings and Lithuanian national revival in the 19th century

Throughout the 19th century, Poland, partitioned among Russia, Prussia and Austria, was absent from the map of Europe. Nevertheless, the 19th century is typically considered in Polish historiography as an era of great transformations, when Polish Romanticism, Positivism and modern Polish nationalism emerged, whereas the two uprisings against the tsarist rule demonstrated the unity of nation and its determination to acquire freedom from the foreign government.

Polish history textbooks depict the different stages and the sequence of events during the uprising of 1830 and that of 1863 in an exceptionally detailed way. Interestingly, when we compare the Lithuanian and Polish history textbooks' accounts of the uprisings, the latter ones focus much more on the course of the events, battles and army maneuvers, whereas the Lithuanian textbooks, along the narrower sequence of events, offer a rather extensive discussion of the uprising goals, the future state models that the rebels envisioned, national loyalties and identities of the uprising leaders and the relative separateness of the uprising in Lithuania (at least in 1863-1864) from that in Poland. Polish history textbooks, on the other hand, do not linger too much on the latter topics. The goal of the uprising – independent Poland – is taken as self-obvious and the borders of such independent Poland or national identity constellations of the citizens of this future state are also not specified in any clear way.

However, the border question becomes clearer if we look at how Polish textbooks deal with the topic of the territorial scope of the uprisings. Uprising in Lithuania (as well as in western Belarus), in both 1830-1831 and 1863-1864, is largely considered to be a part of the Polish uprising. Little distinction between the two, as it was the case in the Lithuanian textbooks, is made and, unsurprisingly, there is no mention of the fact

that in 1864 the leaders of the Lithuanian uprising sought to be independent from the leaders of the uprising in Poland.

In Polish textbooks, the two uprisings of the 19th century are undoubtedly portrayed as a source of great national pride, which demonstrated the unity and patriotic determination of the Polish nation. According to one of the textbooks, the struggle for independence was fought not only in the Kingdom of Poland, but also in the western provinces of the Russian Empire (Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine)¹⁶⁷. Once again, what the textbook fails to mention is what kind of status these western province of Russia were to get in the independent Poland – would they be part of Poland in the form of a federation, following the tradition of the Commonwealth, or were the uprising leaders in these territories seeking for a united Poland. As we could already see, the leadership of the uprising in Lithuania did not have a very clear state model in mind either when they were fighting against the tsarist rule. The main goal was to gain freedom and, after having achieved this, the effort would have been made to restore the Grand Duchy of Lithuania which would seek for a union or federation with Poland. However, it also should be taken into account that different factions within the leadership of the uprising advanced different goals.

According to Lukowski and Zawadzki, “the Polish radicals and democrats saw in the Lithuanian-, Belorussian- and Ukrainian-speaking serfs of the western *gubernii* future equal citizens of a democratic Polish nation embracing all the lands that had constituted the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1772. In that sense they identified Polish territorial claims in the east with the universal cause of liberty”¹⁶⁸. Another national formula of the independent Poland, envisioned by the uprising leadership, is offered by Zamoyski: “It had been said that the boundaries of the putative future Poland would draw themselves with the blood of insurgents. In Lithuania, they corresponded to the borders of 1772, with mass participation by all classes”¹⁶⁹. Thus, the Polish nation, as such, was conceived of as a predominantly multicultural community united by the romanticized cause of liberation, which, as implied by these and other authors, was the

¹⁶⁷ Śniegocki, Robert, *Historia od Kongresu Wiedeńskiego do I Wojny Światowej. Część 2*. Warszawa: Nowa Era, 2010, 116.

¹⁶⁸ Lukowski, Jerzy and Zawadzki, Hubert, *A Concise History of Poland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, 139.

¹⁶⁹ Zamoyski, 245.

main motivation behind “Poland’s desire to reunite the whole of the national territory”¹⁷⁰.

This noble intention of the Polish nation, however, soon had to face some difficulties, as the result of the emerging national movements in the western provinces of Russia. Halecki described the rise of the national revival in the former eastern borderlands of the Commonwealth as the “grave problem”¹⁷¹, which stood in the way of the Polish plans to reestablish a multicultural Poland. Together with the intensifying national movements of Lithuanians, Ukrainians and, to some extent, Belorussians (or “Ruthenians”), the hopes to restore the Jagiellonian union were fading and the ideas of creating an ethnic Poland, without the eastern territories, began to gain ground.

One cannot fail but notice that the emergence of these national movements is discussed in Polish historiography with a sense of regret and resentment. Zamoyski, in particular, places the national movement in Lithuania and elsewhere in a stark opposition to the Polish patriotism, describing it as a “modern Darwinian strain of nationalism among the peoples of the former Commonwealth, rejecting the inclusiveness and toleration of the Commonwealth in favour of an exclusive ethnocentric conformism”¹⁷². Polish nationalism, exemplified in the National Democrats with their leader Roman Dmowski and his doctrine of “national egoism”, is not subsumed by Zamoyski under the “Darwinian strain of nationalism”. The latter political group, known for claiming that minorities are only alien bodies within the nation, which have to assimilate, does not bypass Zamoyski’s attention. However, Dmowski’s political ideology is only described as being “practical, logical and implacable”¹⁷³.

Next to the rise of the national movements, another outcome of the failed uprisings seems to cause even more regret in Polish historiography, and that is “the extermination of the Polish element” in the eastern borderlands of the Commonwealth. Tsarist government, immediately after the uprisings, started to implement severe de-Polonization measures, which, according to Wereszycki, included, among others, confiscation of a large number of Polish estates, entire villages inhabited by Poles being exiled to Siberia, elimination of the Polish language from official correspondence,

¹⁷⁰ Halecki, 235.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 255.

¹⁷² Zamoyski, 283, 284.

¹⁷³ Ibid, 286.

schools¹⁷⁴. Polish population, culture and their influence in the eastern borderlands were considered by the Russian government as the main revolutionary element, which had to be repressed and replaced by intense Russification of these territories in order to create a new peasant strata loyal to the regime. As the aftermath of such measures, the Polish population in these areas significantly decreased which to Wereszycki as well as to Halecki signifies a tragedy that resulted in the eradication of the centuries-old cultural influence of Poles in these areas¹⁷⁵. Lithuanian nationalism, in this context, taking into account its anti-Polish character, is considered to be the “dominant force which eliminated the Polish element”¹⁷⁶.

Lukowski and Zawadzki are among the few authors who take notice of the fact that the Russian government was equally hostile to the awakening of national cultures in the western provinces of the Russian Empire and took various restrictions against the use of the Lithuanian language, Latin alphabet and the illegal publishing and smuggling of Lithuanian books from East Prussia¹⁷⁷. They highlight the character of Lithuanian nationalism, which, though indebted to “Polish Romanticism and the support of several eminent bi-cultural bishops and writers, acquired strong anti-Polish characteristics, born out of a resentment toward the cultural Polonization of most of the *szlachta*¹⁷⁸ and of the educated classes in the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania”¹⁷⁹. This, however, is contextualised by bringing the attention to the growing popularity of the National Democrats in Poland, who completely rejected the Romantic idea of a pluralist Poland and demanded that minorities should submit to cultural and linguistic Polonization¹⁸⁰. The explanation of the role of national revival of the peoples of the Commonwealth in the “eradication of the Polish element”, thus, becomes more interdependent with the other historical circumstances.

Furthermore, Zamoyski questions the “perverse” claims of Lithuanian nationalism to the heritage of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by emphasizing that the majority of its population was Belorussian or Ukrainian, whereas the elites were mostly Polish¹⁸¹.

¹⁷⁴ Wereszycki, Henryk, “On the eve of the agrarian revolution (1832-1849)”, in: Gieysztor, Aleksander et al. (eds.), *History of Poland*. Warszawa: PWN, 1968, 453.

¹⁷⁵ Halecki, 255.

¹⁷⁶ Wereszycki, 450.

¹⁷⁷ Lukowski and Zawadzki, 167-168.

¹⁷⁸ Gentry of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 168.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 173, 174.

¹⁸¹ Zamoyski, 282.

Vilnius (Wilno), according to him, represents the core of the problem: “its population overwhelmingly Polish and only 2% spoke Lithuanian, yet it was claimed, on historical grounds, by the Lithuanians as well as by the Belorussians, who brushed aside Polish claims, and ignored the fact that one-third of its population was Jewish”¹⁸². In disputes over the symbolic ownership of former capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and one of the centers of the Polish cultural life, this line of reasoning, based on the demographically predominant position of Poles in Vilnius, persisted well into the 20th century, as we will see in the following sections.

To conclude, the national movements of Lithuania, Ukraine or Belarus receive very little attention in the history curriculum of the secondary school education in Poland, while in historiography the dominant approach of describing Lithuanian nationalism is by associating it with the much regretted destruction of the Polish element in the eastern borderlands and betrayal of the noble and Romanticized idea of independent Poland. Additionally, the rise of the Lithuanian nationalism is generally explained by linking it to the failure of the uprisings and the tsarist de-Polonization measures. The uprisings of 1830-1831 and 1863-1864 are recognized and remembered as the symbols of the national unity and struggle for freedom and restoration of Poland. The uprisings in Lithuania are typically regarded as fighting for the same cause, siding together or being part of the Polish uprisings against tsarist despotism. Polish textbooks, however, do not discuss in any more extensive fashion the complex structures of Polish national identity or the status of Lithuania in the restored Poland, pursued by the leadership of the uprisings. The distinction between patriotism of the Commonwealth and nationalism of modern Poland, which we can come across in Polish historiography, is not clearly identified in history textbooks.

4.5 Lithuanian rendering of the “Vilnius Question”

To begin with, some introductory remarks should be made in order to sketch out the general historical context in which the so-called Vilnius Question arose. The period of 1918-1920 in Lithuanian historiography is usually called the Lithuanian Wars of Independence, or Freedom Struggles. Established in 1918, during the period of its two first years of existence, the independent Republic of Lithuania had to contend with the

¹⁸² Ibid, 282.

Bolshevik, Bermontian (the West Russian Volunteer Army, created and supported by Germany) and Polish armies.

Bolsheviks were attacking Lithuania after the withdrawal of the German army in 1918, seeking to create a marionette Lithuanian government, dependent on Soviet Russia. However, the Lithuanian army managed to defeat Bolsheviks and signed a peace treaty with the Soviet Russia on July 12, 1920, by which it recognized Lithuania's independence and its rights to Vilnius and its surrounding region. Since the Polish-Soviet war was taking place at the same time, the Soviet Russia's decision to attribute Vilnius to Lithuania could be regarded as a diplomatic maneuver, aimed at ensuring Lithuania's benevolence to the Soviet Russia in its conflict with Poland.

The Bermontian army, led by Pavel Bermond-Avalov, was created by Germany to win back the territories of the newly established Baltic countries, which Germany had taken during World War I. Lithuania achieved some important victories against the Bermontians in 1919, after which the Entente demanded to stop the clashes and ordered the withdrawal of the German troops.

Lastly, the conflict with Poland began already in 1919, during the Polish-Soviet war, which also took place in the territory of Lithuania. The Lithuanian and the Polish army fought against each other and each against the Soviet Russia as well. Mistrust and contention around the issue of Vilnius was so strong between Lithuania and Poland that the armies of the two countries never coordinated their struggle against Russia, but instead kept fighting over Vilnius by military and diplomatic means.

The main issue at stake in this disagreement was that of to which country – Poland or Lithuania – Vilnius and its surrounding area should belong. The League of Nations and the Entente acted as mediators in the conflict trying to find a compromise that would satisfy the ambitions of the two countries. The agreement between Poland and Lithuania was finally reached on October 7, 1920 in Suwalki. Vilnius and its surrounding area were allotted to Lithuania and a new demarcation line was established. However, before the Suwalki Agreement came into force legally (October 10), the Polish General Żeligowski's army took over Vilnius on October 9, 1920. The seizure of Vilnius was portrayed by the Poles as General's Żeligowski's mutiny and disobedience to the Polish government, which served as an excuse for Poland, facing sanctions by the League of Nations. Piłsudski, Chief of State of Poland, later acknowledged that, when Vilnius was seized by the Polish army, Żeligowski acted on his orders. However,

despite the demands by the League of Nations that Poles evacuate Vilnius and its surrounding area and retreat behind the demarcation line of October 7, no strict measures or sanctions were taken. Two years later, Vilnius and its surrounding region were annexed to Poland.

The clash over Vilnius grew out directly of the two conflicting modern nationalisms. Lithuanian nationalism, overall, espoused strong anti-Polish sentiments due to the fact that Polish culture and language as well as the domination of the Polish-speaking gentry in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were considered to be guilty of the loss of the old Lithuanian traditions and grandeur of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In addition to historical antagonisms, asymmetry of political influence and international standing stemming from the vast differences in population size further contributed to the Lithuanian resentment against Poles¹⁸³. On the other hand, modern Polish nationalism, embodied by Roman Dmowski and his dominating party of National Democrats, did not recognize the sovereignty of the Lithuanian state and sought to create an ethnically homogeneous Greater Poland with the Commonwealth's borders of 1772. For him, Vilnius and its surrounding area could only be an integral and indistinguishable part of Poland, whereas all non-Polish populations of these territories had to be Polonized. Clearly, his idea of the restored Commonwealth had little in common with the original constellations of ethnic diversity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. An alternative project for Polish-Lithuanian cohabitation was proposed by Józef Piłsudski, Chief of State, Marshal and leader of Poland. Piłsudski, who was himself born in Lithuania, advocated the idea of a federation of the sovereign Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian nations. However, this idea had never received much support in Poland or Lithuania, which was little surprising given the strong positions of fierce Lithuanian and Polish nationalisms at the time. Piłsudski had to give in to the popular demands to seize Vilnius by force, as he had probably seen no other option to take control of Vilnius. The figure of Piłsudski remains very controversial in Lithuania, whereas in Poland he is reminisced about as a national hero of Poland. In Lithuania, on the other hand, Piłsudski is first and foremost associated with the "occupation of Vilnius".

¹⁸³ The population of Poland in 1921 reached 27 million, whereas Lithuania (without the Vilnius region) in 1923 had a population of approximately 2.2 million.

Here we come to one of the most persistent points of disagreement between Lithuania and Poland, which is why I also use the term of “occupation by Poland” in quotation marks. Lithuania claims Poland’s act of aggression to be the “occupation of Vilnius and its surrounding region”, while Poland rejects the use of the term “occupation”. Two different lines of reasoning are behind such claims, which are deeply intertwined with the questions of historical tradition and national identity in the ethnically and culturally diverse area of the former Polish-Lithuanian state with multiple identity constellations. The Polish and Lithuanian interpretations and views on the “Vilnius Question” have formed in the interwar republic period and, “conserved” by the absence of discussions on the issue during the Soviet rule, had extended to the present day.

To illuminate the differences of viewpoints, two quotes follow – the first is by the Polish Democrat Ludwik Abramowicz¹⁸⁴ and the other is by Antanas Smetona, a key public figure and president of interwar Lithuania. Abramowicz stated that “...Jews and the Russians aside, Vilnius is a purely Polish city. [...] the Lithuanians are willing to consider Vilnius the centre of their motherland and cannot reconcile themselves to the changes brought by the centuries... collecting statistical material on the Poles in Lithuania would be better than high-sounding phrases. After all, numbers are so eloquent...”¹⁸⁵. Abramowicz emphasizes the importance of numbers and statistics, claiming that Vilnius, aside from the majority of Jews, was dominated by Polish population, from which follows that Vilnius should be considered to be a Polish city and, as a result, the annexation of Vilnius region to Poland cannot be described as occupation.

Meanwhile, Antanas Smetona responds to such claims: “Vilnius is the cornerstone of Lithuanian life. It can also be a Byelorussian centre. We shall never wrangle over Vilnius with Byelorussians, we shall be able to coexist, because none of us harbour any aggressive ambitions. The Poles are different; they were and still are aggressors. They have driven out the Lithuanian language from the Lithuanian churches, and when

¹⁸⁴ One should note here, though, that Ludwik Abramowicz did not support the aggressive nationalism of Polish National Democrats and was himself a member of Lithuanian Polish party which supported the idea of a Polish-Lithuanian federation. Therefore, his ideas do not represent the most aggressive or fierce Polish standpoint towards the question of Vilnius, as is the case with the National Democrats and their leader Roman Dmowski.

¹⁸⁵ Abramowicz, L., *Wolne głosy w sprawie litweskiej. Kwestya litewska w praise polskiej*. Warszawa: 1905, 47-48.

Lithuanians require its return, they are declared chauvinists and imperialists”.¹⁸⁶ The loss of Vilnius is portrayed by Smetona as a great grievance for the Lithuanians which they consider to be their historical capital from the times of the Grand Duchy. His viewpoint on the Vilnius Question is all the more important when we take into account that Smetona, after the coup d'état in 1926, became an authoritarian head of state and within several following years of his regime a marginal nationalistic political party, the Lithuanian National Union, led by Smetona, became the main and only political power in the country. In the above quoted passage, Smetona also highlights the confrontation between Lithuanians and Poles over the language used in churches in the first decades of the 20th century, which was especially commonplace in the ethnically mixed areas on Lithuania's eastern fringes and in some parishes led to riots where the Russian authorities had to intervene¹⁸⁷. As Kiaupa points out, many priests in the Vilnius diocese looked down on the Lithuanian language and considered Polish to be the only suitable language of the Church¹⁸⁸. This, in turn, heightened the tensions not only between the Lithuanian and Polish peasants, but also between the intellectuals and priests who began to politicize the language issue, leading to increasingly pronounced confrontations between the two groups.

How is the Polish-Lithuanian conflict over Vilnius portrayed in Lithuanian history textbooks? Several key observations follow. Typically, Poland is depicted as an aggressor, bigger and thus more powerful and influential neighbor of Lithuania, which opposed Lithuanian statehood, claimed Vilnius to be an integral part of Poland¹⁸⁹ and finally achieved its goal by occupying Vilnius treacherously through a sham mutiny led by the Polish General Żeligowski. Treachery is commonly exemplified by stressing that Poland broke the Suwalki Agreement already the next day after its signature, disregarded the League of Nations and pretended that Polish government had nothing to do with the “mutiny”¹⁹⁰.

The discussion of Suwalki Agreement, signed by Poland and Lithuania on October 7, 1920, which attributed Vilnius and its area to Lithuania, is usually accompanied by additional emphasis on the fact that the peace agreement was achieved through

¹⁸⁶ Smetona, Antanas, *Rinktiniai raštai*. Kaunas: Menta, 1990, 325.

¹⁸⁷ In 1909, both languages were given equal rights in the Vilnius diocese. However, with the outbreak of World War I, the Lithuanian language was again removed from the churches. Kiaupa, Zigmantas, *The History of Lithuania*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 2004, 222-223.

¹⁸⁸ Kiaupa, 222.

¹⁸⁹ Kamuntavičius et al, 364.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 366.

mediation of the League of Nations and registered by the Secretariat of the League of Nations¹⁹¹. The latter point can be considered as an insistence from the Lithuanian side to prove the legality of the agreement and its violation by Poland one day after the agreement had been signed. When Poland broke the agreement, it is highlighted that the international community as well as the League of Nations protested against such Polish actions, but later, when Poland diplomatically declared of having no relation to the mutiny, accepted the *fait accompli*¹⁹². Lastly, Poles are also blamed for spreading negative propaganda in the diplomatic circles of Western Europe regarding the newly established Lithuanian state, aiming to create its image as of a dubious and impermanent state and merely a Bolshevik or German intrigue, which severely impeded the Lithuanian diplomats' efforts at lobbying in the League of Nations and the Entente¹⁹³.

In the textbook, published in 2001, Poland is placed next to the Soviet Russia and Germany as an equally threatening enemy of Lithuanian sovereignty and statehood: "Soviet Russia sought to keep Lithuania under its influence at any stake, Germany drafted plans of how not to lose its power in Lithuania, while Poland openly sought to annex Lithuania and re-establish a Polish-Lithuanian state".¹⁹⁴ Poland is paralleled to two other major threats to Lithuanian sovereignty – Germany and the Soviet Russia. Thus, the historical heritage of the common state for over 200 years is overshadowed by the struggle of two nationalisms, which results in a situation where Poland, instead of being considered as a potential ally against Germany and Soviet Russia, is regarded as one of the major threats to Lithuanian independence. The image of Poland as an aggressor is further strengthened by describing how after the seizure of Vilnius and its surrounding area Polish army started an offensive to the Lithuanian territories beyond the Vilnius region and deeper into the ethnographic Lithuania¹⁹⁵. Lithuanian army managed to resist the attacks and started approaching Vilnius, but the advance was stopped when the Entente demanded to halt the warfare and sign an armistice. In addition, one of the history textbooks comments on the seizure in the following way: "Poles of Vilnius met Żeligowski's army very congenially; Lithuanians expressed very hostile reactions, while Jews and Belarusians did not show either support or rejection.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 365.

¹⁹² Makauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Antroji knyga*, 102.

¹⁹³ Kamuntavičius et al, 351; Makauskas, 94.

¹⁹⁴ Gečas et al, 184.

¹⁹⁵ Gečas et al, 189; Kamuntavičius et al, 366.

Polish soldiers soon began Jewish pogroms in Vilnius”¹⁹⁶. No further explanation follows, but the latter statement clearly adds more negativity to the already overall grim image of the Polish army.

Further, the Republic of Central Lithuania, created by General Żeligowski, and the elections of Sejm (National Assembly) of Central Lithuania that took place in 1922 are described as illegal and fictive, discriminative against non-Polish population of the occupied Vilnius region. It is stated that the elections to Sejm were organized under the conditions of oppression, only fluent speakers of Polish could be elected and only 64.7% of those who had the voting right were included into the voters’ lists¹⁹⁷. Therefore, the process of incorporation of Żeligowski’s Central Lithuania is presented as fictitious, based on false and discriminative procedures and intended to cover up the illegality of Poland’s seizure of the Vilnius region. The Entente states agreed with the territorial change in 1923, but their ruling was not confirmed by the League of Nations, which, according to the textbook, shows that Poland was considered to be an occupant and aggressor by the League of Nations¹⁹⁸. Lithuania has never accepted the annexation. Consequently, the history textbook for 11th and 12th grade emphasizes that, from the perspective of the international law, for such a territorial change to be legally valid, both states should have officially agreed on the border, which was not the case¹⁹⁹. The fact of occupation of Vilnius by Poland thus appears as legally and morally undeniable, which, as we shall see, is contradictory to the Polish perspective.

Strong tensions between Poland and Lithuania remained throughout the interwar period. History textbooks typically mention that, in 1926, Lithuanian Ministry of Education passed the decision to establish 75 new schools with Polish as the language of instruction, which received a very negative outcry in society, as, at the same time, in the occupied Vilnius region, Poles were massively closing down Lithuanian schools²⁰⁰. Another example would be Lithuania’s decision to call back its diplomatic mission from Vatican in 1926, which was a sign of protest against Vatican signing a concordat with Poland earlier than with Lithuania, despite Lithuania’s long-term negotiations with Vatican²⁰¹. When the Minister of Foreign Affairs Rainys sought to normalize the

¹⁹⁶ Makauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Antroji knyga*, 102.

¹⁹⁷ Kamuntavičius et al, 367.

¹⁹⁸ Makauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Antroji knyga*, 104.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Kamuntavičius et al, 376, 377; Gečas et al, 249.

²⁰¹ Kamuntavičius et al, 376, 373.

relations with Vatican that same year, he was officially accused of conceding Vilnius to Poland and had to resign²⁰². Lastly, one of the more recently published history textbooks gives even more emphasis on the wrongs done to the Lithuanian culture and education by the new Polish government in the Vilnius region, including closing down Lithuanian schools and de-Lithuanizing churches²⁰³.

The position of Lithuanian historiography with regard to the “Vilnius Question” has stepped into the process of transformation over the past 10-15 years. However, the long-standing tradition in Lithuanian historiography, which precedes the aforementioned transformation, but still often dominates the popular opinion, was to treat the interwar conflict with Poland over Vilnius as being only Poland’s fault and caused only by Polish aggression, fierce nationalism and opposition to Lithuania’s statehood. In such renderings of the history, portrayed in the classical works of Šapoka or Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, Poland emerges as a treacherous and predatory country, while Lithuanian Poles are depicted as disloyal, Polonized Lithuanians (in a derogatory meaning), who looked down on the efforts of Lithuanians to build a new state. To illuminate this point, in the “History of Lithuania” by Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė we find the following description of the beginning of the war with Poland in 1920:

“On 19th of April, 1920, Poles, led by Juozas Pilsudskis, who himself originated from Lithuania, seized our capital and all southern Lithuania. Poles in our country got agitated: many maintained bonds with the Polish government and, having important contacts there, sought to harm Lithuania whenever possible, especially in the Versailles Peace Negotiations [...]. Local Polonized Lithuanians, looking down on Lithuanians and their “peasant-like, rude and boorish government”, enrolled in the Polish army or, otherwise, in the Lithuanian army with the aim to spy on our authorities, and some were simply awaiting to find out which side it would be more useful to join. There were also quite many of those, who sincerely supported Lithuanians and worked for the benefit of our country. In many families severe divisions emerged, when brothers would happen to join different sides and support different viewpoints”²⁰⁴.

Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė goes on to extensively describe the workings of a secret Polish organization which had its network all over Lithuania – Polish Military Organization (PMO; in Polish, Polska Organizacja Wojskowa). She argues that PMO, closely working with the Polish government, supported a network of spies in Lithuanian

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Makauskas, *Lietuvos istorija. Vadovėlis XI-XII klasei. Antroji knyga*, 104-105.

²⁰⁴ Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, Vaida, *Lietuvos istorija*. Vilnius: Vyturys, 1990, 319.

institutions and was planning a coup d'état, after which it would have announced that the Lithuanian nation abandoned the false wish to establish an independent Lithuania and instead wanted to be a part of Poland²⁰⁵. However, Lithuanian intelligence service found out about the organized coup d'état and prevented it. Typically, Lithuanian history textbooks usually also briefly describe the Polish Military Organization, its espionage and the secret plot of coup d'état, this way further strengthening the negative image of Poland. Moreover, throughout the chapter on the conflict with Poland, Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė places emphasis on how Poles disregarded the demarcation lines, established through Polish-Lithuanian negotiations; how, while fighting against Bolsheviks, Poles prevented Lithuanian army from taking over Vilnius in July, 1920, and rather let the Bolshevik army first invade the city; how, after the occupation of Vilnius by Żeligowski's army, Polish government adopted cruel discriminatory measures against Lithuanians – closed down Lithuanian newspapers, schools, started arresting those who would dare to publicly speak in Lithuanian or Belarusian.²⁰⁶

Šapoka's "History of Lithuania" is another emblematic work of history written in the interwar period, first published by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education in 1936. Šapoka depicts the attitudes of the Lithuanian Poles in the following way:

"[...] in Lithuania, there had always been a strong stratum of Polonized Lithuanian landlords. They looked at the Lithuanian national movement with distrust and dreamt about liberation from the Russian rule in union with Poland. [...] They were the strongest support for the Polish government which sought to recreate their state with the old borders of the Republic. [...] Because Poland have always had the support of France, the struggle for the new-born Lithuania was especially hard, particularly because the Entente distrusted Lithuania and was afraid that this tiny weak state would create perfect conditions for the spread of Bolshevism. Meanwhile, after escaping from Lithuania, landlords ranted and raved that the "boorish" state was already Bolshevik"²⁰⁷.

Thus, Šapoka portrays the Lithuanian Poles, or "the Old Lithuanians", whose identity has been already discussed, as "traitors of the Lithuanian nation and state", who did everything to help restore the Polish, but not the Lithuanian state. The following excerpt from the diary of Mykolas Römeris (Michał Römer), a prominent Lithuanian-Polish lawyer, professor at the University of Lithuania and public figure, will further

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 320.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 322-326.

²⁰⁷ Šapoka, Alfredas, *Lietuvos istorija*. Vilnius: Mokslas, 1990, 555.

illuminate the situation and tough identity choice facing the Lithuanian Poles in the context of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict:

“[...] the position of Lithuanian Poles, or Lithuanians of Polish culture: those Poles who, like me, still remain honest citizens of Lithuania, hold Lithuania their homeland and are friends of Lithuanians, but at the same time also have some national Polish sentiments – today they are in between the hammer and the anvil in Lithuania. They have been let down by Poland, because it does not fight for people’s freedom, but comes to Lithuania to get what it considers to belong to Poland, and seeks to appropriate it as its own. It comes to Lithuania motivated by purely egoistical aims, hostile to Lithuania. On the other hand, Lithuanians do not regard the Lithuanians of Polish culture and their own cousins in a friendly way. Lithuanians have many complaints directed at Poland and often well-grounded ones, as they have already experienced many harmful actions taken by many Lithuanian Poles, especially by Poles of Vilnius, therefore, they see conspiracy everywhere and they consider every Pole to be Poland’s spy and their secret enemy. Further, we are regarded here as citizens of the second category, suspicious people. [...] This is hard to bear for those who sincerely love Lithuania and it encourages many to choose instead the road of Polish nationalism”.²⁰⁸

Furthermore, in a similar manner as Daugirdaitė-Sruogienė, Šapoka condemns the secret plot of the Polish Military Organization to take over Lithuania on the night of August 29, 1919, and later assist the Polish army to occupy all of its territory²⁰⁹. Likewise, he calls Żeligowski’s offensive to seize Vilnius to be a “march of deception and violence which corrupted the possibility of normalizing relations between Poles and Lithuanians”²¹⁰. For him, this act of the Polish government, covered up as a mutiny of Żeligowski’s army, was insolent and unforgiveable.

Throughout the Soviet occupation era in Lithuania (1940-1990), Šapoka’s “History of Lithuania” was forbidden and held in the so-called *spetsfonds*²¹¹. Despite its historical research being outdated, Šapoka’s work became “the embodiment of popular discontent” with the official Soviet historiography²¹². Moreover, the book for many Lithuanians represented the “true history of Lithuania”²¹³, as opposed to the forfeited

²⁰⁸ Römeris, Mykolas, *Dienoraštis. 1919 m. birželio 21-oji / 1920 m. kovo 15-oji*. Vilnius: Versus Aureus, 2009, 24.

²⁰⁹ Šapoka, 557-559.

²¹⁰ Ibid, 562.

²¹¹ Special collection of materials censored and forbidden to be publicly used by the Soviet authorities.

²¹² Senn, Alfred Erich, *Awakening Lithuania*. Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2002, 43.

²¹³ Ibid, 44.

history written by the Soviet historians, which is probably why after the re-establishment of Lithuanian independence in 1990, when the book was published the second time, many Lithuanian families saw it necessary to own one copy of the book. Thus, by its perceived opposition to the corrupted Lithuanian history of the Soviet era, Šapoka's book, presenting strong anti-Polish sentiments and an explicitly Lituano-centric narrative, became the idolized "true history of Lithuania", which portrayed Poles as mostly hypocritical and treacherous enemies of the Lithuanian statehood.

Some important transformations in the evaluations of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict in Lithuanian historiography could be noticed in the last 10 or 15 years. Bumblauskas has been one of those who started questioning the overwhelming self-righteousness often dominating Lithuanian historical narratives when all the blame for the conflict was always attributed to Poles. Bumblauskas argues that both Lithuanian and Polish nationalism with its full-force egoism have contributed to aggravating the interwar conflict, and, if Poles should be ashamed of the National Democrats, Lithuanians, likewise, should be ashamed of flirting with Bolsheviks and signing the secret appendix to the 1920 treaty with Soviet Russia, which allowed Bolsheviks to cross Lithuanian territory in their war with Poland; he also calls Lithuanian historians to reconsider the personality and goals of a fierce anti-Bolshevik Lithuanian-born Piłsudski, especially his role in liberating Vilnius and its surrounding area from Bolsheviks²¹⁴.

Rimantas Miknys is another contemporary Lithuanian historian who pointed out that the general view of Polish politicians in the interwar period and earlier that Lithuanian movement was just a Russian "intrigue" was not completely without a foundation²¹⁵. Miknys also deeply regrets that in the midst of the aggressive Polish and Lithuanian nationalisms, the rational thinking of the democratic *krajowcy*²¹⁶ political group in Lithuania, which emphasized the priority of historical consciousness and sought for restoration of the historic federation-like state of equal and sovereign Commonwealth nations, was bound to be rejected²¹⁷.

²¹⁴ Bumblauskas, "Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštijos paveldo „dalybos“ ir „Litva/Letuva“ distinkcijos konceptas", 64.

²¹⁵ Miknys, Rimantas, "Vilnius and the Problem of Modern Lithuanian Statehood in the Early Twentieth Century". *Lithuanian Historical Studies*, vol. 2. Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of History, 1997, 109.

²¹⁶ A group of Polish-speaking intellectuals in the Vilnius region in the beginning of the 20th century, who argued against the division of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth along the ethnic and linguistic lines.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 120.

Algis Kasperavičius highlights how the conflict with Poland over Vilnius was extensively used by various Lithuanian political parties in the 1920s to gain popular political support and present oneself as the defender of the Lithuanian nation against “vicious Poles”, which, as a consequence and according to the observers of those times, created an intense atmosphere of hatred toward Poles and Poland²¹⁸.

Despite these new accounts of the Polish-Lithuanian conflict, however, the new generation of Lithuanian historians still treats the seizure of Vilnius by Poland as an occupation, which is a crucial factor in maintaining the deeply contradictory points of view between Poland and Lithuania over what “really happened” in the interwar period. Using the term “occupation” also places the heavier share of the blame for the disruption of peace on Poland, which is how it still is largely regarded in the popular Lithuanian national imagery of the historical past.

Lithuanian history textbooks offer consistently negative depiction of Poland and its political aims, hostile to Lithuanian statehood. Poland is portrayed as a shamelessly treacherous political power which used the cover up of the army mutiny in order to occupy and annex “the heart of the Lithuanian life” and the historical capital of Lithuania – Vilnius. Moreover, Lithuanian Poles are seen as disloyal to the Lithuanian state, collaborating with the Polish government, as spies and traitors, enemies of the Lithuanian nationhood and statehood. The incorporation of Vilnius and its area after the 1922 election of the local Sejm is presented as illegal and fictive, discriminative against the Lithuanian population remaining in the Vilnius region. Unfortunately, the tensions that grew into a conflict between Poland and Lithuania in the first quarter of the 20th century still serve as the greatest source of mutual adversary stereotypes. Perhaps the main factor that allowed these stereotypes to retain their popularity up until the present day was the lack of bilateral discussion between Lithuania and Poland throughout the years of the Soviet occupation. Having in mind the highly restricted conditions for public debate and scientific activities, many Lithuanian intellectuals were forced to join the Lithuanian Communist party, but would nevertheless find ways to contribute to the

²¹⁸ Kasperavičius, Algis, ”Lietuvių visuomenės požiūris į Vilniaus ir Vilniaus krašto prijungimą prie Nepriklausomos Lietuvos (1939 m. rudenį-1940 m. vasarą)“, in: Volkonovski, Jaroslav and Gaidis, Ryšard (eds.), *Lietuvių-lenkų santykiai amžių tėkmėje. Istorinė atmintis. Stosunki polsko-litewskie na przestrzeni wieków. Pamięć historyczna*. Vilnius: Lenkų institutas Vilniuje, Lietuvos lenkų mokslininkų draugija, Vilniaus Universiteito leidykla, 2009, 217.

preservation of the Lithuanity²¹⁹. This mostly took the form of the cultivation of historiography, in which the Lithuanian nation emerged as the victim of powerful neighbours²²⁰. As we could see, the latter imagery still persists in the Lithuanian history textbooks.

I would like to complete this section by quoting Mykolas Römeris, a Lithuanian Polish lawyer and politician, whose life, spent oscillating between Poland and Lithuania, is an iconic example of the complicated and highly complex identity of the Polish-speaking gentry of Lithuania in the first decades of the 20th century:

“I get more and more convinced, how negatively Lithuanian-Polish relations are influenced by the fact that Poles took over Vilnius. According to Piłsudski and the proponents of the Polish-Lithuanian state, the *fait accompli* of the seizure of Vilnius and of defeating Bolsheviks in the larger part of the country should have been the trump card in convincing Lithuanians that they need to seek for relations with Poland. However, the evidence shows the opposite. The *fait accompli* affects the relations only negatively; no nation likes when it's addressed by the neighbor over the facts, which have already been accomplished in its territory, which, by the way, they consider to be inherited and legally owned”.

Crucially, Römeris pins down what is at stake in the Polish-Lithuanian interwar conflict and how it affected the Lithuanian collective memory, in particular. The issue of the symbolic ownership, the right to the city of Vilnius around which the conflict centers ignited the hearts and minds, and left an imprint in the national collective memory and the attitudes toward Poles – as a legacy of the dead, instructing to not forget the wrongs done by Poles.

4.6 Polish rendering of the “Vilnius Question”

After having overviewed several Polish history textbooks that offer accounts of the dispute over Vilnius and its surrounding region, three particular textbooks seem to provide most detailed and nuanced storylines: “Historia. Burzliwy Wiek XX” by R. Śniegocki, “Historia dla Maturzysty. Wiek XX” by A. Radziwiłł and W. Roszkowski, “Polskie Dzieje” by A. Dybkowska, J. Żaryn and M. Żaryn, and “Człowiek i historia. Część 4” by J. Kochanowski and P. Matusik. The “Vilnius Question”, so pivotal to the

²¹⁹ Snyder, “Memory of sovereignty and sovereignty over memory: Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine, 1939-1999”, 53.

²²⁰ Ibid, 53-54.

Lithuanian Wars of Independence, in Polish textbooks emerges as an important, yet one of many territorial disputes that Poland had at the time with the neighboring countries. The description of the contending Lithuanian and Polish positions in the dispute resembles the one offered by Lithuanian textbooks: “in 1918, the Poles could not imagine independent Poland without Vilnius - the city of Mickiewicz - inhabited predominantly by Poles. At the same time, Vilnius, as the capital of the medieval Lithuanian state, was regarded by Lithuanians as a natural part of their independent state, even if only a few percent of Lithuanians lived in the city”²²¹.

Several key encompassing themes or elements could be distinguished in the narratives outlined in the aforementioned textbooks: first, what is common across all the textbooks is the consistent emphasis on the fact that the population of the Vilnius region was overwhelmingly Polish; second, on the whole, Piłsudski’s federalist conception, his wish to liberate and bring freedom to the eastern borderlands receives more attention than Dmowski’s „incorporationist“ ideas; third, Piłsudski’s and Żeligowski’s localness, attachment, symbolic belonging to the Vilnius region are highlighted, placing their policies and initiatives vis-à-vis the disputed area in a local cultural context; last but not least, Polish struggle for Vilnius is depicted as the liberation of the predominantly Polish populated area from the Bolsheviks.

Typically, textbooks present and offer a general overview of both the federalist conception of Poland advanced by Józef Piłsudski and the “incorporationist” vision of the future Poland offered by the leader of National Democrats, Roman Dmowski. Piłsudski was convinced that Poland could secure its independence and military power to defend itself from the Russian or German attacks only by establishing a federation, to which Lithuania, Ukraine and Belarus should belong, and even possibly Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Yugoslavia and Hungary could be included as well. This way Piłsudski expected to create a federal unit, named “Międzymorze”, which translates as “in between seas”. Further, he intended to support the establishment of the independent states in Lithuania and Ukraine, as, according to one of the textbooks, he understood that the Lithuanians and Ukrainians would seek to establish their own states, in which case Poland’s support would have allowed for a smoother creation of a federal union of states under the Polish domination, as in the case of the Lublin Union in the 16th

²²¹ Kochanowski, Jerzy and Matusik, Przemysław, *Człowiek i historia. Część 4*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne Spółka Akcyjna, 2004, 226.

century²²². Raised in the spirit of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Piłsudski's federalism represented the nostalgia for the Jagiellonian idea of unity of Eastern and Central Europe.

A starkly opposite vision of future Poland was maintained by the National Democrats (NDs) and their leader Roman Dmowski, who advocated for an ethnically homogeneous Poland, to which the eastern borderland areas of the former Commonwealth should be annexed and the inhabitants of those areas assimilated to the Polish nation. Any support from the Polish side to establish independent states on the eastern border of Poland was considered to be a mistake. Meanwhile Russia did not constitute a threat, according to the NDs, but rather had to be taken into account as a potential ally against Germany²²³.

Lithuanian history textbooks do not acquaint students with the latter distinction between the federalist conception of Piłsudski and Dmowski's "incorporationist" standpoint, which could be regarded as further reinforcing the uniform, monolithic image of Poland as an aggressive nationalist state, blurring any existing differences of perspectives in the first decades of the 20th century as to what course of politics Poland should choose vis-à-vis its eastern neighbors. On the other hand, Polish textbooks identify this distinction, but later continue to depict the conflict over Vilnius and its surrounding area by explicitly highlighting the federalist conception and Piłsudski's politics, presenting it as an exclusive matter of Piłsudski's eastern policy. This choice of portraying events is, of course, largely shaped by the fact that Piłsudski, Polish Chief of State and Marshal, considered the military struggle over the eastern borders of Poland to be the most important part of his political strategy²²⁴. Nevertheless, it is puzzling that no contextual connection is made between Poland's eastern politics and the political activities of Dmowski and the NDs in Poland or the political standing, reputation and activities of Dmowski in the Paris Peace Conference. In other words, the popular support receiving claims of the NDs in Poland – that the eastern borderlands should be annexed and made integral part of ethnically homogeneous Poland – is omitted from the picture or at least not clearly connected with Poland's political strategy toward Vilnius in a direct causal relationship.

²²² Śniegocki, Robert, *Historia. Burzliwy Wiek XX*. Warszawa: Nowa Era, 2010 (7th ed.), 30.

²²³ Ibid, 30-31.

²²⁴ Ibid, 30.

Throughout the textbooks, the federalist conception and Piłsudski's politics in the eastern borderlands receive much more attention than Dmowski's ideas of "national egoism". This is most clearly exemplified by the fact that the chapter in "Historia. Burzliwy Wiek XX" on Poland's military struggles to secure its eastern borders is followed by three texts from different historical sources, all of which deal exclusively with Piłsudski's ideology and politics. The first text is an excerpt from S. Cat-Mickiewicz's book and offers an analysis of Piłsudski's federalist concept. The second text is the famous Piłsudski's "Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania", which he announced in Vilnius in April 1919, after Polish army had taken over Vilnius for the first time during the Polish-Soviet War. Lastly, the third text is yet another excerpt from General Żeligowski's memoirs, which portrays his perspective on the seizure of Vilnius²²⁵.

We learn from the first text that Piłsudski's federalism included two key elements, or goals: to weaken Russia by supporting multiple national separatist movements in its vast territories and, second, to liberate the states, bordering with Poland in the east, from the Russian oppression, this way aiming to increase Poland's influence in the region and, ultimately, achieving Polonization of these territories – in the same way that the gentry of the old Commonwealth Polonized Lithuania and Rus' (present day Belarus and Ukraine) in the past²²⁶.

The "Proclamation to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania" yet again reiterates the cornerstone of Piłsudski's political program in the eastern borderlands – bringing freedom and liberty to Lithuania and Belarus. In a similar vein, this is reiterated in "Historia dla Maturzysty", where we find out that the seizure of Vilnius in 1920 was the outcome of Piłsudski's wish to provide the inhabitants of the Vilnius region the possibility of self-determination²²⁷. The message is reinforced by an excerpt from the actual proclamation, which, issued both in Lithuanian and Polish, stated that

"for more than a century your country has known no freedom. It has been oppressed by the hostile forces of Germans, Russians, and Bolsheviks, who, whilst never consulting your wants interrupted your way of life. [...] The Polish army brings liberty and freedom

²²⁵ Ibid, 37-38.

²²⁶ Ibid, 37.

²²⁷ Radziwiłł, Anna and Roszkowski, Wojciech, *Historia dla Maturzysty. Wiek XX*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Szkolne PWN, 2007, 49.

to you all. It will expel the rule of force and violence, discard the governments which are against the will of people. I want to give you the opportunity to resolve internal – ethnic and religious – affairs, like you yourselves will determine, without any violence or oppression from the Polish side. That is why, despite the fact that on your lands the war is still rumbling and the blood is flowing – I am not introducing a military administration, but a civil one, to which the local people will plead, the sons of this land.”²²⁸

Piłsudski also pledged to organize elections based on secret, direct and universal voting and to defend everyone equally, irrespectively of one’s national or religious affiliation. However, for Lithuanians, as the textbooks highlights, Piłsudski’s intentions appeared to pose a threat of another effort at Polonization of these areas and imposition of Poland’s political and economical sovereignty²²⁹. The negative attitude of Lithuania toward Poles and their political strategy in the eastern borderlands, reluctance to accept the idea of the federal union, thus, is identified as one of the key reasons why Piłsudski finally decided to start a military operation and annex Vilnius, “situated in his native areas”, to Poland²³⁰.

The discussion of “nativeness” of Piłsudski to the Vilnius region and Lithuania directs us to another emerging theme in the Polish textbook narrative. This element of the narrative is the most obvious in Śniegocki’s textbook. The fact of Piłsudski or General Żeligowski being born and having lived in Lithuania and in Vilnius, their symbolic localness and belonging to the Vilnius region are strongly underlined, invoking a sense of justification for the seizure of Vilnius. The main argument here would be that the emphasis on the symbolic belonging and localness of Piłsudski and Żeligowski as well as their symbolic status of “Vilniusites” supports the Polish historical narrative with a strong emotionally-loaded basis for ultimately legitimating Poland’s act and presenting it as a conflict not solely between Poland and Lithuania, but also as a dispute between the Lithuanians and the autochthon, local Poles. The explanation of Poland’s role in the conflict meanwhile is more focused on its intentions to liberate the region from the Bolshevik oppression. Therefore, the seizure of Vilnius cannot be seen as an act of occupation, following the Polish historical reasoning, for Vilnius was in part taken over by the “local Poles” who felt strong emotional attachment to the disputed area. The latter point is only further strengthened by

²²⁸ Śniegocki, 38.

²²⁹ Ibid, 31.

²³⁰ Ibid, 36.

consistent reiteration that the Polish army division, which seized Vilnius – the Lithuanian-Belorussian division – was formed entirely from the local Polish men²³¹.

The textbook offers an excerpt from Żeligowski's memoirs, which once again stresses the noble intentions of the general as well as the sense of his emotional belonging to Lithuania:

“I registered at the car in which the Marshal lived. It was easy to talk, both of us talked in Vilniusian categories. Marshal assessed the situation. The Bolsheviks gave Vilnius to the Kaunas government. Poland cannot do anything here, as it would not be allowed by the coalition, and because at Spa Vilnius was commissioned by the Polish government to Lithuania. If we do not rescue Vilnius now, history will not forgive us. And not only Vilnius. We must restore Lithuania. This can be done only by the people themselves - the sons of the Lithuanian-Belarusian Division. It is necessary that someone took upon himself the whole thing. Marshal believed that only I can do it. Only it has to be kept in mind that everyone is against us, even the Polish society, which does not understand the Lithuanian case. [...] 9 October 1920, at the head of troops, composed of the sons of Lithuania and Belarus, Vilnius was taken not by the Polish General Żeligowski but by the Lithuanian Żeligowski, the one who, being a small boy, came from Żupran to Vilnius for the exam and slept on benches of the city garden.”²³²

The fact that Vilnius was taken by “the Lithuanian Żeligowski” is of crucial importance here, as it shows the stark mismatch between the Lithuanian perspective, where Żeligowski is merely a Polish general, sent by the Polish Chief of State and Marshal Piłsudski to seize Vilnius, and the Polish perspective, in which Żeligowski appears as a Lithuanian, though of Polish culture, and to whom the definition of the Lithuanian identity and nationhood is not delineated by the linguistic and cultural identification. Essentially, two different standpoints on what elements constitute the Lithuanian national identity come into conflict here, which brings us back to the aforementioned distinction, identified by some Lithuanian historians, between the “Old Lithuanians” and the “Young Lithuanians”. Unfortunately, the identity of “Old Lithuanians” – Polish-speaking, loyal to the spirit of the Commonwealth, but increasingly drawn to the Polish nationalism and unsupportive or even spiteful of the rising Lithuanian national movement – and that of the “Young Lithuanians”, who felt

²³¹ Ibid, 36, 38.

²³² Ibid, 38.

deep resentment and distrust of the Polish influence in Lithuania, were mutually exclusive.

Lastly, as the quotation of Żeligowski's memoirs implies, the seizure of Vilnius was an act of "rescuing" the city and possibly all Lithuania from the Bolsheviks, who invaded the country after the German troops had begun retreating. In a similar vein, the seizure of Vilnius as liberation of the city and the surrounding area from the Bolsheviks emerges in the textbook "Polskie dzieje". Here, a section on the Polish eastern military offensive in 1919 is titled "Liberation of Vilnius from the hands of the Bolsheviks". Further, we read that "[i]n early 1919, the Bolshevik army (the Red Army), starting to march westward, took over Vilnius, inhabited mostly by Poles, proclaimed there the establishment of Lithuanian-Belorussian Socialist Soviet Republic and gave the authority in it to its Lithuanian supporters"²³³. The emphasis on the Lithuanian supporters of the marionette LitBel state somewhat stands in opposition to the Lithuanian national narrative, which typically portrays the Bolshevik Lithuanian government, led by Kapsukas, as an essentially illegitimate Russian-Bolshevik creation, aggressive toward and acting against Lithuanian statehood and independence. Further, a lot of focus in "Polskie Dzieje" is placed on the fact that Lithuania acquired Vilnius and its region from the Bolsheviks after signing the peace treaty in 1920. Thus, after the Bolsheviks had taken control of Vilnius again, "Lithuanians did not join the military actions against the Red Army. But they signed a peace agreement with Bolsheviks, under which General Tukhachevsky gave Lithuania the Vilnius region, in return for permission of passage of his troops, fighting against Poland"²³⁴. The same point is reiterated in the next page, where the description of Żeligowski's "mutiny" is preceded by an assertion that "[a]ccording to the agreement of general Tukhachevsky with the Lithuanian government of Kaunas, Vilnius region had become a part of the Lithuanian state"²³⁵. This is then followed by a statement that "Lithuanians, having the support of the League of Nations and Bolsheviks, would not agree to conduct a plebiscite in the region of Vilnius, as demanded by the Poles. [...] In this complicated situation, in mid-October 1920, general Lucjan Żeligowski separated from the main Polish forces and

²³³ Dybkowska, Alicja, Żaryn, Jan and Żaryn, Małgorzata, *Polskie Dzieje od czasów najdawniejszych do współczesności* (6th ed). Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Naukowe PWN, 2007, 232.

²³⁴ Ibid, 233.

²³⁵ Ibid, 234.

seized the entire Vilnius region, forming Central Lithuania²³⁶ in this area”²³⁷. An important observation of how Żeligowski’s act was received by Poles and Lithuanians is offered in “Historia dla Maturzysty”: For the majority of the Poles of this region, he became a hero who restored the Polish government in the area. For Lithuanians, both then and now, he is a symbol of Polish perfidy”²³⁸. The comparison demonstrates the remaining contradictory evaluations of Żeligowski’s act.

Another difference between the Lithuanian and Polish accounts is that Polish textbooks either do not mention or mention very briefly the Suwalki Agreement, which, as stressed in the Lithuanian account, was officially registered and recognized by the League of Nations and by which Poland, two days prior to the Vilnius offensive, assigned the city to Lithuania after bilateral negotiations, mediated by the Entente. Lithuanian textbooks stress the crucial importance of this agreement, as a validation of the injustice and unlawfulness of Poland’s act of aggression. Meanwhile, only in “Historia dla Maturzysty” we find a clear acknowledgement that “[n]ot respecting the agreement on the military demarcation line, signed on September 7, 1920, in Suwalki, which assigned Vilnius to Lithuania, Piłsudski commanded general Żeligowski to simulate rebellion and invade Vilnius with his subordinate forces”.²³⁹

Similarly, the creation of the Central Lithuania, the elections to its Sejm and its later decision to incorporate Central Lithuania into Poland, the fictitious character of which is consistently emphasized in Lithuanian textbooks, are typically briefly mentioned in the Polish textbooks as events that expressed the will of the local population and that do not require more detailed exploration. What is emphasized instead is the official confirmation of Poland’s eastern borders by the League of Nations in 1923, which demonstrated that the League of Nations finally recognized the decision made by the majority of the population in the region.

If we look to the Polish historiography, there is undoubtedly an agreement that the seizure of Vilnius was secretly ordered by Marshal Piłsudski and that the whole military operation was presented as an army mutiny in order to prevent the sanctions on the

²³⁶ The seized territory was named “Central Lithuania” because Piłsudski envisioned that the territory of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania should be divided into three administrative units: Western Lithuania with the centre in Kaunas and a dominant position of the Lithuanian culture, Central Lithuania with the centre in Vilnius and a dominant position of Polish-Lithuanian culture, and Eastern Lithuania with the centre in Minsk and a dominant position of Orthodox Belarusian culture.

²³⁷ Ibid, 234.

²³⁸ Radziwiłł and Roszkowski, 49.

²³⁹ Ibid.

Polish government by the Entente. Piłsudski's sentiments to the Vilnius region, his devotion to the federalist idea and the rejection of his political ideas by the Lithuanians typically emerge as main factors which all contributed to the final decision of taking over Vilnius by war. Furthermore, when it comes to the issue of the annexation of Vilnius and its surrounding area to Poland, Halecki, for instance, stresses that the Lithuanians would never acknowledge the incorporation, even if "it followed in March 1922, after the elections in all the disputed territory, at the request of the Wilno Diet. A year later, on 15th March 1923, the Conference of the Ambassadors of the western Powers definitely recognized the eastern boundary of Poland"²⁴⁰. Thus, Halecki grounds the legitimacy of the annexation by emphasizing that the decision had been made by the local Diet and was additionally confirmed by the western Powers, which should once again prove the legal validity of the act. However, in the Lithuanian historiography, we can find counterarguments to Halecki's claims, which highlight that the League of Nations has never officially recognized the creation and incorporation of the Central Lithuania into Poland or point to the discriminatory practices toward non-Polish population of the Vilnius district during the elections.

Suwalki agreement, of which there is so little mention in the Polish textbooks, similarly escapes the attention of Polish historians. Halecki refers to the agreement only indirectly when he states that "on the 9th October Żeligowski took the town, although the Polish plenipotentiaries had quite unnecessarily agreed, two days previously, to a temporary line of demarcation leaving it on the Lithuanian side"²⁴¹. The mismatch of the importance the agreement is given in the two accounts is obvious: Suwalki agreement in Lithuanian historiography is considered to be a crucial peace agreement between Poland and Lithuania, officially recognized and registered by the Secretariat of the League of Nations, whereas Halecki identifies it as an agreement made by "Polish plenipotentiaries" on a temporary and rather unimportant line of demarcation.

Although Polish historians generally avoid identifying the seizure of Vilnius as an "occupation", a few exceptions can be observed in the following accounts. For instance, Wereszycki claims that "Polish troops under the General Żeligowski occupied Wilno with the area of "Central Lithuania"²⁴² and comments on Poland's military struggle in the east by pointing out that "the defense of Poland was confused with the desire to

²⁴⁰ Halecki, 288.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 287.

²⁴² Wereszycki, 649.

expand beyond the ethnic frontiers to the eastern borders of the former Commonwealth, inhabited in the main by Ukrainians, Byelorussians and Lithuanians”²⁴³. Similarly, Garlicki takes note of the fact that “Piłsudski had already, in the second half of August, started making preparations for the occupation of Wilno” and that “contrary to the expectations after the occupation of Wilno, relations between the two nations steadily worsened”²⁴⁴. He also mentions that the Lithuanian-Belorussian division, formed from 14000 local men from the Vilnius district and led by the General Żeligowski to take over Vilnius, was reinforced by another 65000 soldiers from Poland²⁴⁵, which contradicts the common portrayal of the seizure in the Polish textbooks and historiography as distinctly carried out by the local, autochthonous Lithuanian Poles.

Lastly, Jędruszczak points out that the Polish government in fact controlled Central Lithuania already before it was formally annexed to Poland in 1922, as right after the creation of Central Lithuania its Governing Commission asked the Polish government to send some army troops for military assistance and protection²⁴⁶. The Polish government officially condemned the army mutiny, but expressed its understanding of the intentions of the soldiers of the Lithuanian-Belorussian division and agreed to send the troops to Central Lithuania, this way gaining factual control of Central Lithuania, before its formal incorporation²⁴⁷. However, such instances when Polish historians place more emphasis on the facts which portray the seizure of Vilnius as an act of occupation by Poland or emphasize Poland’s involvement in the process of the annexation of Central Lithuania remain rare.

A different perspective on the popularity and contents of the federalist ideas in Poland and in the eastern borderland of the former Commonwealth is offered by Dziewanowski, according to whom, “the period from 1918 to 1920 was the heyday of federalism in Poland”²⁴⁸, whereas “federal, or quasi-federal, schemes were also preached by the Polish landowners in the eastern borderlands”²⁴⁹. However, he highlights that “they advocated a sui generis federalism which in reality was closer to

²⁴³ Ibid, 643.

²⁴⁴ Garlicki, Andrej, *Józef Piłsudski, 1867-1935*. Hants: Scolar Press, 1955, 104.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Jędruszczak, Tadeusz, ”Preliminaria pokoju i rozejmu. Zajęcie Wilna”, in: Grosfeld, Leon and Zieliński, Henryk (eds.), *Historia Polski. Tom IV 1918-1939. Część I 1918-1926*. Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1969, 414.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Dziewanowski, Marian Kamil, *A European Federalist, 1918-1922*. Stanford: Stanford University, 1969, 81.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 89.

incorporation and which they were ready to use as an instrument of their class interests”²⁵⁰. Dziewanowski’s point is crucial in showing the widespread attitudes of the Polish landowners in the eastern borderlands, who preferred Polish nationalism to the Lithuanian one, the latter being born out of the peasantry movement and, thus, considered as threatening the landowners’ socioeconomic status. At the same time, it reveals that Piłsudski’s federalist program with its noble aims of bringing freedom and liberty to the oppressed nations of the eastern borderlands of the former Commonwealth had in fact relatively minor relevance as a motivating factor behind the decision to incorporate the Vilnius region into Poland.

Dziewanowski describes in great detail the clashes between the National Democrats and the Leftists and their different visions of future Poland. If in Polish historiography Poland’s quest in the eastern borderlands is typically associated with Piłsudski’s personality and, thus, in turn with his political ideas and values, Dziewanowski focuses more on showing how the assimilationist and incorporationist position of the National Democrats was increasingly gaining ground both in Poland and among the Polish landowners in Lithuania or Ukraine, who would nevertheless still present themselves as federalists. Essentially, Dziewanowski indicates a distinction between the leftist federalism, which was “willing and even eager to sacrifice the age-old hegemony of Poland in the eastern borderlands”²⁵¹, and the conservative landowner federalism, “camouflaging its selfish class interests with empty federalist slogans and [...] being interested in straight annexation”²⁵².

These realities are not taken into account neither in Polish, nor in Lithuanian textbooks. Polish textbooks are void of any straightforward connection between the dominant position of the political ideas of the National Democrats and its influence in Poland’s eastern policy, submersing the latter entirely under the noble Piłsudskian federalism, which seeks for freedom via voluntary federation of equal and sovereign states of Eastern Europe. Meanwhile Lithuanian textbooks offer a monochromic picture of Poland’s political realities by failing to identify distinctions between the contents of competing ideologies of Piłsudski and Dmowski. The variety of perspectives toward the question of eastern borderlands in Poland is completely ignored, while the focus is

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 90.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 89.

²⁵² Ibid, 90.

primarily and rather simplistically placed on a generalized Poland's desire to occupy Vilnius – an embodiment of Dmowski's political ideas.

In both Lithuanian and Polish textbooks there is a certain amount of reticence to acknowledge the more complex realities and diverse political constellations in the early 1920s conditioning the conflict over Vilnius. Lithuanian narrative largely tends to overlook Piłsudski's and Żeligowski's anti-Russian and anti-Bolshevik predispositions, their role in preventing Bolshevik occupation of the city, their emotional ties with Vilnius as well as complicated national identity structures. The voices of the leftist federalism are also completely ignored in the Lithuanian textbooks, not to mention the stark and crucial differences in political ideology of Dmowski and Piłsudski, which are ignored too. Polish perspective, likewise, prefers to present the conflict over Vilnius by associating it primarily with Piłsudski's eastern policy, his sentiments and emotional attachment to Vilnius as well as Poland's mission to rescue the area from the Bolshevik threat, while somewhat leaving aside the aggressive nationalism of the NDs. Lastly, the mismatch between the two narratives clearly appears when it comes to the evaluation of the importance of the Suwalki agreement as well as the legitimacy of the establishment of Central Lithuania and its annexation to Poland.

5. Interview analysis

The initial task was to determine to what extent the historical narratives of Polish minority members reiterate or diverge from Lithuanian and Polish official historical storylines. Particular attention was thus paid to descriptions of or references to the three events/periods of the common Polish-Lithuanian historical narratives whose portrayal in the textbooks has been outlined above. However, the analysis of interviews, which appeared to be so rich with various references to history and memory, was not limited to these pre-categorisations. In fact, certain historical references proved to be strongly associated with themes of identity, belonging as well as political claimsmaking, providing further insights into the collective dimension of historical interpretations of the Polish minority members.

5.1 Meaning of Polish-Lithuanian unification

In Lithuanian historiographical tradition, Lublin Union, which brought the Polish-Lithuanian rapprochement, has been predominantly considered to have accelerated cultural Polonization of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and has been associated with the loss of the Duchy's grandeur and long-standing traditions. Similarly, as we have seen, grim perceptions of the Commonwealth are prevalent among Lithuanians, as the survey on Lithuanian collective memory in 2005 revealed – only 4% of respondents considered Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth to be relevant to their national identity.

A different perspective, however, emerges from the interview data. The historical period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was largely perceived by the informants as the source of the highly valued rich cultural heritage and traditions of multiculturalism, which, in turn, served as a basis for claiming that Poles and their history are a part of Lithuanian history. One informant commented that

”these were the times of prosperity. All the cities and manors appeared during this period. I’m following the discussion among Lithuanians. There are two tendencies – to accept and treat it all as heritage or to either reject it. [...] Should we destroy and reject all these manors, paintings? [...] This past ought to be accepted as one’s own instead of rejecting it and calling it Polonization or loss of one’s national identity”(I7).

A similar view is pursued by another informant who talks about the local dialect of Polish language:

“the *tuteishi* language has developed here since the times of the Grand Duchy. It was the official state language of the Duchy. So Poles here use and speak the old state language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. [...] We are the real Lithuanians (laughs). But I’m being purposefully spiteful here so as to cause some annoyance”(I6).

A somewhat differently placed emphasis, however, was made by an informant who argued that

“in terms of culture, language, yes, it was dominated by Polish culture, already since 16-17th century. But this was still *Litwa* (emphasis), Lithuania, Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Those who were coming here from Warsaw, they were coming to *Litwa*” (I4).

He also stressed the differences in historical knowledge or learnedness of local Polish intelligentsia and the “common people”:

“In my environment, intelligentsia environment, we are more familiar with such historical facts, but an average Pole does not know those things. I know how Jogaila took

the throne, what kinds of games were played here. In fact, Poland always sought to take control of Vilnius, of the bishop's throne. Poles always held this expansionist idea. Lithuanians were good at protecting themselves against it and Poles respected it. They tolerated this specific standpoint of *ours* (emphasis – R.K.). [...] We know this, but the majority of Poles identify with the Polish interpretation of the past. Although the local Poles know more than the other Poles – historical past is more important for us.” (I4).

With regard to collective memory, the passage reveals some important distinctions both within the local Polish community and between the local and the “Polish” Poles. It also demonstrates how informant's interpretation actually overlaps with the popular Lithuanian historical narrative in the way the informant argues about Poland's expansionist attitude toward the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Moreover, while talking about Polish-Lithuanian relations in the past, he clearly aligned himself with the Lithuanian side, treating Lithuanian history as his history, too.

As a result, although more interviewees espoused views that endorsed the cultural heritage and multicultural traditions of the Grand Duchy, arguing that these ought to be accepted by Lithuanians as an authentic and valuable part of their history, some contradictory ideas were also voiced which, though not rejecting the heritage of Polish culture, reiterated the Lithuanian interpretation of the past by highlighting the independence and separateness of the Grand Duchy as well as Polish cultural expansionism. On the other hand, the informant drew attention to the differences of collective memory within the Polish minority, distinguishing between the local Polish elite and the remaining body of community. Importantly, 4 informants (I4, I6, I7, I12), however, when speaking of the Polish past of the Duchy, identified it as an inextricable part of Lithuanian history thus grounding their sense of belonging to the Lithuanian historical tradition.

5.2 Memories of the plural identities of the 19th century

Two main themes can be distinguished in informants' views when they refer to the 19th century events of Polish-Lithuanian history – Lithuanian national revival with the ensuing aggravation of interethnic tensions and, in relation to this, a more general topic of integration which is mostly employed as a means to generate historical parallels between the 19th century dilemmas and the more contemporary discussions of integration of national minorities in Lithuania.

One of the interviewees, when commenting about the sources of commonly held mutual perceptions of Poles and Lithuanians, assessed the situation as follows:

“everything began long long time ago, probably starting from the times of the Lublin Union, when Polish culture started gaining ground in Lithuania. [...] But I think it intensified especially at the end of the 19th century, when the so-called “Young Lithuanians” appeared and the national revival began. Poles held the view that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania should keep its old form and remain in the union with Poland, whereas here there emerged a strong resistance seeking to create a separate state. Perhaps everything began from these contradictions. By the way, apart from the “Young Lithuanians”, there were also those who held different views and who were in favor of the union with Poland.”(I1)

Two overriding themes emerge in this passage. Firstly, the informant considers the 19th century to have brought the crucial transformations in national self-definition of Lithuanians which, in turn, caused more pronounced national tensions and which served as the basis for the development of mutual stereotypes. On the other hand, by pointing at the distinction between “Old” and “Young Lithuanians”, he is essentially seeking to demonstrate the plurality of views vis-à-vis the Lithuanian statehood in the 19th century. As we have seen earlier, this plurality of perspectives stemming from different identity constellations among Lithuanians has entered the accounts of contemporary Lithuanian historiography, but not the school history textbooks. In this sense, the informant is challenging the monolithic, ethnocentric storyline of national revival in Lithuanian textbooks.

An interconnected theme which emerged in references to the Lithuanian national revival was the issue of integration. The informant, who perceived himself as representing the intelligentsia of the Polish community, claimed that the process of linguistic integration of the Lithuanian Poles should be focused not so much on raising the levels of formal Lithuanian language requirements, but on widening the scope of cultural contents in language teaching – by promoting appreciation of and respect for the fathers of Lithuanian national revival Basanavičius, Vydūnas (I4). Essentially, he argues for a stronger presence of certain symbols of Lithuanian national historical narrative in the language teaching process as a means to effective integration process.

A recurrent figure throughout the different interviews was Adam Mickiewicz, symbolic of the 19th century and the identity transformation processes that took place in it. Rather overwhelmingly, different informants referred to Mickiewicz by highlighting

his “Lithuanianess” as well as his deserving to be recognized as a Lithuanian. One of the respondents, when speaking about the issue of integration and explaining in which sense the local Poles could be regarded as Lithuanians, asserted that

“neither Mickiewicz, nor Piłsudski, nor Słowacki said that they were Poles. All of them thought of themselves as Lithuanians” (I10).

Another informant, arguing for the inclusion of Polish part of Lithuanian history into the official Lithuanian historical narrative, drew attention to the fact that

“Mickiewicz, but also Kraszewski wrote the whole of Lithuanian history. If they lived today, they would be greatly offended, for they loved this land, worked for it, and now they are regarded as occupants, Polonizers”(I7).

The latter quote, in particular, reveals how Mickiewicz is virtually used as a symbol of Lithuanian Polish identity and as an embodiment of claims of the Polish minority for symbolic inclusion into the Lithuanian “mnemonic community”. The boundaries of Lithuanian collective memory, which determine what is to be remembered or forgotten, are challenged here as the informants seek to ground and legitimate their rightful attachment and belonging to the Lithuanian history and state, instead of being regarded as Polonizers or occupants. In other words, the figure of Mickiewicz is employed as a powerful symbol to contest the ethnocentric Lithuanian collective memory.

Throughout the interviews, the 19th century and Lithuanian national revival emerged as a turning point in the Polish-Lithuanian history and was perceived as a key to capturing what is at stake in the present day tensions between Poles and Lithuanians. In addition to that, the identity of “Old Lithuanians”, not reflected in the textbook contents, stood out as a meaningful symbol legitimating the pleading for inclusion of plural pasts into the Lithuanian collective memory.

5.3 Memories of the Polish-Lithuanian interwar conflict

Out of all different periods in Polish-Lithuanian history, the interwar conflict received by far the most attention and emphasis among all interviewees in all age groups. Reflection on the seizure of Vilnius surfaced within a wide array of topics, most prominently related to family history, issues of localness and identity, minority claimsmaking and institutional responses to it.

5.3.1 Family memory and contestation of the “occupation” narrative

A predominant point of view, although with varying degree of emphasis across the different interviews, was focused on highlighting the ethnic composition of the Vilnius region at the time of its seizure by Żeligowski’s army which, in turn, is treated as evidence of the crucial fact that the term “occupation” is not suitable in the portrayal of the interwar events. One of the informants emphasized that

“an important aspect is the ethnic composition of the population in Vilnius. If they knew what it was, the uncertainty would immediately subside – 60% Poles, 40% Jews and 3% Lithuanians (sic!). If there had been a plebiscite, it would have been obvious. But they didn’t choose this path, both sides – Lithuanians and Poles – were very stubborn”.(I7)

In a similar vein, a 22 year old informant stressed that

“when we talk about history and Vilnius, Lithuanians either do not know or forget who were those living in Vilnius at the time. Around a half of the population was Jewish, then there were Poles, Russians, Belarusians and only then there was 1% of Lithuanians. Meanwhile, they perhaps think that everything used to be in the past as it is these days. That is why they think that there came bad Poles and occupied Lithuanians. But Vilnius was not as Lithuanian back then, although many do not want to admit this. [...] That’s why it is wrong to either talk about some kind of cruel occupation or, on the contrary, claim that there hadn’t been anything wrong done at all. Neither one nor the other point of view is right. Vilnius has always been the capital of Lithuania, but Poles have been living here all the time too.”(I13)

The latter passage shows that the opposition to the term “occupation” is also expressed by a young informant who graduated from high school already in the 2000s, which might be regarded as a persistence of a certain historical narrative transmitted intergenerationally. At the same time, it is evident that she attempts to find a middle ground reflecting on the interwar conflict and does not adhere to any extreme viewpoints on the topic. Equally significant is her remark that “Vilnius had always been the capital of Lithuania” – a point so stressed in Lithuanian historical narrative. This passage demonstrates how certain elements from both Polish and Lithuanian narratives merge generating a new storyline in which both sides of the narrative are looked at critically. The past, being recollected in the contemporary context, is, as a result, transformed by reconfiguring one’s memory and consolidating elements of two clashing storylines into one coherent and more encompassing narrative.

Another crucial dimension which emerged in relation to the interwar conflict was the history of one's family, of one's parents and grandparents. I would claim that to a large extent the interwar history appeared to be so relevant to many interviewees because of its intrinsic connectedness to the memory inherited from the family which, as a result, loaded this period with emotional significance and meaningfulness. One of the informants commented:

“Can I ask you: whose grandparents were occupied – mine or yours? How many people in Vilnius can you find whose parents or grandparents were occupied by Żeligowski's army? So Żeligowski came and occupied my grandparents and parents? *They remember this period differently* (emphasis – R.K.). Perhaps it should be evaluated in a different light.”(I3).

A central theme in this excerpt is the memory of the informant's grandparents and parents of the interwar events which is attributed a special status – it is a memory of those who have experienced the actual events in question and who therefore hold a right to question and challenge the officially legitimated story of “occupation”. The significance of family memory and history emerges similarly in the story told by a 22 year old university student:

“In the first or second year of studies, we had a history lecture and discussion on the seizure of Vilnius. Some of my classmates talked a lot on the topic – how terrible it was and the like. I observed the discussion passively... I thought to myself that there is no point in trying to argue. I will better sit quietly and listen to what they speak. It was interesting to observe that one girl was especially active in trying to prove how terrible it was, that it shouldn't have been this way, that it was an occupation, that Poles are bad. Then she turns to me and one more Polish girl in the group and says: “Don't you two worry. It's not about you. It's not you who did it”. I tell her then that it is really very nice that you embrace us in such a friendly way, but if not us, perhaps then our grandparents or grand grandparents could do this. How can you know?”(I13).

This demonstrates how memory and history of one's family may contain elements which stand in opposition to the officially maintained national narrative, causing resistance to being integrated into the larger mnemonic community which adheres to the commonly approved storyline. Espousing this official narrative would pose a threat to the unity and coherence of the family or minority collective memory which serves as the basis for the very existence of the group. In this regard, memory dissonance performs as

a counter-influence to construction of more encompassing identities based on shared national memory.

5.3.2 Challenging the “Lithuanocentricity”: localness and belonging

The earlier analysis of Polish textbooks demonstrated how one of the recurrent themes in Polish textbooks was the localness of Piłsudski and Żeligowski, their attachment and symbolic belonging to the Vilnius region, their “Lithuanianness”. As we could see in the previous section, the “Lithuanianness” was highlighted in the context of Mickević, Kraszewski and other prominent 19th century figures too, as a claim to reconsider “Lithuanocentricity” of the official narrative. However, it should be highlighted that “Lithuanianness” here does not denote cultural or linguistic attributes, but is rather associated with a historical and political tradition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, in which one’s national affiliation was not predetermined by culture or language. In effect, official Lithuanian narrative and collective memory of Lithuanian Poles are predicated on different understandings of what constitutes “Lithuanianness”, creating ground for collective memory dissonances.

In the words of a 22 year old informant, “Lithuanian Poles are unique. They aren’t the same as the Poles in Poland – they are a part of Lithuanian history” (I12). Similarly, commenting on the interwar conflict, a 41 year old informant suggests:

“There is no single answer in this situation. On one hand, this could not be an occupation, as the majority of population was Polish-speaking. On the other hand, the biggest Lithuanian of all, who always claimed he was a Lithuanian, was Józef Piłsudski. He understood this early in his life. He understood that without Poland there can be no Lithuania. He said he was a Lithuanian, but he went to Poland and attempted to reestablish Polish army there.[...] But Piłsudski failed to achieve an agreement. He sought to create a federation, as he saw this to be the only possible way to protect ourselves from Russia and Germany. But he failed. I think he was really wrong when he sought to realize his ideas by force, when Żeligowski with his army came to take over Vilnius. This was not anymore politics of arguments. It was politics of force. But that’s really not what he had wished for. Those soldiers who died in the conflict, they died in the war of brothers”(I5).

Piłsudski’s localness to Vilnius, his identification with and attachment to Lithuania are here employed to justify and explain what reasons led him to seize Vilnius. Nevertheless, the informant criticizes the “politics of force” in the take-over of Vilnius.

By and large, the passage reiterates the Polish textbooks in its emphasis on Piłsudski's symbolic belonging to Lithuania and the role of the latter in shaping his political decisions. On the other hand, perception of the conflict as the brothers' war brings in yet another dimension, based on the belief that the conflict took place between the "new" and the "old Lithuanians". A similar perception of the events can also be observed in the following passage:

"occupation is an occupation of another nation. Well, yes, it was a territory...They say that, when Żeligowski returned home after war, Lithuanian soldiers did not let him in and said that this was Lithuania now. And he replies, "How can you not let me in? That is my property." After all, we have been always living here. There was no Poland, no Lithuania. They lived here, they were from this area, they returned home."(I6).

The doubt which briefly emerged in the reflection of "occupation" – "well, yes, it was a territory (of Lithuania – R.K.)" – reveals informant's awareness of the opposing perspective on the seizure of Vilnius. However, the recollection and description of the past in the interview context, as a process of mnemonic consolidation of history, requires the informant to convey a coherently organized, uniform and meaningful narrative which excludes those elements that do not easily fit into one's rationalization.

On the whole, the theme of localness and "Lithuanianness" of the Lithuanian Poles' history runs strong throughout the interview data and emerges in multiple contexts.

5.3.3 "Vilnius was Polish, but Vilnius – that's Gediminas"

The rejection of the term "occupation" based on Piłsudski's "Lithuanianness" as well as on the predominant demographic and cultural position of Poles in the region was not so pronounced in all interviews. A slightly different set of views could be observed in some interviews, where there emerged a stronger emphasis on the claim that Vilnius was historically and politically Lithuanian, even if culturally it was predominantly Polish. In other words, the cultural dimension was outweighed by the dimension of political history in rationalizing one's views about the past. As a result, this brings a different perspective on the seizure of Vilnius, which to a considerable extent reiterates the official Lithuanian narrative. For instance, the claim that Vilnius has always been a capital of Lithuania, which earlier appeared in a 22 year old informant's reflections

(I13), echoes in the observations of informants in their late 40s and 60s. A 49 year old informant argues:

“But it was an occupation. I don’t claim that this is the most suitable term to describe it, but practically you took something that does not belong to you. It has always been Lithuania here. It was spoken around here in Polish, there was Polish culture here, but in political terms it was Lithuania. And you took control over it politically, not culturally. You took what’s not yours. It would be different if you closed down a university, but you have brought on a political change”(I4).

A striking feature of this passage is how much the rationalizing of the informant resembles the official Lithuanian narrative which highlights that Vilnius has been a historical capital of Lithuania. In a similar vein, a history teacher in a Polish secondary school points out that

“Vilnius used to be one of the largest cultural centers. It was Polish, there were few Lithuanians. At the beginning of the 20th century there were only 2% of Lithuanians. Later, of course, Piłsudski contributed to that too. He was born here, studied, lived – he was unwilling to give Vilnius away. He wanted to create *Rzeczpospolita*²⁵³. Meanwhile Lithuanians did not agree to it, thus he acted as Poles insisted – at least to take over Vilnius. And the majority of population was Polish. This would not work these days. Żeligowski came and that’s all. Obviously it was an occupation. Why? Because Vilnius – that’s Gediminas. And you can’t do anything about it. And how it became that Poles happened to live here, that’s history, the Lublin Union and other things”(I9).

The two informants, when reflecting on the nature of the interwar conflict, shift the emphasis from the dominant position of Polish culture and ethnic composition in the Vilnius region to historical and political dimensions of symbolic ownership of Vilnius. I would argue that this perspective, though echoing the official Lithuanian historical narrative in using such powerful symbolic landmarks as the Lithuanian grand duke Gediminas who is said to have founded the city, still retains its specific Lithuanian Polish character. The latter is constituted by the distinction made between the Poles in Poland and the local Poles. This is evident, for instance, when the informant mentions that Piłsudski’s decision to seize Vilnius was the result of pressure from Poland. The same idea surfaced earlier when an informant claimed that the politics of force employed in the take-over of Vilnius was not what Piłsudski had wished for and that he initially sought for a peaceful agreement (I5).

²⁵³ A Polish term for Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The latter narratives represent more internally diverse interpretations of the past which manage to subtly reconcile the key aspects of the two contending storylines. At the same time, this demonstrates the existence of multiple versions of Polish collective memory when a certain storyline is individually transformed by integrating new elements or symbols and merging competing views. Such narratives of the past are equally espoused by a 22 year old, a 49 year old and a 67 year old, each of whom holds a quite different socio-economic status. In effect, one may draw a hypothesis that, rather than being a peculiar feature of a specific age or social group, this might be attributed to the impact of the social context which requires one to re-evaluate and re-construct one's historical narrative in order to retain coherence and meaningfulness of the past in the face of the changing contemporary realities.

5.3.4 Mnemonic socialization at school and continuity of historical memory

The passage, in which the informant – a history teacher in a Polish school in Lithuania – reflects on the take-over of Vilnius, provides some insights into how historical past concerning such sensitive topics can be taught in Polish schools. As one of the informants commented,

“Lithuanian textbooks, approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, are obligatory in Polish schools. If Polish textbooks are used, they can only be used as an addition to the main Lithuanian textbooks. The identity of kids, thus, mostly depends on the teacher. He or she might tell that Lithuanians think this way and that doesn't concern us or that we don't agree with them. He might also say that there was an occupation.”(I3).

In other words, since the textbooks, even if translated into Polish, represent the Lithuanian version of the past, the teacher's role in presenting the teaching material from a certain angle and this way shaping pupils' national identity becomes crucial. School constitutes one of the principal environments of mnemonic socialization where history education, by conveying a certain perspective of the past, is employed as an identity building tool. However, the same informant shares a story, in which we can observe a dissonance between family memory and the narrative outlined in the school history curriculum:

“I once heard a story where a child, 13 or 14 years old, returns home from a Polish school and asks his mother, “So are we occupants? Is it really so?” He felt uncomfortable

about this. So the mother then started telling him all about the history of her parents, grandparents, explaining him how this “occupation” happened.”(I3).

This passage is important in showing how a certain narrative of the past, based on family history and opposed to the school narrative, is transferred within a family circle. In effect, this produces a memory conflict which may potentially deepen dividing lines between different communities of memory unless a more encompassing storyline enters the school history curriculum which would be more inclusive to plural memories. As one informant argues, “I cannot tell my children that their grandfather was an occupant” (I7). A possible solution to handling such diversity of memory is offered:

“I know that in Czech Republic there has been a history textbook written in such a way that the same fact has been described from two different perspectives – the first interpretation in one page, the second in the other page. I don’t believe that there could or should be only one interpretation, that there could be one denominator.”(I7).

An equally important observation of how the history of the interwar conflict was taught in the Soviet schools comes about in the following excerpt:

“the attitude to Poles as to occupants or “Panska Polska”, which was the enemy of the Soviet government, was shaped in the Soviet period too. I know this. I went to school back then.”(I3).

This provides some support to the above mentioned research of Vyšniauskas as well as to my own pre-assumptions that throughout the Soviet period the basic structure and the main elements of the narrative depicting the conflict over Vilnius retained its continuity from the interwar period, despite the imposed ideological clichés. On the other hand, another informant draws attention to the fact that,

“in our times (the Soviet period – R. K.), the history curriculum was dominated by Russian history and perhaps only 30% of it was made up of Lithuanian history. Us, Poles, we have learned our history from the literature classes as everything has been described in literature. Only because of that we knew our history, as from history lessons we didn’t get anything.”(I7).

The history curriculum in the Soviet period, whether depicting Russian or Lithuanian history, did not constitute a meaningful narrative with which she could identify with. As a result, the informant preferred to rely on other sources of historical knowledge, such as literature which offered some information on the Polish history.

Going further back to the interwar period, an informant argues,

“this current evaluation (of the interwar Polish-Lithuanian conflict – R.K.) came from the interwar Lithuania, Kaunas’ Lithuania, where there existed many stereotypes about Poles and Poland” (I3).

She takes note of the source of the contemporary perspectives on the events by pointing out how the widespread negative attitudes toward Poles developed in the interwar Lithuanian republic. An analogous observation is made by another informant who speaks about the popular contemporary portrayal of Polish minority:

“Emphasis on the “Polish problem” has old traditions. In the interwar Lithuanian republic, too, there used to be a “Polish problem”, a “Vilnius region problem” which was made the centre of public attention when the government needed to distract the nation from the real problems”(I2).

This, to some extent, allows us to infer that there has been a continuity of certain elements of Lithuanian historical narrative which emerged in the interwar period, persisted throughout the Soviet era and remained in the collective memory, with additional contribution of political (mis)use of history, after the reestablishment of Lithuanian independence in 1990. In this regard, the continuity of an undemocratic form of political regime in Lithuania throughout most of the 20th century (1926-1990) should be taken into account as a contributing factor to the endurance of certain forms of collective memory, which essentially hindered the rise of alternative storylines.

5.3.5 Other environments of mnemonic socialization

Apart from schools, the function of mnemonic socialization of Polish minority members is also performed by various Polish organizations. Among my interviewees, there were a few who belonged to the Lithuanian Polish Scout organization and who shared their reflections on different commemorative practices and rituals enacted annually. One of the informants spoke about how history is taught through various scout activities:

“we mark all the Polish celebrations. We try to show the children the surroundings of Vilnius and the traces of Polish soldiers. Of course, we don’t always explain that Lithuanians killed those Poles, although there have been such casualties – Poles attacked Lithuanians, Lithuanians burned a village for this. There have been such things, but I think we should provide children with the truth and they will have to choose later anyway.[...] We’re trying to foster traditions. We respect the Lithuanian land, all the Lithuanian traces

as well, but also ours – Poles’ – graves, soldiers, those who died. It is important that some of them (children – R.K.) return – even, for instance, to the heart of Piłsudski in the Rasos cemetery. [...] From Lithuanian celebrations, I would lie if I said we mark the Lithuanian Independence Day, we don’t. We mark Polish celebrations: the 3rd of May, the 11th of November. These are the most important. But they have all the rights to take part in those public celebrations in Vilnius on 13 January, 11 March and 16 February. Nobody tells them that they cannot or should not participate in them” (I11).

As we can see from this passage, scouts are highly involved in nurturing respect for Polish history – its local traces in the surroundings of Vilnius as well as larger landmarks of history, such as Polish Independence Day.

On the other hand, the local history of Lithuanian Poles, the history of the Vilnius region outweighs the significance of Polish national history as the following passage suggests:

“In the first place, we seek that children who come to our organization would be educated not simply as patriots of Poland or Lithuania, but as patriots of this area in which they live, as patriots of their fatherland. In my opinion, fatherland is the place where we live, where our parents, grandparents and ancestors have been living. We want them to be proud of this land in which they live. When we started researching on the earlier scouting history in this region, we found out we could be very proud of how those people fought for this land and sought to bring prosperity to it”(I5).

Meanwhile, the Polish Independence Day, 11 November, is marked by Polish scouts for the last 15 years by a marathon from the Zalavas village, where Piłsudski was born, to his heart, buried in Rasos cemetery in Vilnius. The informant described an uncomfortable situation which emerged when the marathon was organized the last time and the official approval had to be acquired from the municipality administration:

“I was asked whether we were trying to teach the youth to repeat the events of 1920 and take over Vilnius. I replied, “Do you think we will try to take over it for the 15th time? We tried to seize it for 14 times and it failed.” It was a joke. I didn’t take our conversation seriously, but I saw that it caused a hurtful reaction.”(I11).

This reveals that historical memory connected to the interwar conflict, even if it erupts at the informal joke level, still retains its presence and is brought up as part of historical analogies between past and present. The following section provides further insights on this.

5.3.6 Contemporary fears and historical analogies

Lithuanian anxiety and uneasiness about Polish presence in Vilnius region, occasionally encountered by some of the informants, is placed into wider historical context by an informant who compares it to similar Polish anxiety that she had observed in Wrocław:

“You know, I visited Wrocław in 1986 or 1987. I spoke to Poles living there. They were all afraid to renovate their flats in the old town because they were not sure whether the Germans wouldn’t return. There was fear. It seemed so strange to me. It was autumn of 1987. [...] It was strange to me. I was a Pole and I had never heard from my parents or any other people that somebody would wish that Poles would return to Vilnius. I grew up here and I have never encountered such fantasies. And when I think why they were afraid – everywhere there were public signs in German, German kindergartens, the number of pupils in German schools was increasing – it serves to me as an example how such fears can rise, like they rose here.”(sic)(I3).

Lithuanian uneasiness with the Polish past of Vilnius, on the whole, was identified by many respondents as a strong factor in shaping institutional responses to Polish minority claims. For instance, one informant explained the much delayed process of land restitution as follows:

“it is obvious that this has been a political decision – not to recover the property rights to those who ask. Because politicians are afraid that if the land property is returned to them, the situation will resemble the 1939”(I8).

Thus, the problem is articulated by means of an historical analogy wherein the decisions of Lithuanians politicians are assumed to be shaped by historical fears stemming from the interwar experience. The perception of such institutional responses to minority claims-making permeated by historical considerations is also evident in the following passage:

“Poles have been living here for thousands of years and they have been living in their own land. If we looked at how local people perceived the current politics of land restitution, the widespread point of view is to treat it as a “new colonization”. I understand that this concept is wrong in political terms, because it is one centralized state here, but from the perspective of these people who live in these villages or areas, they see it as a “new colonization”. They live in their land, they did not come from anywhere abroad”(I1).

The same viewpoint resurfaces in another informant’s critique of the land restitution process:

“We did not arrive from anywhere, as, for instance, I have read in *Delfi*²⁵⁴ that Poles, who live now in Lithuania, arrived from Poland in the interwar years. That’s nonsense. It really hurts to hear that the land property should not be restored to Poles because they arrived during the occupation. Especially in my case, when I know that my family has been living here for 500 years, since 1600, and I know that not only they owned this land, but they took care of it, cultivated it.”(I5)

Once again, the emotionally compelling themes of localness and symbolic territorial attachment are used to legitimate political claims and challenge the dominant Lithuanian collective narrative of “occupation”. At the same time, the dynamics of minority politics appear to be considerably affected by cultural explanations and rationalizations of opponents’ reactions in terms of historical parallels with the interwar period.

5.3.7 Interview analysis: conclusion

The multitude of opinions, involving informants from different age and social status groups, could be broadly grouped into two main segments. First, a more pronounced view on the past combines the following elements: i) emphasis on the value of multicultural and diverse past of Lithuania, ii) contestation of “Lithuanocentricity” of the Lithuanian narrative and iii) rejection of the term “occupation”, based on the cultural presuppositions – the dominant position of Polish culture and language in the Vilnius region, symbolic belonging and “Lithuanianness” of the local Poles. Typically, those informants who strongly argued against the “Lithuanocentric” historical narrative and stressed the multicultural aspects of the Lithuanian past were also most opposed to treating the interwar events as an “occupation”. While the opposition to the term of “occupation” with regard to the interwar events is in accord with the official Polish narrative conveyed by the textbooks, the former two elements (i and ii) do not neatly adhere to either Polish or Lithuanian textbook narratives. They should rather be considered as an expression of claims for inclusion of plural pasts into Lithuanian collective memory and hence as claims for symbolic enfranchisement into the Lithuanian “imagined community”.

²⁵⁴ One of the major news portals in Lithuania, www.delfi.lt.

The second strand of views, on the other hand, does not exclude assertions about the historically dominant position of Polish culture in Lithuania or the cultural dimension of the interwar conflict, but at the same time places more emphasis on the political and historical continuity of the Lithuanian state and highlights a long-standing symbolic connectedness of Vilnius and Lithuania, thus, striking a middle way between the Polish and Lithuanian interpretations of the past.

A strong identification emerged with the local history of the region, its local landmarks and historical figures, which serves as a basis for maintenance of a distinct Lithuanian Polish identity. The significance of local history for one's identification is, in turn, highly interwoven with respect for the history and memory of one's family, parents and grandparents. However, reconciliation of the official Lithuanian narrative with the local Polish history and family memory requires one to tackle the mnemonic dissonance by re-evaluating and re-consolidating the historical narrative so as to merge the clashing storylines.

Mnemonic socialization, as expected, appears to take place within a wide range of environments – family, school, various minority organizations, associations and clubs, which all contribute to the transmittal of collective memory through means of commemorative acts, practices and rituals. Textbooks constitute only one of the multiple sources of historical knowledge which influence informants' perceptions of the past. In some cases, as we have seen, school history has been largely outweighed by literature classes which are considered to be a significant source of information on Polish history. This, in part, explains why historical narratives of some informants contain and merge elements of different storylines encountered within a multitude of social contexts.

On the other hand, the data also provides some support for claims that certain elements of Lithuanian and Polish minority narratives persist and retain their importance in the context of collective memory despite the political regime transformations. The fact that some elements of the narratives persist while others are transformed by combining them with alternative explanations of the past opens new possible paths for further investigation into the processes of collective memory transformations and the ways in which these link to personal involvement in different social environments or groups.

The main points of the different narratives emerging from the textbooks, national historiographies and interviews are summarized in the table below. The latest developments in national historiographies show that historical narratives of the common Polish-Lithuanian past increasingly incorporate more multiperspectivity, challenge and critically reconsider some of the long-standing, established elements of the national historical narratives. However, certain mismatches between the narratives outlined in the textbooks and in national historiographies illustrate that the new perspectives of the contemporary generations of historians are not reflected in the textbooks published within the last 20 years and, thus, do not easily enter the school history curriculum. The stability of the textbook narratives is nonetheless counteracted by the diversity of sources of historical knowledge which affects the historical memory of the informants.

Table 2: Narratives in textbooks, historiographies and interviews

	<i>Lithuanian rendering</i>		<i>Polish rendering</i>		<i>Narratives of informants</i>
	<i>Textbooks</i>	<i>Historiography</i>	<i>Textbooks</i>	<i>Historiography</i>	
<i>The Lublin Union and Polish-Lithuanian unification</i>	“The lesser of two evils”; opposition to Lithuania’s incorporation into Polish Kingdom and to the terms set by Poland; Polish cultural expansionism and territorial interests; dualism of the Commonwealth; Lithuania’s equal standing and institutionalized separateness in the union.	Dualism of the Commonwealth; Lithuania’s sovereignty and institutionalized separateness in the union; separate political identity; new historiographical tendencies to regard Poland as Lithuania’s integration into the Western civilizational field (as opposed to the traditional perspective where unification is regretted as the loss of Lithuanian culture).	Unification as expansion of the Jagiellonian dynastic rule; Krewo union is attributed equal importance; less emphasis on the duality of the Commonwealth and the separateness of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the most recently published textbooks.	Unification results from voluntary mutual agreement; opposition of Lithuanian nobility caused by power struggles, not by efforts to preserve independence; new historiographical tendencies to acknowledge Lithuania’s separateness and sovereignty in the union (as opposed to the older perspective where unification meant complete Lithuania’s incorporation).	Identification with and emphasis on the cultural heritage and multicultural traditions of the Grand Duchy; political separateness of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, dualism of the union; Polish past of the Duchy as an inextricable part of Lithuanian history.
<i>19th century: uprisings and Lithuanian</i>	Emphasis on the national revival and “Young Lithuanians”;	Distinction between “Old Lithuanians” and “Young Lithuanians”	Lithuanian uprising treated as part of the Polish uprising; the goals of	Lithuanian national awakening as an obstacle to the goals of the	19 th century and Lithuanian national revival perceived as a turning point in

<p><i>national revival</i></p>	<p>“Old Lithuanians” are not distinguished as such and when mentioned, mostly treated as Poles; evidence of separateness and Lithuanian resistance to overbearing Polish governance in the uprisings; Lithuanian political parties fighting with Polonization; negative Polish reactions to the Lithuanian national revival.</p>	<p>raised by a new generation of historians; “Old Lithuanians” distinguished from the Poles; different attitudes to the Lithuanian national revival and independence, including support, are revealed; identity transformation and multiple identity constellations are acknowledged; more multiperspectivity in the latest historiography.</p>	<p>uprisings presented as self-obvious – independent Poland; uprisings as proof of national unity and patriotism; Lithuanian aspirations for independence as an obstacle to the re-establishment of Poland; multiple identity constellations and transformations in the eastern borderland mostly overlooked.</p>	<p>uprisings and re-establishment of Poland; the loss of the Polish element in the East as caused by Lithuanian nationalism; modern Lithuanian nationalism’s betrayal of the Romanticized idea of independent Poland; national identity transformations within the territory of the former Commonwealth receive little attention.</p>	<p>the Polish-Lithuanian history; Mickiewicz as a symbol of Lithuanian Polish identity; distinction between “old” and “new Lithuanians”, utilized to demonstrate the plurality of views vis-à-vis the Lithuanian statehood in the 19th century; challenging the ethnocentricity of the Lithuanian historical narrative.</p>
<p><i>The interwar conflict and the “Vilnius question”</i></p>	<p>Vilnius – a historical capital of Lithuania; Poland as one of the aggressors, next to Russia and Germany; the seizure of Vilnius – occupation, Piłsudski and Żeligowski – occupants; importance of Suwalki agreement preceding the occupation; illegal and fictive elections of Sejm in Vilnius; illegal annexation of Vilnius to Poland; discrimination of Lithuanians</p>	<p>In older historiography, Poland described as a treacherous political power aggressive to Lithuanian statehood; in post-Soviet historiography, more multiperspectivity and critical evaluation of both sides in the conflict.</p>	<p>Emphasis on the fact that the population of the Vilnius region was overwhelmingly Polish; Piłsudski’s federalist conception receives more attention than Dmowski’s „incorporationist” ideas; Piłsudski’s and Żeligowski’s localness, attachment, symbolic belonging to the Vilnius region; Polish struggle for Vilnius as the liberation of the predominantly Polish populated area from the Bolsheviks.</p>	<p>Reluctance to regard the seizure of Vilnius as occupation; little emphasis on Suwalki agreement; in portrayal of Polish strategy in the eastern borderland emphasis on Piłsudski and his federalist ideas, with some exceptions where the influence of assimilationist and incorporationist ideas is equally taken into account.</p>	<p>A more pronounced view on the past – emphasis on the value of multicultural and diverse past of Lithuania, contestation of “Lithuano-centricity” of the Lithuanian narrative, rejection of the term “occupation”, based on the overwhelming presence of Polish culture in the area and territorial attachment; the second strand of views does not exclude assertions about the historically dominant position of Polish culture in Lithuania, but</p>

	in the Vilnius region.				also places more emphasis on the political and historical continuity of the Lithuanian state, historical connectedness of Vilnius and Lithuania; importance of family memory which interweaves with the local history.
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6. Discussion

“And those who longed for the Kingdom took refuge like me in the mountains to become the last heirs of a dishonored myth” (Czesław Miłosz, “How it Was”)

“To see” means not only to have before one's eyes. It may mean also to preserve in memory. “To see and to describe” may also mean to reconstruct in imagination. A distance achieved, thanks to the mystery of time, must not change events, landscapes, human figures into a tangle of shadows growing paler and paler. On the contrary, it can show them in full light, so that every event, every date becomes expressive and persists as an eternal reminder of human depravity and human greatness. Those who are alive receive a mandate from those who are silent forever. They can fulfill their duties only by trying to reconstruct precisely things as they were, and by wresting the past from fictions and legends.”

(Czesław Miłosz, from Nobel lecture)

Memory is a never-ending process of reconstruction in imagination. It ascribes meaning to experience and narrates the past by transforming our recollections to adhere to the ever-changing present. Alas, my doubts whether we are capable of “wresting the past from fictions and legends”, to use the words of the last citizen of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, as every attempt at reconstruction of the past is partly in itself an act of myth-making.

What remains forgotten and what goes on living in collective and individual memory is largely dependent on the present circumstances of the social context in which the past is re-thought, re-told and re-imagined. Memory is inherently linked to the present needs and future expectations.

Memory, individual or collective, in which certain events of the past are established as facts of identification and importance, is intersubjective. It evolves, in a myriad of diverse and overlapping ways, from a dialogical relationship between self and other, bringing about multiple versions of the past. In that sense, memory is a contingent and contested process of narrating and reconstructing the past in new meaningful ways. Forcing these multiple memories into one monolithic memory narrative would deprive collective memory of many alternative pathways of reconfiguring and reconciling competing storylines.

Yet, even if we seek to step beyond the simplistic one-sided interpretations of the past, some level of a common ground for a collective conception of the past, which would be regarded as “objective” by members of the national mnemonic community and which would accommodate both local (and/or minority, family) and national memories, still needs to be established as a basis for social unity and civic loyalty. One possible solution is reflected by a group of interviewees (I4, I9, I13) who, rather than strictly aligning themselves with either one of the contending narratives, are capable of reconciling the opposing storylines by merging peculiar elements of both and hence of producing a more encompassing and inclusive historical narrative of the past, which nevertheless manages to embrace the most emotionally compelling views about the common Polish-Lithuanian history. The particular ways in which these interviewees remembered the past may serve as a model in the pursuit of an inclusive and, in that sense, “objective” national historical narrative.

Even if we cannot strictly speak of any monolithic and uniform collective memory of Polish minority members, some aspects of the imagined past were recollected and mediated in a more pronounced way, perhaps reverberating the present actualities which ascribe the importance to certain historical facts and events. Historical rootedness of one’s family, long-standing historical affinity and emotional attachment to Lithuania and its history might be perceived as an expression of contestation of an ethnocentric Lithuanian narrative, stemming from the felt symbolic exclusion and separation from what is supposed to constitute the continuous, stable and ever-present subject of Lithuanian history.

Although internal diversity of Lithuanian Polish collective memory is partly a self-evident finding, due to the fact that memory of each of the group member is affected and altered by subsequent encounters of other narratives, changing contexts and

environments of social remembrance, it is important to acknowledge this plurality, especially having in mind that “for local Poles historical past is much more important than to an average Pole”(I4). Recognition of the plurality of collective memory is particularly relevant in the debates surrounding the issue of minority integration – in identifying the factor of collective memory as important in the process of integration in the first place and in preventing the misrepresentation of the level of cultural integration stemming from broad and imprecise assertions about group’s collective memory.

Contestation of the boundaries of Lithuanian collective memory, which emerged in the interviews, is indicative of the underlying identification processes in which one’s self-distinction, tied to peculiar characteristics of Polishness, is complemented with the need to be approved of as a member of the Lithuanian mnemonic community. On the other hand, the present political and social realities encourage, in some cases, a search for more encompassing and internally diverse accounts of the past which serve as catalysts of newly transformed identifications.

The attempts to merge different interpretations of the past, to find some common ground for re-thinking and re-imagining one’s identifications and national affiliations requires the plurality of competing memories to be inscribed into the everyday democratic life, into textbooks, professional historical accounts and public discussions. Instead of fixed and uncritical inculcation, the reconstruction of the past via history education should be a self-reflective process open to multiple contending voices and perspectives. Looking at the Lithuanian and, to some extent, Polish textbooks, we can observe that history curriculum, traditionally perceived as an identity building tool, still largely excludes the more substantially diverse aspects of history in portraying multicultural pasts. Though pride in the multicultural past is acknowledged, the narrowly ethnocentric historical narrative with its normative ascriptions of what is to be remembered still dominates over the voices of parallel “others”. To some extent, this is explained by the changing historical circumstances, regime shifts and the ensuing need to re-assert and ground group identity. However, 20 years after the fall of the Soviet Union, one may wonder whether the time has come to critically reassess the past and allow for more encompassing and plural narratives to emerge.

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