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ONE YEAR OF DESTALINIZATION IN LITHUANIA

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The question of destalinization was treated in Lithuania just like that of the proverbial member cf the family who committed suicide by hanging himself — everybody knows it, but no one talks about it.

The case has been much the same throughout the Soviet Union, where Khrushchev's anti-Stalin speech has never been published. But the unique thing about Lithuania was that none of the leaders of the Lithuanian Communist Party ever uttered their own word against Stalin, and even the anti-Stslin statements made in Moscow have been only half-heartedly repeated in the Communist press and radio in Lithuania.

A reference critical of the personality cult, without mentioning Stalin's name, was first made only at the time of the 20th Party Congress in February. It consisted of a single sentence in a speech by Khrushchev that took up 12 large pages. The second such reference to the cult appeared in a similar sentence in a resolution of the Congress. An editorial on the decisions of the 20th Party Congress in the Lithuanian Communist Party's organ also condemned the cult of personality in a brief sentence. On March 29 — almost a month and a half after the Congress — an article was reprinted from Moscow's Pravda stating publicly, for the first time in Lithuania, that the cult of personality ref-rs explicitly to the glorification of Stalin.

To be sure, shortly after the Congress a plenary session of the Lithuanian Communist Party Central Committee, in which regional Party secretaries and other local Party activists were invited to participate, was held in Vilnius. There were also regional meetings of Party workers in which secretaries of the Central Committee participated. Public announcements concerning these meetings would lead one to think that they discussed only the decisions of the 20th Party Congress having to do with the Sixth Five-Year Plan; there can be no doubt, however, that a large part of the time of these secret meetings was devoted to the clari-cication of the uneasy problems of destalinization.

The people — through foreign broadcasts, and also from Party members who failed to observe secrecy — were already aware of Khrushchev's Moscow speech. There was a perfectly natural reaction: If Stalin was bad, are his surviving followers, as well as the Party and the whole system itself, any better? So it happened that when the local Communist ideologists said their say on the problem of the cult of personality — which they did in a magazine restricted to a very limited number of

Party members — they were forced to take the de-?
fensive; they had no alternative but to claim that the rejection of the cult of personality applies only to the past and not to the present, that it in no way affects the Party and its general line, and, finally, that Stalin himself was not so bad in every respect — which means that one should not be too eager to condemn him...

It is rather significant that Communist leaders in Ii'huania appeared cautious, as if they foresaw th» possiti'ity that Khrushchev himself might still take a step or two back from his denunciation of Stalin. After Beria's arrest, for example, A. Sniečkus, First Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Farty, returned from the meeting of the Central Committee in

Moscow and repeated unreservedly a'l the accusations that had been hurled at Beria. However, Sniečkus failed to do the same on his return from the 20th Party Congress; in this case he went beyond mere caution.

Yet the downgrading of Stalin did play a role in Lithuania, after all: The courage of the people ros 3 even more than during the year following Stalin's death. The course of international events was now discussed with less fear; information overheard on the radio, which reaches listeners' cars in spite of jamming, was more widely disseminated; and contact with the outside world through correspondence increased. Even if it is felt that the correspondence is being censored, there is increased determination to pay no attention to the censorship. In the whole regime, especially in its lower strata, a vacilation is being felt. The feeling prevails that the forces of terror are thawing out somehow... This may not be fundamental in itself, but it is of practical significance. No one forgets that the terror can exercise its grip as before, or that many a bold step now can have tragic consequences later, yet the majority give in to the temptation to breathe some fresh air.

CHANGES IN PERSONNEL

A major change in the leadership of the Lithuanian regime occured on the eve of the 20th Party Congress. On Jan. 16, 1956, Mečys Gedvilas, Premier of the Republic of Lithuania, was removed from the post he had held for 16 years — that is, from the very beginning of the Soviet occupation. There was hardly any connection, however, between this change and the downgrading of Stalin. For even though the ousted premier no longer holds public office in Lithuania, he remains Chairman of the Legislative Proposals Committee of the Soviet of Nationalities of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet.

M. Šumauskas, the new Premier, is a former printing shop worker. He is self-educated, a member of the Party underground, about ten years younger than Gedvilas, and resembles Khrushchev as far as his Party career is concerned — whereas M. Gedvilas is an intellectual and of non-proletarian origin, and might better be cons'dered "Lithuania's Molotov."

Two other important appointments were made at about the same time: A certain P. Levicki (probably a Russian), unknown in Lithuania before his appointment, was given the post of First Deputy Prime Minister, and then B. Sharkov, a Russian and equally unknown, was made Second Secretary of the Party. The two appointments revealed an apparent increase of Russian influence at the top — especially in the Party hierarchy, where only two of the five secretaries were Lithuanians, one a Russian born in Lithuania and two Russians from Russia proper.

But there were other personnel changes that seem to indicate the strengthening of the influence of native Communists in the local government.

In April, J. Augustinaitis, the long-time Minister of Agriculture, who is possibly of Lithuanian origin but who was educated in Russia, was transferred to the Ministry of State Farms. P. Kunchin, a Russian, who had been Minister of State Farms, remained as Augustinaitis' assistant. J. Vazalins-kas — a Lithuanian, a graduate of the Academy of Agriculture of independent Lithuania and a former high official of the Ministry of Agriculture of independent Lithuania, who is well acquainted with the country's agricultural problems — became head of the Ministry of Agriculture, one of the most important ministries in Lithuania.

After more than ten years of service as Chairman of the Lithuanian Republic State Planning Commission, the Russian Petroy was released from his duties. The new Chairman of the State Planning Commission, J. Laurinaitis, is, like Vazalinskas, a Lithuanian and a former student at the Academy of Agriculture of independent Lithuania, and he also worked in the Chamber of Agriculture before the Soviet invasion. Now, being appointed Chairman of the State Planning Commission, he remains Deputy Premier as well.

Both planning and agriculture are now administered by people who acquired their qualifications in independent Lithuania. Also, the Lithuanian L. Mackevičius recently replaced V. Boreiko as Minister of Light and Fuel Industry, and the Russian Terioshin lost his ministerial rank when his Ministry of the Textile Industry was attached to the Ministry of Light Industry, which is headed by a Lithuanian (Terioshin was kept as Assistant Minister for the Textile Industry). Other changes saw J. Pivoriūnas, a Lithuanian, appointed to the post of Assistant Chairman of the State Planning Commission; another Lithuanian, J. Grigalavičius, chosen as Deputy Premier; and M. Afonin, a Russian Secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party Central Committee, recalled to Moscow, with the Lithuanian Barauskas appointed to replace him.

According to reliable, though not yet published information, various government agencies in Lithuania have been ordered to carry on their correspondence in Lithuanian, or at least to answer In Lithuanian all communications received in that language. It has further been ordered that all Soviet offiria's stationed in Lithuania learn the native tongue if they have not already done so. (This ruling has theoretically been in force all along, though it has not been enforced in practice, and it is doubtful that it will be even now.)

RUMORS OF THE SATELLITE STATUS

In the spring of 1956 rumors circulated in the Western press to the effect that Moscow was considering a satellite status for the Baltic States.

Such rumors are practically unknown in Lithuania. One must conclude from official announce-, ments that the Kremlin is not considering the separation of the Baltic states from the U.S.S.R. system, even if it does not dispute the need for-some kind of special treatment for the three republics. For instance, when the entireU:S.S.R_ adopted the ten-year school system, the Baltic, states, after a trial period of one year, were permitted an 11-year system, on the ground that two languages — the native tongue and Russian — are taught, and this is a burden on the whole program. In administering the collective farms it must be taken into account that many of the farmers here still live on single farmsteads, a situation that will not change in the near future. In the matter of livestock breeding this fact has been accepted on the ground that the farmers of these countries possess greater experience in bacon production, and that one must take advantage of the old "bour-g?ois" method even on the collective farms.

DECENTRALIZATION

Rumors of "satellite" status may be arisen as a result of various decentralization measures — which have been applied, however, in all the republics of the U.S.S.R. and not in the Baltic states alone.

Lithuania was only slightly affected by the decentralization of industry — that is, the transfer of some branches of industry from the jurisdiction of central ministries to that of republic ministries — since only a few of the republic's industrial enterprises were affected by the decentralization decree. It affected only five meat-packing plants, three sugar refineries and the fish cannery in Klaipeda. All the other large enterprises — such as the turbine, lathe, painting materials, electrical appliance and many other enterprises — remained under Moscow's jurisdiction. Finally, the transfer of the enterprises to the jurisdiction of the local ministries has no important practical value, since the local ministries themselves are under the control of the central ministries, and the common planning is still centralized.

The abolition of the Ministry of Justice in Moscow and the transformation of the republic Ministries of Justice into agencies independent of any direct control from the center is less important than it may appear, for the Prosecutor's Offices are independent of the Ministries of Justice and remain strictly centralized, while the carrying out of sentences remains a function of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. G. Bacharov, a Russian appointed by Moscow, remains Lithuania's Chief Prosecutor, and he is responsible solely to the U.S.S.R. Prosecutor's Office. (It is worth noting that the Ministry of State Control, which works closely with the Prosecutor's Office and the security police, has been headed for more than ten years by a Russian, Yefremov. This ministry is under the supervision of the U.S.S.R. Ministry of State Control, now headed by Molotov). The final session of the U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet adopted an important resolution, permitting the republics to pass their own codes — in accordance, of course, with the basic principles set by the center. This refers to the Civil and Criminal Codes, the laws of civil and criminal procedure and the organization of the courts. The extent of independence will depend in the first place on the degree of applicability of the "basic principles" laid down by the center and in the second place on the extent of the individual republics' determination and ability to pass their own laws. The present R.S.P.S.R. codes, hastily drawn in revolutionary surroundings and in force in Lithuania by decree, not only fail to correspond to conditions in Lithuania but are considered out of date and unsatisfactory in the Soviet Union itself.

In the field of administrative decentralization, it can be noted that there is now a separate Lithuanian Railroads Administration, under Moscow's supervision, and Lithuania's railroads are no longer under a common office for the Baltic and Belorus-sian Republics. A separate inland waterways office has also been set up in Lithuania. Both railroad and inland waterways offices, however, are administered almost entirely by Russians and are directly subservient to ministries in Moscow.

ECHOES OF THE POLISH AND HUNGARIAN EVENTS

Having lived through an armed resistance of some six years (1945-1951) — a resistance of varying intensity and tragic not only because it failed to attract any foreign aid but because it failed to draw 1he attention of foreign observers or to effect any reaction in the free world — and having lost in this struggle some 30,000 killed and hundreds of thousands deported to Siberia or the forced labor camps, Lithuania is cautious about another uprising. In 1956, a number of those sentenced to forced labor camps for their underground activities or their uncompromising attitude toward the regime were amnestied. Some were allowed to return; with rare exceptions, they all returned as invalids. Of those deported to Siberia only between one and two per cent returned. Hope remains that at least some of those still alive may still be allowed to come back home. This hope is probably one reason why there is no desire to attempt some kind of demonstration having hardly any chance of success.

The events in Poland, and especially in Hungary, did have an effect on the attitudes of the Lithuanian people. It is worth noticing that the peopls learned very soon of the unrest — and not from local press, which maintained silence for a long time before it began to publish "information" about the events.

On Nov. 2, All Soul's Day, there were demonstrations in Vilnius and Kaunas in connection with the honoring of the dead in the cemeteries. This was at the beginning of the Hungarian uprising, when the local press and radio were keeping their silence on the events there. Yet people in Lithuania a'ready knew all about the events in Budapest, and the All Souls' Day demonstrations were carried out under the influence of this knowledge. The Vilnius and Kaunas cemeteries were crowded with thousands of people. After lighting their candles at the graves of their own dead and singing several prayers. people

gathered at the tombs of Lithuania's patriotic leaders and at the graves of those who died in the struggle for Lithuania's independence and there sang patriotic songs, including the now-tranned Lithuanian national anthem.

Students of the Kaunas Polvtechnical Institute, the Institute of Medicine and the Academies of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, when their classes finished, marched in a body to the cemetery and later joined in demonstrations on the city's main street. The entire police force was alerted, but it did not interfere with the demonstrations either in thi cemetery or on the street. Arrests and sentences did follow certain so-called "hooligan" activities, which included the beating up of a Kaunas policeman and the breaking of a window in a police station. Among those arrested were a few of those who had been released from the labor camps, and who had taken no part in the demonstrations; they were released after a couple of weeks.

As was the case in Poland and Hungary, students and young people—who did not live through the period of Lithuania's independence and who for 12 years have experienced an intensive ~~procss~~ process of Soviet indoctrination—were foremost in this ~~outuburst~~ outburst of popular discontent.

There is an increasing interest in everything Western in Lithuania. Some are interested in Western fashions and Western luxuries, others in jazz and modern dancing, which are considered characteristic of Western culture, and still others in science and the fine arts. We are reliably informed that young Lithuanian lovers of ~~iterature~~ literature seek the works of a Lithuanian writer~~s~~ who fled to the West, although ~~these writers' names are~~ the writer's name is never publicly mentioned, and it is worthy of note that the younger generation knows them at all.

The Party leaders have apparently been alarmed at all these tendencies. Beginning last November the local press has begun to carry articles, resembling fatherly chastisements, condemning and warning young people who may have displayed an interest in the Western way of life and in news from the West. ~~Those who "sit with their kind of imperialist reproaches," rather than listening to the "only true and wise information" dis-ears glued to radio receivers, hoping to hear some seminated by local sources, are condemned~~.Condemned are those who instead of listening to the "only true and wise information" of the local sources, "sit at the radio receiver with their eyes popping, so as to hear some kind of imperialist slander. Students have been publicly condemned — in some cases their names have been published—for having the courage to ~~rase~~ raise at various meetings "provocative questions" about Hungary, or for expressing their doubts as to the wisdom of the Party's leadership in condemning the cult of personality. Two Jewish students were publicly criticized for their attempt to justify Israel's position with respect to Eeypt.

A literary paper published an article that indicated an increasing concern with the future tendencies of the masses in general and of the individual in particular. Many series of newspaper articles and radio lectures in the last few months (November, 1956-March, 1957) have been directed chiefly against the activities of the emigres and the policies of the United States~~—which country~~ the liberation policy of which is, needless to say, denounced and condemned, but at the same time is ~~represented~~ pictured to the Lithuanian people as more impressive than it actually is. Not since the beginning of the Soviet occupation has there been such a degree of nervous reaction in Lithuania to the emigres activities, or so intense a condemnation of the "weakminded" ones who, "unable to distinguish between lies and truth, submit to the blandishments of the imperialist sirens."

Yet even those at the very top of the Party leadership are tempted to retreat from some of the dogmas of the Stalinist era. A number of formerly condemned writers—some of whom were actually sentenced for their bourgeois nationalist ideas—have been rehabilitated, and it can still be hoped that the criticism of certain works may be reexamined and that they may receive a greater measure of justice. The literature of the pre-Sovie*. period is being looked at with somewhat more favor, and there are even partial attempts to learn more about it. Finally, Sniečkus himself, the chief Communist in Lithuania, remarked publicly that not everything created in "bourgeois Lithuania" is necessarily bad. This statement gained wide currency in Lithuania; even those who allege that they do not read Communist newspapers refer to it (this is confirmed by a completely reliable source). What is most important is that even the leading figures in the field of cultural activities are displaying an ever-increasing tendency to cross the barrier that up until now has separated almost all works of the "bourgeois past" from those of the present, with the former category doomed to being totally ignored.

KHRUSHCHEV'S "DOGMAS" ARE ALSO BEING REVISED

There is, of course, no possibility of decollectivization in Lithuania such as appeared possible in Poland. Yet Khrushchev's agro-city idea has been rejected, and there is a trend in the opposite direction—the collective farms tend to diminish in size. In 1956 some 117 collective farms were halved in size. There is currently a movement to decentralize the collective farms and to organize them in so-called "complex brigades"—that is, to divide a collective farm's lands into what can be considered almost independent farming units, each with its own farm implements and livestock, with cnly the accounting done communally for the collective farm as a whole. Corn growing has been amost totally rejected in Lithuania after two years of unsuccessful trial. It is hoped that the horse will be restored to its rightful role in Lithuanian farming.

Although the farmers—to paraphrase one writer—are still hoping that "hectares will be added to ~~areas~~ ares," the official tendency is for the major part of the farmer's income to come from the collectivized land, while the private plot (60 ares, or 1.44 acres) plays an ever-smaller part. So far most of the peasants' income, in many cases as much as four-fifths of the

total, still comes from the private 1.44 acres that the farmer cultivates during his free hours. This explains why it is so hard for the Lithuanian farmer to love the collective farm.

A FEELING OF UNCERTAINTY

According to private information, an indefinable feeling of uncertainty, a result of the process of destalinization, prevails in Lithuania. The masses of people, and especially the younger generation, are seized by a feeling that something must happen in the near future—something that goes beyond the mere downgrading of Stalin. The efforts of those at the top to convince themselves and everyone else that things will simply become stabilized in the spirit that now exists do not seem to be based on any firm belief that this is what is really going to happen. There is that sense of uncertainty. At first the uncertainty stemmed from fear of the prevailing terror; now it comes from the hope of increased freedom, coming from no one knows where—and at the same time from doubt as to whether the terror may not suddenly return. All this gives rise to a very complicated ferment, composed of one ingredient common to all and two ingredients opposed to each other. The common ingredient is the tendency to seek material and spiritual betterment; the conflicting ingredients are on the one hand, efforts to achieve th!s betterment through the Soviet system (on the part of those who seek to save the prestige of the Soviet system and of the leaders within that system), and on the other hand, hopes for a miracle that would destroy the Soviet system and pave the way toward an i ndependent life. Here lie the aspirations of both the older and the younger generations. It is simply that the younger generation still cannot imagine the way in which this change should come about, while the older generation clings to its conservative viewpoint: "Nothing will happen without a war. . . . And should we lose our lives in the war, well, one has to die anyway. . . .