



## The Sword and the Cross, A History of the Church in Lithuania

Dr. Saulius Sužiedėlis. **The Sword and the Cross, A History of the Church in Lithuania.** Huntington, IN. Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1988. 264 pages. Paperback \$9.95.

*The Sword and the Cross* provides the reader with an overview of the history of Lithuania through a review of religious developments in that country since the area's first contacts with Christianity in the late 10th century.

By presenting the material in an easy to read but well digested form the author gives the reader basic information on Lithuania's history which can provide a key to better understanding of current developments in the area.

The author acknowledges presenting his material from a Lithuanian perspective. But he skillfully manages to avoid a negative overemphasis on and prejudice against such groups as the German Teutonic Knights, the Czarist Russians, the Poles or Communists who at various times threatened the Lithuanian national identity or Lithuania's Catholic faith.

The work, published shortly after the 1987 celebrations of the 600 Anniversary Christianity in Lithuania, portrays the country's history through a religious prism. The early chapters analyze the dynastic, ethnic, cultural, religious and political factors which made Lithuania the last country in Europe to officially accept Christianity.

Later sections describe the growth of the new religion in the country, until it became a central force in Lithuanian life and a major factor in defense of human rights and the preservation of Lithuanian nationality.

Though the author calls his works a mere survey, or introduction to Lithuania's past designed mainly to acquaint the reader with the basic facts of Lithuanian history, some comments and suggestions are still warranted.

The map portraying the Baltic tribes in the 12th and 13th centuries leaves a reader with the impression that the Livians were a Baltic tribe. In fact, linguists have determined that they were a Finno-Ugric group related to the nearby Estonians and should be listed as such.

Having described his work as one designed for an English speaking reader unfamiliar with details of Lithuania's past, the author could have provided a more detailed map of the area. This is particularly the case in reference to several instances of harassment of students as reported in the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church*. The author mentions the towns of Debeikiai and Veisiejai, but gives no information as to their location. The problem could also have been obviated by identifying the first as a town in northeastern Lithuania, while the second, as one in the southern part of the country.

References to leading soviet dissident and human rights activist Sergei Kovalev for some reason identify him as "Kovaliev". There are two generally accepted western transliterations for the activist's last name, either Kovalev or Kovalyov, and the use of a third spelling could mislead readers familiar with the Soviet activist.

All things considered, *The Sword and the Cross, A History of the Church in Lithuania* can be considered a valuable contribution to familiarizing English-speaking readers with Lithuania's past, thus give them better understanding of current developments in that country. With the rapidly-changing situation in Lithuania and the Roman Catholic Church's continued influential role there, the author should be encouraged to monitor the changes and publish an updated version of his book as warranted by developments.