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## The fate and mission of withdrawal in Tomas Venclova's contemplations

### Introduction

Tomas Venclova called himself a new wave emigrant. He expatriated from Lithuania quite late – in 1977, so the gap of more than several decades distinguished him from the emigration wave of the World War II, which, considering the opinion of its participants, can be compared to the Great Emigration after the rebel of 1831.<sup>1</sup> Each generation of emigrants had own values, problems, distinctive attitude towards the exile mission, whereas thoughts of own fate and mission in the writings of emigrants used to be a frequent topic.<sup>2</sup> T. Venclova as well as the emigrants of his generation was slightly different from the previous ones. They were grown up in Soviet Lithuania, thus they were better aware of the country than others and had contemplated their motives of emigration. Moreover, the case of Tomas Venclova is exclusive by the fact that he had grown up in a family of Lithuanian elite, but he was not able to adapt to the society even being a son of a famous and honourable man. According to Juozas Grinius, the decision to expatriate on own freewill, without any compulsion is very rare. He named poverty as an indirect compulsion, whereas political persecution as a direct one.<sup>3</sup> In case of Tomas Venclova the main factors of the choice of emigration were indirect, mostly due to the lack of possibilities to express himself. His attitude to the emigration distinguished him from other exiles as well. It was a great loss and disaster for most people, but T. Venclova considered it as a positive and natural matter even though he had grown up in the country where it was a tendency to form a negative attitude towards emigration.

The thoughts of Tomas Venclova, revealing the motives of departure and their evaluation, has become the object of this article. The intention, based on these thoughts is to reveal Tomas Venclova's perception of emigration and its challenges: what were

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<sup>1</sup> Aleksandravičius E., *Praeitis, istorija ir istorikai*, Vilnius, 2000, p. 74 – 75.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Girnius J., *Tauta ir tautinė ištikimybė, Raštai III*, Vilnius, 1995, p. 70.

the main reasons, predetermining T. Venclova's decision to expatriate to the West; how he realized both his own and overall emigration mission and duties to Lithuania; what was the evaluation of his own choice in the position of an emigrant.

The chronological range of the work embraces decades 7 – 8 of the XXth century, a period from Tomas Venclova's decision to expatriate till his departure and establishment in the West. However, sometimes the expansion is either to one or another side while speaking about earlier events, influencing the decision or by conveying his later evaluations.

The attention to Tomas Venclova as an exile, was hardly paid by researchers. Thus a relative exception can be considered a study by Leonidas Donskis "Identity and liberty: three intellectual portraits". Three methods of the critics of society and culture, emerging from liberal and modernizing nationalism are described in the book, where Vytautas Kavolis', Aleksandras Štromas' and Tomas Venclova's relations with nationalism are analyzed. A short presentation of his personality as an emigrant is in a chapter, dedicated to reveal the intellectual portrait of Tomas Venclova.<sup>4</sup> The way towards Tomas Venclova's emigration and life in the West is discussed in a study "Tomas Venclova. The signs of biography and creation" by Donata Mitaitė, though a greater attention is paid to his creation and biography facts instead of intellectual discussions on the topic of emigration.<sup>5</sup> Articles by Tomas Venclova<sup>6</sup> and an interview with him<sup>7</sup> have become the main source to this work. The articles of other emigrants: Aleksandras Štromas,<sup>8</sup> Vytautas Kavolis<sup>9</sup>, an essay of Czeslaw Milosz<sup>10</sup> as well as a philosophic study on expatriation of Juozas Girnius were very valuable.<sup>11</sup>

### Motives and hopes of Tomas Venclova withdrawal

Tomas Venclova was born in Klaipėda on 11 September, 1937. It is worth to mention that his father, Antanas Venclova, was a famous poet, writer and high ranking officer in Soviet Lithuania. His son's comparatively easy way of life was greatly influenced by father's position and name. Although Tomas Venclova himself claimed that his father had nothing to do with his position and had never protected him, but in some cases his father's name and financial independence obviously helped.<sup>12</sup> In opinion of Donata Mitaitė, the family name not only protected him, but sometimes it was harmful as people acted against his father indirectly by aiming at the son. One of such cases was, when in 1974 his father's desire to admit Tomas Venclova into the Association for Writers failed, as he was the only one candidate out of ten to be rejected. This was a body – blow to Antanas Venclova with several strokes in the past. Soon after this he died. The assumption was that there were members in the Association for Writers interested in the

<sup>4</sup> Donskis L., *Tapatybė ir laisvė: trys intelektualiniai portretai*, Vilnius, 2005 (Donskis L., *Identity and Freedom: Mapping Nationalism and Social Criticism in Twentieth-Century Lithuania*, London / New York, 2002)

<sup>5</sup> Mitaitė D., *Tomas Venclova. Biografijos ir kūrybos ženklai*, Vilnius, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991; Štromas A., *Laisvės horizontai*, Vilnius, 2001, p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> *Manau, kad... Pokalbiai su Tomu Venclova*, Vilnius, 2000; *Akiračiai*, Čikaga, 1978 – 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Štromas A., *Laisvės horizontai*, Vilnius, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> Kavolis V., *Nepriklausomųjų kelias*, Vilnius, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Milosz Cz., *Pavergtas protas*, Vilnius, 1995. (Zniewolony umysł)

<sup>11</sup> Girnius J., *Tauta ir tautinė ištikimybė, Raštai III*, Vilnius, 1995.

<sup>12</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 10.

liquidation of A. Venclova, by using influence through the son as handy one.<sup>13</sup>

Tomas Venclova in Lithuania mostly worked as a translator, a little as a poet, an essayist, lecturer at university.<sup>14</sup> He considered himself a nonconformist, not able to adapt to official values. He stated that his views were finally formed in about 1956, after the rebel in Hungary, whereas earlier in his life there had been some hesitations and compromises.<sup>15</sup> He was a member of Komsomol in his youth, though during his studies he was involved into antisoviet activity and chose the way of a dissident.<sup>16</sup> According to him – “a dissident is a free man despite all external restraints.”<sup>17</sup> He said that in 1962 he made a decision to stop writing or saying things that he did not believe into.<sup>18</sup> Leonidas Donskis described T. Venclova as a double dissident who was misinterpreted both in Lithuania and in diaspora. On the one hand he was a political dissident in the Soviet Union, on the other hand he disapproved the dominating trend of Lithuanian nationalism.<sup>19</sup> Tomas Venclova stated, that during his life in Lithuania, he was a free man, never lied to himself and the others, never felt material deficiency, he was engaged in his favourable literary work, his well-known father's name supported him as well, so what encouraged him to choose an emigrant's fate? According to T. Venclova, there were several reasons, which determined such decision.

Czeslaw Milosz, a close friend of Tomas Venclova, tried to envisage the feelings and state of a man, living and creating in Soviet nations in his essay. According to him, such a man suffered from ambiguity, it was difficult to keep a balance between adjustment and rejection. As Cz. Milosz states, even though a creator is purposely struggling against the official ideology, the following is such a powerful force, that it manages to mark your subconsciousness. Due to this reason an intellectual is not able to create “to the drawers” as he is not sure if this piece of literature is of any value. Thus a writer seems to believe that a good creation can exist only as formal. Such psychological effect Cz. Milosz, basing on a novel “Insatiability” by Stanislaw Ignac Witkiewicz, has called a “Murti – Bing” tablet. Even at the moment, when a man takes a tablet and makes a decision to stop fighting, he is tormented by doubts related to old persisting moral and esthetic requirements.<sup>20</sup> Thus, in any case it was significantly complicated to create, an intellectual suffered from different ambivalent feelings, had either to be in a mask or to kill own feeling of being guilty. Tomas Venclova viewing Lithuania from a position of emigration, had also noticed the effect of the mentioned tablets – official propaganda affected people's mind even there was no belief in it.<sup>21</sup> Tomas Venclova had experienced the affect of “Murti – Bing” prior to the expatriation to the West. And this was one of the main reasons that made him to decide to emigrate. Soviet environment appeared to be far from the most suitable places to create. Tomas Venclova stated that he both would not be able and would not like to work any work, except for the literary one, but he realised the this kind of work in the Soviet union required the compromise and

<sup>13</sup> Mitaitė D., *Tomas Venclova. Biografijos ir kūrybos ženklai*, Vilnius, 2002, p. 85.

<sup>14</sup> Donskis L., *Tapatybė ir laisvė: trys intelektualiniai portretai*, Vilnius, 2005, p. 157.

<sup>15</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Milkova V., Lietuvą mylėti per ištiesios rankos atstumą, *Kauno diena*, 2010-02-24, p. 4 – 5.

<sup>17</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 31.

<sup>19</sup> Donskis L., *Tapatybė ir laisvė: trys intelektualiniai portretai*, Vilnius, 2005, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Milosz Cz., *Paerętas protas*, Vilnius, 1995, p. 15 – 39.

<sup>21</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 82.

hypocrisy, so he mostly was engaged in the “safest” field such as translations, which was the easiest way to avoid compromise. Although during that period translations and author’s presentations were considered as a serious cultural activity, anyway he had no feeling of fulfilment and was lack of possibilities to express himself.<sup>22</sup> The audience had a great importance to him, so he had no wish to write into the “drawer.”<sup>23</sup> His statement in one of his interviews was that he was unable physically to force himself to write texts proving the author’s “loyalty”, the following called “locomotives” by writers. Due to this he was treated rather suspiciously, he had difficulties in publishing his articles even in magazines or newspapers.<sup>24</sup>

Possibilities to express oneself in the field of literature was particularly constricted after his father’s death in 1971. As far back as 1960 he published a few poems in an informal magazine on poetry “Sintaksis” edited by a Russian dissident. Also with some friends he established a small self-edited publishing office “Saulutė” and a circle of cultural studies. The following activities were terminated by inquiries, but there were no severe consequences for that moment. In 1968 he wrote a protest note regarding the trial against Alexander Ginzburg and Jurij Galanskov, but he had no inquires regarding this action. As he stated himself, he felt the consequences only after his father’s death, as he was victimised from university, and his offered texts were increasingly rejected by editors and censorship.<sup>25</sup> On 9 September, 1975 T. Venclova wrote a public letter to the Central Committee of the Communist party of Lithuania, where he claimed that he would like to emigrate to the West as there were no possibilities for him to develop widely his literary, scientific and cultural activities.<sup>26</sup> In the same year, in his letter to Vincas Trumpa, he wrote, that he had taken an unhesitating decision to leave Lithuania and the fact that life was not easy in the West did not frighten him.<sup>27</sup>

Czeslaw Milosz provided him an invitation to lecture at University of California, Berkeley, but at that moment, the departure according such invitation was impossible. In 1976 Tomas Venclova joined the Helsinki group. During the same year, in a flat of Jurij Orlov in Moscow, the first Helsinki group conference took place, where T. Venclova also participated. The reaction to this event was quick, some members of the group were arrested, whereas the others, including T. Venclova, were expelled from the Soviet Union. Even in Lithuania it was mentioned by the members of the Helsinki group that a representative of the group in the West is necessary, but for a certain period of time it was just a theoretical possibility.<sup>28</sup> In 1977 Tomas Venclova reached his aim as he had a permission to emigrate to the West. It is likely that news about his trial had already reached the West, played its role. It is assumed that the Soviet Union perhaps expected that he would not be able to adapt in the West, will stay unemployed and finally he would apply to be admitted again.<sup>29</sup> According to Leonidas Donskis, Tomas Venclova chose exile in order to work for himself and the others without any lies and to stay faithful his

<sup>22</sup> Mitaitė D., *Tomas Venclova. Biografijos ir kūrybos ženklai*, Vilnius, 2002, p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 9.

<sup>24</sup> *Manau, kad... Pokalbiai su Tomu Venclova*, Vilnius, 2000, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 10 – 11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19 – 20.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22 – 25.

<sup>28</sup> Donskis L., *Tapatybė ir laisvė: trys intelektualiniai portretai*, Vilnius, 2005, p. 163.

<sup>29</sup> Štromas A., *Laisvės horizontai*, Vilnius, 2001, p. 16.

own ethical principles and conscience.<sup>30</sup> Whereas on the other hand, he had mentioned that he approved Josif Brodski's words, that a poet is always in exile. T. Venclova had this feeling during his life in Lithuania.<sup>31</sup> Czeslaw Milosz named such state as an inner emigration when a person is not able to belong spiritually, to adapt to the world surrounding him with formal values.<sup>32</sup>

One more reason that made Tomas Venclova to contemplate the emigration was not only lack of creative freedom and limited possibilities of a literary work, but also as he stated himself, a wish to explore the world wider, to read more than it was available in Lithuania and a possibility to meet people.<sup>33</sup> He also wanted to get free from provincial environment. His statement that he departed seeking to escape from the soviet authority, but simultaneously from the Lithuanian intelligentsia, whose creation was compared to whisperings in the kitchen. The wish of intelligentsia to save the traditions of previous independence, its uniqueness, wish to live provincially and in isolation frightened him.<sup>34</sup> In his talks about Lithuanian culture, T. Venclova noticed that the level of Lithuanian culture is lower than it might be. Although he evaluated the underground literature, but he claimed it to be too restricted, overmuch limited in the worship of old values, and though the same, repetitive, with too much attention to factography, with the symptoms of intolerance. According to T. Venclova the self-edition was lack of "different profound scientific articles, stories and poems of excellent quality, essential discussions, science-based fundamental studies".<sup>35</sup> While the official press was self-critical and diverse, but in his opinion, only mechanical diversity is behind it, self-criticism as the conception of inner weakness, sophistication turning into provincial prose or megalomania, whereas the other side of spirituality – cynicism, and the crown of everything is total materialism.<sup>36</sup> T. Venclova's emigration was encouraged by his friend of similar fate Aleksandras Štromas's belief that the influence to Lithuania can be stronger from the West instead of staying here with a limited possibilities.<sup>37</sup>

Ideas to emigrate used to come to Tomas Venclova since his youth, although for a certain time it seemed to him that staying in Lithuania was a particular patriotic duty.<sup>38</sup> After his father's death, he finally realised that it was impossible to work in Lithuania without hypocrisy. Thus, decision to emigrate was not a spontaneous action. It was a sufficiently well considered decision with all "yes" and "no". Although the possibility to leave came rather unexpectedly, but Tomas Venclova made a firm decision in this view and was seeking it purposefully. Both personal reasons (wish to have a freedom of creation, to see more) and a hope to serve Lithuania encouraged his departure.

### The mission of exile in the thoughts of Tomas Venclova

The mission of exile was contemplated differently by the representatives of different generations in exile and of different political views. The variety of views is well

<sup>30</sup> Donskis L., *Tapatybė ir laisvė: trys intelektualiniai portretai*, Vilnius, 2005, p. 162.

<sup>31</sup> *Manau, kad... Pokalbiai su Tomu Venclova*, Vilnius, 2000, p. 80.

<sup>32</sup> Milosz Cz., *Pavergtas protas*, Vilnius, 1995, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> *Manau, kad... Pokalbiai su Tomu Venclova*, Vilnius, 2000, p. 266.

<sup>35</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 74.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p. 75.

<sup>37</sup> Štromas A., *Laisvės horizontai*, Vilnius, 2001, p. 16.

<sup>38</sup> Mitaitė D., *Tomas Venclova. Biografijos ir kūrybos ženklai*, Vilnius, 2002, p. 88.

illustrated by Egidijus Aleksandravičius in one of his articles on the topic of emigration: "To become an emigration of great soldiers and poets – such fate was seen by M. Biržiška. The deputies of the occupied, the personification of their ideas, the mission of implementors of their plans were assigned to emigrants by J. Eretas".<sup>39</sup> The emigration was of great importance to Juozas Girnius as well: "Not only is decided the destiny of the country in the homeland of the nations, but any place his children reside."<sup>40</sup> The emigrant of T. Venclova's generation and his comrade Aleksandras Štromas considered the nation in the country and the emigrants as solid parts of the nation's body: people of the country as a body, whereas the emigration as a soul. He stated that the role of emigrants is very significant as they have to fulfill anything impossible in the circumstances of the occupation: "Today only emigration can nurture the soul of the nation so as the time comes to be connected with the body".<sup>41</sup> However, opposite opinions existed, telling that emigrants should not intrude into the affairs of Lithuania.

The discussions regarding the necessity to keep in touch with Lithuania took place, different views were formed towards the ones in Lithuania, two opposite camps of conservatives and liberals were created. In the middle of the seventies the opinion of the representatives of liberal tendencies started to dominate by declaring that the relations with Lithuania is necessary and beneficial for both sides, and a new motive – to get closer with Lithuania appeared as new emigrants arrived to the USA. Aleksandras Štromas, Tomas Venclova, and the others not only brought the information about Soviet Lithuania, but an optimistic hope related with the emigration influence to the future of Lithuania as well. A. Štromas encouraged to keep constant and intensive relationships with Lithuanian people through both direct communication and press exchange.<sup>42</sup> The principle of "Face to Lithuania", formed by a professor Steponas Kairys Kaminskas in 1965, was close to Tomas Venclova as well as to the members of "Santara-Šviesa", whereas according to him, the majority objected it.<sup>43</sup> Tomas Venclova and Aleksandras Štromas expressed the idea that Soviet Union is not internal, and is about to collapse soon. There were opposite opinions, which stated that talking about the collapse of Soviet Union is a step backwards for 30 years and on the contrary there should be more talks about people's behaviour both in emigration and in Lithuania in case if occupation would be prolonged.<sup>44</sup> Tomas Venclova stated that the emigrants in particular of his generation "have chosen a very significant status, – the status of winners differently from the first and the second waves of emigration, and the status of people, who denied themselves to be losers; not a status of refugees, but a status of the ones who departed purposely".<sup>45</sup> Thus, their mission in the fight for freedom in Lithuania was of great importance.

In the USA Tomas Venclova got involved into the liberal intellectual and cultural movement of Lithuanian emigrants. He associated with Czeslaw Milosz and Josif

<sup>39</sup> Aleksandravičius E., *Praeitis, istorija ir istorikai*, Vilnius, 2000, p. 88.

<sup>40</sup> Girnius J., *Tauta ir tautinė ištikimybė, Raštai III*, Vilnius, 1995, p. 74.

<sup>41</sup> Štromas A., *Laisvės horizontai*, Vilnius, 2001, p. 131.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>43</sup> Venclova T., *Tautos identitetas yra gyvas daiktas, Atgimimas*, Nr. 23, 2009, p. 3, 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Esminiai klausimai, Akiračiai, Čikaga*, 1978, Nr. 10, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> Venclova T., *Išėivija ir kultūrinis procesas, Metmenys, Čikaga*, 1983, Nr. 45., p. 162.

Brodski and related his own fate with „Santara-Šviesa“<sup>46</sup>. According to Tomas Venclova statement, on his arrival to America he was invited to participate in different emigration organizations, but only the activity of „Santara-Šviesa“ seemed to him meaningful and close to his attitudes.<sup>47</sup> Whereas the representatives of the conservative tendencies seemed to be shut down in old irrelevant issues and incompetence: “Slogans and prompts of majority of emigrants to free Lithuania have become a vague ritual, covering the disbelief in any kind of changes or deadly fear of communism.”<sup>48</sup> In this view Tomas Venclova's opinion coincided with the the opinion of Vytautas Kavolis, who had earlier noticed that in the emigration press the spirit of the reminiscence of old days, idolatry, group dogmatism is prevailing. Although his most critical blame was the following: “that it [Lithuanian identity – J. J.] is irrelevant, out of date, moss-grown and cobwebbed like Trakai castle. It is not able to respond to nowadays issues, does not regard the present situation and its requirements. Moods prevailing in Lithuania is completely worth the name of archival culture.”<sup>49</sup> These words were said in 1957, although it is likely that until T. Venclova arrival the situation has not changed. Whereas speaking about members of “Santara-Šviesa”, T. Venclova stated “These were people, educated in traditional Western universities and free of some Lithuanian anachromisms. Free of provincialism, exaggerative affection for Lithuania ruled by the president Smetona. Free of tendencies of a firm hand, dictatorship, though having a reasonable attitude towards collaboration with nacism, whereas the members of Frontas group were not able to boast for. The following issues were evaluated according to standards of western civilization by the members of Santara.”<sup>50</sup>

Tomas Venclova believed that emigrants could influence the homeland greatly, considered them to be the “second voice of culture”, especially effective when the first one was silent or singing the wrong melody”.<sup>51</sup> He proposed both to exile and himself to follow the ethical rule: “wherever you are, or anything happens to you, you must behave the way your behaviour is bringing only goodness in any circumstances to your society, your nation and through it to all humanity, except the evil, or at least much more goodness than evil”.<sup>52</sup> In order to implement this rule, he offered specific approaches, the values to follow and the behaviour mode of an emigrant to execute this mission. Tomas Venclova, as well as majority of other exiles, considered that the creation of culture was one of the most significant approaches of the implementation of this rule. Though some possibilities to express oneself existed in Lithuania, they were substantially insufficient. The second important mission of an emigrant was to be a bridge between Lithuanian underground and legal cultures, because emigration provides with possibility to follow and even to influence them both, emigrants' discussions should reach Lithuania and provide with possibilities to make a connection between both cultures. Overall literature of exile would reach Lithuania, both legally and illegally working Lithuanians would be

<sup>46</sup> Donskis L., *Tapatybė ir laisvė: trys intelektualiniai portretai*, Vilnius, 2005, p. 165.

<sup>47</sup> Veidu į Lietuvą: Santaros Šviesos likimai, *Akiračiai*, Kaunas, 2010 04, Nr. 410, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Štomas A., *Laisvės horizontai*, Vilnius, 2001, p. 20.

<sup>49</sup> Kavolis V., *Nepriklausomųjų kelias*, Vilnius, 2006, p. 126.

<sup>50</sup> Venclova T., Tautos identitetas yra gyvas daiktas, *Atgimimas*, Nr. 23, 2009, p. 3, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 24.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72.

involved in constant discussions.<sup>53</sup> Not only is important the informational function of emigrants, but according to T. Venclova: "Emigration must foster the political class of Lithuania, must be in charge, must promote those cultural and political tendencies that were more and more displayed in Lithuania".<sup>54</sup>

Tomas Venclova considered that it was not worth to require special kind of Lithuanian identity as this not only constricts the artist's possibilities, but devalues his significance to the nation. In his opinion, that if anyone is deprived of his homeland, it is easy to lose one's language and identity is only a myth and conversely, he stated that it is practically impossible to escape from Lithuanian identity, therefore it should not be leading in creation. In his view, some of the works (e.g.: by Algirdas Julius Greimas, Oskaras Vladislovas Milašius) written not in Lithuanian can more exalt the name of Lithuania than the ones written in the Lithuanian language. The most important is not to ignore the Lithuanian identity and not to cut relationship with Lithuanian society, whereas overall activity in exile must be focused to Lithuania. According to him, the western cultural experience, civic rights, conceptions of tolerance should be transmitted to Lithuania as Lithuanians would need the following after gaining the independence.<sup>55</sup> However, according to T. Venclova, the Lithuanian language should not be emphasized overmuch, although language is one of the most significant indication of the identity, where any Lithuanian can miss a fair part of his national identity with the loss of the language.<sup>56</sup> T. Venclova considered that Lithuanian exiles should not feel miserable or lonely, while such feelings lead to inner isolation and force to think that it is impossible to make any changes. Aleksandras Štromas agreed to his ideas by stating that the inferiority complex of a small nation induce the dissociation, which only promotes the self-preservation and provinciality maintenance.<sup>57</sup>

Thus, Tomas Venclova encouraged the exiles to be active in making the future of Lithuania instead of missing Lithuania in the past. His arrival was rather late, but with other emigrants of his generation he managed to set off a noticeable dying hope of possibility to see the independence of Lithuania. He assumed that emigrants are neither small nor weak to influence the future of Lithuania, so he urged them to be active and do everything to lay the foundations of independence. Tomas Venclova thought that intellectual creation and dialogue with Lithuania is very important.

### Autoreflections of emigrant Tomas Venclova

Tomas Venclova's perception of the emigration itself as a phenomenon was rather differed from the other emigrants. The departure from Lithuania was a painful experience for the majority. In Vytautas Kavolis words, emigrants felt themselves humbled and crush by history. It is obvious that such feelings were typical to people who not only lost their homeland, but their previous life as well. They had to start a new life and to reconsider the system of own values.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 72 – 76.

<sup>54</sup> Veidu į Lietuvą: Santaros Veidu į Lietuvą: Santaros Šviesos likimai, *Akiračiai*, Kaunas, 2010 04, Nr. 410, p. 13.

<sup>55</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 78 – 81.

<sup>56</sup> Savukynas V., *Esu lietuvis, niekuo kitu negaliu ir nenorėčiau būti*, *Akiračiai*, Kaunas, 2007 07, Nr. 9, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Štromas A., *Laisvės horizontai*, Vilnius, 2001, p. 317 – 318.



Tomas Venclova considered an emigration as a normal phenomenon of the XXth century, and claimed that the emigration is available not only as the escape from totalitarianism, but it cannot be condemned in case a person leaves a country for better conditions, cultural and scientific novelties, or sometimes just for an adventure. Each nation must have own class of emigrants abroad.<sup>58</sup> He assumed emigration as a task or a challenge, fate or sometimes as the best solution to give one's duty for a nation. In one of his interview, he stated the following: "I used to be a lonely poet in Lithuania, and this loneliness reduced the shock of collision with another world".<sup>59</sup> It is supposed this collision to be fairly gentle and thus, according to him, his expectancy from the West were significantly lower than of others, and he was also better informed about the West.<sup>60</sup> T. Venclova compared his departure to the gambling in Las Vegas: his imagination about the West was rather vague, he was not aware of the future, so his choice was done by guess. In his opinion his choice was lesser of two evils. Later he stated that he managed to win the game and he enjoyed any possibilities provided by the West World.<sup>61</sup>

T. Venclova lived in the Soviet Union for a reasonably long period, so he was well acknowledged with it, whereas people, grown-up in Independent Lithuania had significantly more sentiments. While reading his reviews on life in the West, a certain feeling of pride is obvious, his ability to cope with life perfectly is often emphasized. The emphasis is due to the fact that it was supposed to be a failure, followed by a wish to return, so he wanted to prove himself, soviet authorities and other emigrants that it was possible not only to emigrate but also to get successfully established in the West.

Thanks to the help of the circle of earlier emigrated acquaintances, he managed to settle and to get an academic job in the USA. However, as he stated, he never expected to have an easy life in the West, but he neither experienced great difficulties, nor unemployment, he was engaged in his favourite activity: he worked in universities of Berkeley, Los Angeles, Yale, published a significant number of books, travelled a lot, the language barrier he coped easily. A great bureaucracy were considered by him to be the biggest problem.<sup>62</sup> Therefore Tomas Venclova had no nostalgia in emigration, and conversely, his life was full of value and activities, for the following he could not have in Lithuania. Although the works of Tomas Venclova were read in Lithuania, but his statement was, that only in the West he understood what means to be a litterati, to participate in literature events, presentations of books and other pleasant things to a writer.<sup>63</sup>

Though mostly positive emotions are prevailing in Tomas Venclova's thoughts, but some nostalgic notes are felt as well. In the interview of 1996 in the magazine "Literature and art" he said: "One day I was involved in the translation of Eliot, the other - Borgese, another - Norwidge, when everything is new, it is important, that all this has not existed in Lithuanian, while rephrasing Mandelstam, it must be in Lithuanian. It was complicated to get such texts, more complicated to promote them into the press, each publication was an event in my life and I hope some event in the culture of Lithuania as

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<sup>58</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 77 - 78.

<sup>59</sup> *Manau, kad... Pokalbiai su Tomu Venclova*, Vilnius, 2000, p. 152.

<sup>60</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup> Venclova T., Rašyti savaip, *Lietuva Pasaulyje*, Čikaga, 1981, p. 178 - 179.

<sup>62</sup> Venclova T., Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 14 - 17.

<sup>63</sup> Venclova T., Rašyti savaip, *Lietuva ...*, p. 177.

well".<sup>64</sup> Thus, T Venclova had a feeling of benefit to Lithuania, while not living there, and every though minor work was something new to Lithuanian people.

After the two decades of the reestablishment of Lithuania, Tomas Venclova replied that he considered his home both in Lithuania and USA (town New Haven), both Poland and Montenegro. He stated that he had no obvious home and he considered as "rather a good feeling, when you can feel a home almost in any place, especially in Europe".<sup>65</sup> Tomas Venclova had a liberal and cosmopolitan attitudes, according to him, his home could become any place in the world, but at the same he retained Lithuanian identity. He had a feeling that he was able to do more for both – himself and Lithuania, being in the West rather than in the Lithuania. In general, being a Lithuanian to him was much more than residing in a closed territory of the country: "The meaning is that you must care for Lithuania more than any other country of the world. You can be a Russian, Polish, Jew, German, Chinese, African, a resident or just residing in Lithuania, but all affairs of this country must be of greater significance than affairs of any other country of the world. In case it is like this, you are a Lithuanian in civic meaning, not a narrow ethnic one".<sup>66</sup>

Summarising the approach of Tomas Venclova towards expatriation and exile, his reasoning about the duke Andrej Kurbsky must be mentioned. He called him "an ancestor of all dissidents and emigrants". T. Venclova recollected this story not only due to the reason that A. Kurbsky was one of the first Russian emigrants, but also because he was a man, resisting the conventional order of that time Russia and incurred the disgrace of Ivan the Terrible. He did what seemed to be impossible – he became a dissident and emigrant. Despite of this, his life in emigration was a failure, his letters to Ivan the Terrible never reached the aim and he died broken and in poverty, but according to T. Venclova, he was right as he "had the courage to cut own navel" and chose a third way, while only two seemed to be possible: either to stay in Russia loyal to the czar or to die.<sup>67</sup> In the story of Andrej Kurbsky Tomas Venclova envisaged similarities with modern issues of emigration and even in his own case in particular.

### Conclusions

Tomas Venclova's had chosen to become a dissident despite of the fact that he was grown up in a family loyal to the Soviet union. Though he had fairly good material and creative conditions, he was not able to adapt. The departure to the West was deliberate and induced by several reasons: the lack of freedom to create limited possibilities of literary work, which were more restricted after his father's death and finally the desire to see the world, to travel and desire to serve to the welfare of Lithuania. The ideas of the members "Santara-Šviesa", propagating the cooperation between the emigrants and Lithuanians were the closest to him. T. Venclova himself valued exile as a significant factor in the fight for freedom of Lithuania. The works of literature and their transmission to Lithuania were considered as the most important task for emigrants. He believed that the influence of expatriates could be great, so he offered them rather to keep a constant dialogue with Lithuania, to govern it, instead of dissociation.

<sup>64</sup> Lietuviška kultūrinė spauda ir tikros bei tariamos hierarchijos, (G. Dabašinsko ir T. Venclovos pokalbis), *Literatūra ir menas*, 1996 07 27, p. 11

<sup>65</sup> Milkova V., Lietuvą mylėti per ištiestos rankos atstumą, *Kauno diena*, 2010-02-24, p. 4 - 5.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4-5.

<sup>67</sup> Venclova T., *Vilties formos: eseistika ir publicistika*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 384 - 393.

Streszczenie

Jowita Jankauskiene

### **Przeznaczenie i misja emigracji w rozmyślaniach Tomasa Venclovy**

Tomas Venclova wybrał życie dysydenta, pomimo faktu, że wychował się w rodzinie lojalnej wobec Związku Sowieckiego. Choć miał dość dobre warunki nie był w stanie się dostosować. Wyjazd na Zachód był celowy i spowodowany przez kilku powodów: brak swobody tworzenia ograniczone możliwości pracy literackiej, szczególnie po śmierci ojca i wreszcie pragnienie, aby zobaczyć świat, podróżować i służyć ojczyźnie. Uważał, że wpływ emigracji może być wielki, więc proponował raczej utrzymanie stałego dialogu z Litwą, aby wpływać na sytuację, zamiast odcięcia.

Резюме

Иовита Янкаускене

### **Судьба и миссия эмиграции в размышлениях Томаса Венцловы**

Венцлова выбрал судьбу диссидента, несмотря на то, что он вырос в семье лояльной к Советскому Союзу. Хотя он имел довольно хорошие условия к творчеству, он не смог адаптироваться. Уход на Запад было преднамеренным и основывался несколькими причинами: отсутствие свободы для творчества ограниченные возможности литературной работы, которые были еще более ограничены после смерти отца и, наконец, желание увидеть мир, путешествовать и желание служить к благосостоянию Литвы. Он считал, что влияние иностранцев может быть большим, поэтому он предлагал им, чтобы сохранять постоянный диалог с Литвой, чтобы влиять на ею, вместо диссоциации.

