

# LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 11, No.4 - Winter 1965

Editor of this issue: Thomas Remeikis

ISSN 0024-5089

Copyright © 1965 LITUANUS Foundation, Inc.



**LITUANUS**

[www.lituanus.org](http://www.lituanus.org)

## Book Review: AN INDICTMENT OF SOVIET REGIME

**V. Stanley Vardys, ed., LITHUANIA UNDER THE SOVIETS: A PORTRAIT OF A NATION, 1940-1965 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965).**

The Soviet occupation of the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania), which occurred a quarter of a century ago, has been accepted by Western public opinion and even by some scholars and students of world politics as an almost natural and logical event. The fact that the Baltic States enjoyed independence only two short decades and lost it at the start of the second world

[There appears to be missing text between folio 77 and 78 in the printed issue?]

holocaust places them in a worse position than that of some upsurging Asian and African nations which never enjoyed independence and which therefore deserve a chance to try.

To some people the independence of Baltic States was a failure. Of course, this theory of failure is based on nothing but the fact that they lost their independence after such short lapse of time. One who studies the problem more seriously will be forced to admit that the progress which the Baltic States made in the field of agriculture, education, literature and arts was by any standard no indication of a failure. On the contrary, it could be followed and, as a matter of fact, has been followed, though unconsciously, by many Asian and African nations. Some Latin American countries could find in the land reform of Baltic States a good example what should be done for progress.

But the fact remains that outside of verbal sympathy on behalf of the unjust status of the Baltic States nobody seems to cherish seriously a hope for a better one. The life of Soviet Russia might change so much, in the direction of economic well-being and cultural and political freedoms, and the Baltic nations might be carried away by such progress. Of course, we must realize that such an imaginary evolution may bring with it the greatest danger that the Baltic nations, as well as all other non-Russian nations of the Soviet Union, must face, namely, a complete absorption by Russia. A striking failure of the Soviet Union in many fields kept the non-Russian nationalities in the Soviet Union alive.

*LITHUANIA UNDER THE SOVIETS*, edited by V. Stanley Vardys, Associate Professor of Political Sciences at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, is a serious and comprehensive demonstration of this failure, as well as an indictment of the Soviet rule in Lithuania. The first two chapters of this symposium show what Lithuania was before it was taken over by the Soviet Union, while the following two chapters deal with the Lithuanian resistance movement during the World War II and after. It is rather a tragic picture to see how a small nation becomes a completely insignificant factor in world power politics.

The bulk of this book deals with the problem of sovietization of Lithuania after the World War II. As in any collective work, contributions are of unequal quality. Despite some mistakes the best chapters are on Soviet Lithuanian economy (by Pranas Zundi), the administration of power and the Lithuanian Communist Party (by Thomas Remeikis) and the Soviet social engineering in Lithuania (by V. Stanley Vardys). Sober presentation of facts and careful conclusions make these chapters quite convincing even to a reader who does not cherish any particular sympathy for the cause of Lithuania's predicament. The chapters on education, literature and arts sound more like an indictment of the Soviet rule in Lithuania than a scholarly discussion of facts and figures.

As the subtitle of this study says, it tries to give a portrait of a nation. What kind of portrait? Prof. V. Stanley Vardys, in his Introduction, states that the "Soviet-affairs specialists tended toward the belief that the Baltic States were not typically Soviet. Yet it would seem that the opposite holds true." Therefore "the purpose of this book is to examine the full cycle of sovietization, from the destruction of Lithuania's independence and the bourgeois order to its complete integration into the

Soviet state and society". Of course, if this is the case and the complete cycle of sovietization is achieved, then the portrait of the Lithuanian people must indeed be very sad. I, for one, am inclined to believe that the complete sovietization of Baltic States is far from being completed. Otherwise, why should there be such an astute and ever increasing struggle against nationalism and religion? Despite all propaganda and terror the sovietization of Baltic States did not reach much deeper than the very surface of these countries. As the story goes, a visitor to the Estonia's capital city Tallinn told his host:

- So, you have a Soviet regime now.
- So they say — answered the Estonian host.

With this in mind, I think, that on the Baltic shores, as well as all over the Soviet Union, there are peoples who yearn for freedom no less than the peoples of Asia and Africa. At least, parts of the book *Lithuania Under the Soviets* will convey this idea to the scholars and to the general public of the West. A young coed, who dares to write in the Communist Party paper *Tiesa* that she is a Catholic and that she would choose death rather than lose her faith (quoted on p. 235), gives a much brighter portrait of a nation than many other pages in this book suggest.

*V. Trumpa, Library of Congress*