

# The Maps and Mapmakers that Helped Define 20th-Century Lithuanian Boundaries - Part 4:

## The Third and Last Partition of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; administrative boundaries of Lithuanian lands from 1795 to 1918

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Yes, "Lithuanian lands," because the name "Lithuania" did not disappear from maps after the Third Partition: it lived on both as named administrative entities within the Empire of Russia until 1840, and on maps by Russian and non-Russian mapmakers through World War I. What disappeared from maps was the "Grand Duchy of Lithuania" (*Lietuvos Didžioji Kunigaikštystė*), or GDL. Fig. 1 below, a detail from an 1854 German Atlas, shows GDL losses in all three partitions: 1772,

1793 and 1795. Nearly 60 years after the disappearance of the GDL, the name "Litthauen" survives over the area of the former GDL, including even that area which became part of "Neu Ostpreußen" until after Napoleon conquered it in 1806.

After twice partitioning the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in 1772 and 1793, the three powers – the Empire of Russia, the Kingdom of Prussia and "Austria" – considered

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Fig. 1. Detail of Dr. Karl Spruner von Merz's "Polen bis zu seinem Untergange, 1795," Gotha, Germany, from the 1854 edition of Justus Perthes's "Historisch-geographischer Hand-Atlas zur Geschichte der Staaten Europa's vom Anfang des Mittelalters bis auf die neueste Zeit." <http://www.lithuanianmaps.com/MapsHistoricalUpTo1795.html>

the failed Kosciuszko (*Kosciuška*) Rebellion of 1794 the last straw. (“Austria” is within quotes because the area ruled by the Habsburg Monarchy had no official name from 1526 until 1804, when, until 1867, it became the “Austrian Empire,” and then, until 1918, “Austria-Hungary.”) The GDL had officially proclaimed, on May 1, 1794 in Vilnius Townhall, that it was joining the Rebellion. After weeks of disagreements with Polish nobility on the ultimate aims of the rebellion, and after France, busy with its own revolt, failed to send promised help to the rebels, Russian troops occupied Vilnius on August 11, 1794. By mid-October, Russians had occupied all the GDL up to the Nemunas, while Prussians took Užnemunė. The insurrection was over in a few weeks.<sup>1</sup>

You’ve seen, in parts 2 and 3 of this series, that scholars, the literature and online sources often have wildly different and inaccurate descriptions of the geographic consequences of the first two partitions. Published descriptions of the Third Partition are no different, but this time I’ll just describe what the GDL lost:

- 1. The Empire of Russia** took the area west to the Baltic and the eastern/northern bank of the Nemunas, excluding the Prussian Kingdom’s Memelland. It had previously annexed Courland/Semigallia. Specifically, Russia annexed:
  - the remaining two-thirds of Vilnius Voivodeship (*Vilnaus vaivadija*), in the GDL since 1413
  - the remaining half of Nowogródek Voivodeship (*Naugarduko vaivadija*), in the GDL since 1507
  - the remaining half of Brest Litovsk Voivodeship (*Brastos vaivadija*), originally created from the southern-most part of Trakai Voivodeship (*Trakų vaivadija*) in 1566
- 2. The Kingdom of Prussia** annexed Užnemunė (*kairiajame Nemuno krante, iš esmės sutapusi su Suvalkija*), and included the area in a newly-formed “New East Prussia” or Neuostpreußen (Polish: *Prusy Nowowschodnie*; Lithuanian: *Naujieji Rytprūsiai*)

### Post-Third-Partition administrative boundaries of former GDL lands: Duchy of Courland and Semigallia

The final partitioning of the GDL began on March 28, 1795, when Duke Peter von Biron, leader of the Duchy of Courland and Semigallia (German: *Herzogtum Kurland und Semgallen*; Latvian: *Kurzemes un Zemgales hercogiste*; Lithuanian: *Kurzėmės ir Žiemgalos Kunigaikštystė*), gave up his title to the Empire of Russia after receiving additional “financial encouragement” – he had, for years, been accepting money from Russia to purchase palaces and estates in Berlin. His Duchy had been a vassal state of the GDL from 1561-69, a vassal state of the Commonwealth from 1569 to 1726, and a formal part of the Commonwealth from 1726 until 1795<sup>2</sup>. You’ll find many

sources saying this annexation was a result of, or followed, the Third Partition, but it preceded it. The result was the creation of Courland/Kurljandskaya guberniya (Курляндская губерния – using the pre-1918 Cyrillic spelling of guberniya, which I will abbreviate as “g.” throughout, because it aligns with the spelling you will see in Cyrillic map illustrations; the post-1918 spelling is *губерния*). Residents of the area might not have noticed the administrative change: they continued to be governed for nearly the next hundred years, with Russia’s approval, by Baltic German nobles.<sup>3</sup> This guberniya, its capital Mitau (its name until 1917, when it was changed to *Jelgava*) existed with unchanged boundaries until 1915, when the German Empire took control. See Fig. 2.

Seven months after Russia’s annexation of Courland/Semigallia, on October 25, 1795, meetings began between representatives of the Empire of Russia, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Habsburgs. Negotiations continued through January 26, 1797, when the three participants signed, in St. Petersburg, a final treaty.<sup>4</sup>



Fig. 2: Vasili Petrovich Pyadyshv's 1820 "General-Karte vom Kurländischen Gouvernement," from his "Atlas géographique de l'Empire de Russie, du Royaume de Pologne et du Grand Duché Finlande..." (in 83 maps), published in St. Petersburg by the Russian Topographical Depot. From [www.easteurotopo.org](http://www.easteurotopo.org)

<sup>1</sup> Zigmantas Kiaupa, et al: "The History of Lithuania before 1795," Lithuanian Institute of History, 2000, p. 358

<sup>2</sup> Volumina Legum, t. VI, Petersburg 1860, p. 209.

<sup>3</sup> David James Smith: "The Baltic States and Their Region," Rodopi, 2005

<sup>4</sup> Norman Davies: "God's Playground: A History of Poland," Columbia Univ. Press, 1982, p. 54

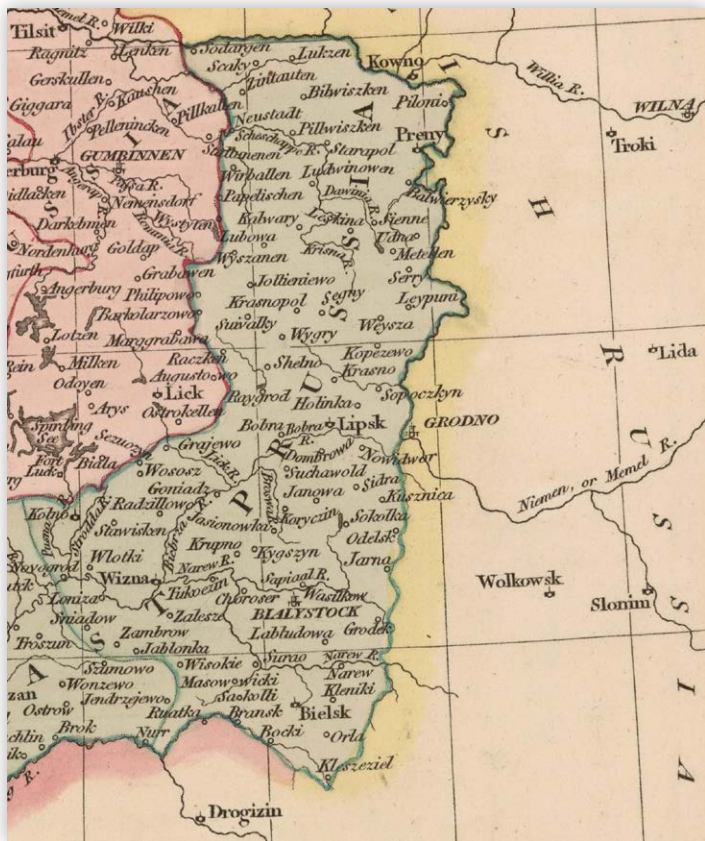


Fig. 3: Detail, showing the eastern half of New East Prussia: Kammerdepartement Bialystok, which existed 1795 – 1806, from Robert Wilkinson's 1808 map "Prussia" (by then already out of date), London, from his "A General Atlas," published 1800 to 1816. From www.davidrumsey.com



Fig. 4: "The Raft at Tilsit," with Napoleon standing in rowboat. From Harper's Monthly, 1853, v. 6. via the Library of Congress

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**Post-Third-Partition administrative boundaries of former GDL lands: Augustavas and Suvalkija**

Augustavas (Polish: Augustów) and Suvalkija (Polish: Suwałki) became the northeastern half of New East Prussia, named Kammerdepartement Bialystok. See Fig. 3.

In 1806, "Napoleon felt what powerful allies the Poles, fighting for liberty, would be against Russia and Prussia, and used many arts to engage them in the cause. There was one man then living near Fontainebleau, whose very name would have raised the whole population of Poland – Kosciusko. Buonaparte made him the most pressing invitations to share in the approaching campaign, and urged him to issue addresses to the Polish nation, calling upon them to embrace the present opportunity of regaining their liberty. But Kosciusko was not one of those who were dazzled by the splendor of Napoleon's career, and he divined that the military despot would be equally treacherous as hereditary tyrants. The more ardent and sanguine spirits among the Polish patriots were not so skeptical, but engaged in the campaign with the highest hopes." This particular "Greater Poland Uprising" (others followed in 1830-31, 1846, and 1863-64) was successful, and Polish soldiers marched on Prussia's capital in October 1806.

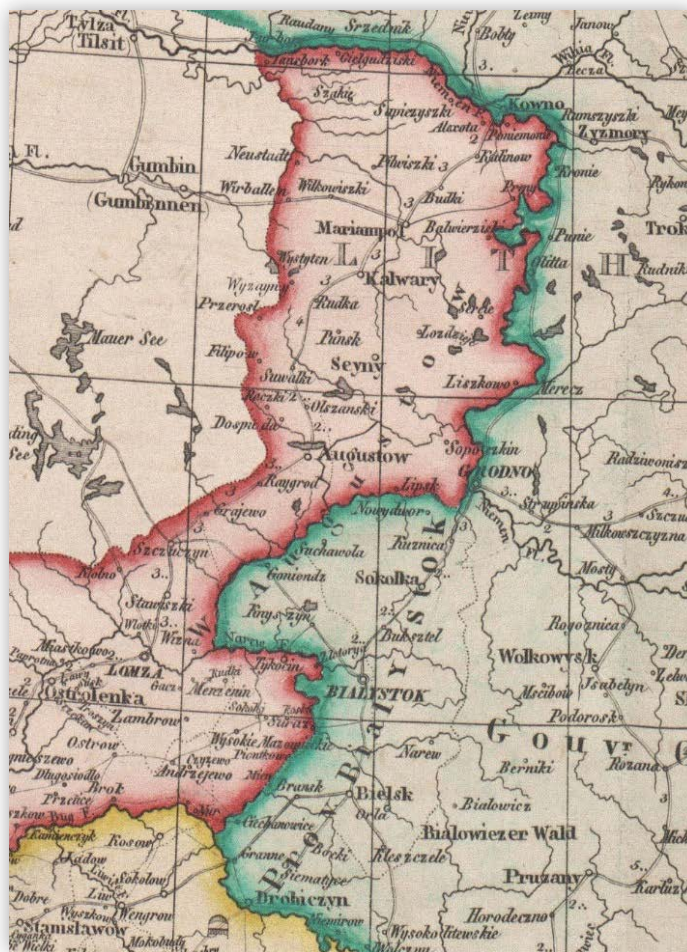


Fig. 5. Detail from Jan Marcin Bansemer's "Poland in 1807 (after the Treaty of Tilsit)," from his 1823 "Atlas." From www.easteurotopo.org

<sup>5</sup> James Fletcher "The History of Poland," Harper Brothers, 1836, pp.287-288

A Russian army advanced on the area, but withdrew upon Napoleon's arrival. Napoleon and Tsar Alexander I signed the July 7, 1807 Franco-Russian Treaty of Tilsit while sitting on a raft in the middle of the Nemunas (Fig. 4).

That treaty resulted in an alliance between the two countries. Two days later, the July 9, 1807 Franco-Prussian Treaty of Tilsit was signed, with the King of Prussia giving up nearly half his territory: the southern part of Kammerdepartement Bialystok was given to Russia (who renamed the area **Belostok oblast**), while the rest of the Polish lands in Prussian possession since the Second and Third Partitions (including former GDL lands) became the quasi-independent **Duchy of Warsaw** (Polish: *Księstwo Warszawskie*; German: *Herzogtum Warschau*; Lithuanian: *Varšuvos kunigaikštystė*). (See Fig. 5 for both former Lithuanian lands in the Duchy of Warsaw, and Russia's Belostok oblast.) In 1815 the Congress of Poland gave those areas to what was called "**Congress Poland**," and they remained in nominal Polish hands until WWII. Belostok oblast – "oblast," in this instance, an administrative district generally equal to a guberniya – lasted until 1843, when it became part of Grodno guberniya (Russian: *Гродненская г.; Lithuanian: Gardino gubernija; Polish: Gubernia grodzieńska*) which had been created in 1796.

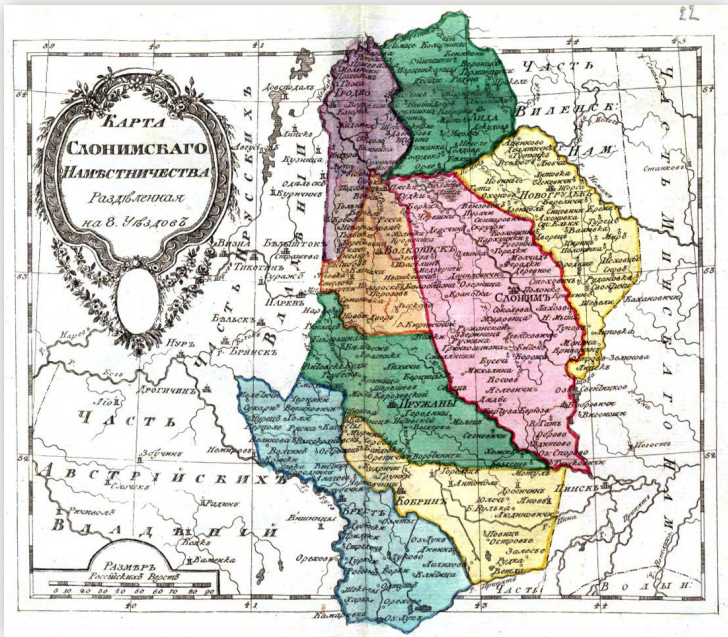


Fig. 7: 1796 "Слонимскога наместничества" (Slonimskovo namestnichestvo), from that year's "Small Atlas of the Russian Empire." From the National Library of Russia: <http://www.rsl.ru/>

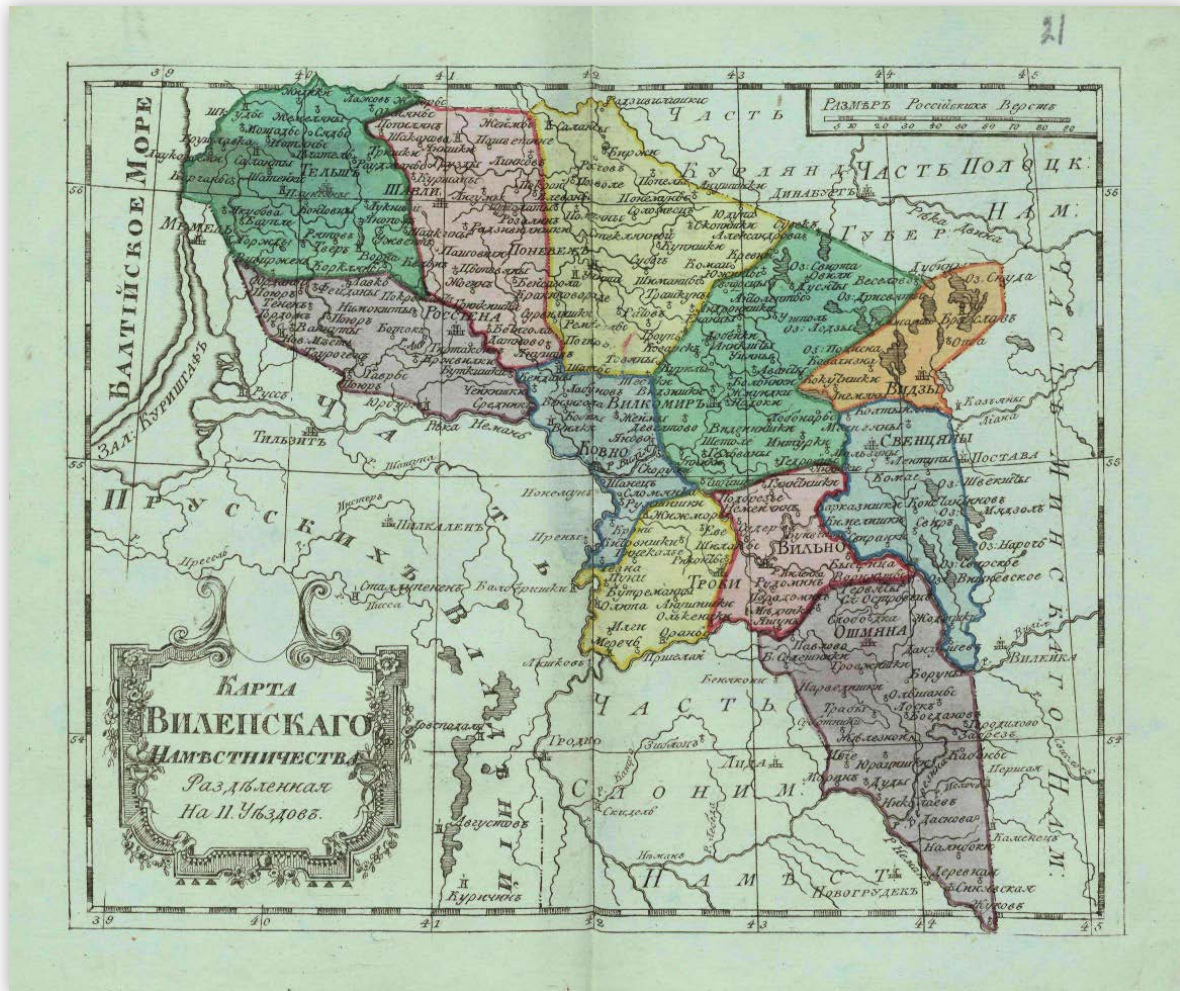


Fig. 6: 1796 "Виленского наместничества" (Vilenskago namestnichestvo), from that year's "Small Atlas of the Russian Empire." From the Russian State Library: <http://www.rsl.ru/>

### Post-Third-Partition Russian administrative boundary changes to former GDL lands

Russia initially divided the remaining territories of the GDL between the short-lived Vilna and Slonim (*Lithuanian: Slanimo; Russian Слонимская*) namestnichestvos, or vice-regencies. All namestnichestvos were renamed guberniyas later in 1796. (See Figs. 6 and 7, which are, I believe, the only maps ever issued of these short-lived entities.)

By the end of 1796, the two were merged into one: Litva guberniya (*Russian: Литовская г.*), its capital in "Vilna." (Fig. 8)

In 1801 Litva g. was divided into the Litva-Vilna g. and the Litva-Grodno g., a situation that lasted until 1840, when "Litva" was officially dropped from both names. I have not been able to find any maps with the "Litva-Vilna" and "Litva-Grodno" names. The 1831 German atlas map in Fig. 9 is from 1831, and while it inaccurately names the two guberniyas "Wilna" and "Grodno," it does have the label "Litthauen" over the Wilno g., as well as over the northern part of Minsk g., which has an additional label in smaller

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Fig. 8: Leonov Vilbreht's 1800 "Литовской г." (Litovskoi g.) from the "Russian Atlas of 42 maps of 44 guberniyas," published by the "Geographic Department of the Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty," From the National Library of Russia: <http://www.nlr.ru/>

type "Weiss Russland." Grodno g. is over-labeled "Podlesien" (Belarussian: Палессе/Paleśsie; Ukrainian: Полісся/Polissya; Russian: Полесье/Polesje; Polish: Polesie; Lithuanian: Polesė) which today partly in Belarus and partly in Ukraine.

In 1843, an administrative reform created the Kovno (Lithuanian: Kaunas) g. (Russian: Ковенская г.) out of seven western districts of the Vilna g., including all Žemaitija. Vilna g. got three additional districts: Vileyka and Disna/Dzina from the Minsk g. and Lida from Grodno g. At the same time, Belostok oblast was dissolved, with Bialystok, Byelsk and

Sokolka uyezds (districts) annexed to Grodno g., while Grodno g. ceded Novogrudok uyezd to Minsk g. See Fig. 10. This arrangement continued until World War I.

In 1867 Augustów and Płock g.'s in Congress Poland were divided into a smaller Płock g., Suwałki g. (consisting mostly of the former GDL Augustów g. territories) and a recreated Łomża g.

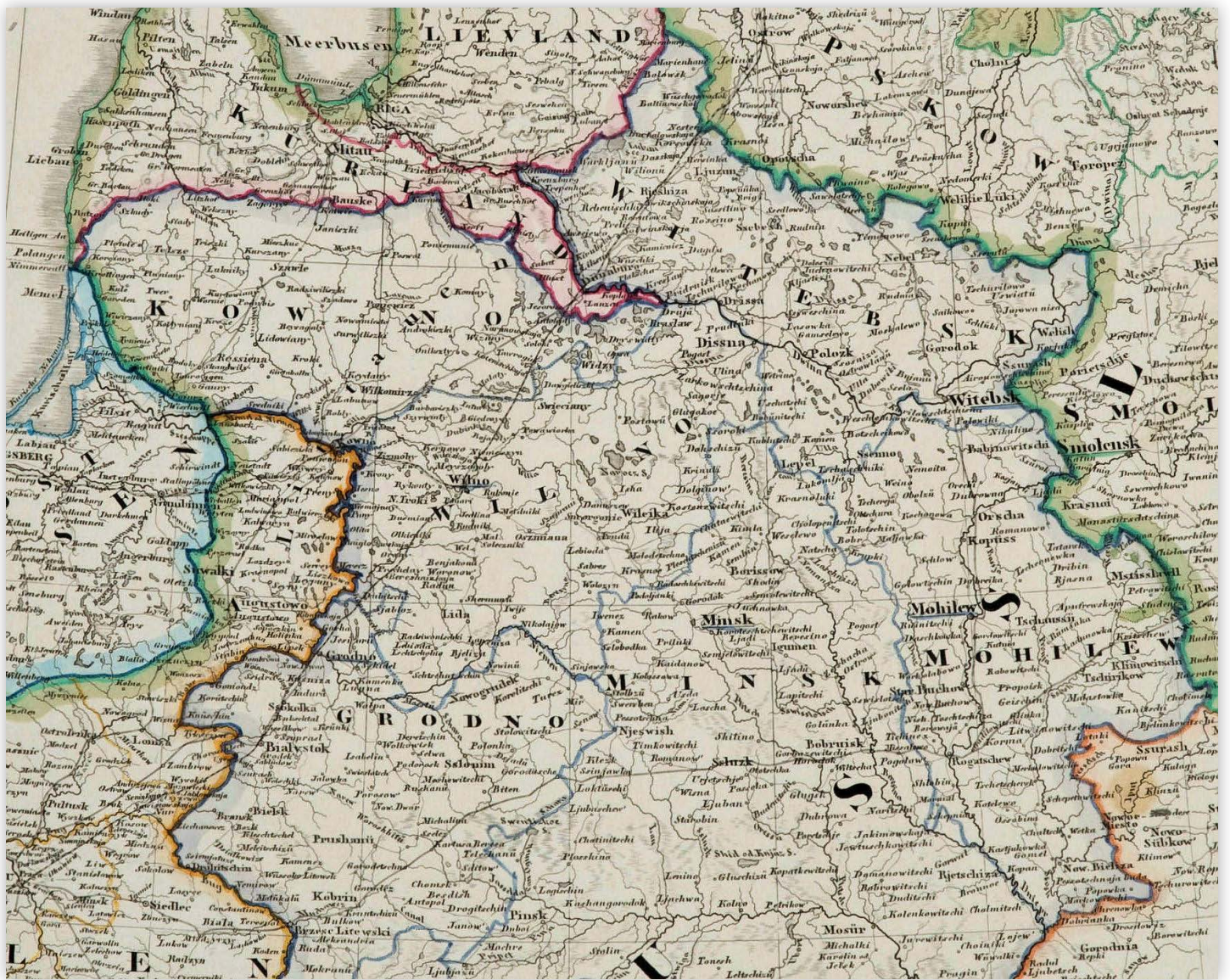


Fig. 9: 1831 "Karte der Russischen Provinzen Curland...Lithauen," Danzig. From www.karty.by



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Fig. 10: Lands of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania from 1843 to World War I, from this detail of Friedrich von Stülpnagel's 1862 "Ostsee-Laender und Inneres Russland bis Moskau," from "Stieler's Handatlas," published by Justus Perthes. "Litauen" is now limited to Kowno g. From the collection of Andrew Kapochunas at <http://www.lithuanianmaps.com/Maps1851-75.html>

## 19th to early 20th century larger Russian administrative groupings

From 1870 to 1912, Grodno, Vilna, and Kovno g.'s were grouped together as the "Guberniya-General of Lithuania." The "Northwestern Krai" (Северо-Западный край), or subdivision, of the Russia Empire consisted of the area of the former GDL, and was centered in Vilnius. It included six guberniyas:

Vilna, Kovno, Grodno, Minsk, Mogilev, and Vitebsk. A Russian cartographer in 1890 expanded the definition by including surrounding areas as representing Lithuania and Belorussia (See Fig. 11).



Fig. 11: 1890 Pompei Nikolaevich Batyushkov: "БѢЛОРУССІЯ и ЛИТВА" (Belorussia and Litva). The yellow coloring incorporates parts of Poland, Prussia and Russian guberniyas as Belorussian and Lithuanian, roughly following GDL boundaries, and quite different from the post WWI boundaries to come. From the British Library

(To be continued.)

The next article will cover ethnographic maps of the former GDL from the 19th and early 20th century, and how those "racial" maps, together with Lithuanian ethnic nationalism, directly led to Lithuania's greatly-reduced boundaries after WWI.