

PRELUDE TO AGGRESSION

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At the end of World War I, with the collapse of Imperial Germany and the weakness of the revolutionary regime in Russia, a number of states in Central and Eastern Europe, claiming rights under the principle of the self-determination of nations, appeared or reappeared as independent political entities.

After the collapse of the three continental powers, efforts to advance international peace, security and order in the world resulted in the establishment of an institution that, with all its imperfections, represented hope for some states and seemed to provide certain guarantees for the existence of others. Gradually, however, there appeared on the international scene a number of other states that appeared to be ready to challenge the rule of international law issuing from the League of Nations. The situation became such that a number of states that not only considered themselves devoted to international law but to a great extent depended on it for their very existence found themselves confronted with the combined might of certain powers that defied both the law and its embodiment, the League of Nations.

The events of 1939 were ominous for small states like Lithuania. Certain occurrences on the international scene had already demonstrated that reliance on international law could be fatal. In an age when that law was observed by the powerful states only when it did not concern their "vital interests." Unfortunately, such reliance was the only resource for some states.

On June 15, 1940, Soviet troops entered Lithuania. The Lithuanian state, which had experienced in the course of its long history times of grandeur and times of misery, again ceased to exist as an independent political entity. However, before the country was actually occupied there was a period of revealing negotiations on the part of the Soviet Union, first with the Western powers, then with Germany, then with Lithuania herself. There was a prelude...

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE WESTERN POWERS

After the Czechoslovak crisis early in 1939, Britain and France sought new measures to prevent possible future German conquests. Negotiations between England and Poland were initiated on April 4, and at their conclusion a joint declaration was issued. This declaration provided for mutual assistance in case of "any threat, direct or indirect, to the independence of others." A final agreement to this effect was signed on August 25, 1939. Under both the declaration and the final agreement, Lithuania was included in the Polish security system.

The developments of 1939 troubled the Soviet Union as much as they did England and France. Negotiations for a possible rapprochement were initiated in the summer of 1939, and at one stage a second Triple Entente appeared probable. But then the "Baltic question" arose.

Soviet intentions in the Baltic region were not fully revealed at the opening of the discussions in Moscow. Winston Churchill, who was not yet in the government, advocated mutual assistance agreements that would go into effect in case of a German advance through the Baltic states.¹ On June 7, Neville Chamberlain reported to the House of Commons that "His Majesty's Government have been able to satisfy the Soviet Government that they are in fact prepared to conclude an

agreement on the basis of full reciprocity."² Instead of the proposed pledges, Russia sought a firm alliance. Britain accepted the Soviet views, and it seemed that only the details remained to be worked out.

It became evident during the course of these British-French-Soviet discussions of 1939 that the Soviet Union "harbored certain aspirations toward the Baltic states."³ By June 22 there remained no doubts as to Soviet intentions in the Baltic area: "...Great Britain should assent to the forcible absorption of the three independent states of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia into the Soviet Union."⁴ The Soviet demands were put forth at a time when the German Ambassador was returning to Moscow to negotiate a "trade." From now on the Soviets began to negotiate with both the Western powers and the Germans. The Western powers were clearly at a disadvantage in such negotiations, since there were limits to the Soviet claims they could satisfy. For while England and France were seeking only security through alliances, the Soviet Union was seeking both security and territorial expansion. And as matters finally stood in the negotiations, the Russians tried to gain Western approval of their aggression in the Baltic area.

In answer to those critics of the British stand who maintain that Britain failed to satisfy the Soviet need for security, it must be pointed out that it was not security that the Soviet Union was really seeking in the negotiations. The whole Soviet security argument does not stand up, since

- (a) England and France were prepared to sign a pact with the Soviet Union that would have provided for a common front against Germany and that would have satisfied Soviet security demands — what England and France refused to do was condone Soviet territorial ambitions in the Baltic area;
- (b) when the Russians did receive the Baltic states into their sphere of interest and succeed in setting up military bases in them, they still liquidated the Baltic states in 1940;
- (c) only later (see below) did the Russians finally reveal their intentions in Europe generally and in the Baltic area in particular.

No matter how much Britain wanted an understanding with the Soviet Union, she refused to second the plans for Soviet aggression in the Baltic region. Britain refused to yield even when the Russians tried to disguise their demands under the definition of "indirect aggression," which would have permitted them to interfere in the affairs of the Baltic countries under practically any pretext. On July 31, Chamberlain referred the matter to the House of Commons: "We are extremely anxious not even to appear to be desirous of encroaching upon the independence of other states. And if we have not agreed so far with the Soviet Government upon this definition of indirect aggression, it is because the formula which they favoured appeared to us to carry that precise signification."⁵ England's refusal to give in to the Soviet demands just about ended efforts to reach an agreement with the Soviets at this time and on these particular matters.

Developments now gained momentum; the Russians accelerated their negotiations with the Germans. The Soviet government's first attempts to come to some understanding with the German government seem to have been made after the exposure of the weakness of the Western powers by the Munich crisis of 1938.⁶ In 1939, after Russia's disagreements with England and France over the questions referred to above, these attempts were renewed. Conditions were now favorable for an understanding with the Germans. Russia and Germany soon agreed on their objectives in Central and Eastern Europe, and no considerations could stand in their way. Both states sought territorial expansion, and both ignored international law and equity — the only force that could possibly check their combined advance at this time.

During the earlier negotiations between England and the Soviet Union, there was hardly any common ground on which those two countries could meet to deal with the problems at hand. Russia could not understand why England refused to condone her aggression in the Baltic states, while England held that "in failing to uphold the liberties of others we run a great risk of betraying the principle of liberty itself, and with it our own freedom and independence. We have built up a society with values which are accepted not only in this country but over vast areas of the world."⁷ Now, in the negotiations between Germany and the Soviet Union, no such obstacles as "principle," as "freedom and independence," "values" were apparent. In the words of Lord Halifax, "Herr Hitler bartered what was not his property to barter — the liberties of the Baltic people (Finland)..."⁸ In 1943, K. V. Grinius paid tribute to England: "In justice and honor to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Halifax, it must be stressed that the British delegates had refused to condone this Muscovite concept (of "indirect aggression"), mostly on ethical-moral considerations."⁹

The Baltic states remained strictly neutral throughout the course of the negotiations. It would appear that this Baltic policy of neutrality, especially in the case of Lithuania, was a simple necessity rather than a calculated course. As matters stood in 1939, Lithuania's only alternatives to strict neutrality would seem to have been either self-annihilation through armed resistance against Russia or Germany or a state of dependence on Russia or Germany. Alliance with either power on equal terms was out of the question. Germany's intentions had already been revealed in Austria, Klaipėda (Memel), Czechoslovakia and Poland — all of which pointed to the probable future course of that powerful state, especially in its relations with its weaker neighbors. Nor could there be any doubt about Soviet Russia's aspirations. Russia's intentions in regard to the Baltic states were fully revealed in her negotiations with England and France. Evidence now seems to indicate that Stalin hoped to see the Western powers fighting Germany in a long war, with Russia intervening at a time of her own choice in order to realize her objectives in Europe.¹⁰ Molotov disclosed such intentions to the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, V. Kreve-Mickevicius, in 1940:

You must take a good look at reality and understand that in the future small nations will have to disappear. Your Lithuania along with the other Baltic nations, including Finland, will have to join the glorious family of the Soviet Union. Therefore you should begin now to initiate your people into the Soviet system which in the future shall reign everywhere, throughout all Europe; put into practice earlier in some places, as in the Baltic nations, later in others.¹¹

This, certainly, was not an argument for security, either Lithuania's or Russia's, as the Soviets maintained throughout all their negotiations, first with the Western powers and later with the Baltic states themselves.

On August 23, 1939, Von Ribbentrop and Molotov signed the nonaggression pact. The pact contained a Secret Supplementary Protocol that clearly defined the spheres of influence of Germany and Russia with respect to Central and Eastern Europe. Under this protocol, Lithuania found herself in the German sphere of influence. The consequences of the pact were felt immediately.

LITHUANIA DURING THE GERMAN-POLISH WAR

The German-Polish war began on September 1. On September 4, Lithuania announced her policy of neutrality.

It has already mentioned that the Secret Supplementary Protocol of the August 23 nonaggression pact placed Lithuania in the German sphere of influence. It should be noted, however, that no mention was made of this protocol in the official announcement of the nonaggression pact, and it was only certain subsequent events that indicated that some kind of an agreement on spheres of influence had been reached between Russia and Germany.

Immediately after the outbreak of the war, Germany, acting under the protocol, suggested that Lithuania enter the war against Poland — thus becoming, in effect, Germany's ally.¹² Dr. Peter Bruno Kleist, of the N.S.D.A.P. Dienststelle von Ribbentrop, approached the Lithuanian Minister in Berlin with such a suggestion. Dr. Kleist promised German assistance, and hinted that Lithuania need not fear the Soviet Union if she attacked Poland.¹³ (This is one of the indications that there existed a Russo-German understanding on Eastern Europe.) On September 21, 1939, Ribbentrop personally suggested to the Lithuanian Minister in Berlin that Lithuania enter the war. Throughout these approaches the Germans pressed for immediate action on Lithuania's part. From the German point of view, it was only natural that Lithuania should enter the war against Poland. Germany offered Lithuania all she could desire: her ancient capital of Vilnius together with the Vilnius territory, all of which had been seized by the Poles some twenty years previously. This was probably the greatest temptation that Lithuania experienced in her brief period of independent existence between the two world wars. For only a Lithuanian can understand what Vilnius means to Lithuania. For twenty years the Lithuanian government had refused to recognize the seizure of the country's historic capital; for twenty years Vilnius had been held to be constitutionally the permanent capital of Lithuania, and Kaunas had been called merely its provisional capital; for twenty years the Lithuanian nation had lived in hope that Vilnius would someday be reunited with Lithuania. And yet Lithuania countered all the German temptations with a reassertion of her strict neutrality. Furthermore, rather than joining Germany in her attack on Poland, Lithuania proceeded to give all assistance to the Polish refugees who poured into the country by the thousands. Lithuania's decision appears to have been based on "wisdom and conscience" and not on emotions; it can be explained in no other way.¹⁴ The distance between the Lithuanian border and Vilnius could have been covered in a couple of hours; Lithuanian-Russian relations were more than merely good, even without the Russo-German pact; Germany promised military assistance, and Poland could offer no resistance at all. And yet the attack was not made. Sven Auren, a Swedish writer who was in Lithuania at the time of the German-Polish conflict, pays tribute to Lithuania: "The Lithuanians behaved splendidly... They behaved like gentlemen in their hour of testing, for they hated the Poles... In September, 1939, Lithuania proved herself to be one of Europe's most civilized nations."¹⁵

On September 17, Russia invaded Poland from the east. On September 28, under the Secret Supplementary Protocol to the German-Soviet Boundary and Friendship Treaty,¹⁶ Lithuania was transferred to the Soviet sphere of influence in exchange for certain Polish territory that was given to Germany. The mass repatriation to Germany proper of some 100,000 Poles of German origin provided evidence that some kind of understanding existed between Russia and Germany. This was a rather significant undertaking, since the families of all those repatriated had lived in the Baltic states for centuries.

Faced with pressures from East and West, Lithuania based her hopes on "loyal and scrupulous" neutrality.¹⁷ In pursuit of this policy, Lithuania avoided any action that might be interpreted as hostile to either Russia or Germany and thus serve as a pretext for intervention.

Thus it is evident from the events described that conditions in the Baltic region were such as to make neutrality the only feasible course, setting aside the ephemeral advantages that might have gained for Lithuania had she entered into war against Poland. Events proved, however, that at this period international law and equity were considerations of secondary importance to the two great continental powers involved. Furthermore, in the absence of conditions for defending herself — either a substantial armed force or a favorable geographic position — the Lithuanian state was destined to survive only as long as the Soviet Union desired such a survival. But "if Lithuania was to be crushed, she still preferred to fall together with the crumbling fabric of law."¹⁸

SOVIET-LITHUANIAN NEGOTIATIONS

The Secret Supplementary Protocol signed on August 23, 1939, shall be amended in item 1 to the effect that the territory of the Lithuanian state falls to the sphere of influence of the U.S.S.R...

From the Protocol of September 28

On September 29, Dr. Natkus, Lithuania's Minister in Moscow, returned to Kaunas to give his government information on the talks he had had with Russia's Foreign Minister Molotov. He brought with him an invitation from the Soviet government to Lithuania's Foreign Minister, J. Urbšys, to visit Moscow. That very same evening a conference of the Council of Ministers, under the chairmanship of President A. Smetona, was held. The Minister reported on the recent developments arising out of the occupation of Poland. The proposed trip of the Foreign Minister to Moscow did not appear to disturb Dr. Natkus, but both President Smetona and Foreign Minister Urbšys felt differently.¹⁹ It must be noted that the Foreign Ministers of Latvia and Estonia were already in Moscow. The general public was kept in ignorance of any uneasiness that was felt; the proposed trip to Moscow was publicly presented as simply an attempt to settle the Vilnius question.

When the Soviet Minister in Kaunas, Pozd-niakov, was asked about the discussions in Moscow, he said that they would concern Vilnius, mutual assistance between the two countries and other, unspecified matters. On September 19, the **New York Times** reported that "Vilna and the surrounding areas were expected to be the subject of conversations between Lithuanians and the Soviet Union in Moscow within a few days. It was indicated that Lithuania would not demand the restoration of Vilna, but was hopeful that the Soviet Union might open the question in connection with the Polish settlement."²⁰ The invitation was accepted by Lithuania, and Foreign Minister Urbšys left Kaunas on October 2.

In Moscow the Foreign Minister received a proper reception. At seven in the evening of the same day he attended the first meeting with Soviet officials. In this first meeting in the Kremlin, Lithuania was represented by Urbšys and Dr. Natkus; Stalin, Molotov, Potemkin and Pozd-nia-kov represented the Soviet Union. Stalin opened the meeting. He spoke first of the situation created in Eastern Europe by the collapse of Poland. He accused Poland of a failure to see the rapid changes that were taking place in conditions in Eastern Europe, and added that Poland must now suffer in consequence of this failure. Stalin remarked that the war in Europe was not over, and that to him the security of the Soviet Union was the primary concern. He emphasized that the Soviet Union did not intend to infringe upon the sovereignty of other states. The interests of security, however, required that Lithuania agree to sign certain agreements, which were not disclosed at the time.²¹ Stalin's speech was vague and not very informative.

Molotov, like Stalin before him, then spoke of the changed situation in Eastern Europe. There was an implied warning in his speech that Germany might threaten Lithuania's security, and that the question of that security should be reexamined accordingly. Molotov, unlike Stalin, emphasized Lithuania's security rather than the Soviet Union's. He proposed a mutual assistance pact to safeguard Lithuania's independence, but again no details were presented. Lithuania's Foreign Minister gave an equally evasive, general reply. Before any further discussions could be fruitful, concrete proposals would have to be presented. Stalin then proceeded to formulate three treaties that he expected the Lithuanian government to sign:

- (a) a treaty relating to the return of Vilnius and the surrounding territory (only part of the Vilnius territory would be turned over to Lithuania, however);
- (b) a treaty establishing a mutual assistance pact between Lithuania and the Soviet Union;
- (c) a treaty ceding part of Lithuania's territory (the Suvalkai territory — see map) to Germany.

The Russians even suggested that the agreement transferring Lithuanian territory be signed there in Moscow by the Lithuanian representatives and the German Ambassador. The first proposal created no important difficulties, and there was room for discussion of the second, but the third proposed treaty was a blow to Lithuania in two ways; the demand that Lithuania hand over a portion of her territory to Germany was unexpected here in Moscow, and the suggestion that everything could be arranged with Ambassador Schulenberg clearly hinted that some kind of agreement between Russia and Germany had been concluded at Lithuania's expense. Why, if no such agreement existed, would Stalin find it possible to speak for Germany? Foreign Minister Urbšys first thanked Stalin for the proffered return of Vilnius and then asked what precisely was meant by the proposed transfer of Lithuanian territory. At this point Molotov interjected that the question of Lithuania's cession of territory had already been settled between himself and Von Ribbentrop. Urbšys protested in vain.²² The first meeting ended after midnight. Detailed draft proposals were needed for further discussions.

The second meeting was called for 1:30 that same morning, just about an hour after the end of the first meeting. The participants were the same. (Apparently the draft treaties had been prepared in advance of the first meeting but were not



Map of Lithuania

presented then for purely tactical reasons.) The first treaty would return Vilnius to Lithuania under the Soviet-Lithuanian treaty of July 12, 1920. The second draft called for mutual assistance and also asked that 50,000 Red Army men be stationed in Lithuania at points chosen by Russia; a military pact to this end would be concluded. Lithuania was accorded no rights on Soviet Union territory. Foreign Minister Urbšys still sought to dissuade Stalin from his course, arguing that the proposed bases would threaten Lithuania's independence and under International law would constitute an infringement upon the state's sovereignty. He finally asked that a mutual assistance treaty be considered that did not call for the quartering of Soviet troops on Lithuanian soil. Stalin and Molotov were visibly nervous.²⁸ ²³ Minister Urbšys argued that the pact in the form proposed by the Soviet Union would in effect constitute the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union. Stalin referred to it, however, as "assistance." Molotov reminded the Lithuanian representatives of the Soviet Union's friendly attitude toward Lithuania in the past, and repeated StaHn's contention that the pact was to be interpreted solely as evidence of the Soviet Union's concern for Lithuania's security as well as her own. While Molotov was speaking, Stalin suggested that the number of Soviet troops to be based in Lithuania be set at 35,000 rather than 50,000. During this discussion Molotov informed the Lithuanian representatives that Estonia had already signed similar agreements and that Latvia would do so in the near future. He sharply criticized the "negative view" taken by the Lithuanian delegation, saying it endangered the whole Soviet security system in the Baltic area. He even threatened that such an attitude would lead to unfriendly relations between the two states. At this point Stalin called for refreshments, and the tenseness was somewhat alleviated. The conversations now continued without the usual formalities. Stalin repeatedly emphasized that the Soviet troops in Lithuania would constitute no danger to the Lithuanian state; they would remain there solely for the country's protection. Finally Minister Urbšys told the Russians that he would have to return to Kaunas to inform the Lithuanian government of the Russian proposals. Stalin appeared to be annoyed at this, but Urbšys was insistent. The second meeting ended at 6 a.m.

On October 4, Minister Urbšys arrived in Kaunas with the draft treaties. The Germans were notified that he would be in Kaunas for two days, so they could make known the German views on the negotiations with the Soviets.

The Lithuanian government was unanimously of the opinion that Soviet bases on Lithuanian soil would be irreconcilable with the concept of sovereignty and would constitute a clear threat to Lithuania's existence as an independent political entity. The Soviet demands were held to be contrary to the existing good relations between the two governments. And indeed, looking at matters in the light of legality and in the spirit of international law, ample grounds existed for the Lithuanian government's contentions. Unfortunately, at the time, and in that part of Europe, at least, political questions were not settled under international law. Things would have been bad enough had the pressure come only from Russia; in view of the Russo-German agreement on joint action in Eastern Europe, they were fatal.

On October 5, Foreign Minister Urbšys approached the German Minister in Kaunas, Dr. Zechlin, in order to learn the German stand on the various questions that had been raised. Dr. Zechlin told the Foreign Minister that Germany did not intend to put into effect the agreements she had concluded with the Soviet Union.²⁴ The Lithuanian government realized from this interview with the German Minister that German action with respect to the agreed Lithuanian territory had been postponed only temporarily, and — what is of great importance — that in their negotiations with the Russians the Lithuanians would have to rely on their own strength; no assistance in any form could be looked for from Germany.

On October 5 the news reached Kaunas that Latvia had also signed agreements with Moscow, but the Lithuanian government was still resolved not to give in. On October 6 the Council of Ministers, under President Smetona's chairmanship, met prior to the return of the Lithuanian delegation to Moscow. It was agreed that the mutual assistance pact was acceptable to Lithuania, but not the Soviet troops. The draft proposals were modified so as to provide for a Soviet military mission with the Lithuanian Army staff on condition that a Lithuanian military mission, even if a smaller one, be accepted by the Soviets. The Lithuanian delegation arrived in Moscow with these instructions on October 7.

The delegation was now made up of Foreign Minister Urbšys, chairman; Deputy Prime Minister K. Bizauskas; Gen. S. Raštikis, Commander-in-Chief of the Army; and a number of advisers. The third meeting was called for ten o'clock that same evening. Molotov, Potemkin and Pozdniakov were present for the Russians. Minister Urbšys opened the meeting with a long speech rejecting the Soviet proposals; he spoke of the history of the Lithuanian nation, of the Soviet recognition of Lithuania after World War I, of Soviet assistance to Lithuania and of the general good relations between the two states. He argued that the pact as proposed by the Soviet Union would be viewed there as occupation forces. In the eyes of the international community, Lithuania would be a vassal state.²⁵ He then asked for a pact without Soviet troops in place of the pact as formulated by Moscow. As might have been expected, Molotov was not satisfied with this answer. In response to the Lithuanian Foreign Minister, he now openly emphasized Russia's security: "The present war has not unfolded entirely; it is difficult to forecast its repercussions and, therefore, the Soviet Union considers its security... I should point out that Lithuania is much more important to the Soviet Union than Latvia and Estonia."²⁶ Since all important decisions had to be approved by Stalin, however, Molotov promised to bring the Lithuanian proposals to Stalin's attention. It was evident from Molotov's attitude that the Lithuanian position was unacceptable to Moscow, but hope persists in the face of discouragement, and the Lithuanian delegation still hoped.

The fourth meeting was held at 5:30 p.m. on October 8, in the Kremlin. Stalin again was present, and point by point he rejected Lithuania's proposals. He once more reduced the proposed Soviet force in Lithuania, this time to 20,000 men. Again he spoke of Lithuania's independence. Again he promised not to interfere in Lithuania's internal affairs, and he even

offered to warn the Lithuanian Communist Party not to engage in any disturbances. When Stalin had finished, all the members of the Lithuanian delegation expressed themselves as against the Soviet proposals. At one point Stalin interrupted Foreign Minister Urbšys with the remark that he was overstating his case,²⁷ and Molotov added that all that remained to do was for the Lithuanians to agree. Minister Urbšys and Gen. Raštikis then offered what amounted to a compromise. They proposed that Lithuania agree in advance to resist any aggression on Germany's part either against Lithuania herself or against the Soviet Union through Lithuania, and more detailed offers along this line were made to guarantee Russia's security.²⁸ Even this offer was unacceptable. Minister Urbšys, in final attempt, begged Stalin not to insist on Soviet bases. Stalin refused to compromise. Again Minister Urbšys told the Russians that he would have to contact his government, since he was not authorized to conclude such an agreement.

On October 9 two members of the Lithuanian delegation, Deputy Premier Bizauskas and Gen. Raštikis, left Moscow for Kaunas. The Council of Ministers was called into session, with President Smetona participating. Members of the delegation made Russia's demands known to the Council of Ministers. It was clear that Russia, the only major power in Europe at the time that was not involved in the war, was ready to take advantage of her favorable position to force Lithuania into submission.

The return of Vilnius was first discussed. Some of the Ministers doubted whether Lithuania should be content to accept only part of the Vilnius territory. Agreement was approved, however, on two principal grounds:

- (a) It was apparent that a refusal to accept Vilnius would not alter the Soviet insistence on army bases, while the failure to achieve the return of Vilnius would adversely affect the country's morale;
- (b) it was maintained that if it was impossible to prevent part of the Vilnius territory from falling into Bolshevik hands, it was the Lithuanian government's moral duty to save whatever it could.²⁹

With no assistance to be looked for from Germany, and in the face of the concentration of Soviet forces near Lithuania's borders, Lithuania had no alternative but to accept the Soviet demands. The delegates were instructed to seek the best possible terms.

The final meeting was held in the Kremlin on October 10. Even at this late stage in the negotiations, the Russians introduced modifications that were of considerable significance and were objectionable to Lithuania. The return of Vilnius and the mutual assistance provisions were merged into a single treaty, creating the impression that Lithuania had bargained for Vilnius by granting permission for Soviet bases in Lithuania. Lithuanian efforts to return to the two-treaty arrangement were unsuccessful. Furthermore, Soviet bases had previously been asked only for the duration of the war, but Molotov now demanded a 20-year term for the assistance pact. The Lithuanian delegation protested against this change, and Molotov finally agreed to a 15-year period. He stated that Stalin himself had approved the changes, and that nothing else could be altered.

At 10 p. m. on October 10, Foreign Minister Urbšys, in the presence of Stalin, Voroshilov, Zhdanov and other members of the Soviet government, signed the mutual assistance pact. On the same day, Vilnius was returned to Lithuania.

On October 11 a banquet was given for the Lithuanian delegation. All the members of the Soviet ruling circle — Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Zhdanov and others — were present. Molotov and Stalin were the principal speakers at the banquet. Stalin, in what appeared to be a carefully prepared speech, reviewed Lithuania's history, touched upon Russo-Lithuanian relations with emphasis on the periods of cooperation between the two states, and expressed the wish that Lithuania might regain her former power. Both Molotov and Stalin emphasized once again that the troops to be stationed in Lithuania would not interfere in the country's internal affairs.³⁰ In answer to Stalin's speech, Foreign Minister Urbšys promised to uphold the agreements that had been concluded.

On October 13, Kaunas celebrated the return of Vilnius. And yet, in spite of twenty years of hoping, neither the press nor the people displayed much enthusiasm. For who could rejoice at the return of a city — even Vilnius — when the very existence of the Lithuanian state was in danger? The ceding of the Klaipeda territory to Germany; Soviet penetration into Estonia and Latvia; the rape of Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland — all created uncertainties about Lithuania's future.

If the nonaggression treaty between Germany and Russia affected in some way the whole world, it was destined to be fatal to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. International law and morality fell before the combined strength of the two most powerful states in Europe, and with this collapse of the embodiment of the hopes of the 20th century, there fell too those states that had no alternative but to adhere to that system.

As has been indicated above, "the fate of Lithuania was decided without her participation in, or knowledge of, the decision. But even had she known about this secret deal at the time it was made, there was no chance that she could have escaped what had become, in view of the then existing political situation in Europe, inevitable."³¹ And one lives to lament the fact that in mid 20th century, when such efforts had been poured into achieving international law and equity through an institution that represented the greatest advance ever made in this direction, another extreme in the behavior of states was reached that clearly represented a regression to the ages of civilization in its crudest form.

NOTES:

- 1 F. W. Pick, "1939: The Evidence Re-Examined," *The Baltic Review*, 1:156, 1946.
- 2 *Ibid.*
- 3 J. Kajeckas, "The Lithuanian Annexation," *The Baltic Review*, 1:214, 1946.
- 4 Pick, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
- 5 *Ibid.*, p. 158
- 6 K. V. Grinius, *Lithuanian Bulletin*, 1:2, No. 6, August 25, 1943.
- 7 Speech of Halifax, quoted in Pick, *op. cit.*, p. 159.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Grinius, *op. cit.*, p. 2.
- 10 J. A. Swettenham, *The Tragedy of the Baltic States*, p. 23.
- 11 *Third Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression*, p. 342.
- 24 12 V. B. Mačiuka, *Lithuania*, p. 70.
- 13 *Third Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression*, p. 311.
- 14 J. Audrūnas and P. Svyrius, *Lietuva Tironų Pančiuose*, p. 7.
- 15 Sven Auren, quoted in E. J. Harrison, *Lithuania's Fight for Freedom*, p. 23.
- 16 See Appendix.
- 17 Harrison, *op. cit.*, p. 21.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 19 J. Audrūnas, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
- 20 *The New York Times*, September 19, 1939, p. 5.
- 21 J. Audrūnas, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 25 *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- 26 *Third Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression*, pp. 315-316.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 S. Raštikis, *Kovose Dėl Lietuvos*, p. 611.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 615.
- 30 *Ibid.*, pp. 623-624.
- 31 J. Šmulkstys, "[The Annexation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union](#)," *Lituanus*, No. 2, March, 1955.