

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN LITHUANIA

The Premier of Soviet-occupied Lithuania, Mr. Mečyslovas Gedvila, was unexpectedly ousted from his office and succeeded by Mr. Motiejus Šumauskas. This shift calls for an explanation and evaluation of circumstances in Lithuania.

The dismissed Premier, Mr. Gedvila, was born into small bourgeois milieu in 1901. Four years later he left Lithuania with his father who was exiled to Russia for activity against Czarist regime. He was educated in Russia; and after returning to his native land in 1922, he became a teacher, an editor of a weekly provincial newspaper, and Health Insurance Director of the Telsiai District. For twelve years he was an active Atheist and a revolutionary left-wing socialist; only later, in 1934, did he join the Communist Party in underground.

After the annexation of Lithuania, Gedvila was made President of the Council of Commissars. With the outbreak of the German-Russian war, he fled with the Red Army to Russia; and the Red Army brought him back to Lithuania in 1944 where he was again installed in the same office. Now he is ousted without any indication of what is in store for him in the future.

Those who knew him personally say that Gedvila was not a one hundred percent Communist, at least not when he witnessed all the realities of Communism in practice. But he saw no other way out and felt that he was compelled to take orders from Moscow.

His successor Motiejus Šumauskas, was born in 1905 in Kaunas into the family of a hard worker. He is entirely a self-made man, who began as a worker in a printing shop. As early as 1926 he organized a pro-communist Trade Union of Printers and was repeatedly jailed for communist subversive activities. During the German occupation of Lithuania Šumauskas was parachuted from Russia and worked for the communist underground. On February 1954, he became Second Secretary of the Communist Party of Lithuania, and two years later was made Deputy Prime Minister.

From all that is known about the new Premier, it seems that Šumauskas will be a more faithful tool in the hands of Moscow and that people in occupied Lithuania will have to face greater terror and new trial.

There are two main causes for this shift, both following the same pattern.

The failure in agriculture

The Kolkhoz system, imposed by the Soviets, simply does not work properly. The output of grain and cattle is pitifully small. When the highest Communist boss, Nikita S. Khrushchev visited the Baltic States in October, 1955, he especially censured for its failure in agriculture. Mr. Šumauskas himself, in his speech at the meeting of the kolkhoz chairmen on December 21, 1955, in Vilnius, the Capital of Lithuania, strongly denounced the Soviet-imposed Government and the Communist Party of Lithuania blaming them for all short-comings in agriculture and for what he called "Bourgeois nationalism" which still persists in Lithuania.

It was N. S. Khrushchev who very much insisted on cultivating more corn in all Soviet Republics and in Lithuania as well. And as a matter of fact the cultivating of corn in Lithuania was really a complete failure.

A woman, who very recently left Vilnius and is now in United States, reveals that the propaganda for cultivating corn in the country was a very great one. An exhibition was organized last summer in Vilnius for this purpose, and she recalls that visitors laughed at it because they knew that no one in the region of Vilnius had succeeded in growing normal corn and that corn had been brought from Ukraine for the showing.

The Continuing Resistance.

According to Mr. Harry Schwarz and other experts on Soviet Russia and its subjugated countries, resistance against the Soviet regime in Lithuania is widespread and this resistance is one of the causes for the ouster of Gedvila.

This is confirmed, in part, even by the Soviet regime in Lithuania. On January 20, only a day after the dismissal of Gedvila, Radio Vilnius, in an unusual broadcast, appealed to "those few persons still in hiding" since 1945 (i.e., the Lithuanian partisan underground fighters) to leave their hideouts and to admit their "guilt". It is obvious that all efforts by the Red Army and by the police to "convince" the underground fighters were in vain.

The Soviet Youth Movement newspaper, **KOMSOMOLSKAJA PRAVDA**, reported on January 17, 1956, that there are severe ideological defects in the Soviet Republics especially in Lithuania, Latvia, and Kazakhstan. In Lithuania the Soviet organ reports that the situation is particularly bad in the villages. It disclosed that students at the university of Vilnius issued a hand-written magazine entitled **FIG LEAF** which, complained the paper, contained "vulgar and decadent rhymes". **KOMSOMOLSKAJA PRAVDA** also charged that, instead of denouncing its authors, the local Communist Youth Organization tried to cover up the incident. The newspaper said that the number of Young Communists is rising very slowly and that "nationalism still exists".

The shake-up in Lithuania is the biggest since the occupation. The Iron Communist broom has failed in the hands of Mr. Gedvila.

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