

Kęstutis Kasparas. *Lietuvos karas. Antroji Sovietų Sąjungos agresija. Pasipriešinimas. Ofenzyvinės gynybos tarpsnis 1944 m. vasara - 1946 m. pavasaris.*

Kaunas: Lietuvos politinių kalinių ir tremtinių sąjunga, 1999. 624 pp. 26 lits.

The very title of this book challenges the reader. Can one call the armed resistance to Soviet rule in Lithuania "Lithuania's war"? The author argues that one can, that this was a war between states, a "total" war between the Soviet Union and Lithuania.

The author, a historian, currently heads the resistance fighters' archive in Kaunas, which is supported by the political prisoners' union, and the book's title page carries the imprint of the Institute of Lithuanian History in Kaunas, where the author also works.

The bulk of the book offers a detailed account of Lithuanian resistance to Soviet rule in the immediate postwar period. These first two years, 1944-1946, saw the most bitter battles and conflicts. The Soviets obviously had not expected such fierce opposition and, as the author points out, it took the Soviet authorities some time to coordinate their campaign. The author makes clear his own sympathy for the resistance by capitalizing the word: *Pasipriešinimas*. His account observes the basic canons of contemporary Lithuanian *faktografija*, seeking to detail what seems to be every possible incident. Someone browsing through the book might mistakenly think that this accumulation of detail constitutes the major accomplishment of the book, but Kasparas builds an elaborate structure on this mass of detail, offering his own original interpretation of this crucial period. The structure explains the title and, in this brief review, I want to deal with the foundations of this structure.

For Americans, who are only now launching into studies of the Lithuanian resistance, Kasparas's historiographic essay is of particular value. This brief account, only 17 pages long, could by itself easily satisfy the requirements of an American Master's thesis. Dividing the literature into four categories - Soviet works, "resistance and emigre historiography," "the tenacity" (*gajumas*) of Soviet traditions, and archivists - Kasparas makes clear how he differs from other authors, including Girnius, Remeikis, Anusauskas, Truska, and Tininis. An American student can learn a lot here about making his or her interpretations and vocabulary more precise. My one major complaint here concerns the author's casual treatment of Liūtas Mockūnas's provocative study *Pavargęs herojus*, which he dismisses as an expression of Mockūnas's "political and journalistic views," whatever those might be. Moreover he includes his comments on Mockūnas's work in the section "the tenacity of the traditions of Soviet times," and goes on to say that the Soviets' "psychological-ideological war against the Resistance" still influences Lithuanian writing about this period.

At the foundation of Kasparas's arguments lies his conviction that the Lithuanian Provisional Government of 1941 reestablished the Lithuanian state, and that henceforth all states owed Lithuania the respect due an independent and sovereign state. On this he constructs an interpretation of international law favorable to the Lithuanians on every point, and he criticizes foreign states for not having regarded Lithuania in the same way. (He seems to believe that there is, in fact, just one "objective" interpretation of history.) Accordingly, the Lithuanian resistance to the Second Soviet Occupation (Kasparas considers the use of proper terminology a test of a given historian's judgment), constituted a war between states.

I would argue with the author's idealistic picture of the Lithuanian Provisional Government of 1941. He argues that the Soviet Union eventually nullified the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939. But the official existence of a state and its government is dependent on recognition. Even when the USSR Congress of People's Deputies denounced the pact in December 1989, Soviet officials made clear the distinction that they drew - and indeed western historians have long drawn - between the terms of that pact and the staged production of annexation in 1940. However the pact of 1939 and the Soviet invasion of 1940 were related, they did not constitute single action that could be undone by just one declaration.

I would also point out that the Provisional Government of 1941 had openly declared its friendship and gratitude to Nazi Germany. When the American government eventually learned of such statements, J. Edgar Hoover, the head of the FBI, raised the question whether - this in the middle of World War II - the United States government should consider Lithuanians in the United States to be enemy aliens. Any such action, one might also point out, would have certainly hindered the decision, after the war, to admit Lithuanian Displaced Persons into the United States.

In his conclusion, Kasparas argues that the discussions as to whether the resistance was senseless or heroic and justifiable are misplaced. He disapproves of the argument that while the resistance had a heroic quality it was nevertheless doomed. The conflict involved total war, he insists, and the Resistance could not lose. Its meaning lay in the fact that it manifested the nation's vitality.

The American reader must take pains to understand the issues that Kasparas *is* arguing. As an example, I would cite the thoughts of Liudas Dambrauskas, whose book (*Gyvenimo akimirkos*) I had been reading before I picked up Kasparas's book: "The village did not understand the Soviet order. Having first attempted to resist by arms, it became convinced that this was suicide. Those who remained alive, at large, and not deported to Siberia, chose an old means of struggle - passivity..." This view of the resistance does not fit into Kasparas's construction.

The American reader, moreover, may regret the apparent decision of the author and the publisher not to include an index and a summary in some western language. Those two instruments are vitally important in making westerners aware of Lithuanian publications.

In conclusion, the book is challenging, it forces the reader to make clear his or her own thoughts. It should find a place in major collections of books on postwar Eastern Europe.

Alfred Erich Senn
Univ. of Wisconsin - Madison