

Baltic States: A Study of their Origin and National Development, Their Seizure and Incorporation into U.S.S.R. Interim Report of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression, House of Representatives, Eighty Third Congress, Second Session, 1954, Under the Authority of H. Res. 346 and H. Res. 438. Reprinted in the series *International Military Law & History*, Vol. IV. Edited by Igor I. Kavass and Adolph Sprudz. Buffalo: William S. Hein & Co., Inc., 1972. 537 p. and preface.

Twenty years ago, in the 83rd Congress, the U.S. House of Representatives established a select committee to investigate the Soviet seizure and occupation of the Baltic States. The idea for the investigation had come from the Lithuanian American Council, a group representing several large American Lithuanian organizations. Congressman Charles J. Kersten, a Republican from Milwaukee, agreed to sponsor this proposal, and together, the Council and the Congressman secured support of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and of President Eisenhower. After vigorous lobbying with the leadership of the House of Representatives, the latter was convinced of the usefulness of the proposed inquiry, and on July 23, 1953, a select committee was authorized for the purpose. Soon afterwards, furthermore, Congressman Kersten succeeded in broadening the group's jurisdiction to include an investigation of other Communist takeovers, and as a result of this action, Kersten's Committee, now known as Committee on Communist Aggression, galvanized to action almost all American ethnic groups of East European heritage and thus became the focal point not only for an inquiry into Communist behavior in Eastern Europe but also for American ethnic group politics as well.¹

The Committee heard hundreds of witnesses and published several volumes of hearings. In addition, the Committee's staff prepared brief special summaries on individual East European nations that fell under Communist rule after World War II or were incorporated outright into the Soviet Union in the aftermath of World War I. The Committee also authorized preparation of a report on the Baltic States. In contrast to the summary reports on Eastern European countries that were prepared by the Committee's staff and that not only discussed Communist revolutions but also reflected mutually antagonistic nationality group interests, the report on the Baltic States was extensive, scholarly, flawlessly a-political in the ethnic sense, and extremely well documented. Documentation came primarily from American sources, although other Western sources were also used. This documentation was of uneven quality, a fact that is somewhat reflected in the contents of the study itself, though what is given represents information available at that time.

The report, actually a study of the independent Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, of their establishment, development, their occupation by the Soviet Union and their early sovietization was prepared by the Law Division and the Legislative Reference Service of the Library of Congress, under the editorship of Dr. Ernest S. Griffith. Although the Committee acknowledged only the contributions of Joseph G. Whelan and William A. Coblenz as principal collaborators, a good number of other American and Baltic researchers, associated with the Library, worked on the project. The product of this cooperation was a thick volume that provided an analysis of the 1918 - 41 period, with an appendix containing rarely seen documents, for example, a text of NKVD instructions for deportations massively executed in 1941, secret police records of resistance to Soviet rule in Lithuania in 1940 - 41, etc. An extensive bibliography of sources available at the Library of Congress was also added. Generally, at that time, this Congressional report represented the best reference and survey work available on the Baltic States.

Twenty years later, two law librarians, Igor I. Kavass of Northwestern University and Adolph Sprudz of the University of Chicago convinced William S. Hein and Company that it was worthwhile to reprint this study. Was it worth that trouble? After all, in the intervening two decades there have appeared in the West a number of other works on the Baltic States prepared by university scholars, not by politically interested government institutions. Various aspects of independent Baltic development and sovietization, furthermore, have been analyzed in dozens of articles published in the United States, Germany, and elsewhere in Western Europe. There exist now a number of monographs on these topics, beginning with Boris Meissner's *Die Sowjetunion, die baltischen Staaten, und das Voelkerrecht* (1956), Albert Tarulis' *Soviet Policy Toward the Baltic States* (1959), and ending with Georg V. Rauch's *Geschichte der baltischen Staaten* (1970). Thus, the

Congressional study heed to be measured against sophisticated and highly competent West European and American academic scholarship. The vantage point, furthermore, has changed. In the early fifties, the dominant concept for the understanding of international community was the concept of law. International organization was conceived to be founded on international law. Thus, violations of this law, of the principle of *pacta servanda sunt*, of the use of force in relations among nations dominated the minds of policy makers as well as of scholars. This framework for the consideration of Baltic development and Baltic fate in 1939-40 constitutes the design of the Congressional report on the Baltic States. Is a book so conceived still valuable after a passage of a generation, in the seventies when the international scene and the international community is understood as held together not by concepts of legal responsibility but by the matching of raw military power?

A critical rereading of the Congressional study thus is necessary. A new look into its pages shows that the book indeed contains a wealth of encyclopedic information about the Baltic republics between the two world wars. Furthermore, it discusses thoroughly the events of 1939 - 40 that led to Soviet occupation. These events are examined with an eye for identifying the model the Soviets used for occupation and sovietization. The authors of the study were quite successful in their efforts. They point to the use of the Red Army, privileged promotion of local communist parties, division of social classes, disorientation of public opinion, and an outright use of force as elements of this model. It may be added that this model of takeover, in one shape or another, was later used by Moscow in other Eastern European countries for gaining complete control over government and society. In international relations, the study concentrates on legal aspects of Baltic - Soviet ties and convincingly demonstrates the dichotomy that existed between Soviet policy and professed commitment to international agreements. While less analytical than the monograph by the Royal Institute of International Affairs (*The Baltic States*, 1938) and in places somewhat sanguine and over generalizing, the Congressional study soundly documents the accomplishments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in economic, social and political fields. Neither does it avoid the discussion of problems, especially in the field of domestic politics. Thus, it faces the main political issues of democracy vs. authoritarianism with reasonable, albeit sympathetic frankness. The issue of native communism also is discussed squarely.

The book does not present an issue or problem-oriented analysis, but discusses periods of each country's development under identical headings. Such organization may be less sophisticated than an outright comparative study, but it is better for the uninitiated reader and gives more opportunity for wider coverage of factual materials. Thus, it does not detract from the book. One is tempted to add, finally, that Lithuania receives here a more balanced treatment than in the *Baltic States* by the Royal Institute.

The editors, Igor I. Kavass and Adolph Sprudz— the latter better known to students of the Baltic area for his editorship of *Res Baltica* (Leyden, 1968) —have sought to justify the reprinting of the Congressional study by emphasizing the undiminished importance of the Baltic experience in the larger historical perspective of developing a law-abiding international community of nations. In their thoughtfully written, short but succinct preface they convincingly write that the Baltic example raises questions "about the fundamental validity and effectiveness of international law rules relating to such basic concepts as sovereignty, treaty obligations, acquisitions of territory, and the use of military power. Failure to come to grips with these questions in the context of the annexation of the Baltic States creates a dangerous precedent of silent acquiescence, which together with other precedents of a similar nature admits the possibility of force being one of the recognized tools of international law." Our generation, our world and our political leaders need to be reminded of the meaning of these principles.

This book ought to find a place not only on the shelves of law school collections but in all public and college libraries.

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1 See V.S. Vardys, "Congressional Investigation of Communism Abroad: A Case of the Public Opinion Function of Congress," *Lituanus*, No. 1 (February, 1956), pp. 2-10; also V.S. Vardys, "Select Committees of the House of Representatives," *Midwest Journal of Political Science*, August, 1962, pp. 247-65.