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Leonas Sabaliūnas: LITHUANIA IN CRISIS: NATIONALISM TO COMMUNISM, 1939-1940 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972).

In this study Dr. Leonas Sabaliūnas traces the major socio-economic and domestic political forces that shaped the history of Lithuania from 1926 to 1940. The main emphasis, however, is on the transition from the authoritarian regime of President Antanas Smetona to the totalitarian rule of Stalinism. The author is well prepared to handle the study: he holds a doctorate from Columbia University and has the linguistic advantage of being a native Lithuanian, which enabled him to make use of the Lithuanian periodicals published during the period of the study.

Devoid of emotionalism or preconceptions and in good empirical fashion, the author has analyzed some of the problems and difficulties affecting the Lithuanian Republic since 1926. He also scrutinizes the democratic parties governing Lithuania until 1926, pointing to the parliamentary inexperience and dogmatism prevalent among many liberal and democratic politicians. Sabaliūnas views the establishment of dictatorship in Lithuania as a broader European phenomenon: to Smetona and his supporters, both among the Nationalists and a number of Catholic politicians, the "in" movements were the authoritarian movements.

It seems to me that in analyzing the Smetona regime, Sabaliūnas should have placed more emphasis on the pressures against Smetona from Voldemaras and his supporters, who tended to view Smetona as being not enough of a nationalist, too lenient toward ethnic minority groups, and, above all, because of the "*mesalliance*" with a Polish wife, as being too soft toward Poland over the Vilnius issue. Sabaliūnas points out quite correctly that after the overthrow of the democratic regime in Lithuania, Smetona was not quite certain how to restructure the country politically. Following similar tendencies in some of the other European countries, Smetona endeavored to work out a formula for a domestic brand of authoritarianism. In the long run, he appears to have lacked certain ingredients for a successful dictator, such as fanaticism, prompt action, and charisma. In retrospect, the repression practiced by Smetona appears almost benign when compared to the Stalinistic rule imposed on Lithuania in 1940.

Among the more complex issues under consideration is the question of Lithuanian attitudes toward the Soviet Union. Sabaliūnas mentions that prior to the crucial events in 1939, certain intellectuals were interested in fostering friendly relations with the Soviet Union and that certain industrialists, to insure themselves for the future, subsidized the Communist cause. It would be interesting to know how many of them were of ethnic minority stock. Unfortunately, a detailed documentation of such collaboration is very difficult or impossible. Some fellow travelers, who had accepted the Stalin Constitution of 1936 and similar documents at face value, later became militant anti-Communists, attempting to hush up their left-wing political past, while others in Soviet Lithuania, in retrospect perhaps, magnified their pro-Soviet involvement.

The actual sovietization of Lithuania in 1940 is described very vividly. I share the author's viewpoint that Justas Paleckis, at the time of signing the order authorizing the mass deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia and elsewhere, was a tragic figure acting under orders from Moscow. The book seems to suggest that somehow Lithuania would have looked better in 1940 had it been governed democratically. If one recalls that the sovietization of Lithuania was carried out in conjunction with the Molotov - Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, I do not see how any democratic regime could have done better under the circumstances. Interesting parallels can be drawn to Czechoslovakia in 1948. Beneš, the leading democratic statesman of a democratic republic was being deceived to the bitter end by Stalin and his underlings as to the true intentions of Moscow in Czechoslovakia. As in Lithuania, guarantees of noninterference in domestic affairs were rendered to be broken with impunity. Dr. Sabaliūnas points to the tragedy of many liberals in Lithuania who witnessed the destruction of Lithuanian authoritarianism to end up under an alien totalitarianism.

A great asset of this book is the intellectual honesty of the author. Dr. Sabaliūnas should be commended for furnishing new and lucid insights into recent Lithuanian history which has been much neglected in this country.

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