

“Be Lithuanian, Be Strong.”

Until 1795 Lithuania was independent. During the first occupation, Lithuania was annexed by Russia. There were many deportations in Siberia, causing a big emigration of the population. In 1915, a second attempt at restoration is a success. In 1918 Lithuania recovers its independence, unfortunately it lost it at the end of WWII.

During the second occupation in 1944, the USSR proceeds to the annexation of Baltic countries: Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. This was directed strictly by a single party: the communist party of the Soviet Union. The inhabitants of Lithuania were persecuted and killed under the command of Stalin. Intelligent people were the first to be put in prison or killed.

In 1950, under the soviet occupation the Lithuanian national anthem was forbidden and was replaced by the

Soviet socialist republic's official anthem. This anthem praises the Soviet Union and its values. In 1980 while the independence movement expanded, the Lithuanian national anthem reappeared for the first time in a clandestine newspaper. It became a symbol of resistance. People who sang the anthem were persecuted. Lithuanian people had other ways to fight against the occupa-

tion e.g. the Hill of Crosses.

Lithuania proclaimed its independence in March 1990 and was recognized by the USSR in September 1991. It was the first Baltic country to regain independence; Lithuania was united.

Jade Delestre

The Ninth Fort

The Ninth Fort is situated in Kaunas, in the south of Lithuania. Kaunas was a fortified city. In fact at the end of the 19th century, the city had 8 forts and 9 gun batteries. In 1902, the construction of the Ninth Fort began and finished in the early 10s. The first use of the fort was its being the “Kaunas city prison”.

During the Soviet occupation, soviets used the fort as a prison and a kind of transitional place for political prisoners who were later to be transported to labour camps.

Throughout World War II and Nazi occupation, the former Kaunas city prison served to murder Jews. 10,000 of them died in the fort. This fact is now known as the “Kaunas massacre”.

After the war, soviets reused the fort as a prison for a few years. Since 1958, the Ninth Fort is a museum which is a way for Lithuanians to remember its history.

Maelle Boulard



Unity, resistance : the Hill of crosses

The Hill of crosses is located in the north of Lithuania. On this little hill, there are thousands of crosses placed by Lithuanians and tourists over hundreds of years. This place is precious and mystical according to inhabitants. There's even a legend which intensifies the mystery: some people say that on the hill there was a cathedral.

The tradition of putting some crosses on the hill began in the 19th century. Lithuania was then run by Russia. During this period, the number of large crosses rose. The hill represented Christian devotion and was a memorial to the Lithuanian national identity. From 1944 until 1991, Siauliai was a part of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic. During this period, the Hill of Crosses served as an expression of Lithuanian nationalism: the hill became the symbol of a struggle against occupa-

tion and mainly, a struggle for freedom.

Many Lithuanians were killed, under the command of Stalin; religion was banned. The Hill of crosses was one of the ways Lithuanians' could fight without violence against this regime.

At first, members of KGB were posted around the hill, to monitor any illegal activity. Finally, they burnt the

crosses and the area was covered with waste and sewage. These events triggered an even stronger national resistance. And each time crosses were rapidly replaced. It happened three times. The Hill of Crosses is now left in peace. It is now a touristic site visited by thousands of people each year.

Maelle Boulard



Traditional celebrations

There are some traditions in Lithuania which are celebrated each year.

On the last week-end of February, Lithuanians celebrate Shrove Tuesday to announce the defeat of winter against by spring, at Rumšiškės. This event brings a lot of people together disguised as devils, witches or other scary characters; mixing pagan and Christian traditions. On this day, at the end of the celebration, the Morė, symbol of winter, is burned.

The first week-end of march, Lithuanians celebrate Casimir, their patron saint, born in the XVth century. Saint Casimir is celebrated all over the country, especially in Vilnius, on a craft market installed in the old town just for the occasion.

A week before Easter, the country celebrates Palm Sunday. All Vilnius is flowery with bouquets of dried grass woven around Vilnius. The first Sunday of may, they celebrate musical day. It's a new tradition: music professionals and amateurs play in the streets.

On June 23rd, Lithuanians celebrate the shortest night of the year, the whole nation parties. At the same time, Kernavė which is the theater of living pageants is

open. There, you can discover the daily life of prehistoric times and the Middle Ages.

From the end of November to January, there are winter holidays in the capital. There are concerts, exhibitions, fairs ... And of course, in the middle of this period, Lithuanians celebrate Christmas.

Marie Hagenré

