

ABSTRACT

It's Our Country and It's Our Cathedral: Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church

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Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sajūdis, 'Lithuanian Movement for Perestroika', was the popular nationalist movement that led Lithuania toward independence from the Soviet Union on 11 March 1990. In order to gain the Lithuanian people's support, Sajūdis capitalized on the historically close bond between Catholicism and national identity. This dissertation will examine the relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church (LCC), which will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Lithuanian history and the importance of religious nationalism for Lithuania's popular independence movement.

This dissertation argues that the relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church was essential, intentional, and mutually beneficial. Sajūdis' relationship with the LCC was essential for the movement's success. Although there were several cultural and historical aspects of Lithuanian national identity that might have served as foundations for the independence movement, the Catholic Church was deeply connected to Lithuanian nationalism and had greater mass appeal and trust than any other source of

national identity. Moreover, as a sacred institution, the LCC had the ability to legitimate Sajūdis and motivate Lithuanians to support the independence movement.

Both Sajūdis and the LCC intentionally forged their relationship by courting the other's support and involvement. Sajūdis courted the LCC's support by recruiting priests and giving them prominent roles at rallies and other events, and by incorporating into its political agenda the LCC's concerns, including religious freedom and property. The LCC demonstrated its support for Sajūdis through participation in the movement's events and promotion of its political ideals.

Sajūdis and the LCC built their relationship because it was mutually beneficial; both Sajūdis and the LCC stood to gain socially and materially in ways that would not have been available to them without the relationship. Sajūdis benefited from the relationship when it gained a share of the LCC's high level of public trust and when Sajūdis-supported candidates won elections. The LCC benefitted when its properties were returned, religious freedom was restored, and the Church was able to reestablish its role in society through media, education, and charitable work.

It's Our Country and It's Our Cathedral:
Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction and Research Context	1
Introduction to Sajūdis	
Research Context	
Methodology and Boundaries	
Outline of Chapters	
Chapter Two: Lithuanian Catholicism and Nationalism in Historical Perspective	40
Theoretical Foundations of Nationalism and Religio-Nationalism	
Catholicization and State Formation: The Twelfth Century to 1385	
Catholicism and National Identity in the Polish-Lithuanian Empire: 1385 to 1772	
Catholicism and Nationalism under the Russian Empire: 1772 to 1918	
The Catholic Church and the State during the Inter-War Independence: 1918 to 1939	
Catholicism and Nationalism in the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic	
Conclusion	
Chapter Three: Sajūdis' Essential Relationship with the Lithuanian Catholic Church	94
Sajūdis' Context: Social Transformation under Gorbachev	
Socio-Cultural Sources of Lithuanian National Identity	
Historical and Political Aspects of Lithuanian National Identity	
The Catholic Church and Popular Nationalism	
Conclusion	
Chapter Four: The Intentional and Mutually-Beneficial Relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church	149
Introduction	
Sajūdis Intentionally Builds a Relationship with the Church	
The Church Intentionally Builds a Relationship with Sajūdis	
How Sajūdis and the Catholic Church Benefitted from Their Relationship	
Conclusion	
Chapter Five: Conclusion	194
Lithuania's Religious Nationalism	
The Essential Relationship	
The Intentional Relationship	
The Mutually-Beneficial Relationship	
Epilogue	
Acknowledgments	vi

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and Research Context

Vilnius Cathedral imposes upon the ancient city's landscape, a centrifugal force from which radiate the cobbled footpath of Old Town's Pilies Street, the shopping and theater district along Gediminas Avenue, the national museums and arsenal, and the legendary site on which the city was founded marked by Gediminas Tower. Vilnius Cathedral, a white marble Greco-Roman structure, fronted by massive columns and topped with over-scaled statues of saints, stands like a sentinel, lest any resident or visitor forget the Catholic identity of Lithuania and its people. Gediminas Square, named for a legendary fourteenth century king, sprawls along the length of the cathedral, a statue of King Mindaugas at its center. In this square on 23 August 1988, thousands of people spontaneously gathered, after attending a political rally in nearby Vingis Park earlier in the day. The people were demanding that Vilnius Cathedral, which had been converted to a museum of atheism, be returned to the Catholic Church and restored to its sacred purpose. They cried out, "It's our country and it's our cathedral! Let us kiss its walls!"¹

How did the country and the cathedral become united in the Lithuanians' minds? Why was Catholicism such a prominent component of Lithuanian national identity? How did a political rally in a public park segue into a spontaneous demonstration of religion-nationalism? In order to answer these questions, it will be necessary to analyze the development of Lithuanian religious and national identity, and then examine how religion

¹ Vytautas Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, trans. Anthony Packer and estate of Eimutis Šova (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 117.

and nationalism came together during the independence movement that began in 1988. The organization responsible for the political rally of 23 September 1988 was *Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sajūdis*, ‘Lithuanian Movement for Perestroika’,² commonly known as *Sajūdis*, and it was this movement that led Lithuania to declare independence from the Soviet Union on 11 March 1990.³ In its efforts to lead Lithuania to independence, *Sajūdis* capitalized on the historically close ties between the Catholic faith and Lithuanian national identity. The focus of this dissertation is the relationship between *Sajūdis* and the Lithuanian Catholic Church (LCC).⁴ The examination of the *Sajūdis*-LCC relationship will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Lithuanian history and the importance of religio-nationalism for Lithuania’s popular independence movement.

This dissertation will argue that the relationship between *Sajūdis* and the Lithuanian Catholic Church was essential, intentional, and mutually beneficial. An examination of how the leaders of *Sajūdis* and the LCC leadership interacted and cooperated will demonstrate that the relationship between the two was essential for *Sajūdis*’ success. Moreover, both *Sajūdis* and the Church intentionally forged their

² Attaching a date and a timeline to *Sajūdis*’ formation is an over-simplification of a very complex organization. One member of the *Sajūdis* Initiative Group explained: “One can say that [*Sajūdis*] is a constant state of the spirit of any Lithuania. It is like a candle in the wind – stronger gusts would come and would blow away the flame into the darkness of history. However, it withstands the wind, it gets back on its feet and it shines on. *Sajūdis* is the indicator of the livelihood of the nation. It is a hand that protects the light of Lithuania from any wind, and raises it up as much as it can. . . . *Sajūdis* was called many different names throughout history. However, *Sajūdis* is the steadfast spirit of the nation. Its power comes from its universality, openness, and democracy.” See *Respublika*, “*Sajūdžio jėga* [The power of *Sajūdis*],” January 19, 1990.

³ This is the date on which the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic passed The Act of the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania. The USSR would not recognize the country’s independence until 6 September 1991.

⁴ Lithuanian Catholic Church refers only to geography, not to autocephaly or independence from the Roman Catholic Church.

relationship by courting the other's support and involvement. They built the relationship because it was mutually beneficial, and both Sajūdis and the LCC stood to gain socially and materially in ways that would not have been available to them without that relationship.

Introduction to Sajūdis

Sajūdis formed in Vilnius on 3 June 1988. Several weeks earlier Mikhail Gorbachev had invited institutions and groups from each of the Soviet Republics to nominate delegates to the Nineteenth Soviet Communist Party Congress, the purpose of which was to spur on *perestroika*. On 28 May 1988 Lithuanian Communist Party (LiCP) leaders announced the Lithuanian delegates to the Congress, and some intellectuals complained that the LiCP leadership had pre-selected a delegation that “constituted a victory for the bureaucracy rather than for supporters of perestroika.”⁵ Scholars, artists, and intellectuals, who were under-represented in the delegation, contacted Eduardas Vilkas, the chairman of the constitutional commission, and requested a general meeting where the public could voice their opinions and concerns to the Party Congress delegation. Vilkas granted the request and a public meeting was held at the Academy of Sciences in Vilnius on 3 June with around five hundred people in attendance. The attendees were a diverse group including students, journalists, artists, writers, academy workers, engineers, and others, but they were united by a common desire for positive action toward mending the various problems that plagued Lithuanian society. As concerned and passionate people ardently voiced their opinions, Vilkas lost control of the meeting and tried to end it, but the assembly demanded that a committee be formed to

⁵ Alfred Erich Senn, *Lithuania Awakening* (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), 57.

represent the Lithuanian people's concerns. The demand resulted in the formation of an Initiative Group of thirty-six members, which took the name Lithuanian Movement for Perestroika, or Sajūdis.⁶

The Sajūdis Initiative Group's stated purpose was to promote democracy and social reform along the lines of perestroika and *glasnost*, but Vytautas Landsbergis, one of the Initiative Group's leaders, explains that "Sajūdis was not merely a reform movement, although we used that term as a cloak for our real aims. We acted within the law, but our intention was not the reform of the Soviet system. What we were working for was the establishment of Lithuanian law."⁷ The members of the Initiative Group agreed to meet weekly and elected a few necessary officers. The formation and membership of the Initiative Group was not entirely spontaneous: many members of the Initiative Group had met on 23 May 1988 in order to establish a commission to propose changes to the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LiSSR) constitution that would bring it more into alignment with perestroika.⁸ The idea of forming a popular reform movement was already circulating among the intelligentsia, and the election of delegates to the Party Congress provided a catalyst to formalize the idea and give it a name. The Sajūdis Initiative Group functioned as a steering committee and provided structure for communicating ideas as the Sajūdis popular movement expanded across Lithuania. Local-level Sajūdis groups organized rapidly in eleven cities and forty-two districts

⁶ Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 224-225; Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 55-58. Although initiative groups formed for local Sajūdis organizations, throughout this document the Initiative Group will refer to the thirty-six people who were selected as leaders at the 3 June meeting.

⁷ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 60; Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 99.

⁸ V. Stanley Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," *Problems of Communism* (July/August 1989): 56.

across the LiSSR.⁹ In order to appreciate Sajūdis' goals and actions, it is necessary to step back in time and examine the socio-political context in which it formed.

Political and Social Context of Sajūdis' Formation

An examination of the rapidly changing socio-political context of the 1980s will provide a better understanding of the environment in which Sajūdis was founded. The single most important factor, the *sine qua non* of Sajūdis and any other public reform or dissent organization, was perestroika. Gorbachev's dramatic changes to Soviet policy created the environment in which Sajūdis and other more narrowly-focused interest groups could voice their opinions and coalesce around reform efforts.

When Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, he recognized that parts of the USSR were drastically underdeveloped and even pre-modern. In order to address the economic disparity, Gorbachev would first need to correct underlying issues that contributed to corruption, inequality, and social problems such as alcoholism and suicide. He recognized that "the system was too highly centralized, information was constantly being manipulated and falsified, and officials were ignoring the deep, chronic problems of society."¹⁰ In a speech to the Party's Twenty-Seventh Congress on 25 February 1986, Gorbachev painted in broad strokes the need for radical reform, and attacked the inertia and apathy of the Soviet bureaucracy. Gorbachev's proposals were bold and had great potential to improve the quality of life for

⁹ Kęstutis Bartkevičius, "Lietuvos persitvarkymo Sąjūdžio vietinio lygmens organizacijos 1988-1990 metais: struktūros ir socialinė analizė – Daktaro disertacijos santrauka [Local level organizations of Lithuanian movement for Perestroika in 1988-1990: structural and social analysis]" (Ph.D. diss., Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas, 2010), 6, accessed January 19, 2014, <http://www.lmt.lt/lt/naujienos/disertacijos/db/1931/p0.html>.

¹⁰ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Soviet Experiment: Russia, The USSR, and the Successor States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 451.

the Soviet people, but Gorbachev's speech was also "tantamount to saying that he and his colleagues had lost their faith in the efficacy of Leninist strategies."¹¹ Gorbachev met with resistance from the conservatives and "time-servers in possession of party cards," as Boris Yeltsin called them.¹² He needed popular support for reform, and he gained the needed support in large part by promoting greater openness or transparency between the central government, the republic governments, and the people.

Glasnost opened space to critique the Communist Party, the Soviet system, and all levels of leadership; conversations for which one could have been deported under Stalin were now encouraged in order to spur on perestroika. One consequence of glasnost was that the contradictions inherent to everyday life under communism started coming to light. The Soviet constitution promised the right to education in the native language of each republic, free speech, freedom to criticize public officials, and freedom of conscience, however the populace knew very well that any attempt to actualize these rights might have serious negative repercussions.¹³ Glasnost created the environment in which people could speak aloud the truths they had long known. Vytautas Landsbergis, a leader of Sajudis, recalls how "the new freedom of thought and speech gathered force, and then became a tidal wave as people found a new spirit in their meetings."¹⁴ Writers and social scientists were Gorbachev's key to weakening the influence of antireformists, and Gorbachev encouraged them to be bold and innovative as censorship evaporated.¹⁵

¹¹ Gale Stokes, "The Return of Politics," in *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945*, ed. Gale Stokes, 182-183 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 182.

¹² Suny, *Soviet Experiment*, 452-453.

¹³ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 11.

¹⁴ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 101.

¹⁵ Suny, *Soviet Experiment*, 454.

The media began to report more truthfully, and a public hungry for accurate information began to talk more boldly among their friends and family, then more openly to others. As the deeply-engrained fear of retribution diminished, Lithuanians gathered around a variety of social or political reform issues. Specific areas of concern included human rights, the environment, artistic and literary freedom, recovery of accurate history, and religious persecution. Groups that organized around each of these issues would contribute to the development of Sąjūdis.

Advocates for human rights had been organizing since the 1970s. The Lithuanian Helsinki Group was founded in 1976 in order to further the implementation of the Helsinki Accords.¹⁶ It submitted documents to the USSR Supreme Soviet demanding protection of human rights, and also made its reports available to publications abroad in order to bring international attention and pressure to the Soviet government.¹⁷ The Lithuanian Helsinki Group formally disbanded in 1983 after it was dismembered by arrest, death and emigration.¹⁸ Another human rights-focused group was the Lithuanian Freedom League (LFL), which also organized in response to the Helsinki Accords, and

¹⁶ The Helsinki Accords, signed in 1975, were non-binding agreements intended to improve relations between the communist bloc and the West. The Accords included statements pertaining to respecting international boundaries and national sovereignty, and the enumerated the principle of respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, which was the catalyst for human rights movements throughout the communist world.

¹⁷ For an example of a typical document and its publication, see Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “Lithuanian Helsinki Group Demands Return of POC Iešmantas’ Creative Works,” August 10, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

¹⁸ Šaulius Girnius, “Current Events: The Demise of the Lithuanian Helsinki Group,” *Lituanus* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1984) reprinted from *Radio Liberty Research*, no. 20/84 (11 January 1984), accessed February 15, 2014, http://www.lituanus.org/1984_2/84_2_05.htm. For a brief but informative account of the Lithuanian Helsinki Group’s formation, members, rules, and activities, see Rolandas Gustaitis, “Lithuanian Helsinki Group and One of Its Founders – E. Finkelstein,” trans. Kristina Dujauskaitė (report read at Tolerance and Totalitarianism: Challenges to Freedom Conference, Vilnius, 1 May 2012), modified January 5, 2012, <http://www.bernardinai.lt/straipsnis/2012-01-05-rolandas-gustaitis-lithuanian-helsinki-group-and-one-of-its-founders-e-finkelstein/74940>.

eventually broadened its focus and became an active supporter of Lithuanian independence.¹⁹ The Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believer's Rights was a human rights watch-group with a focus on religious persecution. The Committee was founded in 1978 and systematically monitored violations of the religion clauses in the LiSSR constitution. One of the founding members, Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, was arrested by the KGB in 1983, and another, Father Sigitas Tamkevičius, was sentenced to exile in 1988.²⁰ These human rights advocacy groups set a precedent for holding the Soviet state accountable to its own constitution, and Sajūdis would build on their legacy.

Environmental concerns also prompted a sizable ecological movement to develop in Lithuania. Rapid industrialization had wreaked havoc on the once pastoral landscape of the Baltic coast. Overproduction by factories yielded tens of thousands of tons of waste, which were simply dumped into rivers or the Baltic Sea.²¹ Dependence on nuclear energy led to increasing construction of nuclear facilities, which ignited controversy about the environmental impact as well as safety. A nuclear energy plant in the eastern Lithuanian town of Ignalina was a flash point of controversy in 1988, especially since it followed the model of the Chernobyl plant where disaster had struck in 1986. Baltic concern about nuclear energy was exacerbated by the fact that servicemen from the Baltic republics were among the clean-up crew after the Chernobyl disaster and worked in the

¹⁹ Asta Banionis, "Current Events: The Summer of 1988 and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in Lithuania," *Lituanus* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1989), accessed February 6, 2014, http://www.lituanus.org/1989/89_1_04.htm.

²⁰ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, "123,000 Petition Soviets for Release of Imprisoned Priests," February 27, 1984, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX; Lithuanian Information Center, press release, "Updates on Lithuanian Political Prisoners Reach West," 19 August 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

²¹ Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 241.

radiation without protection.²² Several environmental groups were active: in May 1987 the Žemyna discussion group formed to bring attention to ecological problems, and *Žaliuju partija*, ‘Green Party’, successfully prevented a third nuclear reactor from being constructed at Ignalina.²³ The Lithuanian Nature Protection Association, founded in 1971, grew to 320,000 members, almost one-tenth of the total population, by 1983.²⁴ The Writers’ Union also included environmental concerns among its topics of discussion, and circulated a petition in 1986 to condemn oil drilling in the Baltic Sea.²⁵ To the Soviet authorities, environmentalism often looked like nationalism, and some activists were sentenced to exile for their dissident activities.²⁶

Writers and artists hoped perestroika would bring new opportunities for freedom of creative expression. The Soviet state tightly monitored and restricted all publications, and writers hoped greater freedom would restore a sense of purpose and cultural identity and improve morale among artists. Freedom of expression quickly became political under glasnost. The Lithuanian Writers’ Union criticised *Tiesa*, the LiCP newspaper, for its biased reporting of a pro-perestroika rally, and adopted a resolution that “affirmed its support for the Lithuanian Movement to Support Perestroika.”²⁷ Through its weekly publication *Literatura ir menas*, ‘Literature and Art’, the Writers’ Union encouraged

²² Lieven, 220.

²³ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 9, 39; Darius Furmanavičius, “Sajūdis’ Peaceful Revolution, Part I,” *Lituanus* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2009), 4, accessed February 20, 2013, http://www.lituanus.org/2009/09_1_01%20Furmonavicius.html. Žemyna is the name of the goddess of the earth in the pantheon of Lithuania’s indigenous religion.

²⁴ Misiunas and Taagepera, 293.

²⁵ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 24.

²⁶ Misiunas and Taagepera, 293.

²⁷ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “Lithuanian Writers Union Criticizes Russian Watchdog of Lithuania,” July 7, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

professionals in other fields to place greater emphasis on defending the nation.²⁸ Over time the range of issues that the Writer's Union addressed widened substantially, and eventually included concern for Lithuanians living in neighboring republics.²⁹ Artists and writers would comprise a significant portion of Sajūdis' membership.

Historians saw in perestroika and glasnost the opportunity to recover an accurate history of Lithuania and to reveal the atrocities Lithuanians suffered under Soviet rule. Some historians sought "reconsideration of a number of historical questions, including the role of the Catholic Church in Lithuanian history, a reevaluation as to whether the incorporation of Lithuania into the Russian empire had really been a positive factor in Lithuania's historical development, and a serious examination of the problems of socialism in Lithuania."³⁰ Historians were in an especially difficult situation because the Soviet government had put a great deal of energy into retelling history in a way that promoted socialism and engendered gratitude for the privilege of membership in the Soviet Union. Historians would play an important role in rallying support for reform by publicizing historical information that had been hidden from the Lithuanian people or distorted in Soviet publications.

Lithuanian expatriot communities, which were committed to the freedom and independence of their motherland, influenced a resurgence of national sentiment. Lithuanians living in the United States and Canada gathered information about injustices perpetrated by the Soviet government, published and disseminated information,

²⁸ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 24.

²⁹ Šaulius Girnius, "Upheaval in the Baltic Republics," in *Soviet/East European Survey, 1987-1988: Selected Research and Analysis from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, ed. Vojtech Mastny (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 155.

³⁰ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 47.

sponsored intellectual and educational exchanges, and kept alive the memory of Lithuania as an independent nation-state. Expatriot groups lobbied the United States Congress to support the Lithuanian independence movement, and in September 1988, a cooperative of Baltic-American organizations lobbied President Reagan and Secretary of State George Shultz, “to protest, in strongest terms, the oppressive tactics of beatings and arrests employed against the people of Lithuania” by the Soviet government.³¹ In addition to lobbying activities, expatriot groups collected and shared information, which was often passed along through illicit channels at great risk to the informants. For example, the Lithuanian Information Center in Brooklyn provided news about political prisoners, public demonstrations, and political developments, through its contacts within the LFL.³²

The Lithuanian Freedom League, mentioned above as a human rights activist group, was a precursor to Sajūdis, and its focus on independence came to influence Sajūdis’ goals. The LFL’s nationalist activities predated Sajūdis by about a year, and it used mass demonstrations as its primary form of protest. In 1987 the LFL held rallies to mark two important anniversaries: the 1941 deportation of over 27,000 Lithuanians, and signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in 1939, which resulted in Lithuania’s annexation to the USSR. The LFL presented a sharp contrast to Sajūdis: while Sajūdis’

³¹ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “Lithuanians Rally to Protest Violent Attacks by Riot Police,” September 29, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX. The United States had refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Soviet presence in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, therefore the Lithuanian-American community had reason to hope that the U.S. would take a more active role in Lithuania achieving independence.

³² Richard J. Krickus, *Showdown: The Lithuanian Rebellion and the Breakup of the Soviet Union* (Washington: Brassey’s, 1997), 35. The Lithuanian Information Center was founded by Father Casimir Pugnevičius as a subsidiary of Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, which sent Bibles and religious materials to Lithuania. It was based in Brooklyn, New York, and received much of its information from Antanas Terleckas, the founder of the Lithuanian Freedom League.

supporters were “distinguished party and non-party intellectuals, the League [was] led by former political prisoners and former partisans of the 1944-52 period. . . . Its core support [came] from former dissidents, political prisoners, partisans and deportees.”³³ The LFL supported Lithuanian independence and advocated radical means of attaining it, rather than a moderate, legislative process. Its leaders initially butted heads with Sajūdis, because they found Sajūdis to be too slow and methodical.³⁴ Sajūdis, “dissatisfied of the League’s confrontational tactics,” but ultimately cooperated with the LFL on the condition that the radical group use more restraint.³⁵

Religion, primarily Catholicism, had been a vocal source of dissent and agitation since the 1970s, and the changes in religion policy under Gorbachev allowed the LCC’s dissent to ferment and gain greater public support. The status of Christianity, the rise of religiously-motivated dissent, and the activities of the LCC that influenced the independence movement will be covered in great detail in chapter two.

Popular fronts that were already underway in neighboring countries, most notably Poland and Estonia, also influenced the formation of Sajūdis. Poland’s reform movement, Solidarity, was in its adolescence by 1988, having formed out of trade unionist strikes in 1980. In an outline of its program, Solidarity explained,

we have united in protest against the treatment of the citizen by the state as if he were state property, against the deprivation of the working people of an authentic representation in their conflicts with the state, against the benevolence of those in power who know better how much freedom is to be allotted to those under their rule, and against awards for absolute obedience instead of initiative and

³³ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 58.

³⁴ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 46. Radicalization in this case refers to a drive for independence, as opposed to reform from within the USSR or a degree of sovereignty or autonomy while remaining a Soviet Republic.

³⁵ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 58.

independence in action. We have been united in repudiating hypocrisy and in objecting to the mismanagement of the results of the hard and patient toil performed by the people.³⁶

Solidarity's twenty-one demands included, "(3) Respect for the freedom of speech, print and publication guaranteed by the Constitution of the PRL, and therefore no repression of independent publications and access to the mass media for representatives of all denominations."³⁷ It is significant that Solidarity's demands did not assume changes would come from within the Party-state apparatus, but rather broad social participation in the movement was the key to reform.³⁸ Sajūdis' own move away from reform *within* the the USSR to independence *from* the USSR was in part inspired by Solidarity's methods. Algirdas Kaušpedas, a Sajūdis member, explained Solidarity "gave us a political education. We studied and learned from their mistakes and are careful not to repeat them."³⁹ Lithuanian intellectuals were already being influenced by Solidarity before glasnost opened the path for communication about change, and in that sense Sajūdis' formation was just as much a proactive move inspired by Solidarity as it was a response to glasnost.⁴⁰

The Estonian People's Front in Support of Perestroika, known as *Rahvarinne*, 'popular front', also influenced Sajūdis' formation. Reform-minded communist

³⁶ Peter Raina, "Solidarity's Program," in *Poland, 1981: Towards Social Renewal* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1985), 326-329, 346-47, reprinted in Stokes, 210.

³⁷ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 47.

³⁸ Ash, 47.

³⁹ Peter Gumbel, "Baltic Juggernaut: A Defiant Lithuania Leads Soviet States in Drive to Break Free," *Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 1990, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/398136316?accountid=7014>.

⁴⁰ Furmanavičius, "Sajūdis' Peaceful Revolution, Part I."

intellectuals established Rahvarinne in April 1988.⁴¹ Rahvarinne's members called for economic, if not political, autonomy from the USSR. Arvydas Juozaitis, a member of the Sajūdis Initiative Group, participated in the Estonian People's Front's inaugural meeting, then two economists who were instrumental in constructing Estonia's economic independence visited Lithuania the same month.⁴² About a week prior to the 3 June meeting at which Sajūdis formed, Estonian activists met with intellectuals in Lithuania and briefed them on the developments in Estonia, which the Lithuanian Soviet press was not yet reporting. In the weeks following Sajūdis' founding, representatives traveled to Estonia and returned with stories of powerful mass meetings, which led to Sajūdis sponsoring its first rally on 21 June 1988 outside the Supreme Soviet headquarters.⁴³

This overview of the social and political movements that were active and influential during the period immediately prior to Sajūdis' formation illustrates the wide range of issues about which the Lithuanian people were concerned. Perestroika and glasnost opened the possibility for distressed citizens to publicly discuss the specific policies or social issues that troubled them. As people spoke more freely, they gained the courage to agitate for change. Thus by the time Sajūdis formed in 1988 there were already several organizations engaged in discourse or dissent, and many people who were ready to participate in changing the legal or social situation in Lithuania. For this reason, "the foundation of Sajūdis in Vilnius was initiated both from the bottom (by the independent clubs active before – conservation of historical heritage 'Talka,' Ecology 'Žemyna,' young economists by the Academy of Sciences and others) and from the

⁴¹ Š. Girnius, "Upheaval," 155.

⁴² Furmanavičius, "Sajūdis' Peaceful Revolution, Part I."

⁴³ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 56, 77-78; Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," 56.

outside – a fair influence was [the] Estonian People’s Front.”⁴⁴ Many organizations and individuals gravitated toward Sajūdis because of its high-profile leadership and because they recognized the importance of a well-coordinated popular front. Considering the breadth of interests and influences, it is only logical that Sajūdis’ goals would be expansive and its membership diverse.

Sajūdis’ Goals and Membership

At its first official meetings on 8 and 13 June 1988, the Sajūdis Initiative Group formed special commissions to address specific goals and concerns. The Social Commission, Cultural Commission, Commission on National Relations, Economic Commission, Legal Commission, and Ecological Commission each suggested social or political reforms that fit within the goals of perestroika.⁴⁵ Among the goals that the various Sajūdis commissions promoted were: raising the workers’ standard of living, holding officials accountable for their decisions, saving Lithuania’s cultural heritage, maintaining cultural monuments, recognizing Lithuanian as the official language of the republic, publishing important historical documents, improving management of natural resources, and gaining economic and political self-sufficiency.⁴⁶ Several smaller groups found within Sajūdis the organizational mechanisms and popular support that they lacked on their own, and Sajūdis began to sponsor a range of groups and publications.⁴⁷ Ideas

⁴⁴ Bartkevičius, 15.

⁴⁵ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 62-64.

⁴⁶ Self-sufficiency in this case does not mean political independence from the USSR. There is a complex relationship between self-sufficiency, autonomy, and independence, but in its earliest iterations Sajūdis’ stated goals included greater self-governance while remaining within the Soviet Union.

⁴⁷ David Remnick, “Lithuania: The Little Independence Movement That Could,” *Washington Post*, August 6, 1989, accessed December 4, 2010, LexisNexis.

percolated from the various interested constituencies up to the Sajūdis Initiative Group, which provided a forum for communication and regional organization to make the many strands of reform more coherent and ultimately successful. Moreover, Sajūdis' activities spread beyond Vilnius as local branches established themselves across the republic, and glasnost reforms allowed the various local chapters to communicate with relative freedom.

Politically, Sajūdis was an umbrella movement within which several nascent political parties found their voice. Sajūdis was not anti-Communist; it was pro-perestroika. As such, it did not initially envision itself as a challenger to the LiCP, but rather as a force that would push the LiCP in the direction of reform within the Soviet system. Landsbergis explains Sajūdis' intentions and constituencies in his autobiography:

We had no intention of starting an anti-communist crusade, but we did want to establish an open reform front which would include those who sought independence; reasonable communists; non-aligned people; believers and atheists; ecologists; and everybody who was prepared to work for the nation's well-being. . . . Sajūdis itself had no intention of developing a narrow ideology: the entire purpose of our movement was to pave the way, to create a broad coalition and to seek reforms, and we knew that we had the backing of our community in general for these aims.⁴⁸

Alfred Senn, a university professor in the United States and a witness of Sajūdis'

formation, further explains Sajūdis position vis-a-vis party politics:

. . . the Initiative Group produced no program for intra-party democracy, much less a multiparty system. Sajūdis spokespersons, insofar as anyone dared to speak for the entire group, insisted that the "movement" was just that, a commonly agreed sense of reform without any intention of becoming a permanent organization, much less a political party. Speakers repeatedly insisted that once the party had unreservedly dedicated itself to perestroika, the "movement" would dissolve itself.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 105.

⁴⁹ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 65.

Perestroika and cultural renaissance were goals the LiCP shared with Sajūdis. Party and Sajūdis leaders even coordinated some of their activities, including protesting changes to the USSR Constitution that would limit the rights of the individual republics. The movement's goal was to keep the LiSSR, under the leadership of the LiCP, advancing toward reform. Although Sajūdis was not technically a political party, within a few months of its formation Sajūdis "stood almost as a second government in Lithuania," with "a moral authority to which the population responded."⁵⁰ Sajūdis served a political function by presenting an alternative to the LiCP, which was not advancing perestroika as quickly as some people desired.

The members of the Sajūdis Initiative Group were mostly intellectuals, including writers, linguists, historians, professors, and even actors. In general, they "were popular and respected for their honesty: throughout their lives, they had tried to avoid the mandatory Soviet hypocrisy, albeit with varying degrees of success."⁵¹ Seventeen members of the Sajūdis Initiative Group were members of the Lithuanian Communist Party.⁵² Vytautas Landsbergis, who quickly emerged as the leader of the movement, was a professional musician, an expert in the work of Lithuanian artist and composer Čiurlionis, and a third-generation intellectual.⁵³ He was not a public figure prior to the formation of Sajūdis, despite the fact that his father and grandfather were well-known

⁵⁰ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 136.

⁵¹ Tomas Venclova, "Lithuania: The Opening and the Hand of the Past," *Salmagundi* 90/91 (Spring-Summer 1991): 5.

⁵² Richard J. Krickus, "Democratization in Lithuania," in *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 295.

⁵³ Mary Brill Olcott, "The Lithuanian Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 69, no. 3 (Summer, 1990): 38.

nationalists. His father had fought the Bolsheviks in 1918, and his family helped hide Jews during the Nazi occupation. Through his work with Sajūdis, Landsbergis “set out to restore an active appreciation of Lithuania’s history . . . and to free public life of the perverse interpretations which had become endemic during a half a century of deliberate Soviet falsification.”⁵⁴ In 1990 he was elected Chairman of the Supreme Council of Lithuania, the equivalent of the president, and led the *Seimas*, ‘parliament’, to declare independence from the USSR.

At first, Landsbergis shared leadership with Arvydas Juozaitis, a professor of philosophy at the University of Vilnius. Juozaitis had the benefit of name recognition, having won a bronze medal in swimming at the 1976 Montreal olympic games. The two men eventually clashed over how quickly Sajūdis should move toward independence, and Juozaitis was marginalized by the more moderate majority. Like Landsbergis and Juozaitis, the majority of the Initiative Group members were professors and intellectuals. Mečys Laurinkus, Bronius Kuzmickas, and Bronius Genzelis were philosophers. Kazimiera Prunskienė was an economist and became deputy prime minister in 1989. Alvydas Medalinskas, Antanas Buračas and Kazimieras Antanavičius were also economists. Regimantas Adomaitis was an actor, Česlovas Kudaba was a geographer, and Emmanuelis Zingeris was the only Jewish member of the Initiative Group.⁵⁵ Algirdas Kaušpedas was an architect and leader of the popular rock group Antis. Raimundas Rajeckas was an academic.⁵⁶ Julius Juzeliūnas was a composer and friend of Landsbergis. Other artists included baritone singer Vaclovas Daunoras, visual artists

⁵⁴ Furmanavičius, “Sajudis’ Peaceful Revolution, Part I.”

⁵⁵ Krickus, *Showdown*, 51-53.

⁵⁶ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 65. *Antis* means ‘duck’.

Arvydas Šaltenis and Bronius Leonavičius, poets Sigitas Geda and Justinas Marcinkevičius, writers Vytautas Petkevičius, Algimantas Čekuolis and Vytautas Bubnys, and architect Algimantas Nasvytis. Other Initiative Group members were Zigmas Vaišvila, a green activist, Gintaras Songaila, an activist for historical monument preservation, actor and film director Arūnas Žembriūnas, journalist Vytautas Tomkus, and Artūras Skučas, who was a radical and was instrumental in uniting several disparate interest groups under the umbrella of Sajūdis.⁵⁷ Romualdas Ozolas and Kazimieras Motieka were lawyers. This list illustrates the character of Sajūdis' leadership: intellectuals and artists with university connections. Workers were notably absent from the Initiative Group.

Sajūdis Events, Elections, and Independence

In the months following its formation, Sajūdis sponsored a series of rallies. Osvaldas Balakauskas, a member of the Initiative Group, summarized the events of 1988 for the journal of the Kaunas chapter of Sajūdis:

The first of three large meetings took place in June. The second meeting was in July; and the third, which was the first high point of [Sajūdis'] activity, was held in August. The reaction, and the strengthening of the revolution occurred in September, but the highest point of the year came with the General Meeting of Sajūdis representatives in October.⁵⁸

These mass rallies were effective means of building broad support for Sajūdis and its goals and galvanized the people around the goal of independence.⁵⁹ Mass rallies provided legal, low-risk opportunities for thousands of people to peaceably participate in

⁵⁷ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 103-104.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Furmanavičius, "Sajudis' Peaceful Revolution, Part I." The "General Meeting" is a reference to the Founding Congress.

⁵⁹ Krickus, "Democratization in Lithuania," 296.

dissent, which gave people a sense of ownership in the movement, even if they might not have participated in dissent otherwise.

Sajūdis held its first rally on 24 June 1988 in Gediminas Square in order to give delegates to the Nineteenth Party Congress an opportunity to address the public. The delegates were mostly LiCP members. Ringaulas Songaila, the First Secretary of the LiCP, was hesitant about the rally, so Algirdas Brazauskas, the Central Committee secretary, represented the LiCP at the event.⁶⁰ The other delegates were Alfonsas Macaitis from the communist youth organization, Gestutis Zaleckas from the Vilnius Communist Party, and Juras Požėla from the Academy of Sciences.⁶¹ Vytautas Landsbergis spoke for Sajūdis and urged the delegates to represent the interests of the people at the Party Congress and recover economic, cultural and political sovereignty. Landsbergis recalls how he simultaneously criticized the delegates and at the same time affirmed their role as representatives of the Lithuanian people:

I then suggested that they [the delegates] should have refused selection by such a discredited process, but explained that we knew they had accepted the procedures because they were the victims of that ingrained habit of submissiveness which the party had always encouraged. While we would like to be sure that this was the last time that selection would take place according to those methods, we did not now want to denounce them personally for having gone along with the now discredited procedure, because we would prefer to ask them about the attitudes they would adopt when they reached Moscow.⁶²

At the 24 June rally the effect of glasnost manifested itself in the public's willingness to challenge the government and support Sajūdis: notes and messages passed to the speakers included requests to select different delegates, questions about the national flag, and

⁶⁰ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 79.

⁶¹ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 112.

⁶² Ibid.

support for Sajūdis' program over the LiCP's.⁶³ When Landsbergis mentioned Sajūdis' financial needs, people began to circulate upside down umbrellas among the crowd for people to contribute money.⁶⁴ The Lithuanian people met Sajūdis with great enthusiasm. The rally also provided the opportunity for spontaneous displays of popular nationalism.

Sajūdis held its second rally on 9 July 1988 in Vingis Park, in order to hear reports from the delegates to the Nineteenth Party Congress after they had returned from Moscow. An estimated 100,000 people attended even though the Soviet press chose not to announce the event in advance. At the meeting, representatives spoke "standing in front of a banner bearing national symbols and proclaiming the 'Movement to Support Perestroika.'"⁶⁵ Someone unfurled a giant Lithuanian national flag behind the podium. People carried signs and banners with slogans promoting independence, equal rights for believers, freedom of conscience, and economic sovereignty.⁶⁶ Landsbergis spoke about the future of the country, "declaring that we must build a Lithuania which was more just than it had become, using the opportunity to denounce bad laws and double standards in environmental planning, though [Landsbergis'] real theme was the accountability of a free nation and its responsibility for protecting the part of our planet which history and almighty God had given us."⁶⁷ Algirdas Brazauskas took the opportunity at the rally to

⁶³ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 79-81.

⁶⁴ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 113.

⁶⁵ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, "100,000 Rally in Vilnius' Vingis Park," July 9, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁶⁶ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, "100,000 Rally in Vilnius' Vingis Park," July 9, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX. Freedom of conscience is a reference to the USSR military service draft, which became a major point of protest, especially in 1990 and 1991.

⁶⁷ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 113.

announce that the state had cancelled plans to expand the Ignalina nuclear plant.⁶⁸

Brazauskas was a gifted communicator, and remained popular even as support for the LiCP declined. Other speakers promoted economic autonomy, Lithuanian as the official language, and Lithuanians drafted into the Soviet armed forces being allowed to serve within Lithuania.⁶⁹ The July rally inspired smaller gatherings across Lithuania, which led to the establishment of local-level Sajūdis initiative groups.⁷⁰

On 23 August 1988 rallies were held across the LiSSR to commemorate the forty-ninth anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which had granted Lithuania to the Soviet sphere of influence and ultimately resulted in Lithuania's annexation to the USSR. The largest rally took place in Vilnius's Vingis Park, with over 250,000 people in attendance.⁷¹ In preparation for the rally, Sajūdis leaders met in Kaunas with Juozas Urbšys, who had been the Minister of Foreign Affairs when the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed. They recorded a message from him, since his advanced age made travel to Vilnius impossible, and played the recording at the rally. Landsbergis describes crowd's reaction and the content of the message:

The audience was then astonished to hear the recorded voice of the historic witness telling them plainly how our country had been forced to submit to the Soviet forces in 1939, while Stalin and Molotov gloated over their agreement with Hitler. His statement neatly summarized all the dissatisfactions and demands of our movement.⁷²

⁶⁸ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 113.

⁶⁹ Šaulius Girnius, "Massive Rally in Vilnius," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report/9 (6 August 1988): 33-34.

⁷⁰ Bartkevičius, 15.

⁷¹ Š. Girnius, "Massive Demonstrations in Lithuania," 23. Meetings were also held in Kaunas, Šiauliai and Kretinga, although these meetings were much smaller since they had not been granted official permission.

⁷² Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 116.

After hearing the message from Urbšys, other speakers took the podium and “described the painful story of the deportations of the past, the imprisonment of innocent people by the KGB, and the Communist and Nazi conspiracies against Lithuania, going on to demand ‘justice in the present and a new vision for the future’.”⁷³ At the 23 August rally, Lithuania’s history was laid bare as the veil of the Soviet version of events was removed. After the rally concluded, people spontaneously converged on Gediminas Square to demand that the state return Vilnius Cathedral to the Catholic Church.

From 22 through 24 October 1988, Sajūdis held a Founding Congress, so Sajūdis could firmly establish itself as the voice of the Lithuanian independence movement and formally organize itself. The Congress hosted 1,027 delegates and elected a 220-member Sajūdis Seimas and a 35-member council, which included many members of the Sajūdis Initiative Group. The Sajūdis Seimas would meet twelve times before the March 1990 elections.⁷⁴ It adopted a resolution calling for relations with other Soviet republics “based on Leninist principles of federalism, national equality and self-determination.”⁷⁵ To put it more bluntly, as Landsbergis’ father said in his opening speech at the Founding Congress, “‘We are here to restore Lithuania’s independence.’”⁷⁶ The Founding Congress was also an opportunity for international publicity: the meeting was televised, there were daily press conferences, and daily bulletins were published in Lithuanian, Russian, German and English. For the Lithuanian people, the Congress was also a celebration of national identity, as national and regional flags waved and signs invoked

⁷³ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 116.

⁷⁴ Bartkevičius, 17.

⁷⁵ Misiunas and Taagepera, 318.

⁷⁶ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 122.

legends and heroes of Lithuanian history.⁷⁷ Less than a week before the Congress, Ringaudas Songaila resigned as first secretary of the LiCP and was replaced by Algirdas Brazauskas, who presided over the Supreme Council as Moscow's representative in Lithuania. There were a few members of Sajūdis who were also deputies of the Supreme Council, and through these representatives Sajūdis began to influence legislative proceedings.⁷⁸ At first Brazauskas seemed to be a leader that Sajūdis could trust and work with, but Sajūdis broke with the LiCP when Brazauskas prevented a declaration of sovereignty from coming to a vote in the Supreme Soviet on 22 November 1988. A similar declaration had passed in Estonia only days earlier, but Brazauskas yielded to pressure from Moscow when he blocked discussion of the measure.⁷⁹

The resistance from Brazauskas and the Supreme Soviet prompted Sajūdis to field a full slate of candidates for election to the Congress of People's Deputies, which Gorbachev established as a forum for open discussion in the spirit of perestroika. Although Sajūdis was not itself a political party, it officially supported or sponsored candidates from various political parties that had established themselves as alternatives to the LiCP. In the March 1989 election to the Congress of People's Deputies, Sajūdis candidates won thirty-seven of the forty-two seats allotted to Lithuania.⁸⁰ The delegates would represent Lithuania's reform interests in Moscow. Among those elected were

⁷⁷ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 217-218.

⁷⁸ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 126.

⁷⁹ Kestutis Girnius, "The Party and Popular Movements," in *Toward Independence: The Baltic Popular Movements*, ed. Jan Arveds Trapans (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 60-61.

⁸⁰ K. Girnius, "The Party and Popular Movements," 60-61; Kevin O'Connor, *The History of the Baltic States*, Volume of The Greenwood Histories of the Modern Nations, ed. Frank W. Thackeray and John E. Findling (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2003), 152-155. In one district the candidate backed by the local Sajūdis organization defeated the candidate backed by Sajūdis' parliamentary council, hence 36 or 37 victories.

writers, economists, lawyers, professionals, one worker, one Russian, and one Jew.⁸¹

This election stood in stark contrast to 1940, when “Moscow had manipulated a general election in Lithuania unscrupulously in order to have its own representatives nominated to a hastily renamed Parliament, the ‘Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic,’ which then arbitrarily announced that it was ‘the will of the nation’ to join the Soviet Union.”⁸² It was becoming increasingly clear to the LiCP and to Moscow that the will of the Lithuanian people was bending toward independence.

The show of public support for Sajūdis and its goals in the March 1989 elections prompted the representatives to the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet to cooperate more closely with Sajūdis. As a result, they approved revisions to the LiSSR constitution declaring that “from today, after amending Article 70 of the constitution of the Lithuanian SSR, the only valid laws in Lithuania are those adopted or confirmed by its Supreme Soviet.”⁸³ The revision asserted a degree of autonomy, since Lithuania now refused to accept USSR laws without LiSSR approval. Despite the LiCP’s efforts to align itself with the political will of the Lithuanian people, approval of the LiCP’s leadership fell. A public opinion poll conducted in May 1989 revealed the abysmal state of support for the LiCP: the Party received only a 22 percent positive rating, while Sajūdis received 68 percent.⁸⁴ Sajūdis had established itself as a competitive political force that offered a viable alternative to the LiCP, but it was not yet in a position to declare independence from the USSR. For

⁸¹ The inclusion of a worker, a Russian, and a Jew is important because it both illustrates the inclusion of non-intellectual and non-ethnic-Lithuanian members, and also the that delegates were not statistically representative of the total populations of Lithuania.

⁸² Darius Furmanavičius, “Sajudis’ Peaceful Revolution, Part II,” *Lituanus* 55, no. 2 (Summer 2009), accessed February 20, 2013, http://www.lituanus.org/2009/09_2_01%20Furmonavicius.htm.

⁸³ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 71-73.

⁸⁴ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 74.

that to happen, Sajūdis-backed candidates would need to win a majority in the Lithuanian Supreme Council. With elections to the Lithuanian Supreme Council set for February 1990, Gorbachev anticipated that Lithuania would elect independence-minded representatives and attempt to secede from the USSR. He urged Landsbergis and other leaders, “‘You must think a thousand times before setting sail without a compass, without maps, fuel and without a crew.’”⁸⁵ But Sajūdis met his pleas and warnings with increased determination to break free from Moscow’s control.

The 24 February 1990 election to the Lithuanian Supreme Council confirmed the public’s sweeping support for Sajūdis and its independence goals.⁸⁶ Of the 136 seats, Sajūdis-backed candidates won 100, and pushed the LiCP to the political periphery.⁸⁷ Vytautas Landsbergis defeated Algimantas Brazauskas for chairman of the Lithuanian Supreme Council by a margin of ninety-one to thirty-eight.⁸⁸ Sajūdis-backed candidates were in a position to legislate, and by the end of the following year Sajūdis’ Vytautas Landsbergis would be elected president of the newly independent Republic of Lithuania.

⁸⁵ Gumbel, “Baltic Juggernaut.”

⁸⁶ Marina Popescu and Martin Hannavy, “1990 Parliamentary Elections – Soviet,” Project on Political Transformation and the Electoral Process in Post-Communist Europe, University of Essex, accessed May 22, 2013, <http://www2.essex.ac.uk/elect/database/indexElections.asp?country=LITHUANIA&election=lt90>. The first round of elections was held on 24 February, and run-off elections followed on 4, 7, 8, and 10 March 1990. The statutory assembly was 141 representatives, but elections in 6 constituencies failed to produce results. Of the Sajūdis-backed candidates, 58 had no party affiliation, 17 were LCP members, and the remainder were members of newly-formed parties including Social Democrats, Christian Democrats, and Green Party. Of the 472 candidates, 401 were ethnic Lithuanians, 30 Russians, 30 Poles, 6 Belarussians, and several Jews. See also: Krickus, “Democratization in Lithuania,” 297.

⁸⁷ Graham Smith, “The Resurgence of Nationalism,” in *The Baltic States: The National Self-Determination of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia*, ed. Graham Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 136.

⁸⁸ Krickus, “Democratization in Lithuania,” 297.

Sajūdis followed a legal, parliamentary path to independence, supplemented by mass rallies that demonstrated the movement's popular support. Arūnas Zebriūnas explained, "we will not win on pure force, but on moral force," indicating the rejection of violent revolution accompanied by commitment to the justice of the independence cause.⁸⁹ Landsbergis described the process as "incremental" and explained, "in order to become independent we started passing laws and pulled away step by step."⁹⁰ On 11 March 1990 the Sajūdis-majority Supreme Council adopted the Act On the Re-Establishment of the State of Lithuania:

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, expressing the will of the nation, decrees and solemnly proclaims that the execution of the sovereign powers of the State of Lithuania, abolished by foreign forces in 1940, is re-established, and henceforth Lithuania again is an independent state.

The Act of Independence of 16 February 1918 of the Council of Lithuania and the Constituent Assembly (Seimas) decree of 15 May 1920 on the re-established democratic State of Lithuania never lost their legal effect and comprise the constitutional foundation of the State of Lithuania.

The territory of Lithuania is whole and indivisible, and the constitution of no other state is valid on it.

The State of Lithuania stresses its adherence to universally recognised principles of international law, recognises the principle of inviolability of borders as formulated in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki in 1975, and guarantees human, civil and ethnic minorities rights.

The Supreme Council of the Republic Lithuania, expressing its sovereign power, by this Act begins to realise the complete sovereignty of the State.⁹¹

The language of the Act made it clear that the Council understood its declaration of independence not only as a break from its current status as a Soviet Socialist Republic, but, more importantly, as a continuation of the Lithuanian state that formed in 1918 and

⁸⁹ David Remnick, "Independence Movement."

⁹⁰ Quoted in Furmanavičius, "Sajūdis' Peaceful Revolution, Part II."

⁹¹ Office of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, "Supreme Council - Reconstituent Seimas 1990 – 1992," Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, accessed May 22, 2013, http://www3.lrs.lt/seimu_istorija/w3_viewer.ViewTheme-p_int_tv_id=281&p_kalb_id=2&p_org=0.htm.

was unjustly occupied in 1940. The Act was approved by 124 legislators with 6 abstentions. After approving the Act, the legislators joined hands and chanted “*Lietuva, Lietuva*,” ‘Lithuania! Lithuania!’ , and a small crowd broke into cheers outside.⁹² Landsbergis addressed the Council: “Honorable deputies, Lithuania is *free*: she is free in spirit and in law.”⁹³

The timing of the Act of Re-Establishment was strategic: it preceded Gorbachev’s election as president of the Soviet Union. Only weeks before, Gorbachev had called for the creation of the office of president, and the newly elected president would have authority to declare a state of emergency in any republic, thereby imposing tight control from Moscow. Moreover, the new session of the Supreme Soviet intended to pass a law that would prevent republics from seceding.⁹⁴ Although Lithuania passed the Act before Gorbachev was elected president, Moscow was not without power in Lithuania, which was economically dependent upon the USSR. Gorbachev was prepared to grant Lithuania’s secession, but in return he wanted thirty-three billion dollars as compensation for factories and other Soviet assets in Lithuanian territory. Lithuania countered with an offer to allow the Soviets continued use of its ports and demanded a financial sum as remonstration for Lithuanians who had been deported or killed.⁹⁵ Gorbachev argued that Lithuania could not secede from the USSR without holding a referendum in which citizens could vote on secession. Landsbergis responded, Lithuania “is not seeking

⁹² Associated Press, “Lithuania declares its freedom; Legislature is unanimously for secession from U.S.S.R.,” *Telegram and Gazette* (Worcester, Mass), 12 March 1990, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/268364936?accountid=7014>.

⁹³ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 165-166.

⁹⁴ Olcott, 40.

⁹⁵ *New York Times*, “Two Liberations in Lithuania,” 12 March 1990, accessed June 6, 2013, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

permission to secede, but rather reclaiming the independence it lost 50 years ago,” and therefore no referendum is necessary.⁹⁶ Negotiations between the Lithuanian Seimas and Gorbachev continued, and the Sajūdis-led Seimas acknowledged that independence could not simply be declared; it would have to be won through negotiations. Landsbergis told the legislators, “We have to sit down at the table . . . We’re not going to be beating our fists, but we have to start settling accounts.”⁹⁷

The process of fully actualizing Lithuania’s independence, both politically and economically, would take over a year. Moscow instituted an oil embargo and economic blockade in 1989, forcing the Lithuanian Supreme Council to delay implementing independence. By summer 1990, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia joined in negotiations with Moscow, but the talks did not proceed fruitfully. Events came to a head in January 1991 when Soviet paratroopers seized the Vilnius press center on 11 January. Then on 13 January, “Bloody Sunday,” fifteen Lithuanian dissenters were shot or crushed by tanks at the television tower in Vilnius. The international attention and local rage fueled the independence fire once again. In February 1991 a referendum produced an overwhelming majority of Lithuanians in favor of independence. By August, all three Baltic States received international diplomatic recognition and admission to the United Nations. The Soviet State Council recognized Lithuania’s independence on 6 September 1991.

⁹⁶ Francis X. Clines, “Lithuania Offers to Discuss a Vote on its Sovereignty,” *New York Times*, 30 March 1990, accessed June 6, 2013, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

⁹⁷ Associated Press, “Lithuania declares its freedom.”

With this understanding of Sajūdis and its context in place, this dissertation will analyze the relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church. It is possible to follow the sequence of events leading to Lithuania's independence without paying heed to the role of religion or the LCC specifically, and many historians have done so. However, it is not possible to understand why events happened as they did without carefully examining the LCC's role. The relationship between Sajūdis and the LCC was essential if Lithuania was to achieve its independence; both Sajūdis and the LCC intentionally pursued a relationship with each other, and both Sajūdis and the LCC benefited from their relationship.

Research Context

This research moves toward filling a lacuna in the existing body of literature on religion and nationalism, and more specifically the literature on Lithuanian religio-nationalism and Sajūdis. A review of the available research on nationalism, religio-nationalism, Lithuanian history, and the history of Sajūdis will demonstrate that there has been relatively little in-depth analysis of Lithuania's independence movement. Moreover, the role of the Lithuanian Catholic Church during the period of the independence movement is mostly overlooked, and the relationship between the Church and Sajūdis has not been examined at all.

The theoretical foundation for the relationship between Sajūdis and the Church is the broader question of how religion and nationalism become integrated, and how religio-nationalism influenced revolutionary events in the former Soviet republics. Regarding research on this topic, V. Stanley Vardys rightly notes, "studies of the relationship between religion and nationality, and again between religion and nationalism in modern

times, are not numerous, especially in the Baltic region.”⁹⁸ Several monographs and edited volumes address nationalism or nationalities in the Soviet Union, but rarely reference Lithuania specifically. Among these works are Terry Martin’s *The Affirmative Action Empire*, Ronald Grigor Suny’s *The Revenge of the Past*, and Gale Stokes’ *From Stalinism to Pluralism*.⁹⁹ Each of these works gives weight to the different ways the Soviet Union handled the ideological and political challenges that came with governing a multi-national state. Martin argues that Stalin’s approach to nationalities backfired, leading to greater national identification instead of internationalism. Both Suny and Stokes explore the importance of nationalist revival as a catalyst for the dissolution of the USSR. Miroslav Hroch’s *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*,¹⁰⁰ which analyzes national revival, but during the nineteenth century, provides a very useful framework for the nineteenth century rise of Lithuanian nationalism.

There has been less scholarly attention paid to the union of religion with nationalism. One noteworthy exception is Dennis Dunn’s work, wherein he warns that scholars neglect religion’s impact on nationalism to their peril. Several of his publications focus on religion and nationalism in Eastern Europe during the Soviet Period

⁹⁸ V. Stanley Vardys, “The Role of the Churches in the Maintenance of Regional and National Identity in the Baltic Republics,” *Journal of Baltic Studies* XVIII, no. 3 (Fall 1987): 287.

⁹⁹ Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Gale Stokes, ed, *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe since 1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁰ Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups Among the Smaller European Nations*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

and gives beneficial insight into religio-nationalism in Lithuania.¹⁰¹ Research on religion and politics in the USSR that is focused on policy is more abundant than that which is focused on underlying influences. Sabrina Petra Ramet is first among the scholars in the field of religion and politics, having written several monographs and edited several collections pertaining to the role of religion in the USSR and Soviet policies toward religion.¹⁰² However, the majority of her work was completed prior to the dissolution of the USSR and only touches briefly on Lithuania. Paul Mojzes's *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR* is an excellent overview of religion policy and the status of churches during the Soviet era, but it does not include Lithuania among its case studies.¹⁰³ Michael Bourdeaux, whose life work has been gathering information and writing about religion in communist societies, edited *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*.¹⁰⁴ The book includes a chapter on the Baltic churches' role in the democratization process. Overall, work on religious policy in the USSR tends to focus on the Russian Orthodox Church or on the unique multi-confessional situation in Ukraine. Such works also focus on the impact of policy on religion, but not on the role of religion in shaping policy. There is no comprehensive research devoted exclusively to the role of religion in the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

¹⁰¹ Dennis Dunn, "Nationalism and Religion," paper presented at The Wilson Center, East European Program, Eastern Europe: Religion and Nationalism, Washington D.C., December 4, 1985.

¹⁰² Pedro Ramet, ed., *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Societies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990). Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987). Pedro Ramet, ed., *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1989). Sabrina P. Ramet, *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998).

¹⁰³ Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR: Before and After the Great Transformation* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1992).

¹⁰⁴ Michael Bourdeaux, ed., *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia* (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1995).

General histories of the Soviet Union are abundant, but histories of Lithuania, whether generally or as a Soviet republic, are less common. The most informative and often cited sources for Lithuanian history are: *Lithuania 700 Years*, edited by Albertas Gerutis and covering the period from pre-history to the 1960s; *The Emergence of Modern Lithuania* by Alfred Erich Senn covering World War I through 1959; and Thomas Remeikis' *Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania 1945-1980*.¹⁰⁵ The most comprehensive history of the Soviet period is *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940-1990* by Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera.¹⁰⁶ It is one of very few histories to encompass the entire Soviet period and the independence movements, but its publication predated Lithuania's re-establishment as an independent state.

Among the histories of Lithuania under the Soviets, several give some weight to Catholicism and religion more generally. Michael Bourdeaux collected first-hand accounts of the religious persecution in the USSR at the Keston Center for Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, England. He brought together documents pertaining to Lithuania in *Land of Crosses*.¹⁰⁷ Dennis Dunn closely examined the impact of the annexation of Lithuania on the Catholic Church in his book *The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government 1939-1949*.¹⁰⁸ *The Catholic Church, Dissent and Nationality* by V. Stanley Vardys is the best source for Catholic involvement in politics and dissent from

¹⁰⁵ Albertas Gerutis, ed., *Lithuania 700 Years*, trans. Algirdas Budreckis (New York: Manyland Books, 1984); Alfred Erich Senn, *The Emergence of Modern Lithuania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); Thomas Remeikis, *Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania 1945-1980* (Chicago: Institute of Lithuanian Studies Press, 1980).

¹⁰⁶ Misiunas and Taagepera, *Baltic States*.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Bourdeaux, *Land of Crosses: The Struggle for Religious Freedom in Lithuania, 1939-78* (Devon: Keston College, 1979).

¹⁰⁸ Dennis Dunn, *The Catholic Church and the Soviet Government, 1939-1949* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1977).

the inter-war independence to 1978.¹⁰⁹ All of these were written before the major changes to religion policy that Gorbachev introduced and before the formation of popular dissent movements.

By the time Sajūdis formed in 1988, academic interest in the Baltic States seems to have waned somewhat, perhaps due the rapid developments in Central Europe and the interest in Gorbachev's reforms. There are relatively few sources dealing with the independence movement in Lithuania, and some of them were written during or very soon after the events. They are informative but offer little broad analysis of causes and effects. Three books focus specifically on Lithuania and give weight to Sajūdis in particular. *Lithuania Independent Again* is the autobiography of Vytautas Landsbergis.¹¹⁰ He writes from his own experience, giving a great deal of detail about Sajūdis' goals and activities and the sequence of events that led to Lithuania regaining independence. Alfred Erich Senn writes his eyewitness account of events from 1988 to 1989 in *Lithuania Awakening*.¹¹¹ Although an excellent resource for understanding how Sajūdis got its start and what other groups were active in 1988, the book was published in 1989 before the 1990 elections that proved to be turning point in Sajūdis' political influence. *Showdown: The Lithuanian Rebellion and the Breakup of the Soviet Empire* by Richard Krickus is based on the author's personal observations and interviews with participants.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ V. Stanley Vardys, *The Catholic Church, Dissent and Nationality in Soviet Lithuania* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1978).

¹¹⁰ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*.

¹¹¹ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*.

¹¹² Krickus, *Showdown*.

For the history of the independence movements in the Baltic republics, not only Lithuania, the field is similarly sparse. Anatol Lieven's *The Baltic Revolution* is a combination of Baltic history and eyewitness testimony, with special attention to the experience of Baltic Germans, from whom the author is descended.¹¹³ Clare Thomson writes from her experience as a journalist and traveler in *The Singing Revolution*, which is not strictly academic in its account but does offer helpful insights into the time and culture.¹¹⁴ *Toward Independence: The Baltic Popular Movements* is a volume edited by Jan Arveds Trapans and includes essays explaining the popular movements in each of the Baltic States and their relationship to movements in other parts of the USSR.¹¹⁵ Each of these books mentions the Catholic Church or priests, but mostly in passing. The relationship with clergy is treated as an inevitable result of the historic ties between religion and nationalism, and is not analyzed for its causes or impact.

This review of literature on religion and nationalism, religion and Soviet politics, Lithuanian history, Catholicism in Lithuania, and the popular movements reveals several lacunae. There is a time lapse: many works were written prior to independence, and those that were written more recently focus on the post-independence political challenges. There is also very little attention given to religion and nationalism in Lithuania, and the few available works on that topic do not include the popular independence movements. First and foremost, there is no work addressing the role of the Church in the Lithuanian independence movements, or the relationship between the

¹¹³ Lieven, *Baltic Revolution*.

¹¹⁴ Clare Thomson, *The Singing Revolution: A Journey Through the Baltic States* (London: Michael Joseph, 1992).

¹¹⁵ Jan Arveds Trapans, ed., *Toward Independence: The Baltic Popular Movements* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991).

Church and Sajūdis. By addressing the Lithuanian Catholic Church's role in Sajūdis, this dissertation contributes to the literature on religio-nationalism broadly and the role of Catholicism in Lithuanian nationalism in particular.

Methodology and Boundaries

This research applies a qualitative analytical methodology to a variety of primary and secondary sources in order to understand how Sajūdis and the Church worked in harmony toward their respective goals. The sources include monographs and articles, archive materials, newspaper accounts, and *samizdat* publications. Although relatively few works are devoted solely to Sajūdis, and even fewer to the LCC's involvement therewith, the firsthand accounts and autobiographies offer invaluable insight. Monographs, including many of those listed in the research context, as well as articles from publications such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, provide the historical context and descriptions of Sajūdis meetings and events.

Archive materials from the Keston Center for Religion, Politics and Society focus on Sajūdis meetings and rallies, with special attention to the public, visible role of clergy and use of religious language and symbols. The Keston News Service and bulletins from the Lithuanian Information Center shed light on the effort that went into forging the Sajūdis-LCC relationship and how the public perceived that relationship.

Newspaper accounts from the United States, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, the Soviet Union, and Lithuanian ex-patriot communities will shed further light on events as seen through differently-biased eyes. Several *samizdat* publications, self-published documents that were printed and distributed independently by groups or individuals,

include accounts of Sajūdis events.¹¹⁶ The most significant such publications are *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* and *Sajūdžio žinios*, ‘Sajūdis News’.

The parameters of this research are narrow by design. The focus is on the relationship between the Lithuanian Catholic Church, to the exclusion of other religious groups, and Sajūdis, to the exclusion of other political or dissent movements. The scope is limited in time to the period of 1988 to 1991, from Sajūdis’ founding to Lithuania’s independence. Although there will be extensive analysis of religion and nationalism in Lithuanian history prior to 1988, the purpose of that history is to explain the relationship that was forged between the LCC and Sajūdis. The LCC’s relationship with other groups will be examined in as much as it contributes to the understanding of the relationship with Sajūdis.

This is not a comparative study. The three Baltic States are often studied as a single unit, and therefore research on Lithuania naturally invites comparison with its neighbors to the North. However, the religious situation in Estonia and Latvia, where Lutheranism was the majority confession, diverged very much from Lithuania. Lithuania’s Catholicism makes it an obvious candidate for comparison with Poland or Croatia. Comparisons with Estonia and Latvia or Poland and Croatia will be a project for another time. Such topics are too interesting and worthwhile to present as a mere sideline in this study.

Finally, this research is not primarily political, which is to say that the complexities of Soviet policy, international relations, the content of negotiations, the process of economic and democratic reform, and the inner-workings of Soviet

¹¹⁶ The Russian term, *samizdat*, was commonly used for “underground” publications in Lithuania, rather than a Lithuanian equivalent term.

government are not the focus. USSR history and policies have been well-documented and abundantly researched, and need not be repeated here. Policy and government structures will be explained only to the extent necessary for providing analysis of the relationship between Sajūdis and the LCC.

Outline of Chapters

Having laid the necessary foundation for understanding Sajūdis and the process by which Lithuania gained independence, the subsequent chapters will address aspects of the relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church. Chapter Two will focus on the religious and nationalist history of Lithuania, from pre-Christianity through the nationalist movement of the late 1980s. The chapter focuses on how Catholicism came to be tied to national identity over the course of Lithuanian history.

Chapter Three will demonstrate that the relationship between Sajūdis and the Church was essential for Lithuania to gain independence. The chapter examines cultural and geo-political sources of Lithuanian national self-understanding, and explains why non-Catholic sources of national identity were insufficient to serve as the foundation of the national reform movement. Additionally, the chapter will provide a sociological argument for the power of religion as a motivator for political action.

Chapter Four will argue that the relationship between Sajūdis and the LCC was intentional and mutually-beneficial. It examines the ways Sajūdis cultivated relationships with specific people, the role of clergy in Sajūdis meetings and rallies, the incorporation of Catholic concerns into Sajūdis' goals, and the strategic use of Catholic locations and symbols. The Church responded to and cooperated with Sajūdis through clergy participation and promotion of nationalism and independence. The chapter demonstrates

that Sajūdis and the Church actively pursued their cooperative collaboration, and that both benefited from the relationship in concrete ways.

Chapter Five concludes the study, reiterating that the relationship between Sajūdis and the Church was essential, intentional and mutually-beneficial. The conclusion will also include a brief epilogue summarizing the political and social developments that culminated with Sajūdis' decline and Lithuania's full independence from the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER TWO

Lithuanian Catholicism and Nationalism in Historical Perspective

Since its arrival on Baltic shores in the early thirteenth century, the Catholic Church has been influential at every major turning point in Lithuania's history, and as a result, Catholicism had been significant for the formation of Lithuanian national identity. The history of Catholicism in Lithuania is unique among European countries, because of the late date of conversion to Catholicism and the high percentage of Lithuanians who continue to identify as Catholic even as other historically Catholic countries in Europe have experienced trends toward secularity. Similarly, national identity developed later for Lithuanians than for many other European peoples, and a nation-state did not result from the nineteenth-century nationalist awakening the way it did for some other nations such as Germany and Italy. It is necessary to examine Lithuania's religious and nationalist history in order to understand the relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church. This chapter will examine the role of Catholicism in the development of Lithuanian national identity, thereby laying the historical foundation upon which the Sajūdis-LCC relationship was built.

Crusading knights, who were more eager for wealth and power than for converts, brought Catholicism to Lithuania in the early-thirteenth century. Catholicism was initially a military threat, which ironically led Lithuanians to identify more strongly with their indigenous religion. Catholicism later became the confession of the powerful and wealthy Polish nobility, which alienated Lithuanians who were not members of the

gentry from the foreign faith. It was only after Russia introduced Eastern Orthodox Christianity to Lithuania that Catholicism became firmly rooted among the Lithuanian people, because it became important for people to differentiate Lithuanian and Catholic identity from Russian and Orthodox. The increased identification with Catholicism coincided with the rise of nationalism across Europe in the nineteenth century, and Catholicism and nationalism continued to reinforce one another from that time forward.¹ The process of Catholicism moving from military threat, to foreign occupier, to key component of national identity had ramifications for the role that the Lithuanian Catholic Church played during the Soviet period and ultimately in the Sajūdis independence movement.

This chapter takes a long view of Lithuanian history to complete the picture of religious and national identity that is essential for understanding the relationship between Sajūdis and Lithuanian Catholic Church. Beginning with the first crusaders' attempts to convert the Lithuanian tribal groups to Catholicism, the chapter follows the paths of Catholicism and nationalism, focusing on the ways each contributed to the other. The intersecting paths of Catholic identity and national identity will place the Sajūdis-LCC bond in historical perspective.

Theoretical Foundations of Nationalism and Religio-Nationalism

Before tracing the historical path of religio-nationalism, it is necessary to define nationalism as a theoretical concept, and to determine its meaning in the context of

¹ Jerzy Ochmanski locates the beginning of Lithuanian national consciousness much earlier, with the tribal diversity of the thirteenth century. However, whatever national consciousness may have developed this early was interrupted by the union with Poland, which led to Polonization that suppressed Lithuanian distinctiveness. See Jerzy Ochmanski, "The National Idea in Lithuania from the 16th to the First Half of the 19th Century: The Problem of Cultural-Linguistic Differentiation," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 10, no. 3/4, Concepts of Nationhood in Early Modern Eastern Europe (December 1986): 301-315.

Lithuanian history and Sąjūdis. The definition, origins, and impact of nationalism have been the subject of much debate. The basic precondition for nationalism is a nation or nationality, but even this can be difficult to define. Ernest Renan provides a metaphysical definition: “a nation is a soul, a spiritual principle,” and “a great aggregation of men, with a healthy spirit and warmth of heart” who share a “moral conscience.”² Karl Deutsch’s definition is more pragmatic: “a *nationality* is . . . a people striving to equip itself with power, with some machinery of compulsion strong enough to make the enforcement of its commands sufficiently probable to aid in the spread of habits of voluntary compliance with them.”³ Renan’s and Deutsch’s definitions complement one another: the soul of a nation is a necessary precondition for the nation to strive for power.

Some definitions of nationality stress the idea that the nation is an organic element of humanity. Clifford Geertz explains that primordial attachment to one’s nation is rooted in “kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language . . . and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom, and so on, are seen to have an ineffable, and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves.”⁴ Coerciveness is a key element, because nationalism has the power to compel people to take risks in pursuit of nationalist aims. According to Walker Connor the essential element of a nation is a psychological bond based upon the conviction that the people group shares a common ancestry and evolved from a single source. This

² Ernest Renan, “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” in *Nationalism*, ed. John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17-18.

³ Karl W. Deutsch, “Nationalism and Social Communication,” in Hutchinson and Smith, 28.

⁴ Clifford Geertz, “Primordial and Civic Ties,” in Hutchinson and Smith, 31.

conviction that the nation is essentially an extended blood family may lead to “thinking with the heart (or with the blood) rather than with the mind,” which is a useful way to understand violence motivated by nationalism.⁵ The primordial definition resonates with the Lithuanian people who trace their lineage to the ancient Balts, and is especially evident in Lithuanian emphases on language and national myths.

Ernest Gellner takes issue with the theory that nations are primordial or an essential fact of human nature. He argues that nations are invented and cultivated to meet the political or military goals of the nationalists:

Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long-delayed political destiny are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes takes pre-existing cultures and turns them into nations, sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: *that* is a reality, for better or worse, and in general an inescapable one.⁶

Eric Hobsbawm takes a similar view, but places the blame for inventing nations on historians. He claims,

[modern and contemporary historians] are highly relevant to that comparatively recent historical innovation, the ‘nation’, with its associated phenomena: nationalism, the nation-state, national symbols, histories and the rest. All these rest on exercises in social engineering which are often deliberate and always innovative, if only because historical novelty implies innovation.⁷

Gellner’s and Hobsbawm’s definitions also resonate with Lithuanian history. Historians and nationalists or patriots have played a significant role in articulating Lithuanian ideals, preserving language and culture, and, when necessary, imagining a shared mythology.

Ronald Suny categorizes the competing primordial versus invented views of nationality

⁵ Walker Connor, “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group, is a . . .,” in Hutchinson and Smith, 37-38.

⁶ Ernest Gellner, “Nationalism and High Cultures,” in Hutchinson and Smith, 63-64.

⁷ Eric Hobsbawm, “The Nation as Invented Tradition,” in Hutchinson and Smith, 76.

as the “Sleeping Beauty” view, in which “long-repressed primordial national consciousnesses” erupt, versus the “Bride of Frankenstein” view, which emphasizes the invented nature of nationality and nationalism.⁸ Although the two views are contradictory on their surface, both are helpful lenses through which to examine Lithuanian national identity.

Other definitions of nation and nationality are more pragmatic or descriptive.

Miroslav Hroch defines the nation as

a large social group characterized by a combination of several kinds of relation (economic, territorial, political, religious, cultural, linguistic and so on) which arise on the one hand from the solution found to the fundamental antagonism between man and nature on a specific compact land-area, and on the other hand from the reflection of these relations in the consciousness of the people.⁹

According to Hroch’s explanation, the Lithuanian nationality formed when a group of people tamed the land and constructed a common life that included religion and language that set them apart from their neighbors, as well as economic and territorial boundaries that clearly identified who was not a member of the nation. Joseph Stalin’s definition was similarly descriptive: “A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture.”¹⁰ Stalin’s definition of the nation influenced the Soviet Union’s policies for managing minority nations in the multi-national Soviet state.

⁸ Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution, and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 3-4.

⁹ Miroslav Hroch, *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 4-5.

¹⁰ Joseph Stalin, “The Nation,” in Hutchinson and Smith, 20.

National consciousness, meaning the awareness that one is a member of a nation, follows after the recognition that the nation exists. The consciousness of national identity is a “complex phenomenon described as an intersubjective cultural whole of human relations and their interaction, which is expressed by the language, faiths, traditional values and unique emotional attitude.”¹¹ The catalyst for national consciousness is contact with a non-member of one’s own nation. National differentiation in its most primal sense originates in “the uncanny experience of confronting others who, perforce, remained mute in response to [primitive man’s] attempts at communication, whether oral or through symbolic gestures.”¹² Differentiation from an “other” is not limited to the experience of primitive man’s communication barriers, although the unintelligibility of the Lithuanian language to outsiders makes communication an enduring aspect of Lithuanian national consciousness in particular. Differentiation may also be based upon military action, physical territory, religion, physiological traits, or other factors even if language happens to be a shared attribute. Writing about nationalism in Eastern Europe in 1990, Renata Salecl explored the role of the other as enemy:

. . . national identification with “our kind” is based on the fantasy of an enemy, an alien who has insinuated himself into our society and constantly threatens us with habits, discourse and rituals which are not “our kind.” No matter what this Other “does,” his very existence is perceived as threatening.¹³

The enemy or non-native serves to reinforce those aspects of national self-differentiation that are potentially threatened by the presence of the other. In this way, Poles, Russians,

¹¹ Liliana Astra, “Changes of Identity: Differences Between Generations,” in *Changes of Identity in Modern Lithuania*, ed. Meilute Taljunaite (Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1996), 213.

¹² John Armstrong, “Nations before Nationalism,” in Hutchinson and Smith, 142.

¹³ Renata Salecl, “National Identity and Socialism Moral Majority,” in *Becoming National*, ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 418-419.

Germans, and other Balts were instrumental in uniting the Lithuanian people around their shared national identity.

Once a nation has gained national consciousness, there are other factors that can transform members of a nation into nationalists. Nationalism as an ideology is more than simply awareness of the nation's existence: it is the desire to preserve or strengthen the nation, which may include territory, language, religion, ethnicity, and political and economic security. Clifford Geertz summarizes the motivation that drives nationalism as "the desire to be recognized as responsible agents whose wishes, acts, hopes, and opinions 'matter,' and the desire to build an efficient, dynamic modern state."¹⁴

Similarly, Elie Kedourie explains that nationalism "divides humanity into separate and distinct nations, claims that such nations must constitute sovereign states, and asserts that the members of a nation reach freedom and fulfillment by cultivating the peculiar identity of their own nation and by sinking their own persons in the greater whole of the nation."¹⁵ Lithuania's history of oppression and occupation made nationalism a powerful force. The nationalistic desire for sovereignty was so powerful that people were willing to risk their own safety, and those who became martyrs for the national cause only inspired greater nationalism among their compatriots.

Nationalism as a force promoting the independent nation-state is a relatively benign idea, but nationalism in pursuit of national sovereignty often involves violence. Thus nationalism often has a dark side, as nationalists forcibly exclude non-nationals. Nationalism has been responsible for war, genocide, xenophobia, and all manner of

¹⁴ Geertz, 30.

¹⁵ Elie Kedourie, "Nationalism and Self-Determination," in Hutchinson and Smith, 49.

oppression. As Adam Michnik explains, “nationalism is a degenerate form, after all, of a natural need to live with national dignity and in an independent national state, since nationalism amounts to intolerance: it allows the rejection of another person because of his otherness.”¹⁶ Lithuanian nationalism was not immune from the consequences of intolerance. Lithuanian poet Tomas Venclova critiqued nationalist fundamentalism in 1991: “All this mythologizing of the glorious past, of perfect language, of a sacral primitive condition, of eternal victimization and unerring national spirit [. . .] played a positive role under certain circumstances, but today it is definitely bound to become a burden.”¹⁷ Lithuania’s history of struggle for national self-determination made some people cognizant of the need to protect minority rights in Lithuania, but others were determined to protect the nation by promoting ethnic homogeneity.

It is significant to note that Lithuanians were aware of the negative connotations of the term “nationalism” and resented being called “nationalists” in the Soviet or foreign press. Soviet efforts to discredit Sajūdis on the basis of its nationalism were met with hostile response from Sajūdis’ newspaper, *Sajudžio žionios*.¹⁸ In that publication, Antanas Kulakauskas wrote, “today, we can finally complain out loud that we, the Lithuanians, often were and still are unreasonably accused of nationalism,” and went on to explain how the term was “wrongly manipulated to mean something that the Stalinists

¹⁶ Adam Michnik, “Nationalism,” in *The National Idea in Eastern Europe: The Politics of Ethnic and Civic Community*, ed. Gerasimos Augoustinos (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1996), 135.

¹⁷ Tomas Venclova, “Lithuania: The Opening and the Hand of the Past,” *Salmagundi* 90/91 (Spring-Summer 1991): 9.

¹⁸ Alfred Erich Senn, *Lithuania Awakening* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 97, 115.

and Brezhnevists wanted it to mean.”¹⁹ For the purpose of this research, nationalism and nationalist are descriptive, not pejorative terms, and are used according to Dennis Dunn’s definitions:

Nationalism . . . is a doctrine held by all political groups that aim to set up and maintain a nation by stirring people’s consciousness of their nationality, and to shape their aspirations into a movement for political action. In this context, a nationalist is a person who agrees with or argues for the goals of nationalism. In effect, nationalism is a means to organize or reorganize a state – a basis providing legitimacy to the process of fashioning or refashioning a state . . . The only thing that nationalists hold in common is the belief that nations have a right to determine their own destinies.²⁰

Lithuanian nationalists, including Sajūdis members, were those who desired and fought for an independent Lithuanian state. Understanding the concepts that underlie nationalism and the phases of national development contributes to a better understanding of Sajūdis’ activities and goals.

Religion as a component of national consciousness and nationalism requires a more in-depth examination, because religion can exert an influence on people that far exceeds territorial boundaries, language, or other mundane aspects of national differentiation. Benedict Anderson recognized the important role of religion in nation formation: “nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being.”²¹ One of these “cultural systems” is the community that forms around shared religion. The extent to which religion was tied to

¹⁹ Antanas Kulakauskas, “Ar lietuviai nacionalistai? [Are Lithuanians nationalists?]” *Sajūdžio žinios* 39 (September 20, 1988).

²⁰ Dennis J. Dunn, “Nationalism and Religion,” (presented at the East European Program European Institute, Eastern Europe: Religion and Nationalism, The Wilson Center, Washington D.C., December 4, 1985), 33.

²¹ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (New York: Verso, 2006), 12.

national identity in different Central and Eastern European countries during the Soviet period was a major determinant of the role religion played in the individual political revolutions of 1989 to 1991. Dennis Dunn addresses the complex relationship between religion and national identity in Eastern Europe:

because the Eastern Europeans lacked for most of modern history a national state, national consciousness drew on a variety of sources of inspiration including religion, language, history and race. It appears, in fact, that religion was the key factor influencing the formation of nations in the Balkans and Eastern Europe. . . . Religion helped explain who belonged and who did not by distinguishing among true believers, heretics, schismatics, and infidels.²²

Each European country or Soviet republic had its own religious and national history, and in most cases the majority religion came to be inseparably linked to national identity.²³

Thus religion inevitably played a role in the rise of nationalist movements in the 1980s.

The role of religious dissent in East Germany, Poland, Croatia, Hungary, and other countries has been explored to varying degrees.²⁴ The same cannot be said for the role of the Catholic Church in Lithuania.

²² Dennis J. Dunn, "Nationalism and Religion in Eastern Europe," in *Religion and Nationalism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union*, ed. Dennis J. Dunn (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 11.

²³ Take for example Lutheranism in East Germany, Catholicism in Poland, or the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches of Ukraine. Estonia and Latvia are noteworthy exceptions. Although Lutheranism was the dominant faith and the confession of the Estonian and Latvian national churches, its bond with national identity was weak compared to Catholicism in Lithuania or Orthodoxy in Russia.

²⁴ See: Niels Nielsen, *Revolutions in Eastern Europe: The Religious Roots* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991); Ina Merdjanova, *Religion, Nationalism, and Civil Society in Eastern Europe—The Postcommunist Palimpsest* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2002); Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag* (New York: Continuum, 1998); Pedro Ramet, ed., *Catholicism and Politics in Communist Countries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); Pedro Ramet, ed., *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1989); Patrick Michel, *Politics and Religion in Eastern Europe: Catholicism in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia*, trans. Alan Braley (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Jörg Swoboda, *The Revolution of the Candles: Christians in the Revolution of the German Democratic Republic*, ed. Richard V. Pierard, trans. Edwin P. Arnold (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1996); J. Martin Bailey, *The Spring of Nations: Churches in the Rebirth of Central and Eastern Europe* (New York: Friendship Press, 1991).

In order to understand how Lithuania won its independence, one must take into account the Catholic Church's role in the popular independence movement. The LCC's role in the independence movement was the culmination of centuries of Catholicism interweaving with national identity; therefore, it is essential to examine the long history of Lithuania's national and religious development from Catholicization to national revolution.²⁵

Catholicization and State Formation: The Twelfth Century to 1385

Despite the fact that folk religion continued to be widespread among Lithuanian people long after the introduction of Catholicism, relatively little is known about ancient Baltic religion. What has been written about Baltic religion mostly comes from the sixteenth century or later and combines oral tradition, creative license, and generalizations from the belief systems of other folk religions. There is good evidence that the Lithuanians practiced an animistic religion in which "there was no distinct borderline between human beings, seen as a part of nature, and animals, plants, or rocks."²⁶ The folk religion had innumerable minor gods who were not named or anthropomorphized, in addition to Perkūnas who filled a Zeus-Jupiter function and is the only known pre-historic Lithuanian god-name.²⁷ As for praxis, practitioners seem to have used sacred places, including altars, as were used in Vilnius, and tradition tells of other locations that were sacred to the indigenous religion including what is now the Hill

²⁵ Catholicization refers to the process of Lithuania becoming Catholic, both in its majority adherence and as the official religion. Catholicization is specified rather than the more common Christianization in order to differentiate from Orthodox Christianity, which was already established in the Slavic states by the time Catholicism came to Lithuania.

²⁶ Endre Bojtár, *Foreward to the Past* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997), 289.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 290, 282.

of Crosses in Šiauliai. Due to the destruction of such sites during Catholicization as well as the natural decay of the materials used to construct them, primarily wood, little evidence of specific sacred sites has survived.

Catholicism's arrival in the Baltic region was political, militaristic, and chronologically late compared to the rest of Europe. The Teutonic Knights, a militaristic crusading order from Prussia, entered Lithuania around 1200 CE. The crusaders, who were much more successful at their military endeavors than their missionary efforts, gained control of territory and threatened the power of tribal leaders. In 1236, Mindaugas, who had united the Lithuanian tribes, submitted to baptism in order to reach a truce with the Teutonic Knights. In exchange for Mindaugas' conversion and some land, the knights promised him the kingship over Lithuania. Mindaugas' conversion was hollow; a 1252 addition to the Polish *Chronicle of Halicz-Volhynia* describes how Mindaugas' "baptism was disingenuous and he continued to sacrifice to his gods in secret, firstly to Nunadjev and to Teljavel and Diverikz, to the Rabbit-god, and to Mendeina [. . .] and he openly admitted to being a pagan."²⁸ Mindaugas was killed in battle in 1263 and a quick succession of rulers managed to hold together the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and repel attacks from the Teutonic Knights and other rivals.²⁹ Lithuania was politically stable, and the indigenous belief system was the dominant religious expression; Catholicism made almost no headway. Grand Duke Gediminas, who ruled from 1316 to 1341, famously wrote a letter to Pope Benedict XII in which he

²⁸ Quoted in Bojtár, 309. The *Chronicle of Halicz-Volhynia* was written during Mindaugas' lifetime, and is therefore the most contemporary document available on Mindaugas' life, although the Polish source seems to have some bias against him.

²⁹ Juozas Jakštas, "Lithuania to World War I," in *Lithuania 700 Years*, ed. Albertas Gerutis, trans. Algirdas Budreckis (New York: Manyland Books, 1984), 45-49, 52.

decried the villainy of the Teutonic Knights and suggested that Lithuania might have been successfully Christianized were it not for their attacks.³⁰

Catholicism's failure to take root among the Lithuanians was due in part to the brutality of the Teutonic Knights, but Eric Christiansen argues that the deeply-rooted Lithuanian indigenous religion was also a factor. Christiansen explains that indigenous religion contributed to the success and stability of the Lithuanian state: "Since [the Lithuanians] were prosperous and well-organized, the example of the neighbouring Christian peoples was not in itself seductive . . . Paganism allowed the Lithuanians to govern Latins, Greeks, Jews and Tartars impartially."³¹ Baltic folk religion had a well-developed complex of rituals, and rulers put themselves and their armies at the center, thus linking indigenous belief with military success.³² In the context of long-term military threat, the Lithuanian people's logical response was to continue their indigenous religious practices in order to reinforce the alliance between the gods and the military, and also differentiate themselves from their Catholic enemies.

Attachment to indigenous religion and observance of its rituals persisted among Lithuanians for centuries after the introduction of Catholicism. Catholic Saints became syncretized with the gods of Lithuanian mythology. For example, the Virgin Mary "as the Queen of Heaven and the protector of pregnant women, had merged with Žemyna, the earth goddess, and probably with Laima, the goddess of fate."³³ Missionaries to the

³⁰ Jakštas, 45-49, 53.

³¹ Eric Christiansen, *The Northern Crusades* (New York: Penguin, 1997), 145.

³² Ibid., 144.

³³ Antanas Musteikis, *The Reformation in Lithuania: Religious Fluctuations in the Sixteenth Century* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988), 72.

Lithuanians attempted to replace sites of pagan ritual observance with Catholic churches or shrines. According to tradition, Vilnius Cathedral was constructed in the Sacred Cape where the Lithuanians worshiped their deities, and other churches were built in the sacred woods. It is possible that building churches on already sacred sites merely reinforced attachment to the sacred space, simply changing the name of the deity worshiped there.³⁴ Antanas Maceina explains, “while former Lithuanian cult objects (sacred alkas, venerable trees, adders, etc.) were destroyed or banned, the centuries-old attitudes of pre-Christian religiosity remained in people’s . . . layer of consciousness.”³⁵ For unknown generations after the Lithuanian people encountered Catholicism, their folk religion and Catholicism merged such that the elements of each could not easily be separated. Although the people continued to identify themselves primarily by tribal affiliation, not as members of a Lithuanian nationality, the presence of Catholicism contributed to Lithuanian identity by providing an “other” against which the Lithuanian people began to differentiate themselves.

Catholicism and National Identity in the Polish-Lithuanian Empire: 1385 to 1772

The next major political and religious shift took place in 1385. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland united when Grand Duke Jogaila married Hedwig, the eleven-year-old queen of Poland. Jogaila accepted baptism for himself and his family as part of the marriage agreement, and in 1387 Jogaila baptized the Lithuanian people en masse at the Neris River, which runs through Vilnius.³⁶ Empowerment of

³⁴ Musteikis, 70-71.

³⁵ Ibid., 76.

³⁶ 1387 is considered the birth year of Christianity in Lithuania. In 1987 there were anniversary celebrations marking 600 years of Catholicism in Lithuania.

Polish clergy and efforts to rid the country of indigenous religion followed, but despite the king's efforts, folk religion continued to flourish. Catholicism was a foreign faith, and its practitioners in Lithuania were almost exclusively the privileged classes of urban, Polish land-owners.³⁷ The bishop and priests who served in Lithuania were Polish, and the state formally supported the Church by granting it land and other holdings. Although Catholicism was firmly established as the religion of Lithuania's elite, the rural population had little interest in abandoning their traditional beliefs. Lithuania was a nation governed by Catholics, but not a Catholic nation.

The turning point in the Lithuanian people's acceptance of Catholicism came during the rule of King Casimir, who was crowned in Lithuania in 1440 then in Poland in 1447. One factor that contributed to Catholicization during Casimir's reign was his emphasis on education, which advanced Lithuania's westernization. Casimir wanted to educate his subjects, and looked to the universities of western Europe for guidance. The resulting growth in western educational influences came hand in hand with an increasingly western worldview, which included a more prominent cultural role for the Catholic Church. Thus, Casimir's cultural and political orientation toward Western Europe strengthened the influence of Catholicism in Lithuania.

Another factor that contributed to Catholic identity under Casimir was the growing military threat from The Grand Duchy of Moscow, which was by then the center of the Eastern Orthodox world.³⁸ The Grand Duchies of Lithuania and Moscow were

³⁷ Jakštas, 59-60.

³⁸ Saulius A. Sužiedelis, "Casimir IV," in *Historical Dictionary of Lithuania* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 71. His importance in the Catholicization of Lithuania led to Casimir's canonization. The only Lithuanian saint, he is a figure deeply entrenched in Lithuanian national history.

ancient rivals, owing in part to Baltic trade routes and mutual desire for expansion.³⁹ Politically-motivated marriages between the Lithuanian and Muscovite ruling families further complicated their relationship.⁴⁰ Commensurate with Casimir coming to power in the united Polish-Lithuanian Empire, Muscovite prince Vasilii II “asserted his sovereignty by using the title ‘sovereign of all Rus’,” and named his son Ivan as his co-ruler.⁴¹ Ivan and his successors expanded the territory of Rus to the East and North, and made clear their desire to expand west toward Lithuania. The military threat from the Grand Duchy of Moscow strengthened the Polish-Lithuanian political union, and also invigorated its Catholic identity.⁴² It became more important for Lithuanians to differentiate themselves from Orthodox Russia than from Catholic Poland, thus the Lithuanians adopted more Catholic practices. The result was “a synthesis of various religious beliefs paganistic and Christian. Outwardly observing [Catholicism], they persisted in the performance of old rites that were pagan but found their proper place in

³⁹ Nancy Shields Kollmann, “Russia,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume VII, c. 1415 to c. 1500*, ed. Christopher Allmand and Rosamond McKitterick (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 751.

⁴⁰ For a history of ruling dynasties, see: Janet Martin, “The Emergence of Moscow (1359-1462),” in *The Cambridge History of Russia*, ed. Maureen Perrie (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

⁴¹ J. Martin, 178. Not only was Moscow waging battles to expand its territory, but the ruling family was in a civil war of its own. Vasilii II battled his uncle Iurii then his cousin Vasilii Kosoi followed by another cousin, Dmitrii Shemiaka, for control of Moscow. Vasilii retook power in Moscow in 1446/7. Ivan would assume the throne as Ivan III in 1462.

⁴² The Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church were engaged in disputes and negotiations during the mid-fifteenth century that paralleled Lithuanian-Russian relations. The Ottoman Empire posed a serious threat to the Byzantine Empire, and the former hoped for help from Europe. Fearing that Europe would be unwilling to aid the Byzantine Empire because of its Eastern Orthodox confession, Isidor led the Russian Orthodox Church into reconciliation negotiations with the Roman Catholic Church. The council achieved a union of the two churches in 1439, but when Isidor returned to Moscow as a cardinal, Vasilii II deposed him and rejected the union. See: J. Martin, 183-4. It is not clear to what extent these negotiations directly impacted the Catholic Church in Poland-Lithuania.

the total religious experience.”⁴³ Lithuanians integrated Catholic practices into the existing indigenous beliefs, but the average Lithuanian was not versed in Catholic doctrine. Catholicism was firmly established on Lithuanian soil, but as late as the sixteenth century it was not clearly differentiated in the peasants’ minds from their folk beliefs.

The Protestant Reformation briefly interrupted Catholic adherence among the privileged classes.⁴⁴ For a brief period, Lutheran and Calvinist Protestantism flourished among the nobility. The peasantry followed suit, attending Lutheran or Calvinist services with the same enthusiasm as they exhibited for Catholicism: it was a formality imposed by the Poles, and indigenous religious belief persisted. Protestantism waned just as quickly as it had spread for several reasons. It lacked the official support of the Grand Duke, it split into various sects, and most importantly, the Jesuits arrived in 1569 with more effective missionary methods, which included preaching in the Lithuanian language.⁴⁵

Catholicism did not start to make significant headway among the Lithuanian people until the early seventeenth century, by which time Jesuit missionaries had been active in Lithuania for several decades. The Jesuits established colleges in Vilnius and other locations, as well as a seminary, but these mostly attracted members of the gentry. In order to reach the peasantry, Jesuits scattered their missions around the country, even to the smallest towns. They also mastered the native language, and when they preached sermons that “even non-Catholics flocked to hear,” they successfully “managed to reach

⁴³ Musteikis, 69.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 43.

⁴⁵ Jakštas, 75-77.

a great number of people.”⁴⁶ This was the first opportunity people had to engage with Catholicism without a language barrier, and it was effective. Jesuits encouraged the use of Lithuanian in education, unlike earlier priests who insisted on Polish, and publication in Lithuanian increased. The Jesuits also expanded their monasteries and colleges, which became centers of culture and education.⁴⁷ Slowly the Lithuanian people gained knowledge of Catholic doctrine and, over time, Catholicism became more commonplace than folk religion. Symbols and practices of folk religion continued to be incorporated into Catholicism, but Catholic doctrine became embedded in Lithuanian culture such that the indigenous elements were more like vestiges of history than hints of true belief breaking through a dogmatic shell.

The process by which Catholicism became the religion of the Lithuanian people was slow and halting. By the time Jesuits were preaching in rural villages, other countries in Europe had long-since forgotten their indigenous religions and were fighting bloody wars over Christian confessions. In contrast, the Protestant Reformation had a minimal impact in Lithuania, where Catholicism was only just beginning to gain a foothold among the Lithuanian people. The process of Catholicization was still underway when the Russian Empire burst onto the scene and changed the political and religious landscape.

⁴⁶ Jakštas, 87.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 88.

Catholicism and Nationalism under the Russian Empire: 1772 to 1918

Catherine the Great occupied Lithuania then annexed it to the Russian Empire beginning in 1772, after the Great Northern War.⁴⁸ For the first approximately sixty years after the annexation, Russia's influence in the Lithuanian territory was almost entirely limited to administration, and there was little change in Lithuanians' daily life. But, beginning in the 1830s a nationalist ideological movement was underway in Western Europe that would soon spread into Lithuania, and the Russian government would have to respond to several nationalist uprisings.

The first flare up of nationalist agitation was among students at the University of Vilnius, where the ideas of the French Revolution and the broad European cultural and social revolution were in vogue. On 29-30 June 1831, four hundred Lithuanian university students, aided by Polish rebels, took up arms, but Tsar Nicholas I quickly quelled the revolt and closed the University the following year.⁴⁹ In 1863, during Alexander II's reign, another revolt gained strength, with the goal of giving "the land to the people of all religions immediately and free."⁵⁰ Several thousand rebels met their Russian oppressors in a three-day battle, which the better-skilled Russian troops won handily. In response to the uprisings, "the government made a special effort to Russify law, education and religion."⁵¹ Alexander II, who was emperor from 1855 until 1881, adopted an especially

⁴⁸ Jakštas, 97ff. The Great Northern War, 1700 to 1721, was a conflict between Peter the Great's Russian Empire and Charles XII's Swedish Empire. Peter the Great was victorious, leaving Russia as the dominant power in the Baltic region, and a major player in European politics.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 119.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 129.

⁵¹ Edward C. Thaden, "Reform and Russification in the Western Borderlands, 1796-1855," in *Russification in the Baltic Provinces and Finland, 1855-1914*, ed. Edward C. Thaden (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 22.

aggressive policy of administrative russification in an effort to “bring all elements of the Baltic population closer to Russia through the establishment of Russian as the official language of the local state bureaucracy, the introduction of Russian municipal, judicial, and educational reforms, and the development of railways and economic ties linking [the Baltic] region with the rest of the empire.”⁵² Russification had the unintended consequence of separating Lithuania from its Polish governors and clergy, thereby weakening the Polish influence and accentuating Lithuanian distinctiveness.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 spilled over into Lithuania and took on a life of its own there as the educated class and clergy took up the cause of Lithuanian autonomy. The struggle for religious rights became one facet of the already active nationalist movement.⁵³ The Lithuanian Catholic clerics were staunch nationalists, and united with liberals and nationalist radicals who opposed the tsarist regime. Moreover, priests were the only Lithuanian intellectuals who were not at risk of being relocated to work in other parts of the empire, because Nicholas II did not want Catholicism to spread, which heightened the priests’ importance for the Lithuanian nationalist movement.⁵⁴ Nicholas II ultimately suppressed the revolution, but Lithuanian nationalists made a few gains. Nicholas II allowed Lithuanians to build their own schools and provide instruction in the Lithuanian language and he also lifted some restrictions on the Catholic Church.⁵⁵ The

⁵² Edward C. Thaden, “Administrative Russification in the Baltic Provinces, 1855-1881,” in Thaden, 33.

⁵³ Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 7.

⁵⁴ Alfred Erich Senn, *The Emergence of Modern Lithuania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 8-9.

⁵⁵ Jakštas, 139-140.

national movement was not successful in geo-political or military terms, but it laid the groundwork for national consciousness that would be activated in years to come.

The Catholic Church suffered greatly under russification policies after the 1830s. Because Catholicism was a marker of differentiation between the Lithuanians and the Russians, and because Catholic clergy had not opposed the nationalist uprisings, “the government came out strongly against the Roman Catholic Church, it confiscated much of its property, and it made it clear that from this time on the area was to be definitely governed by Russians.”⁵⁶ The Lithuanian Catholic clergy had begun to operate independently of Polish Catholic hierarchy, and “in league with the new intelligentsia, the activist [Lithuanian] clergy resisted the Czar’s campaign to russify the Lithuanians and force them to join the Russian Orthodox Church.”⁵⁷ The Russian administrators also diminished the Catholic Church’s influence by taking education “out of the hands of Catholic clergy.”⁵⁸ Russia’s attempts to limit the Lithuanian Catholic Church and its ties to nationalism had the opposite effect, because persecution strengthened the Catholic Church’s ties to the Lithuanian nation. Miroslav Hroch explains the role of the Catholic Church in national self-awareness during the Russian incursion:

[religious bonds] subsequently became a support for patriotic activity against the advance of Tsarist oppression, and an instrument in the creation of national consciousness among the Lithuanian-speaking population. . . . The extraordinarily powerful role of religion in Lithuania derived . . . from its position as a kind of

⁵⁶ Clarence Manning, *The Forgotten Republics* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1952), 110.

⁵⁷ Richard R. Krickus, “Democratization in Lithuania,” in *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (London: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 291.

⁵⁸ Edward C. Thaden, “Reform and Russification in the Western Borderlands, 1796-1855,” in Thaden, 22.

temporary “substitute” for cultural relations, which could not themselves fully develop owing to the persecution of the authorities.⁵⁹

Just as Catholicism had helped the Lithuanians differentiate themselves from the Grand Duchy of Moscow, it once again took on the role of identifying people as Lithuanian in the face of Russian Orthodoxy.

Russian opposition to the Catholic Church was not purely political or merely a reaction against nationalism; Russian Orthodox theology underpinned Russia’s efforts to decrease Catholic influence and force the Lithuanian people to convert to Russian Orthodoxy. At the heart of Russia’s religion policy was the Orthodox model of church-state relations known as *Symphonia*.⁶⁰ In this model, church and state are an organic, indivisible whole.⁶¹ At the same time, church and state are distinct, “for without distinction there can be no harmony; but they complement and support each other in the larger whole, which is a godly Christian society.”⁶² Justinian articulated the theology of *Symphonia* in his sixth century *Novella*:

The priesthood ministers to things divine; the imperial authority is set over, and shows diligence in, things human; but both proceed from one and the same source, and both adorn the life of man. Nothing, therefore, will be a greater matter of concern to the emperor than the dignity and honor of the clergy; the more as they offer prayers to God without ceasing on his behalf. For if the priesthood be in all respects without blame, and the full of faith before God, and if the imperial authority rightly and duly adorn the commonwealth committed to its

⁵⁹ Hroch, 95-96.

⁶⁰ *Symphonia* is the Greek word meaning “harmony,” indicating the harmonious or complementary relationship between the Orthodox Church and the state.

⁶¹ Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1992), 50.

⁶² Paul Valliere, “Introduction to the Modern Orthodox Tradition,” in *The Teachings of Modern Orthodox Christianity on Law, Politics and Human Nature*, ed. John Witte, Jr. and Frank S. Alexander (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 11.

charge, there will ensue a happy concord which will bring forth all good things for mankind.⁶³

The belief that the empire's prosperity would result from the priests and the governors working in unity meant that the tsar understood religious discord as undermining the blessings of God upon his empire. Therefore, converting the Lithuanian people to Orthodoxy was not only a tactic for asserting Russian political authority, it was a sacred obligation upon which the very existence of the empire depended. In an effort to win converts, Orthodox priests stressed the worldly benefits of conversion, and took measures to weaken the non-Orthodox churches.⁶⁴ The tsars removed non-Orthodox religious education from schools, limited the rights of Catholic clergy, and excluded them from holding administrative positions in local government, thereby curtailing their opportunities to influence society.⁶⁵

National consciousness in the nineteenth century was not only motivated by politics and the desire for national self-determination; cultural awakening, spurred on by interest in folk culture and language also contributed to the nationalistic spirit. Nationalist newspapers, pamphlets, and booklets promoted "Catholicism, morality, Lithuanian language and national feeling, and resistance against the Muscovite tyranny."⁶⁶ The growth of literacy combined with access to Lithuanian language publications spurred resistance to the Cyrillic alphabet and the Russian language. Folk

⁶³ Aristeides Papadakis, "The Historical Tradition of Church-State Relations under Orthodoxy," in *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Pedro Ramet, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 39-40.

⁶⁴ Michael H. Haltzel, "Religious Turmoil," in Thaden, 161-162.

⁶⁵ Edward C. Thaden, "The Abortive Experiment: Cultural Russification in the Baltic Provinces, 1881-1914," in Thaden, 71.

⁶⁶ Constantine R. Jurgela, *History of the Lithuanian Nation* (New York: John Felsberg, 1947), 476.

stories and mythology also captured the nationalist imagination. Nineteenth century historians conducted scholarly investigation into Lithuanian myths and legends, and filled in the gaps with creative license.⁶⁷ Their work created a national mythology that could unite the Lithuanian folk around a common ancestral identity, which echoes Hobsbawm's view that nationalism is in part the result of invented traditions.

As the long nineteenth century drew to a close with the beginning of World War I, the national consciousness of Lithuania's people was still in the process of awakening. More Lithuanians had entered the intelligentsia and come to an academic appreciation for their nationality, which led them to revolt against their Russian oppressors, even in the face of almost certain defeat. For peasants, increased literacy contributed to national consciousness as nationalist publications circulated in towns and villages. Catholicism complemented education as a means of expanding Lithuanian national identity, and Catholicism was integrated into Lithuanian national identity as a source of differentiation from Russia and Orthodoxy. The Russian influence only strengthened those aspects of Lithuanian identity that differentiated Lithuanians from Russians, resulting in Catholicism's firm establishment as a central aspect of Lithuanian national identity.

The Catholic Church and the State during The Inter-War Independence: 1918 to 1939

During World War I, Lithuania was in the crossfire between Russian and German forces, and Baltic territory was desirable due to its natural resources and Baltic Sea access. The War also put Lithuania at a slight advantage for gaining independence, however, since Russia was more concerned with the Bolshevik Revolution and World War I than with the growing movement for Lithuanian independence. In 1918 the

⁶⁷ Bojtar, 317.

Lithuanians organized an administration and an army; in 1919 it successfully repulsed the Red Army and later pushed back the German forces. In 1920 all three Baltic countries signed peace treaties with the Bolshevik government, which renounced claims to sovereignty over Baltic territories. Germany retained control of Klaipėda, the Lithuanian port city on the Baltic Sea that the Germans called Memel, and Poland gained control of Vilnius, which left Kaunas as the capital city of independent Lithuania.⁶⁸ Each Baltic state established a uni-cameral parliament, and Aleksandras Stulginskis was elected to a five-year term as the first president of Lithuania in 1920.⁶⁹ Having gained independence, Lithuania looked West: the new country was firm in its opposition to the Soviet Union, and embraced the cultural and political traditions of Western Europe.⁷⁰

The Catholic Church was an active participant in Lithuanian politics during and after the transition to independence. Five of the signatories to the 1918 declaration of independence were clerics, and the Seimas elected in 1920 included eleven clerics. The dominant political party in the early years of independence was the Christian Democratic Party, which was affiliated with the LCC.⁷¹ The LCC engaged with society through journalism, education, economic development, and eventually politics. Priests authored legislation, oversaw land reform, ran consumer cooperatives, and managed parliamentary

⁶⁸ Vilnius, Kaunas, and Klaipėda are and have been for centuries the first, second, and third largest cities in Lithuania. But Kaunas is the only one that has always been within Lithuanian territory, and therefore is less multi-national than Polish-influenced Vilnius or German-influenced Klaipėda. This becomes significant when the Kaunas and Vilnius factions of Sąjūdis disagree over the role of ethnicity in national identity and citizenship.

⁶⁹ Misiunas and Taagepera, 10-11. The Council of Lithuania, a provisional body, elected Antanas Smetona to the presidency in 1919, but he served for less than one year before the Lithuanian Seimas was organized and elected Stulginskis.

⁷⁰ Georg von Rauch, *The Baltic States: The Years of Independence*, trans. Gerald Onn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 79-81.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 97-98.

campaigns. Bishop Karevičius of Žemačiai was a vocal supporter of national self-determination and was largely responsible for increasing the Catholic Church's participation in political and social life through international promotion of Lithuanian independence. Mečislovas Reinys, the future Archbishop of Vilnius, served as Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1925 and 1926, during which time he negotiated a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union.⁷² Clerical participation in the political process was unprecedented. People welcomed their priests' involvement because they trusted the clergy to represent their nation's best interests.

Having found itself in a new socio-political reality, the LCC leadership paused to articulate its official position regarding the proper role of the LCC and of individual clergymen vis-à-vis government. Bishop Karevičius convened a meeting in 1926 at which the bishops explained the LCC's attitude toward politics and established guidelines for clergy participation in government. The bishops decided, "since clergymen are citizens and since the Church has rights to be defended, it is not only permissible but in some cases even obligatory for priests to participate in politics," with the caveat that "priests should not hold membership in political parties nor should they accept positions that would subordinate them to party discipline."⁷³ Clerics' active participation in party politics hurt the Church's reputation as some priests became embroiled in political maneuvering, leading the bishops to state that "it is more suitable . . . for a priest to be

⁷² V. Stanley Vardys, *The Catholic Church, Dissent, and Nationality in Soviet Lithuania* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1978), 19-20.

⁷³ Vardys, *Catholic Church*, 21-22.

active in pastoral Catholic work rather than as a member of a political party” and “political parties should not carry the ‘Catholic’ name in their title.”⁷⁴

The course of Lithuania’s independence did not run smoothly. In December 1926, the Nationalist party, led by Antanas Smetona and Augustinas Voldemaras, staged a coup and overthrew President Kazys Grinius. Smetona was elected president, then he dissolved parliament and promulgated a new constitution that created a weak parliament and a strong presidency.⁷⁵ He severed ties with the predominantly Catholic Christian Democrat party, and wrote a new constitution that established himself as an authoritarian ruler.⁷⁶ The position of the LCC changed dramatically under Smetona, who did not differentiate between the pastoral activities of the clergy and their participation with his rival Christian Democrat party, and therefore restricted LCC activity. Smetona withdrew aid to private schools, changed the manner and amount of clerical compensation, occasionally arrested priests and intellectuals, shut down some political parties, and censored newspapers. In 1931 the government expelled the Papal Nunzio and came close to severing diplomatic relations with the Vatican.⁷⁷

The looming threat of World War II forced Smetona to change his relationship with the LCC, because his regime needed the LCC’s support if it had any hope of retaining independence in the face of potential foreign invasion. Smetona allowed the clergy to resume their pastoral duties, but Prime Minister Juozas Tūbelis warned that the

⁷⁴ Vardys, *Catholic Church*, 22.

⁷⁵ V. Stanley Vardys, “The Rise of Authoritarian Rule in the Baltic States,” in *The Baltic States in Peace and War 1917-1945*, ed. V. Stanley Vardys and Romuald J. Misiunas (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1978), 68-69.

⁷⁶ Krickus, “Democratization,” 292.

⁷⁷ Vardys, *Catholic Church*, 28-29.

normalization of government relations with the LCC should not lead to the strengthening of any political party. The government established a rapport with the Vatican, including the reception of a new Papal Nunzio, and disputes about dioceses, language, and bishoprics were resolved.⁷⁸ Thus, the Smetona government was able to shift its attention from domestic to foreign affairs.

The religio-nationalist bond between the Lithuanian people and the Catholic Church strengthened during the twenty years of independence. Not only did the LCC actively participate in politics and exert its influence in society, but scholars began to articulate the importance of Catholic faith as a part of Lithuanian nationalism. Professor Stasys Šalkauskis, the leading Lithuanian Catholic intellectual of the 1930s argued:

When a nation, together with religion, adopts the Catholic *Weltanschauung*, there occurs a process of assimilation that helps a nation to gain universally significant ideas while it provides for the Catholic ideology an opportunity of national idiomatic communication. The individuality of a nation is enriched and matures as a result of acquiring universally significant contents.⁷⁹

Along a similar vein, one Catholic priest explained that religion and nationalism “constituted the two strong pillars of our life, the two powerful initiators and promoters of our cultural activity and progress.”⁸⁰ In addition to promoting religio-nationalist ideology, some Catholic thinkers promoted nationalism as the proper foundation for the state. Antanas Maceina, a Catholic philosopher, posited that state borders ought to be coterminous with national borders, an idea that became the foundation for the post-WWII anti-Soviet resistance.⁸¹ The inter-war independence period allowed the LCC to establish

⁷⁸ Vardys, *Catholic Church*, 30-31.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 35.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 34.

⁸¹ Ibid., 35.

itself as the most influential institution in Lithuanian society, to articulate a Catholic perspective on Church-state relations, and to explore the role of Catholicism in the ongoing formation of Lithuanian national identity.

In addition to religion, other aspects of Lithuanian identity contributed to the development and articulation of nationalism during the independence period. Ethnicity gained attention, since the population of Lithuania was approximately eighty-four percent Lithuanian, but land ownership was concentrated among the Polish and Russian minority.⁸² The imbalance led Lithuanians to diminish the power of their non-native population through agrarian reforms that limited the size of privately held plots of land.⁸³ Given Lithuania's history as an occupied or subjugated territory, one can understand the desire to assert ethnicity as a precondition for holding a power position in the Lithuanian nation-state. The arts also flourished during independence, as "creative people could now feel that in doing their work they were expanding cultural domains with a national designator – *Latvian* literature, *Estonian* music, *Lithuanian* painting – and that there were publics that would receive their work as such."⁸⁴ The development of national culture contributed to enthusiasm for the nation, and led to increased participation by the Lithuanian people in politics and interest in policy and its prospects for improving the socio-economic status of the Lithuanian nation while reducing the power of the non-native minority.

⁸² von Rauch, 85.

⁸³ Ibid., 90-91.

⁸⁴ Andrejs Plakans, *A Concise History of the Baltic States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 331.

The importance of the twenty years of independence for the development of Lithuanian national identity cannot be overestimated: it was the only time before 1991 that the Lithuanian people enjoyed self-determination as a nation-state. The LCC's participation in political and social life strengthened its central role in Lithuanian national consciousness and cemented the bond between religion and nationalism. The nationalist ideology and Church-state relationship that developed during the inter-war independence period set the stage for resistance against the Soviet incursion to come. The collective memory of independence would influence dissent and national independence movements decades later.

Catholicism and Nationalism in the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic

By the end of the 1930s, the Baltic States found themselves geographically and diplomatically situated between the Axis and Allied powers of World War II. On 23 August 1939, Stalin's Soviet Union and Hitler's Germany signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression agreement that awarded the Baltic States to the Soviet sphere. By the end of September, Josef Stalin began the process of annexing the Baltic States by aiding the formation of Pro-Bolshevik "People's Governments" in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. The Red Army enforced the proscription of all non-Communist public activity, and "political, social, ideological and religious groups which could not be subsumed into the circle of Communist fronts were disbanded."⁸⁵ The following July, the Communist Party rigged the elections to guarantee the election of Party members to the Lithuanian Seimas. The candidates had to be nominated by "cultural, educational,

⁸⁵ Misiunas and Taagepera, 24.

labor and other legally functioning institutions,” which were all communist.⁸⁶ The new communist-led Lithuanian Seimas voted on 22 July 1940 to apply for membership in the USSR, and the Supreme Soviet granted the Lithuanian application on 3 August 1940. Lithuania’s independence was over. Thus began the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (LiSSR), whose people would endure a long fight to retain their national and religious identity in the face of almost inconceivable restrictions.

Once Lithuania was annexed to the USSR, Soviet religious policy went into effect. Article 96 of the new Constitution of the LiSSR placed limitations on religion in the public sphere:

In order to ensure citizens freedom of conscience, the church in the Lithuanian SSR is separated from the state and the schools from the church. Freedom to perform religious rites and the freedom of antireligious propaganda are recognized for all citizens.⁸⁷

Priests were allowed to perform their basic pastoral functions such as officiating at Mass, but were not allowed to proselytize in any way. The Soviet Statute on Religious Associations required religious groups to register with the local government and gave state agencies authority to remove members from the executive bodies of religious societies. Article 17 was one of the most restrictive portions of the Statute:

Religious associations may not: (a) create mutual credit societies, cooperative or commercial undertakings, or in general, use property at their disposal for other than religious purposes; (b) give material help to their members; (c) organize for children, young people, and women special prayer or other meetings, circles groups, departments for Biblical or literary study, sewing, working or the teaching of religion, etc., excursions, children’s playgrounds, libraries, reading rooms, sanatoria, or medical care.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Ibid., 28-29. Latvia and Estonia did the same.

⁸⁷ “Constitution of the Lithuanian SSR of 1940,” quoted in Vardys, *Catholic Church*, 232.

⁸⁸ “Statute on Religious Associations of April 8, 1924 (as amended January 1, 1932,” quoted in Vardys, *Catholic Church*, 236-237. The statute was ratified in 1924 and amended in 1932.

The LiSSR government also excluded the LCC from military chaplaincy, and curtailed all education functions inside and outside church buildings, including confirmation classes. Clergy lost their salaries and pensions, and congregations had to pay taxes and fees to rent church property from the government.⁸⁹

Although Soviet religious law did not change significantly between 1929 and 1990, its implementation changed according to each Soviet leader's ideological position. Stalin sought to accelerate religion's demise, but his successors tended to accept the existence of churches and opted to do everything possible to control the clergy, whether by curtailing their activities or co-opting their support.⁹⁰ Over five decades of Soviet rule in Lithuania, "policies toward religious belief and practice tended to vacillate over time between utopian determination to substitute secular rationalism for what was considered an unmodern worldview . . . and a realistic acceptance of the tenaciousness, possible harmlessness, and even benefits of religious faith and institutions."⁹¹ Under Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev, different approaches to repressing religion, promoting atheism, and diminishing the Catholic Church's power in Lithuania, yielded different and growing expressions of religio-nationalist identity.

⁸⁹ Misiunas and Taagepera, 39.

⁹⁰ George W. Hoffman, "Introductory Remarks for the December 4th Conference," (presented at the East European Program European Institute, Eastern Europe: Religion and Nationalism, The Wilson Center, Washington D.C., December 4, 1985), 9.

⁹¹ Catherine Wanner and Mark D. Steinberg, "Introduction: Reclaiming the Sacred after Communism," in *Religion, Morality, and Community in Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Mark D. Steinberg and Catherine Wanner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 2.

Religion and Nationalism under Stalin: 1940 to 1953

Under Stalin, leaders and members of the Lithuanian Catholic Church faced intimidation, deportation, and arrest. Arrests and deportations began immediately after Lithuania was incorporated into the USSR. The first mass deportation took place from 14 to 18 June 1941, when 18,000 men, women, and children were loaded into cattle cars and shipped to exile or hard labor camps in Siberia.⁹² The Nazi occupation interrupted deportations briefly, then between 1946 and 1949, among tens of thousand of other victims, hundreds of clergy became targets of arrest and deportation. The Soviet government deported 350 priests to Siberia or the central Asian republics, the number of priests dropped from 1,451 in 1940 to 741 in 1954, the number of churches declined from 1,202 in 1939 to 688 in 1954, three seminaries were closed leaving only one open by 1946, and the number of seminarians was cut in half from 300 to 150 by 1946, then halved again by 1954.⁹³ Clergy who refused to endorse government policies were arrested, and within less than fifteen years after the Soviet annexation only one Catholic bishop remained in Lithuania.⁹⁴ The LCC's "social presence was eliminated totally, including charitable institutions, religious instruction in the schools, and auxiliary organization (especially important in the Catholic Church). Access to the media was restricted . . . theological education for clergy became practically impossible . . .

⁹² Rocas M. Tracevskis, "70th anniversary of deportation and uprising of 1941," *Baltic Times*, June 29, 2011, accessed February 12, 2014, <http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/28936/#.UvuDbY1IPYc>

⁹³ Misiunas and Taagepera, 125.

⁹⁴ Alfred Erich Senn, "The Sovietization of the Baltic States," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 317, *The Satellites in Eastern Europe* (May 1985): 125. Of the twelve bishops serving in Lithuania during the period of inter-war independence, three died during the War, four emigrated overseas, and four were arrested by the Soviet regime.

international ties of the churches were ruptured.”⁹⁵ Among the measures taken to curtail the Pope’s influence on the LCC, “Vatican representatives were expelled, and concordats abrogated, with the government seeking to sever or at least fully control any contacts between their local Catholic church and the Holy See.”⁹⁶ Stalin also attempted to break Lithuanian Catholic ties with the Vatican by creating a “national church” that would be loyal to the Soviet Union, but this was largely unsuccessful. Despite all of this, most priests continued to serve their parishes “even when Church property was confiscated, their regular salaries were discontinued and income received from their congregations was subjected to heavy special taxes. Sermons were recorded, hospital and school visits were prohibited, and visitors to the priests were blacklisted.”⁹⁷ Stalin’s campaign against the LCC strengthened the synergy between Church and nation, because “behind the veil of communist legality, the Catholic Church remained the only institution not controlled by the party; and like Poland . . . it functioned as a repository for nationalist sentiments.”⁹⁸ Catholicism in Lithuania remained a prime target for the Soviet campaign against religion, but the broad popular support for the Church made it resilient.

Immediately following the annexation of Lithuania by the USSR, a short but wide-spread national revolt erupted in 1941, when “Lithuanians of all social strata and political convictions formed a national resistance with the purpose of restoring their

⁹⁵ Robert Goeckel, “The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process,” in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 203.

⁹⁶ Hoffman, 7.

⁹⁷ Misiunas and Taagepera, 124.

⁹⁸ Hank Johnston, “Religio-Nationalist Subcultures under the Communists: Comparisons from the Baltics, Transcaucasia and Ukraine,” *Sociology of Religion* 54, no. 3, International Studies in the Sociology of Religion (Autumn, 1993): 241.

Republic's sovereignty."⁹⁹ The revolt spread across Lithuania, and an estimated 131,000 Lithuanians participated. The swift nationalist response to Soviet annexation indicates the depth of nationalist commitment that had developed during the inter-war independence years. The Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) coordinated the various nuclei of resistance that were spread across the LiSSR. The LAF took over Kaunas, Vilnius, Šiauliai, and Panevėžys and set up a provisional government based in Kaunas.¹⁰⁰ When German troops entered Kaunas on 22 June 1941, the LAF initially hoped to cooperate with them and secure Lithuania's independence. The Germans did not share this goal; they did not recognize the national government or army.¹⁰¹ Thus Germany occupied Lithuania until 1943 when Stalin "liberated" the Baltic region from "the tyranny of Nazi hangmen."¹⁰²

While Stalin re-established his firm grip on Lithuania and implemented large-scale socialist transformation, a large partisan movement developed that came to be known as the "Forest Brotherhood." The catalyzing event for the partisan movement was conscription into the Soviet Army. Attempting to escape the draft, men hid in the forest. When only fourteen percent of Lithuanian men obeyed the conscription order, the army carried out "punitive operations across the entire country: they burned farmsteads, they

⁹⁹ Algirdas Budreckis, *The Lithuanian National Revolt of 1941* (South Boston: Lithuanian Encyclopedia Press, 1968), XIII-XIV.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 76-78.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁰² Juozas Daumantas, *Fighters for Freedom: Lithuanian Partisans Versus the U.S.S.R. (1944-1947)*, trans. E.J. Harrison (New York: Manyland Books, 1975), 10.

used mortars to destroy buildings, shooting people or burning them alive.”¹⁰³ The Soviets’ cruelty provoked violent resistance fueled by patriotic determination to restore independence. Thousands of freedom fighters took to the woods in an effort to undermine the Soviet troops and fight for Lithuania’s independence.¹⁰⁴ Loose bands of men, whose members differed greatly in age, military training, and material resources, slowly became organized into the *Lietuvos Partizanų Sąjunga*, ‘The Lithuanian Partisans’ Union’, which coordinated the individual partisan groups’ activities and established a command structure.¹⁰⁵ Clergy and sacristans were among the leaders of the partisans, and many parish priests secretly supported the Forest Brotherhood by providing food and shelter.¹⁰⁶ Although the Church did not officially endorse the Forest Brotherhood, “most bishops and priests did not succumb to Soviet pressures to condemn Catholic participation in the struggle.”¹⁰⁷

The Partisan War lasted until 1953, when the Soviet Army defeated the few remaining partisan detachments. An estimated 20,200 partisans were killed, 140,000 people were interned at concentration camps, and 118,000 were deported to central Asian republics or Siberia. Despite its losses, the Forest Brotherhood contributed to Lithuania’s

¹⁰³ Nijolė Gaškaitė-Žemaitienė, “The Partisan War in Lithuania from 1944 to 1953,” in *The Anti-Soviet Resistance in the Baltic States*, ed. Arvydas Anušauskas (Vilnius: Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, 2006), 27.

¹⁰⁴ Although they are widely remembered as heroes, it is worth noting that the partisans were not only fighting against Soviets, but any group that could be seen as an enemy of the Lithuanian nation. For some partisans this meant Jews. As one witness recalls, partisans took over Kaunas and began accusing Jews of being communists and then killing them. Si Frumkin, “Lithuania, 1941: A Son Remembers,” *Wall Street Journal*, 11 September 1991, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/398245335?accountid=7014>.

¹⁰⁵ Daumantas, 67.

¹⁰⁶ Misiunas and Taagepera, 84.

¹⁰⁷ Christel Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union: A Sociological Study* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1978), 216.

resistance of colonization, and documents that partisans carried abroad raised international awareness of Lithuania's plight. Most importantly, the partisans exhibited "the intense determination to sacrifice for an ideal," and that spirit invigorated resistance throughout the Soviet period.¹⁰⁸

During the Stalinist period, religious nationalism developed in several important ways. First, the deportation and murder of thousands of LCC leaders elevated common village priests to the status of saints and martyrs, which also reinforced the population's esteem for the Catholic Church and its role as a preserver of national identity. Second, the Forest Brotherhood, with its fiercely nationalist determination for freedom, produced heroes whose example would serve as a model for future nationalists. The LCC's support of the Forest Brotherhood, for which it was severely punished, assured the people that the Catholic Clergy shared in the national aspirations of the Lithuanian people.

Religion and Nationalism under Khrushchev: 1953 to 1964

When Nikita Khrushchev became Communist Party General Secretary in 1953, he initiated a new crackdown on religion across the USSR. Repressive measures had loosened slightly in the early 1950s, leading to a relative increase in church attendance in the USSR, which prompted Khrushchev to undertake a ferocious anti-religion campaign between 1959 and 1964. Registration requirements for congregations became a means of imposing regulations, believers experienced moral and administrative pressure that reduced their opportunities for work and education, and atheist propaganda intensified.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Gaškaitė-Žemaitienė, 44.

¹⁰⁹ Philip Walters, "A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy," in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 20-22. A report by the Central Committee in July 1954 indicated rising church attendance.

The state used “parishes’ increasing inability to maintain a minimum membership, as well as financial pressure, to deregister them.” Khrushchev ordered the closure of LCC buildings, and the State transformed the buildings to other purposes, including Vilnius Cathedral, which was converted to a picture gallery and concert hall, and St. Casimir’s Church, which became the Museum of the History of Religion and Atheism.¹¹⁰

Khrushchev attempted to replace religious customs with secular equivalents, including a “Spring Festival” instead of Easter, Name-giving and Adulthood Day ceremonies that replaced baptism and confirmation, and civil marriage that replaced church weddings. Khrushchev’s religious agenda was particularly harsh in Lithuania, where the Soviet government continued to perceive the LCC as a potential threat to Soviet authority.

With regard to nationalities policy, Khrushchev’s goal was to simultaneously suppress national differences while creating a uniquely Soviet national identity. To this end, there was an “intensive education drive aimed at instilling in the people ‘the ideology of Soviet patriotism,’” defined as “‘love for the Socialist Fatherland with daily care for the growth of its power and glory,’” and “‘a spirit of love and devotion toward the Soviet Union.’”¹¹¹ Khrushchev’s aggressive policies had a remarkable impact on the Lithuanian *Zeitgeist*. Vytautas Landsbergis remembers the Khrushchev years, during which he was a university student:

While we were acutely aware of the oppression and hypocrisy prevailing in the Soviet Union, we were forced to associate daily with people who did believe in the system, and it was absolutely necessary to hold back our opinions and to go along with things which we did not like. Once one’s support for “the way things were done” was known to be anything other than immediate, open and public, one would be marked out as holding an alternative ideology and after that the door to

¹¹⁰ Misiunas and Taagepera, 198-199.

¹¹¹ Senn, “Sovietization,” 125.

jobs controlled by the state would be barred . . . This placed us all in an uncomfortable psychological position. One was dependent upon being approved. It was difficult to sustain oneself morally in such conditions.¹¹²

Khrushchev and his government could not have foreseen that “the ultimate paradox of the whole Soviet effort at indoctrination, in the schools and in the armed forces, was that it had virtually no result. [The] younger generation never embraced Soviet patriotism, and finally turned down the demand that they should be ‘proud of our motherland which stretches beyond Kamchatka’ as a Soviet ballad put it.”¹¹³ Although “this attitude was not declared in public, either by individuals or by groups, and few [people] took part in illegal activities,” if the communists had insight into most Lithuanians’ minds, they would have discovered a prevailing anti-Soviet mindset.¹¹⁴

The endurance of Lithuanian religious and national consciousness was evident in several small demonstrations that were inspired by nationalist uprisings in Poland and Hungary in 1956. A student who participated in the demonstrations in Vilnius described the nationalist feeling in a letter: “We approached the tomb of Dr. Basanavičius, the Lithuanian national patriarch . . . Our national anthem was sung several times. Although previously no one dared to even mention the national anthem, it now sounded over the city and gave the impression that Vilnius was free again.”¹¹⁵ Elena Juciūtė, who witnessed a concurrent demonstration in Kaunas, wrote in her memoir:

A demonstration had begun at the cemetery. A crowd of people, carrying the national flag, marched down Freedom Boulevard, (at that time called Stalin’s

¹¹² Vytautas Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, trans. Anthony Packer and Estate of Eimutis Šova (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 47-48.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹¹⁵ *Lituanus* 1/2 (1962), 64 reprinted in Thomas Remeikis, *Opposition to Soviet Rule in Lithuania, 1945-1980* (Chicago: Institute of Lithuanian Studies Press, 1980), 275.

Prospect) all the way to the Central Post Office. Here they were attacked by a large band of policemen, many were arrested, others ran away. The revolutionaries had cried: “Long live the Hungarian heroes!” According to reports, they demanded freedom and independence for Lithuania.¹¹⁶

Antanas Sniečkus, leader of the Lithuanian Communist Party, attributed the demonstrations to “remainders of the former antipopular parties and exploiting classes, bourgeois-nationalistic elements, and their helpers.”¹¹⁷ Although nothing came of the demonstrations, they did serve to renew or raise awareness among Lithuanians that they were Soviets against their own will. Such demonstrations also initiated into the nationalist cause youth who had come of age within the Soviet state. Small demonstrations like this one kept national consciousness alive.

The Khrushchev period can be characterized as years of learning to live within communism and gathering strength for the fight to come. There was not widespread dissent or revolt from either nationalist or religious groups, but resentment toward the Soviet state simmered and popular devotion to the Catholic Church endured, despite the best efforts of the well-oiled propaganda machine. The fruits of long suffering would begin to ripen under Khrushchev’s successors.

Religion and Nationalism under Brezhnev: 1964 to 1982

Leonid Brezhnev codified and clarified religion policy. In 1975, revisions to the 1929 Soviet Statute on Religious Associations granted the Council for Religious Affairs regulatory powers over a broad range of religious matters, making it more difficult for religious associations to register and further limiting legal religious activity. Anti-

¹¹⁶ Elena Juciūtė, *Pėdos mirties zonoje* [Traces of the death zone] (New York: Immaculata Press, 1974), 393-395 reprinted in Remeikis, 277.

¹¹⁷ Senn, “Sovietization,” 128.

religious propaganda continued, but it was centralized and largely confined to academic specialist journals so it no longer pervaded the press. Although the venue and format of anti-religious publication changed, it never showed signs of ceasing. On the contrary, Brezhnev's regime gave serious attention to curtailing the influence of religion and tried to improve the scientific quality and marketing appeal of atheism-promoting publications.¹¹⁸

In Lithuania, the Catholic Church continued to receive greater attention than religious groups elsewhere in the USSR because of its ongoing ties to national identity, positive reputation among the Lithuanian people, and a relatively high public participation in Catholic rites and services. An LiCP report asserted, "the Church portrays itself as the true guardian of the cultural heritage of the past, of national traditions and customs. It frequently identifies religious traditions with national ones and portrays itself as the defender of national interests."¹¹⁹ In response to the LCC's continued popularity, the state attempted to damage the LCC's image and restrict its influence by gaining the loyalty of priests, often through blackmail, with very limited success.¹²⁰ An account of the Archbishop of Berlin's visit to Lithuania in 1975 illustrates how the Soviets exercised control over the Church and its international affiliations:

The management of [Cardinal Bengsch's] visit was entrusted to priests who are loyal to the government and, apparently, they did their job well. All those who could have told [him] very much about the true situation of the Church, could not

¹¹⁸ Walters, 23-25.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Kestutis Girnius, "Soviet Authors Deny that Lithuanian Nationalist and Catholic Interests Are Identical," *Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty Research* 345/82 (16 August 1982): 1.

¹²⁰ *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* 4, (1972) printed in Remeikis, 545. The *Chronicle* further states, "The security agents have been successful in enlisting one or the other problem priest, forcing him to carry out assignments for the Soviet government. Such co-opted priests never work seriously for the police; rather, feeling an internal conflict, they finally succumb psychologically, have an emotional breakdown, or take to drink."

find access to [him].” The Cardinal was not shown desecrated churches or sites where Lithuanians had been massacred by the communists.¹²¹

Few priests collaborated with the regime, but those who were not loyal to the state were no less tightly controlled. Those few priests who did manage to travel abroad were sent with careful instructions, some of them to “disseminate false information abroad,” and had to give a written account of their activities.¹²² Canon J. Stankevičius’s diary attests, “We had to provide proof every time, directly or indirectly, of how we had helped the Soviet Union and what harm we had inflicted on the Catholic Church.”¹²³ The LCC had learned to function within the boundaries of Soviet law, but a very active minority undertook religious dissent that raised awareness of the LCC’s and the nation’s plight.

The most wide-spread form of dissent in Lithuania was illicit *samizdat*, ‘self-published’, documents. In the 1970s and 1980s there were more *samizdat* publications per capita in Lithuania than in any other Soviet republic.¹²⁴ The most prolific and influential publication was the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. Father Sigitas Tamkevičius wrote the first issue in 1972 to keep people in Lithuania and abroad informed about the persecution of Catholics, and soon broadened the *Chronicle*’s scope to report religious and human rights issues. The *Chronicle* reinforced the tie between Catholicism and national identity, and gave voice to the Church’s role as a repository of

¹²¹ Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania, “Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church Summary of Issue No. 19,” *ELTA Information Service* 2 (202) (February 1976): 3.

¹²² *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* 4, (1972) printed in Remeikis, 541.

¹²³ Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania, “Chronicle,” 4.

¹²⁴ V. Stanley Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” *Problems of Communism* (July/August 1989): 53-76, 54.

nationalist sentiment.¹²⁵ Marking fifteen years of publication, Šaulius Girnius explained the importance of the *Chronicle* in a Radio Free Europe report:

By documenting for a decade-and-a-half the contemporary situation of Catholics in sparse and unemotional prose, the *Chronicle* has become a symbol of the struggle for human and religious rights and has played an important role in convincing many Lithuanians, even nonbelievers, that the Church is the chief guardian of the national heritage.¹²⁶

The assertion that the *Chronicle* is meaningful even to non-believers as a keeper of national identity is significant. Although the *Chronicle's* primary intention was to accurately document religious persecution and violations of the USSR constitution, it also raised national consciousness and united Lithuanians in opposition against the Soviet regime regardless of individual religious confession. The LiCP saw the *Chronicle* as a serious threat because of the world-wide attention it brought to the persecution of religious believers in Lithuania and throughout the Soviet Union, therefore the LiCP's newspaper, *Tiesa*, engaged in intense propaganda against the *Chronicle*.¹²⁷ The state accused the *Chronicle* of being influenced by "bourgeois nationalism and Western imperialism" and even some Lithuanian priests saw it as stirring up unnecessary trouble for the Church.¹²⁸ Sigitas Tamkevičius, who would become archbishop of Kaunas 1996, was sentenced to internal exile for his role in producing the *Chronicle*.¹²⁹ The threats of punishment did not dissuade the other authors of the *Chronicle*, including Father Jonas

¹²⁵ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 66.

¹²⁶ Šaulius Girnius, "Fifteen Years of the Lithuanian *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report/3 (8 May 1987), 41.

¹²⁷ Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," 55.

¹²⁸ Š. Girnius, "Fifteen Years," 42.

¹²⁹ Frans Hoppenbrouwers, "Romancing Freedom: Church and Society in the Baltic States since the End of Communism," *Religion, State & Society* 27, no. 2 (1999): 162.

Barūta and Sister Gerarda Elena Šuliauskaitė, and publication continued until 1989, when many of the Church's rights and properties were being restored.¹³⁰

Another important *samizdat* publication was *Aušra*, 'Dawn', which appeared in 1975 and billed itself as a continuation of the very first Lithuanian language newspaper. The original *Aušra* was published between 1883 and 1886 and was smuggled into Lithuania, then part of the Russian Empire, from East Prussia.¹³¹ Although the new *Aušra* was not written by Catholic clerics, it had Catholic lay people behind its publication and distribution, and it made strong connections between Catholic faith and Lithuanian national identity. The first issue of *Aušra* commemorated the one-hundredth anniversary of the death of Bishop Motiejus Valančius, a dissident who "sought to preserve the Lithuanian nation intact against the Russification and denationalization policies of the tsarist government" in the 1860s.¹³² Another issue of *Aušra* insisted "that every Lithuanian should be a Catholic who lives according the precepts of the Bible," and moreover, "the nation will remain alive only as long as the Catholic Church remains alive."¹³³ The author's of *Aušra* tended "to view the survival of Catholicism as a precondition for the survival of the nation."¹³⁴ The stated purpose of the publication as

¹³⁰ For Fr. Barūta's own account of his involvement with the *Chronicle*, see Jonas Barūta, SJ, "Lord What a Blessing that You Allowed," *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church*, accessed February 14, 2014, http://www.lkbkronika.lt/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=343&Itemid=228.

¹³¹ Misiunas and Taagepera, 248.

¹³² Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania, "Aušra – The Dawn, New Samizdat Periodical," *ELTA Information Service* 2 (202) (February 1976), 11-12. ELTA Information Service published an English translation of the lead article from the first issue of *Aušra*, "The First Rays of Aušra," and summaries of the remaining articles.

¹³³ K. Girnius, "Nationalism and the Catholic Church," 97.

¹³⁴ Remeikis, 154.

well as the subject matter of the articles illustrates the close association of Catholicism with Lithuanian nationalism during the Soviet period.

Petition drives were another form of dissent that the LCC initiated. In an effort to hold the USSR accountable to its own laws, Catholic clergy and lay people circulated petitions for different church-related causes including return of property and release of prisoners. In 1971 a mass petition asked the Soviet government “to grant us the freedom of conscience which is guaranteed by the USSR Constitution but which up to now has not been practiced.”¹³⁵ The government responded by increasing propaganda that claimed freedom of religion was protected in the USSR and pressured the LCC hierarchy to condemn religious activism.¹³⁶ One of the largest petition drives was for the release of Fathers Alfonsas Svarinskas and Sigitas Tamkevičius in 1984, who were both imprisoned for their involvement with the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*. After collecting 123,000 signatures, four delegates traveled to Moscow several times to deliver the petition, but were detained and escorted back to Kaunas.¹³⁷ Although petitions rarely achieved their stated objective, the petition drives were nonetheless significant because they kept religious persecution in the public eye, and were a relatively low-risk means for thousands of people to participate in dissent, which laid the groundwork for the popular dissent movements to come.

There were several important events during the Brezhnev years that directly influenced religious and nationalist dissent. One such event was, the self-immolation of

¹³⁵ Vardys, *Catholic Church*, 262.

¹³⁶ Misiunas and Taagepera, 255.

¹³⁷ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “123,000 Petition Soviets for Release of Imprisoned Priests,” 27 February 1984, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

19-year-old student Romas Kalanta in Kaunas on 14 May 1972, which triggered large demonstrations and riots. Kalanta explained his internal struggle in his personal journal: “What should I live for? For this system to kill me slowly and mercilessly? It would be better to kill myself at once... There will never be freedom here. Even the very word FREEDOM has been forbidden.”¹³⁸ On the day of Kalanta’s funeral, several thousand young people marched from the Kalanta home to the city center, then approached police headquarters where police dispersed them with rubber truncheons. The next day, thousands gathered in the city center, where they met KGB units that broke up the demonstration.¹³⁹ Five hundred demonstrators were arrested, and within a few days there were three more self-immolations in Lithuania.¹⁴⁰ Post-communist narratives of Kalanta’s self-immolation and the demonstrations that followed attribute it to either nationalist or religious dissent, civil resistance, or youth protest resonant with the ethos of the 1960s.¹⁴¹ Whatever Kalanta’s reasons, his death was a catalyst for a level of public demonstration that had not been seen in decades.

The single most important event for the Catholic Church during Brezhnev’s tenure was the election of Karol Wojtyła to the papacy in 1978. John Paul II was Polish, and as the first pope to have lived under communism his presence on the international

¹³⁸ Office of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, “Romas Kalanta, Ambassador of Freedom, and the Spring of 1972 in Kaunas,” Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, accessed 21 June 2013, http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=8524&p_k=2. In 1990 Kalanta’s tomb was declared an historical monument. In 2005 he was conferred the status of a freedom fighter. In 2012 several days of programs in Vilnius and Kaunas commemorated Kalanta’s death.

¹³⁹ Amanda Swain, “Negotiating Narratives of Kaunas 1972 from Archives to Oral Interviews,” *The REECAS Newsletter* (Spring 2012), accessed August 13, 2013, <https://depts.washington.edu/jsishelp/ellison/2012/spring/swain>.

¹⁴⁰ Misiunas and Taagepera, 252-253.

¹⁴¹ Amanda Swain, “A Death Transformed: The Political and Social Consequences of Romas Kalanta’s Self Immolation, Soviet Lithuania, 1972” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2013), abstract, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/3563099?accountid=7104>.

political and religious stage caused nothing short of panic for Brezhnev and his government. In November 1979 the Central Committee of the Communist Party issued a decree including “measures to counter the policy of the Vatican in relation to the socialist countries.” The top secret measures advised the KGB

to take measures to publish abroad, via special channels, materials in which the question would be put of the undesirability of actions on the part of the Vatican, capable of worsening its relations with the socialist countries and thus complicating the position of the catholic church there, and which would condemn in appropriate form the dangerous tendencies in the conduct of pope John Paul II.¹⁴²

Despite Soviet efforts to limit John Paul II’s influence, Catholics were emboldened and greatly encouraged by the election of an Eastern European pope, and Catholic dissent activities increased after 1978.

By the end of the 1970s, the character of dissent changed as various interest groups began to organize. Dissidents in Lithuania coordinated with their colleagues in other republics, and began to openly promote ideals of sovereignty, national self-determination, and independence. For example, in 1979 representatives of the Baltic republics submitted a petition to Moscow that demanded the overturning of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and full restoration of national independence.¹⁴³ This was the first time since the Forest Brotherhood that a group had openly demanded independence. Political dissent drew on the example of religious dissent, and “where massive prison sentences awaited any suspected of independent political activity, attendance at church became a

¹⁴² Felix Corley, ed., “Decree of the Secretariat of the CC of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” in *Religion in the Soviet Union: An Archival Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 279.

¹⁴³ Aleksandras Shtromas, “The Baltic States as Soviet Republics: Tensions and Contradictions,” in *The Baltic States: The National Self-Determination of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania*, ed. Graham Smith (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996), 105.

symbol of unspoken protest.”¹⁴⁴ Because they understood the LCC as a national institution, some people came to associate religious participation as much with political dissent as with spiritual practice.

In the early 1980s, the LiCP had tried to break up Catholic involvement in independence politics by claiming that “Catholicism never fostered genuine national aspirations and that the ‘bourgeois nationalism’ of militant priests and laymen [had] nothing in common with the spiritual concerns of ordinary Catholics.”¹⁴⁵ The Party leader warned, “clerical extremists are attempting to utilize religion in order to achieve reactionary political goals—subversion of the friendship among peoples and revival of bourgeois-nationalist attitudes.”¹⁴⁶ This view of the LCC persisted within the Moscow-aligned faction of the LiCP throughout the 1980s. In an interview with *Moskovskiye novosti*, ‘Moscow news’, Lionginas Šepetys, Secretary of the LiCP Central Committee, said nationalist extremists “side with a certain portion of the Catholic clergy (which is very strongly politicized, in general) that are nationalistically minded, since it considers itself, and only itself, to be the true custodian of national traditions.”¹⁴⁷ When the LiCP’s attempts to discredit the relationship between Catholicism and Lithuanian nationalism were ineffective, the Party tried to align the LCC with socialism, arguing that “religion is not inherently opposed to socialism,” and “religious beliefs of ordinary Catholics do not

¹⁴⁴ Michael Bourdeaux, *The Gospel’s Triumph Over Communism* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1991), 135.

¹⁴⁵ K. Girnius, “Soviet Authors Deny,” 2.

¹⁴⁶ Alexander R. Alexiev, *Dissent and Nationalism in the Soviet Baltic* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1983), 31.

¹⁴⁷ Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, ed., “Lithuanian Party Official Says . . .,” *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XL, No. 17 (1988): 8.

make them ill-disposed towards socialism.”¹⁴⁸ Thus the LiCP’s efforts to dampen and then redirect the LCC’s social power towards its own ends laid the groundwork for a few years later when the LiCP, under the leadership of Algirdas Brazauskas, would openly seek the Church’s cooperation.

During the Brezhnev years, “it was a sign of protest to be a believer.”¹⁴⁹ Although anti-religious propaganda was ongoing, attendance at church or participation in religious events was far less risky than it had been in previous decades. The Lithuanian Catholic Church received “extensive support from the fact that it [was] closely identified with the idea of a Lithuanian nation and uniquely suited to serve as a focus of nationalist aspirations,” thus the LCC could count on the support of the majority of Lithuanians whether for religious or nationalist reasons.¹⁵⁰ The national support for the LCC would prove important in the decade after Brezhnev’s tenure, as the bond between Catholicism and nationalism would take a more overtly political tone.

Religion and Nationalism under Gorbachev: 1985 to 1992

When Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Supreme Soviet in 1985, he initiated *perestroika*, a broad reform agenda that had an incalculable impact on politics and society. A religious renaissance, marked by increased church attendance and participation in religious rites, was, at least in part, an unintended consequence of *perestroika*. Because Party leadership was busy with economic reform, democratization, and emerging dissent movements, restrictions on churches started to be less strictly

¹⁴⁸ K. Girnius, “Soviet Authors,” 4.

¹⁴⁹ Hoppenbrouwers, 162.

¹⁵⁰ Christel Lane, *Christian Religion in the Soviet Union: A Sociological Study* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1978), 217.

enforced.¹⁵¹ Gorbachev recognized that religion was not going to dissolve the way Marxist ideology claimed it would, so he decided, “it was time to abandon the old dogma that religion was a retrogressive force, a relic of the past which could have no place in the future ideal communist society.”¹⁵² He proposed new laws governing religion, which gave religious associations the status of legal bodies and allowed clergy to “perform religious rituals in hospitals, old people’s and invalids’ homes and in penal institutions.”¹⁵³ Gorbachev took a pragmatic rather than ideological approach to managing the church-state situation, and thus created a situation in which the status of the LCC could change rapidly.

Gorbachev eased restrictions on churches for several reasons. One was the millennium anniversary of the “Baptism of the Rus” in 988, which brought a great deal of international attention to the status of religion in the Soviet Union. The millenium events, which “represented both a rehabilitation of the [Russian Orthodox] church as a *social* institution . . . and a celebration of *national* (Russian) culture and of the church’s contribution to it,” brought changes to the status of the Russian Orthodox Church primarily within the Russian and Ukrainian SSRs. Lithuania benefited very little from the concessions since a very small percentage of the population was Russian Orthodox.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the renewed cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet government set a new precedent for church-state relations.

¹⁵¹ Goeckel, 209.

¹⁵² Bourdeaux, *Gospel’s Triumph*, 39.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 67.

¹⁵⁴ Sabrina Petra Ramet, “Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev,” in S. Ramet, *Religious Policy*, 34-5.

Another factor that provoked Gorbachev to ease religious restrictions was a perceived crisis of morality, reflected in high rates of alcoholism, absenteeism, suicide, abortion, theft, and corruption. Gorbachev hoped that allowing the churches to have a greater social presence would have a positive effect on morality and traditional values.¹⁵⁵ As Gorbachev made concessions to the Russian Orthodox Church he set a precedent for relations with other denominations, which created a situation in which the LCC leadership could become more bold in its demands for religious freedom. The LCC embraced its spiritual and cultural roles, and recognized the opportunity to reassert its authority in ways that would benefit society and improve the material condition of the LCC.

Finally, Gorbachev's 1 December 1989 meeting at the Vatican with Pope John Paul II had serious implications for religion policy in the USSR, especially regarding the Catholic Church. The meeting signaled a re-opening of diplomatic relations between Moscow and the Vatican. The Pope said to Gorbachev, "In relation to [freedom of conscience] I will say that we are waiting anxiously and with great hope for your country to accept a law to uphold freedom of conscience. We hope that the introduction of such a law would broaden the possibility for religious life for all Soviet citizens." He went on to advocate for Catholics in the USSR, including "most of the population of Lithuania."¹⁵⁶ Prior to the meeting, the Soviet youth newspaper, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, praised John Paul II as a "fighter for peace," and claimed, "the Vatican is not calling for a crusade

¹⁵⁵ Oxana Antic, "Religious Policy Under Gorbachev," in *Soviet/East European Survey, 1987-1988: Selected Research and Analysis from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, ed. Vojtech Mastny (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 177.

¹⁵⁶ National Security Administration, Record of Conversation Between M. S. Gorbachev and John Paul II, Bush and Gorbachev at Malta, National Security Archive, posted December 3, 2009, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB298/Document%208.pdf>.

against Communism and we do not call religion 'opium' any more.”¹⁵⁷ The remarkable meeting between Gorbachev and the Pope put pressure on the Soviet Union to lift legal restrictions on religious liberty and to ease anti-Catholic propaganda.

By the late 1980s, the parallel nationalist and religious dissent movements were gaining momentum and cooperating with one another. The Lithuanian people understood the LCC as “a symbol of national unity and national self-awareness in face of the Russian and Orthodox environment,” while the LCC acknowledged that it was “the only legal institution struggling for the preservation of national traditions.”¹⁵⁸ The combination of perestroika and glasnost from Moscow plus religious and nationalist dissent in Lithuania set the LiSSR on a trajectory toward independence. The Lithuanian Catholic Church was closely associated with Lithuanian national identity, and the relationship between the LCC and politics would reach its apex with Sajūdis. A description of Vilnius Cathedral’s reconsecration in February 1989 aptly illustrates the extent to which religion and national identity were inextricably linked in Lithuanians’ minds. Michael Bourdeaux accompanied Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius when he returned from exile to Vilnius to reconsecrate the Cathedral. According to Bourdeaux,

As the bishop moved towards the cathedral’s classical façade the crowd opened up at the merest gesture from the church’s own marshals. Inside the cathedral, the crowd was very different in appearance, because about 90 per cent of the people were wearing national costume. At the front were all the clergy of the diocese in cassocks and surplices.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ *Komsomolskaya Pravda* quoted in David Willey, “Visitor from the Kremlin,” *The Tablet*, December 9, 1989, accessed January 15, 2014, <http://archive.thetablet.co.uk/article/9th-december-1989/4/visitor-from-the-kremlin>.

¹⁵⁸ Gerhard Simon, *Church, State and Opposition in the U.S.S.R.*, trans. Kathleen Matchett (Berkeley: University of California, 1970), 230; Kestutis Girnius, “Nationalism and the Catholic Church in Lithuania,” in *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 97-98.

¹⁵⁹ Michael Bourdeaux, “Michael Bourdeaux’s Diary,” *Frontier*, (May/June 1989): 7-8.

The juxtaposition of national costume and clerical garb is a visual representation of the way Catholic faith and national pride mingled in the hearts and minds of the Lithuanian people. The path to independence, and the religio-nationalism that contributed directly to Lithuania's secession from the USSR will be the focus of Chapter Four.

Conclusion

Religiosity has been a locus of national identity for the Lithuanian people throughout their history. As the last European population to convert to Christianity, the Lithuanian tribes clung to their well-developed indigenous religious practices as an act of defiance against the crusading knights. Even before the Lithuanians developed a concrete concept of themselves as a nation, they differentiated themselves from others based on religion. The union of Poland and Lithuania caused tension and class division between Polish clerics and Lithuanian peasants. The latter defiantly held on to their indigenous practices, even as they participated in Catholic rites, resulting in a syncretism that became a distinctly Lithuanian iteration of the Catholic faith. The Russian Empire unintentionally cemented the bond between the Catholic Church and the Lithuanian nation. Russification efforts provided an impetus for the Lithuanian people to profess Catholicism as an act of defiance against Russian Orthodoxy and the Russian Empire, even as Lithuanian Catholic priests worked independently of the Polish Catholic hierarchy. Thus, Catholicism became one of the means by which Lithuanians differentiated themselves from Russians. During the inter-war independence from 1918 to 1939, the Catholic Church took a prominent role in politics. The LCC gained strength through developing its organizational structure and political relationships, which would

benefit its ability to stand against the trials to come under Soviet rule. During the Soviet period, harsh measures against the LCC dealt a devastating blow to the LCC's human and material resources, but also increased the social trust people placed in the LCC.

Attending Mass, distributing religious *samizdat* publications, and professing faith endured as acts of defiance against the Soviet Union and its scientific atheist ideology.

Given the history of religion as a locus of defiance for the Lithuanian people, it should come as no surprise that the LCC played an important role in the dissent movement that ultimately led to Lithuania declaring independence from the USSR. The Lithuanian Catholic Church not only fought for its own religious freedom, but participated in the fight for political freedom as well. Moreover, patriots and nationalists understood the LCC as an integral part of Lithuanian national identity; therefore, nationalists sought out the LCC's endorsement and participation in their political activities. Chapter Four will address the relationship between the LCC and political movements, Sąjūdis in particular.

CHAPTER THREE

The Necessity of Sajūdis' Relationship with the Lithuanian Catholic Church

The rapid rise of popular nationalism in the late 1980s, of which Sajūdis became the standard-bearer, was made possible by the sweeping reforms Gorbachev implemented. Perestroika made it legal for people to express their national spirit, to participate openly in religious activities, and to talk to friends and neighbors about their frustrations without fear of repercussions from the government. In this new environment of openness, Sajūdis brought together groups of people whose specific interests differed, but who were united in their desire to see Lithuania regain its status as an independent nation state.

The majority of Lithuanians was not involved in dissent, did not attend political rallies, and was not necessarily interested in political engagement. Lithuanians were focused on work, family, and simply living their daily lives without drawing the government's attention. The politically non-engaged majority is the population that Sajūdis would need to mobilize if Lithuania had any hope of achieving independence. Vytautas Landsbergis, the Sajūdis leader who would become the first president of independent Lithuania, describes the prevailing attitude through which Sajūdis would need to break: "Theirs was a reflex response which had remained ingrained from the Stalinist era, reflecting the submissive spirit and the self-censorship which his bullying had imposed throughout the whole Soviet Union. It had resulted in a set disposition

which now just carried on without anyone thinking about it.”¹ Arvydas Juozaitis, another Sajūdis leader, described the Lithuanian people as “angry yet completely silent because of fear.”² People were accustomed to suspicion, and knew from experience that Soviet politics was a corrupt sham. In order to win elections that would give Sajūdis a majority in the Seimas, Sajūdis needed to rouse the non-engaged majority from its fear or indifference or cynicism. The Sajūdis leadership knew that glasnost, which was changing the character of cities like Vilnius and Kaunas, “was still not so easy for the country people” who “continued to live under the shadow the Party, which still seemed almighty to them.”³ In order to summon the nationalistic potential of the masses, Sajūdis appealed to aspects of Lithuanian culture and history that differentiated the Lithuanian nation from other people groups in the Soviet Union.

This chapter will examine the socio-political context in which Sajūdis operated, and then focus on the various aspects of Lithuanian national identity that Sajūdis incorporated into its events and politics in order to gain support from the majority of Lithuanians. One can conclude from this analysis that Sajūdis’ relationship with the Catholic Church was essential. First, although there were many components of nationalism that differentiated Lithuania from other nations, none of the cultural or historical identifiers was sufficient to raise the needed popular support or mobilize people to action. Second, the power of religion as a motivator for human behavior, along with

¹ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, trans. Anthony Packer and Estate of Eimutis Šova (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 62.

² Alicia Mann, “Glasnost in a Baltic Republic: Lithuanians Lift Their Heads,” *New Leader* 71, no. 21 (December 12, 1988): 9, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1308975551?accountid=7014>.

³ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 106.

the high levels of Catholic adherence among Lithuanians, made Catholicism the most effective source of nationalist sentiment around which to gather popular support. Given the weakness of culture and history as bases for nationalism, and the power of religion as purveyor and preserver of nationalist sentiment, the support and involvement of the Lithuanian Catholic Church was essential for bringing the Lithuanian people into the independence movement.

Sajūdis' Context: Social Transformation under Gorbachev

When Mikhail Gorbachev was elected General Secretary of the Supreme Soviet in 1985, he instituted reforms that had a pervasive impact on politics and society. Perestroika, glasnost, and economic reform radically altered the Soviet context. Perestroika was born out of economic stagnation and the need to address the “gradual erosion of the ideological and moral values of [the Soviet] people.”⁴ A malaise had settled over the Soviet people due to “the needs and opinions of ordinary working people, of the public at large [being] ignored.” And in the academy, “creative thinking was driven out from [*sic*] the social sciences,” “scientific theoretical and other discussions . . . were emasculated,” and culture, the arts, journalism, teaching, and medicine were characterized by “mediocrity, formalism and loud eulogizing.”⁵ According to Gorbachev, “the initial task of restructuring—an indispensable condition, necessary if it is to be successful—is to ‘wake up’ those people who have ‘fallen asleep’ and make them truly active and concerned, to ensure that everyone feels as if he is the master of the

⁴ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 21.

⁵ Gorbachev, 21-22.

country of his enterprise, office, or institute.”⁶ In an effort “to make the whole intellectual potential of society and all the potentialities of culture work to mold a socially active person, spiritually rich, just and conscientious,” Gorbachev began restructuring the Soviet state from the top down.⁷ The great irony of perestroika is that the attempt “to achieve a partial legitimization of communist party rule” failed even as the “relegitimation of religious life had acquired a force of its own, and it had become inconceivable that there could be any attempt to turn back the clock now.”⁸ Perestroika was so successful, in fact, that it provided the conditions in which dissent flourished and transformed into organized political movements, ultimately leading to revolutionary action.

Perestroika changed the entire *Zeitgeist*. Landsbergis describes how the “new freedom of thought and speech gathered force, and then became a tidal wave as people found a new spirit in their meetings.”⁹ The importance of free speech cannot be overestimated. At the universities and among the intelligentsia,

Discussion clubs were springing up everywhere. People were discussing everything. This opportunity to express oneself was obviously a major advance. Lithuania was coming alive with excitement, and in Vilnius in particular such open discussion was in full spate. . . . In this atmosphere, the Philosopher’s Club was like a beehive. Some of its discussion covered the moral needs of the rising generation, and the necessity for a reformed and humanistic education in Lithuania. . . . Arvydas Juozaitis, a young philosopher, struck hard at corruption in Lithuanian local government and the Communist party. His lecture was copied and read widely. Some ten years earlier this kind of openness would have landed him in a mental hospital, or in Siberia, but by 1988 these penalties no longer applied, and this young philosopher was already a symbol of change, a hero with his name in the public eye.¹⁰

⁶ Gorbachev, 29.

⁷ Ibid., 30.

⁸ Sabrina Petra Ramet, “Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev,” in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 32.

⁹ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 102.

¹⁰ Ibid., 102.

Sajūdis was born within and took full advantage of the reforms, which Landsbergis explains, “provided an excellent framework in which [Sajūdis’] tactics could develop. It gave us an opening because it meant that the situation had changed sufficiently to allow us, and others, to perceive that we all stood ‘for’ and not ‘against’ glasnost, *perestroika* and even Gorbachev!”¹¹ Sajūdis’ initial *raison d’être* was to promote perestroika, especially because conservatives, who balked at the changes coming from Moscow, dominated the Lithuanian Communist Party (LiCP). Sajūdis was able to consolidate the various interest groups that had sprung up in response to perestroika and harness their energy into one movement that was united by the desire for change, however disparate its constituent parts. Because perestroika made it legal and desirable for citizens to come together for creative thought, the LiCP had no recourse to stop Sajūdis, even after the movement’s attention had shifted from implementing perestroika to restoring Lithuania’s independence.

One of the unintended consequences of perestroika in Lithuania was an increase in church attendance and a renewed interest in Catholicism, especially among young people who had come of age within the Soviet Union. Gorbachev was less antagonistic toward religion than his predecessors, therefore restrictions on religion were beginning to relax.¹² But changes to the rights and status of the LCC lagged behind changes in other Soviet republics. In the official LiSSR press, there were campaigns persecuting religiously active individuals, including Lithuanian Catholic priests, alongside articles

¹¹ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 101.

¹² Robert Goeckel, “The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process,” in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 209. Cf. Chapter Two pp. 49-51.

supporting believers' rights.¹³ And as late as 1986, "no fewer than 127 of the 130 priests in the diocese of Panevėžys signed a protest to Gorbachev complaining about the continuing interference of the state in church affairs."¹⁴ Even as changes proceeded rapidly under perestroika, Catholics did not immediately reap the benefits of restructuring and openness. Cardinal Sladkevičius expressed frustration with the status quo, and exhorted the Lithuanian clergy, "today, we can wait no longer. For three years now, they have been promising and repeatedly postponing the promulgation of new religious regulations, and it is still unclear when they will publish them. We have been lulled to sleep and comforted by promises."¹⁵ An open letter to the LiSSR Public Prosecutor and to Sajūdis echoed the Cardinal's frustration:

just like before, the radio, television and the press claim that faith is free. The rights of the believers are not restrained. However, there are no attempts at solving the arising problems between the believers and the state. And so it goes on, the media pestering the public with the same old templates: 'it is becoming better,' 'it is becoming friendlier,' 'it is becoming normal.' How long with this 'becoming' last? The reality is quite different.¹⁶

In January 1988, one Catholic believer explained, "these days, even the atheists themselves are claiming that the situation practically remains the same: 'the old "tradition" of mocking believers is still considered a good deed, while the constitutional

¹³ Oxana Antic, "Religious Policy Under Gorbachev," in *Soviet/East European Survey, 1987-1988: Selected Research and Analysis from Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, ed. Vojtech Mastny (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 176.

¹⁴ Michael Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), 141.

¹⁵ Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, "Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius' Remarks at the Priests' Symposium," printed in *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania No. 79*, September 8, 1988, trans. Vita Matusaitis and Rev. Casimir Pugevičius (Brooklyn: Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, 1989), accessed May 31, 2013, <http://www.lkbkronika.lt/en/images/chr/chronicle79.pdf>.

¹⁶ Stasė Norkienė, et al., "Atviras Laiškas [An open letter]," *Sajūdžio žinios* 22, August 15, 1988.

freedom of conscience remains in force only in documents.’”¹⁷ What did change quickly was people’s willingness to object to the continued persecution of the LCC. The LCC itself became more vocal, and Sajūdis members “were attempting to take advantage of the new attitudes at the heart of that [perestroika] process” by speaking freely about the injustices suffered under the Soviet yoke.¹⁸ The independence movements shed ever-brighter light on the atrocities of the past, including the deportation of religious leaders, as well as the ongoing persecution and denial of religious rights. This not only contributed to policy change, but the people’s respect for the LCC also grew. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, the LCC was closely tied with Lithuanian national identity, and so perestroika provided a context in which the role of the LCC as a national institution could become more prominent. The LCC and its experience of persecution became prominent themes in rhetoric and in political activity, and the rights and legal status of the LCC became a rallying point for the Lithuanian people. In this context of unprecedented liberty and continued religious oppression, Sajūdis emerged as a nationalist movement that had the potential to engage the Lithuanian people in determining their political future.

Socio-Cultural Sources of Lithuanian National Identity

In its efforts to reinforce Lithuanian national identity and build its political platform on a foundation that would garner popular national support, Sajūdis had many cultural and geo-political factors available as foundations of Lithuanian national identity. It’s attention to developing national identity was “conditioned by two elements of

¹⁷ Norkiene, et al., “Atviras Laiškas.”

¹⁸ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 1.

Lithuanian political culture: first, a deep commitment to historic national values and the tradition of national resistance to occupying powers and, second, the brief experience of democracy in the interwar period.”¹⁹ In order to rouse popular support in elections, Sajūdis needed to appeal to the majority of Lithuanians and stir up national sentiment strong enough to motivate the people to take potentially risky actions to support independence. Sajūdis saw national values and history as potential means of raising the needed support. Although folk culture and geo-politics were indeed powerful loci of national identity, each of these elements would prove insufficient to rouse the majority to action. Thus it was essential for Sajūdis to build a relationship with the Catholic Church, which was the single most powerful preserver of national identity and motivator of individual action. This section will examine several sources of Lithuanian national identity, explain how Sajūdis utilized each source in its efforts to promote nationalism, and analyze why each source was insufficient on its own for converting passive popular support into popular action.

Ethnicity

Ethnic identity is a fundamental component of nationality. An ethno-centric nationalism will emphasize blood relationships that band the nation together, to the exclusion of those who do not, or are believed not to, share the same lineage. Despite centuries of intermarriage with Poles and other non-Lithuanian ethnic groups, many Lithuanians retained or adopted the idea that the Lithuanian nation was based first and foremost upon ethnic ties to the tribes who were the prehistoric inhabitants of the Baltic

¹⁹ V. Stanley Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” *Problems of Communism* (July/August 1989): 54.

lands.²⁰ The Soviet government understood the potential for ethnicity to become a nationalistic rallying point, and therefore tried to diffuse ethnic homogeneity by means of aggressive relocation. Russians especially were sent to the Baltic republics to work in the newly industrialized urban centers in the years following World War II.²¹ In theory, this would increase internationalism and contribute to pan-Soviet solidarity based on economic class instead of ethnicity. It also, of course, contributed to russification. The rapid influx of Russians heightened the Lithuanians' awareness of their own ethnic differentiation and contributed to animosity toward the Soviet Union as foreign agents of oppression. The Soviet Union's desire to create a supra-national country, followed by efforts to invent Soviet nationalism, both backfired in Lithuania. Lithuanians had centuries of practice retaining their unique identity against russification, and their Russian co-workers, while not necessarily enemies on an individual level, only made Lithuanians more assertive of their national identity.

One of the means by which Sajūdis emphasized Lithuanian's shared ethnic heritage was by fostering collective memory. Lithuanians passed down stories of former glory and oppressions of the past and present through folk stories, folk songs, and memorializing the victims of deportation. The stories linked young people growing up within the Soviet Union to their Lithuanian history and kept alive the animosity against

²⁰ Vytautas Landsbergis' own ethnic heritage highlights the difficulty of claiming a pure Lithuanian ethnicity after centuries of intermarriage with Poles, Russians, Germans, and other ethnic groups. Landsbergis' Lithuanian grandfather married a Polish woman, but was intentional about raising his children to speak Lithuanian. Landsbergis notes that "many of his contemporaries and relatives considered this process of reclaiming the Lithuanian language to be an affectation which bordered on eccentricity, but [his grandfather] ignored these pressures and ensured that his family became entirely Lithuanian . . ." Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 32.

²¹ Benjamin Brake, "Country Profile: Lithuania," Focus Migration, Institut für Migrationsforschung und Interkulturelle Studien, accessed February 3, 2014, <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/Lithuania.1257.0.html?&L=1>.

the nation's Soviet and Russian oppressors. Vytautas Landsbergis explains that, because of the national attention given to Lithuania's fight for independence, Lithuanians as an ethnic group were emerging from the homogenous mass of the Soviet Union, and would be known as a people group who "were nurtured by the memory of her long resistance to oppression and to the foreign occupation of their country throughout its history, and were inspired by an unbroken and enduring hope for their people's freedom."²² Sajūdis invoked this shared history at every political event, which effectively united the Lithuanian people under the banner of their unique ethnic identity, but at the same time caused concern for minority ethnic groups who called Lithuania home.

Ethnicity became a major point of political contention within Sajūdis. Of the thirty-six members of the Sajūdis Initiative Group, nearly all were ethnic Lithuanians, with only one Russian, one Pole, and one Jew among the members. Compared to the total population, Russians and Poles were dramatically underrepresented.²³ For residents of the LiSSR who did not share Lithuanian bloodlines with their neighbors, "the massive and emotional currents of national rebirth" were intimidating, and led to the establishment of groups whose purpose was to "articulate and defend the interests of the Russian and Polish minorities."²⁴ Some Russians and Poles did promote Lithuanian independence and were willing to take risks for the republic that they considered home. Gorbachev's government, recognizing the potential divisiveness of ethnic relations, tried

²² Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 16.

²³ Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," 57.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

“to weaken the independence movement by inciting inter-ethnic conflict.”²⁵ Ethnic Lithuanians were divided on the importance of ethnicity as a point of departure for the national movement, and later as a condition for citizenship in independent Lithuania. While ethnicity was a powerful rallying point for national self-awareness, the use of ethnicity as a foundation for nationalism approached, and occasionally crossed, the line into xenophobia and anti-Semitism. After Sajūdis’ second congress in April 1990, where the more radically nationalistic and ethnically homogenous Kaunas faction held the majority, Sajūdis’ clashed around the question “who is a real, proper Lithuanian?”²⁶ Ethnicity’s role in national identity and in Sajūdis’ politics was problematic precisely because it might lead to the oppressed becoming the oppressor. There was sufficient sensitivity to the danger of ethnocentrism within the Sajūdis leadership that, while there was a great deal of rhetoric in praise of the Lithuanian nation, the biological ethnic ties were not heavily promoted as sources of Lithuanian pride.

The problem of ethno-centrism was especially poignant in the case of the Jewish population, which was almost completely decimated during World War II. Prior to World War II, Jews were the largest ethnic minority in Lithuania. Vilnius was commonly referred to as the Lithuanian Jerusalem and was a center of Jewish culture in Europe, and

²⁵ “Dealing with Lithuania,” *Economic & Political Weekly* 25, no. 18/19 (May 5-12, 1990): 970, accessed January 30, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4396242>.

²⁶ Vesna Popovski, *National Minorities and Citizenship Rights in Lithuania, 1988-93* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 56. Popovski argues that “the Lithuanian national movement has its origins in Soviet nationality policies” and that “when the goal of independence was achieved Sajūdis changed its rhetoric from being anti-Soviet to anti-Russian and anti-Polish.” Popovski, 85-59. There is also ongoing contemporary debate between advocates of reintegration into Western Europe on the one hand versus Baltocentrism on the other. Lithuanian philosopher Leonidas Donskis warns against Baltocentric foundations of cultural rebirth, explaining “the romantic-ethnocentric and monadic visions of culture treat it as a closed, unique and sacred world—a specific theophany or monad” which amounts to “national fundamentalism.” Leonidas Donskis, “Lithuania at the end of the Twentieth Century: The Creation of an Open Society and culture,” in *Personal Freedom and National Resurgence*, ed. Aleksandr Dobrynin and Bronius Kuzmickas (Washington, D.C.: Paideia Press, 1994), 76.

the city's population was over twenty-eight percent Jewish.²⁷ During World War II, over ninety percent of Lithuanian Jews were killed. During the German occupation from 1941 to 1943, the Nazis recruited tens of thousands of Lithuanians to serve in the military, and Lithuanian collaborators assisted in murdering approximately 185,000 Lithuanian Jews, over 33,000 of them in 1941 alone.²⁸ After the Nazi occupation ended in 1943, much of the small remnant of Jews emigrated, leaving only a few thousand Jews in the country by the end of the Soviet period.²⁹ Although there was at least one Jew in the Sajūdis Initiative Group, the question of Lithuanian complicity with the Nazis and the suffering of the once-large Jewish population was an issue to which Sajūdis gave little attention. A Jewish supporter of Sajūdis remarked about its Founding Congress in October 1988,

they were going on and on about Lithuanian victims and sufferings, and I suddenly thought, what the hell am I doing here? My mother was a victim, my whole family, my three-year-old cousin, and they have no place here, not even a mention. But then, I thought, it is the first time that Lithuanians can talk about their sufferings, about the truth . . . but to this day (11 May 1992), there have been only a very few statements from the intelligentsia, and a few official gestures concerning the Lithuanian role in the Holocaust.³⁰

The Lithuanian people have not yet come to terms with their role in the Holocaust, despite “awareness of the fate of the Jews [being] a recurrent theme, a consciousness of tragedy and crime on a massive scale.”³¹ Adam Michnik said, “nationalism is usually a

²⁷ Yitzhak Arad, *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust* (New York: Holocaust Library, 1982), 28.

²⁸ Tomas Skucas, “Lithuania: A Problem of Disclosure,” in *Dismantling Tyranny: Transitioning Beyond Totalitarian Regimes*, ed. Ian Berman and J. Michael Waller (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 413; Arad, 217. For a detailed account of the timeline and process of the Nazi operations against the Jewish people of Lithuania, see Arad.

²⁹ Popovski, 137-138.

³⁰ Quoted in Popovski, 147.

³¹ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 19.

technique of escaping from responsibility for the past. Strangers are guilty—that is the conviction of a nationalist.”³² In the case of Lithuania and the Jews of Vilnius, Michnik’s analysis rings true. Regarding the nation’s complicity and participation in the destruction of Lithuania’s Jews, there was a vague sense of embarrassment or guilt, but Sajūdis did not acknowledge the full extent of the atrocity. Nevertheless, there was sufficient understanding of that part of Lithuania’s history to dissuade most nationalists from over-emphasizing ethnic identity in ways that might come across as anti-Semitic. Sajūdis did not emphasize Lithuanian ethnicity at the expense of Lithuanian Jews, but it did not attempt to make amends for the past either.

Other well-represented ethnic minorities in Lithuania during the twilight of the Soviet period included Russians, Poles, and Germans, although many Germans had been repatriated during the Nazi occupation. Some Sajūdis participants revealed a long-standing resentment toward Poles. Some believed most of the Poles living in Lithuania were actually Lithuanians who had simply adopted Polish culture, and if they wanted to remain culturally Polish they ought to leave Lithuania and go to Poland.³³ That view of the Polish minority was further complicated by the fact that Vilnius had been part of Poland during the years of independence, and had always been an international city, which is part of the reason why the Kaunas-based faction of Sajūdis was more determined to build a mono-ethnic Lithuania than the Vilnius faction was.

The sizable Russian minority was disquieted by the anti-Soviet rhetoric that was part and parcel of promoting Lithuanian national culture. Some were “troubled by

³² Adam Michnik, “Nationalism,” *Social Research* 58, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 760, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1297202105?accountid=7014>.

³³ Alfred Erich Senn, *Lithuania Awakening* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 99.

demands for reduced Soviet control and for an end to Russian migration” and feared that the surge in nationalism would lead to “open hostility toward outsiders.”³⁴ Minority groups were not, as a rule, opposed to Lithuanian independence, nor were they necessarily loyal to Moscow, as demonstrated by the work of *Yedinstvo*, ‘Unity’, an organization established in response to the lack of ethnic minority participation in the Sąjūdis Founding Congress in October 1988. Although open to all nationalities, the majority of *Yedinstvo*, members were Russians and Poles. *Yedinstvo* believed the LiCP should take a leading role in the implementation of perestroika, and opposed the adoption of Lithuanian as the official language.³⁵ Therefore Sąjūdis, while Lithuanian at its core, was not only an ethnic Lithuanian movement; it was a political movement with a support base whose motivations were more varied than simply promoting self-determination of a single ethnic group.

Although ethnic identity was part of Sąjūdis’ politics, it was not a major platform by means of which Sąjūdis hoped to gain popular support. Because of the multi-ethnic history of the Lithuania, especially Vilnius, an emphasis on ethnic homogeneity as the basis of the national movement was unlikely to gain sufficiently broad support. Indeed, the Kaunas faction’s emphasis on a “pure” Lithuanian nation was a likely culprit in the rapid decline of Sąjūdis’ popularity in the 1992 elections. The emphasis on Lithuanian ethnicity alienated a sizable minority of Russians and Poles as well as Lithuanians with some Polish ancestry. Minority concerns led Algirdas Brazauskas, in his address to the Sąjūdis Founding Congress, to assure the people that “rebirth of Lithuanian national

³⁴ Philip Taubman, “In Lithuania Too, Nationalism Surges,” *New York Times*, 23 July 1988. ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

³⁵ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 59.

consciousness gives no reason for alarm on the part of representatives of other peoples, much less for them to distrust the Lithuanian people.”³⁶ Brazauskas also warned against emotional, extremist, and irresponsible speeches.³⁷ The nationalist rhetoric soared with accolades for the Lithuanian people and their accomplishments, but did not generally focus on driving minority groups out of the country or inciting ethnic hatred. Therefore ethnicity was a resource for rhetoric that would appeal to the majority, but was not used in way that might cause violence against minority groups or a Nazi-esque preoccupation with ethnic purity.

Folk Religion

Despite the eventual Catholicization of the Lithuanian people, myths and symbols of Lithuanian indigenous religion continued to be a point of pride for Lithuanians, even if they had no interest in practicing the religion of their ancestors. Ernest Gellner posits,

some deeply engrained religious-cultural habits possess a vigour and tenacity which can virtually equal those which are rooted in our genetic constitution. Language and formal doctrinal belief seem less deep rooted and it is easier to shed them; but that cluster of intimate and pervasive values and attitudes which . . . are usually linked to religion . . . frequently have a limpet-like persistence, and continue to act as a diacritical mark for the populations which carry them.³⁸

The Catholicization of Lithuania did not erase the nation’s history or the people’s knowledge of their folk religious traditions. However subtle or overt the influence, folk religion remained part of Lithuanians’ national consciousness.

³⁶ Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, ed. “Brazauskas to Sajūdis Congress,” *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XL, no. 43 (1988): 4.

³⁷ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 239.

³⁸ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 71.

It may be surprising that folk religion would be a source of national identity as late as the 1980s, but folk belief did indeed persist even into the Soviet period when “participation in the activity of the organization of pagan beliefs, *Romuva*, was one of the ways to resist the official regime.”³⁹ While folk religion was not a major focal point of the independence movement, it was not entirely ignored either. Alfred Senn recalls the founding congress in October 1988 where “amid more serious proposals, another speaker suggested making paganism Lithuania’s national religion.”⁴⁰ Although the assembly did not seriously consider this proposal, it is indicative of the pride Lithuanians felt about their long-enduring indigenous roots. In a proposal to publish a national calendar, Danguolė Droblytė wrote, “the people of the nation need to be aware of well known holidays [. . .] spawned by the pre-Christian spiritual culture and the content of and symbolism behind such holidays.”⁴¹ Pride in their folk religion was also, perhaps ironically, attached to Lithuanian demands for the Vilnius Cathedral to be returned. In a press release, the New York-based Lithuanian Information Center explained the religious and historic importance of the Cathedral: “The significance of the Cathedral for Lithuanians extends beyond the Roman Catholic community. As a symbolic center of religion, the Cathedral site predates the introduction of Christianity to Lithuania – the

³⁹ Stanislovas Juknevičius, “Religiosity and the Moral Values of Lithuanians in the European Context,” in *Lithuanian Identity and Values*, Lithuanian Philosophical Studies V, ed. Aida Savicka (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2007), 101. *Romuva* was active throughout the Soviet period and into independence. As late as 1995 a bill was sent to parliament to acknowledge ancient Baltic beliefs as one of the traditional religions of Lithuania, and in 2003 parliament pronounced Joninės, a former pagan feast, a national holiday.

⁴⁰ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 173-174. The folk religion of Lithuania did not have an official name; it is almost always referred to as pagan, and some of the pantheon and beliefs were explained in Chapter Two.

⁴¹ Danguolė Droblytė, “Civilizuotos pasaulio tautos švenčia savo nacionalines šventes [Civilized nations of the world celebrate their national holidays],” *Sąjūdžio žinios* 29, August 26, 1988.

Cathedral was built on the ruins of a pagan temple.”⁴² Whether the assertion about the pre-Christian temple is accurate or not, it is telling that some attachment to folk religion persisted in the national imagination to such a degree that the indigenous religion was woven into the Catholic identity.

Of all the sources of Lithuanian national identity, folk religion was the least likely to rally popular support. While the uniqueness of Lithuania’s religious heritage did appeal to some people, primarily academics, an emphasis on folk religion would no doubt have lost Sajūdis a great many supporters among faithful Catholics, let alone the clergy who had significant political influence especially in the rural villages. Any serious attempt to revive the Lithuanian folk religion would most likely have discredited the movement as eccentric or heretical. Moreover, it is almost impossible to distinguish between true ancient beliefs versus embellishment from later centuries. As a result, any attempt to recover folk religious practices as an expression of Lithuanian identity would necessarily have resulted in artificial constructs that were no more authentically Lithuanian than any other system imposed by foreign powers.

Myths and Legends

Closely related to folk religion, myths and legends are also significant for Lithuanian national identity. Johann Gottfried Herder, a German living in Riga who took an interest in Baltic traditions, theorized about the importance of folklore for national identity in the mid-eighteenth century. Herder posited, “every nation had its own special and incommunicable national spirit and culture, the highest expression of which was their

⁴² Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “House of Reps Urges Soviets to Return Cathedral to Catholic Believers,” 14 October 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

folksong and poetry” and “the only route to the recovery of a national cultural and hence political identity was through the rediscovery of folklore.”⁴³ However, the records of Lithuania’s myths and legends are similar to the record of its indigenous beliefs: they are mostly constructions of German or Polish scholars who combined knowledge with creativity to create national myths.

The only story that is believed to be a genuine myth of the Lithuanian people is *An Account of the Straying of the Pagans who Called Slovi a God*, but it only dates to the mid-thirteenth century. According to Endre Bojtár, it is a poorly told, almost incomprehensible, tale of a man or tribe who started the tradition of cremating the dead, believed to be a sinful practice by the Eastern Orthodox recorders of the original text.⁴⁴ The legends of Gediminas and Šventaragas, both of which are legends about the founding of Vilnius that were conceived and recorded in the sixteenth century, are two of the myths that are most familiar to modern Lithuanians. Šventaragas was a Grand Duke who died in 1271. According to the legend, his son cremated him at the junction of the Vilnia and Neris rivers and then built a sanctuary where priests kept a sacred fire lit. The sanctuary was destroyed and the sacred fire was extinguished when King Jogaila forced the Lithuanians to convert to Catholicism in the late-fourteenth century. Another well-known legend is about Gediminas, who is the legendary founder of Vilnius. After falling asleep near the site of Šventaragas’ cremation, Gediminas dreamt about an iron wolf with a hundred wolves howling inside it. A priest interpreted the dream to mean that an enormous castle would stand on that spot and it would be famous all over the world.

⁴³ Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 113.

⁴⁴ Endre Bojtár, *Foreward to the Past* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 1997), 330-333.

Gediminas began construction of what would become Vilnius the next day.⁴⁵ Gediminas Tower, which overlooks Vilnius, has been reconstructed several times over the centuries, but still stands as a reminder of Lithuania's folk history and a symbol of Vilnius' ancient founding.

For the artists, writers, philosophers and historians who comprised the leadership of Sajūdis, the recovery of folk culture was an important endeavor. One of the ways Sajūdis, as well as other protest and dissent organizations, invoked the nation's folklore was by attaching the names of folk heroes to major streets. For example, Lithuanians insisted on calling the major thoroughfare of Vilnius "Gediminas Avenue," and not "Lenin Avenue." In this and other ways, the name of Vilnius' legendary founder was a constant refrain.⁴⁶ Another symbolic nod to Lithuania's mythic past was the image of a knight. When the LiSSR Seimas declared independence from the Soviet Union in March 1990, it also "dropped the old seal that included a Soviet hammer, sickle, and star, replacing it with one showing a white knight on a dark shield."⁴⁷ The national anthem, which was formally banned during the Soviet period, but which people often sang spontaneously at rallies and other public events, alludes to the "land of heroes."⁴⁸ While subtle, these references to Lithuanian myths and legends kept the stories fresh on

⁴⁵ Bojtar, 322-323.

⁴⁶ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 36. Other streets were also renamed: July 21st Street was renamed February 16th Street to commemorate Lithuania's 1918 independence day, and the street where the KGB headquarters was located was renamed the Street of Victims. Peter Gumbel, "Baltic Juggernaut: A Defiant Lithuania Leads Soviet States in Drive to Break Free," *The Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 1990, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/398136316?accountid=7014>.

⁴⁷ Associated Press, "Lithuania Declares Its Freedom; Legislature is Unanimously for Secession from USSR," *Telegram and Gazette*, March 12, 1990, accessed June 6, 2013. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/268364936?accountid=7014>.

⁴⁸ Vincas Kudirka, "Lietuvos Himnas," printed in *Sajūdžio žinios* 42, October 4, 1988. The text and instrumental arrangement of the national hymn covers the first page of this edition, indicating the importance of the national hymn for Sajūdis and the national independence movement.

people's minds, reinforcing pride in Lithuanian cultural heritage in the face of the Soviet artifice that threatened to bury the past under Soviet names and symbols.

Folk heroes and legends also made their way into Sajūdis rhetoric, as orators alluded to the great deeds of the past and reminded Lithuanians of their proud heritage. At the 23 August 1988 rally commemorating the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Sigitas Geda exhorted the people, "let us not forget for a moment the tales of our noble ancestors whether they be descended from the Himalayas or risen from the lost islands of Crete, let us not forget the myth of Palemonas and the enlightenment of our European ancestors."⁴⁹ At Sajūdis' Founding Congress, Vytautas Landsbergis "invoked ancient and modern Lithuanian heroes as he prodded those assembled to preserve the future of 'our land and our children.'"⁵⁰ By alluding to folk heroes, orators put the Lithuanian struggle for independence within the context of Lithuania's heroic struggles of the past, thereby strengthening people's resolve to continue fighting just as their ancestors had done.

Myths and legends did not serve as strong foundations for Lithuanian identity because it was primarily academics who were interested in the preservation of Lithuanian folklore. Lithuanians handed down myths and legends through oral and written tradition, but the intrinsic value of folklore for the renaissance of national identity lacked broad appeal beyond the academy. A village farmer or factory worker may enjoy the stories and even have a heartfelt attachment to them as part of his national heritage, but he was

⁴⁹ Asta Banionis, "The Summer of 1988 and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in Lithuania," *Lituanus* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1989), accessed February 6, 2014, http://www.lituanus.org/1989/89_1_04.htm. When Geda mentions the Himalayas or Crete, he is referring to two different theories about the origin of the Lithuanian people. According to some linguists, the Lithuanian language is related to Sanskrit, thus the ancient Lithuanians may have migrated from the Indian subcontinent. Other linguists highlight the relationship between Lithuanian and other Indo-European languages including Greek. There is also some similarity between Lithuanian and Greco-Roman mythology. Palemonas refers to a sixteenth century myth that placed ascribed Roman roots to Gediminas' ancestry in order to give him an ancient pedigree.

⁵⁰ Martha Olcott Brill, "The Lithuanian Crisis," *Foreign Affairs* 69, no. 3 (Summer, 1990): 33.

unlikely to risk his livelihood to promote the preservation of folklore. Thus the zeal for folk culture was found in the university history or literature departments, but did not translate well to the foundation of a nationalist movement.

Folk Music

Although music and singing are by no means unique to any particular nation, folk music has played a significant role in the national identity of Lithuanians and other Balts. Ethnographers have collected lyrics and recordings of thousands of folk songs, many of them dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Singing was woven into the fabric of daily life, with songs for specific occasions including weddings and funerals, children growing up, harvest time, and religious events.⁵¹ The songs are lyrical and have been classified as songs of youth, songs of love, and songs of family life. It is not uncommon for individual Lithuanians to have a repertoire of dozens of folk songs.

Song festivals demonstrate the significance of folk singing for Baltic culture; the festivals draw tens of thousands of people from the Baltic region and the diaspora, and are stunning demonstrations of national pride. Estonia hosted the first Baltic song festival in 1869 to celebrate the abolition of serfdom, and since that time the song celebrations have been “traditionally associated with political protest and the demand for freedom.”⁵² Lithuania hosted its first song festival in 1924, and the festivals “acquired widespread popularity as a means of asserting Baltic cultural identity” after the Baltic

⁵¹ Rytis Ambrazevičius, “Songs Introduction,” *Anthology of Lithuanian Ethnoculture*, trans. Elena Bradūnaite-Aglinskienė, (1998-1999), accessed January 30, 2014, <http://ausis.gf.vu.lt/eka/index.html>.

⁵² Clare Thomson, *The Singing Revolution: A Journey Through the Baltic States* (London: Michael Joseph, 1992), 251.

states gained independence from Russia in 1920.⁵³ Organizers of the 2014 Lithuanian song festival note, “the Lithuanian Song Celebration is an overall national cultural phenomenon and a continual purposeful creative process spiritually equal to ancient Greek Olympic Games.”⁵⁴ UNESCO includes Baltic song and dance celebrations in its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Folk singing is a living tradition, with songs added to the ancient catalog that reflect the suffering of the Soviet years, especially deportations.

Folk music groups came under suspicion during the Soviet period because of their connection to nationalism and their lack of contribution to Soviet industrial work. One folk music club was organized at the Vilnius trade union and gave performances for four years before suddenly being impeded by the State Security Committee. The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* lamented, “it seems that the folksong club faces the same destiny which has struck the regional studies and discussion clubs in Lithuania. The hand of the Soviet government wants to erase the entire past of Lithuania.”⁵⁵ In the 1970s there was a revival of academic and popular interest in folk music, and a “self-assured Baltic generation no longer ashamed of the simplicity of the old folktunes” made the archaic singing style quite popular.⁵⁶ Vytautas Landsbergis recalls how his fellow Vilnius conservatory students vied for the opportunity to accompany a scholar of folklore

⁵³ UNESCO, “The Baltic Song and Dance Celebrations,” UNESCO Multimedia Archives eServices, 2008, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.unesco.org/archives/multimedia/index.php?s=films_details&pg=33&id=1742.

⁵⁴ “From the History of Song Celebrations,” 2014 Lietuvos Dainū Šventė, 2013, <http://www.dainusvente.lt/en/about-song-celebrations/history/>.

⁵⁵ Supreme Committee for Liberation of Lithuania, “Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church Summary of Issue No. 19,” *ELTA Information Service* 2 (202) (February 1976): 3-5.

⁵⁶ Romuald Misiunas and Rein Taagepera, *The Baltic States: Years of Dependence 1940-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 249-250.

“on expeditions into the country, to record Lithuanian songs among the people.”⁵⁷ When Landsbergis was a professor at the conservatory, he helped arrange music competitions and courses to promote interest in Lithuanian folk music, which brought him some trouble.⁵⁸ Growing interest in folk song and other aspects of folk culture reinforced Lithuanian identity and was a source of hope for those who feared that Lithuania would be culturally subsumed into the Soviet Union.

Folk singing was a commonplace at Sajūdis events, whether emerging spontaneously from the crowd or led from a stage. Senn recounts what he witnessed on 7 October 1988, the day thousands of people gathered in Gediminas Square to see the national flag raised: “After the formal ceremony had ended at 10:50 A.M. and the band had marched off, most of the crowd lingered in smaller or larger groups, singing folk songs, including songs recounting Stalin’s deportations and resistance to Soviet rule.”⁵⁹ That same month, during the Sajūdis Founding Congress, there was a procession to Gediminas Square during which people sang folk songs, some of them commemorating the deportations.⁶⁰ It is significant to note, “the musical accompaniment of these rituals is usually gentle – either religious and devotional or national and nostalgic – not militant marching songs as in some other versions of nationalism, and not performed by uniformed bands.”⁶¹ The *National Hymn* was very popular at events and rallies, and was

⁵⁷ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 43.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁵⁹ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 200-201.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 225-226.

⁶¹ Vytautas Kavolis, “The Second Lithuanian Revival: Culture as Performance,” in *Personal Freedom and National Resurgence*, Lithuanian Philosophical Studies, I, ed. Aleksandr Dobrynin and Bronius Kuzmickas (Washington, D.C.: Paideia Press & The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy), 153.

an expression of both nationalist and religious sentiment.⁶² By singing, the Lithuanian people participated in the narrative of their country. They reminded themselves and one another where they came from as the song lyrics told of folk life or of significant historic events, and the singers experience a unique connection to distinctly Lithuanian identity, to the exclusion of other ethnic groups who do not understand the language or meaning of the songs.

Folk singing was an effective rallying point for national sentiment, thanks to its almost universal popularity and cultural value among the Lithuanian people. Lieven claims, “in the one hundred-and-fifty-year-old process of the creation of national-cultural symbol . . . [song festivals] are probably the most powerful symbols of all.”⁶³ Of the cultural and geo-political elements of national identity, singing is the one that most readily resonated in rural areas. People remembered the songs and the song festivals, and valued that unique component of their heritage to such a degree that it was almost unconsciously inserted into public events. It was culturally appropriate to start singing a folk song at public gatherings, especially where emotions were running high, and people readily joined in to sing the familiar tunes. The challenge of appealing to folk song as part of Sajūdis’ efforts to raise popular support is that independence was not necessary for the preservation and expression of that particular aspect of folk culture. Perestroika restored the ability to form singing groups, and the song festivals continued to take place

⁶² Although it is beyond the scope of this research, singing also manifested in the form of Rock and Roll. Rock music festivals were often associated with aspirations for independence, and rallied the youth. In August 1988, there was a March of Rock in which young people traveled across Lithuania performing rock concerts in support of Lithuanian freedom. At the conclusion of the concert in Vilnius, the crowd demonstrated its national spirit by singing not a rock song, but the National Hymn. See Jurga Ivanauskaite, “Mūsų Dvasios Žygis,” *Sąjūdžio Žinios* 24, August 18, 1988.

⁶³ Lieven, 110. The Song Festival holds even greater significance in Estonian and Latvian culture and political movements.

during the Soviet period, although the government encouraged a more pan-Soviet schedule of choirs and song selections. By the time Sajūdis was becoming active, singing was already regaining its public role in society, so the restoration of this aspect of culture was not sufficient to lure people to the polls to elect candidates who wanted independence from the Soviet Union. Folk music contributed to keeping the national spirit alive and preserving an invaluable part of Lithuanian culture, but it was not necessarily a politically useful point of contact between Sajūdis and the voting public.

Language and Literature

Lithuanians take great pride in their language, which is among the more ancient spoken languages and is not mutually-intelligible with any other language. The Lithuanian language presents a puzzle to linguists, who dispute among themselves about the various models for the development and preservation of the Baltic language family, of which Lithuanian seems to be the most ancient surviving branch. Lithuanian does not fit neatly into accepted models of language diffusion or evolution, and linguists are left agreeing that Lithuanian is an ancient language with correspondence to Sanskrit and Old Slavic.⁶⁴ Tomas Venclova, a Lithuanian poet and dissident, reflects on the almost mythic power that the Lithuanian people attach to their language: “Lithuanian is the most archaic among the living Indo-European languages. By the force of not-too-logical extension, it is often considered the best and brightest among them, their venerable and infallible

⁶⁴ Bojtar, 66-84.

mother.”⁶⁵ Lithuanians are proud of their language, and are well aware of its ancient roots and its uniqueness among the world’s modern languages.

Despite its ancient roots as a spoken language, as a literary language Lithuanian only dates to the Reformation period. While the Reformation had relatively little long-term impact on popular religiosity, Protestant missionaries made the invaluable contribution of printing books and pamphlets in Lithuanian. The first book published entirely in Lithuanian was a catechism translated by Martinas Mažvydas in 1547. Other books followed, mostly translations or original religious literature by Lithuanian-speaking students at the University of Königsberg, a German university in present-day Kaliningrad. These publications helped attract more Lithuanian students to the university, many of whom were members of the nobility, but also a growing number of peasants. Although there were only a few dozen people involved with Lithuanian-language publication, the impact of written language on religion and culture cannot be overestimated.⁶⁶ Literacy improved rapidly, thanks to the education efforts of both the government and missionaries. Having sacred literature in their mother tongue contributed to people’s attachment to the Catholic faith, and also paved the way for a rich literary tradition that would become a source of pride for Lithuanians.

In the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, when Lithuania was united with Poland, Polish and Russian linguistic influences combined with the relatively late development of Lithuanian written language and publishing brought the ancient language near the brink of extinction. The majority of the intelligentsia was Polish, therefore

⁶⁵ Tomas Venclova, “Lithuania: The Opening and the Hand of the Past,” *Salmagundi* 90/91 (Spring-Summer 1991): 7.

⁶⁶ Antanas Musteikis, *The Reformation in Lithuania: Religious Fluctuations in the Sixteenth Century* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1988), 44, 47.

“Lithuanian nobility concerned with maintaining and improving their own status in the united kingdom” adopted Polish as their lingua franca.⁶⁷ Were it not for the national awakening in the nineteenth century, Lithuanian may well have gone the way of Prussian and Ruthenian. But the rapid expansion of publishing and the Lithuanian intelligentsia’s commitment to learning and using their native language prevented it from dying out.

Vincas Kudirka, who wrote the Lithuanian national hymn, is significant to the development of Lithuanian nationalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His poems “may be entitled a diary of national renaissance,” and his *Satynos*, ‘Satires’, sought to “stimulate and encourage Lithuanians to fight Russification and Lithuanian oppressors.”⁶⁸ During the Soviet period, when aggressive russification was intermittently underway, the Lithuanian language became increasingly important for national differentiation. The Soviet government attempted to limit the role of language in national identity by promoting bilingualism through education reforms. Formal instruction in Russian preceded Lithuanian, which resulted in declining use and knowledge of Lithuanian among children. Older students were not exempt: all doctoral theses had to be presented in Russian.⁶⁹ Lithuanians began to fear that their nationality was “being subjected to a long-term denationalization strategy,” a fear that was intensified “by a concerted campaign to aggressively promote the use of Russian at the

⁶⁷ V. Stanley Vardys, “Polish Echoes in the Baltic,” *Problems of Communism* (July-August 1983): 23.

⁶⁸ Juozapas Girdžijauskas, “Vincas Kudirka,” Lithuanian Classic Literature Anthology (Vilnius: Institute of Lithuanian Scientific Society, 1992-2009), accessed January 30, 2014, www.old.antologija.lt.

⁶⁹ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 8.

expense of the native languages, beginning in the late 1970s.”⁷⁰ Reacting against russification, “many Lithuanians . . . seem to believe that the very act of replacing Russian with Lithuanian leads to immediate salvation—as if nothing wrong could be said in Lithuanian by definition (and as if Lithuanian newspeak never existed).”⁷¹ Refusing to speak or respond to Russian was a popular act of subtle defiance, and after independence there were efforts to cleanse Lithuanian of Russian loan words.

One of Sajūdis’ primary concerns was the preservation and promotion of national culture, the Lithuanian language was *sine qua non* for the nation’s cultural heritage, language occupied a prominent place in Sajūdis’ platform from the very beginning. Sajūdis counted participants in the Lithuanian Union of Writers among its members, and the Writer’s Union had first advocated for Lithuanian as the official language on 4 April 1988. Members of the Writers Union “noted that despite the theoretical equality of the Lithuanian and Russian languages, the latter was clearly given preference.”⁷² In the sixth issue of *Sajūdžio žinios*, Virgilijus Čepaitis and Arūnas Zebriūnas proposed a resolution:

to formally include the Lithuanian language into the Lithuanian SSR Constitution as the Language of the Republic. To have it become a main language of administrative and production-related documents, regardless of the company’s ownership. To improve the teaching of the Lithuanian language in schools and to bring back Lithuanian language courses to higher education institutions and their faculties. To not allow the Lithuanian language to be pushed out of any material or cultural area of life of the republic.⁷³

⁷⁰ Alexander R. Alexiev, *Dissent and Nationalism in the Soviet Baltic* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1983), 18.

⁷¹ Venclova, 8.

⁷² Šaulius Girnius, “Campaign to Make Lithuanian the Official Language of the Republic,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report/9 (August 26, 1988): 29, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁷³ Virgilijus Čepaitis and Arūnas Žebriūnas, “Nacionaliniai Klausimai [National questions],” *Sajūdžio žinios* 6, July 5, 1988.

Sajūdis' suggested agenda for the Lithuanian delegate to the Nineteenth Party Congress included improving the teaching of Lithuanian in the bilingual education system and making Lithuanian the official language of the republic.⁷⁴ *Pravda* reported in 1988 that a draft of the new LiSSR Constitution proposed "that Lithuanian be declared the state language, while at the same time creating conditions for the development of the languages of all nationalities living in the republic, with Russian as the language of communication between nationalities."⁷⁵ In January 1989 the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet adopted a constitutional amendment declaring Lithuanian the official language of LiSSR.⁷⁶ The amount of time and political energy exerted in support of the language clearly demonstrates the importance of Lithuanian for its native speakers both as an aspect of national identity and as a counterweight to the forced use of Russian, a language that became symbolic of oppression.

Lithuanian language was clearly an important aspect of Lithuanian national identity and a focal point of Sajūdis' policy agenda, but its weakness as a foundation for mass political action lies in its inability to mobilize people who were otherwise not politically engaged. The coexistence of Lithuanian and Russian languages was a fact of life in the LiSSR, which people simply took for granted. Since Russian was the language of government and management, it was practical for people with any aspirations to job promotion or higher-prestige careers to learn Russian. For this reason, parents accepted that "from the moment they entered a school during the Soviet era, Baltic children were

⁷⁴ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 82.

⁷⁵ Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, ed. "After Its Congress," *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XL, no. 43 (1988): 6.

⁷⁶ Misiunas and Taagepera, 325.

exposed to Russian-language instruction. By the time they reached any institution of higher education, instruction was largely—if not exclusively—in Russian.”⁷⁷ From a purely pragmatic perspective, assuming, as most people did, that the Soviet Union was an intractable fact of life, it made good sense to be fluent in both Russian and Lithuanian, even if Russian was used begrudgingly. Those who attached national aspirations to linguistic purity were zealous and fought passionately for the protection of their native tongue, but most people were not going to risk their livelihood for the sake of a language that they used daily whether it was the official language of the republic or not. Language was a firebrand for the nationalist true believer, not for the common voter.

Historical and Political Aspects of Lithuanian National Identity

The major epochs of Lithuanian history became focal points for the national independence movement, and Sajūdis placed great emphasis on how the history of oppression and freedom had shaped the Lithuanian people. Different epochs in Lithuania’s history were points of national pride for the Lithuanian people. Lithuania was the classic underdog: it stood up to the crusaders, and it rebelled against the tsars, and it resisted the Soviet Union.

During the independence movement, Lithuanian scholars were preoccupied with recovering the true history of Lithuania, which involved uncovering the actual events hidden beneath Soviet interpretations and misinformation. In July 1988, Sajūdis published a resolution “to return the Lithuanian history to its nation, which was hidden and made false for decades. To demand the disclosure of important historical documents

⁷⁷ Lenore A. Grenoble, *Language Policy in the Soviet Union* (Norwell, MA; Kluwer Academic, 2003), 108.

concerning our nation.”⁷⁸ History had been rewritten as part of cultural russification efforts, with the resulting pretense that “intense and friendly relations had existed through the ages with the Russians, who were always represented as superior to the Balts.”⁷⁹ Recovering the truth was not a merely scientific endeavor aimed at knowing what really happened. The importance of an accurate account of Lithuanian history carried significance for self-understanding. Algis Mickunas, a Lithuanian philosopher of history, posits, “history is completely tied to human experience, and . . . the historical extension of awareness from generation to generation is not material, but signitive. This is to say, what is transmitted is the essential meaning and not brute facticity. . . . Every ‘fact’ is basically a system of awareness.”⁸⁰ For the people of Lithuania, the recovery of their history was the recovery of meaning, made all the more important by the ontological crises brought about by years of learning both the Soviet and the Lithuanian versions of history.

The Grand Duchy

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, during which legendary kings banded together the tribal groups that occupied the Baltic lands and fought off the incursions of Crusaders and Muscovites, has a mythic quality in the Lithuanian imagination. Gediminas, who was Grand Duke of Lithuania from 1315 until his death in 1341, is one focal point of Lithuania’s heroic self-perception. He is memorialized by Gediminas Tower, a turret of

⁷⁸ Čepaitis and Žebriūnas, “Nacionaliniai Klausimai.”

⁷⁹ Misiunas and Taagepera, 118. Examples of rewritten history already mentioned including referring to the independence years of the “Bourgeois Yoke” and the Forest Brother’s and “bandits.” Another example is referring to the expansion of the Lithuanian state in the fourteenth century as “feudal aggression.”

⁸⁰ Algis Mickunas, “History: the Grand Fact of Being,” in Dobrynin and Kuzmickas, 114.

the legendary Upper Castle he built in Vilnius, which has been reconstructed and preserved. The square surrounding Vilnius Cathedral also bears his name, as do many streets. The other prominent site preserving the Grand Duchy period is Trakai Castle, which was constructed by Grand Duke Kestutis at the height of the Grand Duchy's power in the late-fourteenth century. Although the castle was mostly in ruins by the nineteenth century, it became a point of interest to nineteenth century romantics and nationalists who made some efforts toward the site's restoration. The restoration project continued during the inter-war independence period, and the castle became a history museum in 1960s, and is still a popular tourist destination.⁸¹ The prominence of Gediminas Tower and Trakai Castle in the physical landscape mirrors the place of these sites and their history in the Lithuanian collective imagination. The collective memory of the Grand Duchy and nationalist rebellions shaped "an 'heroic' self-perception," which contributed to a "disposition toward dangerous, even foolhardy, courage."⁸² Nationalists looked to the Grand Duchy period for inspiration and as confirmation that the Lithuanian people had an ancient claim to the land and to sovereignty.

Sajūdis members summoned the collective memory of strength and valor primarily through sprinkling their rhetoric with allusions to the heroic past. In heated discussions with Moscow to negotiate the terms of Lithuania's secession, Vytautas Landsbergis cited a fourteenth century Grand Duke when he declared that "sooner will iron melt and stone turn to wax than we shall retreat."⁸³ Sigitas Geda, in his speech at the 8 July 1988 rally, invoked Lithuania's ancient history and the necessity of its

⁸¹ History, Trakai historical museum, accessed November 19, 2013, www.trakaimuziejus.lt.

⁸² Kavolis, 151.

⁸³ Ibid., 152.

preservation, saying “what will we say to them [our relatives], what will we say to ourselves when we’re alone, what will we say to those who were laid to rest in peace today, yesterday, the day before yesterday? . . . We will tell them that we are one of the most ancient nations.”⁸⁴ Such statements reminded people of their noble lineage and their former military might, perhaps emboldening their determination to restore Lithuania to its former glory.

Although the history of the Grand Duchy was worth preserving and served as a powerful image in rhetoric, this period was not a rallying point for the national movement for several reasons. Primarily, the Soviet Union did not perceive the history of the Grand Duchy as a threat. The restoration of Trakai Castle continued throughout the Soviet period and Gediminas Tower was not repurposed for Soviet propaganda. The Grand Duchy was never a direct threat to the Russian state, and could therefore be subsumed into the history of the Soviet people. Moreover, Russia was not responsible for the Grand Duchy’s end, therefore the period was not a source of dissent against the Soviet Russians. The Grand Duchy was interesting and inspiring, but it was not a history that Lithuanians feared losing to Soviet re-writing.

Inter-War Independence

During the 1980s independence movement, nationalists summoned the memory of the short period of Lithuanian independence between the World Wars as justification for restoring independence and as a rallying cry for popular support. Soviet propaganda alleged that the Baltics were merely colonies of western powers from 1918 to 1939 and

⁸⁴ Quoted in Virginijus Savukynas, “Lithuania and Europe: Possibilities for Reconstructing Identity,” in Savickas, 43.

referred to the inter-war independence as the period of the “bourgeois yoke.”⁸⁵

Lithuanian nationalists rejected the Soviet narrative and magnified the independence period as a golden age for Lithuanian culture. There were elderly people in the 1980s who had come of age during independence, and their memory of democracy “colored popular understanding of reform.”⁸⁶ For the generation that remembered independence, “one of the most important things was that the idea of nation was related to regaining history, which is connected with two fundamental things: truth . . . and death.”⁸⁷ The personal experiences of lost independence were valuable, but also presented challenges. In 1989 many political prisoners who had been deported in the early 1940s returned to Lithuania and brought with them “senseless antagonisms, paranoiac complexes and pathetic fervors” that Sajūdis had to temper.⁸⁸ Despite its mixed history and challenges, the inter-war independence period was a powerful tool for awakening nationalism. The two decades of independence that preceded five decades as a Soviet republic provided the Lithuanian people with the evidence of things hoped for.

Sajūdis directly alluded to the period of inter-war independence in several ways. In the 1980s it became increasingly common for demonstrations and parades to take place in commemoration of Independence Day on 16 February. One such demonstration was held in Kaunas in 1988, where “some 3,000 marched through the town in a procession which began at the church of Vytautas the Great, proceeded to the Kaunas

⁸⁵ Alfred Erich Senn, “The Sovietization of the Baltic States,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 317, The Satellites in Eastern Europe (May 1985): 125-126. See also Taubman, “In Lithuania Too.”

⁸⁶ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 54.

⁸⁷ Savukynas, 41.

⁸⁸ Venclova, 7.

Basilica and ended at Kaunas castle.”⁸⁹ Meanwhile, in Vilnius, “the KGB moved in to break up a procession consisting of religious activists and members of an unofficial temperance movement [who] planned to honour those who had died for Lithuania by laying flowers at the Rasu cemetery.”⁹⁰ A few months after this unofficial commemoration of independence, Sajūdis formally proposed that February 16 be marked as a national holiday to celebrate Lithuania’s freedom, while June 14, the anniversary of the Soviet annexation, should be observed as a Day of Sorrow for the Lithuanian nation. The publication of a national calendar with these dates marked as “red days” would “help people to get a grasp of things in the state of historiographical chaos, as well as refresh people’s historical memory and solidify their knowledge of historical truths, facts, works (carried out by bright and honest people of the nation), thoughts and lives of people in history.”⁹¹ One year later, on 16 February 1989, the Sajūdis Seimas held a meeting to discuss a declaration of independence. Sajūdis members affirmed the declaration “unambiguously and unequivocally with this anniversary at the forefront of everyone’s mind.”⁹² It was important for Sajūdis to link itself with the inter-war independence period because it was the political source of the movement’s validity.

The period of inter-war independence was a primary political resource for justifying the Sajūdis’ independence goal, but the difficulty of using the twenty-year period as the foundation of the popular independence movement was memory. Although

⁸⁹ Keston Institute, “Detentions in Lithuania,” *Keston News Service* 295 (March 3, 1988): 2, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Droblytė, “Civilizuotos pauvalio [Civilized nations].”

⁹² Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 132.

the period of political independence persisted in the collective memory, the political reality had changed so dramatically that it was difficult for people who had not lived during the era of independence to imagine Lithuania as anything but a Soviet republic. A generation gap resulted between older Lithuanians, who “grew up and studied in a free independent state,” and their children or grandchildren, who “matured at the junction of the two global epochs: the apogee of the ‘brezhnevism,’ . . . and the historically short, although strained, period of restoration of the national state.”⁹³ It would be difficult to convince the average Lithuanian, whose livelihood depended on a Soviet factory or a collective farm, that they ought to vote to restore independence, in effect biting the hand that fed them. For the intelligentsia, independence was a powerful motivator and justification, but not as much so for the person whose daily life was not occupied with academic reconstruction of bygone years. Moreover, the Soviet version of history taught that Lithuanians themselves had voted to forfeit independence and join the Soviet Union, and the average Lithuanian grew up with the Soviet version of history. If their father or grandfather had rejected independence in favor of the Soviet system for whatever reason, then why should the grandson risk his job or safety trying to get independence back?

The majority of Lithuanians had not experienced independence, and had no reason to believe that election would be an accurate representation of the democratic will of the people. Sajūdis therefore had the added challenge of convincing people to aspire to a concept, independence, with which they had no personal experience. That made national identity all the more important: people may not have sufficient emotional

⁹³ Liliana Astra, “Changes of Identity: Differences Between Generations,” in *Changes of Identity in Modern Lithuania*, ed. Meilute Taljunaite (Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1996), 216.

connection to the Lithuanian state to fight for its restoration, but they could be reinforced in their commitment to the Lithuanian nation.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact

The single most important political and historical rallying point for the Lithuanian independence movement was the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union under a hidden provision in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939. In an open letter to the people of Lithuania, the Lithuanian Freedom League succinctly explained the content and results of the Pact:

It is widely known that . . . Ribbentrop and . . . Molotov signed a non-aggression pact in Moscow on August 23, 1939, together with a secret protocol. This made it possible for Hitler to begin World War II, and gave the USSR the opportunity to occupy Lithuania, Latvia, [and] Estonia [. . .] The signing of the secret protocol violated the non-aggression treaty of October 26, 1926, between the Soviet Union and Lithuania. This dug graves for Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian sovereignty, and initiated the oppression and genocide of millions of Baltic people.⁹⁴

Justinas Marcinkevičius, a speaker at the 23 August 1988 Sajūdis rally, called the Pact “a document of disgusting international banditry.”⁹⁵ Uncovering the truth about this world-changing event had political implications certainly, but on a deeper level it signaled the release of the Lithuanian people from mental bondage.

In summer 1988, *Rahvarinne*, the Estonian popular front, published the text of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and *Sajūdžio žinios*, ‘Sajūdis news’, followed suit in its 5 August edition.⁹⁶ The LiCP responded to the publication by conceding that the Pact was

⁹⁴ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “Lithuanians Call for Repudiation of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact,” August 3, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁹⁵ Banionis, 7.

⁹⁶ *Sajūdžio žinios* 17, “Viešumo [Public sphere],” August 5, 1988. The publication included an introduction by Bronius Kuzmickas, a professor of philosophy and Sajūdis member, followed by the telegrams exchanged between Ribbentrop and Molotov.

“a clear deviation from generally accepted norms of international law, from Leninist principles of foreign policy,” but reiterated, “these steps, under the conditions of the time, were inevitable.”⁹⁷ Then, on 23 August 1988, Sajūdis called a rally to commemorate the 49th anniversary of the Pact. In preparation for the rally, organizers visited Juozas Urbšys, who had been minister of foreign affairs when the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed. He recorded a message to the rally attendees, “telling them plainly how [their] country had been forced to submit to the Soviet forces in 1939, while Stalin and Molotov gloated over their agreement with Hitler.”⁹⁸ Urbšys’ statement was historic because “these facts were well known, but in over fifty years this was the first time that they had ever been repeated in public, let alone announced to such a rally.”⁹⁹ The rally catapulted Sajūdis to national attention when “Lithuanian television broadcast a program summarizing the demonstration of August 23 . . . Although the program was considered biased and distorted by many, at least the television silence regarding Sajūdis was broken.”¹⁰⁰ This exhibition of freedom coupled with the reminder of the injustices suffered by the Lithuanian people effectively unleashed the crowd’s enthusiasm, and popular support rapidly coalesced around Sajūdis.

At the 23 August 1988 rally Sajūdis began to reach out to the international community, much of which had never officially recognized the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States, and still maintained diplomatic relations with Lithuanian leaders in exile. Sajūdis’ appeal urged local and international action:

⁹⁷ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 117-118.

⁹⁸ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 116.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 89.

So long as the secret agreement between Hitler and Stalin is not publicly denounced world-wide, and so long as it is not declared the greatest crime against Peace and Humanity in the 20th century, there can be no true peace, even if all the missiles of mass destruction are dismantled.

Even though both Hitler and Stalin have been denounced and condemned, the results of their “creation” continue to be taken for granted. The future is still being built upon a base of deceit, lies, duplicity, toadyism, cheating and injustice. In humanity remains the primary principle of action.

. . . Guided by a clear conscience and by our responsibility as human beings, we urge you to demand that the Soviet government recognize as in effect all treaties signed in peacetime between Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia on the one hand, and the Soviet Union on the other. It is essential to demand: that the government of the USSR denounce the secret protocol signed by Molotov and Ribbentrop and immediately withdraw its army of occupation from Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia . . .¹⁰¹

Then, in May 1989 the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet responded to the popular discontent that Sajūdis had stirred up and adopted a resolution that decried the injustice of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact: “The sovereign Lithuanian state in 1940 was illegally annexed by force to the Soviet Union and lost political, economic and cultural independence. The government of the USSR currently ignores even the goal of economic independence of the republic.”¹⁰² This statement signaled the beginning of a split between the LiCP and Moscow, as well as division within the LiCP over what its attitude ought to be toward the independence movement.

In preparation for the February 1990 elections, Sajūdis placed the injustice of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and Lithuania’s loss of independence at the forefront of its political platform. Sajūdis members explained that the Lithuanian nation “has an old and strong tradition of statehood that it never renounced of its own free will; it therefore has

¹⁰¹ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “Lithuanians Call for Repudiation of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact,” August 3, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

¹⁰² Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 73.

the natural and inalienable right to reestablish independent Lithuania.”¹⁰³ Moreover, Sajūdis “called upon the Soviet government to publish and declare null and void the Nazi-Soviet agreements of 1939 and 1940, which opened the way ‘for the occupation and annexation of the Lithuanian Republic.’”¹⁰⁴ The LCC also condemned the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the unlawful annexation of Lithuania. Cardinal Sladkevičius appealed to the Vatican, which had never officially recognized the annexation, as John Paul II planned a visit to the USSR. The Cardinal was concerned that the pope’s visit would “make it look more prestigious to the other countries which would only add to the already exaggerated praises given to Gorbachev,” and urged the pope that “if the Holy See was to approve the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union, that would go against the will of the majority of Lithuanians. The faith of the nation might crumble to bits in that case.”¹⁰⁵

One of the challenges of appealing to public outrage about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was that it was difficult for this historical-political reality to resonate with the average person sufficiently to move them to action. It was essentially an intellectual argument, which was apparent in the differences between the 23 August 1988 meeting revealing and commemorating the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the more emotional and spontaneous 9 July 1988 rally. The 23 August meeting was more structured and organized and appealed more to intellectuals, some of whom indicated the

¹⁰³ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 70.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ *Sajūdžio žinios*, “Kardinolas perspėja Vatikaną dėl Lietuvos aneksijos pripažinimo [Cardinal notifies the Vatican regarding the approval of the Lithuanian annexation],” September 7, 1989. Ultimately, John Paul II did not visit the USSR. Gorbachev had an audience with the pope at the Vatican in 1989, and the pope visited Poland several times during his tenure.

impact that several of the speeches had on them personally.¹⁰⁶ The role of intellectuals in national movements was undeniably significant, however the success of the movement rested almost entirely on the intelligentsia's ability to rally the masses. Revolutionary potential does not lie in the academic's ability to publish an article or give a speech; it lies in the willingness of common folk to take action and disrupt the status quo. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact certainly angered people, but it did not incite the majority to participate in demonstrations or risk being arrested or losing jobs.

History of Stalinism

The Stalinist period immediately following Lithuania's annexation by the Soviet Union, more specifically the Partisan War and mass deportations, was another potential source of nationalist feeling. Soviet historians extensively re-wrote the history of the Stalinist period in Lithuania, and so recovering that history became a focal point for reclaiming national identity as victims of Stalin's deportations and patriotic heroes of the resistance. Historians were especially focused on recovering an accurate account of the deportations and the Partisan War, and demanded "that a law be passed designating the length of time official documents could be kept secret, that all the archives be opened to historians and other scholars, and that a new history course for the secondary schools be established that would use a newly written history book."¹⁰⁷ Gediminas Rudis, an historian who addressed the 23 August 1988 rally, highlighted the importance of recovering history: "Historical scholarship owes a great debt to society. However, we cannot repay this debt by simply expelling the spirit of dogmatism and Stalinism. . . . We

¹⁰⁶ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 132.

¹⁰⁷ Šaulius Girnius, "Massive Demonstrations in Lithuania," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report/9 (August 26, 1988): 24, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

will not shake Stalinism until we finally understand that science and knowledge, including history, is created in laboratories and departments, and not at congresses or in Party committees.”¹⁰⁸ In order to recover the truth about their past, Lithuanian historians would have to literally rewrite the books, and the Partisan War and deportations were two focal points of the efforts to reclaim history.

Deportations began immediately after the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States in 1940 and continued to the end of the decade, with a short interruption during the Nazi occupation of 1941 to 1944. The Lithuanian Communist party was an active participant in the deportations; the LiCP “drafted a top-secret communiqué ordering the NKVD and the NKGB to prepare for the mass arrests and deportations of ‘counter-revolutionaries and socially dangerous elements.’”¹⁰⁹ The LiCP drafted its list of people to be deported in May 1941, and the KGB generated its own list of additional “elements in society [that] demanded neutralization,” then on the nights of June 13 and 14 “Soviet officials approved mass deportations to Siberia of more than thirty thousand individuals.”¹¹⁰ Another wave of deportations was conducted between 1947 and 1949 when over 200,000 people were deported, mostly from rural areas.¹¹¹

Stalin’s deportations were an unspoken blight on the Lithuanian national consciousness; a blight because nearly everyone had a personal connection to a victim of deportation, unspoken for fear of suffering the same fate. With glasnost came the ability to discuss the deportations more openly, but it was a challenge for historians or family

¹⁰⁸ Banionis, 11.

¹⁰⁹ Skucas, 412.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 413.

members to find concrete information since archives remained closed. In 1988 Lithuanian researchers offered drastically different estimates ranging from 12,562 to 35,000. The higher figure corresponds with estimates by western scholars. These estimates are only for the 1941 deportations; calculations are even harder to come by for the post-WWII deportations from 1945 to 1951. For the post-WWII deportations, Soviet scholars estimate around 200,000 deported, while western scholars give estimates as high as 400,000.¹¹² Accurate numbers would not be available until Lithuanians gained access to KGB archives in 1991, but even then “many files, particularly those dealing with operational issues, were censored, with entire pages torn away or portions cut out,” and many files had been burned as well.¹¹³ Personal accounts do not replace accurate statistics, but they did allow communities to keep memory of the deportations alive through oral history and public memorials.

For over a decade after Lithuania entered the Soviet Union, thousands of Lithuanians took to the forest to defend their homeland against the Soviet Army. This so-called Partisan War “became so troublesome that the USSR was forced to pour additional men into the country simply to maintain control.”¹¹⁴ The question of the partisans or Forest Brotherhood is one of the most complicated and controversial in Lithuanian historiography. The standard Soviet interpretation of the partisans was that they were villains and terrorists, whose ranks were “comprised of former war criminals and kulaks, who terrorized the countryside, pillaging and killing supporters of Soviet rule and

¹¹² Kestutis Girnius, “Debate on History Heats Up,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report/7 (13 July 1988): 45, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX. These estimates are based on handwritten lists and tables, not on archival research.

¹¹³ Skucas, 417.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 413.

thousands of innocent men and women” in order to “restore the bourgeois regime with all its privileges and to have revenge on the poor peasants who had benefited from the Soviet land reforms.”¹¹⁵ On 11 June 1988, Romas Gudaitis penned an article for *Literatura ir Menas*, ‘Literature and Art’, that turned the tables on the Soviets by presenting a less than flattering picture of the Soviet detachments who fought against the Forest Brotherhood. While he did not challenge the Soviet depiction of the partisans, he asserted that the Soviet soldiers were “drunkards, lazy, uneducated, cruel, and vindictive” and they “abused their power, had innocent people arrested, threatened others with deportations, stuffed cigarettes into the mouths of dead partisans, whose bodies would lie for days in the village squares.”¹¹⁶ At a meeting of writers and historians on 4 April 1989, scholars debated the true history of the partisans and offered competing interpretations of their actions and contributions to Lithuania. Resolutions adopted at the meeting demanded that the “armed struggle had to be reclassified as resistance and its participants as partisans,” and that “historians, writers, and journalists be granted access to the archives of the Committee of State Security (KGB) and the Soviet Ministry of Internal Affairs.”¹¹⁷ Thanks to efforts like this, the Forest Brotherhood is indeed memorialized in Lithuania as freedom fighters and national heroes. One poem gives a spiritual air to the freedom fighters’ struggle: “where the little stars in the sky are/like eyes of the taken away,/sleeps the brotherhood of the forest/. . . stay on duty/the crosses in the night . . ./the stones –

¹¹⁵ Kestutis Girnius, “The Elimination of the Last Blank Spots in Lithuanian History,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report/5 (31 May 1989): 17-18, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX. ‘Kulak’ is a Russian word that refers to affluent farmers and land-owners. During the Soviet period, kulak was a pejorative word to describe the enemies in the class warfare against poor peasants.

¹¹⁶ K. Girnius, “Debate on History,” 47.

¹¹⁷ K. Girnius, “Last Blank Spots,” 20

crying/statues.”¹¹⁸ The recovery of this history gave the Lithuanian people another point of pride and a reason to identify themselves with a brave nation’s enduring pursuit of freedom.

Sajūdis understood itself as taking up the mantle of the Forest Brotherhood, and continuing its struggle. Even the name Sajūdis is a subtle homage to the freedom fighters, who were called *Lietuvos Laisvės Kovos Sajūdis*, ‘Union of Lithuanian Freedom Fighters’.¹¹⁹ Landsbergis tied Sajūdis directly to the heritage of the partisans in his autobiography:

[the freedom fighters’ ideals] emerged again almost forty years later in the Lithuanian Sajūdis reform movement, and having participated in this movement I take great pride in its achievements. I recognize the analogies between its experience and the struggles of generations of Lithuanian patriots in our earlier history with a sense of exhilaration. Their example stands and is an inspiration for us all.¹²⁰

While framing Sajūdis as the ideological descendants of the Forest Brotherhood was inspirational and invoked a strong sense of national pride, it also posed hazards for political relations. Because Soviet historiography framed the partisans as bandits and violent revolutionaries, the LiCP leadership and Moscow might see any group lauding its revolutionary ideals as a threat to be neutralized. Since Sajūdis was determined to take a legal path toward independence, it was important to maintain a delicate balance between participation in Moscow politics and retention of the good will of the progressive forces within in LiCP. Thus the challenge was to inspire people with the national spirit of the Forest Brotherhood without inciting them to violence.

¹¹⁸ Tomas Kuršys, “Birželio 14 gedulo ir vilties diena [June 14th the day of mourning and hope],” *Sajūdžio žinios* 85, July 14, 1989. Ellipses in original.

¹¹⁹ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 89.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

Recovery of the Stalin-era's history of deportation and suffering was a less controversial task than aligning with the partisans, in large part because Gorbachev himself promoted the elucidation of Stalinist crimes, and the LiCP was eager to distance itself from the Stalinist period. One of the goals Sajūdis set forth at its Founding Congress was "eradication of Stalinism, research and reporting on the crimes of the Stalin period, and punishment of those responsible."¹²¹ Revealing the truth about the Stalin years brought people together, as collective suffering often does, and the Sajūdis Founding Congress "devoted a great deal of attention to the fate of former prisoners and people who were exiled during the time of the personality cult and to restoring their dignity and financial position."¹²² Memorializing Stalin's victims was also a focal point of national identity. Simple acts such as building "a simple cross in every cemetery with something like an altar built from stones found around the cemetery, where people could place candles and flowers in remembrance of those who were tortured" were acts of commemoration and also national defiance of the Soviet state.¹²³

Although the recovery of history did engender national sentiment, including among rural and industrial populations whose families were more likely to be personally impacted by the Partisan War or deportations than they were by other elements of Lithuanian history, the efforts to rewrite history were fundamentally academic and therefore lacked revolutionary appeal. Independence was not a necessary precondition for memorializing deported family members, and within the glasnost context there was

¹²¹ Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," 57.

¹²² Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, ed., "After Its Congress," *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XL, no. 43 (1988): 7.

¹²³ V. Bieliauskas, "Kiekvienoms kapinėms – atminimo aukura [A memorial altar for every cemetery]," *Sajūdžio žinios* 42, October 4, 1988.

opportunity for reclaiming history without risking Lithuania's political stability.

Therefore recovering history, as important as it was, did not incite a revolutionary fervor, and did not sufficiently motivate the average Lithuanian to change his or her political behavior.

The Catholic Church and Popular Nationalism

In order to build a popular nationalist movement, Sajūdis needed to appeal to the general population of the LiSSR. It did so by building up the people's sense of national identity to such a degree that people were motivated to participate in activities that would contribute to independence from the Soviet Union. The most important way people could participate in moving Lithuania toward independence was by electing a majority of pro-independence candidates to the People's Council of the USSR and to the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet, but for Sajūdis to gain a majority it would need people to be motivated to unprecedented levels of political participation. Sajūdis drew upon cultural and geo-political elements in its effort to rally popular support, and yet none of those sources of national pride were sufficient for motivating the needed mass action. Sajūdis needed to locate nationalism in a source with more power to unite and motivate people than culture or history provided. Therefore, as Thomas Lane rightly notes, "the key to achieving working-class participation was religion, and it was the Catholic rights movement which above all distinguished Lithuanian dissent from other dissident groups in the Soviet Union."¹²⁴ Religion was a source of identity that transcended history, personal experience, education, and status, therefore it had more common appeal than references to history or more academic aspects of identity. Only the Catholic Church could provide

¹²⁴ Thomas Lane, *Lithuania: Stepping Westward* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 92.

a locus of national identity that was sufficiently powerful to rouse the masses to action. The power of the Catholic Church lay in its ability to bring order to ideological chaos, and its ability to motivate action on both a personal and corporate level.

In order to gain mass support, Sajūdis needed to generate an alternative reality in which national identity was primary and worth fighting for. Only the LCC could offer such an alternative, because “unlike other non-communist belief systems, [the Church] remains the only readily available ‘ideological’ alternative to the official doctrine.”¹²⁵ Faltering belief in socialism created a situation in which “religion offered a compelling alternative” for people who needed an ideological structure within which to organize their world.¹²⁶ The force of Catholicism as an ideological alternative to the communist state lies in its ability to “impose a meaningful order upon reality,” thereby giving structure and meaningfulness to a world plagued by “nomic disruption.”¹²⁷ The anomy and futility of the Soviet era constituted “such a powerful threat to the individual” that one might face the danger of meaninglessness, which plunges the individual into “a world of disorder, senselessness and madness.”¹²⁸ The Soviet state produced in people such apathy leading to anomy that only a force more compelling than the state had real potential to free people from their disordered and meaningless attitude toward life. The internal chaos that the Soviet Union produced could only be effectively countered by the

¹²⁵ George W. Hoffman, “Introductory Remarks for the December 4th Conference *Eastern Europe: Religion and Nationalism*,” paper presented at The Wilson Center, East European Program, Eastern Europe: Religion and Nationalism, Washington D.C., December 4, 1985, 10.

¹²⁶ Catherine Wanner and Mark D. Steinberg, “Introduction: Reclaiming the Sacred after Communism,” in *Religion, Morality, and Community in Post-Soviet Societies*, ed. Mark D. Steinberg and Catherine Wanner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 6.

¹²⁷ Berger, 22.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

sacred, which “emerges out of chaos and continues to confront the latter as its terrible contrary.”¹²⁹ Even though the 1980s Soviet context was ostensibly less dangerous than it had been in the 1940s, especially for Christians, “the terror of chaos lurking even in apparently safe conditions of everyday life and the accompanying feeling of helplessness” remained a serious problem.¹³⁰ Sąjūdis recognized that the LCC was “important to the movement’s future because Catholicism [remained] a binding force among Lithuanians despite 48 years of Soviet rule in the Baltic territory and concerted efforts by Moscow to erase religion from Lithuanian life.”¹³¹ The LCC offered a way out of anomic darkness by means of providing an alternate narrative within which the Lithuanian people could locate their identity, and therefore find meaning.

The previous chapter established the strong ties between the Catholic Church and Lithuanian national identity. Because of that connection, and because of the powerful influence religion is able to exert on individual and mass behavior, the LCC was the only source of motivation powerful enough to move people into the unfamiliar world of democratic participation. The power of religion as a motivator lies in its regulatory and authoritative role, which is most effective when the individual’s private faith in God is “embedded in a network of community ties” or in a “religiously inspired social movement.”¹³² In addition to its authoritative role, “for the faithful, religion provides solace for repression through other-worldly justification for persecution, and by

¹²⁹ Berger, 27.

¹³⁰ Thomas Luckmann, “Religion, Human Power and Powerlessness,” in *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life*, ed. Eileen Barker (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 178.

¹³¹ Philip Taubman, “New Lithuania Cardinal Part of Nationalist Surge,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1988, accessed October 16, 2013, Academic OneFile.

¹³² William Sims Bainbridge, *The Sociology of Religious Movements* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 298.

providing compelling moral prescriptions for worldly action.”¹³³ While religion’s influence may be most obviously witnessed in behaviors such as deviance versus compliance, it is just as influential on behaviors such as political party allegiance and participation in the electoral process. Some sociologists hypothesize that “regular religious participation, particularly collective acts such as services of worship, will probably encourage political and social engagement and also electoral support for religious parties.”¹³⁴ In short, if one’s priest supports a particular party, and one’s religious community supports a cause, one is more likely to support that party and that cause along with the community than alone. Thus, the LCC, as the religious monopoly in Lithuania, was the faith community best situated to influence political participation. Moreover, as a religious institution the LCC’s legitimacy was not dependent upon the state, and indeed its sacred authority superceded that of the secular state. Whereas “the state is very limited in the degree to which it can coerce obedience from citizens by force,” there is no limit to the authority of God or, by extension, God’s representatives on earth, the Catholic priest.

The appeal to Catholic identity was dependent upon the people’s attitude toward the LCC and their local priests. If the LCC had been compromised during the Soviet period, or if priests were perceived as conspiratorial agents of the state, then the LCC’s authority would have been crippled. But this was not the case for the Lithuanian Catholic Church, which retained high levels public trust throughout the Soviet period. According

¹³³ Hank Johnston, “Religio-Nationalist Subcultures under the Communists: Comparisons from the Baltics, Transcaucasia and Ukraine,” *Sociology of Religion* 54, no. 3, International Studies in the Sociology of Religion (Autumn, 1993): 239.

¹³⁴ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, “The Secularization Debate,” in *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 22.

to the 1990 European Values Survey, seventy percent of Lithuanians had confidence in the Church.¹³⁵ How is it that the Catholic Church emerged from fifty years of being systematically undermined by the Soviet State with such a high degree of public trust? The two most likely factors that shed positive light on the LCC were Stalin's deportations, during which many priests and other Catholics were deported, and the well-known dissent activities of the LCC such as the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.

The deportation of priests had an unexpected consequence: instead of removing the religious influence, it turned common village clerics into heroes of the Catholic faith. Hagiographic accounts of the priests' perseverance in exile filtered back to the village folk, and when some priests started returning to Lithuania after their sentences were completed, people's esteem for the LCC increased. Despite the success that the Soviets had in limiting the place of religion in people's daily lives, even people who became convinced atheists or who were indifferent toward Catholicism as such still saw the LCC as a bulwark against the Soviet regime.

A second reason that the Catholic Church continued to be held in high esteem, despite the best efforts of the Soviet propaganda machine, was the dissent activity of individual priests. The majority of the Lithuanian Catholic clergy "disregarded the prohibition against the teaching of religion and fought the government's daily interference in the affairs of the church."¹³⁶ Whether they participated in the LCC or not, people were aware of their local priest's activities, especially in rural areas, and the

¹³⁵ Juknevičius, 107.

¹³⁶ Vardys, "Role of the Churches," 293.

refusal to abandon religious duty garnered the priests a great deal of trust and respect. Many priests also participated in producing *samizdat* publications and petition drives. In addition to the well-known *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, clerics and Catholic lay people produced many other newsletters, journals and other underground publications. Petition drives were also common, and carried risk, since they involved signing one's name to an act of defiance. The petition with the most signatures that circulated in the USSR was the request for the return of Mary Queen of Peace Church in Klaipėda, with 150,000 signatories. The petition circulated in 1979, but the Soviet government did not return Mary Queen of Peace to the LCC until 1988.¹³⁷ These widely known acts of nonviolent dissent increased the LCC's authority as an alternative to the Soviet state.

If the Catholic Church carried such authority and was engaged in dissent since at least the early 1970s, why was it not until the late 1980s that the Church became a locus for wide-spread nationalist dissent? Several historic factors explain this fact, the most important of which was perestroika. Another factor was leadership. In the 1980's, the appointment of Vincentas Sladkevičius as the first Lithuanian Cardinal in centuries and the return of Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius from exile intensified people's Catholic sentiment. The Vatican had never recognized Lithuania's annexation by the Soviet Union, thus, when reform was beginning in the late 1980s, the Vatican was prepared to restore and rebuild the Church hierarchy in Lithuania. Sladkevičius' selection as a Cardinal was "considered a great honor" by Lithuanians, because the Church continued

¹³⁷ Vardys, "Role of the Churches," 296.

“to serve as a rallying point of pride.”¹³⁸ Likewise, the Pope’s appointment of Julijonas Steponavičius as archbishop of Vilnius was a point of pride for Lithuanian Catholics, who saw Steponavičius as a hero because of his twenty-seven years in exile.¹³⁹ This boon to Catholic leadership brought the LCC to the forefront of people’s minds, and inspired them to follow the lead of Catholic leaders who were supporting independence.

Throughout the Soviet period, with its internationalist ideology and efforts to create a pan-Soviet nationalism, the Catholic Church was a bulwark that prevented Lithuanian national identity from being absorbed by Soviet identity. The Lithuanian people identified much more closely with the LCC than with any state organization, which contributed to the LCC’s “very open and articulate support of national and even nationalistic aspirations.”¹⁴⁰ It’s central place as a factor of national identity made it a force without which Sajūdis could not possibly have rallied the level of popular support necessary to change the course of electoral politics.

Conclusion

Sajūdis was a popular nationalist organization that needed to quickly gain the support of the majority of Lithuanians in order to win elections that would result in Lithuania declaring independence from the USSR. In order to gain popular support, Sajūdis needed to awaken and build upon the national identity of the Lithuanian people. Many sources of national differentiation existed that were helpful for generating popular support, including ethnicity, folk culture, language, and history, however these sources of

¹³⁸ Taubman, “In Lithuania Too.”

¹³⁹ Clyde Haberman, “Pope Names 3 Bishops for Lithuania,” *New York Times*, March 11, 1989, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

¹⁴⁰ Vardys, “Role of Churches,” 294.

national identity were more effective for reaching niche academic groups and people who were already politically engaged. Sajūdis had “a reasonable, middle-class face, as if a renegade political science department were preparing to storm the Bastille with manifestos instead of muskets,” which was beneficial for managing the complex political situation, but Sajūdis needed the farmers and factory workers and their proverbial muskets if their movement was to succeed.¹⁴¹ Another component of Sajūdis’ challenge was its commitment to a gradual and legal secession process, as opposed to a violent coup. Sajūdis and its compatriots in Latvia and Estonia differed “from other areas of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe by the moderate or restrained manner in which they pursued their political goals of national independence.”¹⁴² It is perhaps easier to inflame the passions of a crowd, to engender in them such fiery hatred for the enemy that they turn violent, than it is to ignite a crowd just enough to get them to a rally or a polling place, and to keep them smoldering throughout a sustained struggle.

Since it was essential to gain the enthusiastic support of the majority, it was necessary to appeal to the element of national identity that would be most compelling to common folk who were not likely to be involved in politics. The only component of Lithuanian national identity with the necessary reach, authority, and public trust was the Catholic Church. Lithuanians trusted the LCC as an institution, and respected local priests for steadfastly carrying out their religious duty in spite of persecution and legal restrictions. The LCC’s legacy of dissent created a network from which Sajūdis could draw support, and also set a precedent for the LCC’s participation in resistance.

¹⁴¹ David Remnick, “Lithuania: The Little Independence Movement That Could,” *Washington Post*, August 6, 1989, accessed December 4, 2010, LexisNexis.

¹⁴² Kavolis, 149.

Moreover, the LCC carried the weight of sacred authority, and retained that authority in the face of aggressive atheistic propaganda, and therefore the LCC's support for independence had greater power to compel individual action than any cultural or historical aspect of national identity. For these reasons, the Church's support was essential to Sajūdis' success.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Intentional and Mutually-Beneficial Relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church

Chapter Two examined the development of religio-nationalism in the long history of the Lithuanian people, and established that the Lithuanian Catholic Church was inextricably linked with Lithuanian national identity by the time Gorbachev came to power and Sajūdis formed. Chapter Three demonstrated that the relationship between Sajūdis and the LCC was essential to Sajūdis' success because no other component of national identity was sufficient for galvanizing the national independence movement, and because of the unique ability of religion to motivate people to action. Chapter Four will now examine how Sajūdis and the LCC built their relationship, as well as the benefits both gained from their close cooperation.

Introduction

Given the historic development of religious and national identity in Lithuania, one might assume the relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church was inevitable and developed naturally. However, an examination of Sajūdis and LCC statements and actions reveals that both parties built their relationship intentionally. Although the Catholic Church was indeed tied to popular nationalism and was involved with dissent, Sajūdis did not assume that the LCC would become an active participant in its political activities. There were several reasons why the relationship between Sajūdis and the LCC was not inevitable: Sajūdis was not religiously dogmatic, the LCC's dissent was focused on religion and human rights, and other political organizations were already courting the LCC's support before Sajūdis formed.

Sajūdis was not affiliated with any particular religious group when it formed in June 1988, nor did it initially assume that religion needed to be a factor for the movement to be successful.¹ In his examination of the Sajūdis Initiative Group's political agenda, Alfred Senn points out, "another major area of Lithuanian life ignored in Sajūdis' program was religion and, more specifically, the role of the Catholic Church in Lithuania."² Senn posits that the reason Sajūdis did not include religious concerns in its agenda was because "the intellectuals who made up the Initiative Group of Sajūdis were the products of an educational system that had aggressively disqualified religious believers from intellectual professions and pursuits" and because "the intellectuals wanted genuine freedom of conscience."³ The Sajūdis leadership wanted "to establish an open reform front which would include those who sought independence; reasonable communists; non-aligned people; believers and atheists; ecologists; and everybody who was prepared to work for the nation's well-being," therefore Sajūdis did not include religious freedom among its political goals at first.⁴ The Initiative Group members were products of their environment: they had grown up avoiding the appearance of religiosity, some were convinced atheists, and they genuinely desired a society in which their consciences were not hampered by any higher authority, including a state supported church. This is not to say that no members of Sajūdis professed Catholicism, but their faith was not their central motivator or primary political goal.

¹ Contrast Sajūdis' a-religiousness with the Lithuanian Freedom League, whose leaders were priests or well-known Catholic dissidents, or with the Christian Democrat Party during the inter-war independence, which was an explicitly Catholic political party.

² Alfred Erich Senn, *Lithuania Awakening* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 66. Senn also notes that Sajūdis did not, at this point, have a formal political program or a plan for multi-party democracy.

³ Ibid., 67.

⁴ Vytautas Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, trans. Anthony Packer and estate of Eimutis Šova (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 105.

Even if the Sajūdis agenda had included the Catholic Church from the beginning, that would not have guaranteed the LCC's cooperation. The LCC's dissent activities were historically focused on issues that directly affected the church, and LCC leaders were wary of working closely with political groups. Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius and other LCC leaders, "shied away from tying the institution's fortunes to any passing political movement, especially after the government showed increasing signs of willingness to deal directly with church officials."⁵ *The Catholic Herald* noted in 1988 that "the Catholic Church at the centre of Lithuanian national feeling, has never fully committed itself to a nationalist programme."⁶ Because of Church leaders' suspicion of politics, "the Church's attitude toward Sajūdis and the process of national renewal and political change was unclear; in the early summer of 1988 it was not participating in the reform movement."⁷ This is not to say that the LCC was completely disengaged from politics, but its political activities focused on religious and human rights issues and ran parallel to political movements. The *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* was the most visible and influential source of dissent, and it focused on bringing to light violations of the Soviet constitution that had an impact on the LCC and individual believers. Continuing to perform clerical duties, such as catechesis or training new priests, was another form of religious dissent. Cardinal Sladkevičius made a bold speech to seminarians in 1989 in which he declared, "clergy would openly organize catechism classes and bishops would not allow the state Council

⁵ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 70. There were, of course, exceptions to clerical reticence to engage in politics. One such exception was Fr. Alfonsas Svarinskas, who was charged with anti-Soviet agitation and spent years in regime labor camps. According to the Party news service, TASS, "He still considers clergy, even senior clergy, unworthy if they don't engage in political activity." Keston Institute, "Abuse of Law on Religious Cults," *Keston News Service* 294 (18 February 1988): 9, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁶ Catholic Herald, "Cathedral Handed Back in Lithuania," *Catholic Herald*, 28 October 1988, The Catholic Herald Archive, accessed February 15, 2014, archive.catholicherald.co.uk/article/28th-october-1988/2/cathedral-handed-back-in-lithuania.htm.

⁷ V. Stanley Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," *Problems of Communism* (July/August 1989): 60.

for Religious Affairs to make the final choice of seminarians.”⁸ Although individual priests “openly expressed their determination to disobey regulations which [transgressed] canonical laws and rights guaranteed in the Soviet constitution,” they did not dissent against measures that had no bearing on the Church.⁹ Sajūdis could not assume that the LCC would align itself with the movement’s political program because the LCC’s dissent had focused on religious matters since the 1970s, and because the LCC leadership was wary of tying its dissent to any political group.

Competition for the LCC’s support from other political groups, namely the Lithuanian Freedom League (LFL) and the Lithuanian Communist Party (LiCP), was another reason the relationship between Sajūdis and the LCC was not inevitable. The Lithuanian Freedom League was more radical than Sajūdis in agitating for Lithuania’s independence, and it also placed more emphasis on the LCC.¹⁰ The LFL saw the LCC “as a natural ally – as a mainstay of European culture and a proponent of universal values” and LFL membership included “Catholic activists and former prisoners of conscience, such as Vytautas Bogusis, Nijole Sadunaite and Antanas Terleckas.”¹¹ The former prisoners of conscience were more drawn to the LFL than to Sajūdis

⁸ Marite Sapiets, “Ferment in the Baltic,” *Frontier* (May/June 1989), 9. The Council for Religious Affairs was organized in 1965 as an extension of the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Council of Ministers. The CRA’s task was to oversee churches and other religious organizations at the local level, but its precise role was not codified until 1975. During the Brezhnev years “there were continuing criticisms of the Council from religious dissidents who attached its role in controlling all institutional aspects of church life.” John Anderson, “The Council for Religious Affairs and the Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy,” *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 1 (1991): 691.

⁹ Alexander R. Alexiev, *Dissent and Nationalism in the Soviet Baltic* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1983), 27.

¹⁰ Sajūdis and the LFL disagreed sharply about the best tactics for gaining independence. While the LFL “wanted to organize general strikes, hunger strikes, or whatever would attract the attention of the world, hoping that the Soviet Union and its forces would be shamed into leaving Lithuania,” Sajūdis was “prepared to use the parliamentary process, which in [the LFL’s] mind was a road which led nowhere.” Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 115. See also Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 58.

¹¹ Marite Sapiets, “Ferment in the Baltic,” 6.

because “the League was seen to be avoiding compromise with the communists.”¹² In contrast to Sajūdis, which some considered “cool or even unfriendly to the Catholic Church,” the LFL “tried to identify itself with the church” and demonstrated “willingness to cooperate with . . . organizations for the defense of religious rights.”¹³ Four of the twenty-five signatories to the LFL’s “Appeal to the Citizens of Our Capital City Vilnius, and of All Lithuania” were Catholic priests.¹⁴ LFL rallies were often held outside churches or other locations with spiritual significance, and priests led prayers at such events. For example, on 28 September 1988 Father Robertas Grigas spoke at an LFL rally, and when protestors clashed with police “at least 5000 people broke away and marched a half-mile to the religious shrine of Our Lady of Vilnius, singing religious and national hymns to the applause of passers-by.”¹⁵ Although the LFL’s political goals were similar to Sajūdis’, one key difference was that “its cultural program demanded . . . permission for religious instruction in schools.”¹⁶ Because the LFL was organized in 1987, a year before Sajūdis, there was already a political outlet for clergy and Catholic lay people to participate in political dissent, and since the LFL included religion in its agenda it appealed to the Catholic population. Therefore, by the time Sajūdis recognized the necessity of including the LCC in its activities, it was competing with other groups for the LCC’s support. At the same time, the Church’s relationship with the Lithuanian Freedom League indicated that not

¹² Marite Sapiets, “The Baltic Churches and National Revival,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1990): 160.

¹³ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 69-70; Šaulius Girnius, “Lithuanian Freedom League Resumes its Activities,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report/8 (4 August 1988): 27, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

¹⁴ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “Lithuanians Call for Repudiation of Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact,” August 3, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX. The purpose of the “Appeal” was to explain the contents and results of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

¹⁵ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “Riot Police Clash with Vilnius Demonstrators,” September 28, 1988, 30, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

¹⁶ Senn, *Lithuania Awakening*, 67.

all clergy were opposed to cooperating with political movements, therefore Sajūdis had reason to believe that it was possible to form an alliance with the Church.

The Lithuanian Communist Party also vied for the Church's support and cooperation. Only days after taking office as Chairman of the LiCP, Algirdas Brazauskas said he "was eager to improve relations between the party and the Roman Catholic Church."¹⁷ The more progressive factions within LiCP hoped that the LCC would be a positive force for implementing perestroika and restoring a sense of moral order to society. In a speech published in *Tiesa*, 'Truth', the LiSSR newspaper, on 7 November 1989, Vladislovas Domarkas, chair of the State Commission on Education and Culture, explained, "State organizations are also to 'cooperate' with the church and other religious organizations 'in promoting public morality,'" and the Keston News Service suggested the statement was a possible indication of "future church participation in campaigns against alcoholism or drug taking, for example."¹⁸ Catholic sources outside Lithuania recognized that "in a country where unstable family life, corruption, drunkenness and slack work discipline are giving the authorities cause for concern the social outlook of Christianity is a prop that the state would like to win to its side."¹⁹ In order to curry favor with LCC leaders and the predominantly Catholic Lithuanian people, the LiCP returned some church buildings to LCC ownership, allowed high profile political prisoners to return from exile, and eased restrictions on activities such as preparing children for first communion or confirmation. In a meeting with leading state officials and Catholic bishops, the government

¹⁷ Philip Taubman, "Lithuanians Move to Limit Moscow Ties," *New York Times*, October 24, 1988, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

¹⁸ Keston Institute, "Church Gains New Rights in Lithuania," *Keston News Service* 339 (30 November 1989): 4, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX. *Tiesa* was a Lithuanian-language newspaper that began publication in 1917 as a Bolshevik news outlet. It's publication continued through the Soviet period, and the Soviet government viewed it favorably. According to the 1979 *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, *Tiesa* was awarded the Red Banner of Labor in 1967.

¹⁹ *Catholic Herald*, "Cathedral Handed Back."

representatives emphasized “the projected return of the Klaipėda Church, the restoration of three other churches and an increase in the number of seminarians,” and also “implied that religious leaders might possibly be allowed to discuss their opinions on the mass media.”²⁰ The Lithuanian representative to the USSR Council for Religious Affairs stated in a 1988 interview with *Sovetskaya Litva*, ‘Soviet Lithuania’, “a great deal is being done in Soviet Lithuania to satisfy the legitimate interests of religious congregations and believers,” and “the representative of the Council for Religious Affairs has proposed that the draft law on freedom of conscience include an article that permits priests to give children religious instruction, with the consent of both parents.”²¹ *Pravda* reported, “the attitude toward the church and toward believers has changed in the republic. Confrontation and head-on atheism are giving way to dialogue and cooperation.”²² While the LCC received these changes favorably, the policy changes did not turn the LCC into an ally of the LiCP. In Cardinal Sladkevičius opinion, the LiCP’s actions were “very insignificant change in the sphere of religion.”²³ The LiCP hoped to address the LCC’s needs in order to diffuse the clergy’s desire to pursue reform and cooperate with reform groups. Since the LCC was reticent to involve itself with political action, the LCC might have been able to function within the Soviet context, if the LiCP made some concessions. However, what concessions the LiCP did make, along with perestroika, proved too little and too late, and the LCC did step into the political arena.

²⁰ Keston Institute, “Dissident Lithuanian Bishop Appointed as Cardinal,” *Keston News Service* 302 (9 June 1988): 2, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

²¹ Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, ed., “Lithuanian Government Returns Churches,” *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XL, no. 47 (1988): 11. *Sovetskaya Litva* was the Lithuanian-language edition of the central Soviet newspaper.

²² Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, ed. “Supreme Soviet Votes Down Sąjūdis Amendments,” *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XL, no. 47 (1988): 11. *Pravda*, or Truth, was the leading Soviet state newspaper.

²³ Philip Taubman, “New Lithuania Cardinal Part of Nationalist Surge,” *New York Times*, October 27, 1988, accessed October 16, 2013, Academic OneFile.

Although Sajūdis quickly became the largest and most influential independence movement, overshadowing the Lithuanian Freedom League and offering a viable alternative to the Lithuanian Communist Party, it could not assume that a cooperative relationship with the LCC would develop organically. Because Sajūdis understood that the LCC's support was essential, and recognized that the Church's support was not inevitable, Sajūdis intentionally built a relationship with the Catholic Church.

Sajūdis Intentionally Builds a Relationship with the Church

At the Sajūdis Initiative Group's first meeting on 6 June 1988, the Initiative Group did not list religion or the Catholic Church among its political focus areas, nor were any clergy involved in the meeting; by the Founding Congress in October 1988, seats were reserved for Catholic clergy, a few priests held leadership roles within Sajūdis, and religious freedom was included in Sajūdis' political agenda. Sajūdis made an effort to build a collaborative relationship with the LCC, and to ensure that the Lithuanian people recognized the association between Sajūdis and the Catholic Church. Sajūdis intentionally built a working relationship with the Catholic Church by recruiting Catholic priests and lay people and giving them prominent roles on committees and at rallies, and by adding support for religious freedom to its political agenda. Sajūdis reinforced the Lithuanian people's association of Sajūdis with the LCC by holding events in religiously significant places, and by infusing its public image with Catholicism through rhetoric and participation in Church events.

Recruiting Priests

In order for Sajūdis to gain the LCC as an ally, it needed priests to participate in the movement. Catholic participants could function as liaisons between the LCC and the Sajūdis,

and could contribute to Sajūdis' understanding of the LCC's needs. Sajūdis pursued the support and participation of Catholic leaders who had the power and authority to sway public opinion. The highest ranking Catholic clergyman in Lithuania in 1988 was Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, and Sajūdis recognized his influence over the attitudes and actions of the clergy. Cardinal Sladkevičius told the attendees of the Priests' Symposium in 1988, "the restructuring movement gives me no peace. Delegations keep coming, one after another, asking why we remain silent."²⁴ The Cardinal's statement indicates that Sajūdis was attempting to recruit Church leaders to participate in the movement, and was even scolding the Cardinal for the LCC's hesitation.

Sajūdis invited Catholic clergy to hold leadership positions and to conduct religious rites at Sajūdis events. Sajūdis invited priests to participate in the Founding Congress in October 1988, with the result that "more than a dozen of the 1,021 delegates were priests, several of them actively taking part in the discussion."²⁵ A photograph of the Founding Congress shows the clerics seated in the first two rows of the stadium, within feet of the podium.²⁶ Sajūdis also "sought to recruit priests as candidates," but the LCC "refused to permit priests to enter electoral competition."²⁷ The shift from no Catholic presence in June 1988 to a prominent Catholic

²⁴ Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, "Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius' Remarks at the Priests' Symposium," printed in *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania No. 79*, September 8, 1988, trans. Vita Matusaitis and Rev. Casimir Pugevičius (Brooklyn: Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, 1989), accessed May 31, 2013, <http://www.lkbkronika.lt/en/images/chr/chronicle79.pdf>.

²⁵ Keston Institute, "Lithuanian Catholics Celebrate Return of Cathedral," *Keston News Service* 312 (3 November 1988): 7; Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX; Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," 57; Taubman, "New Lithuania Cardinal."

²⁶ Darius Furmanavičius, "Sajudis' Peaceful Revolution, Part I," *Lituanus* 55, no. 1 (Spring 2009), accessed February 20, 2013, http://www.lituanus.org/2009/09_1_01%20Furmonavicius.html.

²⁷ Robert F. Goeckel, "The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process," in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 212. There is one exception, Fr. Aliulius, who will be discussed later in the chapter.

presence in October 1988 demonstrates that Sajūdis' recruitment efforts were successful and the LCC was growing more amenable to cooperation with Sajūdis.

Sajūdis also recruited priests to lead religious rites or speak at Sajūdis-sponsored rallies and events. For example, in September 1988, Sajūdis invited three priests to celebrate the Eucharist at a rally protesting the expansion of the Ignalina nuclear power plant. The priests participated in the demonstration, but “sang a brief prayer instead [of celebrating Eucharist]” in order to avoid violating the law against religious services in public spaces.²⁸ At another rally held in September 1988, the list of speakers was “carefully balanced by the inclusion of senior Lithuanian churchmen.”²⁹ Despite the fact that “Sajūdis stood firm against dogmatism of any kind,” it still made an effort to include clergy.³⁰ Sajūdis intentionally built a relationship with the Catholic Church by recruiting priests to participate in the Founding Congress and other Sajūdis events, and the LCC responded to Sajūdis' overtures favorably, but not without caution.

Incorporating Religion into the Policy Agenda

One way Sajūdis gained the Catholic Church's support was by advocating for policies that directly benefited the LCC, most importantly the return of church property and protection of religious rights. Sajūdis' political program promoted the “normalization of relations with the Catholic Church and other religious denominations, and the abolition of state-sponsored atheist indoctrination.”³¹ Many clergymen had spent decades demanding that the Soviet government return church property to the ownership and control of the Catholic Church, with limited success.

²⁸ Lithuanian Information Center, press release, “Lithuanians Say No to Nuclear Power,” September 18, 1988, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

²⁹ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 115.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 58.

For example, Mary Queen of Peace Church in Klaipėda was the only new church building constructed during the Soviet period. It was constructed using private funds, with permission from the Soviet government, in the late 1950s, but,

one of the inaugural and most grotesque acts of the new anti-religious campaign under Khrushchev in 1961 was to demolish the steeple, which the authorities themselves had asked should be visible from the sea, as a landmark and to impress foreign visitors to the port. The nave became a concert hall where orchestras played to empty houses and two priests who had done much to see the project through were imprisoned.³²

Mary Queen of Peace became “a cause celebre for Lithuanian Catholics, who . . . constantly [demanded] its return” by means of petition drives, one of which gathered 150,000 signatures. In August 1987 the Soviet news agency, *TASS*, announced that Mary Queen of Peace would be returned to the Church, and in 1988 a *TASS* spokesperson told a western delegation that the building would be officially handed over by July of that year and “reopened for worship . . . even if the building work on reconverting it to a church had not been completed.”³³ But the LCC’s success with Mary Queen of Peace was an anomaly, and by mid-1988, when Sajūdis was beginning to organize, there was still a great deal of work to be done in advocating the return of church buildings to their sacred function.

The LCC concentrated its property demands on the Vilnius Cathedral.³⁴ At Sajūdis’ first mass rally on 24 June 1988, Lithuanians asked the Nineteenth Party Congress delegates, “When

³² Michael Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), 135.

³³ Keston Institute, “Soviets Fix Date for Return of Klaipėda Church,” *Keston News Service* 298 (14 April 1988): 1, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

³⁴ Vilnius Cathedral stands in the same location where, according to tradition, King Mindaugas constructed the first Christian temple in 1215. Under King Jogaila, construction began on a Gothic cathedral in 1387. The Cathedral burned down in 1419 and was subsequently rebuilt by Vytautas the Great. The Cathedral has burned and been renovated several times since the fifteenth century, and its current structure dates to the late eighteenth century. The Cathedral was the coronation site for the Grand Dukes of Lithuania for centuries, thus cementing its importance as both a religious and a political site. See: “History,” Pilgrim Route of John Paul II: Lithuania, accessed March 14, 2014, www.pilgrimukelias.lt/index.php?id=101&lng=1.

will the Cathedral . . . be returned?”³⁵ At the Founding Congress on 22 October 1988, several speakers “declared their resentment that the cathedral had been used [as a museum and art gallery] since the Communist take-over, their feelings being focused by the fact that a mass had been arranged for the second morning of the conference, to be sung in the open air, in the square *outside* the cathedral.”³⁶ Cardinal Sladkevičius threatened, “unless the cathedral was returned the Mass would go ahead on the steps.”³⁷ Celebrating Mass on the steps of the centrally-located Vilnius Cathedral would draw a great deal of public and press attention, which would reflect negatively on the LiCP. The Sajūdis delegates supported the Cardinal’s demand to the state to return the Cathedral, which put pressure on the LiCP to respond.³⁸ The government tried to appease the Catholics by suggesting “that the clergy might like to spend an hour, and perhaps hold a service, in the cathedral.”³⁹ The LCC leaders declared, “they would only hold a service in the cathedral when they had got it back,” and to their great surprise Algirdas Brazauskas met the demand.⁴⁰ Brazauskas announced that the Vilnius Cathedral would be returned to the Catholic Church, and Cardinal Sladkevičius celebrated the announcement by officiating Mass on the Cathedral steps that night, with thousands of people in attendance and thousands more watching on television. Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius reconsecrated the Cathedral the following February, 1989, and artisans went to work restoring the interior and the classical façade.⁴¹ The

³⁵ *Sajūdžio žinios*, “Pageidavimai, gauti Gedimino aikštėje [Requests made in Gediminas Square],” July 5, 1988.

³⁶ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 123.

³⁷ *Catholic Herald*, “Cathedral Handed Back.”

³⁸ Sapiets, “Baltic Churches,” 160.

³⁹ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 123.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 64; Keston Institute, “Reconsecration of Vilnius Cathedral (USSR),” *Keston News Service* 319 (16 February 1989): 6, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Vilnius Cathedral's return to the LCC was a highpoint of religio-nationalist feeling, as people approached Gediminas Square, "walking to the soft rhythmic chanting of patriotic songs which everyone knew by heart."⁴² An observer described "thousands upon thousands of people in a sea of yellow, green and red were repeating Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius as he read the Lord's prayer."⁴³ The LiCP's motivation for returning the Vilnius Cathedral and other properties was to forestall criticism and "gain the support of the Catholic Church in the 'restructuring' campaign."⁴⁴ By meeting the Church's demand that the Vilnius Cathedral be returned, the LiCP signaled its willingness to work with the LCC, but also revealed its weakness as the LCC and Sajūdis forced the government to bend to the Lithuanian people's desires.

The return of the Vilnius Cathedral and Mary Queen of Peace, as well as other church properties, were "undoubtedly due partly to the growing influence of the churches in the national movements."⁴⁵ Cardinal Sladkevičius explained, "the communists were in a no-win situation. So they chose the most appropriate moment to make concessions . . . They made many Lithuanians quite happy and earned a modicum of gratitude."⁴⁶ However, Sajūdis, not the LiCP, reaped the political benefits of returning the churches: the people saw the action as a sign that Sajūdis had power over the LiCP, which "added much to [the] movement's credibility."⁴⁷ By including the

Restoring the massive statues to top the Cathedral was point of particular interest, and *Respublika* kept readers updated on the progress. See: Lina Bandzaitė, "Šv. Elena jau kyla į viršų [St. Helena is rising to the top]," *Respublika*, July 4, 1990.

⁴² Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev*, 144.

⁴³ Jurga Ivanauskaitė, "Dvi dienos, kurios pakeitė Lietuvą [Two days that changed Lithuania]," *Sąjūdžio žinios* 49 (October 29, 1988).

⁴⁴ Keston Institute, "Lithuanian Catholics Celebrate," 6.

⁴⁵ Sapiets, "Baltic Churches," 164.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 123.

return of Church property among its talking points, Sajūdis demonstrated its ability to sway the government, and grew in the esteem of clerics and the populace alike.

Sajūdis also incorporated religious education and charity work into its platform, which helped Sajūdis gain favor with LCC leaders. The February 1990 elections produced a Sajūdis-led Seimas, which promptly approved “church cultural and charitable work and [obligated] the state to subsidize its charitable organization, Caritas. Intervention by the Catholic hierarchy over the issue of religious instruction in schools resulted in a temporary delay in liberal legislation on the legal status of the churches.”⁴⁸ Thanks to these policy changes, within a matter of years after independence “all Churches, large and small, [were] engaged in charitable activities, from distributing food and clothing to full-scale programs on behalf of weaker social groups such as the elderly, children and single mothers and also asylum-seekers . . .”⁴⁹ The LCC recognized the potential for its social role to change dramatically if Sajūdis attained leadership of Lithuania, and was therefore willing to support Sajūdis.

The February 1990 “Law on the Restoration of Houses of Prayer and Other Buildings for Religious Communities” overturned the nationalization of religious buildings and “obligated the local governmental bodies to sign an agreement with religious centers and communities to either define the terms for the restitution of nationalized buildings, to provide monetary compensation, or to provide other means which would enable the restitution of premises that had belonged to the Church.”⁵⁰ Then on 12 June 1990 the Seimas passed an “Act of Restitution of the Catholic Church Status in Lithuania,” which established “the state’s stand on certain church-state

⁴⁸ Goeckel, “Baltic Churches,” 212.

⁴⁹ Frans Hoppenbrouwers, “Romancing Freedom: Church and Society in the Baltic States since the End of Communism,” *Religion, State & Society* 27, no. 2 (1999): 168.

⁵⁰ Jolanta Kuznečoviene, “Church and State in Lithuania,” in *Law and Religion in Post-Communist Europe*, ed. Silvio Ferrari et al. (Walpole, MA: Peeters Publishers, 2003), 179.

questions and [created] the necessity, as well as an obligation, to pass a law that would further regulate relations between the state and the Catholic Church.”⁵¹ The Act met with some criticism because it appeared the “Catholic faith [was] being especially distinguished from other faiths through official means, probably because someone [wanted] to re-establish power of the Catholic Church in and over our society as it was before the wars began.”⁵² It is unclear whether the Church would have favored an act that was broadly applicable to all religious institutions, but one can surmise that Sajūdis was intentional and thoughtful in its use of Church, as opposed to churches, in the language of the Act. This indicates the attention Sajūdis continued to pay to its relationship with the Catholic Church, even after the 1990 elections in which the LCC’s influence was so important. Sajūdis ingratiated itself to the Church by including religious rights and restoration of Church property in its policy agenda, and then made good on its campaign promises after Sajūdis won the 1990 elections, which it would not have been able to achieve without the Church’s support.

Building a Catholic Image through Symbols and Locations

It was just as important for Sajūdis to ensure that the Lithuanian people mentally associated Sajūdis with the LCC as it was for Sajūdis and the LCC to actively cooperate. Since the LCC was the single most trusted institution in Lithuania, if the people associated the LCC with Sajūdis it would infuse the political movement with an air of reliability and even sanctity. One way to make sure the public made a mental connection between the LCC and Sajūdis was to hold political events at locations with religious significance. Cathedral Square, also known as

⁵¹ Kuznečoviene, “Church and State in Lithuania,” 180.

⁵² Feliksas Laurinaitis, “Valstybė. Bažnyčia. Pilietis. [State. Church. Citizen.],” *Respublika*, July 25, 1990. This article goes on to offer a detailed list of proposed amendments to make the Act applicable to all religious and atheistic communities.

Gediminas Square, beside Vilnius Cathedral was the most central and well-known public location in Vilnius. The Stalin regime had confiscated Vilnius Cathedral in 1950 and converted it to a warehouse then an art museum, but the paved square adjacent to the Cathedral was a popular location for public gatherings. In June 1988, Sajūdis was planning its first public rally, at which the Lithuanian delegates to the nineteenth Congress of the Communist Party would have the opportunity to “explain how they planned to represent the Lithuanian interest in Moscow.”⁵³ Sajūdis planned to hold the rally in Cathedral Square, and when the City Council of Vilnius denied permission, Sajūdis leadership replied, “we did not need permission to enter Cathedral Square as it was not the City Council’s property.”⁵⁴ The rally went on in Cathedral Square, and Vytautas Landsbergis offered the first speech on Sajūdis’ behalf, followed by speakers from the Congress delegates. At this early juncture in Sajūdis’ activity there does not appear to have been intentional outreach to the LCC, and the use of Cathedral Square seems to have been motivated by logistics and visibility. However, it is significant to note the tradition of the Vilnius Cathedral grounds being a place for public gatherings, and the associations this might have conjured for the people who attended the rally. The image of the imposing renaissance revival architecture of the Vilnius Cathedral makes a remarkable backdrop for one of the first public political events in decades of Soviet rule. Use of the Vilnius Cathedral grounds subtly reminded people of their spiritual oppression, and implied that Sajūdis was in solidarity with the nation’s Catholic heritage.

During the Sajūdis Founding Congress in October 1988, a rally that took place outside the Vilnius Cathedral had a distinctly religious feeling. After a session of the Sajūdis Opening

⁵³ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 109.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 110.

Congress on 23 October, around 200,000 people gathered for a torchlight rally outside the Vilnius Cathedral. Photographs of the event depict the crowd surrounding the cathedral and overflowing into the streets, with the cathedral's façade illuminated by torches, and a large group of people forming the concentric circles of a folk dance, some of them wearing national costume.⁵⁵ The confluence of the Sajūdis Founding Congress, the Vilnius Cathedral, the thousands of people, and the national spirit demonstrates the extent to which politics and faith were joined in people's minds.

Local Sajūdis groups across the LiSSR also utilized religious symbols and locations for their rallies and meetings. Vytautas Kavolis notes, "only in Lithuania are there processions in the tens of thousands carrying crosses across the country to the Hill of Crosses . . . and a few men and women lying cross-wise in the cathedral square."⁵⁶ Sajūdis also strengthened its Catholic image by including Mass in some of its events. In Kaunas on 16 February 1989, the Sajūdis Seimas declared independence from the Soviet Union, then rose from a few hours of sleep "to attend a special mass celebrated by Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, the archbishop of Kaunas and primate of Lithuania, in his cathedral."⁵⁷ The national observance continued after Mass when "a huge procession wound through the streets to the open square which stands before the Kaunas War Museum, where our national Statue of Liberty had been restored and was

⁵⁵ Reuters, Photograph, from Taubman, "Lithuanians Move." This is during the same sequence of events described above when the Cathedral was returned to the Church, but is a different rally from the one following the announcement of the Cathedral's return.

⁵⁶ Vytautas Kavolis, "The Second Lithuanian Revival: Culture as Performance," *Lituanus* 37, no. 2 (Summer 1991), accessed January 31, 2014, http://www.lituanus.org/1991_2/91_2_05.htm.

⁵⁷ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 132. The Sajūdis Seimas was the parliamentary body within the Sajūdis organization, and should not be confused with the Seimas of the LiSSR, which would not declare independence from the USSR until after Sajūdis candidates won the majority of seats in February 1990.

waiting to be unveiled.”⁵⁸ The transition from religious to national observance signals the extent to which the Catholic faith was intertwined with the national culture, and the fact that Sajūdis members made presence at Mass a priority illustrates the movement’s efforts to maintain a close working relationship with the LCC.

Building a Catholic Image through Rhetoric

Speeches given at Sajūdis meetings and rallies were often full of religious rhetoric. By alluding to or directly invoking the Catholic Church or Lithuania’s Catholic heritage, Sajūdis leaders not only revealed the deep roots of Catholic faith in the country, but also subtly associated themselves with the Church. Some of these uses of rhetoric are quite generic or only vaguely mentioned religious themes, such as when Landsbergis spoke about “our planet which history and Almighty God had given us.”⁵⁹ Other statements left little room for interpretation, and directly invoked biblical language or Catholic identity.

Sigitas Geda was a poet, a Sajūdis Initiative Group member, and a devout Catholic, who often peppered his language with biblical allusions and demands for religious freedom. While most members of Sajūdis had primarily political or economic goals, for Geda “the movement [was] one of spiritual renewal,” and the goal was “not to replace one group with another, but to make it so that power is no longer amoral.”⁶⁰ For Geda, the guiding focus of the movement was “Lithuania’s ancient European and Catholic culture,” and he feared that “if old Christian nations

⁵⁸ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 132. The Statue of Liberty was erected in 1922 to celebrate Lithuania’s independence. It was destroyed during Stalin’s regime, but restored in 1989.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 113.

⁶⁰ Celestine Bohlen, “Poet is Now a Player in Lithuania’s Unfolding Epic,” *New York Times*, October 25, 1988, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009). Geda died in 2008 in Vilnius.

like Lithuania and Armenia don't survive, then Europe's proto-homeland will be lost.”⁶¹ Geda often spoke at Sajūdis events, and infused his rhetoric with concern for Catholic heritage and disgust with the atheistic Soviet state. At the Sajūdis rally on 9 July 1988, Geda referred to the “holy Lithuanian soil,” and urged the people to believe “in a higher – fear not to say cosmic – calling” and “belief in a higher, spiritual nature of humankind.”⁶² Geda strived to undo the atheistic worldview that had permeated Lithuanian culture by reminding the people of their spiritual roots and the nature of the soul.⁶³ At the 23 August 1988 commemoration of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Geda spoke “in the style of biblical parables” and told the crowd how the Lithuanian man must “collect all the strength in his quaking body, all the strength of his God-given spirit, his willpower, and his intellect if he is to survive and if he is to keep his roof over his head, and his land in which his ancestors’ bones rest, and his children who are still young and need to be protected.”⁶⁴ He went on in the same speech to talk about the “nation’s desire for freedom and self-determination, long smoldering in the depth of our soul,” the necessity of repentance for national sins, and forgiveness and prayer for the “children of Hitler, Stalin, Beria, Molotov and Ribbentrop who wielded the instruments of torture.”⁶⁵ At the September 1988 rally, Geda boldly denounced the communist system, “which he described with the fervor of an

⁶¹ Bohlen, “Poet.” By “proto-homeland” Geda might be referring to Lithuania’s connection to its ancient history, which is well-preserved in the Lithuanian language and folk traditions. In other speech Geda mentions the origins of the Lithuanian people in the Himalayas or Crete, therefore Lithuania’s ancient origins appear to be a theme in Geda’s rhetoric.

⁶² Sigitas Geda, “Sigito Gedos žodis Lietuvai [Words from Sigitas Geda to Lithuania],” *Sajūdžio žinios* 10 (July 19, 1988). It is worth noting that Geda’s rhetoric was not xenophobic, indeed he acknowledged that “Vilnius is also a holy city to another nation struggling in the diaspora – the Jewish.”

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Asta Banionis, “The Summer of 1988 and the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact in Lithuania,” *Lituanus* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1989), accessed February 6, 2014, http://www.lituanus.org/1989/89_1_04.htm.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Old Testament prophet as ‘satanic’.”⁶⁶ He called socialism, “drama in a vacuum, drama without God.”⁶⁷ In January 1990, Geda published an open letter of students of Vilnius University calling on them to “take back the Church of St. John,” a chapel within the University which had been abandoned and robbed.⁶⁸ Geda exhorted the students,

How can we speak about the construction of a palace or any residence for the soul when there is no framework? . . . I believe that this is the reason why the youth is so lost, nervous, and hopeless, that is why this town seems woeful and difficult – because the students of one of the oldest universities in Europe are left without a God.⁶⁹

Geda also helped start and run an ecumenical publication called *Tikybos zodis*, ‘Word of Faith’.⁷⁰

Geda’s rhetoric, which Lithuanians heard at almost every Sajūdis rally and read in Sajūdis publications, was instrumental in shaping public perception of the movement. Since his rhetoric was focused on morality and the soul, and did not hesitate to invoke Lithuania’s historic ties to the Catholic Church, Geda contributed to Sajūdis’ image as an organization that was supported by and cooperating with the Lithuanian Catholic Church.

Another way Sajūdis built its Catholic image and promoted its relationship with the LCC was by being present at events that were significant to the Catholic Church. In February 1989, Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius celebrated Mass to formally reconsecrate Vilnius Cathedral. Sajūdis made sure the crowd, which spilled out of the Vilnius Cathedral and into the streets, would notice Sajūdis’ presence by wearing black Sajūdis armbands and acting as ushers to

⁶⁶ Landsbergis, *Lithuania Independent Again*, 115.

⁶⁷ Bohlen, “Poet.”

⁶⁸ Sigitas Geda, “Ultimatus: Laiškas Vilniaus universitetui studentams [Ultimatum: a letter to the students of the Vilnius University],” *Respublika*, January 10, 1990.

⁶⁹ Geda, “Ultimatus,” 5.

⁷⁰ Sapiets, “Baltic Churches,” 163.

control the crowd.⁷¹ Similarly, when Vincentas Sladkevičius was installed as a Cardinal on 2 April 1989, Sajūdis representatives, including one who was newly elected to the Congress of People's Deputies, attended the ceremony at Kaunas Cathedral.⁷² After independence, the importance of Sajūdis' Catholic image did not dissipate. On 5 March 1991 Lithuanian Catholics celebrated the feast of Saint Casimir, the patron saint of Lithuania whose namesake church had been returned to sacred purpose in 1989. The Mass for Saint Casimir was "a national event, and to that extent political," and President Landsbergis and his wife were in attendance.⁷³ By being present and visible at Catholic events, Sajūdis leaders' reinforced the connection that Lithuanians made in their minds between Sajūdis and the Catholic Church.

Sajūdis' public image was significant because Sajūdis' success depended entirely upon the Lithuanian people's participation in the 1990 elections to the LiSSR Seimas. If Lithuanians recognized Sajūdis as a political extension of the LCC, an institution that they valued and trusted, then average Lithuanians might carry the association between the LCC and Sajūdis with them to the ballot box. Local and international reporting indicates the extent to which Sajūdis and the LCC were united in people's minds. Statements like "the church and separatists have worked together for religious freedom and political independence" abound in the press, indicating that the press recognized the close relationship between the LCC and the independence movement.⁷⁴ If Sajūdis had worked with the LCC but not infused Catholicism

⁷¹ Rupert Cornwell, "Lithuania Blends Politics and Faith," *The Independent*, February 6, 1989, Foreign News, accessed October 1, 2013, LexisNexis.

⁷² Keston Institute, "Lithuanian Cardinal Installed as Archbishop (USSR)," *Keston News Service* 323 (13 April 1989): 4, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁷³ Peter Hebblethwaite, "Lithuania's Church: Interfering in politics?," *Catholic Herald*, April 5, 1991, Accessed February 15, 2013. <http://archive.catholicherald.co.uk/article/5th-april-1991/5/lithuanias-church-interfering-in-politics.html>.

⁷⁴ Christopher Young, "Baltic Republics Hit Sour Note," *Edmonton Journal*, March 31, 1990, accessed January 15, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/250602151?accountid=7014>.

into its public image, then voters would not have made such a strong connection between the LCC and Sajūdis, and Lithuanians' motivation to participate in elections might not have been as strong.

The Church Intentionally Builds a Relationship with Sajūdis

The relationship between Sajūdis and the LCC was not one-sided. The LCC recognized that Sajūdis had real potential to change the political landscape, and needed to be sure that the changes would benefit the LCC. In order to ensure that Sajūdis would be attentive to the Church's needs, the LCC responded positively to Sajūdis' invitations and intentionally pursued a relationship with the movement. The LCC built its relationship with Sajūdis by participating in Sajūdis meetings and events and by advocating political goals that aligned with Sajūdis' goals.

The LCC may have been motivated to work with Sajūdis in part because a renewed campaign of atheist propaganda started in 1988. Leonginas Šepetys, the ideological secretary of the LiCP, asked LCC leaders to "issue a statement that religion must not be used for political purposes," and claimed that "extremist priests were trying to convince Catholics that perestroika and glasnost would eventually 'guarantee the Church unlimited rights.'"⁷⁵ He moreover accused the LCC of seeking "to go beyond the limits of satisfying the religious needs of the people," and trying "to penetrate social life, to thrust its influence on the family, everyday, and social life of believers."⁷⁶ For its part, the LCC "has neither denied its efforts to influence the behavior of practicing Catholics nor its belief that it should not be excluded from public life."⁷⁷ Šepetys'

⁷⁵ Šaulius Girnius, "New Call for Intensification of Atheistic Propaganda," *Radio Free Europe Research*, Baltic Area SR/3 (24 March 1988): 39.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

“emphasis on the need for more individual atheistic work with the families of believers”⁷⁸ may have alarmed the LCC, which was beginning to see some of the benefits of increased religious freedom, and that may have contributed to the LCC’s willingness to work with Sajūdis. The LiCP leadership was simultaneously repelling the LCC with propaganda and ingratiating itself through concessions like returning the Vilnius Cathedral. In response, the Catholic clergy seemed “to see the Restructuring Movement as a way of obtaining concessions from the state while the opportunity [was] there.”⁷⁹ The LCC leadership recognized that their relationship with Sajūdis might scare the LiCP into making further concessions. Whether restoration of religious rights would come as a result of perestroika within the Soviet Union, or as part of a new Sajūdis-led independent Lithuania, it was in the LCC’s best interest to support Sajūdis.

Church Participation in Sajūdis

The LCC cooperated with Sajūdis through the participation of individual priests in Sajūdis committees and meetings. Although Sajūdis invited clerics to be present at meetings or rallies, it was up to the individual priests to take the relationship a step further by joining the movement. An editorial by Father Valerijus Rudzinskas explained that Sajūdis attracted clergy and theological faculty: “many Catholic theologians, who have joined Sajūdis, meet together to discuss various theological questions, which are connected to Sajūdis from the perspective of the Catholic Church . . . Such concern for healthy and ‘straight’ education has also pushed Sajūdis away from doctrinal mistakes.”⁸⁰ Although it is difficult to determine precisely what roles

⁷⁸ Š. Girnius, “New Call for Intensification,” 39.

⁷⁹ Keston Institute, “Lithuanian Catholics Celebrate,” 7.

⁸⁰ Valerius Rudzinskas, “Charizmatinis atsinaujinimas – bažnyčios viltis [A charismatic revival – the hope of the church],” *Respublika*, February 28, 1990.

priests took on or the extent of their individual influence, it is clear that clergy were involved in the movement.

Although high-ranking clerics were cautious about becoming involved with Sajūdis directly, they nevertheless expressed their support for Sajūdis in more indirect ways. In a 1988 interview with the *New York Times*, days after the Vilnius Cathedral was returned to the LCC, Cardinal Sladkevičius said “there can be an alliance between the church and the movement.”⁸¹ Cardinal Sladkevičius also contacted the newly-elected President Landsbergis in 1990 and “expressed the church’s solidarity with the nation in the restoration of independence.”⁸² By reaching out to Landsbergis directly, the Cardinal demonstrated the LCC’s willingness to continue to work alongside the Sajūdis-led government in the future.

Father Vaclovas Aliulis, who was chairman of the LCC’s Liturgical Commission, was one priest who joined Sajūdis politics on his own initiative. At the Sajūdis Founding Congress, according to one witness’s account, Aliulis explained, “the Catholic bishops supported the main objectives of Sajūdis on questions of human and civil rights, social justice, education for national awareness, culture, ecology and economic development.”⁸³ Because of his unique position as a clergyman, Fr. Aliulis was elected to the council of the Sajūdis Founding Congress.⁸⁴ He was later elected to the Seimas as a Sajūdis candidate.⁸⁵ His active participation in the movement

⁸¹ Taubman, “New Lithuania Cardinal.”

⁸² Keston Institute, “Church Support for Lithuanian Independence,” *Keston News Service* 349 (3 May 1990): 6, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁸³ Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” 60.

⁸⁴ Keston Institute, “Lithuanian Catholics Celebrate,” 7.

⁸⁵ Hebblethwaite, “Lithuania’s Church.”

indicated “the tacit support of the Roman Catholic Church.”⁸⁶ Aliulis became the primary liaison between Sajūdis and the Catholic populace, with Sajūdis looking to him for information about the Church’s situation. For example, when a shipment of New Testaments arrived in Lithuania, Fr. Aliulis explained to Sajūdis, “the present amount of printed copies will without a doubt not be enough to satisfy the need for Bibles (a single parish receives 28 copies on average).”⁸⁷ Sajūdis leaders, not all of whom were church-going Catholics, would not have been aware of this kind of detail without Fr. Aliulis. Fr. Aliulis was also bold in confronting the government. In his function as director of the journal *Kataliku pasaulis*, ‘Catholic World’, he denounced the Soviet disinformation campaign after the January 13 Massacre.⁸⁸ Personally, he was “so evidently a spiritual man, with a great devotion to Our Lady,” who seemed “to be the brains behind the local church.”⁸⁹ Fr. Aliulis’ active participation in Sajūdis was one way the Church took initiative to build a relationship with Sajūdis. Although Church leaders were circumspect about the appropriate level of clergy involvement in politics, Fr. Aliulis nevertheless represented the Church’s interests and acted as an intermediary between the LCC and Sajūdis.

Endorsing Pro-Independence Politics

The LCC had clear political desires, despite its hesitation to embroil itself in the political maneuverings of Sajūdis or any other organization. In addition to the LCC’s social and spiritual role, and in keeping with its status as a national institution, the LCC and its hierarchy were

⁸⁶ Bill Keller, “Lithuania Nationalists: A Fine and Fragile Line,” *New York Times*, March 14, 1989, accessed November 30, 2011, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

⁸⁷ Zigmas Vaišvila, “Naujojo testament leidimas [Publication of the New Testament],” *Sajūdžio žinios* 20 (August 11, 1988).

⁸⁸ Katholische Presseagentur Österreich, “Sowietische Desinformationskampagne [Soviet disinformation campaign],” *Kathpress*, January 17, 1991. The January 13 Massacre, also known as Bloody Sunday, will be discussed in Chapter Five.

⁸⁹ Hebblethwaite, “Lithuania’s Church.”

solidly in line with the popular desire for Lithuania's independence.⁹⁰ The LCC expressed its political will in several ways, including from the pulpit and in the press. Although the LCC leadership "[did] not directly participate in politics," they did express their belief that "the nation, itself, without outside interference, should choose its political system."⁹¹ While Cardinal Sladkevičius was cautious and preferred to work "quietly to encourage the change while preventing it from running out of control," he nevertheless stated his support for an independent Lithuanian state on several occasions.⁹² At a symposium of priests in 1988, Cardinal Sladkevičius called on the Church to be more demonstrative in its national pride and political convictions:

It is too bad that we do not see our national flag here today. Surely, it is no stranger to us? Surely, it is not something unworthy of our gaze, or are we unable to rejoice in that which our whole nation rejoices today? Surely all this is not unacceptable to the clergy? It is not without reason that those who experienced that joy of restructuring in Vingis Park threw it up to us clergy that we have become so alienated, without feeling, as if we did not desire restructuring or change, as if we had become entirely too accustomed to the sad condition.⁹³

Cardinal Sladkevičius expressed similar religious and nationalist sentiments in an address to Lithuanian Catholics in 1989:

Our spiritual and national revival of the nation, which began this year, has brought a lot of change to the life of the nation. We wish that this would be an unstoppable and constant part of its journey to perfection. We understand that a lot will be influenced by our own decisions, courage, endurance, and by wise and unrushed steps towards new heights. But let us not forget that our efforts alone will not suffice. A Psalmist warns us: If the Lord does not build houses, the people who build them are working in vain. That is

⁹⁰ Sapiets, "Ferment in the Baltic," 6-9.

⁹¹ Vardys, "Lithuanian National Politics," 60.

⁹² Taubman, "New Lithuania Cardinal,"; Sapiets, "Baltic Churches," 161.

⁹³ Sladkevičius, "Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius' Remarks." The reference to the national flag alludes to the August 1988 Sajūdis rally in Vingis Park, at which someone from Sajūdis unfurled the Lithuanian national flag over the stage.

why I address you, honourable countrymen. I kindly call you all into prayer for our nation, its unity and the success of its revival.⁹⁴

Cardinal Sladkevičius' public statements in support of Lithuanian nationalism demonstrated his support for the independence movement and the desirability of LCC participation in nationalist endeavors.

Some priests willingly inserted themselves into politics by openly promoting independence in their homilies. While some LCC leaders “quietly encouraged the development of [Sajūdis],”⁹⁵ others supported the political struggle of the nation generally without reference to specific political organizations. The involvement of the clergy, even when it was not directly in conjunction with Sajūdis, reinforced the tie between the Church and the Lithuanian nation. In 1988, “masses for the fatherland” were held in churches across Lithuania to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Lithuania gaining independence from the Russian Empire. At these Masses, “prayers were said for national and religious freedom,” people “sang the Lithuanian national anthem,” and “attempts to lay wreaths at national monuments were broken up by the militia.”⁹⁶ Priests often delivered sermons with nationalist themes in conjunction with Sajūdis events. On 23 August 1988, the same day as the massive Sajūdis rally that commemorated the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, local Sajūdis groups hosted smaller rallies across the country. In Šiauliai, a procession of 5,000 people walked from the Hill of Insurrectionists to the Church of St. George, where “Reverend Kazimieras Grazulis gave a sermon demanding that amends be made for the

⁹⁴ Kardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, “Lietuvos Kardinolo kreipimasis į tikinčiuosius [Address of the Lithuanian cardinal to the believers],” *Sajūdžio žinios* 52, November 20, 1989.

⁹⁵ Philip Taubman, “In Lithuania Too, Nationalism Surges,” *New York Times*, July 23, 1988, accessed November 30, 2013, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

⁹⁶ Keston Institute, “Lithuanian Independence Commemorated in Church,” *Keston News Service* 296 (17 March 1988): 9, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.”⁹⁷ And immediately after the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet declared independence in March 1990, “Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius emphasized the church’s support for the nation in its striving for independence.”⁹⁸ Masses like these not only reinforced “the traditional links between the Catholic Church and Lithuanian nationalism,” but also demonstrate that the LCC was not opposed to promoting an essentially political agenda.⁹⁹ In some cases, priests went so far as to advise their parishioners how to vote. Especially in rural areas and among people for whom democracy was a foreign idea or a distant memory, “the local priest’s word [was] decisive,” and “he [was] sure to recommend a nationalist candidate.”¹⁰⁰ The LCC’s support for Sajūdis continued after Sajūdis won the Seimas majority and Landsbergis was elected president. At Mass on 14 December 1991, marking the Third Sajūdis Congress, the priest declared, “we must pray for Sajūdis, for its complicated problems and its great future. We are glad that Sajūdis is the leader of our nation and that it will help the nation to find a bright future.”¹⁰¹ By openly supporting independence and nationalism, the LCC gave its tacit support to Sajūdis, thus indicating willingness to work in concert toward the religious and national goal of an independent Lithuanian state.

Outside church walls, some clerics boldly asserted their national authority through international diplomacy. Relations with the United States were complicated during the Gorbachev years: President Ronald Reagan and then President George Bush were weighing

⁹⁷ Šaulius Girnius, “Massive Demonstrations in Lithuania,” *Radio Free Europe Research*, Baltic Area Situation Report/9 (26 August 1988): 26, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

⁹⁸ Keston Institute, “Church Support,” 6.

⁹⁹ Keston Institute, “Lithuanian Independence Commemorated,” 9.

¹⁰⁰ John Rettie, “Lithuanian Voters Look to Priests,” *The Guardian*, February 23, 1990, accessed December 4, 2010, LexisNexis.

¹⁰¹ Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 366.

peace with Moscow against support for the independence movements of the Soviet republics. Bishop Antanas Vaičius of Telšiai wrote a letter to President Bush in 1990 expressing “the distress of the Lithuanian people at the lack of US support for the Lithuanian republic and at the decision not to impose economic penalties on the Soviet Union despite the continued use of force against the Lithuanian government.”¹⁰² By sending this message to the President of the United States, Bishop Vaičius spoke for the LCC and made it clear that the LCC was not a neutral bystander; it was an actor on the political stage, and it was not shying away from its well-established ties to the Lithuanian state.

The Baltic Way demonstrations of 23 August 1989 provided an opportunity for clergy to demonstrate their support for independence by participating in the mass demonstration. On the anniversary of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, Sajūdis and its parallel popular fronts in Latvia and Estonia organized a pan-Baltic demonstration in which hundreds of thousands of people joined hands in a human chain that stretched from Tallinn to Vilnius. Under orders to stand 1.5 yards apart and not block intersections, some participants carried with them “small black-rimmed placards, honouring the dead of purge, deportation, or immediate execution at the hands of Stalin’s men.”¹⁰³ Scattered among the demonstrators, transistor radios broadcast Lithuanian folk songs. Riot police marred the peaceful demonstration at points as they “ripped signs from demonstrators’ hands and pummeled them to the ground.”¹⁰⁴ Government officials within the progressive arm of the Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian Communist Parties and leaders of the popular independence movements in each Baltic republic issued a statement declaring that the

¹⁰² Keston Institute, “Church Support,” 6.

¹⁰³ Rupert Cornwell, “Human Chain Stands Up Against the Soviet Union,” *The Independent*, August 24, 1989, accessed October 1, 2013, LexisNexis.

¹⁰⁴ Canadian Press, “Baltic Human Chain Demands Freedom,” *Edmonton Journal*, August 24, 1989, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/251535283>.

Soviet Union “infringed on the historical right of the Baltic nations to self-determination, presented ruthless ultimatums to the Baltic republics, occupied them with overwhelming military force, and under conditions of military occupation and heavy political terror carried out their violent annexations.”¹⁰⁵ The Baltic Way demonstration received international attention, and sent a message to the Soviet Union and the world that Lithuania and its Baltic neighbors were Soviet republics against their will. The Lithuanian Catholic Church’s participation in the Baltic Way demonstration was highly visible. In Vilnius, where thousands gathered outside the Cathedral in Gediminas Square to participate in the human chain, “priests hovered in attendance” adding to the “deeply spiritual feel” of the event.¹⁰⁶ Meanwhile, Sajūdis’ Founding Congress “launched its bid for freedom in a theater” across the street from the Vilnius Cathedral.¹⁰⁷ By participating in the Baltic Way, the priests demonstrated their national spirit and solidarity with Sajūdis.

As the first pope from Eastern Europe, John Paul II had great influence over the LCC clergy, both spiritually and politically. John Paul II’s occasional comments about Lithuanian politics encouraged Lithuanian Catholics and clergy. His Easter 1990 prayer during Mass at St. Peter’s Square included the statement, which he delivered in Lithuanian, “We hope their aspirations are confirmed through a respectful and comprehensive dialogue.”¹⁰⁸ Although he “stopped well short of flatly endorsing Lithuania’s declaration of independence,” the pope reassured Catholic leaders in the Baltics by saying that “his prayers included ‘all your noble

¹⁰⁵ Esther B. Fein, “Baltic Citizens Link hands to Demand Independence,” *New York Times*, August 23, 1989, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

¹⁰⁶ Cornwell, “Human Chain.”

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Clyde Haberman, “John Paul Says a Prayer for Lithuania’s Success,” *New York Times*, April 16, 1990, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

people, to whose aspirations I am closer than ever.”¹⁰⁹ Vytautas Landsbergis recalls that John Paul II, “used to say that Lithuania is in his heart. We know that his grandmother was Lithuanian. He never underlined it, but he used to say, ‘Lithuania’s here.’ [Landsbergis points to his heart.] And he supported us in special ways. An example, when we have been already under the Soviet blockade in the spring of 1990. He sends a wave through the priests traveling to me personal congratulations.”¹¹⁰ The Vatican opened diplomatic relations with Moscow in March 1990, and the Vatican’s envoy to the USSR said “the Holy See would be willing to mediate the dispute in Lithuania.”¹¹¹ By inserting the Vatican into Lithuania’s political striving, the pope signaled to the Catholic leadership of the country that it was appropriate and even necessary to work with Sajūdis, as the dominant political force, toward the peaceful restoration of independence.

The LCC also expressed its political will through print media. The Church occasionally submitted articles for publication in Sajūdis’ weekly newspaper, *Sajūdžio žinios*. For example, the 5 July 1988 edition includes a request from Catholic believers in Vilnius and several other districts to register a newly formed Catholic community in the outskirts of Vilnius, in compliance with Soviet law.¹¹² Catholic lay people also recognized *Sajūdžio žinios* as an appropriate outlet for religious requests, such as one community that published a request for items or letters that had belonged to their village priest so they could honor his memory.¹¹³ In

¹⁰⁹ Haberman, “John Paul Says a Prayer.”

¹¹⁰ Vytautas Landsbergis, “Vytautas Landsbergis: John Paul II,” The Freedom Project, George W. Bush Institute, accessed January 26, 2014, http://www.freedomcollection.org/interviews/vytautas_landsbergis/?vidid=976.

¹¹¹ Associated Press, “Pope Urges Lithuanian Freedom as Christians Celebrate Easter,” *Edmonton Journal*, April 16, 1990, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/251598742>.

¹¹² Stanislovas Gruzdas, et al., “Vilniaus miesto Liaudies deputatu tarybos vykdomojo komiteto Pirmininkui [To the chairman of the Vilnius city executive deputy committee],” *Sajūdžio žinios* 6, July 5, 1988.

¹¹³ Tomas Eidukevičius, “Prisiminkime nepelnytai užmirštus,” *Sajūdžio žinios* 68, February 21, 1989.

September 1988, the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* published an “Appeal to the Restructuring Movement Sajūdis” titled, “There is No Freedom Without Freedom of Conscience.” The appeal called on Sajūdis, which had begun to organize only three months prior, to “explain to official agencies and to the public that believing citizens will be able, sincerely, to participate in restructuring and renewal only when they are convinced that their ‘apartness’ really has been unconditionally eliminated.”¹¹⁴ The LCC’s own publications and submissions to Sajūdis publications sent a very clear signal that the LCC was politically engaged and was willing to work with political bodies that shared its interests. Since Sajūdis was the organization best poised to initiate change, the LCC intentionally built its relationship with the movement by joining Sajūdis’ leadership and sharing Sajūdis’ nationalist aspirations.

How Sajūdis and the Catholic Church Benefitted from Their Relationship

Both Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church acknowledged and embraced the close bonds between Catholicism and national identity, and were committed to protecting Lithuanian culture from the influence of the Russian Orthodox Soviet Union or an increasingly secular western Europe. But Sajūdis would not have pursued a relationship with the LCC if it had not stood to benefit from the relationship. Likewise, the LCC would not have entangled itself with the political movement without the promise of concrete gains. Sajūdis and the LCC both directly benefited from their relationship.

¹¹⁴ Julija Šalkauskienė, et al., “There is No Freedom Without Freedom of Conscience,” in *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania No. 79*, September 8, 1988, trans. Vita Matusaitis and Rev. Casimir Pugevičius (Brooklyn: Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, 1989), accessed May 31, 2013, <http://www.lkbkronika.lt/en/images/chr/chronicle79.pdf>.

Benefits to Sajūdis

The LCC's support was essential for Sajūdis' political success. Because of its association with the LCC, Sajūdis gained a level of social trust that it would not have had otherwise, which in turn allowed Sajūdis to build a foundation of popular support that resulted in the election of Sajūdis-sponsored candidates. The LCC retained a higher level of public trust than any other institution during the Soviet period. According to the European Values Survey, public confidence in the LCC remained steady at around 70 percent from 1990 to 1999.¹¹⁵ Sajūdis was able to capitalize on the LCC's public trust by closely associating itself with Church. The public's perception of Sajūdis' relationship with the LCC helped legitimize Sajūdis. As Peter Berger explains, "religion legitimates social institutions by bestowing upon them an ultimately valid ontological status, that is, by *locating* them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference."¹¹⁶ When Lithuanians saw priests participating in Sajūdis events and saw Sajūdis' members acting as ushers at Mass, they extended to Sajūdis the legitimacy that they had always granted to the Church. Sajūdis integrated itself into the prevailing Catholic worldview, and therefore electing Sajūdis candidates became part of preserving the Catholic world.

The most quantifiable way Sajūdis benefitted from its relationship with the LCC was winning elections. When it came to building a network that would rally support for candidates, "Sajūdis was able to gear up quickly a republic-wide organizational capacity" by accessing the network and experience of the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.¹¹⁷ The LCC's

¹¹⁵ Stanislovas Juknevičius, "Religiosity and the Moral Values of Lithuanians in the European Context," in *Lithuanian Identity and Values*, Lithuanian Philosophical Studies V, ed. Aida Savicka (Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2007), 107. 1990 was the second round of the EVS, and the first time Lithuania was surveyed. The data were collected between June and August 1990.

¹¹⁶ Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (New York: Double Day, 1967), 33.

¹¹⁷ Goeckel, "Baltic Churches," 207.

support helped foster the spirit of democracy because its existing grassroots network of popular dissent “was more conducive to democratic skills and attitudes,” which in turn contributed to strong voter turnout.¹¹⁸ Although Cardinal Sladkevičius said it was “not favorable that we join various [political] movements as clergy,” he urged “lay believers and especially the clergy, to support by all available means the public’s efforts at renewal and democratization.”¹¹⁹ By supporting Sajūdis-backed candidates, the LCC helped ensure electoral victories that may not have been possible without local priests urging their parishioners to vote and stoking the flame of the independence spirit in their sermons. The LCC’s vocal support contributed to broad popular preference for Sajūdis candidates, and Lithuanians elected Sajūdis members to thirty-six of the forty-two seats in the Congress of People’s Deputies in the March 1989 election.¹²⁰ A November 1989 poll confirmed that 45.9 percent of the populace intended to vote for Sajūdis candidates in upcoming Lithuanian Seimas elections.¹²¹ Popular support for Sajūdis continued to grow, and Sajūdis won the majority in the Lithuanian Seimas by a landslide: 75 percent of Lithuanians voted in February 1990, and Sajūdis-supported candidates won 96 percent of the 135 seats.¹²² As Chapter Three argued, this level of public support was only possible because Sajūdis

¹¹⁸ Goeckel, “Baltic Churches,” 218.

¹¹⁹ Sladkevičius, “Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius’ Remarks.”

¹²⁰ David Remnick, “Lithuania: The Little Independence Movement That Could,” *Washington Post*, August 6, 1989, accessed December 4, 2010, LexisNexis.

¹²¹ V. Gaidys, “Political Party Preferences and Political Identities in Lithuania,” in *Changes of Identity in Modern Lithuania*, ed. Meilute Taljunaite (Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1996), 94. The next highest preference was for the Communist Party at 16.2 percent, followed by the Christian Democrats at 8.7 percent.

¹²² Associated Press, “Republic May Secede: In Lithuania, Victors Eye Independence,” *Telegram & Gazette*, February 26, 1990, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/268364771?accountid=7014>; Office of the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, “Supreme Council (Reconstituent Seimas) 1990-1992,” Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, accessed January 5, 2014, http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=281&p_d=3248&p_k=2. Sajūdis won 96 seats in February, then a run-off election was held in March to decide 45 races with no clear winner.

incorporated the Catholic Church into its political agenda. The LCC responded by openly supporting Sajūdis in a variety of ways, and the Lithuanian people responded favorably to the Sajūdis-LCC relationship by electing Sajūdis candidates to the Seimas.

In addition to the quantifiable benefit of winning elections, Sajūdis also benefited from having the LCC as an ally in the moral revolution that Sajūdis hoped to bring about in Lithuanian society. Gorbachev himself acknowledged that Soviet society was characterized by immorality, licentiousness, corruption, and alcoholism. In *Perestroika*, Gorbachev lamented, “decay began in public morals; the great feeling of solidarity with each other . . . was weakening; alcoholism, drug addiction and crime were growing; and the penetration of the stereotypes of mass culture alien to us, which bred vulgarity and low tastes and brought about ideological barrenness increased.”¹²³ The LiSSR was no exception to Gorbachev’s observations about the USSR. One writer lamented in *Respublika*, “generosity, compassion, love . . . are mere abstractions to many people. Most people are under the absolute rule of material interests, and they are convinced that happiness is the collection of beautiful things rather than good deeds.”¹²⁴ Sajūdis had a holistic vision for society’s reform that was not limited to its system of governance. In order to change the very fabric of society, Sajūdis “campaigns openly for the spiritual revival of the people and for a better and more honest way of life,” and to that end it was “responsible for introducing the policy of public moral integrity, which suggested that the political culture should be based on Christian principles.”¹²⁵ The LCC shared Sajūdis concerns about the moral fabric of Society. Cardinal Sladkevičius explained, “people’s consciences were damaged when they had to say

¹²³ Mikhail Gorbachev, *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), 22.

¹²⁴ Dalia Jazukevičiūtė, “Jėzus Kristus – žmonijos idealas [Jesus Christ – the ideal of humanity],” *Respublika*, July 19, 1990.

¹²⁵ Furmanavičius, “Sajudis’s Peaceful Revolution, Part I.”

something different from what they were thinking, and to do something different from what they said; when they had to ridicule something which was and is sacred to their parents and also to themselves.”¹²⁶ Father Svarinskas, a former prisoner of conscience, said in a homily that the only possible way to seek true freedom was “by fostering decency and by overcoming alcoholism, immorality and drug addiction.”¹²⁷ In an interview with *Respublika*, Father Sudentas asserted, “an example of a priest would do the country good, and it would uplift the nation.”¹²⁸ Since the LCC agreed with Sajūdis’ diagnosis of society’s ills, Sajūdis gained a powerful ally in its effort to reform not only the government of Lithuania, but the very soul of the people.

Sajūdis’ concern about morality was closely connected with a more broad concern about preserving Lithuanian culture. Vytautas Landsbergis recalls, “Lithuanian culture suffered much. Great parts of their former culture were forbidden, denied, put out from the teaching, or of common use. So it was a complicated time with great losses in culture.”¹²⁹ Not only did Sajūdis want to revitalize Lithuanian national culture after decades of russification and sovietization, but Sajūdis was also troubled by the potential for anomie to increase after independence introduced more western influences to Lithuania. Sajūdis recognized the potential for the LCC, as a long-time preserver of Lithuanian national identity, to act as a bulwark against western cultural influences. Arvydas Juozaitis, a philosopher and Sajūdis member, feared “the wall will come

¹²⁶ Sladkevičius, “Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius’ Remarks.” He is referring to the obligation to demean religious beliefs and promote atheism.

¹²⁷ [Sigitas Tamkevičius?], “We Thank Him for His Service,” in *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania No. 79*, September 8, 1988, trans Vita Matusaitis and Rev. Casimir Pugevičius (Brooklyn: Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, 1989), accessed May 31, 2013, <http://www.lkbkronika.lt/en/images/chr/chronicle79.pdf>.

¹²⁸ Brigita Balikienė and Sigitas Sudentas, “Pakalbėkim, kunige, apie gyvenimą [Dear priest, let us talk about life],” *Respublika*, December 23, 1990.

¹²⁹ Vytautas Landsbergis, “Vytautas Landsbergis: The Struggle to Preserve Lithuania’s Culture,” The Freedom Collection, George W. Bush Institute, accessed January 26, 2014, http://www.freedomcollection.org/interviews/vytautas_landsbergis/?vidid=974.

down, and Western mass culture will come pouring in and flood us,” therefore “the Roman Catholic Church will be Lithuania’s fortress against the Western invasion, as it has been against the Eastern . . . We will all melt away without Christianity.”¹³⁰ Sigitas Geda echoed that concern in a speech at the 9 July 1988 rally: “We, among many other central and eastern European countries, are facing the threat – the grotesque conglomerate, shaped and formed from the waste of socialism and capitalism.”¹³¹ According to Anatol Lieven, “Landsbergis seems to believe that it is only the Church, and Catholic belief, morality and ritual, which can give Lithuanian culture the sort of iron frame it needs to prevent it dissolving into the modern international cultural sea (or, as many Lithuanians see it, an anti-cultural materialist swamp).”¹³² The LCC enthusiastically promoted its role as a preserver of national identity, as demonstrated by Cardinal Sladkevičius’ remarks at a priests’ symposium in 1988 in which he expressed gratitude “to all proponents of our national culture who, prompted by feelings of justice and love of country, raise their voices ever higher on behalf of Christian values, against their devaluation, and in opposition to discrimination against the faithful.”¹³³ By building a relationship with the LCC, Sajūdis gained an ally in the fight to restore and retain Lithuania’s unique cultural identity in the face of competing cultural influences from both East and West.

Benefits to the Church

Although many Catholic clergymen were in favor of Lithuanian independence and understood the Catholic faith as a central component of Lithuanian national identity, the LCC

¹³⁰ Algis Valiunas, “Homage to Lithuania,” *American Spectator* 23, no. 7 (July 1990): 20, accessed November 2, 2013, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

¹³¹ Geda, “Sigito Gedos.”

¹³² Lieven, 31.

¹³³ Sladkevičius, “Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius’ Remarks.”

would not have supported Sajūdis if it had not stood to gain materially, politically, or socially from the relationship. The LCC gained materially when its property was returned and when religious freedom was restored in the Lithuanian constitution. The LCC also gained a prominent role in society through education and charity work, and its close association with independence and nationalism contributed to a surge in church attendance.

One of the most tangible ways the LCC benefitted from its relationship with Sajūdis was the return of Church property. The LCC had been fighting for the return of its property for decades, primarily through petition drives, but Sajūdis' entrance to the political arena led to rapid progress toward returning church buildings. In July 1988 a group of Catholics published an open letter to Sajūdis explaining that the Church would be sure of its place in perestroika "if the highest church of Lithuania – the Vilnius Cathedral – is returned to the religious movement, and if the construction of new churches is allowed in places where they are most needed; if the Atheistic Museum is taken out of [St. Casimir's] church and this desecration is stopped."¹³⁴ The LiSSR government returned the Vilnius Cathedral in 1989, as described above, and St. Casimir's Church was not reconsecrated until March 1991, at which occasion "the holy water was dripping like tears of repentance after such a long time of disregard and disdain."¹³⁵ When the LiCP decided to return the Vilnius Cathedral to the LCC, along with other highly contested properties such as Mary Queen of Peace in Klaipėda, Lithuanians credited Sajūdis' influence, and popular support for Sajūdis increased. By 1990 churches across the country were being restored or rebuilt, such as the Katinėnai parish church where the young priest enthusiastically reported that the whole community was involved in contributing money and labor to rebuild the church and

¹³⁴ *Sajūdžio žinios*, "Laisvės nėra be sąžinės liasvės [There is no freedom without freedom of conscience]," July 27, 1988.

¹³⁵ Lina Bandzaitė, "Sugrįžimas [The return]," *Respublika*, March 5, 1991.

“work on the restoration of spirituality.”¹³⁶ After Sajūdis gained the majority in the Lithuanian Seimas in February 1990, the government continued to return church building, and also provided public assistance for the buildings’ rehabilitation.

The restoration of religious rights in the Lithuanian constitution was one of the most basic and significant things the LCC stood to gain from a Sajūdis-led government. It is difficult to measure the importance of believers’ constitutional rights, and the promise that these rights would be restored was surely *sine qua non* for the LCC’s support of Sajūdis. In July 1988, when the Sajūdis Initiative Group had yet to state its position on religious rights, and before Sajūdis had begun to initiate a relationship with the Church, a group of Catholic lay people wrote an open letter to Sajūdis. The letter began, “We, the Catholics, concerned about the reorganization, would like to direct the attention of Sajūdis to the fact that the democratization of society is impossible without the equalization of the believer’s rights with the rights of the rest of the people and without doing everything necessary to ensure this equality and the overall freedom of conscience.”¹³⁷ The letter went on to make specific policy suggestions including the guarantee of equal rights, that the state not interfere with clergy appointments, and an end to the obligation to fight against religion. As Sajūdis’ influence in society grew rapidly, it was clear to the LCC that the best way to have its basic needs met would be to buttress Sajūdis’ success. As Sajūdis grew increasingly attentive to the LCC’s needs, the LCC was confident that a Sajūdis government would restore the constitutional rights of Catholic believers so that they would “be certain that their second-class citizenship status is completely annulled.”¹³⁸ The single benefit

¹³⁶ Algirdas Vaseris, “Atverkim vilties erdvę [Let us open up the space in which hope lies],” *Respublika*, January 10, 1990.

¹³⁷ *Sajūdžio žinios*, “Laisvės nėra.” “Reorganization” refers to perestroika or restructuring.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

the LCC coveted most was equal rights, and by supporting Sajūdis' agenda and its candidates to the Seimas, the LCC secured its constitutional status.

Working with Sajūdis gave the LCC an opportunity to reclaim its social role as the national church of the Lithuanian people. Glasnost had opened the door to public expression of religious belief, and the Sajūdis Founding Congress "registered yet another phenomenon—the church and believers themselves [were] returning to the republic's public life."¹³⁹ Although the LCC was slowly beginning to assert its public and social role, it stood to gain official recognition, promotion, and protection of its social importance if Sajūdis won the majority in the Lithuanian Seimas. By aiding Sajūdis with winning elections, the LCC secured for itself a government that would allow and even encourage the historic bonds between the LCC and the Lithuanian State. Cardinal Sladkevičius asserted his socio-political authority when, days before the Lithuanian Seimas declared independence, he told the Italian newspaper *L'Avvenire*, 'The Future', that Pope John Paul II ought to be the first foreign head of state to visit independent Lithuania, and that he should visit Lithuania directly from Poland instead of travelling through Moscow.¹⁴⁰ As restrictions eased up and Sajūdis' influence grew, so did the LCC's access to the public. Cardinal Sladkevičius urged priests to not wait for legal changes, but rather to "be prepared to make use of all possible pastoral resources, individually or collectively exercising their apostolate in the care of the elderly, the invalid, the orphan and the sick."¹⁴¹ After 1989, the LCC's social presence increased dramatically as "newly-acquired freedom was translated into a

¹³⁹ Joint Committee on Slavic Studies, ed., "After Its Congress," *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press* XL, no. 43 (1988): 7.

¹⁴⁰ Keston Institute, "Pope Should Visit Lithuania, Says Cardinal," *Keston News Service* 347 (5 April 1990): 5, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX. John Paul II visited Lithuania in 1993, and it was the first former Soviet country he visited.

¹⁴¹ Sladkevičius, "Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius' Remarks."

desire to reestablish the societal role of the churches: proper religious education, theological training, primary and secondary schooling, social activities and charity, access to the media, involvement in political life and the appropriate financial support and infrastructures.”¹⁴² The LCC reintroduced charitable activities, primarily in through *Caritas*, a Catholic women’s charitable organization that held its first official Lithuanian congress in April 1989. At the Caritas congress, Father Robertas Grigas called for restoration of the legal right to religious education, the lack of which had contributed to loss of morality characterized by “blood, dirt, and chaos.”¹⁴³ The LCC’s volunteers served “released criminals, lonely old age pensioners or disabled invalids in need of assistance,” and thanks to glasnost the press widely publicized their service.¹⁴⁴ One of the most simple means by which the LCC reentered public life was through television: a new program called “Glory to Christ” began airing Mass and other religious programs followed.¹⁴⁵ Education was also a vital part of the Church’s social role, and Sajūdis met the Catholic expectation that “the ban on teaching children and youth about faith [should be] lifted.”¹⁴⁶ The LCC availed itself of every means to re-enter the public sphere and take its place as an open and active social institution that pervaded Lithuanian culture.

¹⁴² Hoppenbrouwers, “Romancing Freedom,” 166.

¹⁴³ Robertas Grigas, “Katalikiško moterų sambūrio steigiamasis suvažiavimas [The founding assembly of the catholic women’s gathering],” *Sajūdžio žinios* 82, April 20, 1989.

¹⁴⁴ Sapiets, “Baltic Churches,” 166.

¹⁴⁵ Remnick, “Lithuania.” Not all Lithuanians appreciated the Church’s approach to media. One citizen explained his concern in an editorial, saying “in my opinion, the church, as a place of worship and prayer, a temple, should fill the role of a spiritual shepherd, and should not become a television studio. . . The most important [problem] is that the common nouns ‘church,’ ‘religion,’ ‘believers,’ and ‘priests’ are used somewhat incorrectly in the press, on the radio and television: the discussion is essentially about the Catholic Church, its priests, the propaganda of Catholicism, Catholics, etc.” see: Anzelmas Katkus, “Respublika ir Bažnyčia [The republic and the church],” *Respublika*, September 12, 1990.

¹⁴⁶ *Sajūdžio žinios*, “Laisvės nėra.”

In the years immediately following the independence movement, Lithuanian religious participation increased significantly, and the LCC's engagement with the popular independence movement seems to have had some influence on the surge in religiosity. Religious affiliation increased from 71 percent in 1970 to 87 percent in 1995.¹⁴⁷ In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the LCC experienced increasing participation in its services, which may be in part because "the role of the Catholic Church in opposing the Communist state, and the Western orientation and organizational link of Roman Catholicism, meant that the Church maintained or even strengthened its role after independence."¹⁴⁸ Easing restrictions on the Church and on religious participation was partly responsible for fueling a renewed interest in religion generally and the nation's Catholic heritage specifically. The restrictions that were already easing before independence were in part because "Sajūdis . . . forced the government to . . . permit a virtual renaissance of the Catholic Church in the republic."¹⁴⁹ Johnston explains that "dormant seeds of religious tradition were often only as far away as their parents and grandparents," therefore in the 1980s when "mundane life was a source of dissonance whereby the officially prescribed norms of behavior seemed less and less relevant . . . the childhood recollections of religion, however vague and distant, could germinate to provide an alternative grounding."¹⁵⁰ Since "the church was the only organized alternative to the communist world view," Lithuanians who were disillusioned by communism attended church as a means of asserting their discontent with the

¹⁴⁷ Paul Froese, "After Atheism: An Analysis of Religious Monopolies in the Post-Communist World," *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 1 (2004): 59.

¹⁴⁸ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, "A Religious Revival in Post-Communist Europe?," in *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 118.

¹⁴⁹ Remnick, "Lithuania."

¹⁵⁰ Hank Johnston, "Religio-Nationalist Subcultures under the Communists: Comparisons from the Baltics, Transcaucasia and Ukraine," *Sociology of Religion* 54, no. 3, *International Studies in the Sociology of Religion* (Autumn, 1993): 239.

status quo.¹⁵¹ The LCC highlighted its role as an alternative to the Soviet worldview “by arguing that Catholicism is the traditional faith of Lithuanians and that by becoming or remaining Catholics they distance themselves from the party and its internationalist aims.”¹⁵² Just as attending religious services had been a sign of dissent during the Soviet period, religious observance became a way to identify with the independence movement.

Catholicism came into vogue among intellectuals, which also contributed to increased participation in LCC services and rituals was. One priest noted, “nowadays, I see a lot of intelligentsia types coming into church. They do not quite know what they are really searching for. The job of the priests is to show Christ to them, to help them find him.”¹⁵³ The Church of St. John inside Vilnius University was one focal point of the renewed interest in religion among the intelligentsia. The Soviet government had converted the small chapel into a Museum of Sciences, and as late as 1990 St. John’s remained a museum. University students advocated for St. John’s to be returned to the LCC, as *Respublika* reported, “the youth want to be spiritually reborn, and this church is needed for the students of the university, just like the youth are needed in the church,” and “society has committed a crime against the clergy both from a moral and a material stance,” and “the students have the full right to request this Catholic institution, necessary for the university, so they can use it . . . The church was taken away from the believers. It is a holy place, and the Museum of Sciences was established there so that it would demean the faith.”¹⁵⁴ Intellectual interest in Catholicism ran parallel to intellectual commitment

¹⁵¹ Johnston, “Religio-Nationalist Subcultures,” 238.

¹⁵² Kestutis K. Girnius, “Nationalism and the Catholic Church in Lithuania,” in *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (Durham: Duke University Press, 1984), 97-98.

¹⁵³ Balikienė and Sudentas, “Pakalbėkim.”

¹⁵⁴ Gintaras Mikšiūnas, “Muziejus ar bažnyčia [Museum or church],” *Respublika*, January 24, 1990.

to national identity and independence. Thus, by aligning itself with Sajūdis, which was led by intellectuals and supported by the populace, the LCC benefited from increased attendance that was a part of Lithuanian's political and intellectual expression. The LCC reaped many benefits from its relationship with Sajūdis, but during the struggle for independence after independence was achieved.

Conclusion

Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church intentionally built a relationship that benefited both. Sajūdis had to build the relationship deliberately because the LCC and the political movement were not inevitable allies. Because of competition for the LCC's support, "the Lithuanian Catholic Church's involvement with Sajūdis [was] less close than might have been expected."¹⁵⁵ Sajūdis and the LCC had to intentionally work toward cooperation for several reasons: Sajūdis was not a religiously dogmatic movement, the LCC was invested in religious dissent and was cautious about political entanglements, and the Lithuanian Freedom League and the Lithuanian Communist Party were well-positioned to ingratiate themselves to the LCC before Sajūdis formed. Sajūdis recognized the necessity of LCC support, and the LCC recognized Sajūdis' potential to radically alter Lithuanian politics; therefore, Sajūdis and the LCC pursued a cooperative relationship.

Sajūdis cultivated both its direct relationship with the Church and its Catholic image. In order to build its active relationship with the LCC, Sajūdis recruited priests to participate in Sajūdis meetings and speak at rallies and events. Sajūdis also carefully shaped its public image by participating in LCC services or events and by including Catholic rhetoric in Sajūdis rallies

¹⁵⁵ Sapiets, "Baltic Churches," 161.

and publications. The direct relationship helped Sajūdis gain the LCC's support; Sajūdis' Catholic image increased the movement's popular appeal.

The LCC responded to Sajūdis' efforts to work together toward independence, and also took its own initiative to build a relationship with the political movement. Priests joined with Sajūdis by attending rallies and events, and some assumed leadership roles within the movement. The LCC also aligned itself with Sajūdis by advocating for independence and nationalist ideals from the pulpit and in statements to the government and world leaders. By taking the initiative to expand its political engagement beyond strictly religious concerns, the LCC established a relationship with Sajūdis that would benefit the LCC.

Sajūdis and the LCC would not have developed a relationship unless each stood to benefit from the other's support. Sajūdis benefited from the LCC's high level of public trust, which led to electoral victories. The close association between Sajūdis and the LCC led Lithuanians to extend their approval of the Church to Sajūdis, which motivated them to vote for Sajūdis candidates in the 1990 Seimas elections. The LCC benefited when its legal and social status improved. The state returned church property and allowed priests to resume their roles in society through teaching and charity work. The new Lithuanian constitution of 1990 included equal rights for believers and returned the LCC to its pre-Soviet status. The LCC witnessed an increasing interest in the Catholic faith among average citizens and intellectuals alike, and the LCC also reclaimed its social role, especially in print and broadcast media. The LCC and Sajūdis also shared an interest in protecting the distinctiveness of Lithuania's cultural heritage from westernization, the success of which is impossible to quantify. Both Sajūdis and the Church benefitted from their cooperative work toward Lithuania's independence.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

This dissertation has demonstrated that the Lithuanian Movement for Perestroika, which came to be called Sajūdis, worked closely with the Lithuanian Catholic Church in order to follow an incremental, legal path to restoration of Lithuania's independence and separation from the Soviet Union. Moreover, the relationship that Sajūdis and the LCC formed can be most accurately characterized as essential, intentional, and mutually beneficial. The Sajūdis-LCC relationship was consistent with the history of Catholicism and nationalism in Lithuania, and the close bond between the LCC and the nation reached its apex during the 1980s independence movement. The Church was an essential part of the independence movement because no other aspect of Lithuanian national identity had the broad public appeal or motivational power equal to that of the Lithuanian Catholic Church. Sajūdis and the LCC each intentionally developed a relationship with the other, and both Sajūdis and the LCC benefitted from their relationship.

Lithuania's Religious Nationalism

Sajūdis inherited its religio-nationalist context from centuries of Lithuanian history. Johnston argues, "the strongest indications of [a religio-nationalist] subculture come from Lithuania" where "the linkage of church, nation and opposition is well established."¹ One cannot understand Sajūdis' nationalism or appeals to Catholic identity without first examining the Lithuanian people's history of religion and nationalism. Catholicism was a factor in every major

¹ Hank Johnston, "Religio-Nationalist Subcultures under the Communists: Comparisons from the Baltics, Transcaucasia and Ukraine," *Sociology of Religion* 54, no. 3, International Studies in the Sociology of Religion (Autumn, 1993): 240.

turning point in Lithuanian history, and it directly influenced the development of Lithuanian national identity.

When the Teutonic Knights brought Catholicism to Lithuania in the early-thirteenth century, Catholicism was as a foreign entity against which Lithuanians could differentiate themselves. Upon encountering the foreign faith and its militant missionaries, loosely affiliated tribal groups began to recognize their compatriotism in opposition to Catholics from western Europe. Under the leadership of King Mindaugas, the Lithuanian people united as a Grand Duchy and grew in political stability and military strength. Mindaugas accepted baptism for diplomatic reasons in 1236 but soon rejected Catholicism in favor of his indigenous religious practice, as attested by the Polish *Chronicle of Halicz-Volhynia*. Mindaugas' successor, Gediminas, suggested to Pope Benedict XII that the knights' brutality was to blame for the failure of Catholicism in the region. Eric Christiansen adds that the well-established indigenous religion also prevented the Catholic crusaders from winning many converts. Elements of Catholicism that did enter into Lithuanian religious identity became fused with existing indigenous beliefs in such a way that Catholicism was indistinguishable from folk religion, and even baptized Lithuanians continued to differentiate their religious practice from their Polish Catholic neighbors.

Reaction against Catholicism continued to shape Lithuanians' self-understanding during the Polish-Lithuanian union. 'Catholic' was synonymous with 'Polish', and Lithuanians differentiated themselves from the foreign religion of their Polish allies. When King Jogaila converted to Catholicism as part of his marriage and political union with Poland in 1387, Catholicism became more prominent in Lithuania, primarily in the capital city Vilnius. Jogaila and his successors attempted to expunge Lithuania of its indigenous religion by destroying

sacred sites and imposing Catholic baptism. Despite Jogaila's efforts, Catholicism retained its foreignness, which was exacerbated by the fact that most priests and the nobility in Lithuania were Polish, which reinforced the popular perception that Catholicism was a foreign and even oppressive religion. Thus Catholicism was present in Lithuanian territory for two centuries before it started to become culturally embedded during the reign of Casimir, who came to power in 1440. Casimir, responding to western cultural influences, instituted educational and cultural reforms that made the Lithuanian people more amenable to the Catholic faith. But even as Lithuanian society became more infused with Catholic elements, folk religion persisted and Catholicism did not dominate the religious landscape. The longstanding animosity between the united Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Grand Duchy of Moscow also encouraged Catholicism, because it was a means of differentiating the Poland-Lithuania from Moscow and its Russian Orthodox religion. Despite the growing influence of Catholicism, however, indigenous beliefs persisted with Catholic elements syncretized into the existing belief system. The Lithuanian people did not become more open to Catholic beliefs and practices until the early seventeenth century when Jesuit missionaries learned to preach in Lithuanian and established primary schools and universities where Lithuanians learned Catholic doctrine. As a result of the Jesuit influence, Catholicism became more culturally embedded, and Lithuanians began to see Catholicism as part of their Lithuanian identity. During the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Catholicism slowly transitioned from a foreign religion, to an element of culture that comingled with indigenous religion, to an increasingly important aspect Lithuanian identity.

In the late-eighteenth century, the Russian Empire introduced another foreign faith, Russian Orthodoxy, which caused Lithuanians to identify more strongly with Catholicism as a means of retaining cultural distinctiveness in the face of aggressive russification. Russia

annexed the Lithuanian territory in 1772, and Catherine the Great expelled the Polish gentry and clergy in order to limit the Polish political and military influence. The expulsion of the Polish clergy had the ironic effect of reinforcing Catholicism as the Lithuanian faith because only Lithuanian priests remained in the region. Once the majority of priests were Lithuanian, not Polish, the people began to associate Catholicism more with their own cultural identity. The annexation of Lithuania by Russia also strengthened religious and national identity by providing an 'other' from whom Lithuanians could differentiate themselves. The most significant points of differentiation were language and religion. In the second part of the nineteenth century, Lithuanians resisted Alexander II and his successors' aggressive russification policies that imposed the Russian language in education, and also strengthened their identification with Catholicism as an act of dissent against the Russian Orthodox Church. As Hroch explains, Catholicism united the Lithuanian opposition during over a century of Russian oppression, and thereby strengthened national consciousness. After nationalist ideology made its way from Western Europe to Lithuania in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, revolts broke out in the 1890s and 1905. Catholicism played a role in those revolts, which demonstrates the extent to which Catholicism had become inextricable from nationalism. While being subjugated under the Russian Empire, elements of the Lithuanian culture and identity became increasingly important as means of differentiating Lithuania from Russia, which led Catholicism to become deeply ingrained in Lithuanian culture and identity such that to be Lithuanian was to be Catholic.

The two decades of inter-war independence from 1918 to 1939 brought the Church and the State into close cooperation and further solidified Catholicism as a fundamental aspect of Lithuanian national identity. During the inter-war independence period, the LCC agreed that it had the right and even the necessity to participate in the political process because state policies

directly affected the LCC, and therefore it was appropriate for priests to serve in public office or campaign for candidates. Clergy were involved in the political process through holding political office, supporting the Christian Democrat Party, and taking a very active role in society through education and charity work. Latourette notes, “in the brief period of independence Roman Catholics were prominent in the government and the Roman Catholic Church made significant progress in seizing the opportunity brought by the new order.”² After Antanas Smetona seized power in 1926, he limited the LCC’s role because he feared the Christian Democrat Party was a threat to his authority. Smetona’s opposition to the LCC softened as World War II loomed, recognizing that the LCC was an important source of political and moral support as Lithuania braced itself for war. The LCC was active in politics and played a significant role in society through education, the media, and religious rites that integrated Catholicism with daily life. Thus, by the time Lithuania’s independence ended in 1939, the LCC was firmly established as the religion of the Lithuanian people, and the LCC’s bond with nationalism was undisputed.

When the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact ended Lithuania’s independence in 1939, Josef Stalin’s government severely curtailed the LCC’s role in politics and society. Because of its long-established ties to national identity, Catholicism became a source a national dissent and a bulwark against russification during the Soviet era. The Soviet constitution placed strict limits on religious activity, allowing clergy to conduct religious services within the church building, and eliminating any additional religious services or education. Despite Soviet restrictions and efforts to force priests to submit to the Soviet state, the majority of Catholic priests refused to collaborate with the government. The Soviet government punished priests and Catholic believers for their dissident activity by deporting them to Siberia or Central Asian republics, or

² Kenneth Scott Latourette, *The 20th Century in Europe: The Roman Catholic, Protestant and Eastern Churches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), 207.

by murdering them. Deportations and murder weakened the LCC numerically, but strengthened it in spirit. According to Ramet, “repression and constriction of religion tended to politicize religion, deepening the linkage between religion and nationalism and encouraging churches to become involved in forms of dissent.”³ Clergy came to be seen as conduits of Lithuanian national identity, and as such the people held them in high esteem and placed a great deal more trust in the LCC than in any other institution.

In addition to the LCC, the Forest Brotherhood was a patriotic nationalist patriot movement that posed a challenge to Stalin’s government. Within weeks of Lithuania being annexed to the Soviet Union, hundreds of men and women fled to the Lithuanian forests to avoid conscription to the Soviet Army. From 1939 to 1953, tens of thousands Lithuanian men and women formed militant detachments and refused to cede Lithuania’s independence to the USSR. The Forest Brotherhood demonstrated the strength of the Lithuanian nationalist spirit, and some clergy risked their lives to aid the patriots by providing food, weapons, and shelter. The Partisan War, as the fourteen years of skirmishes between the Soviet Army and the Forest Brotherhood came to be called, contributed to Lithuanian nationalist sentiment, and also reinforced the perception that the LCC stood with the Lithuanian people in opposition to the Soviet regime.

In response to the continuing influence and popularity of the LCC, Nikita Khrushchev increased religious repression after he came to power in 1953. Khrushchev imposed harsh religious restrictions, confiscated church properties, and promoted secular alternatives to religious rites. Khrushchev also recognized the LCC as one potential source of nationalist dissent in Lithuania, and the question of how to manage the multi-national Soviet State plagued the central government of the USSR. In an effort to create a supra-national state, “the Soviet

³ Sabrina Petra Ramet, “Religious Policy in the Era of Gorbachev,” in *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 49.

political system sought to eliminate traditional national values in the conscience of people, suppressing those values in a brutal manner by the great-power Russian chauvinism.”⁴

Khrushchev’s campaign to promote pan-Soviet patriotism largely fell on deaf ears in Lithuania, and in the 1950s several small nationalist demonstrations confirmed that Lithuanian national identity remained strong despite repression.

During Leonid Brezhnev’s tenure as General Secretary of the Communist Party from 1964 until 1982, the Council on Religious Affairs paid special attention to the LCC because of its nationalist ties. The state attempted to limit the LCC’s activities and to gain priests’ complicity, but those efforts bore little fruit. Priests continued to serve their parishes and very few were coopted by the regime, despite being closely monitored and controlled, as Bishop Stankevičius attested. In the 1970s, the LCC further elevated its religio-nationalist status by challenging the government through *samizdat* publications, most notably the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* and *Aušra*. The LCC also dissented by petitioning the government when its constitutional rights were being violated. Two important events that had an impact on the LCC and nationalism during the Brezhnev years were the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta on 14 May 1972, and the election of Pope John Paul II in 1978. Both of these events brought nationalist and religious concerns to the fore, and instigated more wide-spread and organized dissent against the Soviet government. Despite the government’s efforts to separate the LCC from Lithuanian nationalism, the LCC continued to serve as a locus of dissent and source of national identity.

⁴ Liliana Astra, “Changes of Identity: Differences Between Generations,” in *Changes of Identity in Modern Lithuania*, ed. Meilute Taljunaite (Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1996), 217.

When Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary in 1985, his perestroika reforms created a situation in which political grievances and national frustrations could be aired publicly. Until the late 1980s, the only wide-spread, organized dissent movement was that of the LCC. Other dissent groups, such as environmentalists and the Writers' Union were more localized and appealed to niche interest groups. As Lithuanians became more confident expressing their nationalist ideals, a broad range of interest groups formed, some of which focused on implementing perestroika reforms. Gorbachev also eased restrictions on the LCC, which he hoped would "partly [depoliticize] religion, slackening the bonds with nationalism, partly for tautological reasons and partly for natural, substantive reasons, drawing the churches away from illegal forms of activity and into legal forms of protest and social criticism."⁵ Whatever Gorbachev's intentions were, in reality, perestroika created a situation in which the LCC and nationalists could communicate openly and reinforce one another's activism. Thanks to perestroika, when Sajūdis formed in 1988, it rapidly grew to be the largest and most powerful national front.

The history of Catholicism and nationalism in Lithuania demonstrates that the Catholic Church, despite its late arrival and slow integration among the Lithuanian people, was a key player in each epoch of Lithuanian history and directly contributed to the development of Lithuanian national identity. Because of the long history of religious nationalism and church-state cooperation, it came as no surprise that Sajūdis and the LCC worked together toward independence, however their close relationship bears further scrutiny.

⁵ S. Ramet, "Religious Policy," 49.

The Essential Relationship

Sajūdis could not have succeeded in leading Lithuania to independence without taking advantage of the LCC's deep roots in Lithuanian national identity. The LCC was essential to Sajūdis because no other aspect of Lithuanian national identity had sufficiently broad appeal to motivate politically disengaged Lithuanian citizens to participate in the independence movement. Moreover, as explained in Chapter Three, sociologists recognize that religious belief has a unique ability to motivate human behavior, and Catholicism, as the majority faith in Lithuania, had the potential to compel people to support the political movement with which the LCC aligned itself.

The socio-cultural sources of Lithuanian national identity that were possible rallying points for the popular independence movement included ethnicity, folk religion, mythology, music, and language. Sajūdis utilized each of these in its policy agenda or rhetoric as it tried to garner a broad base of national support, however, each of these elements of national identity was insufficient to motivate the level of political involvement necessary for Sajūdis' ultimate success. Ethnicity is a natural point of origin for nationalism, since the very concept of the nation presupposes a shared identity that is tied to bloodlines and territory. Lithuanians had a strong sense of ethnic affiliation with their Baltic ancestors, and centuries of incursion and oppression by different ethnic groups including Germans, Poles, and Russians, gave the Lithuanian people a clear idea of the 'otherness' of non-Lithuanians. In addition, the Lithuanian SSR retained a high level of mono-ethnicity throughout the Soviet period, which contributed to the perception that non-Lithuanians in the region were outsiders and even objects of suspicion. Despite the power of ethnic identity to unite people, an emphasis on ethnic homogeneity was not effective for building the Lithuanian nationalist movement for several reasons. Lithuanians shared a

collective shame over their complicity and participation in decimating Vilnius' Jewish population during the 1941 to 1943 Nazi occupation. In addition, the LiSSR was home to Russians and Poles who saw Lithuania as their home and were willing to support the independence movement. Sajūdis had no desire to stir up inter-ethnic prejudice or violence, and it also coveted the support of ethnic minorities, therefore ethnicity was not a central point of its political platform. Although ethnicity was by no means absent from political and nationalistic conversations and legislative agendas, it was not a significant part of Sajūdis' efforts to rally mass support.

Folk religion was an ironic source of Lithuanian identity, considering the high percentage of Lithuanians who identified as Catholic and the cultural significance of Catholicism. Nevertheless, folk religion was a point of pride for Lithuanians, since the late date of Lithuania's conversion to Christianity signified Lithuania's uniqueness among the European nations. Folk religion was a part of Sajūdis' work to elevate national culture and highlight cultural elements that differentiated Lithuania from its neighbors. Sajūdis members sometimes alluded to folk religion in their rhetoric, but this component of Lithuanian cultural identity lacked mass appeal, primarily because the majority of Lithuanians either personally identified as Catholic and recognized the association between Lithuania and the Catholic Church even if they did not identify as Catholic themselves. Moreover, folk religion had more appeal within the academic community than outside it.

Mythology is closely related to folk religion, and made its way into the independence movement primarily through allusions in Sajūdis' rhetoric and through naming public spaces in honor of legendary Lithuanian heroes. Legends such as the founding of Vilnius and heroes like Gediminas and Mindaugas were valuable as a way to subtly remind the Lithuanian people that

they were the descendants of valorous knights and that their capital city had a proud history. Such reminders of distinctly Lithuanian history and culture subverted Soviet efforts to create a supra-national Soviet identity. Lithuanian folk stories managed to survive centuries of “wars, oppression, and enslavement” only to “come back to the surface like a fresh and clean spring, breaking the hard concrete pavement imposed upon them.”⁶ Myths and legends appealed to academics and stirred the imaginations of average Lithuanians, but the stories were not so fundamental to Lithuanian identity that people were going to change their political behavior or incite revolution in order to protect the right to teach Lithuanian myths to their children or name public spaces after the heroes of the Grand Duchy. Myths and legends reinforced Lithuanian national identity, but were not a foundation for the national independence movement.

The role of music in Lithuanian national identity and in the independence movement differed from folk religion and mythology because it had both academic and mass appeal. For the intelligentsia, folk music was a trove of anthropological and cultural information about the Lithuanian people of the distant and recent past. For the Lithuanian people as a whole, folk music was a consistent presence in daily life that transcended political regimes. Folk music often made its way into Sąjūdis demonstrations as groups of people took up the common cultural activity of singing the national hymn or songs about the nation’s tragic past. Music was an effective means by which the people retained and strengthened their unique cultural identity, but it was not a rallying point for the independence movement because singing did not require political independence in order to continue serving as a national pastime. Although it was restricted in different ways over the course of the Soviet period, under Gorbachev there was little to no risk associated with musical displays of national pride, such as the annual Baltic song

⁶ Jonas Balys, “Explanatory Notes,” in *Lithuanian Folk Tales*, ed. Stepas Sobarskas (New York: Gerald J. Rickard), 231.

festivals. Folk music would remain part of Lithuanian national identity whether Lithuania was a Soviet republic or an independent state, and therefore music was not a motivating force behind popular nationalism.

Geo-political history was also a potential source of support for the national independence movement. The collective memory of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the two-decade inter-war independence period fueled pride in Lithuania's past, while the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, and the atrocities suffered under Stalin ignited resentment toward the Soviet Union. Each epoch in Lithuania's history contributed to the development of national identity and religio-nationalist sentiment in different ways, but no single time period was sufficient on its own to fuel the level of mass movement necessary for Lithuania to achieve independence.

The twelfth- to fourteenth-century era of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was a source of pride for the Lithuanian people. The names Mindaugas and Gediminas recalled a time when Lithuania was a world power that had successfully resisted military incursion from the Teutonic Knights of Germany and the Grand Duchy of Moscow. Sajūdis members alluded to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries as they encouraged Lithuanians to remember their noble roots. But however readily available the heroic imagery was, Lithuanians did not have an unrealistic ambition to become a world power once again, thus the power of the Grand Duchy as source of political motivation was inherently limited. Moreover, knowledge of the Grand Duchy that went deeper than a few legendary names and stories was largely confined to the intelligentsia. The Grand Duchy period was far removed from contemporary Lithuanian reality both chronologically and politically, and therefore it was not a history that compelled Lithuanians to engage in potentially risky political activities.

The period of inter-war independence from 1918 to 1939 was the political and historical foundation for Lithuania's claim to the right to be independent. Because the Republic of Lithuania had been a stable, democratic, independent nation-state for twenty years, Lithuanians had evidence in their own history that independence was feasible. Sajūdis built on the collective memory of independence by commemorating the 16 February anniversary of independence from the Russian Empire, and Sajūdis rallies held on 16 February were replete with displays of national pride and rhetoric that motivated the people to take pride in their past and replicate independence in the future. Among Lithuanians, there were people still living who recalled the era of inter-war independence, and their experiences contributed to the collective memory of independence period. However, almost five decades of subjugation to the Soviet Union and its education system had seriously damaged the level of awareness of Lithuania's history among younger people. For elder Lithuanians who remembered the inter-war independence, it was a golden age of prosperity; Lithuanians who had been educated in the Soviet Union were taught that the independence period was a time of bourgeois dominance and that Lithuanians had voluntarily given up independence to join the Soviet superpower. Although the inter-war independence period was very effective as a means of reconstructing independence as realistic goal, Sajūdis did not dwell on the specifics of the independence period, especially details of Antanas Smetona's autocratic regime. The weakness of the inter-war independence era was a lack of shared memory among generations of Lithuanians, and the inability to highlight the politics of the independence period as an ideal toward which to strive.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which was signed on 23 August 1939, was the single most powerful historical and political foundation for the Sajūdis independence movement, and it became a rallying point for the Lithuanian people after Sajūdis revealed the truth about the pact's

content at a rally on 23 August 1988. When Lithuanians learned definitively that their once independent country had not joined the Soviet Union willingly in 1939, but rather had been handed over by a secret clause in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the people's resentment toward the Soviet Union grew and participation in Sajūdis grew with it. But no matter how compelling the case was for Lithuanian independence, the truth about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact still lacked broad motivational power to compel the majority of Lithuanians to risk their safety and livelihood by joining the independence movement. Even if they supported the idea of independence in abstract, the reality of political, economic, and military risk was sufficient to deter average workers from engagement with the movement.

The Soviet period was another geo-political source of national identity, and Stalin's deportations and the Forest Brotherhood were especially poignant points of contact between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian people. The mass deportations that Stalin orchestrated against the Lithuanian people were so far-reaching that no town or village was left untouched, therefore the collective memory of the deportations reached beyond the cities and universities in a way that more academic aspects of Lithuanian history could not. Lithuanians kept the memory of deportation alive through new songs and monuments, and residual anger over Stalin's atrocities that had simmered for decades reappeared publicly during the drive toward independence. The Forest Brotherhood also persisted in the Lithuanian imagination as a beacon of patriotism and national pride that could reinforce Lithuania's self-image as fighters of oppression. Sajūdis did not neglect the unifying power of the deportations or the Forest Brotherhood in its rhetoric, but historians were the people most interested in the Stalin years. Among Sajūdis members, the academic historians took great interest in recovering a more accurate account of Lithuanian history, and the deportations and the Forest Brotherhood were of special interest for this project

because Soviet textbooks had dramatically distorted or underplayed them. Although the majority of Lithuanians could find some personal connection to the deportations or the Forest Brotherhood, those aspects of Lithuanian identity were largely confined to academics and therefore Sajūdis may have lost an opportunity to rally greater support by drawing a more direct connection in people's minds between the 1980s independence movement and the 1940s struggles.

Where socio-cultural and geo-political sources of Lithuanian national identity lacked the power to motivate the masses, Catholicism had the ability to apply supernatural pressure that activated the Lithuanian people's support for independence. In order to become a movement of the Lithuanian people, and not only a small group of intelligentsia with idealistic political aspirations, Sajūdis needed to build up the population's sense of national identity to such a degree that Lithuanians would be willing to change their behavior and even risk their safety to support the nationalist independence cause. There were many sources of national identity that appealed to different niche interest groups or that stirred larger segments of the population to anger or resentment, but broadly shared sentiment does not necessarily translate to attendance at rallies or participation in elections. The Lithuanian Catholic Church had broad public support and trust, and moreover it carried the authority of the sacred, which provided a sense of order and meaningfulness amid a Soviet society characterized by disorder and futility. The LCC's reputation as a steadfast supporter of human rights and priests' widely-known defiance against the Soviet regime added to its esteem in Lithuanians' eyes, regardless of their individual religious beliefs. Moreover, the "religious dissent in Lithuania [had] acquired mass character and [had] transcended the 'dissent' framework and evolved into an opposition movement."⁷ The

⁷ Alexander R. Alexiev, *Dissent and Nationalism in the Soviet Baltic* (Santa Monica: Rand, 1983), v-vi.

Lithuanian people recognized that “the Lithuanian opposition in the Catholic Church nurtured the active opposition of the Sajūdis movement, although Sajūdis was largely a movement of the laity.”⁸ Because it “retained great influence during the communist period,” the LCC was “an integral part of the Sajūdis movement.”⁹ Because Lithuanians trusted the LCC more than any other institution, when the LCC demonstrated its support for Sajūdis and its candidates the people expanded their trust in the LCC to include Sajūdis. Lithuanians clearly demonstrated that trust at the polls by electing Sajūdis candidates by wide margins in the majority of districts. As a sacred institution, the Church had a motivational power that all other institutions or aspects of identity lacked: it had the weight of divine authority behind it. The spiritual authority of the LCC motivated people to engage with Sajūdis’ fight for independence, since the public recognized that the LCC supported Sajūdis’ goals. Where people might not be willing to take great personal risk in the pursuit of using their mother tongue in school, protecting cultural heritage, or correcting the historical record, they are more willing to take risks for the sake of religious freedom because they believe that religious freedom has eternal consequences.

Many forces contributing to Lithuanian national identity were available to Sajūdis in its efforts to raise national consciousness and rally the Lithuanian people to the prospect of independence. The Lithuanian people needed to unite around a common cause, independence, but the disparate interests in folk culture or history were not sufficient on their own to motivate the majority of Lithuanians to invest their time and votes in the independence movement. What did have the power to unite the majority was the LCC, which was more trusted and more strongly identified with Lithuanian cultural identity than any other institution. Thus, Sajūdis

⁸ Robert F. Goeckel, “The Baltic Churches and the Democratization Process,” in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 207.

⁹ Goeckel, “Baltic Churches,” 213.

could not have garnered the necessary mass support if it had not built a relationship with the LCC. The LCC's active engagement with the independence movement and its specific endorsement of Sajūdis candidates and ideals were essential for Sajūdis' success.

The Intentional Relationship

The relationship between Sajūdis and the Lithuanian Catholic Church did not develop organically through a natural merger of shared interests; on the contrary, both sides took intentional steps to build their relationships. Sajūdis was not the only political group that pursued the LCC's support: the Lithuanian Freedom League and the progressive wing of the Lithuanian Communist Party both ingratiated themselves to the LCC. For its part, the LCC was hesitant to entangle itself with politics at all, and had already been engaged in its own religious and human rights activism since at least the early 1970s. But Sajūdis recognized that the LCC's support was essential, and the LCC recognized that a Sajūdis-led government was the best way to ensure the restoration of religious freedom and the return of Catholic property, thus each pursued a relationship with the other.

Sajūdis built its relationship with the LCC by recruiting clergy and incorporating Catholic interests into its political platform, and also cultivated its public image as an organization with close ties to the LCC. Sajūdis' recruitment efforts focused on convincing Catholic hierarchs, most notably Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, to lead the LCC toward greater involvement in the independence movement. Sajūdis leaders gave priests prominent roles in rallies, such as leading prayers or giving speeches, and also recruited priests to become members of Sajūdis. Clerics were amenable to Sajūdis' overtures in part because Sajūdis incorporated pro-LCC policies into its political agenda. Although religious issues were not included in Sajūdis' initial list of policy focus areas in June 1988, Sajūdis recognized the importance of LCC support and so

added religious liberty and return of LCC property to its political agenda. Sajūdis' focus on LCC property prompted the LiCP to return Vilnius Cathedral and a few other buildings in hopes of winning the Church's and the people's support, but credit for the LiCP's action went to Sajūdis. Once Sajūdis held the majority in the Seimas after February 1990, it immediately passed legislation that restored religious liberty.

Sajūdis also managed its public image so that the Lithuanian people would readily recognize Sajūdis' relationship with the LCC, because if the people had not been aware of Sajūdis-LCC relationship, then Sajūdis would not have benefitted from the LCC's social capital. In order to build a strong popular perception that Sajūdis was closely tied to the LCC, Sajūdis held events in locations that were significant to the LCC, such as Gediminas Square in the shadow of Vilnius Cathedral. Moreover, some events included a Mass or prayers and hymns. Sajūdis further strengthened its Catholic image through rhetoric infused with religious language and biblical imagery. Sigitas Geda's speeches and writing were especially noteworthy for their Catholic overtones. Sajūdis members also attended LCC events, such as the reconsecration of Vilnius Cathedral and Saint Casimir's Church, and identified themselves by wearing black Sajūdis armbands, thereby reinforcing the public perception that Sajūdis and the LCC were allies. Sajūdis' Catholic image was important because the movement's success depended upon the majority of the Lithuanian people electing Sajūdis candidates, and Lithuanians were more likely to elect candidates who were supported by the LCC.

The LCC responded to Sajūdis positively, and further developed a relationship with Sajūdis on its own initiative. The LCC had long advocated for religious freedom and human rights, but its political involvement had been limited to issues that had a direct impact on the LCC. The LCC's limited political involvement broadened as popular nationalist movements

formed in the late 1980s. Michael Bourdeaux, who closely monitored and wrote about the situation of the LCC in Lithuania, said “in Lithuania [the] cry for religious liberty became a national watchword. It coalesced with the eventual demands of Sajūdis for political freedom.”¹⁰ Although the LCC was cautious about direct involvement with Sajūdis or any other political group, the LiCP’s renewed campaign of atheistic propaganda in 1988 may have encouraged LCC leaders to reconsider the status of the LCC in Lithuania and take a more active role in influencing policy. The LCC’s involvement included clerical participation in Sajūdis by individual priests and vocal endorsement of Sajūdis’ agenda by priests and the LCC hierarchy.

Both individual priests and Catholic hierarchs were involved in Sajūdis in different ways. Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius asserted in 1988 that close cooperation between Sajūdis and the Church was a possibility.¹¹ While the Cardinal himself did not find it appropriate to be more directly involved in Sajūdis’ political proceedings, other priests did take their support for Sajūdis further by formally joining the movement. Most notably, Father Vaclovas Aliulis was elected as a delegate to the council of the Sajūdis Founding Congress, and was later elected to the Lithuanian Seimas. Priests were also active participants in local Sajūdis groups across Lithuania. By participating in Sajūdis’ leadership, priests ensured that the best interests of the LCC were being represented and kept religious rights and property at the forefront of Sajūdis’ political agenda.

In addition to direct engagement with Sajūdis, the LCC also advocated for Lithuania’s independence and promoted national identity, which demonstrated the LCC’s cooperation with Sajūdis. The clergy voiced support for independence both from their pulpits and in publications.

¹⁰ Michael Bourdeaux, “The Price of Freedom: The Church,” *Lituanus* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2008), accessed February 6, 2014, http://www.lituanus.org/2008/08_1_01-c%20Bourdeaux.htm

¹¹ Philip Taubman, “In Lithuania Too, Nationalism Surges,” *New York Times*, July 23, 1988, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

From Cardinal Sladkevičius down to parish priests, the LCC leadership's remarks placed it in line with the popular independence movement. At times the priests' comments directly referenced Sajūdis, while at times the comments expressed more broad and generic support for the preservation of Lithuanian national identity, such as celebrating Mass in commemoration of Lithuania's lost independence. Moreover, clerics sometimes had the opportunity to give speeches at Sajūdis events, and on such occasions the speakers openly supported Sajūdis and portrayed the LCC as its steadfast ally. Clerics also asserted their support for independence through international relations, and used their international contacts to urge greater involvement in Lithuania's plight from countries beyond the communist world. Finally, the election of Pope John Paul II had encouraged Lithuanian Catholics greatly, and his thinly veiled support for Lithuania's independence emboldened LCC leaders in their political engagement. As for its publications, LCC leaders submitted articles to *Sajūdžio žinios* requesting support for Catholic causes, and also published an open letter to Sajūdis in *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania* that highlighted the importance of freedom of conscience in a democratic society. Lithuanian citizens who heard or read the LCC's political statements came away with the clear impression that the LCC supported Sajūdis in its movement toward Lithuanian independence.

The intentionality behind the relationship between Sajūdis and the LCC was subtle and largely behind the scenes, which gave the impression that the cooperation between the two organizations was either inevitable or organic. The Lithuanian people and international reporters did not realize that the relationship had been intentionally built. After all, Sajūdis and LCC leaders both advocated for independence, both were present at major religious and political events, and they were the two most important political and cultural actors between 1988 and 1991. However, the relationship between the LCC and Sajūdis was not so simple, and "President

Landsbergis stresses that in contrast to Poland, the Lithuanian reform movement did not develop around the Church; instead, he argues, the Church came to the movement.”¹² It is important to understand the intentionality behind the Sajūdis-LCC relationship in order to have an accurate history of the Lithuanian independence movement and the role of the LCC in Lithuanian nationalism.

The Mutually-Beneficial Relationship

Sajūdis and the LCC both reaped benefits from their relationship. Sajūdis benefited from the LCC’s support by gaining public trust, and won elections in part because priests directly supported independence and Sajūdis candidates. Sajūdis also gained an ally in its efforts to improve Lithuania’s crisis of morality and to preserve its national culture. The LCC was the most trusted and respected institution in Lithuania, and the LCC’s close association with national identity added to its status as a protector of Lithuanian culture. By building a relationship with the LCC, Sajūdis gained a share in the public’s broad support for the LCC. The Lithuanian people were skeptical about the potential for any political group to bring about real change in the Soviet system, and were also rightly concerned about the potential for a political movement to ultimately turn to self-seeking autocracy, as the country had experienced under Antanas Smetona in the 1920s and 1930s. Therefore, it was important for Sajūdis to gain the people’s trust, and its best hope of doing so was by aligning itself with the nation’s most trusted institution. Through careful management of its public image and the active involvement of clerics, Sajūdis associated itself so closely with the LCC that the voting public extended its positive perception of the LCC to include a positive perception of Sajūdis. The association was strong enough that a vote for a Sajūdis candidate was a vote in line with the LCC’s position. At the same time, a vote for a non-

¹² V. Stanley Vardys, “Lithuanian National Politics,” *Problems of Communism* (July/August 1989): 60.

Sajūdis candidate could be equated with a vote against the LCC, and therefore also a vote against the Lithuanian nation of which the LCC was an integral part.

Broad public trust and positive perception contributed directly to Sajūdis candidates winning the majority in the 1989 election to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies, and then winning a sweeping majority of seats in the Lithuanian SSR Seimas in 1990, which gave the Seimas the necessary majority for declaring a restoration of the independent Republic of Lithuania in March 1990. If Sajūdis had not gained the LCC's support and had not made its relationship with the LCC readily visible through events and rhetoric, it is highly unlikely that Sajūdis candidates could have won the necessary support to gain a majority in the Seimas.

Sajūdis recognized the LCC as an ally in its hopes for the revitalization of morality and protection of Lithuanian culture. Sajūdis, which one writer defined as “a concentrate of moral, spiritual and intellectual powers within the Republic,” forged an alliance with the LCC in part because Sajūdis hoped for a moral and spiritual renewal among the Lithuanian people.¹³ Sajūdis and the LCC shared concerns about alcoholism, corruption, and moral degradation that had become pervasive during the Soviet period. Sajūdis and the LCC both supported broad cultural and governmental changes that were conducive to an overall improvement in quality of life and development of civil society.

Protection and promotion of Lithuanian culture is another area where Sajūdis benefitted from its relationship with the LCC. Sajūdis members were distressed by the russification that occurred under the Soviets and troubled by the potential influence of western European culture, which they perceived as hedonistic and secularist. Sajūdis hoped the LCC would act as a bulwark against both eastern and western cultural incursion, and the LCC openly supported the

¹³ P. Vaitiskūnes, “Respublika, LPS suvažiavimą sutinkant [The republic, in preparation for the Sajūdis gathering],” *Sajūdžio žinios* 47, October 20, 1988.

role of Catholicism in protecting distinctively Lithuanian cultural identity. The primary means of promoting Lithuanian culture were through changing language trends, such as de-russifying the Lithuanian language and no longer using Russian in conversation or education, by restoring Lithuanian history and literature to curriculum, and continuing to promote cultural festivals such as folk music festivals or the annual Sea Festival in Klaipėda. Through the efforts and ideals of Sajūdis and the LCC, Lithuania strengthened its unique cultural identity.

When the constitution of the Republic of Lithuania replaced the LiSSR constitution in March 1990, the LCC benefitted immediately. Clergy were allowed to fulfill their spiritual duties without fear of retribution from the state. Although Gorbachev was already easing some restriction on religious activity early in his term of office, he did not make changes to Soviet laws on religion until 1991, by which time Lithuania was negotiating the details of its independence. One of the first actions the Lithuanian Seimas undertook was putting into effect the constitution of Lithuania that was in force during the period of inter-war independence, which included religious liberty and the freedom for religious organizations to proselytize and conduct all other activities commensurate with their religious obligations such as educating youth or performing marriage ceremonies. The LCC benefitted materially from its relationship with Sajūdis: it regained rights under the Lithuanian constitution, the state returned LCC properties, and the LCC gained more access to the public through education, charity work, and the media.

The LCC also benefitted materially from its relationship with Sajūdis when the state began to return property to LCC ownership and control. Returning property began while Sajūdis was still a new movement that was rapidly gaining influence. In an effort to ingratiate itself to the LCC and curtail the LCC's support for Sajūdis, the Lithuanian Communist Party promised to

return the Vilnius Cathedral and Mary Queen of Peace Church to the LCC. While this move was met with jubilation, it did not have the effect the government had hoped for and the people credited Sajūdis with forcing the government's hand to return the properties to the LCC. Once Sajūdis gained control of the Seimas, the Seimas passed legislation that returned religious buildings to their rightful owners and provided financial assistance for repairs and reconstruction of those properties. The return of LCC buildings not only allowed religious communities to have control over their places of worship, but also restored significant financial assets to the LCC, and also removed the threat of the state arbitrarily closing or confiscating buildings for secular use.

Finally, the LCC benefitted from its relationship with Sajūdis because the LCC's role in society was restored. The LCC retook its long-established place in religious education in schools, charitable work among the poor and incarcerated, and medical ministries through hospitals and addiction recovery programs. The LCC understood such activities as part of its spiritual obligation to the world, and in many cases priests had attempted to continue carrying out social ministries during the Soviet period, and met severe punishment when the state or its informants discovered their activities. With the freedom to engage in ministries beyond the church walls, the LCC regained its opportunity to play a vital role in society.

Epilogue

The success of the Sajūdis independence movement was not inevitable. Sajūdis could easily have fallen apart before it gained momentum if the disparate interest groups under its umbrella had not shared the ultimate goal of reestablishing an independent Lithuanian republic. With membership ranging from the Writer's Union to radical environmentalists, from a "Hyde Park-like speaker's association" to "parties that go so far as to endorse a shift to democratic capitalism," the movement was just as likely to implode as it was to alter the course of

Lithuanian history.¹⁴ Sajūdis' membership included "musicologists, poets, chemists and college professors as its commanders in chief," which is not, at first glance, a selection of people poised for political success.¹⁵ The passion of the leaders combined with their lack of political experience could have caused Sajūdis to isolate itself an ideological echo chamber, but the movement did not disintegrate. Sajūdis' leadership shared the goal of advancing freedom, as Vytautas Landsbergis recalled, "we want greater reforms than Gorbachev himself and we want unlimited reforms until the full freedom of choice is implemented."¹⁶ The shared ultimate goal of a free Lithuania united the wide-ranging interest groups under a common cause, because independence would benefit all of Sajūdis' constituencies. One of the keys to Sajūdis' success was patience: Landsbergis stressed that Sajūdis did not "seek to seize power, but rather to exert influence over those in power and thereby have a say in the running of the country's affairs."¹⁷ Sajūdis started by demanding "genuine free elections, competitive elections," and once elections were held "the next achievement was democracy," which was the "way to independence."¹⁸ By following a legal path toward independence, Sajūdis was instrumental in Lithuania's nonviolent transition from a Soviet Socialist Republic to an independent state.

From June 1988, when Sajūdis formed, to March 1990, when the newly-elected Sajūdis-majority in the Seimas declared independence from the Soviet Union, Lithuania moved toward

¹⁴ David Remnick, "Lithuania: The Little Independence Movement That Could," *Washington Post*, August 6, 1989, accessed December 4, 2010, LexisNexis.

¹⁵ Remnick, "Lithuania."

¹⁶ Vytautas Landsbergis, "Vytautas Landsbergis: The Goals of Sajūdis," The Freedom Collection, George W. Bush Institute, accessed January 27, 2014, http://www.freedomcollection.org/interviews/vytautas_landsbergis/?vidid=979

¹⁷ Michael Bourdeaux, *The Gospel's Triumph Over Communism* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1991), 139.

¹⁸ Landsbergis, "Goals of Sajūdis."

independence with almost dizzying celerity. The Sajūdis Initiative Group first met on 6 June 1988, and established itself as an umbrella organization for a range of social and political interest groups. Sajūdis hosted a mass rally in the Cathedral Square, also known as Gediminas Square, on 24 June 1988 to introduce the Lithuanian delegates to the Nineteenth Congress of People's Deputies, then another rally on 9 July to hear the delegation's report. The next rally, held in Vingis Park on 23 August 1988, revealed and denounced the content of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. Sajūdis held its Founding Congress on 22 to 23 October 1988. At the Founding Congress, Sajūdis formalized its organizational structure and elected a Sajūdis Seimas to act as the governing body of the movement. Local Sajūdis support groups formed in towns across Lithuania, and by the end of 1988 Landsbergis estimates Sajūdis membership was around 200,000 men and women.

On 16 February 1989, the Sajūdis Seimas declared that the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was invalid and that Lithuania was an independent state with its pre-Soviet constitution still in force. Although the Sajūdis Seimas' resolution did not have the force of law, the declaration made clear Sajūdis' intention to lead Lithuania to independence. The reconsecration of Vilnius Cathedral also took place in February 1989, and that event reiterated Sajūdis' ability to influence the decisions of the LiCP, which had decided to return the cathedral in response to demands at the Sajūdis Founding Congress. In March 1989, candidates endorsed by Sajūdis won thirty-six of the forty-two seats allotted to the LiSSR in the Congress of People's Deputies, and these delegates represented Sajūdis' interests in Moscow. The following month, on 2 April 1989, Vincentas Sladkevičius was installed as the first Lithuanian Cardinal in over 700 years, which was a cause for celebration among Lithuanian Catholics and a source of pride for all Lithuanians. On 23 August 1989, Sajūdis coordinated the Baltic Way demonstration with Estonia's

Rahvarinne and Latvia's *Tautas Fronte*, and the powerful image of the Baltic people joining hands from Vilnius to Tallinn gained international attention for the Baltic independence movements.

The February 1990 elections were Sajūdis' most important electoral triumph, as Sajūdis candidates won 135 of the 141 seats in the LiSSR Seimas, and within a month the Seimas declared Lithuania an independent state and changed its name to the Republic of Lithuania. But independence would not be achieved by declaration alone; Sajūdis encountered serious resistance from Moscow. In January 1990, Gorbachev met with members of the LiCP, which had become divided over the independence question, and warned them, "the problem of secession comprises deep economic, social, political-legal, defense-strategic and international-geopolitical aspects. It is impossible to ignore the interests of the union, in which the interests of all republics are interrelated and do not exist in isolation."¹⁹ Gorbachev urged Lithuanians to go slowly, to compromise by stopping short of full independence, and to "think a thousand times before setting sail without a compass, without maps, fuel and without a crew."²⁰ Following Lithuania's declaration of independence, Moscow instituted an economic blockade in an attempt to force Lithuania to remain within the Soviet Union to protect its economic security. Lithuania's ability to exist as an independent economy had been a major source of concern throughout the independence movement, because Lithuanians were aware of their material dependence upon the resources of other Soviet republics. Lithuania spent 1990 in a holding pattern of negotiations with Moscow over the economic blockade and the terms of independence.

¹⁹ *New York Times*. "Excerpts From a Speech by Gorbachev Before the Lithuanian Communists," January 15, 1990, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

²⁰ Peter Gumbel, "Baltic Juggernaut: A Defiant Lithuania Leads Soviet States in Drive to Break Free," *Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 1990, Eastern Edition, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/398136316?accountid=7014>.

As President Landsbergis negotiated with Moscow over the economic blockade and other details of independence, Sajūdis began to decline in influence and internal organization. The economic blockade contributed to Sajūdis' declining popularity, and one journalist wondered what would become of Sajūdis as the country moved closer to genuine representative democracy instead of governing coalitions controlled by Party or Sajūdis interests.²¹ The movement was politically divided over issues like citizenship requirements and the economy, and was unsure what Sajūdis' role might be in Lithuanian politics once independence was fully realized. Some observers of Lithuanian politics suggested it was "as if [Sajūdis] had already served its purpose in galvanizing the nation," and had no further role to play in Lithuania's political development.²² In an interview with *Respublika* in January 1990, one Sajūdis member expressed frustration that "Sajūdis is full of shallow, banal, and pompous talk nowadays. So Lithuania is not the only one that actually needs a Sajūdis gathering, but Sajūdis itself needs one – to thoroughly re-evaluate its own activity."²³ By early 1990, the fissures that would ultimately divide Sajūdis were revealing themselves: one wing was strongly anti-Communist, the center was comfortable with Party members who had abandoned Marxist-Leninism, and the other extreme was Party members.²⁴ There was also division between those who were "inclined to foot-dragging" versus those "built for speed," which is to say prudence and legality versus radical and rapid regime change. The latter faction was led by Kazimieras Motieka, a lawyer and member of the USSR Supreme Soviet who showed "in his face and carriage and rapid eloquence a relish for the vivid

²¹ Antanas Kalanta, "Kryžkelėje [At the crossroad]," *Respublika*, January 6, 1990.

²² Rupert Cornwell, "Out of the USSR: A Christmas of Many Miracles for Lithuania," *The Independent*, December 22, 1989, Foreign News, accessed October 1, 2013, LexisNexis.

²³ *Respublika*, "Ketvirtį amžiaus link Sajūdžio [A quarter century towards Sajūdis]," January 6, 1990.

²⁴ John Rettie, "Lithuanian Voters Look to Priests," *The Guardian*, February 23, 1990, accessed December 4, 2010, LexisNexis.

glamour of politics at its most thrilling upper reaches: moral seriousness without compromise [combined] in him with obvious pleasure at doing work that [was] the focus of his countrymen's passion."²⁵ International perception of Sajūdis changed as well. In the foreign press, Sajūdis was either a "reactionary, conservative, and clerical movement which impeded Mikhail Gorbachev's politics of reform," or a "progressive and nationalist-revolutionary movement which was impeding the policies of the president of the United States."²⁶ Moreover, Sajūdis came under fire as "accusations began to fly that the newly-installed government was collecting files for the express purpose of discrediting leaders not associated with the Sajūdis party," and others "accused the movement of not only attempting to discredit the left, but of covering their own tracks by removing files incriminating its party members."²⁷ By the end of 1990, Sajūdis was internally divided and had lost public support. Some individual politicians retained the support of their constituencies, and Vytautas Landsbergis was a popular president, but Sajūdis as a populist movement with mass appeal practically ceased to exist.

As of January 1991, Lithuania's relationship with the Soviet Union was tenuous. Despite the economic blockade and a strong Soviet army presence in Lithuania, Moscow had not threatened to use force to prevent Lithuania from leaving the Soviet Union. But in January 1991, the character of the Lithuania-Soviet relationship changed dramatically. On 8 January, a large protest against the Soviet military draft started outside the Lithuanian parliament building, and the protest quickly grew to include demands for Lithuania's independence. The first several

²⁵ Algis Valiunas, "Homage to Lithuania," *American Spectator* 23, no. 7 (July 1990): 20, accessed November 2, 2013, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost.

²⁶ Adam Michnik, "Nationalism," *Social Research* 58, no. 4 (Winter 1991): 758, accessed June 6, 2013, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1297202105?accountid=7014>.

²⁷ Tomas Skucas, "Lithuania: A Problem of Disclosure," in *Dismantling Tyranny: Transitioning Beyond Totalitarian Regimes*, ed. Ilan Berman and J. Michael Waller (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 417-418.

days of the demonstrations were peaceful, “despite the presence of five trucks full of Interior Ministry ‘black beret’ forces near the demonstration . . . and sightings of Soviet Army armored personnel carriers around the city during the day.”²⁸ President Landsbergis predicted that the Soviet Army might use force against the demonstrators, and asked the Vatican to intervene.²⁹ Landsbergis was right: violence was on the horizon. The Lithuanian government learned that the KGB militia was planning to occupy the television tower in Vilnius, so the government called on Lithuanians to unite as a human barricade to protect the tower.³⁰ On Sunday, 13 January “a column of Soviet Army tanks, plowing through a street crowd of civilians and a cordon of parked cars, seized the television broadcast center of Lithuania in the early morning darkness . . . in a fusillade of cannon and gunfire. At least 11 civilians were killed and 100 or more were wounded.”³¹ The Lithuanian National Salvation Committee, a newly created branch of the LiCP that was loyal to Moscow and dedicated to the purpose of retaking power from the Sajūdis-majority Lithuanian government, carried out the attack. As the tanks rolled, a sound truck blared, “‘The Lithuanian National Salvation Committee announces that all power in the republic has fallen into the hands of our committee!’”³² The days following the attack brought some confusion about who was responsible for giving the commands. The Director of the Ministry of National Defense in the Lithuanian seimas said, “all that is happening in Lithuania is a military

²⁸ Craig R. Whitney, “Protests in Lithuania Continue, Turning Peaceful,” *New York Times*, January 10, 1991, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

²⁹ Katholische Presseagentur Österreich, “Litauens Präsident Bittet Regierungen und Vatikan um Hilfe [Lithuanian president asks governments and Vatican for help],” Kathpress, January 10, 1991, SU/Li 9/Vatican, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

³⁰ Skucas, “Lithuania,” 416.

³¹ Bill Keller, “Soviet Tanks Roll in Lithuania; 11 Dead: Broadcasting Center Seized,” *New York Times*, January 13, 1991, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

³² Keller, “Soviet Tanks Roll.”

putsch, which is not being controlled by the centre. However, the centre and M. Gorbachev are responsible for all of it.”³³ Meanwhile, *Respublika* wrongly reported “the Neo-Bolsheviks . . . are taking over vital objects and are extinguishing the opposition,” but Canadian radio announced that Gorbachev “has ordered the military to come back to the military base.”³⁴ Although there had been a military presence throughout the demonstrations, the use of blunt force at the cost of civilian lives came as a great shock to the Lithuanian people and the world.

Bloody Sunday, as 13 January 1991 came to be called, brought attention from the international community and from church leaders. In a 1997 interview, Condoleezza Rice explained, “President Bush issued very strong statements about what the Soviets were doing in the Baltics, calling it one day a ‘provocation’, what they had done in the Baltics, which in diplomatic speak is pretty strong language.”³⁵ London’s *Financial Times* published an editorial that posited how relations with the Soviet Union might proceed in light of the 13 January events:

If the west were to decide that the military murders in Vilnius this weekend were a deliberate act of presidential authority, and if this is a harbinger of more to come, then the western states must open an examination of phased withdrawal of its aid to the Soviet Union. It must re-examine its posture on arms-control agreements and on further arms cuts. It must reassure at least those central European countries, which are building democratic structures from the collapse of Soviet and domestic communist tutelage that it now regards them as inviolable . . . But the terrible choice will be inescapable if the sky continues to darken. As it becomes clear that reaction has gripped the structures of Soviet power, so we cannot continue collaboration with it.³⁶

³³ Linas Medelis, “Deputatai ramus [Deputies are calm],” *Respublika*, January 14, 1991. The article includes Medelis’ minute-by-minute account of the attack from inside the parliament building where the People’s Deputies were barricaded.

³⁴ *Respublika*, “Kruvinasis sekmadienis [Bloody Sunday],” January 14, 1991.

³⁵ Condoleezza Rice, Interview by The National Security Archive, December 17, 1997, accessed January 26, 2014, <http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/interviews/episode-24/rice1.html>.

³⁶ *Financial Times*, “Consequences of Vilnius,” January 14, 1991, quoted in Darius Furmanavičius, “The Price of Freedom: January 13, 1991 in Lithuania,” *Lituanus* 54, no. 1 (Spring 2008), accessed February 20, 2013, http://www.lituanus.org/2008/08_1_01-a%20Furmanavicius.htm#foots.

Father Werenfried van Straaten, head of the international church organization Aid to the Church in Need, wrote to Cardinal Sladkevičius, “in the name of all the millions of fathers from fourteen countries who are in association with our organization . . . we promise to do everything we can to call all Christendom to pray for you and support you.”³⁷ The World Council of Churches sent a message to Gorbachev expressing “profound disquiet [about] the measures taken by [his] government” and protesting “the deployment of troops and military action in Lithuania.”³⁸ The day after the massacre, Cardinal Sladkevičius and the conference of bishops wrote a letter to Landsbergis in which he affirmed the LCC’s support for the Lithuanian Seimas and reiterated the LCC’s “unbroken solidarity” with the Lithuanian people.³⁹

During his negotiations with Lithuania, Gorbachev had insisted that a popular referendum was necessary for Lithuania to secede from the Soviet Union and that the Seimas could not make a unilateral decision to declare independence. Although the Seimas disagreed about the necessity of a referendum, it was confident that the Lithuanian people would take their support for independence to the polls, especially in the wake of Bloody Sunday. So, on 9 February 1991, “Lithuanian voters turned a republic-wide plebiscite into a festival of defiance of the Kremlin” with the result that “91 percent of those taking part had voted in favor of Lithuania’s becoming an independent, democratic republic.”⁴⁰ Even the referendum did not finalize Lithuania’s independence, however.

³⁷ Keston College, press release, “Father Werenfried Calls for Prayer and Support for Lithuania,” January 13, 1991, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

³⁸ Ecumenical Press Service, “Ecutex: Ecumenical Texts on Lithuania,” EPS 91.01.52, January 31, 1991, Keston Archive, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

³⁹ Katholische Presseagentur Österreich, “Litauen: Bischöfe Solidarisch mit Parlament [Lithuania: Bishops in solidarity with parliament],” *Kathpress* 009, (January 14, 1991): 7.

⁴⁰ Francis X. Clines, “Lithuania Votes Overwhelmingly for Independence from Moscow,” *New York Times*, February 10, 1991, ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times (1851-2009).

Lithuania needed international support, especially diplomatic recognition, to cement its status as an independent state and provide protection from the potential of further violence from the Soviet Union. The Vatican was an important source of international support, although it was also navigating precarious relations with the Soviet Union. In June 1991, Pope John Paul II spent five days travelling across Poland. He stopped in Lomza, a town on the Lithuanian border, so close that people across the border were able to catch a glimpse of him. A small group of Lithuanians was allowed to enter Poland for an audience with the Pope, including Vice President Česlovas Stankevičius and former Prime Minister Kasimiera Prunskiene. The Holy Father said, “‘Lithuania, I hear your voice, the voice of a nation living on a Baltic seaside,’ . . . ‘Here, where I am so close, I am answering this voice. Your Pope is with you.’” Those present “reacted enthusiastically, as if the Pope was endorsing their country’s national aspirations though he never quite said so.”⁴¹ Earlier in his trip, the pope had met with a delegation of Lithuanian officials including the Vice President, Deputy Prime Minister Zigmas Vaisvila and Minister of Culture Darius Knolys. This papal audience reinforced the Vatican’s support for Lithuania, despite the fact that the Vatican had not yet granted diplomatic recognition. Deputy Prime Minister Vaisvila explained, “‘We understand that too quick recognition of Lithuania and its new government can cause too big a reaction from Moscow,’ . . . ‘We understand that we need a lot of time.’”⁴² Thus the Sajūdis-led government, and its successors, would continue the careful dance with the Catholic Church, cooperating when possible, occasionally at odds, working in parallel toward the goal of a free, independent Lithuania characterized by spiritual renewal and political revolution.

⁴¹ Stephen Engelberg, “Pope Subtly Offers Moral Support for Lithuanians’ Independence,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1991, accessed November 30, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/06/06/world/pope-subtly-offers-moral-support-for-lithuanians-independence.html>.

⁴² Engelberg, “Pope Subtly Offers.”

The Lithuanian Seimas especially coveted support from the United States, in part because of its global political influence, and in part because there were more Lithuanians living in the United States than in any other country outside Lithuania. Throughout 1990, the Lithuanian-American community was frustrated in its efforts to lobby the United States congress for support, and sardonically concluded that, “President Bush and his foreign policy advisers . . . have convinced themselves that Gorbachev really wants precisely what we want, and the best thing we can do is to stay out of his way while he does everybody a favor.”⁴³ In August 1991, President Landsbergis published an editorial in the *Washington Post* urging the United States to grant Lithuania diplomatic recognition:

The people of Lithuania are grateful to America for its political support during the most difficult times, and perhaps they also owe a debt of gratitude for any secret support. But now they await the most important act of American support and political protection, which would open the way for Lithuania’s entrance into international organization and its participation in programs for central European development and assistance. And I know that up to a million Americans of Lithuanian descent who helped to establish and defend the strongest country in the world now await its word. Why has it not yet been uttered? We need full recognition now.⁴⁴

The United States did not officially recognize Lithuania’s independence until 2 September 1991, and opened diplomatic relations with Lithuania on 6 September 1991, after the attempted August coup catalyzed the dissolution of the Soviet Union.⁴⁵

Throughout 1990 and 1991, the Soviet Union was embroiled in conflict about the changing structure of the USSR. As republic after republic demanded sovereignty, “Gorbachev

⁴³ Valiunas, “Homage to Lithuania.”

⁴⁴ Vytautas Landsbergis, “It’s Time to Recognize Lithuania,” *Washington Post*, reprinted in *Edmonton Journal*, August 27, 1991, accessed January 27, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/251798578?accountid=7104>.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State, “A Guide to the United States’ History of Recognition, Diplomatic, and Consular Relations, by Country, since 1776: Lithuania,” U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, accessed January 8, 2014, <http://history.state.gov/countries/lithuania>.

wanted to impose a union that was a federation,” while Boris Yeltsin “argued for a confederation—even though he avoided the term—based on the sovereignty of the republics, and a center that was of course retained but deprived of any means for interfering in relations between the republics,” and the Baltic states continued to demand “pure and simple separation.”⁴⁶ In August 1991, a failed coup against Gorbachev and his union treaty severely damaged Gorbachev’s legitimacy and further destabilized the USSR. The attempted coup, “prompted those who had already abandoned the USSR to consolidate their independence,” and in Lithuania “the banning of the Communist party indicated the desire for the prompt elimination of all agencies that allowed the Soviet government to interfere in the life of the independent republics.”⁴⁷ By the end of 1991, Lithuania was independent and the Soviet Union had dissolved.

Even as Sajūdis’ goal of independence was realized, the movement deteriorated. After a brief burst of support for Landsbergis after the August 1991 coup, Sajūdis basically fell off the political map when Algirdas Brazauskas won the presidency in June 1992.⁴⁸ As myriad political parties sprang up, Sajūdis would remain politically active, though in a depleted capacity, only until November 1992, when “Lithuania’s former Communists surged ahead in the first round of elections for a new parliament.”⁴⁹ The Sajūdis Coalition won only 17 percent of seats, the

⁴⁶ Hélène Carrère d’Encausse, *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of the Nations*, trans. Franklin Philip (New York: BasicBooks, 1993), 241.

⁴⁷ d’Encausse, 247.

⁴⁸ V. Gaidys, “Political, Party Preferences and Political Identities in Lithuania,” in *Changes of Identity in Modern Lithuania*, ed. Meilute Taljunaite (Vilnius: Lithuanian Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, 1996), 78.

⁴⁹ Celestine Bohlen, “A New Democracy Votes Communist,” *New York Times*, November 4, 1992, accessed November 30, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/11/04/world/a-new-democracy-votes-communist.html>. President Landsbergis called the results “an expression of people’s dissatisfaction about the economic situation and everyday hardships.” He also “blamed Moscow for encouraging the anti-Sajūdis vote by slowing down critical supplies of gas and oil to the point where some hospitals were threatening to close.”

Christian Democrats trailed at just over 6 percent, and the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party, the progeny of the LiCP, won 48 percent.⁵⁰ The Labor Party presidential candidate, Algirdas Brazauskas, the same man who had led the Lithuanian Communist Party since October 1988, won the presidency with 60 percent of the popular vote, defeating Stasys Lozoraitis who garnered only 38 percent.⁵¹ After the Labor Party's victory, "a Sajūdis poster appeared reading, 'A Tear in God's Eye. Lithuania, where are you going?'"⁵² Tomas Venclova, a Lithuanian poet who emigrated to the United States, watched the political shift back toward the left wing with concern, but also hoped "the nation which has avoided excesses in its fight for freedom with incredible patience and confidence, most likely will never succumb to the temptation of a brutal right-wing authoritarianism."⁵³

The election of President Algirdas Brazauskas, "sent a shock to the Catholic Church," but the hierarchy, recognizing its social influence and wanting to keep the peace, "quickly shifted to emphasize support for the outcome. For his part, Brazauskas embraced the LCC, meeting quickly with Archbishop Sigitas Tamkevičius and greeting the impending visit of the pope."⁵⁴ The relationship between the LCC and the new government was different from the LCC's relationship with the Sajūdis government, in part because Cardinal Sladkevičius was wary of the

⁵⁰ Richard J. Krickus, "Democratization in Lithuania," in *The Consolidation of Democracy in East-Central Europe*, ed. Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 303.

⁵¹ Krickus, "Democratization," 305. Lithuanian citizens living abroad also voted, with 83.1 percent preferring Lozoraitis, presumably because the Lithuanian diaspora "loathed the idea that a 'communist' would become president of the newly independent government in their homeland."

⁵² Anatol Lieven, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 366.

⁵³ Tomas Venclova, "Lithuania: The Opening and the Hand of the Past," *Salmagundi*, no. 90/91 (Spring-Summer 1991): 10.

⁵⁴ Goeckel, "Baltic Churches," 217.

Polish model where “the church identifies too closely with the state.”⁵⁵ Since 1992, “Church leaders are less present in the public domain and people generally take less interest in church matters.”⁵⁶ Nevertheless, religiosity has remained high in Lithuania relative to other post-Soviet countries, which supports Norris and Inglehart’s conclusion that “public religiosity continues to be relatively high in nations where the church was actively involved in resistance against the Soviet regime and the struggle for independence.”⁵⁷ The LCC’s participation in the independence movement not only built upon its existing legacy of nationalism, but also confirmed public trust in the LCC and reiterated the central place of Catholicism as a marker of Lithuanian identity for a generation that did not have first-hand experience of the Lithuanian Catholic Church as a free institution.

⁵⁵ *Glaube in der 2. Welt* 20, no. 4 (April 1992): 4.

⁵⁶ Frans Hoppenbrouwers, “Romancing Freedom: Church and Society in the Baltic States since the End of Communism,” *Religion, State & Society* 27, no. 2 (1999): 162.

⁵⁷ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 2nd edition (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 117-118. The 1990 and 1999 European Values Surveys give a picture of religious change from the heyday of the independence movement to nine years later. Asked “Do you belong to a religious denomination,” the affirmative response increased from 63 percent in 1990 to 81 percent in 1999, and 92 percent of those belonging to a denomination identified with Roman Catholicism. Church attendance showed a less dramatic shift: about 15 percent attended church once a week or more in 1990 and 1999, but 9 percent of people moved from never attending church in 1990 to attending once a month in 1999, and only 47 percent attended church for specific holy days in 1990 but 53 percent did so by 1999. These data indicate that increased religious attendance coincided with the independence movement, but did not dissipate after Lithuania gained independence. After an initial surge, identification with Catholicism and participation in religious services remained relatively higher than it had been during the Soviet period. Juknevičius, “Religiosity and Moral Values,” 104-107.

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