

Urban Development in Vilnius during the Second World War

Keywords: transformation of public spaces based on political ideology, signs of power, urban and symbolic measures of city development, sub-political urban planning, interception of projects.

This article attempts to reconstruct the history of urban development in Vilnius during the Second World War, and to identify instances of ‘ideological transformations’ made in the city’s public spaces. In this article, ideological transformations means measures which are employed by the authorities in order to adapt a city’s identity to the prevailing political ideology. These measures include both urban/architectural forms of development (reconstruction of squares, planning of the city centre, construction of buildings and erection of monuments) and symbolic/decorative forms of development (changes of street names, paratheatrical decorations for public events, the use of state symbols). Political ceremonies, like parades and commemorations, are closely related to urban change, because the latter often serves the purpose of the former: squares are laid out for political rallies, and wide and straight avenues provide suitable arenas for marches and parades. Thus, the article also deals with political performances, as far as they are related to urban development in Vilnius.

In this article, the Second World War starts in October 1939, when the Soviet Union transferred Vilnius to Lithuania, and ends in July 1944, when the Red Army reentered Vilnius, chasing Wehrmacht forces on their retreat to Berlin. This period encompasses the rule of three political authorities: the Republic of Lithuania (28 October 1939 to 15 June 1940), the Soviet Union (15 June 1940 to 24 June 1941), and Nazi Germany (24 June 1941 to 13 July 1944). The short timespans and the wartime conditions did not allow for substantial urban changes. The period was marked



1. Important visitors from Berlin look over Vilnius from the Gediminas Castle tower in August 1943. Second from left: Hans Christian Hingst, Gebietskommissar Wilna Land, third from left: Gustav Meyer, State Secretary of the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories

by military destruction, forced migration, deportations, imprisonment, executions and genocide. Despite the horror and the difficult economic situation, each authority had plans to alter Vilnius, and left, or at least planned to leave, its marks on the city.

By the beginning of the Second World War, Vilnius had lost its status as a state capital a long time ago. Until the First World War, it was the administrative centre of the Vilna Governorate, a part of the Northwest Region of the Russian Empire. During and after the First World War, it passed from hand to hand from various political formations, without acquiring a permanent administrative status. In 1920, the city and its region were incorporated into Poland by the use of military force. Until 1939, it was the centre of a voivodeship of the Second Polish Republic. At the same time, the Lithuanian Constitution declared it to be the true capital of the Lithuanian state. The city was at the heart of the interwar Lithuanian national discourse: images of it were used to construct the tradition of Lithuanian statehood, to demonstrate the continuity of Lithuanian

culture, and build the Lithuanian identity.¹ When a political compromise between the Soviet and Lithuanian governments returned Vilnius to Lithuania in 1939, the Lithuanian authorities promptly started to prepare for the transfer of public administrative bodies and institutions from Kaunas to Vilnius. However, the outbreak of the Second World War, and the general political instability, prevented the realisation of these plans. No government offices were transferred to Vilnius during the eight 'Lithuanian' months. Thus, Vilnius was only the state capital in theory.

In June 1940, Soviet troops entered Lithuania, and on 21 July the new pro-Soviet puppet People's Government issued a decree which requested the USSR to admit Lithuania into the Soviet Union. On 3 August 1940, Lithuania became a Soviet Socialist Republic. Since Kaunas was still the actual capital, the Supreme Council of the Lithuanian SSR passed a resolution on 25 August 1940 to transfer the capital to Vilnius. The goal was set to complete the transfer by 1 September 1941.² Some ministries were actually moved to Vilnius, the university was reopened, and the Art Academy was established. Other plans remained on paper.

The dynamic planning of the capital was stopped by Nazi Germany, which seized the city on 22 June 1941. All the occupied Baltic States, and a part of Byelorussia, formed a new administrative unit called Reichskommissariat Ostland, with its centre in Riga. Lithuania became a *Generalbezirk*, with Kaunas as its centre, so the transfer of the capital was still not completed before the Nazis came. Vilnius was the administrative centre of the Gebietskommissariat Wilna, in other words, a town in a province of an empire once again.

The change of power and the struggle for the status of the capital gave development in Vilnius a unique character. On one hand, attempts were

¹ The Lithuanian attitude towards Vilnius in the interwar period and in 1939 was investigated and presented by the historian Dangiras Mačiulis: D. Mačiulis, 1939-iejai: lietuviai „atranda“ Vilnių arba kolektyvinės atminties kūrimas atgautoje sostinėje (1939: Lithuanians 'Discover' Vilnius, or the Construction of the Collective Memory in the Regained Capital), *Atrasti Vilnių: skiriama Vladui Drėmai* (Discover Vilnius: Dedicated to Vladas Drėma), ed. G. Jankevičiūtė, Vilnius, 2010, pp. 163-180.

² A.E. Senn, *Lietuva 1940. Revoliucija iš viršaus* (Lithuania in 1940: Revolution from Above), Vilnius, 2009.

frequently made to give the city the proper image of a capital; on the other hand, the political authorities did not have enough financial resources, experience or time to give these developments the 'correct' form.

The City Construction Directorate/Department/Office

One institution and its staff lasted throughout this whole unsettled period. Different political regimes gave it different titles, but they incorporated it into their administrative systems. The majority of the institution's employees stayed in their positions until the second Soviet occupation in 1944, or even longer, until 1945, and only then were they forced to move to Poland. All the major urban changes and designs went through the Vilnius City Construction Directorate, which kept its role as the main planning and building authority in Vilnius in the Republic of Lithuania, in Soviet times, and in Nazi times.

The origins of this office date back to 1936, when the City Bureau for Urban Development (*Miejskie Biuro Urbanistyczne* in Polish) was established in Vilnius by the Polish city administration. The Bureau employed local architects and urban planners, as well as graduates of Warsaw University of Technology, the main school of architecture in Poland at that time. It was headed by the famous Polish architect and urbanist Romuald Gutt.³ Under his leadership, the Provisional Vilnius Development Plan (1939) and reconstruction projects for the main squares of the city were prepared. Gutt was a visiting architect. He did not live in Vilnius, and retired from the Vilnius scene after the city was transferred to Lithuania. Meanwhile, his Bureau colleagues, Stanisław Bukowski, Zbigniew Czech, Juliusz Dumnicki, Leszek Teodozy Dąbrowski, Kazi-

³ Romuald Gutt studied in Switzerland. He started his career as an architect in 1910. In the interwar period he turned to modernism, and adopted ideas of functionality. A great number of his projects were realised in Warsaw: a colony of individual houses in Żoliborz, and several schools, villas and state offices. One of his villas was awarded a silver medal at the 1937 Paris International Exhibition. In 1935, Gutt and the landscape architect Alina Scholtz won a closed competition for the Pilsudski homestead and park in Zułów (in the Švenčioniai district in Lithuania). In Vilnius, he built a primary school at Liepkalnio St 18, houses at A. Jakšto St 14 and Akmenų St 5, and the terraces of the stadium on Rinktinės St.

mierz Biszewski, Wiktor Espenhan, Jonas Pekša and others, stayed and found jobs at the newly renamed Vilnius City Construction Directorate.

Their employment at the Directorate raises questions, because the main task of the Lithuanian government was the ‘depolonisation’ or ‘relithuanianisation’ (*atlietuvinimas* in Lithuanian) of the city.⁴ Private burghers and official institutions were ordered to remove the Polish coat of arms from the city’s public spaces,⁵ the Polish language and national symbols were eliminated from the Gates of Dawn and its chapel,⁶ the designs for the restoration of the Town Hall were reviewed in order to ‘cleanse’ them of signs of Polish power,⁷ there were even suggestions to translate the epitaphs on tombstones in Vilnius’ churches.⁸ Lithuania considered the previous 18 years as an occupation of its capital by Poland, and antagonism between Lithuania and Poland made ‘relithuanianisation’ a rather heated affair.⁹ The Polish staff of Stephen Báthory University and its 3,000 students were dismissed, Polish schools were closed, a large number of residents of Vilnius had difficulties in getting Lithuanian citizenship, and so it went on.¹⁰ The Lithuanian government aimed to ‘relithuanianise’ Vilnius to the extent that after the war it would look like a true Lithuanian city.¹¹

⁴ There is more on this in Mačiulis, 1939-iejai: lietuviai „atranda“ Vilnių..., op. cit., pp. 167-180.

⁵ *Vilniaus balsas* (The Voice of Vilnius), 5 January 1940.

⁶ The Polish inscription on the north façade was translated into Latin; the Polish coat of arms was removed from the north façade of the gate, the red curtain with the Polish eagle which covered the holy picture was replaced with a blue one with an inscription in Latin and white tulip decoration (*J. Muloko architektūra* [J. Mulokas’ Architecture], Los Angeles, 1983, p. 24.)

⁷ *Vilniaus balsas*, 25 November 1939.

⁸ Vilniaus miesto išorinis ir išvidinis atlietuvinimas (Internal and External Re-Lithuanianisation of Vilnius City), *Vilniaus balsas*, 25 January 1940.

⁹ It is worth mentioning that before the Second World War, Vilnius was the sixth largest city in Poland. In 1939, it was an important industrial and commercial centre, with 209,000 inhabitants and a very small Lithuanian minority.

¹⁰ P. Łossowski, *Likwidacja Uniwersytetu Stefana Batorego przez władze litewskie w grudniu 1939 roku* (Liquidation of Vilnius University by the Lithuanian Government on December of 1939), Warszawa, 1991; Š. Liekis, 1939: *The Year that Changed Everything in Lithuania’s History*, Amsterdam-New York, 2010, pp. 173-175, <http://books.google.com/books?id=ST3LrBPOM4gC&pg=PA174>, retrieved 26 March 2012.

¹¹ R. Žepkaitė, *Vilniaus istorijos atkarpa: 1939 m. spalio 27 d. – 1940 m. birželio 15 d.* (A Segment

The reemployment of Polish personnel had pragmatic reasons. From November 1939 to February 1943, the Directorate was headed by the chief engineer (later chief architect) Vytautas Landsbergis Žemkalis (1893–1993). He had a degree in architecture from the Regia Scuola Superiore di Architettura in Rome, and by 1939 he was an experienced architect with a number of important achievements to his name in prewar Kaunas.¹² In his memoirs, Žemkalis recalls that in 1939 it was impossible to attract professional architects from Kaunas to live and work in Vilnius. Kaunas was safer, more familiar, and more comfortable in terms of the accommodation and the cultural life.¹³ So he employed the Polish professionals available, who had worked in the prewar Bureau of Urban Development and knew the city very well.

When the Soviets came and the governments changed again, the City Construction Directorate became the City Construction Department of the Vilnius Executive Committee. Because of the lack of personnel, there were no ‘Soviet’ architects or urban planners available, its head and its employees remained the same.

Just after the Nazi invasion, Žemkalis was called to Kaunas and became minister of public utilities of the Provisional Government of Lithuania, which survived for only one month. When the Nazis disbanded it, Žemkalis managed to return to Vilnius and resume his job as the head of the City Building Office, which was already called the *Stadtbauamt*.¹⁴ His former colleagues were still there. Although the policy of the Reich was to place people of German origin in all leading positions, the new

of Vilnius’ History: 27 October 1939 to 15 June 1940), Vilnius, 1990, pp. 123, 125–126.

¹² Kaunas County Municipality Building (1933), the House of the Association of Lithuanian Dairy Enterprises (1934), Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Crafts (1938), etc.

¹³ V. Landsbergis-Žemkalis, *Iš atminties ekrano* (From the Screen of Memory), Vilnius, 2009, p. 340.

¹⁴ In 1942–1944, Žemkalis also taught at Vilnius University. He was sacked from his position as chief engineer because of his refusal to accept the title of commissar engineer in February 1943. In 1944, prior to the return of the Soviets, he emigrated to Germany, and later to Australia, where he continued his architectural practice. In 1959, Žemkalis returned to Soviet Lithuania, and worked as an architect at the Institute of Monument Preservation in Kaunas, and later in Vilnius.



2. Vilnius City Construction Directorate urban planners (from left to right): arch. Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, Juliusz Dumnicki, Zbigniew Czech, Kazimierz Biszewski. 1941

administration lacked professional personnel again, and employed locals. Thus, the lowest Nazi civilian officer in Vilnius was a *Gebietskommissar* (Region Superintendent).

This continuity, which went against the official policies of all three political regimes (the Lithuanians denied Polish competence and regarded them as enemies, the Soviets tended to employ people loyal to the new regime, and the Nazis aimed to put Germans into leading administrative positions, and certainly to avoid Soviet personnel), was probably determined not only by the above-mentioned lack of professional architects and urban planners, but also by personal patronage and the wide circle of acquaintances of the chief engineer.

The employment of the same personnel naturally resulted in continuity in a number of urban projects: the reconstruction of Vilnius' central squares and streets, research into and conservation of the cathedral, Gediminas' Castle and Gediminas Hill, archaeological excavations in Cathedral Square and the nearby Bernardinai Park, and the development of the Master Plan for Vilnius. All these works were initiated and started by the Polish City Bureau of Urban Development.

The design of the Master Plan for Vilnius and the reconstruction of Cathedral Square were the most significant achievements of the Second World War period. Both objects were not only important because of their practical use to the city. They were regarded as core arenas for the representation of power and ideology by all three political regimes.

The Master Plan for Vilnius

The development of the Master Plan for Vilnius started in early 1939. A provisional plan was drawn up by the architect Jerzy Kobzakowski. It was built on the experience of the long-nurtured Master Plan for Warsaw, which in turn was based on recent West European urban development. The Vilnius plan set out to preserve the unique character of the Old Town, to develop a new city centre on the high ground to the northwest of the Old Town (the area of the present-day Mindaugo St), to concentrate industry in the outskirts, to build a river port, and a number of new bridges and roads, to develop workers' living areas further away from the centre, and to surround them with green belts.¹⁵

After Vilnius was transferred to Lithuania, Kobzakowski, like his colleagues, continued to work at the City Construction Directorate, and pursued the development of the provisional plan together with Žemkalnis. The latter presented the main points of the plan to the public, but the main provisions remained the same.¹⁶ Although the project was continued, it was not the main concern of the Lithuanian authorities at the time, which looked after more immediate changes to the city.

The Soviets put much more energy into urban planning. The decision to transfer the capital to Vilnius was taken seriously, and the development of the new Soviet capital started straight away: 'Vilnius, as the capital of a Soviet Socialist Republic, shall promptly prepare to justify its purpose.'¹⁷

¹⁵ J. Poklewski, *Polskie życie artystyczne w międzywojennym Wilnie* (Polish Artistic Life in Interwar Vilnius), Toruń, 1994, p. 196.

¹⁶ J. Kančienė, J. Minkevičius, *Architektas Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis* (The Architect Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis), Vilnius, 1993, p. 45.

¹⁷ Sostinės tvarkymo reikalai (The Work of Putting the Capital in Order), *Vilniaus balsas*, 22 September 1940.

Žemkalnis, the chief engineer, took over the leadership of the preparation of the Master Plan. Kobzakowski was still working on it, too. The plan was reviewed and announced in the press. In September 1940, four long articles appeared in the local newspapers on the development of Vilnius as the future capital of Soviet Lithuania.¹⁸

The Soviet plan was more ambitious, but apart from its scale,¹⁹ it was a direct descendant of the Polish provisional plan of 1939. The Master Plan did not aim at the total reconstruction, or even considerable reconstruction, of Vilnius. More effort was put into the development and improvement of the existing infrastructure than the creation of a new Soviet city. This was apparent to urban specialists from Moscow, who came to inspect the work of the City Construction Department in the spring of 1941, and criticised it strongly. Because of the workers' housing developments in the suburbs, and the conservation and restoration envisaged of the Old Town, the plan was described as a 'clear discrimination of the practice of Soviet urban development'.²⁰

Since July 1940, the Lithuanian press had been writing about the 'amazing achievements' in the reconstruction of Moscow.²¹ Wide avenues, spacious squares, and the Palace of Soviets, which was being built

¹⁸ Vilnius – socialistinės Lietuvos TSR ateities centras (Vilnius: The Centre of the Lithuanian SSR of the Future), *Vilniaus balsas*, 1 September 1940; Iš sostinės tvarkymo darbų (The Work of Putting the Capital in Order), 8 September 1940; Vilniui atsiveria naujos perspektyvos (New Perspectives Open up for Vilnius), *Vilniaus balsas*, 18 September 1940; Sostinės tvarkymo reikalai (The Work of Putting the Capital in Order), *Vilniaus balsas*, 22 September 1940.

¹⁹ Kančienė, Minkevičius, op. cit., p. 45; *Vilniaus miesto generalinis planas* (The Master Plan for Vilnius), Lietuvos literatūros ir meno archyvas (Lithuanian Literature and Art Archive, LLAA), f. 81, ap. 1, b. 1450. The plan suggested expanding the city's area by more than 70 per cent; building 13 workers' colonies, with culture centres and shopping centres, away from the centre and industry, thus creating green housing developments; adapting the banks of the River Neris to public needs; building two river ports, seven bridges, a road around the city, and wide streets around the Old Town; expanding the industrial city railway; to have 11 stadiums, two swimming pools, 70 new kindergartens, schools, hospitals, a Palace of Soviets, a Workers' House of Culture, a Pioneers' House, an Opera and Ballet Theatre, etc.

²⁰ Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, *Is atminties ekrano*, p. 339.

²¹ Maskvos atstatymo planas (The Plan for the Reconstruction of Moscow), *Vilniaus balsas*, 12 July 1940; Penkmečio Maskvos rekonstrukcija skaičių ir faktų šviesoje (Five Years of Moscow Reconstruction in the Light of Numbers and Facts), *Vilniaus balsas*, 14 July 1940.

at the time, were models for Soviet town planning. The preservation and conservation of an old town were definitely not a priority. The Moscow Master Plan, approved by Stalin in 1935, encouraged using a selective method for retaining or destroying: buildings which complied with the principles of the new vision of Moscow (monumental constructions with buildings no lower than six storeys) could be kept if they did not interfere with the widening of existing radial streets or the building of new ones. All the rest should go. Workers' housing was foreseen in newly built high-rise residential constructions in the very centre of the city.

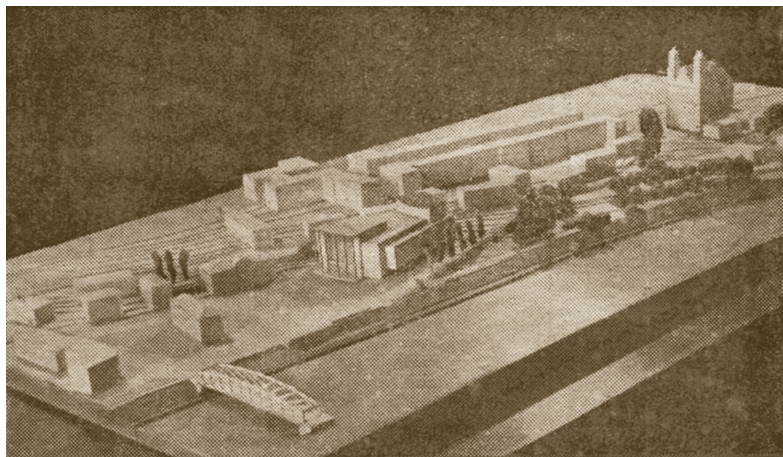
The Master Plan for Vilnius created by Žemkalnis and Kobzakowski had very little in common with the Soviet Moscow vision. The only similarities were the development of the river banks as important city arteries, and the concentration of heavy industry with a railway connection on the outskirts of the city. It may well be that these were mere coincidences, because contemporary Western town planners also had the same ideas.

Even the designs for new Soviet buildings in Vilnius were far from the prevailing Neo-Classical style. One of the outstanding projects of the Soviet period was the Opera and Ballet Theatre. In March 1941, the Vilnius Executive Committee decided to build a 1,200-seat theatre,²² and commissioned Žemkalnis, the chief engineer, to site the theatre in the city and to prepare architectural drawings for it. The theatre was to stand on the left bank of the River Neris (in 1974, the first and the only Vilnius Opera and Ballet Theatre was built very close to this spot). A finished model was presented to the city authorities and the public after a couple of months.²³ Although in theory the theatre's design had to 'reflect the tradition of Vilnius' architecture and the start of the new and great Soviet planning and building',²⁴ the actual model featured a modernist building with large glass surfaces and clear geometric forms, a direct descendant of Žemkalnis' interwar architectural practice. Although the

²² The discussion about the new theatre started in 1940 (A. Pangonis, Dar dėl teatro Vilniuje [About a Theatre in Vilnius], *Vilniaus balsas*, 23 January 1940).

²³ Projekt regulacji części wybrzeża i śródmiescia (Regulation Plan of the City Centre), LLAA, f. 81, ap. 1, b. 3, l. 30.

²⁴ Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, *Iš atminties ekrano*, p. 343.



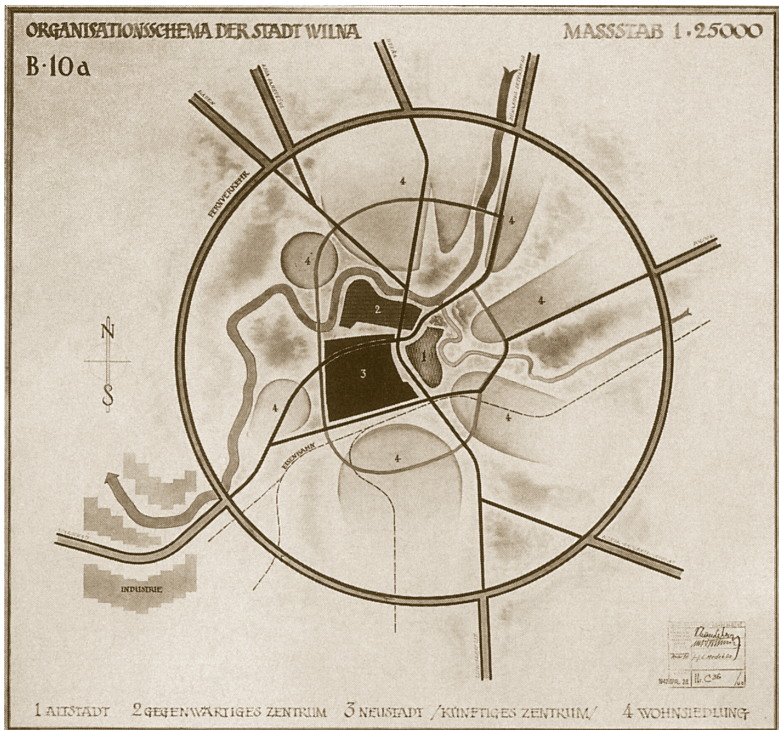
3. Project model for Vilnius Opera and Ballet Theatre (in the centre) by Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis. 1941

model was approved by Aleksei Shchusev, an acclaimed Soviet architect, it was so unlike what was being built in the Soviet Union at the time that it is doubtful the project could have been realised.

The Vilnius City Construction Department started to implement some of the provisions of the Master Plan before the visit from Moscow. A regulatory project for Railway Station Square was prepared,²⁵ and several buildings were demolished to make way for the wider streets that were foreseen.²⁶ Although the department did not produce a new Soviet plan, the city was supplied, even if only on paper and in models, with some attributes of a capital. The Palace of Soviets and other institutions were to appear on Lukiškių Square and in its vicinity. The Opera and Ballet Theatre was foreseen near the Green Bridge. The University and the Art Academy opened.

²⁵ Projekt regulacji placu przydworcowego (Regulation Plan of the Square next to the Palace), *Prawda Wilenska*, 22 September 1940.

²⁶ Pradedama Vilniaus rekonstrukcija (The Reconstruction of Vilnius is Starting), *Vilniaus balsas*, 27 April 1941.



4. Vilnius city zoning chart, part of the completed master plan for Vilnius: 1. the Old Town; 2. present city centre; 3. future city centre; 4. living areas. Architects: Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, Jerzy Kobzakowski, Juliusz Dumnicki, Zbigniew Czech, Kazimierz Biszewski, Wiktor Espenhan. December 1943

The negative reception of the Master Plan by the experts from the centre probably halted the work and the development of the plan itself. However, in a couple of months, the regime changed: Lithuania was occupied by Nazi Germany, and the plan was taken out of the drawer.

The new authorities had to deal with the damage caused by the war: about a hundred houses were destroyed and needed to be demolished or repaired.²⁷ Despite the unexpected workload and the rather limited support of the Nazi authorities, the City Construction Office proceeded with the development of the Master Plan. A great deal of measurements

²⁷ Instandsetzung der kriegsbeschädigten Häuser, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 27 October 1941.



5. Town Hall Square after the reconstruction. 1944



6. Napoleon Square after the reconstruction and the Haus of the National Socialist Party in the present President's Office. 1944



7. A villa on Akmenų St, which was built for the *Gebietskommissar*. 1944

and research were carried out between 1941 and 1943. A lot of attention was paid to the regeneration plan for the Old Town.²⁸

The Master Plan was officially completed in January 1944. Single ideas were developed and implemented: a regulatory project for the Neris riverbank was prepared (1943), City Hall Square and Napoleon Square were redesigned (1942–1943),²⁹ and a block of detached villas on Akmenų St was built. The latter two had prosaic reasons: Napoleon Square was important because the former Palace of the Red Army (now the President's Office) was converted into the House of the Party (Haus der Partei) in 1942–1943,³⁰ and the biggest villa on Akmenų St was constructed for the

²⁸ A 1:2500 model of the central part of the city was built (after measuring the houses) by prisoners of the Vilnius Ghetto (Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, *Iš atminties ekrano*, p. 350).

²⁹ The iron fence in front of the former Red Army Palace was removed, the ground was levelled and new paving was laid, and trees and flowers were planted.

³⁰ Two new entrances were built behind the rows of columns, and the interior of the building was adapted to the Party's needs (Napoleonpalais wird Haus der Partei, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 10 August 1942). Part of the building was adapted to house a kindergarten for Germans (Kinderlachen am Napoleonplatz, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 17 September 1943).

Gebietskommissar.³¹ The Nazi administration invested in other projects which were intended to serve their fellow nationals: the Bristol Hotel on Gedimino St was refurbished for the German civilian authorities,³² two new cinemas were built for Wehrmacht soldiers,³³ and Cathedral Square was altered to fit the needs of Nazi rallies.

At the same time, no investment was put into the development of the infrastructure of the city that was used by locals. This attitude was determined by the 'living space' idea, which was represented in the Generalplan Ost (Master Plan East, 1939–1942).³⁴ The Reichskommissariat Ukraine held a similar status in the Generalplan Ost (the whole occupied territory of the Soviet Union was generally called Russia). Its urban policies were defined in July 1942:

In no case should Russian (Ukrainian) cities be somehow improved or embellished, because the living standards of the local population should not get higher, and Germans will live in the cities and villages which will later be newly built, and strictly protected from the Russian (Ukrainian) population.³⁵

In the light of the Generalplan Ost, the development of the Master Plan for Vilnius came outside the official interests of the invaders. Researchers into the politics of the Nazi occupation argue that there was tension between the Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories and senior authorities in Nazi Germany.³⁶ Alfred Rosenberg, the head

³¹ Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, *Is atminties ekrano*, p. 354. The US Embassy has its offices in the building now.

³² *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 15 November 1941.

³³ Die neuen Kinos wachsen, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 29 September 1943. In fact, these were simple wooden structures in the shape of big village houses or barns, very similar to the models shown at the *Planung und Aufbau im Osten* exhibition (20 March 1941, Berlin).

³⁴ The plan regarded all conquered eastern territories as extra space for the growth of the German population. According to the plan, Lithuania had to be germanised by 20 years after the war. The extermination, expulsion or enslavement of 85 per cent of Lithuanian citizens were seen as means to achieve this goal.

³⁵ *Der Krieg gegen der Sowjetunion. 1941–1945, eine Dokumentation zum 50. Jahrestag des Überfalls auf die Sowjetunion*, ed. R. Ruerup, 1991, Berlin, p. 87.

³⁶ *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg*, Bd. 5: Organisation und Mobilisierung des Deutschen Machtbereichs, Zweiter Halbband: Kriegsvwaltung, Wirtschaft und Personelle Ressourcen 1942–1944/45, ed. B. R. Kroener, R. D. Müller, H. Umbreit, 1999, Stuttgart, p. 48–53.

of the ministry, considered the occupied peoples to be ‘almost’ Aryan, and often complained about the unfair treatment of them. He wished to portray Nazis as liberators of Ostland from Soviet domination, while the senior Nazi authorities ordered him to be harsh and brutal. It could be that some of the orders were mitigated ‘on the way’ to Ostland, and more liberty was tolerated in the occupied Baltic States.³⁷

A similar inconsistency between theory and practice was clear in the adoption of the ‘bourgeois’ Master Plan for Vilnius by the local Soviet authorities. It seems that before the Second World War, Soviet policy and control over Lithuanian town planning was rather vague. Otherwise, it would have been impossible to announce the Master Plan for Vilnius in the press and to start implementing some of its provisions before it was approved by Moscow. The development of the Master Plan, as well as the rearrangement of Cathedral Square under three political regimes which were hostile towards each other, brings the town planning of the Second World War period to a sort of sub-political level. By taking up Polish projects, the Lithuanian authorities continued the work started by the occupiers, the Soviets took over the plans of their ideological enemies, and the Nazis invested in a city with no future. The only explanation is the human factor, which causes considerable deviations from ideological and political dogmas.

To finish with the Master Plan for Vilnius, it must be mentioned that after the war a new team of Soviet architects³⁸ inherited the preparatory material, drawings and designs of Žemkalnis’ team. They were used as a basis for the ‘truly’ Soviet Master Plan for Vilnius, which was approved in 1949 and later implemented. Some of Žemkalnis’ ideas were taken up (such as the concentration of industry in the southwest and northeast suburbs),³⁹ but the new project was more in line with the provisions of the Moscow Master Plan.

³⁷ Žemkalnis claimed that master plans for the former capitals of Latvia and Estonia were not developed during the German occupation (Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, *Iš atminties ekrano*, p. 50).

³⁸ The team included two Polish architects, who left Vilnius for Poland in the middle of 1945: Kazimierz Biszewski and Jerzy Kobzakowski (V. Mikučianis, *Norėjau dirbti Lietuvoje* [I Wanted to Work in Lithuania], Vilnius, 2001, p. 55).

³⁹ Mikučianis, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

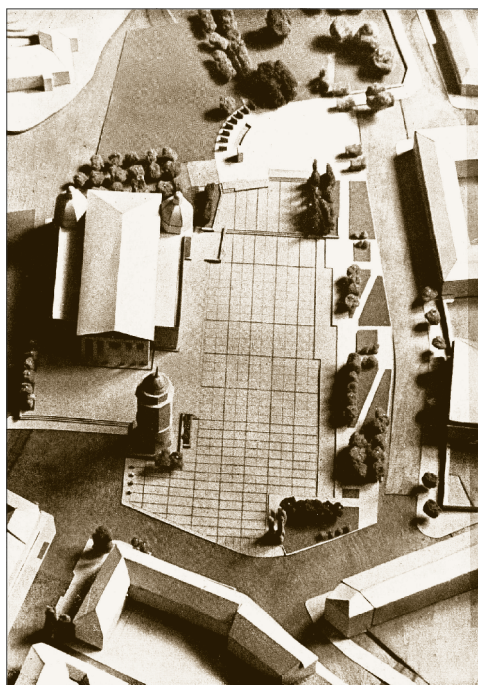
Cathedral Square

The story of the redesigning of Cathedral Square was similar. It started in 1935, when Marshal Józef Piłsudski ordered his heart to be buried in Vilnius, before dying in the president's residence in Warsaw. Because of the special attitude and attention he expressed towards Vilnius, the Polish authorities decided to honour him with a monument in the city. Cathedral Square was chosen as the most suitable place. However, it was in a deplorable state and needed reconstruction. The first two competitions for redesigning the square were held in 1936. Neither of them offered acceptable solutions. At the end of that year, the above-mentioned City Bureau for Urban Development was specially created, with the aim of developing an optimal urban concept for the square. A new reconstruction project was devised in a year. It was prepared by Stanisław Bukowski and Leszek Teodozy Dąbrowski, graduates of Warsaw University of Technology, under the leadership of Romuald Gutt.

In the project, the cathedral and the bell tower were left as the main points of reference in the square. The main space of the square in the south had to be lowered considerably, thus creating a podium for the cathedral. The street, which formerly ran alongside the cathedral, was transferred to the southern edge of the square. The architects declared that the new square was designed as an amphitheatre for mass meetings and celebrations, and as a site for the Piłsudski monument.⁴⁰ The monument was to stand almost on the spot of the present monument to Grand Duke Gediminas.

The Bureau started preparatory reconstruction work, but the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 brought everything to a halt. The Lithuanian City Construction Directorate and its head adopted both the designs and its authors, who became employees of the Directorate. Žemkalnis accepted the project with minor changes: the square was

⁴⁰ K. Kieniewicz, O projekcie regulacji placu katedralnego w Wilnie w związku z zamierzoną budową pomnika Pierwszego Marszałka Polski Józefa Piłsudskiego (About the Regulation Plan of Cathedral Square in Vilnius Due to the Foreseen Erection of a Monument to the First Marshal of Poland Józef Piłsudski), *Architektura i Budownictwo*, 1938, no. 11-12, p. 366.



8. The reconstruction project for Cathedral Square developed by Polish urban planners Romuald Gutt, Stanisław Bukowski, Leszek Teodozy Dąbrowski. 1938

lowered less than Gutt suggested (40 to 45 centimetres, instead of 80 centimetres), and a small parking place was added to the western part. In 1940, Žemkalnis wrote: ‘The square has to serve the official purposes of the nation. It is a big hall, where the nation can express its joys and its sorrows.’⁴¹ He also approved the idea and the spot for the future monument, only the subject was to be different: ‘Between the square and Gediminas Hill is a spectacular place to honour Vytautas the Great.’⁴² In the interwar Lithuanian national narrative, Vilnius Cathedral stood as one of the most important landmarks of Lithuanian history and culture. It was very often associated with the grave of Vytautas the Great, the most famous ruler of Medieval Lithuania, which was thought to be hidden in the cathedral’s crypt.⁴³ Thus, the

monument to the national hero was a logical outcome of the long-held hope to locate Vytautas’ remains and to duly honour him.

The actual rebuilding of Cathedral Square was started, but it was not finished before the Soviet invasion. Nevertheless, the change of regime did not stop the work, and the City Construction Department continued with the refurbishment. Announcing the project in the So-

⁴¹ V. Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, Apie Vilnių ir jo pertvarkymą (About Vilnius and Changes to it), *Naujoji romuva*, 1940, no. 1-2, p. 8.

⁴² Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, Apie Vilnių ir jo pertvarkymą, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁴³ One of the aims of the research into the cathedral building, which was started by the Poles and continued by the Lithuanians, was to find this burial.



9. The celebration of Liberation Day on the reconstructed Cathedral Square. 1942

viet press, Žemkalnis elaborated on the same argument: the square would be used for celebrations, gatherings and rallies, and it would hold up to 9,100 people.⁴⁴ The work moved forward rather fast, due to the more generous funding and the abundant labour supply. However, these were not enough to complete the reconstruction before the Nazi occupation in June 1941.

The Nazi civilian and military governments needed a place for official ceremonies and celebrations as well. Just after entering Vilnius, they ‘rediscovered’ the German military cemetery in Vingis Park. The cemetery had been established in 1915 (during the First World War). Its significance was revived by burying Wehrmacht soldiers killed in the recent attack on Vilnius there. Anniversaries on 22 June (Liberation Day), 9 November (the 1923 Munich Putsch) and 30 January (the day Hitler took power) were commemorated in Vingis Cemetery, by laying wreaths

⁴⁴ Iš sostinės tvarkymo darbų (The Work of Putting the Capital in Order), *Vilniaus balsas*, 8 September 1940.



10. Cathedral Square after the reconstruction. 20 April 1942

and paying tribute to the dead. The cemetery was far from the centre, on the outskirts of a wooded park, in other words, in a rather modest place. It could only hold small ceremonies; and, more importantly, it was not suitable for celebrations. With its size, position and character, Cathedral Square fulfilled the needs of Nazi rallies, and the *Stadtbauamt* was allocated the funds to proceed with its reorganisation.

In 1942, Liberation Day was celebrated on the reconstructed square. It was completed according to the project by Gutt, Bukowski and Dąbrowski, with Žemkalnis' alterations. According to pictures,⁴⁵ the square was used exactly as had been foreseen by the Polish town planners: the lower part held the 'audience', and the most important people at a rally took their positions on the higher podium. The square was especially attractive because of its proximity to Gediminas' Castle, with the Reich flag flying on its tower, to Gedimino St, which had been used for festive and military parades since the interwar period, and to important institu-

⁴⁵ *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 24 June 1942.

tions of the Reich.⁴⁶ The Nazis, however, did not have the intention to mark the square with a monument. A large round flowerbed, which survived until 1996, was laid out on the site of the monument.

The interception and continuation of the reconstruction project of Cathedral Square was not elaborated by Žemkalnis.⁴⁷ It may well be that in the prevailing mood of strict ‘depolonisation’ during the eight ‘Lithuanian’ months, it was wise not to stress the design’s origin. After the war, it could be regarded as collaboration with the Nazis, and after 1990 as collaboration with both the Nazis and the Soviets. The initial project was clearly of very high quality: it has successfully served as a place for gatherings and celebrations since 1942.⁴⁸ Thus we should praise the professional attitude of Žemkalnis, the chief engineer, who acknowledged the quality of the Polish proposal, paid no attention to the prevailing mood, and did not insist on a new design.

It may well be that the reconstruction of Cathedral Square was continued for economic reasons rather than for political reasons. The state of war and the difficult economic situation encouraged quick action to provide people with jobs. The plans prepared by the Polish town planners were ready to be carried out. The work could be started just after each change of political regime. In any case, the choice to continue the work according to projects prepared under the previous regime was not discussed or explained officially. It was taken for granted, without public consideration. However, the main reason was obviously the general need to have a site for rallies and state ceremonies.

⁴⁶ The Gebietskommissariat Wilna-Land (Gedimino St 3), Haus der Partei (Daukanto Square) and other institutions were located near the square.

⁴⁷ It is not discussed in Žemkalnis’ published memoirs (Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, *Iš atminties ekrano*). Jolita Kančienė and Jonas Minkevičius state that Žemkalnis was the author of the project (*Architektas Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis*, p. 44). Only Sigita Gasparavičienė retells the actual story in her article *Katedros aikštė Vilniuje. Istorinė ir urbanistinė raida* (Cathedral Square in Vilnius. Historical and Urban Development), <http://www.archeonas.lt/lt/straipsniai/43-istorija/52-katedros-aikt-vilniuje?showall=1>, 2009, retrieved 11 April 2012.

⁴⁸ The design of the square was altered slightly in 1998–2000, but its basic form remained the same.

Ideological Interventions

The two above cases were the achievements of professional town planners, who, surprisingly, were able to work with little interference from the political leaders. The latter, in turn, were also busy making the city their own. The usual measures that were applied by the new authorities were the change of the flag on Gediminas' Castle and changes to street names.⁴⁹ There were also unusual, even ridiculous, measures, introduced by both the authorities and by individuals, which should be mentioned in order to give an idea of the prevailing atmosphere.

Since the mid-19th century, the west tower of Gediminas' Castle was a favoured spot for the demonstration of power.⁵⁰ Besides raising the state flag just after Lithuanian troops entered Vilnius, and synchronising its raising and lowering ceremonies with those in Kaunas, the idea came up to mark the most important landmark in the newly regained city with a cast of an iron wolf, a 'live' symbol of Gediminas' dream. In addition, 'a powerful siren imitating a wolf's howling could be set up between its jaws' and would sound on special occasions.⁵¹ This was not the only proposal. A little later, a preparatory calculation was made for the 'Bell of Freedom' to be transferred from Kaunas and hung on the top of the tower.⁵² It was also suggested to keep a live wolf on Gediminas Hill, and to place a giant statue of Christ there.⁵³ None of the suggestions materialised, but the attacks on the tower did not cease.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ The authorities of the modern Republic of Lithuania have also expressed the wish to mark 'all Vilnius squares with statues of our ancestors, who sacrificed their lives in order to protect the honour of the Lithuanian capital' (Amžinajam Vilniui – viskas, kas amžina [Everything that is Eternal – to Eternal Vilnius], *Lietuvos aidas*, 21 March 1940). However, no steps were taken to implement the stated 'monumental propaganda' plan.

⁵⁰ For more on Gediminas' Castle as an icon of the city of Vilnius, see: L. Laučkaitė, Vilniaus sostapis kaip miesto ikona XX amžiaus pradžioje (The Castle-Seat of Power of Vilnius as an Icon of the City at the Beginning of the 20th Century), *Naujasis židinys-Aidai*, 2009, no. 7, p. 225.

⁵¹ K. Kalvaitis, *Vilniaus balsas*, 5 December 1939.

⁵² *Vilniaus balsas*, 19 December 1939.

⁵³ Gen. Nagius apie varpo kėlimą į Vilnių (General Nagius on the Transfer of the Bell to Vilnius), *Vilniaus balsas*, 7 March 1940.

⁵⁴ For more on the introduction of the Lithuanian state flag on the tower of Gediminas' Cas-

In the autumn of 1941, a German journalist wrote that the flag on the castle had changed 11 times since the First World War.⁵⁵ Be that as it may, in 1940 the tower was definitely an arena for political change. One day after the decision was made to convert Lithuania into the Lithuanian SSR, the red flag was raised on the tower next to the national tricolour. For two weeks, the two flags flew together.⁵⁶ Then the tricolour was substituted by a red star with a hammer and sickle in the centre, which subsequently came down, giving way to the new Soviet Lithuanian flag in August 1940.⁵⁷ The Nazis played the flag game too; however, they tolerated the Lithuanian tricolour next to the flag of the Nazi Party on public holidays of the Reich. The tricolour was not allowed on Lithuanian national holidays, and it was replaced on Gediminas' Castle by the flag of the Reich.

The Lithuanian authorities were the first to start mass changes to street names.⁵⁸ Those which came down from the times of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (mostly in the Old Town) were merely translated into Lithuanian. Those which were associated with the recent Polish period (mostly in the Naujamiestis and Žvėrynas areas) were changed. A special brochure with an index of old and new street names was published,⁵⁹ which shows the scale of the changes. The main street in the city, named

tle and other attempts to signify this place in 1939, see: Mačiulis, 1939-iejai: lietuviai „atranda“ Vilnių arba kolektyvinės atminties kūrimas atgautoje sostinėje, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-176.

⁵⁵ K. von Werner, Wilna. Stadt im Zwielicht, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 12 October 1941.

⁵⁶ Gedimino kalne plevėsuoja raudonoji vėliava ir trispalvė (The Red Flag and the Tricolour are Flying on Gediminas Hill), *Vilniaus balsas*, 24 July 1940; Gedimino kalne spindi penkiakampė žvaigždė (The Five-Pointed Star Shines on Gediminas Hill), *Vilniaus balsas*, 6 August 1940; S. Macijauskas, Trispalvę vėliavą nuleidus (After the Tricolour is Down), *Vilniaus balsas*, 7 August 1940.

⁵⁷ Resolution of 27 August 1940, *LTSR AT ir Vyriausybės žinios*, no. 1, 26 November 1940. For more on the use of the national tricolour and Soviet flags, see: G. Jankevičiūtė, Lietuva 1939–1944 m.: valdžios ženklai (Lithuania 1939–1944: Signs of Power), *Menotyra*, t. 16, 2009, no. 3-4, pp. 133-135; G. Jankevičiūtė, *Po raudonąja žvaigžde. Lietuvos dailė 1940–1941* (Under the Red Star. Lithuanian Art in 1940–1941), Vilnius, 2011, p. 49.

⁵⁸ In fact, they started to work on the new Vilnius street names in 1936. For more on this, see: Mačiulis, 1939-iejai: lietuviai „atranda“ Vilnių arba kolektyvinės atminties kūrimas atgautoje sostinėje, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-171.

⁵⁹ Vilniečiai mokosi lietuviškus gatvių pavadinimus (Vilnius Citizens Learn Lithuanian Street Names), *Vilniaus balsas*, 24 January 1940.

after the famous Polish-Lithuanian poet Adam Mickiewicz, was renamed after Grand Duke Gediminas. Piłsudski Street in the new centre of the city was renamed after Algirdas, the medieval ruler of Lithuania. Želigowski Street was renamed after Jonas Basanavičius, and so on.

The Soviets were the next to change street names *en masse*.⁶⁰ This was done in May 1941, a month before the Nazi invasion. The changes were drastic. Gediminas Street became Lenin Street, Basanavičius Street became Stalin Street, and 16 February Street became 21 July Street. Other changes were ridiculous: Victim Street was turned into Fighter Street, Martyr Street into Victory Street, Noblemen Street into Worker Street, St Peter and Paul Street into Tractor Driver Street, and so on. In total, 117 street names were changed, about half of all the streets in the city. The actual street signs probably remained as they were, because the Germans did not have any difficulty in using the former names introduced by the Republic of Lithuania. They paid the least attention to this issue. Street names were translated in April 1942 'due to the difficulties the Germans had in pronouncing them'.⁶¹ Thus, Gediminas Street changed to Gediminstrasse, Aušros vartų (Gates of Dawn) Street to Marienstrasse, Vokiečių (German) Street to Deutsche-Strasse, Vilnius Street to Wilnaer-Strasse, and Didžioji (Great) Street to Grosse-Strasse.

Changes of street name were a very formal gesture. Contemporaries complained that the old signs were removed quickly, but new ones were not put up, and even old residents of the city had difficulty finding their way.⁶² Thus, the new names did not have time to play a part in the creation of the new identity of the inhabitants of Vilnius. The same applied to plaques which were put up to commemorate the declaration of independence in 1918,⁶³ and the vaguely documented phenomenon of temporary monuments. According to German newspapers, one such

⁶⁰ Vilniaus miesto gatvių pavadinimų pakeitimas (The Change of Vilnius Street Names), *Vilniaus balsas*, 21 May 1941.

⁶¹ Deutsche Strassenschilder in Wilna, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 1 April 1942.

⁶² Sostinėje pasidairius [Looking Around in the Capital], *Vilniaus balsas*, 17 January 1940.

⁶³ Kaip bus švenčiama Vilniuje Vasario 16 (How 16 February will be Celebrated in Vilnius), *Vilniaus balsas*, 4 February 1940.

monument was erected in the middle of Napoleon Square, in front of the Red Army Palace, in the winter of 1941.⁶⁴ The monument represented a group of Red Army soldiers, made of straw and pure cement. The author of the article wrote that the spring rain softened the cement, the straw came out, and the whole statue tilted.⁶⁵ Other witnesses recalled how temporary statues of Stalin and Lenin were built on Town Hall Square. Due to the short-lived materials, the sculptures all faced the same fate, and had to be removed by the Soviets themselves.⁶⁶ These cases recall Lenin's Plan of Monumental Propaganda (1918–1923), when temporary plaster monuments in honour of the great revolutionary leaders were put up in Moscow and Petrograd. There is no evidence of other temporary Soviet monuments in Vilnius in the Second World War. However, these examples demonstrate both the wish, felt by the Soviet government, to mark the city's spaces with ideological icons, and the lack of lasting materials and the human resources to do it properly.⁶⁷

The Germans also contributed to the temporary sculpture phenomenon. However, their case was totally different. Joseph Edelbauer, a sculptor from Bavaria serving in the Wehrmacht, built an ice sculpture in front of the cathedral in January 1942. Naturally, it was a sculpture of Mars, the Roman god of war, driving a quadriga.⁶⁸ Edelbauer's work was featured in local newspapers and postcards.⁶⁹ It seems that the Classical subject was derived from the paratheatrical decorations of Nazi rallies introduced in Germany much earlier. The playful material of the sculpture

⁶⁴ Later it was written that the monument depicted Lenin: Der Napoleon-Platz wird neugestaltet, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 24 July 1942.

⁶⁵ *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 6 December 1941.

⁶⁶ L. Dovydenas, *Rinktiniai raštai* (Selected Writings), t. 1, Vilnius, 2002, p. 53 (cited in Jankevičiūtė, Lietuva 1939–1944 m.: valdžios ženklai, op. cit., pp. 131–132, and Jankevičiūtė, *Po raudonąja žvaigžde. Lietuvos dailė 1940–1941*, p. 25); Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, *Iš atminties ekrano*, p. 339.

⁶⁷ At the same time, monuments to military heroes of the Republic of Lithuania, Povilas Lukšys, the first volunteer soldier and Antanas Juozapavičius, the first officer killed, were destroyed in Kaunas (Jankevičiūtė, Lietuva 1939–1944 m.: valdžios ženklai, op. cit., pp. 132–133).

⁶⁸ *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 20 January 1942.

⁶⁹ Zwei Schimmel traben ins neue Jahr ..., *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 10 January 1942; Eisplastik auf dem Kathedralplatz, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 15 January 1942.



SCHNEEPLASTIK

v. Jos. Edelbauer-München v. d. Kathedrale Wilna
Januar 1942

11. A postcard of the *Mars quadriga* ice sculpture by Joseph Edelbauer, January 1942

was meant to comfort the Germans, who were in a rather safe but boring and distant place. The same applies to Christmas trees, which were placed on the main Vilnius squares in December 1941⁷⁰ (it could be that this was the first record of Christmas trees in public spaces in Vilnius).

The city changed its appearance on state holidays: portraits of heroes, illuminated displays, flags, flowers, and temporary platforms for speakers used to appear on Vilnius' streets and squares. On Hitler's birthday, his favourite march was played on one of the central squares,⁷¹ and on 30 January his speech was broadcast over loudspeakers throughout the city.⁷² These short-lived decorations had no long-term influence on the city's appearance.

The decision and the reason to change the dome of St Casimir's Church was different. This was a local initiative, completed with local money. According to the press, the Vilnius City Construction Office stated that the dome urgently had to be reinforced.⁷³ The damage was attributed to acts of war in 1941, and the decision was made on this occasion to get rid of the Russian onion dome.

St Casimir's Church had had a long and unsettled history. Built at the beginning of the 17th century as a Jesuit church, it was converted into an Orthodox church in 1831, and altered between 1864 and 1868 by the

⁷⁰ *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 20 December 1941.

⁷¹ *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 21 April 1942.

⁷² *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 2 February 1943.

⁷³ Sankt Kasimir erhält seine Krone zurück, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 2 September 1942.



12. A postcard of St Casimir's Church before the reconstruction. Ca. 1912

addition of an onion dome. Until the First World War, it was the main Orthodox church in Vilnius. In 1917, the church was returned to the Catholics, but its exterior remained unchanged. So the decision to restore the original dome, which was in the shape of the crown of St Casimir, a royal prince of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the patron saint of Lithuania, had a strong symbolic meaning.⁷⁴

The reconstruction was initiated and carried out by the architect Jonas Mulokas, and supported by the chief engineer Žemkalnis. Mulokas did the research and the reconstruction of the dome,⁷⁵ and Žemkalnis designed the iron cross for the top of it.⁷⁶ According to Mulokas' and Žemkalnis' memoirs, the work was financed with money collected in churches.⁷⁷ Materials from the dismantled Russian dome were used for the construction of the new dome. Metals could be confiscated by the Reich authorities at any time (they were in demand for the war industry).⁷⁸ Due to the adverse

⁷⁴ B. Kviklys, *Lietuvių kova su naciais: 1941–1944* (The Lithuanian Struggle with the Nazis: 1941–1944), Vilnius, 1946; G. Jankevičiūtė, *Bažnytinė dailė nacių okupuotoje Lietuvoje* (Church Art in Lithuania during the Nazi Occupation), *Kunigas*, Vilnius, 2011, pp. 193–232.

⁷⁵ The design of the dome was based on the detailed description of the actual crown of the prince made in 1830 during an inspection of St Casimir's remains (*J. Muloko architektūra*, Los Angeles, 1983, p. 26).

⁷⁶ *J. Muloko architektūra*, p. 27.

⁷⁷ *J. Muloko architektūra*, p. 23; Kančienė, Minkevičius, *Architektas Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis*, p. 50.

⁷⁸ In a conversation with Vytautas Landsbergis, Žemkalnis' son, Landsbergis claimed that even



13. The dome of St Casimir's Church after reconstruction

circumstances, it took three years to complete the reconstruction, but on 4 March 1943, St Casimir's Day, the dome was completed.⁷⁹

The new dome changed the skyline of Vilnius' Old Town. It was a clear expression of local initiative.⁸⁰ The Nazi administration was not involved in the project, but tolerated the work carried out by Lithuanian architects, and covered it in the local German press. The change was a sign of the 'fairer' attitude towards the locals. It was a move against the Russian heritage, and a 'reminder of the harm caused by Russian rule'.⁸¹ Thus it contributed towards the image of the Nazis as liberators.

the statement about the bad shape of the Russian dome was a pretext in order to get permission from German officials to reconstruct the dome. The same was said by Mulokas: *J. Muloko architektūra*, p. 27.

⁷⁹ Kazimiero šventė Vilniuje (The Feast of St Casimir in Vilnius), *Jaunoji Lietuva*, 6 March 1943.

⁸⁰ During the Nazi occupation, Mulokas also proposed and put up four plaques: to mark the house where the first Lithuanian president was elected (the house was destroyed during the war and the plaque disappeared); to commemorate the Great Seimas of Vilnius in 1905 (the plaque was removed by the Soviets); to commemorate the first Lithuanian newspaper *Vilniaus žinios* (on Vilnius St, the plaque is still there); and to commemorate the place where Jonas Basanavičius died (on Vilnius St, the house was destroyed during the war and the plaque disappeared). A similar local manifestation occurred under German rule in the First World War, when the three crosses were built by the architect Antanas Vivulskis on one of the highest hills in Vilnius.

⁸¹ G. Jankevičiūtė, *Lietuva 1939–1944 m.: valdžios ženklai*, op. cit., p. 142.

For reasons of political compromise, which returned Vilnius to Lithuania, and the war in neighbouring countries, the Lithuanian administration of the city was not sure how long its rule here would be. Although according to the constitution Vilnius was the capital of the state, and although the Lithuanian authorities intended to move government institutions from Kaunas to Vilnius, the external political instability prevented serious changes from being made in Vilnius. Another reason for the rather limited action was that the Poles had not managed to build major urban landmarks: no monuments, no ideologically charged buildings, no major changes to the urban fabric. Thus, generally speaking, the new rulers had little to destroy. Last but not least, the Lithuanian government had very little time to leave a more noticeable mark. Nevertheless, the use of Polish plans and their designers, which occurred in this period, was of the utmost importance for the development of Vilnius.

The first Soviet year in Vilnius was a year of grand plans. If the Republic of Lithuania was uncertain about its future, the Soviet Lithuanian government paid no attention to the spreading war. Until June 1941, the whole of the Soviet Union felt safe under the non-aggression pact signed in August 1939 with Nazi Germany. Although the majority of projects remained on paper, and the few realised ones were of minor importance,⁸² the period was a big step forward in the preparation of the Master Plan for Vilnius and the continuation of the refurbishment of Cathedral Square.

Three years under Germany brought the reconstruction of Cathedral Square to completion. The Vilnius City Construction Office managed to finish the Master Plan for Vilnius. Unlike the two earlier regimes, no new urban projects were initiated during the Nazi period. Discussions about Vilnius' further development ended in March 1943. After that, all attention and resources were devoted to the setbacks on the Eastern

⁸² For example, on Uosto St (now Pamėnkalnio St), at the foot of Tauras Hill, the House of Pioneers was built in May 1941. It was a simple two-storey residential-type building, without any particular character. Wileński Pałac Pionierów otwiera swe podwoje (Vilnius Pioneers' Palace Opens its Doors), *Prawda Wilenska*, 23 May 1941.

front.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, the recreation of the original shape of the dome of St Casimir's Church was an important local contribution to the appearance of the city, and to the positive image of the Nazi administration.

The Lithuanian period was marked by uncertainty, the Soviet and Nazi periods by the very difficult economic situation, terror, and the unbelievable scale of the mass deportations and exterminations. Town planning was certainly not a high priority. In this context, Vilnius' development looks very intense. It was probably determined by the team of architects and town planners who stayed in the city throughout these turbulent times. The Vilnius-based Polish employees of the City Construction Directorate and their Lithuanian leader from Kaunas, Vytautas Landsbergis-Žemkalnis, managed to continue projects which were started before the war.

The fact that town planning was not a priority also determined the specific character of Vilnius' development. If the projects that were envisaged had been realised, we would have a monument to Vytautas the Great on Cathedral Square, the Bell of Freedom on Gediminas' Tower, and a Palace of Soviets on Lukiškių Square. In reality, the town planning aspects of the city's development did not have a political background (except for the dome of St Casimir's Church, which was not commissioned by the state). Vilnius acquired a reconstructed main square without a monument, and a master plan without an ideologically charged centre. Actual ideological interventions were simple, small and decorative: flags and street names were changed, temporary monuments and occasional decorations were put up, but most of the city remained politically neutral. In fact, major transformations of public spaces which were based on political ideology did not happen in Vilnius during the Second World War.

⁸⁵ The press warned that those who in the fourth year of the war dared to strive for better living conditions were enemies of the soldiers at the front: 'Anyone who decides today to install central heating does not think about the lack of iron for weapons at the front, which are being used to save our lives' (Der Bausünder, *Wilnaer Zeitung*, 28 August 1943).

Rasa Antanavičiūtė

Vilniaus urbanistinė raida Antrojo pasaulinio karo metu

Santrauka

Straipsnyje atkuriama Vilniaus miesto pertvarkymo istorija Antrojo pasaulinio karo (toliau – II PK) metu, ieškant reprezentacinės urbanistikos pavyzdžių. Reprezentacinė urbanistika čia vadinama priemonių, kurias valdžia taiko siekdama priartinti miesto tapatybę vyraujančiai politinei ideologijai, visuma. Šios priemonės apima tiek urbanistinius-architektūrinius (pvz., aikščių rekonstrukcija, monumentų statyba), tiek simbolinius-dekoratyvinius miesto keitimo būdus (pvz., gatvių pavadinimai, valstybės simbolių vartojimas).

Visi didesni urbanistiniai miesto pertvarkymai ir projektai II PK metu buvo rengiami Vilniaus miesto statybos valdyboje. Skirtingi politiniai režimai įtraukdavo ją į savo administracinę sistemą nekeisdami nei darbuotojų, nei vadovo – vyriausiojo inžinieriaus Vytauto Landsbergio-Žemkalnio. Dėl profesionalių architektų bei urbanistų stygiaus 1939 m. naujoji Statybos valdyba perėmė 1936 m. įkurto Miesto urbanistikos biuro darbuotojus. Daugumą jų buvo Varšuvos Technikos universiteto – svarbiausios architektūros mokyklos to meto Lenkijoje – absolventai.

Tos pačios architektų komandos darbas sąlygojo reikšmingiausių urbanistinių Vilniaus projektų tęstinumą: Vilniaus generalinis planas ir Katedros aikštės rekonstrukcija buvo pradėti dar prieš karą, o užbaigti nacių laikais, 1942–1943 metais. Šių, reprezentacinę prasmę pačių svarbiausių, urbanistinių objektų pertvarkymo istorija, vykusi skirtingų, viena kitos atžvilgiu priešiška nusiteikusių politinių jėgų valdymo laikotarpiu, pavertė II PK Vilniaus urbanistinį planavimą tam tikru viršpolitiniu fenomenu. Visų trijų režimų poreikis turėti tinkamą vietą politiniams ritualams nustelbė norą Katedros aikštę pertvarkyti savaip. Vilniaus generalinio plano rengimą sovietiniu laikotarpiu lėmė viešai deklaruojama politinė valia sukurti naują sovietinį miestą (nors parengtasis planas neatitiko svarbiausių sovietinės urbanistikos principų). O štai Lietuvos Respublikos ir Reicho valdymo metais plano rengimas, atrodo, buvo tęsiamas iš inercijos, Statybos valdybos vadovo ir darbuotojų iniciatyva.

Nors Vilnius buvo viena svarbiausių Lietuvos valstybingumo istorijos pasakojimo grandžių, nestabili politinė padėtis ir laiko stoka neleido Lietuvos Respublikai rimtai imtis miesto pertvarkymo darbų, tačiau lenkiškųjų planų ir jų autorių perėmimo veiksmas nulėmė visus tolimesnius karo laikotarpio miesto pertvarkymus. Pirmieji sovietiniai metai buvo planavimo metai. Dauguma projektų taip ir liko popieriuje, tačiau miesto vystymo planuose atsirado sostinei būdingų akcentų: Sovietų rūmai bei Operos ir baletų teatras. Per trejus vokiškuosius metus buvo užbaigta Katedros

aiškštės rekonstrukcija ir generalinis miesto planas. Jokie nauji urbanistiniai projektai nebuvo inicijuoti. Tiesa, šiuo laikotarpiu buvo rekonstruotas Šv. Kazimiero bažnyčios kupolas – stačiatikių „svogūną“ pakeitė Karalaičio Kazimiero mitra, tačiau tai buvo Lietuvos architektų inicijuotas ir Lietuvos tikinčiųjų finansuotas projektas.

1939–1944 m. mieste taip pat vyko nuolatinė simbolinių valdžios ženklų kaita: Gedimino pilies bokšte keitėsi vėliavos, buvo verčiami ir keičiami gatvių pavadinimai, statomi laikini paminklai, tvirtinamos atminimo lentos ir pan. Šių priemonių būta itin daug, o jų dinamika atspindi skirtingų politinių režimų požiūrį į miestą ir jo gyventojus: Lietuvos Respublikai buvo labai svarbu „atlietuvinti“ miestą, sovietams – pademonstruoti Sovietų Sąjungos galią, o naciams – pritaikyti miestą vokiečiams.

Dėl sudėtingos politinės bei ekonominės situacijos, valdžių kaitos ir Statybos valdybos personalo pastovumo II PK Vilniaus valdžių finansuojami projektai įgavo specifinį charakterį – jie neturėjo ideologinio užtaiso: rekonstruota centrinė aikštė liko be paminklo, o naujas generalinis planas – be ideologiškai reikšmingo miesto centro. Urbanistiniai-architektūriniai miesto pavidalo pakeitimai liko politiškai neutralūs. Politizuotos intervencijos – vėliavos ir gatvių pavadinimai, laikini paminklai ir švenčių dekoracijos – buvo smulkios ir trumpalaikės. Iš tiesų II PK metais Vilniuje nebuvo realizuotas nei vienas urbanistinis-architektūrinis reprezentacinis projektas.