LITUANUS
LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 23, No.1 - Spring 1977
Editor of this issue: Thomas Remeikis

ISSN 0024-5089

ON THE THREAT OF LINGUISTIC ASSIMILATION

From the Lithuanian Samizdat

INTRODUCTION

Among the Lithuanian samizdat *publications,* Aušra *(The Dawn) represents a moderate current of the national dissent, is closely allied with the Catholic movement and its publication* Lietuvos Katalikų Bažnyčios Kronika *(Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania).* Aušra *considers itself a modern continuation of the first Lithuanian newspaper* Aušra, *published at the end of the nineteenth century. The first* Aušra *was a major landmark in the Lithuanian national movement, which led to the reestablishment of a national state in 1918. The* samizdat *Aušra, four issues of which have appeared during 1975 and 1976, seeks national emancipation through education, moral regeneration, and passive resistance to the policies of denationalization.*

The second issue of Aušra *(February 16, 1976) contains two articles, which express concern that the Soviet push for bilingualism is merely a first step toward the erosion of national identity and complete russification. Language is a fundamental element of national identity and cultural life. What happens when another tongue, in this instance the Russian language, begins to push out the native language from public and cultural life? The two articles, which are translated below, appear to be a response to the intensified regime pressure to use increasingly the Russian language not only in governmental, but also in scientific-cultural sphere. The articles are slightly abbreviated. Explanatory notes were added by the editor.*

THE SPIRIT OF THE MURAVYOV ERA

It appears that the significance of the native language in the life of a nation is clear, requiring no lengthy substantiation — especially now, at a time when the last empires are crumbling and nations rise for a free life. Regrettably, we need only consider several issues of the Lithuanian *Tarybinis Mokytojas* to feel the icy cold of the Atsakcheyev and Muravyov era* - an era which trampled under foot all of the Lithuanian people's rights, including the right to speak one's native language. . .

In "They Speak Russian Fluently. . ." *(Tarybinis Mokytojas,* Nov. 21, 1975, No. 95/2076, translated from the newspaper *Uchitelskaya gazeta,* Nov. 18, 1975, by prof. Volkov), G. Volkov is gladdened, that in a remote Lithuanian farm a six year-old child attempts to speak Russian with an unknown person (a Russian). Older children, when accosted, soon begin speaking entirely fluently. Everywhere one finds a favorable moral and psychological environment for a thorough and wide study of the Russian language, which is voluntarily chosen as a school subject and as a means of communicating. Comprehension, however, must grow into a spiritual need. And this probably is a teacher's most important task.

The author further recalls his visit to First Middle School of Druskininkai, where the Russian language course of the fourth year was taught by teacher Vida Šaliauskienė. The class was very good — *especially because the teaching of Russian was linked with ethical culture.* The author was pleased with the same school's teacher of the XI class, Janina Bingelienė, for her class about Mayakovski. G. Volkov expressed his enthusiasm in these words:

"Thus Mayakovski's words become the words of the youth, the poet's feelings — their feelings, his convictions — the convictions of the boys and girls. Mayakovski and the Russian language teacher are their ideological nurturers."

The author concludes his article thus:

"Let every Russian-language class become an event in the student's life, an important factor in his spiritual life."

No comments are necessary here. Even Nikita Muravyov would envy the author. It did not occur to the former to equate the process of assimilation with the inculcation of ethical norms,

On the first page of *Tarybinis Mokytojas* {Nov. 5,1975, No. 88/12071) the following motto was published:

"As international ties and cooperation vigorously expand, the importance of Russian increases. For all of the Soviet Union's nations and ethnic groups, it has become a language of mutual cooperation" — L. Brezhnev.

Following the quote, information is publicized about the USSR Ministry of Education's Tashkent conference on questions about improving the teaching and instruction of Russian.

The author of the first report, "A Language for Mutual Cooperation and Interaction," is a Candidate Member of the Politburo of the USSR Central Committee, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Uzbekistan Communist Party, S. Rashidov. Without begrudging Oriental flattery, he celebrates the Russian language and emphasizes its worldwide significance:

"The Russian language played an invaluable role in the struggle of all the peoples bordering on Russia against local exploiters and czarism, for their freedom, independence, and national progress. . ,"

". . . Such renowned writer-educators, scientists. . . as I. Chavschavadze of Georgia, M. A. Achundov of Azerbaidzhan. . . J. Rainis of Latvia, Žemaitė of Lithuania, N. Krazhevald of Estonia, Gabdul Tokoyev among the Tatars and many others greatly appreciated the Russian people's contribution to the world culture and invited their people to learn Russian." In which language were those books written, which for 40 years were carried from Prussia to Lithuania? Whose bullets pierced the breasts of the book-carriers? When did Žemaitė assent to the politics of assimilation?!**

The author adds the following:

"Loving the Russian language has acquired a daily, organic meaning for our country's citizens. This is clearly illustrated by the following data. As the latest census of the population has demonstrated, at the beginning of 1970 nearly 242 million people lived in our country; of these, Russians constituted 129 million. But Russian was considered the native language by 141.6 million people. This means that, excluding Russians, 13 million other Soviet people chose Russian as their native language. To this number must be added approximately 42 million non-Russian people, who indicated Russian as the second USSR national language they speak. In this way there were nearly 184 million people in our country who speak Russian fluently, i.e., 76% of all the inhabitants of the USSR. No doubt, in the past five-year period this statistic has increased even more."

The author is pleased with the increase of the "statistic."

He further glorifies the Russian language as an instrument of internationalist education:

"At this time Soviet patriotism is being developed further, it has become enriched with a new content."

This idea is re-enforced by the following citation of Brezhnev:

"Now, after half a century since the establishment of the USSR, we can speak with full confidence about the great patriotic sense of our people — the common pride of the Soviet man."

By the way, bilingualism is also referred to in this report as a great value.

The second report; "Most Important — the Teacher." Its author — the USSR Minister of Education, M. Prokofiev, In a manner of speaking, the author immediately seizes the bull by the horns:

"One of the most important fields of activity for a teacher is the teaching of Russian to Soviet youth. Improving its instruction in the national schools and the secondary and higher institutes of learning has become a constant center of attention for party and state organs. . ."

M. Prokofiev further indicates that preschool institutions represent the first parts of a chain for the social upbringing of children, which raise about 11 million children of all USSR nationalities. He raises the question whether — by means of games and conversations — one should not begin the teaching of Russian in these institutions. The experts supposedly affirm that the sooner children are acquainted with another language, the better they learn. Already there is assumed to be a certain amount of experience in this field. In Uzbekistan and some other republics this kind of instruction has been introduced in numerous kindergartens and a special program has been set up.

Without any qualms, M. Prokofiev asks: Why should this not be done in other republics?

In order to achieve this, it is necessary that the educators know Russian. Approximately 300 hours are devoted to this subject in the preschool pedagogic school instruction plan. This, under normal circumstances, makes it possible to prepare the staff so that they have a good mastery of Russian. It is also essential to provide the kindergartens with the requisite complexes of didactic games. The author is generous also with additional suggestions:

"As is known, preparatory classes are spreading in the system of education. Among them are those, which prepare children for further education in the Russian language. Today, there are about 233,000 six-year olds in such classes. On the basis of the experience, the institute for the improvement of teachers has compiled a typical study plan and recommendations for the organization of Russian language activities in the national schools. . . Preparatory groups should continue to spread. . ."

"One notices progressive tendency — the teaching of Russian from the first class. Already nine Soviet republics are working under this system. One ought to consider whether it would not be profitable to introduce this system in other republics."

M. Prokofiev further stresses that it is essential to thoroughly teach Russian to the teachers, and for this, it is first of all necessary to have sufficient time. The author asserts that in the past years, the number of hours of Russian instruction has been increased. He reasons thus:

"It is possible to differentiate three groups according to the number of hours of Russian instruction. In the Ukraine and Byelorussia, for example, where the native languages are akin to Russian, 40.5 and 46.5 weekly hours are devoted to Russian language and literature. Here, standardization is possible along Byelorussian lines."

"The Baltic republics have an eleven-year education system. Therefore, the possibilities for assigning more time for instruction in Russian are the greatest. In Latvia, the number of hours of Russian was raised to 48 weekly hours."

It is the author's view that standardization is possible at least along Latvian lines.

In other republics, the number of hours varies from 41 (Moldavian SSR) to 51.5 (Kirgiz SSR).

Besides this, he demands that the preparation of Russian-language instructors be improved and indicates at the same time that there is not one Russian linguist with a doctorate in Lithuania!

The aforementioned authors are well-known, influential people; they occupy high administrative positions; their words reflect the national policies of the USSR; they reveal their distinct direction to strive for the speediest russification of the enslaved nations. In order that these policies be more successful and better concealed, such representatives of the subjugated nations as S. Rachidov are allowed to carry on discourses, who long ago broke off any kind of spiritual ties with their people. This policy can inflict severe harm on nations, restricting even more their cultural growth. But in this age of national liberation, it will not be decisive in essence: everything is too bright and clear!

K.Jakštas

NEW METHODS OF RUSSIFICATION IN THE SCHOOLS

Russian imperialism has firmly subjected the schools to its service. What the Red Army began with bayonets and tanks, what the security organs maintain by means of their courts and jails is to be completed and consolidated by the schools. The task of the schools is to perpetuate Russian domination in all the enslaved countries, to instill in the younger generation the state ideology — which has become a religious surrogate — and gradually to russify it. The eternal annexation of various peoples into the Russian empire must culminate in their organic assimilation. In pursuit of this goal, the schools openly and directly attack and undermine any other ideologies, callously intrude into the students' consciences, and advance atheism by the most devious means. . . At present, the state "religion" is much more prejudiced and intolerant than any other religion in the past. The principle that the ruler determines his subjects' religion reigns supreme in the Soviet Russian empire.

Russification policies are carried out quietly and under disguise. Such terms as internationalism, international friendship, Soviet patriotism, the Soviet people, are often cited to conceal russification. Nevertheless, the accomplishments, superiority, and selflessness of the great Russian people are constantly emphasized. Cautious attempts are made to suppress national culture; obscure, de-emphasize and slander a nation's past; and to emphasize artificially Russian cultural influences. In other words, one strives to quench imperceptibly national consciousness and love of country, gradually insinuating the Russian mentality and consciousness. Similar methods are implemented in the field of language; bilingualism is firmly and methodically promoted. Up till now, the native language has not been openly attacked, as had

been done under the czarist rule. But the Russian language is now much more openly imposed. Traffic signs, advertisements, and inscriptions must be in two languages and even of equal size. Some agencies' papers are written only in Russian. The number of hours of Russian radio and television broadcasting is by no means proportional to the number of Russian-speaking inhabitants of the republic. In the bookstores and libraries, Russian books indisputably preponderate, even though the mass of buyers and readers is Lithuanian. But a particularly important role is assigned to Russian in educational planning and programs. It is through the schools that the Russian language must root itself deeply.

At this time, one more step is being taken toward the realization of virtual bilingualism. To encourage the use of Russian in everyday life, opportunities for practicing Russian are expanded during extracurricular activities. An interesting article relating to this matter appeared in the December 10, 1975, issue of *Tarybinis Mokytojas* (The Soviet Teacher). L. Kojelienė, inspector for School Administration of the Lithuanian SSR Ministry of Education, flatly states the following in her article "Olympics": "It is essential to extensively involve students in extracurricular activities in the Russian-language environment." Extracurricular activities must not only improve knowledge of Russian as a school subject, but must also awaken an "interest in the Russian language, a love of Russian books." Most importantly, they ought to accustom students to the use of Russian in everyday life. The procedures and methods L. Kojelienė recommends in her article leave no doubt what one aims at. "During exercises, an instructor of Russian language and literature can go far beyond the limits of his program," thereby opening them up to "great and inexhaustible possibilities." He may employ means of large-scale participation, organizing literary presentations, debates, lectures, or he may "create an environment congenial to literature — setting up bulletin boards, exhibits of individual writers and their works, displays." Clearly, such an "environment congenial to literature" will be nothing but a Russian environment within a Lithuanian school.

In connection with these large-scale, group and individual, occasional and continuous forms of extracurricular work with Russian, one should employ "dialogues, . . studies of short story structure; grammatical, vocabulary, and literary games, class outings; discussion about slides. . . the posting of articles on bulletin boards." Such occasional methods are suggested, as "Russian-language days and weeks, Russian book festivals, literature mornings, etc."

One is reminded of other methods besides the setting up of exhibits and displays, compiling of albums, lectures, receptions with writers or translators, corresponding with literary museums. These may be "Russian-language almanacs and school newspapers that print the students' best work, essays, reviews of films, and presentations, material pertaining to literary debates." As we see, the trajectory is high, the target chosen is distant. Children in schools are accustomed not only to converse in Russian, but also to write, to create. Russian is introduced into the creative sphere, thus making it the means of expressing the inner world. Reading and other such contests not only encourage certain creative talents, but also evaluate them right in the school. Ethnology dealing with the past of one's own people is persecuted and interfered with. At the same time, a "literary ethnology" is practiced which deals with such questions as these: "Russian writers in our republic" -not Daukantas, Valančius, Kudirka or Putinas, but. .. . Russian writers!*** "Great importance is attached to school outings to places of literary interest." Pray tell — which places? Probably they are not within boundaries of our republic, for "much valuable material is brought back from such outings — material which could be utilized not only for extracurricular activities, but also for class work."Since this is for Russian-language classes, the material must be sought in a Russian environment. But, "one should especially cultivate students art activities associated with Russian, including the upper, middle, and even beginning classes." That is very clearly put. How else could the children become better accustomed to speaking Russian, if not by singing Russian songs and memorizing entire pages of plays. . .

These and other methodical prescriptions are not mere suggestions about how to use extracurricular activities to increase interest in a given subject. Work in this field is to be examined in an organized manner. It is already known that "this school year there will be in our republic a Russian-language and literature olympiad. . . the winner will have the right to participate in the concluding Russian language festival. Over the course of it, students will participate in literary and musical compositions. . . contests, writing articles for the festival's bulletin board, composing short stories on assigned themes. . . They will be awarded prizes." These are carrot-and-stick policies. The carrot encourages the children to cherish the Russian language; the stick warns the schools and teachers not to take Russian lightly. "The olympiad represents a review that demonstrates how well the students have mastered Russian. . ."Further, such olympiads "in future will occur every two to three years."

In the school curriculum, Lithuania's history is distorted and caricatured; the students' knowledge of the Lithuanian language and literature is insufficient, their mastery weak. At the same time, the preoccupation with Russian is intensified. It is not enough that Russian is introduced too early - at a time when the children have not consolidated their mastery of the native language. Now they are required to supplementally pursue this language, using it to discuss, sing, compose short stories, write articles, prepare almanacs, put on plays. Where will such a stress on Russian lead to if not to bilingualism? And from here, one advances to total domination of Russian. We observe this in the autonomous republics, where the local languages are practically barred from public life and used only for propaganda purposes, when one language must demonstrate the equality of all the nationalities. "The assimilation of a foreign language and the further advance towards bilingualism sometimes lead to supplanting of the native language." So writes M. N. Gubuglo in his article, "The Consequences of Social-Ethnic

Bilingualism" *(Sovietskaya etnografija,* No. 2, 1972). The same article (p. 33) states that "The assimilation of a second language is the crucial point in the supplanting of a language. And the last stage of linguistic assimilation, the final supplanting of a language, is directly tied to an individual's indifference to his ethnic group's stability — the group from

which he disengaged himself, having lost one of its principal characteristics." (p. 36). Indifference to an "ethnic group," or, more correctly stated, to one's people, is inevitable once the language is lost. This fact is not denied even by Soviet ethnographers. Relying on concrete data relating to the assimilation of Karelians, the article's author comes to the conclusion that "the spread of bilingualism, the continued expansion of the Russian language's sphere. . . promotes the process of cultural internationalism. The substitution of the native language. . . is directly tied to the Karelians' diminishing recognition of their spiritual and material cultural elements." (p. 35). These are facts, wrapped in scientific terminology, which speak about the terrible process of the destruction of all the nationalities, especially the smaller nationalities. "Studies of language pattern developments in Karelian villages demonstrated that, along with a horizontal expansion of bilingualism, there occurs an expansion of it in depth. The Russian language slowly becomes the means of communicating within the people. According to the 1970 all-Union census, more than 96% of Soviet Karelians speak Russian or consider it their native language." *(Sovietskaya Etnografija,* No. 5, 1974, p. 28).

From the national language to bilingualism; from bilingualism to one of two languages! This represents something of a detour from the primitive, though straight, czarist path of an open prohibition of the language and printing. The Russian imperial Soviet regime makes this detour for propaganda purposes, yet the goal remains the same. "The insinuation of Russian or the expansion of bilingualism is an important integrating factor, contributing to a further strengthening of the Soviet people's monolithicism." *(Sovietskaya etnografia,* No. 4, 1972, p. 30). This "Soviet people's monolithicism" is a pot — a Russian pot — which melts all of its subject nationalities so that the "brotherly" Russian nation could become even bigger. The most enlightened and progressive Russian people see this and condemn it {A. Solzhenitsyn, A. Sakharov and others).

Unfortunately, our own intellectuals do not want to see and understand this — obediently carrying out every whim of the subjugator.

Today, the schools are required to be the grave diggers of the national consciousness. During the czarist period the Lithuanian schools slipped out from the government's hands and were concealed in the huts of the peasants and at the spinning wheels of mothers.**** They preserved the Lithuanian language, faith and nationality.

Vytautas D.

* Mikhail Nikolayevich Muravyov (1831 - 1866) was the czarist Governor General of Vilnius, sent to Lithuania to suppress the Revolt of 1863. He was noted for his ruthlessness in suppressing the insurrection and for the formulation of policies designed to russify the Lithuanian nation. The second Russian functionary mentioned — Aleksei Atsakcheyev (1769 - 1834) — was a general and high functionary of the czars, author of a severe military-police regime, which was also in effect in Lithuania.

** As part of the russification policy, Lithuanian press in the Latin alphabet was prohibited during the period of 1864 - 1904. Lithuanian books were printed in Prussia and smuggled into Russian-ruled Lithuania by book smugglers. Žemaitė (1854 - 1921), a classical Lithuanian writer in the realistic tradition, wrote in the Lithuanian language.

*** Reference to Lithuanian national classics. For biographies, see the appropriate articles in *Encyclopedia Lituanica* (Boston, 1970), Vols, I - IV.

**** Reference to the illegal and wide-spread national schools, usually conducted in peasant households, which counteracted czarist assirnilationist policies and provided the foundations of national rebirth during the second half of the nineteenth century.