

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 44, No.4 - Winter 1998

Editor of this issue: Dalia Kučėnas

ISSN 0024-5089

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VALDAS ADAMKUS: A MAN OF TWO WORLDS

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As Valdas Adamkus moves forward beyond his first 100 days as president of the Republic of Lithuania, it may be of interest to both Lithuanians and non-Lithuanians to take a closer look at his inaugural words "I am one of you." In order to shed light on the mind frame expressed by these words, it may be of value to recall noted University of Chicago researcher Verner Everett Stonequist who recorded Alfred E. Zimmern's concept of "we" and "sense of peoplehood" not being tied to geography or legal definitions since

...Nationality, like religion, is subjective; statehood is objective. Nationality is psychological; statehood is political. Nationality is a condition of mind; [while] statehood is a condition in law. Nationality is a spiritual possession; statehood is an enforceable obligation. Nationality is a way of feeling, thinking and living;... (Stonequist 65-66).

Bearing this concept of nationality in mind, Adamkus' words, "I am one of you," are not only spoken within a democratic mode of merging ruling classes with the ruled into one society, but can also be understood as a verbal manifestation of the Stonequist-Zimmern concept that "nationality" is, at base, a spiritual possession not bound by space or time. Consequently, one may physically be forced to emigrate abroad, as in the case of Adamkus, yet in a deeper, spiritual sense never really leave one's homeland.

Forced to live abroad in a half-century long cycle which began and, significantly, ended in Lithuania with his public profession of "I am one of you" during his inaugural address, Adamkus' words capture the dynamic of the spiritual moral solidarity encased in the largely untranslatable Lithuanian word "bendruomenė." Often translated into English as "community," the translation fails to capture the word's true connotations. The word "bendruomenė" connotes a sense of community that is not determined by geographic setting. It expresses a connection between the dead and the living as well as those yet to be born; all members - past, present and future - are part of the same "bendruomenė," a part of the same organic community not separated by time or space.

Within this context, Adamkus' inaugural words express his Lithuanian soul since they capture the deeper meaning of community and self definition which, like all spiritual possessions, transcend political definitions of nationality. The organic and spiritual dimensions of "always a Lithuanian" are clearly discernible in the life pattern of Adamkus, whose Lithuanian self fired his political action in America. As early as 1956,

...he collected 40,000 signatures for a Lithuanian youth petition, requesting American intercession on behalf of Lithuanians in Siberian concentration camps; with a delegation of American Lithuanian students, he presented this petition to the then Vice-president Richard M Nixon. With another youth delegation he presented memorandums on the question of Lithuania's political status to Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld, at the United Nations in 1958, and to President John F. Kennedy, in 1962 (Encyclopedia Lituanica, V. I, 16).

These actions, in a deeper sense, can be seen as more than political acts in an American political arena. They exemplify a total spiritual identification with fellow Lithuanians and, like his more recent inaugural words of "I am one of you," transcend time and space - whether in the United States of 1956 or the Lithuania of 1998. Residence and naturalization become geographic and legal concepts that measure objective reality without taking into account the spiritual dimension of "I am one of you." In other words, one may physically leave Lithuania yet, on an emotional and a psychological level, never really leave since the identity of the self is a condition of mind.

As a member of the Lithuanian diaspora, Valdas Adamkus continued to practice nationality as a condition of mind as a one-time executive of *Lituanus*, as an activist in the Lithuanian-American Council, the Lithuanian World Community, Santara-Šviesa (Accord-Light), and as a benefactor of Lithuanian language radio and life-long supporter of sports activities. Such undertakings helped to foster and pass on a collective memory which translated into a "one people" state of mind regardless of geographic location. Equally important is the fact that these action programs demonstrated that one can physically migrate from Lithuania, settle in another country, accept the new country's culture yet, by choice, remain within the "we" of a Lithuanian unit based on consanguinity and condition of mind.

Reaching out across time and space Alfred E. Zimmern points out that

Nationality, then... refers to the historical culture of the group, which nurtures and shapes the personality of the individual and out of which he draws his most inspiring ideals and purposes. To be "de-nationalized," then, involves the denial of a part of one's deepest sentiments, the amputation of a portion of one's intimate self (Stonequist 65-66).

To see Valdas Adamkus as "an American who came to Lithuania" would be erroneous, misleading and contrary to evidence that points to the idea that nationality is a subjective spiritual feeling akin to religion. Adamkus was never "denationalized" since, on both professional and personal levels, he never denied a part of his deepest sentiments. Rather his psyche took on a double consciousness that translated into a Lithuanian living in exile in America who, at the same time, became an "insider" and an "outsider" for the entire period that historical conditions forced him to be spiritually in Lithuania and physically in America. Under these conditions Adamkus was structurally integrated into the American host society by virtue of earning a degree in civil engineering, in 1960, from Chicago's Illinois Institute of Technology, and pursuing a 27-year career in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Thus, the world must view him as a methodological exemplar of the concept that nationality is emotional/psychological - a way of feeling, thinking and living. It is within this mode that Adamkus led delegations on behalf of Lithuanian interests to the White House, the United Nations and, starting in 1972, as a high ranking official of the EPA, "tested" Soviet censorship by importing Western ideas and concepts into Lithuania during its last three decades of Soviet occupation.

When one views Adamkus as a living exemplar of the theory and practice of moral solidarity with all things Lithuanian, the "granting" of Lithuanian citizenship to him, in 1992, becomes a formalization of that which existed from the time of his birth in Kaunas, in 1926. A by-product of Adamkus' half-century structural assimilation into the United States is that he remains "an insider" into Western thought while remaining in command of his Lithuanian self, a unique asset for any chief executive in a world with an increasingly global economy. Such a phenomenon to exist in a country formerly occupied by non-Western thought can only serve to bring Lithuania into the world's family of nations and into the twenty-first century. Furthermore, the Adamkus presidency sets the stage to potentially marry the theory and practice of, the Lithuanian philosophers, Antanas Maceina and Stasys Šalkauskis, who envisioned that

The historical mission of Lithuania is to mediate between the extremes of European life... and so become the arena of spiritual exchange between East and West (Maceina 38).

Adamkus, at home in both the East and the West, is attitudinally as well as linguistically suited as a prime mover to engage the Maceina-Šalkauskis envisioned mission for Lithuania as a mediator nation between East and West.

Carl Gustav Jung, one of the most influential figures of the modern age whose ideas have shaped our perception of the real world, holds the concept that individuals in prime mover positions have the capacity to usher in sea changes in thought and society. Jung holds that "The great problems of humanity were never solved by general laws, but only through a regeneration of the attitudes of individuals" (Jung 7). Jung's concept can be seen in the political philosophy of Adamkus. Expressed during an interview, he stated that "I am trying to set an example of how the country can go forward. You cannot learn about a democracy. You have to experience it; you have to live within a democratic society" (McMahon 10). Adamkus focuses on delivering a democratic society through persistent exercise on both theory and practice and word and deed as part of the regenerative process. In an interview early in 1998, the Lithuanian head of state stressed his priority as that of "to rebuild moral authority" -the key to regeneration and individual responsibility (Wisby 3). This philosophy reflects the influence of yet another methodological exemplar - the African-American civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr. - who once remarked that

The law tends to declare rights - it does not deliver them. A catalyst is needed to breathe life experience into a judicial decision by the persistent exercise of the rights until they become usual and ordinary in human conduct (King 80).

Such a prescription dies on the vine without Jungian methodological exemplars who see the function of leadership a "servant of the people," the very same words spoken by Adamkus in his inaugural address as he took on the mantle of president and methodological exemplar for the Lithuanian Republic early in 1998.

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