

## **Alfonsas Eidintas, Katalikų bažnyčios veikla prieš pažangų lietuvių visuomeninį judėjimą emigracijoje,**

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In this study, Eidintas points to the contributions of the Catholic church and clergy to the evolution of the Lithuanian community in America. He crisply begins by mentioning the overall contributions of Lithuanians in America to the development of Lithuanian national self-consciousness, the struggle for Lithuanian independence from tsarist oppression, the moral development of the Lithuanian nation and foundations of a modern Lithuanian press. He describes the role of the Lithuanian Catholic clergy in America in the struggle for the hearts and minds of Lithuanian immigrants in the United States. He loosely describes their leading role as "clericalism." He points to the Lithuanian Catholic parish as the foundation of Old Immigrant Lithuanian community life.

The author accurately and painstakingly chronicles the causes of Lithuanian emigration to America between 1868 - 1940. His Lithuanian sources are impeccable and record in detail the political, economic and psychological background of the Old Immigration. Unfortunately this study does not make use of any of the voluminous studies on immigration in English published in America over the past two decades. If there is little originality in his facts, it is simply because earlier researchers such as Truska, Vaitekūnas and Kapočius have already dealt with the basics. What is new is the author's acceptance of a reasonable mean in the ongoing debate about the number of Lithuanians who emigrated from the country. Hitherto Soviet Lithuanian researchers have generally tended to minimize the numbers of those who left, while immigrants themselves have tended to perhaps overestimate their own numbers.

Eidintas begins his short history almost in pre-history. He describes first those Lithuanians who settled among Polish immigrants. He acknowledges the polonist tendencies of some early Lithuanian emigrants, particularly among the early clergy. He views the initial formation of the Lithuanian community in America within the sociological, cultural, religious and political structure of Lithuania itself from the beginnings of Lithuanian emigration into the early twentieth century. Although Lithuanian national self-consciousness had begun to develop, Lithuania was still in many ways at least psychologically mired in the past, that is to say in the remnants of the old Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth. Many Lithuanians, particularly upper and middle class Lithuanians were still heavily influenced by the "Polish mystique." Polonism was firmly entrenched in the seminaries and manors of the country. Some villagers identified a Polish outlook with upper mobility at home and in America. In speaking of the rise of national consciousness among immigrants in America, Eidintas seems little aware of the overall context of Lithuanian immigrant life in America. For the first time Lithuanian villagers met Polish villagers who were just as poor and uneducated and sometimes poorer and more uneducated than they themselves were. The homeland "Polish mystique" died quickly in America, where Poles and Lithuanians often worked side by side in the mines, slaughter houses and factories of their new homeland. In America, Lithuanians quickly realized that they were not culturally, socially or economically "inferior" to the Poles. With the collapse of the "Polish mystique," the door was opened for the rapid evolution of Lithuanian national self-consciousness in America which not only encouraged but meshed with the rise of Lithuanian national feeling in Lithuania itself. Within a short time, Lithuanians in America became more Lithuanian than their compatriots in the homeland. This was a phenomenon common to most Central-East European ethnic groups in the United States at the time. Given free rein to develop, the seeds of transplanted nationalism blossomed in America, among Lithuanians, Poles, Ukrainians, Albanians, Greeks, Ruthenians and others. Eidintas seems to imply that it was the "laisvamaniai," or "freethinkers," socialists and anti-clericals who were the motor of emergent Lithuanian national self-consciousness in America. The evidence at least from American sources would seem to indicate otherwise. Even J. Šliūpas, the darling of the "laisvamaniai" or "freethinkers" first described himself as a "polski doktor" or "Polish doctor." In his earliest days he was a "Unionist," even to claiming to be descended from polonized Lithuanian nobility. The evidence would seem to indicate that the "laisvamaniai" and socialists did not indeed create the wave of Lithuanian national self-consciousness among Lithuanian immigrants in America. Instead, they rode it. It is rather unnerving when Eidintas describes Lithuanian immigrants in America as "tamsūs" or "dark," that is to say unenlightened people. Yet here he follows

the traditional path of almost all homeland authors of whatever political or ideological configuration. He seems to miss the paradox, that it was these ordinary "tamsūs" villagers, who laid the foundations of the Lithuanian community in America, which have lasted almost a century or more. It was they, the ordinary people, not the few Lithuanian intellectuals, who built scores of churches, schools, founded the organizations and developed a thriving Lithuanian press in America. It was the ordinary Lithuanian immigrant who quickly perceived the negative in a polonized clergy and intelligentsia. It was the ordinary Lithuanian village immigrant in America who rightly discerned the implicit threats to the continued self-development of the Lithuanian people in both Polish nationalism and socialist cosmopolitanism. In their early days Pilsudski and Šliūpas were ideological bedfellows. Poland and America alone made them different.

Eidintas perhaps better than any of his predecessors fully understands the role of the Lithuanian parish among the Old Immigration. He makes the unique observation, that the Lithuanian parish was the "only legal community organization" in tsarist Lithuania (p. 3). As such according to Eidintas it was only natural for Lithuanian immigrants in America to cluster their lives in and around the parish. The parish organization served not only the religious needs of the immigrants but their social, economic and cultural needs as well. The parish was a Lithuanian island in a foreign sea. What Eidintas does not mention is that this form of "parochialism" was common to most immigrant groups in America and not a particularly Lithuanian phenomenon. Lithuanians as did others defined themselves within the parish organization. It quickly became obvious to Lithuanians and non-Lithuanians alike that they were not Poles and they certainly were not Irish or "tikri amerikoniai" or "real Americans" as well. The first Lithuanians built their own churches, organized their own parishes and hired or sought out their own priests. Lay leadership founded most Lithuanian Catholic parishes. It was reasonable, they concluded, that such parishes, financed out of their meager earnings would be the property of the community. There were many squabbles with Polish or polonized Lithuanian priests and Irish bishops for control of Lithuanian parishes. Among the Poles, similar squabbles resulted in the formation of an Independent movement, resulting in the establishment of the Polish National Catholic Church in America. Very few Lithuanians followed the lead of Polish Independents, most likely because they preferred allegiance to an Irish bishop who generally left them alone, to the possible reestablishment of Polish clerical domination as experienced in their homeland.

Eidintas is overly harsh in "demasking" the foibles and inadequacies of some of the Lithuanian immigrant clergy. Their strengths and weaknesses are no better known than in parish folklore and gossip. One reason for this is perhaps a lingering desire to promote the "legitimacy" of the "laisvamaniai" or "freethinkers" among the Old Immigration. It would seem he reflects the attitude of some contemporary Lithuanian Communists who seek to coopt and adopt their grandparents or great-grandparents in America, post mortem. The "laisvamaniai" were not Communists, nor their ideological antecedents in America. The "laisvamaniai" were a loose assortment of "freethinkers," disgruntled intellectuals, anti-clericals, ultranationalists, secularists and modernists who operated on the periphery of most Lithuanian parishes. To some degree they can be viewed as somewhat of a "loyal opposition" within the Lithuanian community as a whole at the time. They were generally well-organized, and very vociferous. Because of their views, they were certainly not held in high esteem by the Lithuanian Catholic clergy. As far as most clergy were concerned, the "laisvamaniai" were atheists and cosmopolitan socialists who posed a danger to the souls they felt were in their charge as well as Lithuanian national feelings and ambitions. Eidintas, while critical of the clergy also seems to admire them as persons who "... had already distinguished themselves (in Lithuania)" in the Lithuanian movement for national self-determination, and became even more active in the encouragement of Lithuanian national self-consciousness in the immigration. He describes the accomplishments and achievements of such well-known priests as A. Burba, A. Milukas, Z. Žilius and A. Kaupas, who encouraged the publication of Lithuanian books and newspapers and founded Lithuanian schools in America (p. 10.) He notes that they were less than Christian in their zeal in combating the "laisvamaniai." He describes one incident in which pious Lithuanian boarding house keepers were urged to eject "freethinkers" from their establishments. Few pious but economically shrewd Lithuanian women followed their pastors to such an extreme. Common sense prevailed and as Eidintas writes "... the clergy could not understand how there could be people (in America) who did not follow their words blindly" (p. 10.) Indeed, Eidintas again seems little aware of the American context in which the Old Lithuanian Immigration lived. Very few with the exception of a few "davatkos," or "pious old women" ever followed the clergy blindly in anything. Eidintas in spite of all the evidence he presents to the contrary, goes on to argue that the "laisvamaniai" and their organizations dominated the Lithuanian-American community of the time (p. 11.) He writes that up until 1890 there were but 10 Lithuanian parishes in America. By 1920 there were 39 parishes and by 1914, 97 Lithuanian parishes in America. By 1920 their number grew to 132 parishes (p. 12.) The priests were the most numerous educated group in the Lithuanian immigrant community. Between 1915-1916 there were about 100 priests, 40 physicians, 10 lawyers and 25 newspaper editors. The number of Lithuanian parishes grew by leaps and bounds while the "laisvamaniai" remained significant yet very stable in number. It is true that the Catholic element grew in power, influence and control. It is also true that some priests crusaded against the "laisvamaniai." Yet in death there were few Lithuanian "laisvamaniai." Very few Lithuanian immigrants, according to American cemetery records, were buried in unconsecrated ground. In America, the overwhelming number of Old Immigration Lithuanians rejected both clerical polonism and cosmopolitan socialism.

The attitudes Eidintas expresses reflect a substantial body of literature written in Lithuania about the immigrants abroad. Beginning with Tumas-Vaižgantas, Žemaitė, Basanavičius, Kudirka and even Šliūpas, most Lithuanian homeland intellectuals have looked somewhat askance upon their countrymen overseas. Emigration siphoned off almost 1/4 of the population of the Lithuanian homeland. The young, most vigorous and most daring left. Some indeed returned after making money abroad, but most remained beyond the borders of the Lithuanian homeland as did their offspring. As a result, Lithuania suffered tremendously economically, socially, and to a degree politically. When one includes the second, third

and now even fourth generation in the number of "immigrants" or those Lithuanians living beyond the confines of the Lithuanian Republic, the loss is compounded. Those who remained always felt a certain sense of moral superiority to the "money grubbers" overseas. Most felt themselves more spiritual, more genuinely patriotic than those who left. Almost all felt and even today feel that the emigrants owed something to the homeland in return for leaving it. Eidintas seems to reflect this historic attitude of the Lithuanian homeland intelligentsia.

In turn, the feeling of "guilt" particularly by those who fled the homeland in times of peril has always been widespread among Lithuanian immigrants abroad. From the earliest days, the Lithuanian diaspora, particularly in the United States, assuaged guilt feelings by sending money home to their native land. The first immigrants in America freely shared their meager paychecks with those less fortunate in Lithuania. In later years, even such giants of the Lithuanian national revival as Basanavičius, came to collect money in America to support projects in the homeland.

All in all this is an excellent little book. With it, Alfonsas Eidintas marches to the forefront of contemporary homeland researchers on the subject, in Lithuania. The greatest singular criticism is the lack of primary sources particularly in the English language from the voluminous research done on immigration in the United States. The author has also generally neglected the research done by other American scholars on Lithuanian immigration, particularly the works of Rev. William Wolkovich (Vincas Valkavičius). In all probability, at the time this book was written, the author may have been unaware of such sources, or they may not have been readily available to him. As in most contemporary homeland studies of emigration, the Western reader in particular must first wade through a plethora of ideological clutter to get to the substance of the study. One only wishes the author had chosen a less tendentious and to a degree, less belligerent sounding title.

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