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BOOK REVIEW

Alfred Erich Senn, *The Great Powers, Lithuania, and the Vilna Question: 1920-1928* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966).

The foreign policy of modern Lithuania in the years after 1918 had as its task the attainment of two main objectives: maintenance of the country's independence and acquisition of additional territories which the Lithuanians regarded as theirs. The second objective involved primarily Lithuania's efforts to win the possession of Klaipeda (Memel) and Vilnius (Vilna), an aim that promised strained relations with Germany and Poland respectively.

Vilnius was a city (and a territory surrounding it) held by Poland but claimed by both Poland and Lithuania. Its seizure by the Poles in October 1920 put a virtual end to all effective intercourse between the two countries for nearly two decades. Efforts to regain Vilnius were unsuccessful until the very end of the interwar decades; Lithuania recovered it only in 1939. Collusion between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia destroyed the Polish state and effected another partition of its lands. Territorially, Lithuania was a beneficiary in that partition: the Kremlin authorities handed over to the Lithuanians a part of the Vilnius area outlined by the Soviet-Lithuanian Peace Treaty of 1920. The city of Vilnius was re-united with Lithuania. However, in the years between the wars recovery of Vilnius was the primary concern of Lithuanian diplomacy, especially in the 1920's. The work under review is a chronicle of that diplomatic endeavor.

Dr. Alfred Erich Senn has produced two major works on the formative years of modern Lithuania. *The Emergence of Modern Lithuania*, which came out in 1959, dealt with the genesis of the Lithuanian state. Now, *The Great Powers, Lithuania, and the Vilna Question: 1920-1928* considers the Vilnius question: its diplomacy and its effect on Lithuanian domestic politics. The author intimates that he spent some twelve years studying matters related to Lithuania, and then implies that his future plans envisage research in other fields. Disengagement of this sort is bad news to those who are interested in diplomatic and political history of the Baltic area.

Professor Senn is an erudite scholar. He utilizes source material that is not readily available to most researchers. His books are copiously documented and free from undue partiality. They also reveal the author's familiarity with matters of structure and style.

The volume at hand is a penetrating and, in a sense, a revisionist analysis. The Vilnius problem itself is a good example. Lithuania in the 1920's viewed Poland as an implacable enemy, and held Warsaw responsible for a "permanent danger of international banditry." Such posture of enmity distinguished Lithuania's diplomacy throughout a good part of the interwar years — so much so that Lithuania's relations with the neighboring states were often influenced by their attitude toward the Vilnius question. In short, absorption in the recovery of Vilnius injected a measure of rigidity into the foreign policies charted by the Kaunas government. Yet, Lithuanian authors are generally reluctant to re-examine either the strategy of Lithuania's foreign policy or the end result it produced. Professor Senn, on the other hand, offers some pertinent and critical observations. He concludes that Lithuanian intransigence resulted in "Lithuania's political isolation," and that after years of diplomatic efforts "Lithuania's Prime Minister stood alone against all the Great Powers." He further suggests that due to the policy of anti-Polonism the Kaunas government "was left with no room in which to compromise." Observations such as these append a humble epilogue to Lithuanian diplomacy in the 1920's.

Senn considers many other factors, decisions, and personalities: popular opinion as a restraint on policy-making, the Suwałki agreement between Lithuania and Poland in October 1920, Latvia's support of Lithuanian independence in the face of possible threat from Poland in 1920, and Professor Augustinas Voldemaras as diplomat and politician. These and some of the other topics brought up in this volume had not previously been sufficiently investigated. That is another reason why Senn's book is a substantial contribution to Baltic, and especially Lithuanian, historiography.

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