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LITHUANIAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Cultural diplomacy is rightly considered to be one of the most interesting and challenging issues within the realm of international relations. Many distinguished and prominent analysts, including Cynthia P. Schneider and Milton C. Cummings, have already endeavored to give this phenomenon a clear and comprehensive explanation. Different interpretations of cultural diplomacy have also been introduced on the basis of practical examples. According to Irini Stamatoudi, it is simply no longer possible to ignore the obvious fact that culture has gradually been transformed into “perhaps the only vehicle that allows nations to work more closely together and successfully to share common interests”.¹ In general terms, cultural diplomacy is not only an effective instrument of soft power, but also a very beneficial means to forge mutual understanding between different societies. Fresh ideas and unexpected solutions can sometimes assist in overcoming well-entrenched political problems inherited from the past. However, in certain cases, it might still be difficult to fully comprehend the extent to which cultural diplomacy affects complex political processes and governmental decisions that often make a huge impact on people’s attitudes towards other countries as well as their own.

Quite often major scholarly studies focus on an analysis of cultural diplomacy in influential countries such as the United States, Britain, China, Japan, France and Germany. Much less is known about the various forms of cultural diplomacy which influence the foreign policy of smaller European states such as Lithuania. The main objective of this article is to fill this informational void as well as to examine the major achievements and challenges related to Lithuanian cultural diplomacy. This will be of interest to those individuals who are willing to reject many stereotypes concerning the interaction between culture and diplomacy and who strive to expand their knowledge about the Lithuanian experience in this field.

¹ Stamatoudi, Irini. (2009). Mediation and Cultural Diplomacy. *Museum International*, Vol. 61, No. 1-2, p. 116.

THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF LITHUANIAN CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

The beginnings of Lithuanian political and cultural diplomacy can be traced back to the re-establishment of the independence of Lithuania in February 16, 1918. Twenty members of the State Council of Lithuania signed the Act of Independence on that memorable day. According to a leading Lithuanian historian, Antanas Tyla, this event became especially significant for the long-term political development of the nation due to the creation of a “possibility for the entire Lithuanian society to express its support for the restoration of the state”.² At that delicate point of history, considerable political effort was necessary in order to maneuver between the military ambitions of the German political leadership and the revolutionary aspirations of the Bolsheviks in order to achieve the recognition of Lithuania. In the wake of World War I, the international situation changed quite suddenly and the independence of Lithuania was finally recognized by the German government in November, 1918. This period was especially demanding for the Lithuanian political elite because they needed to rapidly create a national diplomatic service. Although everything had to be done practically from scratch, the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania was successfully established in November 7, 1918. As another prominent Lithuanian historian, Professor Edvardas Gudavičius, notes, these important steps were taken “in accordance to the European diplomatic codex and the rules of diplomatic protocol”.³ At that time, much heed was paid to the necessity of establishing relations with the following neighboring countries: Germany, Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Finland and Soviet Russia.

Analyzing the development of Lithuanian diplomacy, Vytautas Žalys clearly indicates that the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs began operating as “one of the smallest Lithuanian ministries” and its major functions were carried out by “merely 33 employees”⁴. However, the network of Lithuanian embassies and consulates continued to expand steadily despite initial difficulties and hardships. At present, it is quite complex to reconstruct and examine all important details in more depth because much archival material was either deliberately destroyed or irreversibly lost during the period of brutal Soviet occupation post 1940. Fortunately, some fresh insights into this important field of study can still be gained through the use of personal memoirs

² Tyla, Antanas. Vasario 16-osios Akto reikšmė lietuvių tautos politinei raidai. 6 March 2005. Found: <http://www.straipsniai.lt/vasario16/puslapis/11860>; Checked: 14 04 2010.

³ Gudavičius, Edvardas. Lietuvos diplomatijos istorija – nuo pirmojo žemės kunigaikščio akto 1201 m. iki šių dienų. *Lietuvos rytas*, 6 November 2008. Found: <http://www.lrytas.lt/-12259483091225936095-lietuvos-diplomatijos-istorija-nuo-pirmojo-%C5%BEem%C4%97s-kunigaik%C5%A1%C4%8Dio-akto-1201-m-iki-%C5%A1i%C5%B3-dien%C5%B3.htm>; Checked: 18 04 2010.

⁴ Žalys, Vytautas. Lietuvos diplomatinė tarnyba 1918-1990: Trumpa raidos apžvalga. Found: <http://www.urm.lt/index.php?419805376>; Checked: 18 04 2010.

and archives of Lithuanian diplomats: Petras Klimas, Stasys Lozoraitis Sr., Jurgis Savickis and Jonas Norkaitis, to name just a few.

To celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, an extensive exhibition *White Gloves: Official and Unofficial Diplomacy in Kaunas 1918-1940* opened at the Historical Presidential Palace of Kaunas in 2008. The opening served as an impetus to provoke additional interest in the history of Lithuanian diplomacy, and a chance to display many previously unknown documents, objects and photographs to researchers and the general public. As a result, some interesting reactions and comments about certain cultural aspects of Lithuanian diplomacy before World War II were received from representatives of other countries. The former Ambassador of Italy to Lithuania Giulio Prigioni, for example, openly expressed his excitement about finding out that “a ‘Fiat’ had been the official automobile of the Lithuanian government at that time”⁵. Meanwhile, the Ambassador of the United Kingdom Simon John Butt made an important contribution to the exposition by donating some letters and personal memoirs of British diplomats, which provided interesting information about their cooperation with Lithuanian colleagues before World War II.

In order to reveal important cultural elements related to Lithuanian diplomacy, it is necessary to mention the participation of Lithuania at international exhibitions in Paris (1937) and New York (1939). The government sought to encourage young Lithuanian sculptors, painters as well as textile masters and wood carvers to take part in the World Exhibition in France. Several booklets and informational posters were published inside Lithuania to emphasize the importance of the event. As a result of this, many gifted Lithuanian artists gave a positive response and supported the initiative quite actively. Interestingly after an extensive debate, representatives of all three Baltic States agreed to share one common pavilion together. Such an unexpected turn of events proved that Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian diplomats were willing to cooperate for the benefit of the entire region.

It should be also emphasized that most of the organizational hurdles were rapidly overcome with the assistance of Lithuanian immigrants living in France. In fact, the first attempt to introduce Lithuanian art and culture to an international audience happened to be extremely successful because even “44 Lithuanian artists were awarded golden, silver and bronze prizes and diplomas of honour – 58 awards in total.”⁶ French art experts devoted special attention to the display of Lithuanian national costumes and sashes as well as to traditionally carved wooden

⁵ Giulio Prigioni quoted in Kaune atidaryta paroda apie tarpukario diplomatiją. *ELTA*, 5 September, 2008. Found: <http://whatson.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=18439552>; Checked: 18 04 2010.

⁶ The History of Lithuanian Participation in Expo Expositions. Found: http://www.expo2010.lt/index.php/expo/lithuania_and_expo/594; Checked: 18 04 2010.

decorations and furniture. Much praise was given to the works of the renowned Lithuanian sculptor Jonas Mikėnas. In addition to impressive reliefs, he made a huge oak statue of the Pensive Christ which not only served as the dominant decoration of the Baltic pavilion and but eventually won the Grand Prix Award. In addition, a large group of Lithuanian singers and musicians, including the academic choir of Vytautas Magnus University, gave a special performance at the event in order to demonstrate the variety of Lithuanian musical heritage. All these different forms of art gradually created the basic foundations for the national image of Lithuania.

Another governmental decision to make Lithuanian culture more popular abroad was the decision to participate in the 1939 New York's World Fair. The decision was expected to be an important step forward in the realm of cultural diplomacy. Looking from a political perspective, it should be admitted that "Lithuanian politicians used the occasion to thank the United States that became home to almost one million of Lithuanian migrants" and they also tried to establish close ties with those individuals who identified themselves as Lithuanian without having a chance to visit "the country their parents and grandparents were born"⁷. In fact, the whole process of preparation for this event of global significance lasted several years and much practical assistance was received from the Lithuanian diaspora living in the United States. Due to common efforts, a separate pavilion representing Lithuania was successfully opened in New York.

According to Silvija Vėlavičienė, the head of the Lituanica Department of Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, the entire country "prepared for the 1939 New York's World Fair very responsibly" and in the aftermath of serious discussions in the local press as well as extensive "consultations with historians, seven monumental historical paintings were created"⁸. This important task was entrusted to four gifted Lithuanian painters, namely, Adomas Galdikas, Petras Kalpokas, Adomas Smetona and Stasys Ušinskas. Each painting was dedicated to a defining moment of Lithuanian history: from the coronation of the only Lithuanian king Mindaugas in 1253 to the re-establishment of the independence in 1918. As the scholar Gediminas Zemlickas insightfully indicates, the entire selection of works of art was truly impressive and included "a majestic statue of [the Grand Duke of Lithuania] Vytautas the Great (the sculptor Vytautas Kašuba)."⁹ In addition, some attention was paid to the development of Lithuanian architecture as well as technological and agricultural achievements.

The organizers of New York's World Fair invited all participants to develop their own vision about the future under the theme *Building the World of Tomorrow*. Lithuanian officials, in

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Silvija Vėlavičienė quoted in Zemlickas, Gediminas. „Signatarai“ sugrįžo. *Mokslo Lietuva*, 1-14 March, 2007, Nr. 5 (361). Found: <http://mokslasplius.lt/mokslo-lietuva/node/357>; Checked: 20 04 2010.

⁹ Ibid.

the meantime, sought to present their country on an international stage by merging the historical heritage and some innovative tendencies into one coherent whole. Being quite popular, the pavilion of Lithuania received many positive reviews as well as critical comments. Some active Lithuanian journalists and scholars even initiated a public debate about the relationship between history and modernity and their impact on the national image of the state.

Unfortunately all hopes of Lithuanian diplomats to obtain any positive results from the participation of the country at New York's World Fair appeared to be futile due to dramatic historical developments. It should be remembered that the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and its secret protocols were signed in August, 1939. As a consequence, the annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union began in June, 1940. Lithuanian politician and the Member of the European Parliament Vytautas Landsbergis, who served as the first Head of State of Lithuania after its separation from the Soviet Union in 1990, rightly explains that "the occupation was followed by the Red Terror, and then, by the use of specially re-dressed assault troopers, applying total warfare to the peasants thrown out of their homes and land."¹⁰ Under these tragic political circumstances, the pavilion of Lithuania ended up being completely abandoned but major pieces of art were taken over either by the American - Lithuanian Culture Archive in Putnam or by the Lithuanian Mission in Washington. In fact, all three Baltic States were erased from the map of Europe and the violent presence of a foreign and hostile power within the region lasted for fifty long years. Fortunately, after the downfall of the Soviet Union, some important exhibits returned to Lithuania, including the famous painting *Signatories* by Petras Kalpokas and the unique collection of dolls dressed in national costumes to depict the traditional Lithuanian wedding ceremony by Konstancija Petrikaitė-Tulienė.

After the invasion of the Soviet Army, many peaceful citizens and members of the political and cultural elite were brutally killed or forcibly sent to Siberia. However, some patriotic diplomats made an important decision to continue their action abroad as the representatives of Lithuania. Stasys Lozoraitis Sr. served as Chief Ambassador, responsible for the entire Lithuanian diplomatic service in exile, which remained the only functional institution dedicated to the defense of the vital interests of the country on the international arena. According to the Professor of History at Vytautas Magnus University Egidijus Aleksandravičius, "it had a symbolic mission of continuing the existence of the occupied state."¹¹ Due to strong political pressure and serious organizational

¹⁰ Landsbergis, Vytautas. Russia Blows Up Europe. 25 August 2008. Found: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=3717&p_d=79132&p_k=1; Checked: 24 04 2010.

¹¹ Aleksandravičius, Egidijus. (2003). Emigration and the Goals of Lithuania's Foreign Policy. *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, Vol. 1-2, Iss. 11-12, p 3. Found: <http://www.lfpr.lt/uploads/File/2003-11%2012/Aleksandravicius.pdf>; Checked: 24 04 2010.

obstacles, merely three Lithuanian diplomatic missions to the United States, the United Kingdom and the Vatican succeeded in carrying out their activities without any interruption.

Although Lithuanian exile diplomats devoted most of their time and effort to promote the idea of the restoration of Lithuania's independence, cultural activities were not completely forgotten as well. Being unable to operate completely independently in this field because of the scarcity of financial and human resources, they had to closely cooperate with the Lithuanian diaspora worldwide. For instance, much attention was paid to the dissemination of Lithuanian culture among post-war émigrés. Lithuanians living in Canada and the United States, for example, created their own communities. They built special Saturday schools for their children to learn about their homeland and maintain their identity, published newspapers and books in their native language and also regularly organized folk song and dance festivals. This beautiful tradition is kept alive up to the present day.

In 1954 the federation of liberal-minded emigrant students and scholars called *Santara-Šviesa* was established in Chicago. The renowned sociologist and culture historian Vytautas Kavolis was among the most ardent supporters of the organization. These people made truly courageous steps to maintain secret relationships with the dissidents, artists and even sportsmen living in Lithuania. The Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Wisconsin–Madison Alfred Erich Senn points out that they endeavored “to open the homeland up to foreign intellectual currents, and to confirm that there was in fact but one, united Lithuanian culture” as well as undertaking extensive political action in order to accelerate the liberation of Lithuania in the 1990's¹². Interestingly, such influential figures as the former President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus and the Member of the European Parliament Leonidas Donskis actively participated in the movement as well.

It should also be remembered that *The Voice of America* and *Vatican Radio* served as the only sources of uncensored information to reach the people living in occupied Lithuania. By secretly listening to daily broadcasts of the news and cultural shows coming from beyond the Iron Curtain, many individuals became acquainted with important political messages and learnt about developments inside the Roman Catholic Church. Prohibited patriotic poems by Bernardas Brazdžionis and Kazys Bradūnas were frequently read during these broadcasts too. Afterwards, many of them were circulated around the country as illegal hand-written manuscripts since this type

¹² Senn, Alfred Erich. About Santara-Šviesa. Found: <http://www.rasytojai.lt/inner.en.php?id=26&sritys=renginiai&dalis=renginiai&konferencijos&anarchyve=0>; Checked: 21 04 2010.

of literature was not allowed by Soviet censorship. Meanwhile, political resistance inside the country took many forms of artistic expression as well.

Drama theatres played a great role in shattering the foundations of Soviet rule in Lithuania because people were keen to watch performances about Lithuanian history. In fact, this subtle form of cultural protest troubled the Soviets very much. In 1972 Jonas Jurašas, a talented director working at Kaunas Drama Theatre, caused a big political scandal by staging a historical play *Barbora Radvilaitė* written by Juozas Grušas. Dedicated to the love story between the Great Duke of Lithuania and the King of Poland Žygimantas Augustas and a Lithuanian noblewoman Barbora Radvilaitė, this spectacle was harshly condemned by the Soviet leadership due to the inclusion of patriotic elements. Besides this, a copy of the painting of Aušros Vartai Madonna was solemnly shown to the audience at the end of the open general rehearsal of the performance. As a result, the director Jonas Jurašas had to abandon Kaunas Drama Theatre and eventually he was forced to emigrate without any prospects of return. After making a detailed examination of the situation, the analyst Anelė Dvilinskaitė recently characterized these unprecedented events as “the most brutal example of the censorship rampage at Lithuanian theatre.”¹³ But at the same time Jonas Jurašas inspired many Lithuanian artists to exploit their talent as an effective means to challenge the Soviet regime. All above-mentioned examples demonstrate that Lithuanian exile diplomacy, underground political action and the national culture were tightly intertwined during the Soviet era.

When Mikhail Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, he started the process of political and economic change inside the Soviet Union which is widely known as *Perestroika*. Consequently, many leading Lithuanian intellectuals and artists decided to make advantage of this favorable opportunity and so they created a national movement called *Sąjūdis* in June 3, 1988. This important political step was undertaken at the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences and it led to the restoration of the independence of Lithuania in March 11, 1990. Vytautas Landsbergis who started his political career as the official leader of *Sąjūdis* and eventually became the first head of state nicely summarizes the entire process of Lithuania’s separation from the USSR:

It took only one and a half years for *Sąjūdis*, the Lithuanian Reform Movement, to gain overwhelming support and trust of the people, to win general elections, to vote for independence and interim sovereign Constitution, to establish Government and to start tough talks with M. Gorbachev’s government about the normalisation of relations between Lithuania and the USSR. The latter took a year and a half more; during that period the newly independent Lithuania was granted recognition by

¹³ Dvilinskaitė, Anelė. Režisierius J.Jurašas - už laisvę kurti ir dvejoti. *Lietuvos rytas*, 21 December 2009. Found: <http://www.lrytas.lt/-12613394201260039790-re%C5%BEisierius-j-jura%C5%A1as-u%C5%BE-laisv%C4%99-kurti-ir-dvejoti.htm>; Checked: 22 04 2010.

Iceland, Russia of Boris Yeltsin and finally, after the August 1991 coup, by all European and American democracies. [...] Contacts and co-operation, exchange of experiences and consultations were a natural thing. [...] Creation, invention, politics of culture and culture of politics were always present.¹⁴

Lithuanian exile diplomats, including Stasys Lozoraitis Jr., Anicetas Simutis and Antanas Dambrava, could not remain passive under such tense circumstances. In fact, they played a very important role in strengthening the independence of Lithuania and re-establishing the national diplomatic service once again. Together with newly appointed Lithuanian officials working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania they not only managed to build up necessary relationships with the influential officials representing Western democracies but worked out much needed solutions to a great variety of urgent issues. Much heed was paid to the representation of the country and political negotiations with potential partners and opponents. Interestingly, the former Lithuanian ambassador to the United States, Stasys Lozoraitis Jr., was especially enthusiastic about the possibility of academic exchange. Therefore he took good care of young Lithuanian students who came to the United States for academic reasons and even supported some of them financially. The Ambassador of Lithuania to the United Kingdom, Oskaras Jusys, indicates that when analyzing the development of the national diplomatic service in 1918 and 1990, one can easily notice “many parallels repeat themselves: both times Lithuanian diplomacy had to be created from zero”.¹⁵

Although the very term “cultural diplomacy” has never been very popular in Lithuania, members of the political elite seek to make important cultural processes well known abroad. It is generally believed that the spread of positive messages about Lithuanian culture might be highly useful for co-operation with other countries. Promoters of Lithuanian culture in the member-states of the European Union and the United States have always been quite active. For instance, in the year 2000 an impressive exhibition of the paintings of the outstanding Lithuanian painter and composer Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis was opened at *Musée d’Orsay* in Paris. His works are considered to be surrealistic and symbolic. As Vaiva Kavaliauskaitė notes, the opening of the exhibition was tremendously successful since “many honorable guests came to the exhibition - the Minister of Culture of Lithuania, Lithuanian Ambassador to France, the Head of National Museums Associations of France, directors of French museums, famous art critics”¹⁶. In addition to the retrospective of the works of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, numerous concerts of

¹⁴ Landsbergis, Vytautas. Lithuanian Sajudis and the Singing Revolution. 23 May 2008. Found: http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter/w5_show?p_r=3552&p_d=77831&p_k=1; Checked: 27 04 2010.

¹⁵ Oskaras Jusys quoted in Kaune atidaryta paroda apie tarpukario diplomatiją. *ELTA*, 5 September, 2008. Found: <http://whatson.delfi.lt/archive/article.php?id=18439552>; Checked: 18 04 2010.

¹⁶ Kavaliauskaitė, Vaiva. Čiurlionio retrospektyva Paryžiuje. Found: http://www.muziejai.lt/prev_vers/Informacija/Ciurlionis_Paryziuje.htm; Checked: 26 04 2010.

Lithuanian classical music and other performances were arranged. Therefore the entire program received much attention from the French cultural press.

It might also be useful to consider the case of the Cultural Attaché of Lithuania to the Russian Federation Juozas Budraitis who was appointed to this post in 1995. During the Soviet occupation, this Lithuanian actor became an important film star and his personal popularity continues to be quite useful while dealing with Russian authorities and shaping a more favorable image of Lithuania. In fact, this type of activity has always been very important due to historical tensions and political disagreements between Lithuania and Russia. It should be also mentioned that just a year ago the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania proposed to organize a joint charity concert *Vilnius-Moscow* at the State Academic Bolshoi Theatre of Russia in order to bring Russian musicians and Lithuanian opera soloists together. The revenue generated from this concert was donated to children suffering from cancer in both countries. Lithuania's Minister of Foreign Affairs Vygaudas Ušackas, Russia's First Lady Svetlana Medvedeva and the President of the Rostropovich Foundation to Support Young Talented Musicians Olga Rostropovich expressed their personal support for this initiative by attending the event. In fact, similar common performances as well as other visits of Lithuanian artists, singers and musicians to major Russian cities give some hope that the relationship between two states might greatly improve despite the dark heritage of the past.

CULTURAL DIPLOMACY AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR IN LITHUANIAN-GERMAN RELATIONS

Although relations between Lithuanian and German states were complex throughout different periods of history, positive tendencies concerning the political cooperation and intensive cultural exchanges can be seen following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In 2002 Lithuania was invited to become a guest country at the Frankfurt Book Fair. In fact, such a move not only turned into an important endeavor to introduce Lithuanian literature to the German public but marked a new beginning in the field of the cultural communication between both countries. Intensive arrangements for this international book fair encouraged discussions amongst Lithuanian officials, intellectuals and writers about new possibilities concerning the construction of the contemporary image of the country. Finally, major emphasis was placed on the necessity to demonstrate various modern perspectives related to the Lithuanian state. A short motto *Lithuania: to be continued* was selected to express the dominant theme of the entire exposition. The history of the country as well as its literature and cultural heritage were introduced at the event by employing innovative means of artistic expression. In one of the interviews Ina Marčiulionytė, the former Vice-Minister of Culture,

made a number of interesting comments and shared her personal impressions about the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2002:

Responses were more positive than we expected. [...] 42 thousand people visited the Lithuanian pavilion. [...] Lithuanian exposition had three layers. Archival photos depicting the landscape of Lithuania and sceneries of Vilnius constituted the first one. The second layer - made of catalogues. For the first time Lithuania concentrated on the preparation of brief presentations and we received quite many compliments about them. [...] The third part of the exposition consisted of computer terminals which repeatedly showed some material from the catalogues along with animation as well as the presentation on Lithuanian economics, politics, culture and cities.¹⁷

In addition to the above-mentioned elements, the pavilion of Lithuania was decorated by the impressive installation *Pages of History* by Saulius Valius. This contemporary art object succeeded in uniting the traditional image of the book with new elements of paper art in order to emphasize the continuous movement from the past towards the future. During the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2002 much attention was paid to leading Lithuanian novelists Renata Šerelytė, Vanda Juknaitė, Jurga Ivanauskaitė, Ričardas Gavelis and Jurgis Kunčinas. Subsequently, their novels were successfully translated and published in Germany. Following the publication of translations of *Placebo* and *The Witch and the Rain* by Jurga Ivanauskaitė as well as *Ice-Age Stars* by Renata Šerelytė, favourable reviews by German literary critics were received.

Commenting on the importance of the artists and their works to the representation of Lithuania abroad, Saulius Valius insightfully remarked that “there are different ‘prophets’ of our culture in each country” and for this simple reason the image of the state cannot remain identical in different contexts¹⁸. His opinion is supported by a number of interesting examples. Speaking about Lithuanian artists working in Germany, it is absolutely necessary to mention the case of an opera prima donna Violeta Urmanavičiūtė-Urmana. After finishing her studies at Lithuanian Academy of Music in 1991, she decided to come to Germany in order to polish her singing skills at *Die Hochschule für Musik und Theater München*. It is widely known that her unforgettable road to global recognition has initially been marked by serious trials of fate:

With very little money, not a word of German and nowhere to stay, she went to Munich [...]. There she found Josef Loibl, whom she describes as the perfect singing-teacher. Remarkably quickly she was being acclaimed for her extraordinary musical authority and vocal beauty, exact sense of pitch and assured control.¹⁹

¹⁷ Ina Marčiulionytė interviewed by Jockus, Arvydas. Lietuva Frankfurte: elegantiška, šviesi, graži. *XXI amžius*, 23 October 2002. Found: http://www.xxiamzius.lt/archyvas/xxiamzius/20021023/kult_02.html; Checked: 05 05 2010.

¹⁸ Saulius Valius quoted by Baltrušaitytė, Renata. Ar teatras labiausiai garsina Lietuvą? *Veidas*, 13 May 2004, Nr. 20. Found: <http://archyvas.veidas.lt/leidinys.nrfull/40a47fe18fd99.2>; Checked: 05 05 2010.

¹⁹ Walker, Lynne. Violeta Urmana: She's a force of nature. *The Independent*, 25 October 2004. Found: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/violeta-urmana-shes-a-force-of-nature-544938.html>; Checked: 09 05 2010.

All those endeavors and personal sacrifices proved to be very meaningful and fruitful. Finally, Violeta Urmanavičiūtė-Urmana became an excellent mezzo-soprano and later started singing as a soprano. At present, she is frequently invited to perform at the most prestigious theatres around the world, including *Deutsche Oper* in Berlin, *Teatro alla Scala* in Milan, *The Metropolitan Opera* in New York and *The Royal Opera House* in London. Violeta Urmanavičiūtė-Urmana's current repertoire is very extensive and covers the major operas by Giuseppe Verdi, Vincenzo Bellini, Richard Wagner and Giacomo Puccini. Being an international opera star, she never forgets Lithuania and regularly gives special performances not only in major cities of the country such as the capital Vilnius, Kaunas and Klaipėda but even in her native city Marijampolė which has no opera house at all. Another Lithuanian mezzo-soprano Ieva Prudnikovaitė is also working as a soloist at *The Aalto-Theater* in Essen. Despite the workload, she often sings at *Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre*. Her newest compact disc *Tango del Fuego* was unveiled to the Lithuanian public in 2008. Thanks to intensive professional activities of these gifted women and many other performers, the image of Lithuania in Germany remains inseparable from well-developed traditions of classical music and opera.

In comparison, many Poles traditionally perceive Lithuania in the context of common history and literature related to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. But these tendencies are gradually changing and various cultural dimensions acquire considerable significance. At present, Stasys Eidrigėvičius, an outstanding painter, poster artist and book illustrator, is believed to be the most important representative of Lithuanian culture in Poland. In fact, Stasys Eidrigėvičius has been working in Warsaw for more than thirty years but at the same time he continues to preserve a very close relationship with his native country Lithuania. Making comments about this well-known artist, Audronė Simanonytė observes that when analyzing his works “one can notice the elements of surrealist grotesque, paradox and absurd” but at the same time Stasys Eidrigėvičius strives to “reveal [...] his childhood memories, speak about the longing and love for homeland”²⁰. Due to their originality, his posters and drawings are extremely popular not only in various European countries but in the United States and Japan as well.

Following the successful participation of Lithuanian novelists at the Frankfurt Book Fair of 2002, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania have jointly developed a more systemic approach towards the representation of Lithuania and its culture abroad. Viewed from an institutional perspective, it should be noted that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs devotes more attention to public diplomacy and seeks to introduce the country to foreign audiences

²⁰ An excerpt from the article by Simanonytė, Audronė. *Kaukės, padedančios atverti sielą. Amerikos lietuvis*, 8 September 2008. Found: <http://www.menorinka.lt/authors.php?cid=171>; Checked: 07 05 2010.

by concentrating on the organization of large-scale exhibitions, concerts and special events dedicated to the commemoration of important historical dates. Meanwhile the entire network of Lithuania's Cultural Attaché Offices operates under the patronage of the Ministry of Culture. Therefore cultural attachés and their staff are expected to implement continuous projects, support the participation of Lithuanian artists at well-reputed international events and maintain personal contacts with the members of the cultural and intellectual elite of the country of residence in order to encourage various forms of cooperation. Quite frequently, both these ministries agree to collaborate very closely in order to achieve the best possible results as far as the formation of the image of Lithuania is concerned.

Due to business relations, widespread tourism, and intensive communication between Lithuania and Germany after the enlargement of the European Union, the inhabitants of both states have a strong interest in each other's cultures. In order to compensate for the lack of information and provide necessary administrative assistance, the Cultural Attaché Office of Lithuania in Germany opened its doors in Berlin in 2004. It was established by Rasa Balčikonytė, the Cultural Attaché of Lithuania to the Federal Republic of Germany. She has successfully been acting as the head of this institution up to the present day. Importantly, the Federal Government of Germany encouraged the spread of culture of the newly accepted Member States of the European Union at the time. During *The Cultural Year of the Ten* approximately one million euros were allocated in order to organize a series of impressive events which took place in Berlin as well as other parts of Germany:

Themed "Expansion is good for the Horizon" from May 2004 to May 2005 the Culture Year of the Ten involved more than 60 projects ranging from fine arts and photo art to literature, film and music. [...] Dialogue, the creation of networks, sustainability – the guiding principles of the CULTURAL YEAR followed directly from its main objective: to help to overcome the artificial division of Europe between old and new member states, between east and west, between politicians and citizens. All of the events were organised jointly between the ten new member states and German partners.²¹

Contrary to initial apprehensions and doubts, *The Cultural Year of the Ten* enjoyed tremendous success. Much attention was received from leading German politicians, including the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Germany Joschka Fischer and the Mayor of Berlin Klaus Wowereit. The Cultural Attaché of Lithuania Rasa Balčikonytė was invited by the organizers to take part in a special working group together with nine other diplomats and to make a personal contribution to the overall success of the entire project. Besides, the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania to the Federal Republic of Germany played an important role as an official partner of *The Association for*

²¹The Association for Culture & Dialogue in the Enlarged Europe. *The Cultural Year of the Ten*. Found: <http://culture-in-europe.eu/7.html>; Checked: 09 05 2010.

Culture & Dialogue in the Enlarged Europe. It should be emphasized that Lithuanian intellectuals, artists and musicians were given a unique possibility to communicate directly with their colleagues living in Germany as well as within other European countries. For instance, Antanas Gailius, a poet and a talented translator of classical German literature into Lithuanian, participated in the debate about the cultural prospects of Europe together with many other colleagues. The German public also had a chance to watch some of the best Lithuanian films produced by Šarūnas Bartas and Algimantas Puipa. Clearly, *The Cultural Year of the Ten* provoked long-lasting dialogue, and people living in Germany made many new discoveries about the various creative processes taking place in Lithuania as well as in other Central and Eastern European countries.

Another opportunity to intensify Lithuanian-German cultural relations occurred in 2006. At that period of time all three Baltic states were invited to participate in the festival *Scene: Estland, Lettland, Litauen in NRW* in North Rhine-Westphalia. Approximately forty events from the entire program were dedicated exclusively to Lithuanian culture. It should be noted that a virtuoso saxophonist Petras Vyšniauskas and his group received especially favorable reviews for their innovative interpretations of Lithuanian folklore and pieces of modern jazz in Dortmund. Besides, professional critics and ordinary visitors were extremely interested in the exhibition of one hundred and thirty black and white photographs by Antanas Sutkus which was displayed at the State Museum of Münster. Most of his works demonstrated the every day life of Lithuanians covering the period from 1950 to 2004. All in all, the number of Lithuanian artists taking part in the festival *Scene: Estland, Lettland, Litauen in NRW* exceeded one hundred. Of course, the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania and the Cultural Attaché Office provided much practical assistance to the organizers and to the artists so that the overall representation of the country would be successful and interesting. At the same time, however, it became quite obvious that most Germans tended to perceive all three Baltic countries as a single entity. Therefore it has frequently been challenging but necessary to draw clear lines of distinction in order to demonstrate that Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are different in many respects. Commenting about the outcome of the festival *Scene: Estland, Lettland, Litauen in NRW*, the Cultural Attaché of Lithuania Rasa Balčikonytė openly admitted: “There is no single recipe [...], especially when we are talking about such a big country as Germany. [...] We cannot expect the entire Germany to speak about Lithuanian artists immediately after the events but a big step forward has already been made.”²²

In 2008 Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia jointly marked the 90th anniversary of their independence. On this important occasion the President of the Republic of Lithuania Valdas

²² Rasa Balčikonytė quoted by Jurgelaitis, Remigijus. Kelius į pripažintas meno mekas tiesia diplomatai. *Kauno diena*, 29 July 2006. Found: http://www.kamane.lt/lt/atgarsiai/kita/kitaatgarsis27/atgarsis_printable; Checked: 10 05 2010.

Adamkus, the President of Latvia Valdis Zatlers and the Speaker of the Estonian Parliament Ene Ergma were invited by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany Horst Köhler to take part in the opening ceremony of the German-Baltic Culture Year *Essentia Baltica* at the Berlin Philharmonic. The Lithuanian press enthusiastically noted the fact that “the orchestra of young musicians from the Baltic States *Kremerata Baltica*, which had been organized by Gidon Kremer, performed at the event” and their repertoire consisted of “the works by composers from the three Baltic States - *Variations of Dzūkija* by Bronius Kutavičius, musical pieces by Peter Vask and Arvi Part”.²³ It should be noted that the whole program of *Essentia Baltica* was truly extensive and extremely well-financed. As a result, the inhabitants of Berlin, Hamburg and Frankfurt am Main could visit a series of exhibitions, literary readings and concerts of classical music related to Lithuania and other Baltic states. The Humboldt University in Berlin organized interesting academic discussions about the history of Lithuania and new social as well as political challenges. Much interest was also expressed by the German public about the heritage of Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis and Thomas Mann. Interestingly, the former had studied composition at the Leipzig Conservatory of Music for two years and the latter spent three summers of his life at a small Lithuanian seaside resort Nida writing some of his literary works. (Each year *The International Thomas Mann Festival* is traditionally organized by the Thomas Mann cultural centre at his summer-house in Nida.) At the time a special emphasis was also placed on the performances of German artists inside Lithuania. Indeed, some memorable cultural events related to German theatre, cinema or classical music were simultaneously organized in major Lithuanian cities by the Goethe Institute within the framework of a special festival known as *The Spring of German Culture*.

The year of 2009 also provided some new opportunities for cultural exchanges with Germany since Lithuania celebrated the millennium of its name. The annals of Quedlinburg bore great historical significance for this celebration since the name of Lithuania was first recorded in the manuscript in 1009. Moreover, the original chronicle can still be found and seen at the Dresden State and University Library. In order to commemorate this impressive anniversary, the Cultural Attaché of Lithuania Rasa Balčikonytė initiated a touring exhibition *Lithuania: Culture and History* in Germany. The entire exposition was meticulously prepared by the employees of *Lithuanian Art Museum* who not only aimed “to highlight the significance of Lithuania’s cultural legacy” but also placed emphasis on “[t]he image of Lithuania, as an old and venerable country, having a rich

²³Vokietijoje atidaryti Baltijos šalių kultūros metai. *Balsas.lt*, 17 March 2008. Found: <http://www.balsas.lt/naujiena/187542/vokietijoje-atidaryti-baltijos-saliu-kulturos-metai>; Checked: 10 05 2010.

history of statehood”.²⁴ Initially, it was shown to the public at the Quedlinburg castle and later all exhibits were transferred to Berlin Town Hall.

All above-mentioned events and festivals make up only a small part of the cooperation between Lithuania and Germany. Presently, Lithuanian diplomats devote much attention to continuous initiatives and projects. They encourage closer relationships between similar cultural and educational institutions as well. For instance, *The Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania* has been actively collaborating with the *Stasi Museum* in Berlin. These two institutions traditionally prepare a common exhibition almost every year. The long-term partnership between Šiauliai Boys and Youth Choir *Dagilėlis* and the Boys Choir of the Opera House on the Unter den Linden has also produced valuable artistic results. Besides, the Academic Girl Choir of Vilnius Choral Singing School *Liepaitės* gave three extensive concerts in Erfurt, Marburg and Kronberg im Taunus in April 2010.

Following the ratification of the Amsterdam Treaty, the main headquarters of the European Central Bank were opened in Frankfurt am Main in Germany. Wishing to reveal the artistic diversity of the European Union, this institution developed an interesting tradition by organizing an art exhibition devoted to a Member State on an annual basis. At first, the European Central Bank started collaborating with national banks by displaying their collections of contemporary art. However, following the enlargement of the EU in 2004 new solutions had to be found since the banks of recently accepted Member States did not have big art collections at the time. Finally, it was decided to display a number of innovative contemporary art creations brought from a particular country. In June, 2010 an extensive exhibition *Contemporary Art from Lithuania* featuring seventeen promising young artists was opened by the President of the European Central Bank, Jean-Claude Trichet, and the Chairman of the Board of the Bank of Lithuania, Arnoldijus Šarkinas. Some of the most valuable objects of art might be bought to enrich the growing art collection of the European Central Bank which “currently comprises 220 works of art by 80 artists from 17 different countries”.²⁵

Lithuanian communities found in different regions of Germany have also made an important contribution. They are truly active in promoting Lithuanian culture in Bremen, Hamburg and Celle. The Cultural Attaché Office of Lithuania, in the meantime, has succeeded in creating a special database of Lithuanian artists working in Germany. This information is especially important

²⁴ Exhibition “Lithuania: Culture and History”, Marking the Millennium of Lithuania. Found: <http://www.ldm.lt/millennium.htm>; Checked: 12 05 2010.

²⁵ Kunst privat! European contemporary art. Found: <http://www.ecb.int/events/cultural/exhibits/upcoming/html/index.en.html>; Checked: 17 05 2010.

while organizing various artistic projects in both countries. Much organizational assistance is also received from *European Lithuanian Cultural Center in Germany* which has been working in Hüttenfeld since 1997. The head of this institution, Rimas Čiuplinskas, strives to provoke general interest in Lithuanian culture and seeks to eliminate awkward and erroneous stereotypes about the country by organizing numerous cultural events and providing various sources of information to all interested individuals.

Seen from a geographical perspective, some German regions such as Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg seem to be more willing than others to communicate with Hungary, Austria and other countries of southern Europe. In comparison, North Rhine-Westphalia, Hessen, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Thuringia, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt are strongly interested in the collaboration with Lithuania. This tendency proves that a variety of festivals, exhibitions, literary readings and concerts which have already been organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania and the Cultural Attaché Office within these regions might serve as an important encouragement for both nations to get better acquainted with one another.

ON THE ATTEMPTS TO CREATE THE NATIONAL IMAGE OF LITHUANIA BY MEANS OF NATION BRANDING

Despite being a full-fledged member of the European Union, Lithuania still needs to go a long way forward in order to become sufficiently recognizable and known in different parts of the world. Therefore several governments have tried to construct a positive image of the state for nearly two decades. Major emphasis has often been placed on nation branding and the development of a new identity which would not only inspire Lithuanian people to set new goals for the future but would simultaneously help the entire country to meet the challenges of globalization more effectively. It should be admitted, however, that some of the initiatives were highly successful whilst others were doomed to failure.

Having these tendencies in mind, some lessons about possible ways of building up a favorable reputation of Lithuania on the international arena might be learnt on the basis of innovative ideas from the British expert and researcher Simon Anholt. He has become quite an influential figure due to his detailed analysis of nation branding within different countries. The scholar emphasizes the importance of “clichés and stereotypes” which tend to have a considerable influence upon a variety of attitudes “towards other places and their people and products”²⁶. For

²⁶ Anholt, Simon. (2007). *Competitive Identity*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, p 1.

instance, the traditional image of Belgium cannot be separated from Flemish-Brabant architecture, chocolate pralines, Antwerp diamonds and the lace industry of Bruges while Norway is most frequently related to spectacular fjords, a long-lasting skiing tradition, salmon, and hand-knitted sweaters. All positive associations form an important part of the typical perception of these countries which might sometimes lead to a paradoxical “disconnection between image and reality”²⁷. Negative associations, in turn, tend to have a highly undesirable effect as far as the national image is concerned. African countries, for example, are often labeled by Europeans and Americans as chaotic and politically unstable as well as suffering from starvation and fatal diseases. These clichés are frequently accepted by many individuals as unquestionable despite the fact that many contemporary cities exist in such states as Tunisia and Ghana where one can truly lead a modern lifestyle without experiencing any extreme hardships.

To provide necessary theoretical support for his statements about the power of national image and nation branding as well as the incorporation of all basic constituents into one coherent system, Anholt created the hexagon of Competitive Identity which consists of six major elements: tourism, people, culture, investment, policy and brands. He openly suggests that any particular country which truly aims to achieve success in promoting itself abroad should get several important things done. Firstly, it is necessary for the government and political leaders to “have a good, clear, believable and positive idea of what their country really is, what it stands for and where it’s going.”²⁸ This idea should be gradually turned into a stimulus to create a long-term strategy which would subsume all six above-mentioned elements. Secondly, much attention should be devoted to “the creation of a common purpose” which, in turn, is expected to encourage all key players, including the “government, companies and people [...] to channel their behaviour in a common direction that’s positive and productive for the country’s reputation, so they can start *to earn* the reputation they need and deserve.”²⁹ Strong willingness for cooperation in order to make the country more visible and well-received worldwide might lead to positive results in terms of the country’s competitiveness on the global market. In addition, cultural heritage and economical or technological achievements might also gradually develop additional potential to attract prospective visitors and investors. Thirdly, all the country’s achievements and accomplishments should be made broadcast “both through the media and, wherever possible, directly to audiences around the world”, in order to employ such messages for the continuous building of a positive image of the state³⁰. It should be also emphasized that the very process of the creation of a national image requires

²⁷ Ibid, p. 27.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 26.

²⁹ Ibid, p. 30.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 34.

substantial time and patience from all involved parties. The availability of financial and human resources, as well as the dominant attitude of the local inhabitants towards their homeland, also greatly affect the final outcome. In any case, the leading politicians might expect more investment, strong business relations, and close cultural and political cooperation with the representatives of other states, merely following the development of a favorable reputation of their own country. Otherwise important breakthroughs in the realms of politics, economics, culture and diplomacy cannot be achieved on an international level.

Examining the development of the national image of independent Lithuania, it should be noted that serious discussions on this important topic only started in 2006. At that time two public institutions, namely, *Lithuanian Economic Development Agency* and *Lithuanian Tourism Development Agency* were made responsible for the successful implementation of a special project *Tourism and Business Brand Creation for Lithuania* which had received considerable financial support from the EU Structural Funds. Importantly, much attention was paid by the government of Lithuania to the creation of a special logo that could be widely employed to promote the state abroad for touristic and business purposes. As indicated on the special webpage dedicated to the same project, “proposals from the agencies were evaluated by the commission of experts” but this seemingly innocent task appeared to be more complex than expected.³¹ In fact, the first public competition for designers of a logo ended up causing an international scandal. Initially, the agency *DDB Vilnius* was selected to be the winner among ten contenders. Unluckily, their logo depicting a green tree appeared to be quite similar to the official logo of the city of London in Ontario, Canada. After much extensive professional debates and consultations with international lawyers, claims of intentional plagiarism were rejected. However, the commission made up of several experts decided to organize another public competition in order to avoid any potential misunderstandings. It was clearly emphasized that the logo should be truly exceptional so that it could represent Lithuania on the international arena. During the second public competition “15 applications were received altogether” but three of them did not satisfy the general requirements and merely “12 applications got into a further stage of the evaluation process”³². Finally, the preference was given to proposal of the joint-stock company *Smart Solutions*. The final version of the logo was unveiled in 2008.³³

³¹ Lietuvos turizmo ir verslo prekės ženklo sukūrimas. Found: <http://www.lepa.lt/LietuvosTurizmoIrVersloPrekesZenklas.html>; Checked: 04 06 2010.

³² Ibid.

³³ The image was taken from the following source: http://be.gan.lt/wp-content/uploads/lithuanian_logo.jpg; Checked: 04 06 2010.



In addition, the director of the advertising agency *Not Perfect / Y&R* Paulius Seniūta together with a working group of experts introduced a country branding strategy under the motto *Lithuania – a Brave Country*. It should be noted that the logo is being currently used by numerous websites of Lithuanian companies and the official internet gates of the country which can be accessed at: www.lietuva.lt. As the head of the company *Smart Solutions* Eugenijus Morkevičius explains, the main idea behind it has been based on “the contrast [which encompasses] aspirations in the realm of high technologies as well as our historical attachment to the land, nature”³⁴ However, the logo has often been harshly criticized by some specialists, artists and ordinary Lithuanian people for being inexpressive and meaningless. Moreover, all attempts to focus on courage and bravery while presenting Lithuania abroad have not produced any positive effect so far. It is evident that the lack of success has been conditioned by two basic reasons. Firstly, foreign target audiences often fail to instantaneously grasp the intended message of an expression “brave country”. Therefore, major efforts to introduce Lithuania as a country which is open to innovation and challenges frequently remain misinterpreted by people of other nationalities. Secondly, the majority of Lithuanians find the motto either strange and laughable or completely alien to their national identity. As Simon Anholt correctly observes, “a place may be changing quite quickly, but its image can lag behind by years or decades”³⁵ Therefore one can easily conclude that the national image of Lithuania has not been successfully transformed through this project due to numerous misunderstandings and the overall reluctance of many individuals to distance themselves from traditional perceptions about the country.

Another important project to market Lithuania was undertaken by the famous Lithuanian photographer Marius Jovaiša. He became widely known and breathtakingly popular after publishing an album of aerial landscape photos *Unseen Lithuania* in 2008. As indicated on a special website dedicated to this unique book, “250 outstandingly high quality large format pictures

³⁴ Eugenijus Morkevičius interviewed by Jucaitis, Robertas. Mįslė, vardu Lietuva: II-a dalis. *Portfolio 2008*. Found: http://www.iportfolio.lt/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=97&lang=en; Checked: 04 06 2010.

³⁵ Anholt, Simon. (2007). *Competitive Identity*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, p 27.

with descriptions of places and objects [...] were selected out of almost 20,000 shots”³⁶. The very first edition of *Unseen Lithuania* enjoyed tremendous success that surpassed even the boldest expectations of its author. Later, it was translated from Lithuanian into ten foreign languages: English, German, Polish, French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Swedish, Chinese and Japanese. Wishing to explain what inspired him to photograph Lithuanian landscapes, Marius Jovaiša told a truly interesting story:

Having taken photos and shot video of different lands day after day I have gathered a rather large pictures’ archive. Although, initially I had no such a will, little by little I started to think about finding a suitable form and sharing my small discoveries with other people. [...] Then I gave thought, why I had made thousands of photos of faraway lands, and only one picture of Lithuania. [...] I started to compare the views of Lithuania and the entire world in my mind. And then I understood that Lithuanian landscape is impressive as much as the best-known and most-visited countries of the world. [...] I decided to introduce all the most important and famous Lithuanian places, as well as places being visited more rarely, unknown or forgotten. [...] Everybody finds his way to get to know one’s native country. In order to understand how wonderful Lithuania is, I had to travel around half the world.³⁷

The popularity of the album worldwide made an impressive contribution to the development of Lithuanian cultural diplomacy. The Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of Lithuania gave some exemplars of *Unseen Lithuania* as official gifts to many political and religious leaders, including the Pope Benedict XVI and the President of the United States Barrack H. Obama. Besides, a number of exhibitions of the photographs by Marius Jovaiša and special presentations of *Unseen Lithuania* took place in such countries as Australia, Argentina, Canada, Estonia, France, Germany, Japan, Poland, Spain, and the U.S. Expositions beyond Lithuanian borders frequently received considerable organizational support from the national diplomatic service and the Lithuanian diaspora. Even those individuals who had previously known very little about the existence of Lithuania became interested in the country. One of the most successful exhibitions of aerial photos taken by Marius Jovaiša was organized with the assistance of the Cultural Attaché of Lithuania to the Republic of Italy, Ieva Gaižutytė, and the Honorary Consul Alessandro Palmigiano who made every effort to get the inhabitants of Sicily acquainted with *Unseen Lithuania* in 2009. Sharing his personal impressions about the event, the photographer made an observation that most “Sicilians are aware of Lithuania far less than Lithuanians are aware of Sicily, but their curiosity grew significantly after they found out about my next album, *Divine Italy*.”³⁸ This personal testimony proves that cultural diplomacy might become sufficiently effective only if there is a real possibility

³⁶ Album of “Unseen Lithuania” photographs presented. 15 January 2008. Found: <http://www.neregetalietuva.lt/news.php?id=1>; Checked: 04 06 2010.

³⁷ Jovaiša, Marius. About “Unseen Lithuania”. Found: <http://www.neregetalietuva.lt/album.php>; Checked: 04 06 2010.

³⁸ Marius Jovaiša quoted in Italian trip of Unseen Lithuania started in Sicily. 31 October, 2009. Found: <http://www.neregetalietuva.lt/news.php?id=23>; Checked: 05 06 2010.

of collaboration and informational exchange between all involved parties. It is impossible to achieve noticeable success in this delicate sphere without taking into consideration the interests of potential partners.

The second edition of *Unseen Lithuania* dedicated to the millennium of Lithuania's name appeared in 2009. Every person who bought a copy of the book simultaneously contributed to the initiative to plant *The Oak Grove of the Millennium* in Kėdainiai region. The names of all supporters were written on a special plate and publicly announced on the official webpage dedicated to the album: www.neregetalietuva.lt. The project received positive reviews from Lithuanian society for enhancing patriotic sentiments on the basis of attracting more attention to ecology. According to Marius Jovaiša, his main objective was “to promote the meaningful commemoration of the millennium anniversary [...] and to remind the Lithuanians that [they] can be proud of old history of several millennia.”³⁹ It should also be mentioned that oak groves have always been regarded as sacred place. This Lithuanian tradition takes its beginnings from ancient pagan times. At first, just one thousand oaks were planted but at present the number of trees has already reached six thousand. It is reported that “[t]he organizers of the project expect to plant at least 5000 oaks more - and it will be the biggest oak grove in Lithuania.”⁴⁰ Both above-mentioned initiatives might be regarded as interesting transformations of cultural diplomacy which not only ameliorate the reputation of the country among foreign visitors but also inspire local inhabitants to take action as well.

Being one of the harshest critics of a country branding strategy *Lithuania – a Brave Country*, Marius Jovaiša together with an enthusiastic group of colleagues designed an alternative logo intended to represent the country abroad. It can be downloaded at a special site www.baltijossirdis.lt completely free of charge. The logo depicts a piece of amber with an engraved rider on a horse called *Vytis* which constitutes an essential part of the national coat of arms. Meanwhile, the chosen motto *Lithuania – Heart of the Baltics* helps to rapidly identify the geographical location of the country⁴¹.

³⁹ Marius Jovaiša quoted in “Unseen Lithuania 2009” will restore Lithuanian patriotism and the old oak groves. 12 February, 2009. Found: <http://www.neregetalietuva.lt/news.php?id=8>; Checked: 07 06 2010.

⁴⁰ “Neregėtos Lietuvos” Tūkstantmečio ąžuolyne pasodinta dar 5000 ąžuolų. 03 May, 2010. Found: <http://www.neregetalietuva.lt/news.php?id=32>; Checked: 09 06 2010.

⁴¹ The image was taken from the following source: <http://www.baltijossirdis.lt/download.php>; Checked: 09 06 2010.



LITHUANIA Heart of the Baltics

The official webpage indicates that the logo symbolically reflects all three colors of the national flag of Lithuania since “yellow and red [...] merge together inside the piece of amber and the inscription ‘Lithuania – Heart of the Baltics’ [is] green.”⁴² It should also be remembered that most foreigners tend to relate Lithuania with amber jewelry and lush forests. These stereotypical perceptions are sometimes then truly beneficial for the international reputation of the country. Although the logo has not yet been widely used by official institutions, many Lithuanian citizens consider it to be highly attractive due to its traditional and easily recognizable artistic elements. Importantly, this independent initiative has been successfully implemented following a bottom-up approach without any interference by the government.

To conclude, cultural diplomacy can truly serve as an important means to increase mutual understanding between nations and states. However, the experience of Lithuanian diplomats and cultural attachés proves that substantial intellectual effort, financial resources and creative work are necessary in order to develop a favorable image of the country. Although some positive steps have already been made in this direction, the current situation demands more innovative solutions. In fact, every Lithuanian citizen should play an active role and help to make the cultural achievements of his or her homeland more noticeable around the world.

⁴² Apie VŠĮ “Lietuva - Baltijos širdis” Found: <http://www.baltijossirdis.lt/apie.php>; Checked: 09 06 2010.