

Vasilijus Safronovas

Klaipėda University, Institute of Baltic Region History and Archaeology

Monuments of Wilhelmine Germany in Memel / Klaipėda: A Contribution to the History of Contested Memory

Keywords: German nationalism, Lithuanian nationalism, contested memory, appropriation of the past, reuse of monuments, continuation of memory, remaking of memory

In 1907, the *Borussia* monument was solemnly inaugurated in Memel (today, Klaipėda). It was one of several dozens of so-called national monuments (*Nationaldenkmal*) in the German empire, along with Walhalla in Bavaria, the Kyffhäuser monument in Bad Frankenhausen, the monument to William I at Porta Westfalica, the monument to the Battle of the Nations in Leipzig, and others. As a testimony to its importance, the emperor William II took part in the monument's inauguration ceremony. However, it was not for long that the monument performed its function as an "eternal reminder" of Prussia's resurrection during the Napoleonic wars. It was demolished in 1923. Although thanks to the efforts of the local public activists, the monument was rebuilt in 1938, several years later, at the end of the Second World War, it was again removed.

The short lifespan of this symbol had to do with political changes. During the first half of the 20th century, the city changed hands five times. Having signed the Treaty of Versailles after the First World War, Germany ceded its region north of the Neman (Nemunas, Memel) River to the Allies that "won" the war, and from 1920, France administered the region on their behalf. At the same time, in Lithuania restored after the end of the war, politicians voiced claims to Klaipėda in the hope of turning it into a national port. In early 1923, the Lithuanian government acted upon these claims, first by launching a military operation (a staged uprising of

the local residents), and later, by regulating the aftermath of the operation by diplomatic means. As a result, on February 16, 1923, the Allies decided to cede their rights to the Klaipėda Region to Lithuania. However, in 1939, the Nazi Germany claimed it “back” by an ultimatum. On March 23, the Klaipėda/Memel region became the last territory occupied by Germany before the outbreak of the Second World War. It was not until the Allies renounced the appeasement policy and finally put an end to the Nazi ambitions in 1945 that German soldiers finally retreated from Klaipėda. Like the rest of Lithuania, the city became part of the Soviet Union.

All these political changes had a direct impact on the population dynamics. Forced migrations, including politically and economically motivated ones, fleeing from the war, and deportations were a composite part of the twentieth-century experience of the Klaipėda residents. Major shifts took place in 1938–1960, with a radical change of residents in the city. Due to forced evacuation, at the turn of 1944–1945, almost 100 percent of the residents of Memel, both Germans and Lithuanians, found themselves in the depths of Germany and abandoned the city for good. After the war, Klaipėda was repopulated by new residents – Lithuanians, Russians, Belarusians, Ukrainians etc. – from all over the Soviet Union, above all from the Lithuanian SSR.

Despite these fundamental changes, in 2002, almost six decades after the end of the Second World War, the residents of Klaipėda got involved in a public discussion about the restoration of the *Borussia* monument lost during the war. At first sight, this kind of discussion might seem surprising. It would seem that there is nothing in common between the present-day residents of Klaipėda and the monument that once asserted the myth of Prussia’s German mission: it was not only generations and ideologies, but also the dominant national culture in the city that have changed. However, the discussion was not limited to theory only. In 1989, by the joint efforts of the city’s current residents and Memel’s pre-war communities now based in Germany, another monument erected in the Wilhelmine Period that had met a similar fate – a sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau dedicated to the 17th century Prussian poet Simon Dach –

was rebuilt in Klaipėda. In 2002, it could be used as a reference point for the discussion of what can be achieved by joint action.

All that makes “the Klaipėda case” suitable to discuss the question that is being raised today by many politicians and public figures worldwide. What motives stand behind the ideas of construction, demolition and later restoration of monuments? As we know from previously conducted research, monuments, which are naturally “silent”, become “hostages” of competing ideologies, changing political regimes, attempts by different groups to impose their domination, and conflicting memories.¹ The aim of this article is to show that all these factors each time can “charge” monuments with new meanings, which were unknown or even not intended by its builders and initiators. And, on the contrary, the meanings imposed by the initiators at the time of construction can lose their relevance for the future generations. If cultural continuity ceases or the political situation changes, these generations may give entirely new meanings to the monuments, reuse them, helping to transform the “alien” into “one’s own”.

Three monuments, their initiators and primary meanings

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, Memel, or Klaipėda, as Lithuanians have been calling it since the 15th century at the very least, was

¹ Cf. the research analyzing changes in concrete cities of the Baltic Sea region: Peter Oliver Loew: *Danzig und seine Vergangenheit 1793–1997. Die Geschichtskultur einer Stadt zwischen Deutschland und Polen* (Einzelveröffentlichungen des Deutschen Historischen Institut Warschau, Bd. 9). Osnabrück: Fibre, 2003; Gregor Thum: *Die fremde Stadt. Breslau 1945*. München: Siedler, 2003; Per Brodersen: *Die Stadt im Westen. Wie Königsberg Kaliningrad wurde*. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008; Jan Musekamp: *Zwischen Stettin und Szczecin. Metamorphosen einer Stadt von 1945 bis 2005* (Veröffentlichungen des Deutschen Polen-Instituts Darmstadt, Bd. 27). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010; Felix Ackermann: *Palimpsest Grodno. Nationalisierung, Nivellierung und Sowjetisierung einer mitteleuro-päischen Stadt 1919–1991* (Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. Quellen und Studien, Bd. 23). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010; Vasilijus Safronovas: *Kampf um Identität. Die ideologische Auseinandersetzung in Memel/Klaipėda im 20. Jahrhundert* (Veröffentlichungen des Nordost-Instituts, Bd. 20). Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015; Rasa Antanavičiūtė: *Menas ir politika Vilniaus viešosiose erdvėse* [Art and Politics in Vilnius Public Spaces]. Vilnius: Lapas, 2019. Also see: *Das Denkmal im nördlichen Ostmitteleuropa im 20. Jahrhundert. Politischer Kontext und nationale Funktion* (Nordost-Archiv, Bd. VI/1997, Hf. 1). Ed. by Sven Ekdahl. Lüneburg: Nordost-Institut, 1997.

a city at the border of two huge European empires – Russian and German. Russia started several dozen kilometres north and east of the city. The border appeared there as early as the 15th century, but in those times, it separated Prussia from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The situation changed in 1795, when the lands of the latter were ceded to the Romanov monarchy, and in 1871, when Prussia “expanded” into the Kaiserreich.

The areas near the Russian border were pluricultural. The German-speaking element was predominant in the cities (Memel, Tilsit), while the countryside was inhabited mostly by Lithuanian-speaking subjects of the Prussian King. However, at the turn of the centuries, this region of Germany had not yet been transformed economically and socially by industrialization to the same extent as it happened somewhere in Westphalia or Silesia. In fact, East Prussia was a donor of Germany’s industrial regions and supplied them with approximately 20 thousand-strong workforce annually. Agriculture was still the dominant sector of economy there, and the rural population exceeded the urban population.² Thus, East Prussia was a distant corner of the Kaiserreich, and the city of Memel – the terminal station of Germany’s railway network – was the back of beyond. In the 19th century, a large part of Prussian cities was rapidly growing. However, the population of Memel got “stuck” at 19–21 thousand around 1867, and this number did not change up until the First World War.

Despite its unfavourable geographical and economic position, the intellectual circles of not only this city, but also the entire East Prussia in the late 19th and early 20th centuries used various strategies aimed to draw Berlin’s attention to the problems of their distant corner. Unlike a large part of Prussia’s western lands, it was not until the 19th century that East Prussia for the first time became part of a political entity whose name included the word “Germany”. Thus, these strategies were intended to strengthen the links between the province and Germany, and to show

² Cf. Thomas M. Bohn: *Bevölkerungsentwicklung und Urbanisierung in Ostpreußen im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung, Zwischen Lübeck und Novgorod. Wirtschaft, Politik und Kultur im Ostseeraum vom frühen Mittelalter bis ins 20. Jahrhundert.* Ed. by Ortwin Pelc, Gertrud Pickhan. Lüneburg: Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1996, 361–372.

to the residents of the province how their region was important for Germany and how it enriched “Germanness”, and to show to the residents of the rest of Germany that East Prussia was not “German Siberia”, as some asserted.³

Out of at least several strategies of this kind, two are relevant for the present research. These strategies were based on different visions of who Germans were and what unified them. One vision, that of the *Reichsnation*, was a transformation of fealty to the Prussian monarch, so-called Prussian patriotism. According to that vision, the Hohenzollern dynasty and other imperial institutions were to become the basic symbols unifying the German nation. The myth of Prussia’s German mission was centred on the Hohenzollerns and their wisdom in maintaining German unity and purposefully leading Prussia and the Germans towards what Otto von Bismarck and Kaiser William I allegedly achieved in 1871. According to this vision, East Prussians and the residents of Memel had to realize their role as “the cradle of Prussia”. Though the centre of the Hohenzollern power was Brandenburg, the former domains of the Teutonic Order in Prussia were allegedly instrumental in the growth of their power. Thus, East Prussians realized: if it was not for “their” country, the Hohenzollerns would have hardly fulfilled their “mission”.

The second vision, that of the *Volksnation*, was a result of an agglomeration of many contradictory ideas. According to this vision, Germans were understood not as the Kaiser’s subjects, but as a community defined by racial criteria, a given existing independently of states and national identities. The ideal *Volksnation* was perceived as a homogeneous community (*Volksgemeinschaft*) of “the strong” with a totalitarian structure, racially uniform, bound by blood ties, superior to others because of “natural selection”, and compelled to establish this extraordinary status through the global “struggle for existence”.⁴ This vision was not dominant

³ For more, see Vasilijus Safronovas: *The Creation of National Spaces in a Pluricultural Region: The Case of Prussian Lithuania*. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016, 90–120.

⁴ Cf. Peter Walkenhorst: *Nation – Volk – Rasse. Radikaler Nationalismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1890–1914* (Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft, Bd. 176). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007.

in the Kaiserreich, but it had quite wide support, particularly in the cities. For the residents of East Prussian cities (not excluding Memel), this vision helped to turn their unfavourable geographical position into an advantage. East Prussia began to be represented as an outpost of German “high” *Kultur* in the Slavic and Baltic-dominated “East” – a stronghold of civilization and its dissemination in the backward land of primitive barbarians. Thus, it was not by accident that the border between Germany and Russia, which ran quite close to Memel, was sometimes depicted as a border between Germanic and Slavic peoples, Europe and Asia, civilization and barbarity.

This entire context is important in trying to understand the history of the appearance of three monuments in Memel at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and their concurrent interpretations. All the three monuments should be perceived as a means used by Memel’s urban cultural elite of that time to construct and to strengthen its links to Germany and the German nation. The members of that elite saw these monuments as intermediaries, publicly demonstrating how Memel was important to Germans and Germany.

The earliest monument built in Memel’s public space was a statue of the first Kaiser of the German Reich, William I. The sculpture inaugurated on October 3, 1896 was created in Berlin by Robert Bärwald. The work was commissioned and gifted to the city by a rich Memel merchant Wilhelm Pietsch. Initially, the 2.7 m high bronze statue was displayed in the deputies’ assembly room in the City Hall, and in 1896, it was transferred to a public space⁵ – an intersection of two main streets in the city centre, popularly called Alexanderplatz after an analogy to Berlin. The monument to William I rose in Memel not only because of the posthumous cult of “the first Kaiser” in the German Empire.⁶ The Kaiser

⁵ Johannes Sembritzki: *Memel im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*. Memel: F. W. Siebert, 1902, 146–147.

⁶ Several hundred monuments to the Kaiser were built in Germany over several decades. See Reinhard Alings: *Monument und Nation. Das Bild vom Nationalstaat im Medium Denkmal – zum Verhältnis von Nation und Staat im deutschen Kaiserreich 1871–1918* (Beiträge zur Kommunikationsgeschichte, Bd. 4). Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1996, 105–128;



Kaiser William monument in the Alexanderplatz in Memel.

Around 1900. Postcard. Robert Schmidt's Buchhandlung, Inh. Richard Krips. Klaipėdos apskritys I. Simonaitytės viešojoji biblioteka, AdM archyvas

had a special relation to this city because of his childhood memories: in 1807–1808, situated at the border of Prussia's ally of that time, Russia, Memel became a refuge to the royal family that fled from Berlin and Napoleon's invasion to Prussia; on October 3, 1807, William, at that time the ten-year-old second son of King Frederick William III, was ceremoniously enrolled in the Prussian army there. This plot was represented in the relief on the pedestal of the monument to Wilhelm der Grosse. In this way, the links of the Great Kaiser, the top Hohenzollern in Germany at that time, to Memel were revealed.

A similar relation between the locus and the whole is obvious in the case of the *Borussia* monument as well. A Latin name for Prussia, *Borussia* was personified as an allegorical 4.2 m high bronze figure of a female warrior

on a granite pedestal. The work by the Charlottenburg sculptor Peter Breuer appeared as a result of transformation of previous efforts to

Gunther Mai: »Für Kaiser und Reich«. Das Kaiser-Wilhelm-Denkmal auf dem Kyffhäuser, *Das Kyffhäuser-Denkmal 1896–1996. Ein nationales Monument im europäischen Kontext*. Ed. by Gunther Mai. Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 1997, 149–177.

build a monument to Queen Louise, the mother of Kaiser William I, in Memel. In 1890, this idea was voiced by the local association of war veterans (*Kriegerverein*), which could not implement it solely on its own. In 1898, a foundation set up by the association was taken over by the municipal authorities,⁷ which might have introduced the idea of building the monument to the government of the East Prussian province. At that stage, the conception of the monument changed – instead of building just another sculpture of Queen Louise in East Prussia, it was decided to erect a national monument, revealing the full meaning of the events of 1807–1815, based on the myth of Prussia’s German mission.⁸ Inaugurated on September 23, 1907, the monument sent a message that Prussia, trampled and humiliated by Napoleon but not having lost its dignity (symbolized by Queen Louise), started to get back on its feet in Memel in 1807. For it was in Memel that King Frederick William III, surrounded by wise counsellors (their role and closeness was expressed in an obvious way – the busts of the counsellors were arranged around the sculpture set up in the centre of the square), laid the basis for the residents of Prussia to join the liberation struggle against Napoleon. Above all, it concerned the reforms of Prussia that were started in Memel: liberation of peasants, reorganization of the army etc. The *Borussia* symbolized Prussia rising to its feet again and going into struggle against the occupier. Supposedly, modernized by wise statesmen, the risen Prussia became strong enough to fulfil the mission of the Hohenzollerns – to unite Germany. The site chosen for the monument – a square just opposite the Town Hall, the building that was home to King of Prussia Frederick William III and Queen Louise in the years of their self-deportation to Memel (1807–1808), also pointed to the relation to the theme. Their bronze portrait medallions and the inscription “1807–1907. Das dankbare Preussen”

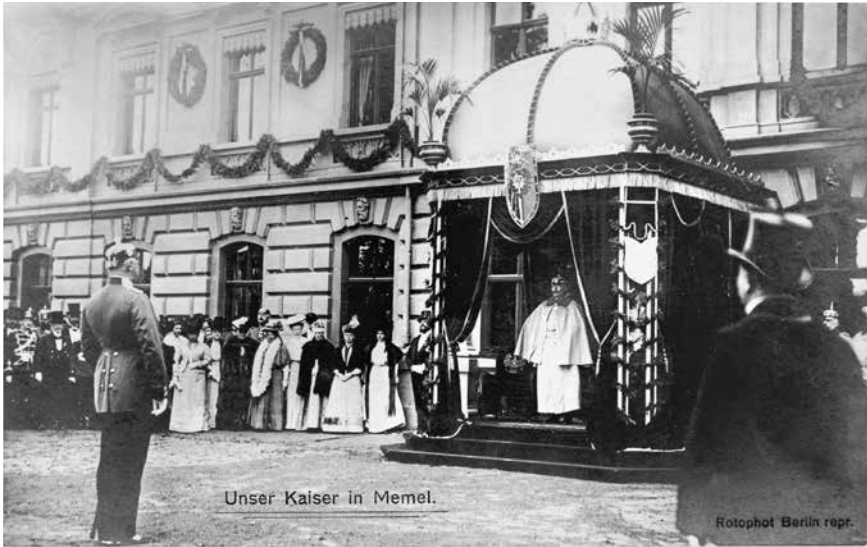
⁷ Sembritzki: *Memel...*, 147.

⁸ For more, see Vasilijus Safronovas: Borusianistinio didžiojo istorinio pasakojimo aktualizavimas Rytų Prūsijos provincijoje XIX–XX amžių sandūroje: atvejo analizė provincijos kontekste [The Actualization of the Borussianistic Historical Master Narrative in the East Prussian Province at the Turn of the 19th and 20th Centuries: Case Study in the Context of the Province], *Acta Historica Universitatis Klaipedensis* 23 (2011), 52–60.



The unveiling of the national monument *Borussia* in Memel.

September 23, 1907. Photo by Max Ehrhardt. Reproduction from coeval publication.
Klaipėdos apskrities I. Simonaitytės viešoji biblioteka, AdM archyvas



German emperor William II attending the solemn ceremony in Memel.
September 23, 1907. Photograph. Rotophot Berlin.

Klaipėdos apskrities I. Simonaitytės viešoji biblioteka, AdM archyvas

(Grateful Prussia. 1807–1907) were set up on a granite pedestal.⁹ The composition was intended to open the eyes of the residents of Memel to the importance of their city to all Prussia and Germany, and focus the attention of the residents of Prussia to the significance of Memel to all of them.

Both monuments reflected the vision of the *Reichsnation* and the efforts of the local elites to establish the understanding of their relation to Germanness. In the history of the third monument of Ännchen von Tharau in Memel, the links to the vision of the *Volksnation* are more obvious. The monument-fountain inaugurated on May 19, 1912 was created by a sculptor from Charlottenburg, Arnold Künne. A bronze

⁹ *Festschrift zur Enthüllungs-Feier des Nationaldenkmals in Memel am 23. September 1907*. Memel: Johannes Schenke, 1907.



The monument-fountain to Simon Dach at the Neuer Markt, in front of the city theatre building (on the right).

C. 1912–1914. Postcard. Robert Schmidt's Buchhandlung, Inh. Richard Krips. Author's collection

figure of a barefoot girl is a reference to a literary character.¹⁰ The life-size figure was raised on a granite base built in the centre of the fountain, and a bronze relief with a portrait of the poet Simon Dach was set up on the base. The most famous Prussian poet of the 17th century and the rector of Königsberg University, Dach was born in Memel. The idea to make use of this fact came up in 1909, when the 250th anniversary of the poet's death was commemorated. It was decided to represent not the poet himself, but a character of popular verses attributed to him, "Anke van Tharaw" ("Ännchen von Tharau"). Researchers of Dach's work have been asserting

¹⁰ The wedding poem was created in honour of the daughter of the Tharau priest (Lithuanian Tarava, today, Vladimirovo, Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia) Anna Neander on the occasion of her wedding in 1636. Heinrich Albert was the first to publish the lyrics and music of "Anke van Tharaw" in 1642 in the collection *Arien*.

for almost a hundred years that there are no reliable data to support the claim that Dach is the author of these verses.¹¹ It was Johann Gottfried Herder who attributed the poem to Dach more than a hundred years after the poet's death, and it was due to Herder's influence that the poem "Anke van Tharaw" became widespread in German-speaking countries as a song "Ännchen von Tharau". That is how Anke / Ännchen, a representative of the lower social classes and a character of folk songs, became Dach's trademark.

The choice of the figure of Ännchen in building a monument to Dach in Memel seems like an expression of the radical version of German nationalism due to several reasons. The nation there was perceived from the ethnic viewpoint (as representatives of "purebred German culture") rather than from the viewpoint of "the Reich's nation" (the Reich as "the Kaiser's subjects"). There are several facts pointing to the relation to this version. The monument was built solely from voluntary donations of the residents; the role of municipal authorities or associations that traditionally demonstrated their loyalty to the Kaiser was minimal. The building committee raised funds for the construction of the monument to Dach in Memel in 1910 and 1911, by holding summer festivals with concerts and attractions for the "people". Thus, it was an obvious attempt to engage everyone, including the lower social classes, in this initiative. The monument in Memel was built in a square where weekly markets were held, rather than next to the objects that were once visited by kings and queens – thus, not in an elite location, but on a site where city and village residents would gather to sell and to buy. Besides, in Memel, market at that time was held right next to the building of the city theatre. This as if emphasized the value of Dach as a representative of high German culture, and Memel and, alongside, East Prussia as the "Eastern outpost" of this culture – the fact that was very clearly formulated when a monument to Friedrich Schiller was also built at the local theatre in the centre of the

¹¹ Cf. Walther Ziesemer: Simon Dach, *Altpreußische Forschungen* 1 (1924), 23–56. Also see: Axel E. Walter: *Orpheus Prutenus. Selbstkonzept und Rezeption des Dichters Simon Dach*. Klaipėda: Klaipėdos universiteto leidykla, 2020, 207–208.

East Prussian province, Königsberg, in 1910.¹² Thus, the figure of a girl, a character of folklorized verses, was meant to become a symbol helping to build imaginary bridges between Memel and Germanness not only for the local elite groups, but also for the lower classes. They also had to feel themselves as members of the community related by “culture passed down by blood”.

The year 1923: two were pulled down, why did the third remain?

Between 1918 and 1923, after four years of the war that hit society hard, the residents of Memel / Klaipėda had to deal with food shortages and the challenges of welfare, which was the reality of Germany at that time. The November Revolution resulted in replacing monarchy with a democratic republic, separation from Germany plunged the residents of the city and the region into the unknown, and finally, the annexing of the region to Lithuania in January-February 1923 provoked strong protests of some, although the larger part of the local population received it passively. All that coincided with the peak of financial crisis and inflation in Germany: the German Mark circulated in the Klaipėda Region until May 1923. At the beginning of April 1923, tension broke into mass protests. An incident when unidentified persons pulled down the statues of Kaiser William and *Borussia* from their pedestals in the night from April 7 to 8 was related to these events.

Unrest flared up on April 3 with a protest held by the local communists with economic motifs.¹³ The trade union association decided to take

¹² Cf. Max Hecht: *Die Idee eines Schillerdenkmals in Königsberg*. Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer, 1905. For more on the comparison of the initiatives to build monuments to Schiller in Königsberg and to Dach in Memel, see Vasilijus Safronovas: Funktionale Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede der Erinnerungskulturen an der Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert in Städten an der Peripherie und im Zentrum. Memel im Vergleich mit Berlin und Königsberg, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 63/2 (2014), 239–242.

¹³ The reconstruction of the strike is based on information from *Königsberger Hartungssche Zeitung*, 05.04.1923 (no. 79)–14.04.1923 (no. 87); *Lietuva*, 11.04.1923 (no. 79)–13.04.1923



The pulled down *Borussia* monument guarded by a Lithuanian soldier.
 April 1923. Photograph. Klaipėdos apskritys I. Simonaitytės viešojo biblioteka, AdM archyvas

charge of the initiative, and on April 6, a general strike was announced to demand economic justice and a guarantee of ethnic and constitutional rights (freedom of speech etc.). Finally, the right-wing forces tried to take the helm of mobilizing society. Their target was clear – the recently introduced Lithuanian administration in the Klaipėda region. In response to the unrest, Lithuania's delegated representative in Klaipėda placed the city under curfew, the army dispersed the protest, and also resorted to other means; as a result, on April 11, the strike was suppressed. However, already the next day after the fall of the statues, the right-wing agitators emphasized that they were pulled down during the curfew,

(no. 81); *Memeler Dampfsboot*, 04.04.1923 (no. 77)–14.04.1923 (no. 86); *Prūsų Lietuvių Balsas*, 05.04.1923 (no. 77); 10.04.1923 (no. 79/81)–14.04.1923 (no. 85).



Two removed statues hidden from the public in the courtyard of the city's fire station. 1932. Photograph. Koncern *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* – Archiwum Ilustracji at the Narodowe Archiwum Cyfrowe

when any movement of the civilian population was banned in the streets. Thus, they laid responsibility on Lithuania, as during the curfew only Lithuanian soldiers were formally allowed to patrol the streets. Several days later, the leading voice of the right-wing liberals, the daily *Memeler Dampfboot*, wrote: “even the radical communists would not have dared to do this”.¹⁴ A number of organizations, the municipal authorities, and the Consulate General of Germany voiced protests right away.¹⁵ The Lithuanian side declared on April 11 that “the search for the culprits is

¹⁴ Die Gefühlsaufwallung des Memelvolks, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 13.04.1923 (no. 85).

¹⁵ Ibid.; Proteste gegen die Memeler Vorgänge. Stellungnahme der Memeler Stadtverordneten und Berufsorganisationen, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 14.04.1923 (no. 86); Einspruch gegen die Denkmalschändung, *Königsberger Hartungsche Zeitung*, 16.04.1923 (no. 88).

on, and when found, they will be severely punished”.¹⁶ But even if they had been found, it was not announced publicly.

Soon after the strike, the municipal authorities, as the owner of the removed sculptures, ordered them to be taken to the courtyard of the city’s fire station, where they remained “hidden” from the public for a dozen years, for almost the entire period of Lithuania’s administration in the autonomous Klaipėda region. It seems that this situation suited both sides – local politicians who ardently supported autonomy and presented themselves as protecting it against Lithuania’s infringements, and the central authorities and their representative in the Klaipėda region, the governor. From 1923, local politicians and Germany’s Consulate General, in their conversations with the members of the Lithuanian government in Kaunas, the governor of the Klaipėda Region and other representatives of the central administration raised the issue of the restoration of the monuments. While doing this, they seemed to be well aware of the fact that the Lithuanian side was not going to fulfil this demand.¹⁷ By implying that the monuments were pulled down in April 1923 by “the Lithuanians”, and referring to Lithuania’s lack of response to the demands to restore the monuments, local political actors publicly asserted that Lithuania did not respect the cultural uniqueness of the Klaipėda Region, and themselves posed as protectors of that uniqueness. The central authorities, in their turn, already from 1923 asserted that the fall of the monuments was a provocation of pro-German forces taking advantage of the general strike in Klaipėda. This statement was supported by the fact that the next day after the fall of the monuments, despite the ban on meetings, right-wing agitators actively tried to turn the general strike into a political manifestation directed against the Lithuanian administration. They took advantage of the fall of the monuments to mobilize society and carry on their campaign. However, it does not deny the fact that the city’s new authorities closed their eyes to the pulling down of the monuments. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to explain why they did not fulfil the repeated demands of the local politicians to allow restoring

¹⁶ Skelbimas [Announcement], *Prūsų Lietuvių Balsas*, 12.04.1923 (no. 83).

¹⁷ Cf. Safronovas: *Kampf um Identität...*, 70.



A public meeting in the Alexanderplatz. On the right, the bare statue base of the Kaiser William monument.

Late 1920s. Photograph. Collection of the former Institute for Monument Conservation

the sculptures. E.g., the official gazette *Lietuva* published in Kaunas, the “temporary” capital city of Lithuania at that time, responded to one of such demands, handed in to Lithuania’s authorized representative in the Klaipėda Region in late June 1924, by pointing out that these were “symbols of Prussian imperialism”, and the demand to restore them was aimed “to support the country’s Germanization”.¹⁸

¹⁸ Klaipėdos krašto vokiečių memorandumas [Memorandum of the Germans of the Klaipėda Region], *Lietuva*, 01.07.1924 (no. 145).

Thus, the statues of William I and *Borussia*, even though “hidden” from the public, still took part in public discussions. Actually, the fact that the remains of the monuments (bases, fences and other elements) were left to stand for ten years after the strike added fuel to the fire. While the central authorities did not respond to the demands to allow restoring the monuments, the anti-integrative municipal authorities left the monument sites as they were. It was not until the summer of 1934 that the governor demanded that the remaining monument parts be removed. At that time, the changed geopolitical situation allowed to fulfil this demand – the great European powers were implementing collective security initiatives as an early response to the actions of the National Socialists who had taken power in Germany. The Lithuanian government also tried to join these initiatives; basically, it meant that Kaunas could disregard a possible reaction of Germany and seek a forced integration of the Klaipėda region. Having initiated the dismissal of a number of local officials and court action against them, Kaunas interfered in the competence of the autonomous administrative bodies of Klaipėda.¹⁹ It allowed removing the former pediment of the statue of William I on August 16, and starting the works of dismantling the remains of the *Borussia* monument on August 28.²⁰ The municipal authorities finally announced that after all eight busts of the political figures of Napoleon’s times that stood in two rows on both sides of the former statue, and “the Prussian symbols” from the former *Borussia* pediment had been removed, the pediment itself would remain in place and would be converted into a flowerbed.²¹

There is a question that deserves a separate discussion: if the statues were indeed removed on Lithuania’s initiative, why these actions were directed to only two of the statues, while the third one, much smaller

¹⁹ For more, see Vasilijus Safronovas: Neumann-Sass-Prozess als Ausdruck fundamentalen Wandels in den Beziehungen zwischen Litauen und Deutschland, *Annaberger Annalen* 21 (2013), 9–34; Safronovas: *Kampf um Identität...*, 89–92.

²⁰ Die Beseitigung der Denkmalssockel, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 18.08.1934 (no. 199); Entfernung des Sockels des Borussia-Denkmal, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 29.08.1934 (no. 208).

²¹ Die Sockel des ehemaligen Borussia-Denkmal, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 30.08.1934 (no. 209).

in size that could be removed much more easily, Ännchen von Tharau, remained standing? Simon Dach might have been a familiar figure to local Lithuanians as an author of church hymns, many of which were translated into Lithuanian and sung in Lutheran churches.²² However, the name of Simon Dach did not mean anything to Lithuanian Catholics, whom the local politicians associated with the central authorities and their “forced actions” in Klaipėda.²³ Thus, on one hand, it is quite possible that the monument-fountain dedicated to the poet, devoid of obvious references to Prussia’s rule and the city’s German past, remained to stand as a symbol for the lack of awareness of its “Germanness”. On the other hand, if the pulling down of the statues was indeed the work of local agents provocateur, as Lithuania’s representative in Klaipėda asserted, the monument to Simon Dach lacked references to imperialism and labour exploitation, which might have been relevant for socialist-minded hot-heads. Immediately after the revolution of 1918 in Germany, there were some attempts on the symbols of Junkerism and imperialism in Memel (Prussia’s coat of arms was smashed down from the pediment of one of the public schools²⁴). Thus, it cannot be excluded that in the case of the monument, the symbols of Prussian power became a target as they were interpreted through the prism of the far left.

The years 1938–1939: restoration as a manifestation of hope

Sixteen years of the rule of the Republic of Lithuania changed Klaipėda. In the 1930s in particular, Lithuania already took a good advantage of the possibilities of foreign trade provided by the Klaipėda port, and directed its efforts to the Lithuanianization of Klaipėda. However, the central authorities encountered multiple problems with the local residents,

²² Cf. Walter: *Orpheus Prutenus...*, 126–138.

²³ A more widely accessible publication on Simon Dach, probably the earliest in Lithuania (excluding the Klaipėda Region), appeared fourteen years after the events of 1923: Mykolas Biržiška: Dach Simanas, *Lietuviškoji enciklopedija* [A Lithuanian Encyclopaedia], vol. 5. Kaunas: Spaudos fondas, 1937, 1273–1277.

²⁴ Circa 1918–1920, a relief coat of arms of Prussia was smashed down from the pediment of the building of the Royal Teachers Training College in Memel.



A public meeting on the Luisenstrasse, near the reinstated monument *Borussia*.
 March 1939. Photograph. Mažosios Lietuvos istorijos muziejus

both Germans and Lithuanians. The local political leaders, orchestrated by Germany's Consulate General, instigated anti-integrational moods. Thus, the disloyalty of the residents of the Klaipėda territory to Lithuania was a major problem,²⁵ and the relatively active migration of Lithuanian Catholics and Lithuanian Jews to the Klaipėda Region from "the Kaunas Lithuania", due to which the city expanded almost one and a half times, did not help to solve it. The fact that Klaipėda remained under Lithuania's rule for as long as sixteen years was determined not by the comparatively small number of loyal residents in situ, but above all by external factors.

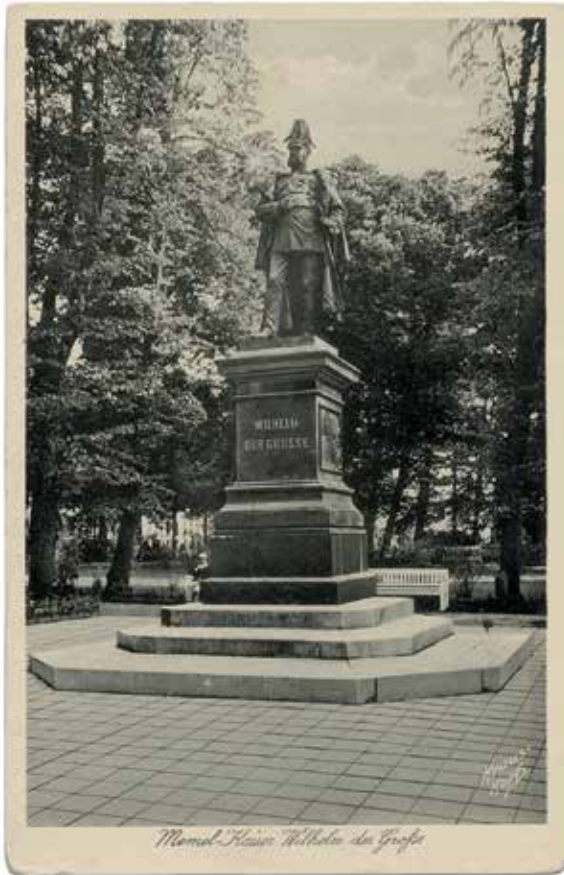
²⁵ Cf. Vytautas Žalys: *Ringens um Identität: Warum Litauen zwischen 1923 und 1939 im Memelgebiet keinen Erfolg hatte*. Lüneburg: Nordostdeutsches Kulturwerk, 1993.

The autonomous status of the Klaipėda Region as part of Lithuania was “supervised” and guaranteed by the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Japan – the signatories to the Convention concerning the Territory of Memel. It presented a considerable obstacle to Germany’s reclaiming the region at its will. On the other hand, the Klaipėda issue was not among Germany’s long-term interests, and this territory was not a basic priority of its foreign politics. Even Adolf Hitler’s government sacrificed the “issue of the Memel Germans” for the sake of greater interests in the region up until the end of 1938.²⁶ All these factors, as well as the martial law, which was introduced in Lithuania, including the Klaipėda Region, after the coup of December 17, 1926, helped the central authorities to deal with disloyalty of the local population.

However, in 1938, the position of the Nazi Germany started to change. Planning a wider expansion, Hitler’s government increased pressure on Lithuania, and the guarantors of the status of the Klaipėda Region urged the Lithuanian government to make concessions. One of the basic concessions made by the government was revoking the martial law from November 1, 1938. It basically meant that all limitations of activity were lifted for the fledgling pro-Nazi movement *Memeldeutscher Kulturverband*, which started to be organized in the Klaipėda Region several weeks earlier. Since that time, local political actors basically took no notice of the central Lithuanian government. In that context, the reinstatement of the monuments demolished in 1923 was soon returned to the agenda: it was decided in a meeting of the city’s deputies already on November 11. As was explained, the reinstatement meant that the Klaipėda Germans “are no longer brought down to their knees, they stand tall and stand free.”²⁷ The *Borussia* monument was restored in its former location already a week later, in the night from November 18 to 19. Klaipėda’s chief burgomaster Wilhelm Brindlinger gave a short speech at the restored statue, in which he emphasized that “the evil deed of the past

²⁶ Cf. Joachim Tauber: *Der Dritte Reich und Litauen 1933–1940, Zwischen Lübeck und Novgorod...*, 477–496.

²⁷ Die Wiederaufrichtung der Denkmale, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 12.11.1938 (no. 265).



Kaiser William monument,
reinstalled in the Turnplatz in Memel.
1939. Photograph and postcard by Fritz Krauskopf.
Klaipėdos apskritys I. Simonaitytės viešoji
biblioteka, AdM archyvas

has been rectified, the old wrong has been mended.”²⁸ Understandably, he had in mind the evil deed of the Lithuanians; no attempt was made to “conceal” the culprit in any way. On the contrary, when the issue of the reconstruction of the monuments was discussed at a meeting of the city’s deputies, the reasons for the strike of 1923 were explained by the brutal administration supposedly implemented by Lithuania in the Klaipėda Region.²⁹ On March 19, 1939, the inauguration festivities of the monument to Kaiser William the Great took place.³⁰ The restored statue was built in another location, the former Turnplatz (today, Kristijono Donelaičio Square), as the original place of the monument had already been claimed by the municipal authorities to solve the traffic problem.

What meaning was attached to the restoration of the sculptures on the eve of Klaipėda’s marching to the Nazi Reich? It was asserted that the monuments demolished by “the Lithuanians” were “symbols of our links to Germany”; “they were

demolished with the aim to demonstrate the end of Germanness in the

²⁸ Nun steht das National-Denkmal wieder, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 20.11.1938 (no. 271).

²⁹ Die Wiederaufrichtung der Denkmale, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 12.11.1938 (no. 265).

³⁰ Das Kaiser Wilhelm-Denkmal steht wieder, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 21.03.1939 (no. 68).



The *Borussia* monument,
reinstalled in late 1938. Postcard.
Published by Gebr. Gronau. Klaipėdos apskritys
I. Simonaitytės viešojoji biblioteka, AdM archyvas

Klaipėda Region”;³¹ thus, their reinstatement was supposed to mean the victory of Germanness and the restoration of the links to Germany. Thus, in the new context of political aspirations, the ideas that originally were behind the construction of these monuments as marking Germany’s unification and liberation from oppression acquired new contextual meanings. They expressed the hopes of the residents of Memel to be united to “their” Germany and liberated from “Lithuanian oppression”. On March 22, 1939, these hopes materialized. After an ultimatum presented by the Nazi Germany, according to a treaty signed in Berlin, the Lithuanian government conceded Klaipėda to Germany. All the credit was given to the “liberator” of the Memel Germans, the Führer. As a reminder of this meaning attributed to Adolf Hitler, the *Borussia* symbol continued to be used after Memel’s annexation as well. For

example, in April 1939, for the Führer’s fiftieth anniversary, in Berlin the representatives of Memel presented to Hitler a miniature copy of the *Borussia* statue restored in 1938, as a token of “the freedom struggle” in Memel.³²

³¹ Ibid.

³² Das befreite Memelland dankt dem Führer, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 20.04.1939 (no. 91).



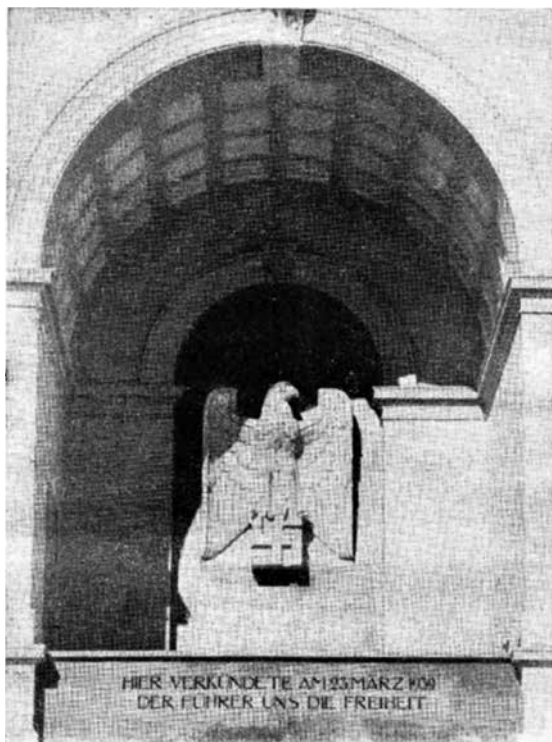
The sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau transferred to a recently built square on the Altenberg-Strasse.

C. 1940. Photograph. Klaipėdos apskrities I. Simonaitytės viešoji biblioteka, AdM archyvas

The sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau hardly took part in this process of reinterpretation of primary meanings and their adaptation to a concrete situation. However, in 1939 or 1940, the monument changed its location: it was transferred from the Neuer Markt (New Market) to a recently built square located 1.5 km away, in the newly built Arthur Altenberg (today, Vilties) Street. The motives for this transfer, as well as its precise time, are not exactly known. During the Führer's visit to Memel on March 23, 1939, the statue was still standing in the Neuer Markt.³³ However, this visit and the address delivered by the Führer in the square from the theatre's balcony created a new meaning for this space in Memel, a meaning which apparently did not need competition. During the first anniversary of Memel's "liberation" in March 1940, a coat of arms of the Nazi Germany was unveiled

on the theatre's balcony, with a carved inscription: "Hier verkündete am 23. März 1939 der Führer uns die Freiheit" (Here the Führer announced

³³ Even though Antanas Stanevičius asserts the opposite (Toravos Anikės mįslė [The Riddle of the Toravos Anikė], *Baltija* (1991), 75, 76), a photo taken during Hitler's visit (Narodowe archiwum cyfrowe, Koncern Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny – Archiwum Ilustracji, 1-E-9498-3) shows the sculpture in its old location.



New symbols of the Nazi Germany and the inscription on the city theatre's balcony.

1940. Reproduction of a photograph published in the local newspaper, *Memeler Dampfboot*

our freedom on March 23, 1939).³⁴ Though it cannot be supported by any documents, it seems that there was hardly enough space for two symbols belonging to different registers there. Obviously, the transfer of the monument to Simon Dach could not have been determined by the depreciation of the poet's work in the Nazi Reich, as in the 1930s, the interest in Dach's work increased, as Nazi academicians provided a fresh impulse for its exploration and dissemination.

The years 1944–1945: a farewell to history?

In the middle of 1944, as the Eastern Front of the Second World War was approaching Memel, an organized evacuation of the city's residents to the depths of the Reich began. It was one of very few regions in the Nazi Germany, whose civilian population was evacuated from military operations. The last residents retreated along with Wehrmacht units in January 1945. Having entered the city on January 28, 1945, the Red Army found it completely empty.

³⁴ Die erste Wiederkehr des Befreiungstages, *Memeler Dampfboot*, 23–24.03.1940 (no. 70).



The statue base of the *Borussia* monument transferred to the new site in front of the Klaipėda branch of the Urban Construction Planning Institute. C. 1970. Photograph. Klaipėdos apskrities I. Simonaitytės viešoji biblioteka

There is no reliable information as to what happened to the monuments built at the end of the Kaiserreich in Memel. Many years later, several newspaper publications mentioned that on May 9, 1945, the first public meeting of the civilian population and the military took place in the former Neuer Markt Square. Allegedly, during that meeting, not only the inscription associated with Hitler's visit was removed from the theatre building, but also the *Borussia* monument that was standing on the other side of the river was pulled down.³⁵ No other known sources confirm this information, and the statue no longer appears in any other photographs

³⁵ Cf. memoirs of Viktoras Bergas: *Tarybinė Klaipėda*, 05.12.1974 (no. 284); Klaipėda – tarybinė [Klaipėda Is Soviet], *Lietuvos jūreivis*, 17–23.01.1980 (no. 3).



The Fisherman statue installed on the former site of the *Borussia* monument.
1971. Photograph by Bernardas Aleknavičius. Klaipėdos apskritys I. Simonaitytės viešoji biblioteka

from the postwar period. However, its base remained standing in its original place for many years after the war. It was not until 1969, when the building of the Klaipėda branch of the Urban Construction Planning Institute was constructed in the new suburbs of Klaipėda, that the base was removed from its old place and installed in the lawn outside the entrance to the Institute's building. In the old place, a work of entirely different contents was erected in 1971 – the sculpture *The Fisherman* by the graduate of the State Art Institute of the LSSR in Vilnius, sculptor



Lenin (since 1976, Victory) Square with the Victory monument.

1977. Photograph by Bernardas Aleknavičius. Klaipėdos apskritys I. Simonaitytės viešojoji biblioteka

Kazys Kisielis, symbolizing the main branch of industry developed in the Soviet period in Klaipėda.³⁶ The *Borussia* base was eventually cut into pieces. In 1973–1974, during the reconstruction of the Victory

³⁶ Safronovas: *Kampf um Identität...*, 176–177.



The Victory monument after the reconstruction.

Late 1980s. Photograph by Artūras Šeštokas.
Klaipėdos apskrities I. Simonaitytės viešoji biblioteka

monument, built in 1945 in the former Libauerplatz, Hindenburgplatz, now bearing the name of Lenin Square, the base of the monument was demolished, and a new reinforced concrete column was built in its place. The column was lined with light granite slabs cut out from the dismantled *Borussia* base, and images of Soviet military orders were hung on them.³⁷

The postwar history of the other two sculptures is also obscure. In the first months after the Red Army entered Klaipėda, the Soviet troops converted the square, in which the restored sculpture of Kaiser William was built in 1939, into a military cemetery.³⁸ They would hardly have chosen a place marked with a figure of the German Kaiser to bury their perished soldiers. Most likely the monument had been removed already before the city was occupied by the Red Army.

³⁷ Pradedama paminklo rekonstrukcija [The Monument's Reconstruction Starts], *Tarybinė Klaipėda*, 03.04.1973 (no. 78). On the fate of the *Borussia* base, see Petras Lapė: Paminklai žuvusiems kariams [Monuments to the Perished Soldiers], *Klaipėda*, 08.09.1990 (no. 198).

³⁸ The founding of the military cemetery was approved at the session of the Klaipėda City Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party of August 20, 1945: Lithuanian Special Archives, f. 3658, ap. 1, b. 11, l. 1–5.

Considering the fact that for several months from August to September 1944, factory equipment and other property was being evacuated from the city, it is possible that not only the statue of Kaiser William, but also other monuments were taken to the depths of Germany or hidden somewhere as valuable artworks. This suspicion was confirmed by the rumours that circulated in the city in the 1970s that the sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau had survived and remained hidden somewhere in Klaipėda. Although there is a lack of reliable information on this issue, several witnesses recalled that as late as 1976, fragments of the base of this sculpture or the edgings of the fountain were lying scattered at Banga café, located between what is now Herkaus Manto and Ligoninės streets.³⁹

The general tendency is obvious – with the change of the prevailing ideology, monuments that were erected in Memel in the times of the Kaiserreich no longer had a place in the Soviet city. They bore too obvious references to the German past of Klaipėda / Memel, which in the postwar period was identified with Hitlerism (to define it, the term “fascism” was often used), and were overturned with the goal to establish new ideological conventions.

However, it does not mean that in the Soviet period there were no attempts in Klaipėda to find ways to appropriate the city’s “German” past. To that end, cultural activists used various strategies of converting and adapting meanings – they both tried to emphasize the relations of the “German” symbols to Lithuanian national culture, and asserted their links to universal values, which could hardly be questioned even in the USSR. A good example is an article published in the city’s daily *Tarybinė Klaipėda* (Soviet Klaipėda) in 1976, in which the teacher Vladas Nausėdas proposed arguments why it was worth looking for the sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau, possibly surviving in Klaipėda, and even restoring it. A group of like-minded associates who were behind this article and its author justified their campaign by the fact that Klaipėda “for many

³⁹ Antanas Stanevičius, Ar sugrįš „Onutė iš Taravos“? [Will “Onutė of Tarava” be brought back?], *Tarybinė Klaipėda*, 25.05.1988 (no. 120). The Klaipėda conservator Dionyzas Varkalis told the same to the author of this article in 2006.

centuries was not only a battleground of classes and nations, but also a place for international cooperation". The author of the article "Kur Taravos Onutės skulptūra?" (Where Is the Sculpture of Onutė of Tarava?) used the Lithuanianized versions of personal and place names on purpose, and wrote: "Besides Lithuanians, a number of German cultural figures were born and raised, lived or left a trace in the city in some other way", further giving a list of the following names: the astronomer Friedrich Wilhelm Argelander, the composer Richard Wagner, the amateur archaeologist famous for the discovery of Troy and Mycenae, Heinrich Schliemann, and Simon Dach...⁴⁰ It proves that despite the highly inflexible prevailing ideological standards in the Soviet period, the end of preserving or even restoring the relics of the city's prewar past – in Klaipėda, this interest manifested itself from the turn of the 1960s-1970s at the latest – justified the means.

In lieu of an ending: what is "ours" and what is "not ours"?

The *perestroika* in the Soviet Union, and the ensuing widely supported efforts of restoring Lithuania's independence, which was forcefully abolished in 1940, raised many expectations: rehabilitating the Gulag political prisoners, sentencing their executioners, and restoring property to private individuals and religious communities. Naturally, communities sought to reclaim and restore their lost symbols. The Klaipėda residents also had such expectations. Like elsewhere in Lithuania, in Klaipėda, reclaiming any lost prewar symbol was a promise of "a return to normality" – to the "normal" ("our own") period in the history of Lithuania that was cut short in 1940.

The monument to Simon Dach became one of the first symbols to be restored in Klaipėda. The inauguration festivities took place on 18 November 1989 – i.e., even before the collapse of the USSR and the proclamation of Lithuania's independence. Referring to illustrative material and a reduced-scale replica of the original figure created by

⁴⁰ Vladas Nausėdas, Kur Taravos Onutės skulptūra? [Where Is the Sculpture of Onutė of Tarava?], *Tarybinė Klaipėda*, 18.04.1976 (no. 91).



The unveiling of the reinstated Ännchen von Tharau statue in Klaipėda.

On the left, Heinz Radziwill is giving a speech. November 18, 1989.

Photograph by Audronius Ulozevičius. Klaipėdos apskrities I. Simonaitytės viešoji biblioteka

Arnold Künne discovered in Germany, the Berlin sculptor Harald Haacke restored Dach's relief portrait and the bronze sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau. However, the idea to rebuild another lost monument, *Borussia*, in Klaipėda, has not received wider support yet, though local activists keep bringing it up (an example is the discussion of 2002, mentioned at the beginning of this article, and a proposal raised in 2017). This, certainly, prompts us to raise a question why the sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau representing the radical version of German nationalism of the early 20th century has found a place in modern Klaipėda, while the proposal to restore the *Borussia* monument, which asserted the moderate

monarchist German identity a hundred years ago, has been met with rejection, not to say opposition.

Apparently, the main reason is a successful conversion of the primary meanings of Ännchen von Tharau by the initiators of its restoration in the late 20th century. The atmosphere of the *perestroika* and *glasnost*, which surrounded the discussions on the restoration of the monument to Simon Dach, was favourable for voicing and exchanging different opinions and arguments. The editor-in-chief of the daily *Tarybinė Klaipėda* of the time, Antanas Stanevičius, himself openly supported the idea of the monument's restoration and gave space in the still "communist" newspaper for the supporters of the idea to explain their arguments and shape the public opinion accordingly. In support of the idea, it was asserted that the initiator of the restoration, a citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany with family roots in northern East Prussia, Heinz Radziwiłł, was related to Lithuania (he was an heir of the famous Radziwiłł family of Lithuanian and Polish nobles). His views were claimed to be "the opposite of revanchist". The former residents of Memel and their descendants now living in Germany consider the monument to be one of the city's symbols, which also appeals to the city's present residents. In 1910–1912, the monument was built with the funds raised by the residents, while the former residents of Klaipėda and their heirs were ready to fund the restoration works. It was claimed that "Ännchen von Tharau" is a "love song" still recognized in Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and thus the monument's restoration would be "an event of international significance", which would "bring fame to Klaipėda, Lithuania in Europe, and beyond", raise Klaipėda's prestige, as the city was aspiring to become an international tourist destination, and additionally attract tourists. Finally, Dach's links to Klaipėda and his contribution to Lithuanian studies were emphasized by renaming "Ännchen von Tharau" as Lithuanian "Onutė of Tarava".⁴¹ Several months later, the newspaper wrote that "the editors received 23 letters from readers of different nationalities", who unanimously supported the idea. Support was expressed, among others, by the architect of the city's drama theatre,

⁴¹ Antanas Stanevičius: Ar sugrįš „Onutė iš Taravos“? [Will "Onutė of Tarava" Return?], *Tarybinė Klaipėda*, 25.05.1988 (no. 120).

which was under reconstruction at that time, Saulius Manomaitis, and the Vilnius Mažvydas Club (in the 1980s, there were proposals to build a monument to the Lutheran priest Martynas Mažvydas, the compiler of the first Lithuanian book, in the reconstructed square).⁴² Architects and historians suggested viewing the square as a meeting point of two cultures – Lithuanian and German, and asserted that not a single Prussian Lithuanian would have claimed that Simon Dach was “not ours”.⁴³ The fact of the combined efforts of the municipal authorities of Klaipėda (the reconstruction of the fountain and the square) and German citizens (Dach’s relief medallion and the sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau were produced in Germany) also helped to implement the project. The Ännchen von Tharau Society founded in Mainz managed to raise significant funds.

Participants of the monument’s inauguration ceremony were the residents of Memel who were evacuated to Germany in the 1940s, the settlers who had moved to the city from the entire USSR in the postwar period, as well as Lithuanian Lutherans of the Klaipėda Region, local bearers of the regional identity. The tribute to Simon Dach was also seen as a sign of reconciliation of the city’s former and present residents (one of the heads of Klaipėda, the chair of the Executive Committee Alfonsas Žalys, called the monument “a symbol of love and harmony”⁴⁴). In 1991, the city’s authorities posthumously conferred on Radziwill the name of honorary citizen of the city of Klaipėda for the implementation of this initiative. There were some doubts about the need to restore the sculpture, even among the municipal authorities of that time. Some warned of the creeping “re-Germanisation” of Klaipėda.⁴⁵ However, these doubts were

⁴² Didelis susidomėjimas ir pasiūlymai [Large Interest and Proposals], *Tarybinė Klaipėda*, 06.07.1988 (no. 155).

⁴³ Gražina Juodytė: Ar sugrįš „Anikė iš Taravos“? [Will “Anikė of Tarava” Return?], *Tarybinė Klaipėda*, 20.10.1988 (no. 241).

⁴⁴ Vytautas Bajoras: Meilės ir santarvės simbolis [A Symbol of Love and Harmony], *Tarybinė Klaipėda*, 21.11.1989 (no. 266). Cf. a positive coverage in the press of the former residents of Memel in Germany: Gerhard Willoweit: Ännchen von Tharau wieder in Memel, *Memeler Dampfboot* 11 (1989), 157–158.

⁴⁵ The words of the deputy chair of the Executive Committee of the City of Klaipėda, Elena Blažienė, that the restored Anikė would be a “magnet for revanchists” got leaked to the German press; cf. *Mažoji Lietuva*, 20.12.1989, (no. 26).

not taken seriously when making a decision about the restoration of the monument in 1988–1989.

Interestingly, in the history of the monument's restoration, we did not manage to find a single publicly voiced argument about its primary ideological (con)text, and about the importance of the meanings of radical ethnic German nationalism at the time when the original sculpture of Ännchen von Tharau was built in Memel in the early 20th century. Basically, it resulted from the lack of knowledge about the city's past. When the sculpture was restored, the authoritative local art historian Jonas Tatoris favourably assessed its artistic and historical meaning, but nobody was interested in its ideological meaning and, thus, it was not assessed separately.

Quite a different situation was observed in regard to the idea of restoring the *Borussia* monument. In January 2002, the discussion "A Border Region – A Bridge Spanning Cultures", held in one of Klaipėda libraries, which was included in the official programme of the 750th anniversary of the city of Klaipėda, at some point took a turn to the subject if the restoration of lost monuments, specifically *Borussia*, could somehow strengthen the unique self-perception of the residents of Klaipėda.⁴⁶ In 2017, three public activists addressed the municipality with a proposal to rebuild the monument. However, the debate did not gain momentum. In 2002, Vytautas Čepas, the former chair of the city council, both at the time of the debate and later, voiced an opinion in the press that "the best thing is not to build ideologized monuments in the first place. Then there will be no need to dismantle them!"⁴⁷ In 2017, one of the members of the memorialization committee set up by the municipality, historian Zita Genienė, announced that "had the monument [*Borussia*] not been demolished, we would not demolish [it] as an object of historical value, but restoring it today would provoke many unnecessary discussions."⁴⁸ These

⁴⁶ Daiva Janauskaitė: Ar sausio penkioliktoji klaipėdiečiams tik antradienis? [Is January 15 Just an Ordinary Tuesday for the Residents of Klaipėda?], *Klaipėda*, 16.01.2002 (no. 12/16269).

⁴⁷ Vytautas Čepas: Du mitai [Two Myths], *Klaipėda*, 21.01.2002 (no. 16/16273).

⁴⁸ Jurga Petronytė: Palaiminti senieji Dangės ir Svijanės vardai [The Old Names of Dangė and Svijanė Were Approved], *Vakarų ekspresas*, 25.03.2017, internet access: <https://ve.lt/naujienos/klaipedar/klaipeda/palaiminti-senieji-danges-ir-svijanes-vardai-1541718> (15.05.2020).



Current view of the Fisherman statue in front of the mayor's office.
2020. Photograph by Vasilijus Safronovas

statements basically show that ideas like this one are met with suspicion and rejection. Convincing arguments are not presented for society, and such *ad hoc* proposals often leave out another question – what should be done with the sculpture *The Fisherman* and the fountain, built on the site of *Borussia* in 1971: it is obvious that this work adds a certain colouring of Soviet ideology to the space outside the former City Hall and, currently, the mayor's office. There are no attempts to turn *Borussia* into a symbol uniting Lithuanians and Germans; on the contrary, the former residents of Memel reiterated in the West German press in 1990 that it was the



Current view of the Ännchen von Tharau statue in front of the city theatre building.
2013. Photograph by Vasilijus Safronovas

fault of “Lithuanians” that the monument was demolished in 1923.⁴⁹ One thing is clear: the meanings that existed at the time of building a national monument in Memel a long time ago today are hardly relevant; part of them, just like in the case of Ännchen von Tharau, might not even be understandable. However, convincing meanings suitable for the new context have not been proposed yet.

⁴⁹ BM: Die „Borussia“ in Memel, *Memeler Dampfboot* 9 (1990), 134.

Vasilijus Safronovas

Vilhelmo laikotarpio Vokietijos paminklai Memelyje / Klaipėdoje: įnašas į konkuruojančių atminčių istoriją

Kas motyvuoja paminklų statybos, jų griūčių ir vėlesnių atstatymų idėjas? Iš ankstesnių tyrimų jau žinome, kad paminklai, kurie patys savaime yra „nebylūs“, tampa „įkaitais“ konkuruojant ideologijoms, keičiantis politiniams režimams, skirtingomis žmonių grupėms bandant primesti savo dominavimą, konfliktuojant atmintims. Šiame straipsnyje siekiama parodyti, kad visi šie veiksniai gali kassyk „įkrauti“ paminklus naujomis reikšmėmis, kurių jo statytojai ir sumanytojai nežinojo arba kurios jiems buvo svetimos. Ir atvirkščiai, sumanytojų paminklams jų statybos metu suteiktos reikšmės ateities kartų gali visiškai nebedominti. Nutrūkus kultūros tęstinumui, pasikeitus politinei situacijai, tos kartos gali suteikti paminklams visai naujas reikšmes, transformuojančias tai, kas „svetima“, į „sava“. Šie argumentai straipsnyje plėtojami rekonstruojant Memelio / Klaipėdos trijų paminklų, iškilusių vėlyvuuju kaizerinės Vokietijos periodu, likimą XX a. kovų dėl atminties kontekste.