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THE ANGLICIZATION OF LITHUANIAN

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There is no doubt that English is now the international, global universal language. Eighty percent of all the world's scientific and technological publications are in English. English is by far the very first foreign language taught in thousands of primary and secondary schools throughout the world. The computer world is almost totally in English. No language in history has ever reached such universal, global, and wide international use.

Some of the faithful readers of *Lituanus* may recall that, many years ago, we wrote an article entitled "English and Lithuanian: Two Candidates for the International Language." (*Lituanus*, Vol. 15 (1969), No. 3, pp. 25-34). In that article, we pointed out that English was well under way to becoming a true international language. And so it happened.

On the other hand, Lithuanian has been, at it were, in the clutches of well-planned and ruthless Russianization. (Cf. Antanas Salys, "The Russianization of the Lithuanian Vocabulary Under the Soviets," *Lituanus*, Vol. 13 (1967), No. 2, pp. 47-62.

Indeed, by 1988, when the Lithuanian Sajūdis began to demand a more important role for Lithuanians, much damage had been done to the lexicon and to the syntax of spoken Lithuanian. In 1989, just a few months before the re-establishment of Lithuania's independence on March 11, 1990, Lithuanian was made, by law, the official state language of Lithuania.

Now, since 1989, Lithuanian was exposed to what we may call desovietization or de-Russianization. On the other hand, hundreds of anglicisms started appearing in Lithuanian, especially in the spoken vernacular of the younger city dwellers. Many of these anglicisms first came via music: songs, records, CDs, videos, radio, TV, films, etc. Also with the many visiting rock bands from the West.

By 1991, many of these English words, most with Lithuanian phonological approximation, and with Lithuanian endings showed up in the Lithuanian press as well. One should recall that, once the Lithuanian press became totally free in 1990, there were up to 1,000 periodicals—of longer and shorter duration—published in Lithuania. With total abandon, these various dailies, weeklies, monthlies, central and provincial newspapers, journals and illustrated magazines, threw themselves into the freedom of the press. And some of them started using more and more anglicisms, be it that they wanted to replace the russianisms, or be it that they wanted to be closer to the West.

Lithuanian linguists were watching this influx of English loanwords with some trepidation, later—with alarm. In various Lithuanian newspapers, journals and popular illustrated magazines there appeared various articles calling on the editors, journalists, writers, TV and radio announcers to stop this flood of English borrowings into Lithuanian which were appearing in almost all spheres of life.

By now, there are hundreds of English loanwords, or borrowings in Lithuanian. We shall list here only a tiny sample of the more frequently used recent borrowings from English listing the English original in parentheses, *outsaidieris* (outsider), *biznis* (business), *biznizmenas* (businessman), *brifingas* (briefing), *dizaineris* (designer), *džinsai* (jeans), *edukacinis* (educational), *miuziklas* (musical), *marketingas* (marketing), *pikas* (peak), *preskonferencija* (press conference), *reidas* (raid), *rokas* (rock), *stresas* (stress), etc.

In 1993, the Society for Lithuanian Language (Lietuvių kalbos Draugija) published several lists with the most "pernicious" anglicisms. For most of them, they also published proper Lithuanian equivalents, but many Lithuanians are somewhat

reluctant to abandon these anglicisms and use their Lithuanian equivalents. Whether it is some sort of "linguistic inferiority complex," or the overbearing desire to be "Westernized" or both is not clear.

This situation is not unique in Lithuania. Almost all modern languages are on the defensive against the onslaught, as it were, of English: Japanese, Russian, Chinese, Hindi, French, Danish, Finnish, Greek, Hebrew, Icelandic, Norwegian, Polish—just to mention a few from various regions of the world. The attraction, the temptation to use English words, English terms is high irresistible: it pours in with the computers, with various technologies, via trade, sports, music, mass culture, TV, films, etc.

In Lithuania, there is now a double temptation to use words borrowed from English: one, you feel that you reject the unloved Russian borrowings and, two, that you are "with it."

Nobody can predict how long this lovefest with anglicisms will last. It is clear, however, that at this time and for the foreseeable future, English will definitely remain the dominant global language, donating, at it were, its lexical treasures to many a world's language. In the past, Greek, Latin gave western Europe hundreds and hundreds of words which still exist in most European languages in one shape or another. Later, at one time, it was Arabic and then came French which became the international language of diplomacy and of some aristocracies. And now, especially since World War II, English. And, in spite of that, some 3,000 different languages thrive in the world.

Whether any other important language, such as Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, even Russian have any chances of ever replacing English as the basic international, universal/global language, is impossible to predict. However, one should remember that, in the 16th century, or thereabouts, English was an insular Germanic language spoken by about 15 million. And, one is tempted to exclaim: "Look at it now!"

My prediction, for what it is worth, is that Lithuanian, this most archaic of all the living Indo-European languages, will survive the "lexical invasion" of English and will remain as vibrant as ever.

Since the vocabulary, or lexicon, of a language is its most unstable level, or its most fluid component, it is quite possible to assume that, like in most modern languages of the world, English will have left its gifts, as it were, in Lithuanian as well. Which of the anglicisms will remain in functional use in Lithuanian, nobody knows.

Certainly, the Lithuanian lexicographers of the 21st century will analyze this last decade of the 20th century as one period of Lithuanian during which hundreds of English words were used in Lithuanian. One cannot predict how they (i.e., the lexicographers) will call this period: perhaps, "From English, with love?"