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Editors of this issue: Antanas Klimas, Ignas K. Skrupskelis, Thomas Remeikis

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## PROTESTS IN LITHUANIA NOT ISOLATED\*

STANLEY VARDYS

Munich Center for Russian Language  
and Soviet Area Studies at the  
University of Oklahoma

Recent anti-government demonstrations in Lithuania provide new and dramatic evidence of the rising tide of anti-Moscow nationalism and of the growing convergence of nationalist and liberal forces in the Soviet Union.

Two self-immolations — one in Kaunas, a city of 300,000, and another in Varėna, a small town — and demonstrations in Kaunas in which thousands of students and workers attacked Communist Party and secret police headquarters have been acknowledged by the Soviet press. This acknowledgement alone is so unusual that it betrays the regime's considerable concern with Lithuanian developments. Massive confrontations with police and paratroopers left two dead policemen and caused the arrest of hundreds of persons. Elsewhere in the Soviet Union, there were food riots in Novochoerkask in 1962, Armenian disturbances in 1965 and demonstrations by Tartars in 1968. But this Lithuanian protest is the most dramatic that has been recorded in recent memory.

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Lithuania has a long tradition of nationalism that the Soviets have not been able to squelch since occupying and annexing the country in 1940. Nationalism inspired a massive revolt against the Soviets in 1941, at the start of the German invasion. It later motivated an eight-year guerrilla war against the regime, 1944-52, and rioting in Kaunas in 1956 at the time of the Hungarian revolution. The Kremlin response to this resistance was deportations, arrests and purges of writers, teachers and officials who attempted to protect Lithuanian linguistic and cultural traditions and to attain greater autonomy from Moscow's rule.

As Marxists, the Communist rulers hoped that nationalism, deeply ingrained in the older generation, would dissipate in the younger as a result of Sovietization. Above all, they hoped that industrialization would change the mentality of the younger generation and make them thankful to Moscow for an improving standard of living. A reading of the recent Soviet-Lithuanian press reveals, however, that both the young Lithuanian intelligentsia and workers feel that the progress made after the war could have been achieved without Moscow's aid and over-lordship. Industrialization indeed substantially improved Lithuania's productive capacity and increased urban population to 50 % of the total. The Lithuanians, however, did not appreciate industrialization policies that brought with them Moscow control over Lithuanian life: influx of a Russian population, cultural Russification, Russian dictation to the local Communist Party and government, persecution of religion and denial of national and political rights.

The demonstrations in Kaunas provide vivid testimony that Moscow failed to win the loyalties of young Lithuanians, born and educated under Soviet rule, Romas Kalanta, who immolated himself May 14 after making a speech denouncing the Soviet suppression of national and religious rights, was 19 years old. Those who demonstrated belong almost exclusively to the generation under 30. It is very important to note that Kalanta was a member of the Communist Youth League and grew up in a family where all the brothers belong to Communist youth organizations and the father to the Communist Party. At the same time, it has been reported by travelers that young Kalanta was deeply religious despite his membership in a Communist Youth League, which requires commitment to atheism. Finally, the published identity of some of the arrested shows that among them there are at least as many workers as there are students. This persistence of nationalism loyalties among the young, even in Communist families, and also in the working class exposes the weakness of Moscow's indoctrination.

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The incipient rebellion of Kaunas represents an apex of dissatisfaction that has been accumulating since the second half of the '60s with the government's treatment of civil rights, especially freedom of religion. Simas Kudirka, the sailor who was denied asylum in the United States and later was sentenced for "treason" by a Soviet court, pleaded for "independence for my homeland of Lithuania," for freedom of religion and for the right to travel and migrate. He further supported the establishment of a democratic political system. In the winter of 1972, 17,000 Lithuanians dared to sign a petition to party chief Brezhnev and to Kurt Waldheim of the United Nations in which they asked for enforcement of Soviet constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion that now are violated. Thus, the Lithuanians drew upon an interpretation of Soviet constitutional liberties that the Russian, Jewish, Baltic and Ukrainian liberals defend in the Soviet Union.

This combination of nationalism and civil rights issues is a new development in the Soviet Union. It spells out a possibility of coalition between the Russian liberal and non-Russian nationalist forces. Such a coalition has been important in Russia's revolutionary history and may ultimately have considerable effect on both the nationality policy of the government and the prospects of liberalization in Soviet society.

Thus the recent revolutionary protest deaths and demonstrations in Lithuania should not be seen as an isolated incident but as a event of great significance to domestic Soviet development.

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