



## **Time Travel at Vezaiciai Manor 1888**

### **Goal**

To reflect on the independence and identity of Lithuania

To encourage civil courage and opposition in a peaceful way

### **Theme**

Civil courage. Dependence and freedom

Russification and oppression of rights

### **Facts, Lithuania in the 19<sup>th</sup> century**

The big Polish-Lithuanian union collapsed in the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and was partitioned. The largest area of the Lithuanian territory became part of the Russian Empire. At this time the use of the Lithuanian language had decreased for a long time and was largely limited to the rural areas. Two unsuccessful uprisings against Russian rule in 1831 and 1863 led to new policies. Serfdom was abolished in 1861, but for many of the peasants life remained more or less the same. The Tsarist authorities implemented a number of Russification strategies as a way of controlling the Lithuanian territory. They banned the Lithuanian press, closed cultural and educational institutions and made Lithuania part of a new administrative region. The Lithuanians opposed and organized secret Lithuanian home schooling and an extensive network of book smugglers. In this emerging national movement the use of the Lithuanian language in speech and writing was seen as very important and the language became more and more associated with Lithuanian identity. The national revival focused on books, poems, secret newspapers, education and a desire for independence. Lithuanian books were secretly stored, one of the places were at the Vezaiciai manor.

At this time many people saw no other opportunity than to go to America. About 635 000 persons, almost 20 % of the population emigrated.

The press ban was finally lifted in 1904. In the aftermath of the first World War Lithuania declared independence in February 1918.

Vezaiciai Manor is a big estate with many buildings, impressive gates, a big manor house, nice alleys and gardens, a brewery, a smithy, store houses, barns etc. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century new stables for the increasing amount of horses were erected in a neogothic style. There were many servants and farm workers employed. The surrounding peasants rented their land and worked for the manor.

In mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Vezaiciai manor was owned by Count Edvardas Volmeris, married with four children. Count Volmeris was known for his brutality and punishments and was very unpopular among the workers. He accepted no opposition. Count Volmeris died in 1883 (killed by a bull) and was succeeded by his oldest son Vaclovas.

## **Scenario, Governor's visit at Vezaiciai manor 1888**

Today is an important day for all the people at Vezaiciai manor. The Governor is going to visit the manor. Count Vaclovas Volmeris has the chance to show the grandeur of the estate, improve his friendship with the governor and his influence in the region. The workers and farm tenants have something completely different in mind. They are tired of all the hard work, high rents and brutal regime. Even the children have to work for the manor. Today is their chance to bring the complaints to the highest authority, the governor. 27 of them have prepared their complaints for a long time.

You can feel this is a time of change in the society. Although serfdom has been abolished the noble men seem to be even more brutal and the social differences increases, Life for former serfs is still the same, high rents and hard work. The Russian Tsar has taken a harder grip, banned the Lithuanian language, books, poems, education. But as a respond there is a growing nationalism. More and more are talking, although in silence, about freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of expression, even independence; secret home schooling in the Lithuanian language is organized. And one of the places where Lithuanian books are secretly stored is the Vezaiciai manor, in the brewery.

It is lots of tension in the air, Count Volmeris and his foremen are giving their orders. The manor must look better than ever; nothing is allowed to destroy this day. But the workers have something else in mind. They silently discuss their actions, while working. This is a key day for the future. Who will dare to raise his/ her complaints? What will happen when the governor arrives? How will it end?

### **Key Questions**

- Why is it important with freedom of speech? Freedom of press? Independence?
- What is Lithuanian identity? Is there diversity as well?
- Is life better for former serfs? Is it possible to reduce the social differences? Equal rights?
- What is our way for a common future? My way? Do I have the civil courage to act for better conditions and the common good?

### **Roles**

Servants, workers and peasants at Vezaiciai manor

### **Activities**

- Broom and rake the paths
- Make nice flower beds
- Wash clothes, carpets
- Make decorations and flower arrangements
- Polish the copper

- Make rugstyre soup, coffee, bread
- Prepare the complaints: placards, song, slogan

Ebbe Westergren, Tina Lindström, Kalmar läns museum  
 Diana Butkute, Ingrida Janciauskiene, Gargzdai primary school  
 Rodema Konciauskiene, Dovilai primary school

### **Time Plan, May 2013**

08:00 Set up, preparations  
 09:00 Learners arrive, welcome, background  
       Dress up, scenario, rules  
 09:40 Initiation, activities  
 10:45 Coffee, Governor arrives, discussion  
 11:30 Time Travel ends  
       Reflection  
 12:00 Learners leave

13:00 Learners arrive, welcome, background  
       Dress up, scenario, rules  
 13:40 Initiation, activities  
 14:45 Coffee, Governor arrives, discussion  
 15:30 Time Travel ends  
       Reflection  
 16:00 Learners leave

### **Time Plan, workshop, November 2012**

09.30 Welcome, background; Lithuanian experiences of Time Travels in Sweden  
 10.00 Historic Environment Education and Time Travels  
       Learning  
 11.00 Coffee break  
 11.30 History of Lithuania at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century  
       Experience the Vezaiciai manor through a walk  
 12.05 Time Travel scenario, characters  
 12.30 Lunch  
 13.30 Dress up, presentation, rules  
 13.55 Time Travel starts, initiation, activities  
 14.50 Governor arrives, coffee, discussion  
 15.30 Time Travel ends  
       Reflection, way forward  
 16.30 End of workshop

