

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 29, No.4 - Winter 1983

Editor of this issue: Antanas Klimas

ISSN 0024-5089

Copyright © 1983 LITUANUS Foundation, Inc.



LITHUANIA'S THORNY ROAD

W. VLADAS ŽILINSKAS

September 8th was enacted in 1930 as a National Holiday to commemorate the date in 1430, set by grand duke Vytautas for his coronation in Vilnius as King of Lithuania. The emissaries of the German emperor Sigmund of Luxembourg, carrying the royal crown, were not permitted to cross the Polish border, and Vytautas' coronation never took place.

Generations of wars with Teutonic Knights, Slavic dukes and Tataric hordes and occasional fratricidal battles weakened the power of ethnic Lithuania in vast Slavic lands under its rule. Uncounted thousands of Lithuanian lives were lost in numerous encounters with Tatars who eventually were stopped in battlefields distant from Northern and Middle Europe. After subjugation of a Lithuanian tribe called Prussians and their territory (subsequently known as "East Prussia") by the Teutonic Order in the beginning of 13th century, the Germanic "Drang nach Osten" (Drive Eastwards) was confined. A serious blow to the German dreams of expansion eastwards was given in the battle of Grünwald (or Tannenberg) in July 1410, an historic encounter led by grand duke Vytautas. After the victory the Grand Duchy of Lithuania rose to a prominent power in East and Middle Europe.

Following Vytautas' death in October 1430 two tremendous streams of ideas and influence were moving upon Lithuanian state and nation with menace to its vast territories and its future. The kingdom of Krakow, East Europe's center of Catholicism, was the moving force of "Western enlightenment" and of Polish culture, customs and LANGUAGE in Lithuanian territories. On the other side, the duchy of Moscow was gradually becoming a powerful center for spreading Byzantine written language, culture and Orthodox creed through Slavic principalities of Lithuania. Step by step Moscow annexed first the lands of Kiev, i.e. Ukraine, and gradually wide areas of White Russians which have been an integral part of Grand Duchy of Lithuania for centuries.

After the 2nd and "final" christening in 1387 the Lithuanian nation was introduced to the Western civilization by Poland's nobility (szlachta), clergy and cultural/religious institutions. As a consequence of magnitude of territories under the Grand Duchy's rule the Lithuanian nobility has grown vastly in numbers and in power, political and military. Under the pretext of "Western civilization" a growing fraction of nobles abandoned their Lithuanian roots and language for a "higher style" represented by Polish customs and language. In 1697 Polish was enacted as the official language of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In the process of Polonization, continuing from the partition of Lithuania-Poland in 1795 up to 1918, a wide belt of ethnic Lithuania South and East of the present borders with millions of population was lost forever to the expansionism of the Polish nation.

In 1918 the Lithuanian state was resurrected in an unfriendly climate prevailing from East, South and West.

The Weimar republic of 1919-1933 appeared to have "frozen" the old threat, but with Hitler's ascendancy to power the German "Drang nach Osten" became a renewed menace to Lithuania's survival.

The Polish people, struggling for reestablishment of statehood, believed that Lithuania had to be a province of Poland or at least — by virtue of Lublin Union imposed in 1569 — an integral part of Polish-Lithuanian state. The Poles felt betrayed (!), when the Lithuanian nation arose from the World War I ruins as a sovereign state. — Lithuania refused to establish diplomatic relations with the Polish Republic due to the fact that the ancient capital Vilnius was deceitfully seized after a peace agreement in 1920 by an army dispatched by Poland's dictator Pilsudski, a member of Lithuanian gentry. Suppression of further polonization of the Lithuanian population was firm, consistent and — SUCCESSFUL.

A peculiar relationship developed between Lithuania and the Soviet Union after defeat of the intruding Red Army in 1919. In the official language the Lenin government maintained a "traditional policy of friendship". This attitude was occasionally

confirmed or "proven" by Moscow's support of Lithuanian causes in international encounters. In fact, however, the red Kremlin was performing juggling acts of hypocrisy by establishing Lithuania's Communist Party in 1918 and subsequently Communist Youth League for subversive activities in the Lithuanian territory. Through Komintern and MOPR (International Organization for Support of Revolutionaries) funds were pouring, particularly into the pockets of students of Lithuanian, Jewish and Russian offspring, who were willing to perform subversive activities through demonstrations, strikes and riots. In the Moscow-guided subversion there was one noticeable restriction: open terror or acts of homicide were not allowed!

Frequently, upon Moscow's request, communists jailed for underground activities were exchanged for innocent Lithuanians kept in Soviet prisons or labor camps. Many of those freed in exchange transactions were sent back to Lithuania with Moscow's up-to-date guidelines for continued obstruction and subversion (e.g., party chiefs Garelis, Preikšas, Sniečkus, etc.). — Under Stalin's rule all conventions and conferences of Lithuania's Communist Party were held in Moscow (a listing was published in the "Small Lithuanian Soviet Encyclopedia, Part II, pages 378/380). Such was Soviet Union's "policy of friendship" regarding Lithuania in the light of Peace Treaty of 1920, Friendship and Non-Aggression Treaty of 1926 (extended to 1945), Non-Aggression Pact of 1934 and Agreement of 1939 on Return of Vilnius and Mutual Assistance. In all these agreements the Soviet Union had assured Lithuania's sovereignty and respect for integrity of political and social structure.

The most thorny East European problem between World Wars I and II was the unsolved Lithuanian-Polish conflict in respect of Vilnius and its region. Estonia and Latvia considered this question a "domestic quarrel" and Lithuania's specific problem. In their endeavor to offset Soviet menace the two Baltic neighbors were aiming at close cooperation with Poland. After years of Lithuanian diplomatic efforts, a "Treaty of Alliance and Collaboration" between Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia was signed in Geneva on September 12, 1934. The treaty provided for semiannual conferences between the three states, but "specific problems" (the question of Vilnius) were excluded from discussions.

The Baltic Alliance assured an established schedule of get-together and friendly parties for diplomats, political and military figures. It was, however, a useless and hopeless endeavor to strengthen international position, importance and weight of the Baltic States. As soon as the Soviet invasion of June 1940 started to unfold, the Baltic Alliance collapsed swiftly and silently in the face of brutal and clumsily conceived ultimata.

The security and actually the very existence of independent Lithuania was assured by opposing interests and a fragile balance of power in post-World War I East Europe. Germany, Poland and Soviet Union were competing for dominant influence in the Baltic region, and Lithuania's annexation by an aggressor was unlikely prior to Hitler-Stalin pact of August 23, 1939. With the partition of Poland, a mortal menace engulfed independent Lithuania. In barely nine months after Molotov-Ribbentrop signed the pact, the invading Red Army with Stalin's ruthless emissaries arrived in the Lithuanian capital and began to mutilate the free country, its body and soul.

The liberation war of Western Allies was expected by all East Europe to bring freedom from communism. Tens of thousands of Lithuanian freedom fighters were waiting for salvation in forests with guns in their hands. A special envoy, Michail A. Suslov, was sent by Stalin for two years 1944-46 to organize and lead an army of "annihilators" (in Russian: *istrebiteli*) against the freedom fighters. Eventually most of them perished in a heroic, but hopeless partisan war against "annihilators" and Red Army.

Constant propaganda and KGB terror are the most serious dangers, to which the nation's morale and hope for freedom are exposed. The communist indoctrination is being hammered continuously, not only through communist party, youth league (Komsomol) and "pioneers" (red boy and girl scouts), but through all educational institutions, all newspapers and magazines, literature of every kind, through cultural and sports events.

It is despicable to find the name of a Stalinist bolshevik, Kapsukas, stuck to the 400-year old, revered university of Vilnius, or the name of KGB official Sniečkus attached to scientific institutions or a high school in the town of Merkinė named for an obscure American communist Mizara ... By an obvious edict of the communist party, many writings are concluded with an incoherent and sickening connotation asserting hopelessness: "Lithuanian nation is forever united with Soviet peoples!" or "Lithuania turned to socialism firmly and irreversibly!".

In 1920 Lenin declared in a speech to the Communist Youth League: "It is often suggested that we have no ethics of our own. Very often the bourgeoisie accuse us Communists of rejecting all morality. In what sense do we reject ethics, reject morality? In the sense given to it by the bourgeoisie, who based ethics on god's commandments, we say: morality is what serves to destroy the old exploiting society and to unite all the working people around the proletariat which is building a new, Communist society . . ."

The Leninist concept of morale and ethics predicted annihilation of the Russian nobility, intelligentsia, kulaks and also of millions of "unreliable", innocent individuals who did not readily fall for the bolshevik way of life. The Lenin style perversion of ethics impels distortion or straight lies in media reporting, calls for imprisonment of "nonconformists" (dissidents) in slave labor camps, jails or asylums and requires liquidation of "counterrevolutionaries". In international connections, the Soviets are signing agreements on human rights (Helsinki Accords of 1975) or on condemnation of biological warfare with a preconceived intention to violate any commitments that do not serve proliferation of communism. Non-communist countries are exposed to deceitful peace demonstrations, Soviet organized international terrorists, incl. their training, supplies and

financing, threats and armed interventions. By the same ethics of Leninism, Stalin concluded a pact with Hitler for destruction of Poland and enslavement of East Europe. In Leninist spirit, all promises and commitments were broken by Soviets at the beginning and after World War II, including four above mentioned agreements with independent Lithuania.

The diabolic religion called Leninism is aiming at disintegration of the natural humane character and of the best instincts of mankind. To the eternal glory of the monstrous deity, a mausoleum is shining in Moscow's Red Square. This shrine attracts hourlong lines of parading slaves of the Soviet system, whose brain, washed by communist indoctrination, does not distinguish good from evil, loyalty from treason, morality from infamy.

Notwithstanding sadistic persecution of religion right from the beginning of the bolshevik regime in November 1918, there is some evidence of religious reawakening in Soviet republics. Particularly in Lithuania, the voice of the Catholic Church is powerful and influential to the distress, or maybe fear, of the Communist Party.

Still, the influence of Leninism on Lithuanian soul and character must be of deep concern. The everyday life is at a crossroads between human instincts and dreams of freedom on the one side and Leninist moral devastation on the other side. The communist indoctrination is primarily directed to the young generation who have not seen other than Soviet life. Only by individual fortitude can a moral resistance survive Leninism in spite of hammering propaganda and a permanent threat of incarceration, deportation or execution.