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**Dale Brown. *Night of the Hawk*. Donald I. Fine, Inc./ G.P. Putnam's Sons. New York, 1992. 462 pages. Hard cover. \$22.95.**

It's almost hard to believe: a best seller novel where the main action is located in Lithuania, in Vilnius. Indeed, in this novel Lithuania is the object of the international intrigue and the machinations of dark forces trying to re-establish the fallen empire, the Evil Empire. Why would an established American novelist (five previous best sellers!) choose to select this particular locus for his new novel?

The answer is to be found on p. 9:

"One of the most stirring sights I have ever witnessed was in Vilnius, Lithuania, in May 1991, only four months after the Soviet Army occupied the capital and massacred thirteen civilians in the street. I saw hundreds of Lithuanians waving their (then illegal) national flag, erecting posters and memorials, chanting slogans and singing songs of freedom and defiance—right in front of the Red Army tanks surrounding the national television studio. I didn't know how long it would be before Lithuania and the Baltic states would regain their freedom, but I knew they deserved it. They wanted freedom and they were willing to fight for it."

And indeed in the incredibly fast moving story Dale Brown pits the most advanced U.S. technology in weapons against the wily men and egotistical warlords, the machinations of the remnants of the KGB and the Red Army, albeit under different names now.

In order not to disclose the very intriguing details of the plot of the novel, we have no choice but to refer to separate events portrayed here, although they are all highly intertwined. It all turns upon the precarious balance of military forces in the Baltic states and the neighboring areas: there are, according to the author, several "shades" of the remnants of the formerly numerous Red/Russian army; there is the new Russian army, some detachments of the newly organized armed forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and, above all, the Byelorussian army, the army of the newly independent Belarus. And there are still units of the infamous Black Berets, the OMON ("Special Purpose Militia Detachment"), the disbanded but still existing KGB, and some shady units of the new MSB, the intelligence service of the new Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

A sinister general Voshchanka, a Byelorussian, in cahoots with the powers of the former KGB, is plotting to carve out his own empire, like a real Chinese warlord, although his secret ally, the former KGB chief plots inside the plot—to revive all of the once-powerful USSR. And in their way stands stubborn Lithuania. Since Lithuania led the fight for independence in the late eighties and early nineties, it must be conquered and occupied again, in order to revive the dead empire. The President of Lithuania knows that only the new and technologically powerful highly advanced secret weapons of the United States can save his country from all these calamities. Therefore, President Kapocius gives permission for the U.S. forces to use the territory of Lithuania. These secret weapons are supposed to stunt and eventually to completely annihilate the Byelorussian Home Brigade advancing from the east to conquer and occupy Lithuania.

Such is the main plot in its broadest outline. A very tense situation develops when it turns out that a former American airman, David Luger, is in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. He is being brainwashed and used as a helper to build a highly advanced Russian /Soviet/ KGB bomber. All kinds of very secret and advanced American weapons systems, the most highly trained special American forces have to go to Vilnius to rescue this important American. The tension mounts when all these forces—some even have nuclear arms—collide in Vilnius, the ancient capital of Lithuania. This is the city where Gorbachev's downfall began when he failed dismally to persuade the Lithuanians to hold back their strong drive for total independence. Here, on March 11, 1990, Lithuania's independence was re-established. Here, on January 13, 1991, the Black Berets and Red Army massacred thirteen Lithuanian civilians. Here is also the Fisikous Institute where the American airman, David Luger, is being held under total secrecy. Of course, it is no longer a secret to the American Intelligence since a Lithuanian army officer, an agent of the CIA, is rescued from Lithuania, and he brings out a photograph of this American airman.

In other words. *Night of the Hawk* is a finely-tuned thriller: you cannot put it down once you start reading it. To a Lithuanian, the very fact that the main action takes place in Lithuania, in Vilnius, heightens the tension.

An American reader, who does not know Lithuanian, will I'm sure, just glance over a few silly mistakes in Lithuanian. Most of the Lithuanian words and expressions used in this novel are correct, proper. Unfortunately, there are some real weird ones left. Why the author did not check them with someone who knows Lithuanian well, remains a mystery. We shall mention here only the most glaring discrepancies.

Let's begin at the "top," with the name of the President of Lithuania. He's President Kapocius, which is fine; *Kapocius* is a good Lithuanian family name: according to the *Lietuvių pavardžių žodynas* ('Dictionary of Lithuanian Family Names'), vol. I, p. 916, there were 81 families in Lithuania with the last name *Kapočius*, which, of course, is the Standard Lithuanian spelling.

In fiction an author may invent names, but they should at least conform to the linguistic structure of the language. Thus, *Kapocius/Kapočius* complies with this requirement, but his first name, *Gintarus*, does not: *Gintarus* is un-Lithuanian, although it rhymes with *Kapocius*. Theoretically, such a first name, i.e., *Gintarus*, could be invented, but it is impossible on practical grounds: it must be *Gintaras* because the Lithuanian first name *Gintaras* is nothing else but the same as the common noun *gintaras* 'amber'. Therefore, the Lithuanian President should be *Gintaras Kapocius/Kapočius*. (His name occurs for the first time on p. 345).

When I read page 289, I do get a sneaking suspicion that the author, Dale Brown, was "being had": some prankster who knew Lithuanian wanted to do the author in with a weird joke. Why? Because on p. 289 we shall find four names of the Lithuanian army officers portrayed as men, while the names are clearly those of women: *Major Knasaite*, *Major Balzaraitė*, *Major Astriene*, *Lieutenant Dapkiene*... The Lithuanian name system is very archaic: most of the men will have their last names ending in *-as*, *-us*, *-is*, *-ys*; a few in *-a* and *ė*. But the women's last names must either end in *aitė*, or *utė*, *ytė* for unmarried women, and in *ienė* for married women. In other words, an unmarried woman will always have her last name ending in *-tė* and a married woman in *-nė*, no matter what. Let us illustrate this with the four names taken directly from page 289:

Man's name	Unmarried woman	Married woman
Knasas	Knasaitė	Knasienė
Balzaras	Balzaraitė	Balzarienė
Astras	Astraitė	Astrienė
Dapkus	Dapkutė	Dapkienė

Thus, the male officers should be properly named as follows: *Major Knasas*, *Major Balzaras*, *Major Astras*, *Lieutenant Dapkus*.

There is one more weird name selection, this time in the choice of the two first names: on page 76 and ff., we run into a tough Lithuanian farmer with a proper family name, but totally implausible and impossible first and middle name: *Mikhaus Egoro Kulikauskas*. I wonder who invented this strange combination: *Mikhaus Egoro* is impossible in Lithuanian, as well as in all neighboring languages. In Lithuanian, the closest approximation, possibly, would be: *Mikas Jurgis*... *Kulikauskas*.

The author must have had someone advising him on Lithuanian. If that's the case, then this "specialist" either did not know Lithuanian well, or the author "murdered" the material given him, Apparently, there was some good expertise used because most of the other Lithuanian names are proper.

There are two more totally weird and strange phrases which, by the way, consist of proper Lithuanian words taken separately, but, as they are used here, make no sense in Lithuanian whatsoever. Namely, on page 406, a Lithuanian army officer, who was born and raised in Ohio, and who is supposed to speak fluent Lithuanian, makes some kind of remark in reference to Lake Placid, N.Y., as "*Sauletumas vandenys*." Now, taken separately, both of these words, i.e., *sauletumas* and *vandenys* are proper Lithuanian words:

*sauletumas* (Standard Lithuanian *sauletumas*) means 'sunniness, being sunny,' even possibly 'being placid'. *Vandenys* means 'waters', plural of *vanduo* 'water'. But used in the phrase "*Sauletumas vandenys*" the first noun being in the nominative singular and the second in the nominative plural, makes no sense in Lithuanian. The only possible explanation would be that someone may have suggested Lith. *sauleti vandenys* 'sunny waters', but I doubt very much that any Lithuanian would refer to Lake Placid by such a weird phrase...

Even stranger is the expression which a Lithuanian soldier uses on page 440. Apparently, he is supposed to say *Lietuvos kariuomenė* 'Lithuanian Army' (literally: 'Lithuania's Army'), but what we read here is: "...the soldier shouted, "*Uzeiga Lietuvos*" Lithuanian Army!" Now, *uzeiga* (Standard Lithuanian *užeiga*) has only one meaning in Lithuanian: 'highway inn'. Thus, "*uzeiga Lietuvos*" could mean only 'Lithuania's inn; Lithuanian Inn', but never 'army'.

In the works of fiction, poetic license has never been defined realistically. But there are certain scientific/scholarly facts that should be observed. Apparently, Dale Brown, like so many Americans, still believe that Lithuanians, and Latvians, and Estonians are... Slavs, Slavic people. On p. 77, there is a reference as to the character of the Lithuanian woman, Anna Kulikauskas (this, too, should properly be *Ona Kulikauskaitė*): "...like most Slavic women..." Lithuanians, and Latvians are Balts, Baltic people; Estonians are not even Indo-Europeans: they belong to the Finno-Ugric family of nations. Lithuanian and Latvian form the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language family. (To the Slavic branch belong: Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian; Polish, Czech, and Slovak; Bulgarian, Slovene, Servo-Croatian, etc.)

There are a few other slight discrepancies, e.g., on page 47 and ff. we find RAGANU, the code name of the Lithuanian army officer working for the CIA. It is further indicated that RAGANU means "witch" in Lithuanian. It's true enough, only the form RAGANU is really the genitive plural of *ragana* 'witch'. Or it could have been RAGANIUS 'male witch, sorcerer'.

I also do get very sad when, on page 232, we read that the (implied) Lithuanian flag is "the gold, blue, and red", while it is YELLOW - GREEN - RED!

On the other hand, it is a fine thriller. Furthermore, on its 462 pages, Lithuania is mentioned at least 316 times, Vilnius—119 times. That, without any doubt whatsoever, makes my heart beat faster for joy. The maps of Lithuania and of Vilnius are very good, and I am so happy when I read how an American soldier eats that fine Lithuanian bread with honey, which has been given him by a fine Lithuanian soldier. When I got to page 426, I wrote in the margin: "*Valio! Valio! Valio!*" — Lithuanian for "Hurray!" Here, the American secret wonder weapon (i.e., "The Hawk") and the Lithuanian army combine forces to totally defeat the cunning enemy—the remnants of the Red Army, the KGB, and their sinister allies.

I shall conclude by saying VALIO! for *Night of the Hawk*.

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