

GARSAS • Lithuanian U.S. Alliance of America

English Section

The Historic Circumstances of Lithuania's Loss of Independence

(Aušra - The Dawn, — Nr 3)

A thoroughly documented 28-page essay on the Soviet aggression against Lithuania and the country's incorporation into the USSR in 1940. Both Soviet and non-Soviet sources are used. The essay describes the Stalin-Hitler Pact, the Soviet pressure on the Lithuanian government, the Red Army invasion on June 15, 1940, and the shock experienced by some Lithuanian Communists when Moscow's ultimate designs became apparent. The conclusions of the essay:

"1. By concluding a non-aggression pact and a secret agreement in Moscow, on August 23, 1939, the Soviet Union and Hitlerite Germany agreed to divide Poland and to liquidate the independent states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

"2. The introduction of the Soviet government in Lithuania and the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union was carried out not by the will of the Lithuanian people but by the force of the Soviet Union, which introduced the Red Army into Lithuanian territory, conducted the elections to the Lithuanian People's Diet by using compulsion, violence and deception, and then dictated to the Diet the adaptation of resolutions necessary to legitimize the rapacious actions of the Soviet Union.

"3. The incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union is an act of the Soviet Union's imperialistic policy".

Polonization or Russification

The article maintains that the Soviet authorities have consistently pursued the "polonization of the Vilnius territory — not because of the love for Poland but since they see polonization as a logical step in the russification process. This polonization has been particularly strengthened since early 1975, with the appointment of Slavs to many high Party and Soviet posts in the regions of Vilnius, Trakai, Eišiškės and Švenčionys. Poles who consider themselves as belonging to the Vilnius territory have no intelligentsia of their own and are therefore doomed to be russified".

During 1944-1950, the Soviet authorities did not obstruct the efforts of the Lithuanian Communist administration and educators to establish Lithuanian-language schools in the Vilnius territory. The situation has undergone a "radical change" since 1950, when the "Kremlin decided that a re-Lithuanianization of the territory ran counter to Russian interests". Inhabitants of the Vilnius territory "who consider themselves Polish, can learn the Russian language easily and therefore they are more easily russified than the Lithuanians". Moreover, the "preservation of the Polish issue helps to keep alive

in the Lithuanian minds the idea that, if Russians ever left Lithuania, Vilnius would be again seized by the Poles".

The new policy led to methodical "polonization" campaign. By 1953, the number of Polish-language schools in Lithuania rose to 263. "The Lithuanian intelligentsia of the Vilnius territory reacted very sensitively to the area's polonization". After the XX Party Congress (1956), they went into action. They prepared a speech for the writer A. Vienuolis, their deputy of the LSSR, unmasking the polonization measures. The security didn't dare to do away with Vienuolis, but many people involved in the action were interrogated, demoted or fired from their jobs".

The magazine Kultūros barai (No. 11, 1976) published a "round table discussion" on the problems of the Vilnius territory. The discussion revealed that Polish schools were estab-

lished where the "majority of the population didn't want it". Also, the regions of the Vilnius territory have been ordered to engage in competition with Byelorussia and not with the Lithuanian-speaking regions. The magazine promised to continue this "interesting discussion" but eight years have passed now without a word on it. Meanwhile, the director of the LSSR History-Ethnography Museum, V. Žilėnas, was fired and replaced by a KGB informant, Agota Jankevičienė. A. Tyla was prevented from defending his doctoral dissertation.

In Polish schools, upper grade students as a rule converse in Russian. They don't know Polish literary language and prefer to answer exam questions in Russian. While Poles in the Ukraine and Byelorussia are not allowed their own schools and newspapers, Poles in Lithuania have both. (ELTA)

COMMUNIST FIRST CLASS MEANS NO CONVENIENCES

By Peter Caikauskas

This is the third in a series of articles describing a Union Leader employee's trip behind the Iron Curtain.

Lithuania welcomes tourists with Communist first class technology, which, when translated, means hotel rooms without heat or hot water.

Our instructions regarding taking photographs were made clear as soon as we boarded the Soviet Aeroflot plane in Leningrad.

Although tourists are allowed to carry one movie and one still camera, there are many restrictions in the actual picture taking.

No photos are allowed in air terminals or while in the air; none of bridges or military installations and, most important, leave your camera in your bag if you find an object YOU like, but the secret police agents standing behind you do not. In the hotel lobby and on the sidewalk outside I saw the same faces, day after day, of men "reading" newspapers with one eye on me.

Curfews were enforced on all guests from the United States — by midnight, all hotel doors were padlocked.

One the cultural center of medieval Lithuania whose territory extended from the Baltic to the Black Sea, Vilnius is one of the most beautiful Eastern European cities, with tourists swarming the narrow streets, admiring the countless architectural treasures of the churches, palaces and castles.

The Russian occupation of Lithuania, to a certain extent, has changed the face of Vilnius. An atheistic regime started to penetrate the lives of the population, which is 85 per cent Catholic. Churches were nationalized and changed into mu-

seums, art galleries and warehouses. The population of the city almost doubled, reaching the half million mark, and creating immense problems for the government controlled by the Communist party.

With the elimination of free enterprise, solutions to seemingly minor problems were hopelessly bogged down in the files of local bureaucrats who, in turn, waited for decisions from Moscow.

Speedy production on a local level pushed by local party functionaries was reduced to a snails pace, while a project had to await final approval or allotment of materials from the centralized Moscow government.

The results of such a system were seen clearly both in Vilnius and Kaunas.

Housing Shortage Acute
Although high-rise apartment buildings are constantly under construction in Vilnius, there is an unbelievable shortage of living quarters. All apartments are assigned by the government through place of employment on a seniority basis. People have waited as long as 10 to 15 years to be selected for a new or better apartment. Once assigned, the apartment is for life.

When children in the family marry, they share quarters with their parents until they come to the top of the waiting list.

Older people, living on a meager pension, are the most neglected, and have no hope of ever acquiring better quarters.

The size of a better than average apartment is approximately 600 sq. ft., including two bedrooms, a small living room and kitchen.

The apartments are neatly furnished and immaculate, but regardless of how comfortable and inviting the living quarters are, the builders' workmanship is far below U.S. standards.

Countryside dwellings are quite a different story indeed. Wide areas of agricultural land prepared for only one kind of crop told us clearly that

small, productive, privately-owned Lithuanian farms are gone.

Dirt Floors

Homes I entered 85 kilometers outside Vilnius jarred my mind. They had four outside walls, roof, and room partitions. Kitchens had dirt floors. Most did not have even a wood-burning stove, but rather brick stoves that looked like those built by early American settlers for heating and cooking.

I took no pictures here, for fear of hurting people's feelings.

We spoke of American homes and furnishings, but I low-keyed my explanations of modern cooking stoves, refrigerators and the like by telling them that we earned more money than they and were thus able to buy these things. But, by their expressions, it was obvious they knew that money was only a small part of it.

Some folks came right out and said it — as long as Russian Communists control Lithuania, they have no hope of ever having what we have in America.

Under communism, anything can be bought for the "right price".

A person wanting to purchase a car was told he would be put on a waiting list, and the sale might go through in about three years. By slipping 1,000 rubles under the counter, the car was available in two weeks.

Gasoline is plentiful, but car accessories, particularly tires, are difficult to find.

A tire may cost \$150, and there is no guarantee that it will last even a year. The Steel-belted, radial tire, is unknown. (Manchester, N.H. Union Leader)

LRCRA Spokesman: Detente Is Illusion

Middletown, Conn. — The new president of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Priests' League of America says U.S.-Soviet detente is an illusion.

Father Zenon A. Smilga, pastor of St. Sebastian Church here, said that true friendship between the two nations is only wishful thinking.

"Americans are so good", he commented in an interview, "and sometimes so naive".

Father Smilga, who came to the United States in 1955, said he escaped the Soviet takeover of his native land after World War II, but that his parents spent 12 years in a Siberian prison camp.

Superficial changes in the Communist approach should not fool America into lessening its defenses against Communist nations, the 50-year-old priest said.

"Their methods are still the same", he said. "Their purpose is to take over the world". (Catholic Light, Dec. 16, 1976)

— Most Americans eat too much — too much sugar, starch, fat and so-called "junk foods", say nutritionists. Even protein has become suspect. And most authorities now believe the eating habits of many Americans make them overload their plates at least three times a day.

Inevitably, bellies bulge and sag so much that some estimates indicate nearly 1 in 2 people in the United States are overweight.

Actual studies reveal that excess weight can shorten your life. It can lead to heart attacks, atherosclerosis, high blood pressure and diabetes. Some 650,000 people died of heart attacks last year. (The Fraternal Monitor)

— Six years ago, women accounted for only 2% of all new agents recruited. A recent study made by the Life Insurance Marketing and Research Association shows that now the proportion has risen to 9%. (The Fraternal Monitor)

Antonia M. Wackell

THE CRUCIFIX

You say that you received the crucifix I sent
With some curiosity and bewilderment.
Would it shock you if I made it known
That it is chiseled out of an exile's bone?
Here we have no trees from which to carve
Nor coffins for the bodies of those who starve.

Here a healthy heart soon weakens and dies,
For the body that sheltered it could not disguise
The desolation existing everywhere.
What can one do? Where can one go — where?
For him who dies, Eternal Rest will be more kind
And into the shallow grave the body is consigned.

To rest in peace in the warmth of the sod
On which despondently in life he trod?
There is no peace, no warmth and no relief
From yesterday's suffering and grief.
The wasteland's beasts uncover the dead
and over the sands the bones are spread.

From such a fragment that cross was made,
Not to be encrusted with jewels or jade;
The work is crude, the lines are plain,
But it shall never see the wastelands again.
The exile's bone obtained its freedom and reward
When an aching heart carved it
Into the image of Our Lord.

"We have never recognized the 1941 frontiers of Russia. They were acquired by acts of aggression in shameful collusion with Hitler... The Baltic States should be sovereign independent peoples".
Winston Churchill

FOUNDER OF ELTA 80 YEARS OLD

Joseph Ehret, writer and journalist, became 80 years old on October 18th. A Swiss national, he became intensely interested in Lithuania and joined the Lithuanian independence movement which he served with his pen. He worked in Lausanne for the Lithuanian Information Bureau and was on the editorial staff of the journal Litauen. In 1919, he went to Lithuania as adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There, he organized and

directed the Information Department and the Telegraph Agency ELTA, during 1919-1922. The ELTA Bulletin in English is a continuation of the Agency's original activities. Prof. Ehret contributed many valuable books and articles on the Lithuanian question and Soviet Imperialism. (Elta)

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