

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 42 11, No.2 - Summer 1965

Editor of this issue: Thomas Remeikis

ISSN 0024-5089

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CONVERSATIONS WITH MOLOTOV

VINCAS KRĖVĖ - MICKEVIČIUS

VINCAS KRĖVĖ-MICKEVIČIUS (1882-1954) is known not only as a writer of great talent but also as a scholar and political activist. For many years he taught at the Lithuanian universities and served as Dean of the Faculty of Humanities. After the Second World War he came to the United States and served on the faculty of the University of Pennsylvania. During the critical June and July months of 1940 he was a Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Lithuanian Government. It is this position that brought him into contact with Molotov and other Soviet leaders. He preserved a very interesting account of the experiences with these men, excerpt of which is reprinted in this issue.

Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius (1882-1954) was a Deputy Prime Minister in the Lithuanian Government during the critical days of June, 1940. The Government was dictated by the emissaries from Moscow, especially Deputy Commissar of Foreign Affairs Dekanozov, who was sent to Lithuania to direct the takeover and incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union. After the occupation of Lithuania by the Red Army (June 15, 1940), the Lithuanian Government still tried, though in vain, to salvage at least a little of independence. On June 29, 1940, Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius went to Moscow to present a personal appeal to Molotov. The 25th anniversary of Soviet aggression in the Baltic States is an appropriate occasion to reprint here a report by Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius on his conversations with Molotov.

Following the Moscow ultimatum to Lithuania of midnight June 14-15, 1940, the abyss of anarchy yawned before Lithuania. The attitude of the Moscow functionaries in regard to the Lithuanian nation clearly indicated that they strove to demolish the internal order, destroy the unifying foundation; and to bring the nation to chaos.

There and then, it was decided that I should leave for Moscow to see Molotov, and if possible, even Stalin. I was to acquaint them with the situation and to demand that they order their Legation in Kaunas and the military government not to interfere in the internal affairs of the country, to cease the destruction of the authority of the Lithuanian Government, and to recall their citizens whom they had unlawfully seated in the Ministry of the Interior.

We were the first victims of the Bolsheviks in Europe: we knew neither their tactics, methods, nor final aims. Therefore, it is not surprising that we thought that most of what took place occurred without the knowledge and approval of Moscow. It is evident that the eminent diplomats of Western Europe and America allowed themselves to be deceived because they failed to orientate themselves, then. God, Himself, therefore allowed us to be deceived as well.

The following day I sent a coded telegram to our representative, Mr. Natkevičius, in Moscow, requesting him to arrange an audience with Mr. Molotov as quickly as possible.

Mr. Natkevičius received a negative reply from Molotov, explaining that N. Dekanozov is now in Lithuania, and that the government of Moscow has empowered him to confer with the Lithuanian Government on all matters. Dekanozov himself visited me shortly and demanded to know why I had not applied to Molotov through him if I had something important to discuss with the Commissar of Foreign Affairs. It was totally incomprehensible to him why I did not wish to discuss it with him, Dekanozov, who was sent here for that purpose.

I replied that Lithuania still has her representative in Moscow through whom she has the right to appeal to the Moscow Government, and therefore I see no reason to disturb Mr. Dekanozov in order to ask him to act as mediator. It would be useless to confer with him since all those matters had more than once been discussed with him, but that all our discussions had been in vain and had produced no fruit.

"You, Mr. Minister, orientate yourself poorly today in regard to the existing conditions which have changed a great deal since we came here," stated Dekanozov. "You would do well if you would listen less to all that Galvanauskas whispers in your ear. We are perfectly aware of that."

"I am not a child, and I understand perfectly well what is going on here, and the whispered advice of Mr. Galvanauskas, should there truly be any, would not influence me. I should like to explain the situation to myself in order that I might not find myself participating in the burial of Lithuania's independence.

"Should Mr. Molotov refuse to see me, even so everything will be clear to me, and I will know what conclusions to draw."

With this our conversation ended. That same day I repeated my request through our representative in Moscow that Mr. Molotov receive me in person, and this time I received a reply that the Commissar of Foreign Affairs, V. Molotov, agrees to receive me, on June 30th, at four o'clock in the afternoon.

This notification reached me on June 29. I left that very day for Moscow. I was met at the station with the customary pomp by the Vice-Commissar of Foreign Affairs, whose name I am unable to recall, Mr. Dekanozov, who, it appeared, had flown from Kaunas, the Moscow Military Commandant, a few other officials, and our legation's functionaries with our Minister, Mr. Natkevičius, at the head.

The station was decorated with our national flags.

From the station I left for our legation.

Mr. Natkevičius was not in a good mood.

"Although you were met in the same way as our high officials were met in good times when they came to Moscow, I do not think that the attitude of Moscow toward the Baltic nations has changed," said the Minister, when the reasons for my coming were explained to him. "If it has changed, then it has become even more unfavorable."

During dinner, about three o'clock, the office of the Commissar of Foreign Affairs telephoned to inform us that Mr. Molotov would receive me not at four o'clock as had been promised, but at eleven o'clock at night.

"Do not be surprised, Mr. Minister," stressed Mr. Natkevičius, at this point, "here, all important matters are attended to at night. That your appointment is scheduled for eleven at night means that a long conversation awaits you. God grant that it bring good results, but that is doubtful."

At eleven o'clock we arrived at the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. I was amazed at the number of times we were stopped and our credentials checked: on entering the Kremlin, at the entrance to the Commissariat, on reaching the second floor, and even at the door of Molotov's office.

Silence reigned everywhere, and not a single employee was to be seen, but there was an armed guard at every step.

Finally we found ourselves in the waiting room. We did not have long to wait, scarcely a few minutes, but the first unpleasantness occurred here which irritated me considerably: we were informed that Molotov wishes to speak with me alone, without the Minister.

I had no idea how one should conduct oneself in these circumstances, how one should address a high official of a foreign country, and had expected that Mr. Minister would be my adviser in this instance. Now that I was left alone, I became uneasy.

Although Mr. Natkevičius had told me that I must open the conversation by inquiring about the health and wellbeing of Josif Vissarionovič, and similar diplomatic phrases, but upon entering Molotov's office I had forgotten everything, and after greeting him I began to express my dissatisfaction on being forced to pay this call on the Commissar of Foreign Affairs alone, unescorted by our Minister.

Molotov smiled, showing no vexation. His expression and attitude impressed me favorably. I thought I was dealing with a Russian intellectual of the old generation.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Minister, and that of your representative. By receiving you alone I did not intend to offend you or to express any distrust of your representative," said the Commissar in reply to my comment. "I have been informed that you are an outspoken person, that you always 'take the bull by the horns' (beriete vseгда čorta priamo za roga), and that you do not hide your opinions behind the shield of diplomatic courtesies. Therefore, I wished to speak openly with you, as with

a man who can understand our present position, not with a diplomat. I thought that I could not speak as freely, seeing beside you an experienced diplomat, the kind your representative, without doubt, happens to be."

Being inexperienced at that time in diplomatic slyness, I believed the words of Mr. Molotov, and was even overjoyed. I thought that speaking candidly and wholeheartedly I could explain many misunderstandings and gain more than I had believed possible. I did not doubt the sincerity of Molotov's statement. Only later I understood that this clever and cunning diplomat had something entirely different in mind.

"We sincerely wished to reach an agreement with the English, French, and Polish Governments for a common plan to block German expansion and avoid the threat of war, however, not through any fault of ours, we were unable to reach such an agreement," continued Mr. Molotov. "It was demanded that we guarantee the eastern Polish borders, although the present allies should have known that those borders were imposed on us at the peace conference in Riga. Our position then was such that we had to agree to all the conditions that were dictated to us. They also demanded that we guarantee the eastern borders of Rumania, although they were aware that we had not disclaimed, nor did we intend to disclaim in the future our rights to Bessarabia. Furthermore, the Polish Government evinced the greatest distrust toward us. It did not agree to allow our military forces to cross their country, even in the event should Germany start a war and we would be forced to join with Western Europe in the fight against German expansion.

"Under such circumstances how could there be any agreement? Seeing that agreement was impossible, we were compelled to seek guarantees elsewhere so as not to remain alone should we be attacked. Such a guarantee had been offered to us by the German Government before our talks with the English, French, and Poles, but we had paid no attention to it. Now, perceiving that nothing would or could come of our discussions with the three allies, we renewed our negotiations with the German Government which seemed to us to be very well disposed and tractable, agreeing to satisfy all our wishes.

"Although we reached an agreement and signed a non-aggression pact with the German Government, we were perfectly aware that the Germans were not to be trusted. Therefore, for the sake of caution, it was necessary to find other means to strengthen our security. At that time we had no common borders with Germany. In other words, desiring to attack us, they would choose a route across Lithuania. We sincerely wished to cooperate with the Lithuanian Government, to strengthen your country's defenses.

"We have always had the best interests of Lithuania at heart, as sincere and true friends we have always upheld her interests on an international level, we have everywhere and always supported her in all her affairs. We have demonstrated our friendship by returning to you your former capital. Vilnius.

"One of the first measures was our suggestion to the Lithuanian Government that it form a firm union with the other Baltic nations, and in this way strengthen its resistance to possible German aggression. We used our influence so that the Government of Latvia and Estonia would offer no resistance to the formation of such a union. But we were soon disappointed. Although Smetona is not a foolish person, but being covered with the moss of superstition, he failed to orientate himself in the existing circumstances and mitigate his regime. He failed to understand such a simple thing that it was impossible to maintain friendly relations with us and at the same time persecute all that smacked of Russian culture, persecute those who manifested the slightest regard for us. Still worse, it soon became evident to us that the union of the Baltic nations, formed at our instigation, showed signs of leaning toward the Germans. From well-informed sources we learned that the delegates of the Baltic nations held a meeting in Riga where it was decided to take a firm stand against us, to resist our influence, and to seek a closer cooperation with the Germans. Your representative in Berlin, instructed by Smetona, began negotiations with the German Government for an agreement directed against us.

"The true nature of the Germans became evident to us when they accepted the Lithuanian offer. Only they desired that your Government take a definite stand in this regard as an ally of Germany. Therefore they ordered the Lithuanian Army to attack Poland immediately and take Vilnius.

"I will not try to hide the fact from you that we were overtaken unexpectedly by this fact and that we were very worried. If Lithuania had listened to the demands of the German Government and had thus proved herself an ally of Germany, she would have become a German fortified area extending far to the East, a starting point in the event of war with us. And we would have been unable to take any measures against her without risking war with Germany which we did not and do not desire.

"We were able to breathe more freely when we discovered that the Lithuanian Government did not dare to listen to the Germans, had refused to occupy Vilnius by force and that she had thereby lost the confidence of Germany.

"In the presence of this dangerous fact we were forced to change radically our attitude toward the Baltic nations, as well as toward Germany, and to take steps which we had neither desired nor anticipated. These steps were necessary in the interests of security. We had no right to give such a situation an opportunity to repeat itself. For their promise not to threaten to draw the Baltic nations into their sphere of influence, and not to interfere in their internal affairs, we now had to yield on many questions to the Germans. Furthermore, they agreed that the Baltic nations, namely: Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia lie exclusively within our zone of influence, and that in that zone we might act as we saw fit.

"However, these new agreements did not wholly disperse our distrust of the Germans, therefore we were compelled to strengthen our armed forces in these countries. I understand that this act of ours seems unpleasant to you, but believe me, it is more advantageous to you than to us: we protect you from danger from the German side, from Germany's attempts to entangle your tiny nation in a world war whose flames lick ever closer.

"It is true that we were obliged to liquidate the Baltic Union, but not because it had gone astray. It is no longer necessary; we have assumed the task of protecting the independence of the Baltic nations."

As I listened I was unable to imagine what purpose Mr. Molotov could have in recounting all this. Did he wish to read to me the act of indictment against Lithuania and the other Baltic nations, or by so doing to cloud my vision and distract my attention from matters which might be unpleasant to him?

And indeed I was blasted from my trench and was unable, on the spur of the moment, to get my bearings, how to divert the conversation to the matters that were important to me and for which I had come.

"We are responsible for neither the national nor the foreign policy of Smetona with which practically none of Lithuania's inhabitants were satisfied," I now began to say. "Personally, however, I begin to fear that soon our populace will start to regret the passing of that time when Smetona ruled the country if matters in Lithuania will continue in the same direction as they have up until now. . ."

"We are aware that you are popular with the people," said Mr. Molotov interrupting me. "You must strive to keep the confidence of the people . . ."

"Yes, I did enjoy a certain amount of popularity, I can tell you. But there is very little left of it, and I fear that there will soon be none left at all. Today the welfare of the Lithuanian people is being destroyed together with the agricultural as well as the legislative system to which they are accustomed and which they value highly. We are unable to stop this destruction, we have neither the power nor the means, while in the eyes of the people the responsibility is ours. The people still believe the Moscow statement that no one shall interfere in the internal affairs of Lithuania, and they are not aware that today their government is powerless. . ."

"What keeps you from combating those who indulge in this destruction?" interrupted Molotov again. "Punish them."

"We would then have to punish the officials from your legation who without regard are proceeding with this destructive propaganda and are causing great unrest in the nation, especially among the farmers. We would have to punish your officers who by their direct demands and threats are demoralizing our institutions and those who work in them . . ."

"We sent no such instructions," frowned Mr. Molotov. "It is hard to believe that our officials or our officers could be so wilful."

I understood that I had been too severe, that I would accomplish nothing by speaking in this manner and that my audience might come to a close without achieving the end.

"It is for this reason that I asked to be received so that I might explain the present situation. I do not for a moment doubt the good intentions of the Government of the U.S.S.R. For I understand that it is not only in our interest, but in yours also, that the production of Lithuanian agriculture should not decrease, to the contrary, it should increase, so that Lithuania could continue its obligation without further hardships to feed your garrisons," I began to explain. "The welfare of the Lithuanian people has reached a high level ; the agricultural life of the people was so arranged as to do away with middlemen between producer and consumer. The return was greater for the producer and prices were lower for the consumer since the middlemen's profit was eliminated. Our export has always been active and considerably larger than our import. This stabilized Lithuanian currency which during all this time not only did not drop in value but also did not fluctuate."

Before my departure for Moscow Mr. Galvanauskas had thoroughly acquainted me with Lithuania's agricultural and financial situation¹ and had provided me with all the necessary information concerning our agricultural productivity, our export and import, our agricultural system, and concerning the organizations: Lietūkis, Pienocentras, and Maistas.

Making use of this material which I had brought with me I proceeded to explain all this to Molotov as clearly as I could.

Molotov appeared interested and listened attentively.

"We have already been informed that your agricultural organizations function like clockwork without any hindrances (bez atkaza). To us that was rather unexpected," commented Molotov. "Our Military Government is absolutely fascinated by the efficiency of these organizations."

"I cannot question your official facts but I am amazed at the productivity of Lithuanian agriculture," continued Molotov. "She produces and exports more than the great, rich Ukraine. It is not our purpose to destroy such a perfect agricultural system. On the contrary we are vitally interested in maintaining its high level. Our officials have received no instructions to interfere in the internal affairs of Lithuania and by this interference harm the country's agricultural system." Therefore, Molotov

believes that all these misunderstandings arise not from ill will but from the dissimilarities of the agricultural and social systems between Lithuania and the Soviet Union. The people failing, and not wishing, to realize this do not agree and do not understand each other due to different psychological viewpoints. The present Lithuanian Government, whose sincere regard for the Soviet Union he does not doubt, should strive to prepare its people to adapt themselves to new condition . . .

"We believe and our entire nation believes that the present situation is only temporary and will not prevail much longer," I said in answer to Molotov's statements. "I should like to believe that it would be more to the point for you to attempt to instruct your garrison commanders in Lithuania to comply more with our system, with our conditions, popular opinion and national psychology."

For some time Molotov did not reply. He sat with bent head scribbling something on a sheet of paper that lay under his hand.

"You provoke my candour, Mr. Minister," he said at last glancing up at me. "You force me to say something which I had no wish to say at this time. Therefore we shall speak openly without sentimentality of which there is already enough. You must take a good look at reality and understand that in the future small nations will have to disappear. Your Lithuania along with the other Baltic nations, including Finland, will have to join the glorious family of the Soviet Union. Therefore you should begin now to initiate your people into the Soviet system which in the future shall reign everywhere, throughout all Europe, put into practice earlier in some places, as in the Baltic nations, later in others."

Although I had been warned in advance by Mr. Natkevičius that I might hear such things, I was completely abashed by Molotov's flat statement. My throat felt dry, my lips frozen, and for some time I was speechless.

It appeared that Mr. Molotov perceived my condition. He telephoned and ordered some tea brought.

"When these things become evident there will be great confusion among our people, perhaps even armed resistance," I began not realizing what I was saying. "The German Government without doubt will make use of this, for it will not tolerate the instigation of the Soviet system on its border."

"Germany swallowed the occupation of the Baltic States without being shocked? And she will have to digest their incorporation," Molotov snapped back. "They are having too much trouble in the West now to want a war with the mighty Soviet Union. I also will not conceal from you that in regard to these matters we have already come to an agreement with them. Comrade Stalin has already spoken about this to your former Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs when they came to see us about some misunderstandings which had arisen with the soldiers of our garrison."

"You have said yourself, Mr. Commissar, that the present German Government is not to be trusted, therefore, you cannot predict how they will behave in this respect. For my part I can only warn you that when your aims become clear our people will look to the Germans as possible allies who will help liberate them from your tyranny. The Lithuanian farmers already, still ignorant of what fate has in store for them, are restless, dreaming a change in the agricultural system. They are already intimidated by your officials and the agitation of sympathizers, and they fear the system of collectivization. They have been accustomed for centuries to private ownership of their land; they prize it as they prize their independence. The theory of land collectivization is foreign to them."

"We do not think of imposing (naviazat) a collective system of farm supervision," remarked Molotov. "We do not maintain that this system is the best method of land reform, but Russia is still a nation too poor and wretched to be able to afford (posvolit sebe) a different system of land reform."

"As I now see it, our people have shown themselves to be more alert than we, and they have distrusted your public pledges and are becoming restless in their distrust, although we have tried to quiet them," I continued my song not realizing that it was not only useless to the matter I wished to defend but was, more than likely, harmful. "Endless lines of farmers' delegations have visited me and the Minister of Agriculture. They have all demanded that we defend not only the internal order but the freedom and independence of the nation as well. When the people will discover the Soviet Union's motives, they will give way to great despair and disorder which will demolish the very foundations of the nation, destroy the still stable prosperity as well as the basis for that prosperity, wiping out all foreign agreements so essential to our economy. The populace without doubt will regard your garrisons as an army of occupation and they will fight them in every way imaginable. Would all this be beneficial to the Soviet Union in such unstable times? In order that all this may be avoided we propose that a friendship pact be made with us on new terms. This would improve our position and strengthen the authority of the Soviet Union in the eyes of the Lithuanian people. According to this pact we would agree even to limit ourselves in matters of foreign policy, being mindful of the interests and advice of the Soviet Union."

"I will not say that your proposal is not worth considering today. At another time it would have been very acceptable to us, but conditions have changed so, that such a turn might not be useful either to the Soviet Union or to the Baltic States. We are more firmly convinced now than ever that our brilliant comrade, Lenin, was not mistaken when he assured us that the Second World War will help us to gain power throughout all Europe as the First helped us to gain power in Russia.

"Today we support Germany but just enough to keep her from being smothered before the miserable and starving masses of the warring nations become disillusioned and rise against their leaders. Then the German bourgeoisie will come to an agreement with its enemy, the allied bourgeoisie, in order to crush with their combined forces the aroused proletariat. But at that moment we will come to its aid, we will come with fresh forces, well prepared, and in the territory of Western Europe, I believe, somewhere near the Rhine, the final battle between the proletariat and the degenerate bourgeoisie will take place which will decide the fate of Europe for all time. We are convinced that we, not the bourgeoisie, will win that battle.

"This is why we cannot seriously consider your offer today. We cannot allow a small island with a form of government that will have to disappear in all Europe to remain behind our back."

"You, Mr. Commissar, forget that the United States of America with her vast material and technical strength might come to the aid of these Western European nations who are fighting against German aggression. This nation, as we know, has once already saved Western Europe because of her way of life. I do not believe that history cannot repeat itself."

"You are absolutely right, Mr. Minister," Molotov stressed. "We know very well that the United States of America are eager to enter this war, and they use every means to provoke that entry. We doubt that we shall be successful in persuading her to resist that provocation; however, this does not worry us. We know that country better than those who govern it do. Have you ever visited the United States?"

"No, I have not," I admitted, "but I have read a great deal about that nation."

"In other words, you have no idea what that loose swamp, which calls itself the United States of North America, is like. American journalists, and to some extent the writers, are clever with their pretty words at deceiving themselves and others when they talk about their land. But we do not have to believe them. There, when they speak of humanism, liberty, equality, and democracy, it is merely the most loathsome hypocrisy, which is so characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon peoples. There at every step you find a church, but in spite of this, there is no other nation in the world so materialistic, where the only thing that matters is money, money, and more money . . . There every official, from an ordinary policeman to their president, is ever ready to make mistakes and errors, if these errors increase his bank account.

"We are not like the stiff Germans who believe only in using their fists. We shall find means to help the leaders of American politics make mistakes, when these mistakes will be to our advantage. Therefore, their entrance into the war does not worry us in the slightest. All those who put their faith in them will be greatly disillusioned . . ."

"Past events have taught us that we can have faith only in ourselves, and our country has not yet lost that faith," I said in answer to Molotov's last words of emphasized rebuke. "The people of Lithuania, at the end of the First World War, were able alone during the most difficult times to repulse the Polish attempts to occupy and incorporate Lithuania. Poland was supported in these attempts by all of the Western European allies, the French, the British, the Belgians ... Although our people had no one to turn to for aid or support, they fought valiantly, and won their freedom. And now they will not surrender it easily."

"Mr. Minister, you must not forget that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics brings to nations not slavery, but true freedom, and so your people are not threatened with the loss of their freedom. They will be asked, in the manner approved by the Soviet Republics, whether they wish to join the family of the Soviet Union."

I felt that our conversation was becoming more and more tense. Evidently my words and resistance had so annoyed Mr. Molotov that the gentle tone began to fade from his voice. But I was so affected by all I had heard that I could not control myself. Therefore I replied that the whole Lithuanian nation had long since decided to be independent, and to live her own life. I do not have to guess what the answer to the question raised would be, provided no force was used.

"The word 'force' has been removed from our dictionary," Molotov hurriedly shot back in a stern voice. "We shall not use force, but we shall know how to convince your people that their welfare demands this union, since only in this way, under the protection of the entire Soviet Union, can they live in peace, without fear of being drawn into the slaughter of war."

I expressed my disbelief that a country could be found that would allow itself to be convinced that it is advantageous to give up its freedom for the protection of a foreign state. The Lithuanian nation, who sacrificed so many of her sons for liberty, would be less apt to be thus convinced.

"You will see that before four months have passed, the people of all the Baltic States will vote for incorporation, which will take place without any disturbances, although you try to intimidate me," Mr. Molotov assured me. "Closing our conversation, I should like to advise you again to look reality straight in the eye, and to keep in mind the aims of our true policy, important for all mankind."

"Lithuania cannot remain an exception, and her future will depend upon the fate of all Europe, you must understand that," Mr. Molotov went on to explain. "You would be doing the most intelligent thing if you would accept without any hesitation

the leadership of the Communist Party which is determined to effect the unification of all Europe and the application of the new order.

"Lithuania, as well as the other Baltic States, will be able quietly, even more quietly than before, and undisturbed to expand its national culture, only giving it a socialistic content."

He, Molotov, and the central government of the Soviet Union believe that the members of the present Lithuanian Government, keeping in mind the good of their country, will remain to cooperate further with the Soviet Union, at least so that the incorporation into the family of the Soviet Union would take place without any great disturbances on the part of the unreliable, poorly orientated persons.

The members of the present government surely would not wish the people to regard them as foes in the future . . .

These last remarks Mr. Molotov delivered standing, giving me to understand that all that was to be said had been said.

I rose also and, standing, replied that the words of Mr. Commissar had not convinced me. How my colleagues in the Government would react I did not know. Personally, I felt that I could no longer remain at the head of the Lithuanian Government, for I had been mistaken in believing the promises given by the Soviet Union that their armed forces came into Lithuania just to protect her neutrality, and not to interfere in her internal affairs. I was mistaken in so believing and therefore I must make the proper deductions. Furthermore, I did not wish to participate in the burial of Lithuania's independence.

"Such a step on your part at this time would be very unpleasant for us, and I am sure that you will think well before you decide," answered Mr. Molotov, walking to the middle of the room.

We took cool leave of each other, without that friendliness with which Mr. Molotov had greeted me. Going out I glanced at the clock. It was twenty-three minutes to four.

In the next room I found Mr. Natkevičius. He was talking to some official and waiting for me. Escorted to our car by this official, we returned to our legation. On the way we were silent, since Mr. Natkevičius had given me to understand that he did not wholly trust his chauffeur.

Once inside the legation, I began to relate in detail my conversation with Mr. Molotov. Mr. Natkevičius himself wrote down all I told him for the purpose of preparing a "Pro Memo."

Listening to me Mrs. Natkevičius began to weep so bitterly that we had to suspend our work in order to comfort her as best we could.

I went to bed at dawn. I felt as if I had just pulled through a serious illness: disaster had overtaken me so suddenly that I was still unwilling to believe it. On my way to see Molotov I had still thought that Mr. Natkevičius' pessimistic suppositions were exaggerated, and that it would now be demonstrated that they had no foundation. I could scarcely drag my feet as I went to the room which had been assigned to me.

Mr. Natkevičius awakened me the next morning at ten to inform me that the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs was calling me. Throwing on my robe I went to Mr. Natkevičius' office. It was Dekanozov, saying that he had just flown into Moscow that day and he must see me. Besides, he would like to show me the Agricultural Exposition of the Soviet Union.

I wanted to refuse, for I had planned to return home that day, but, on the advice of Mr. Natkevičius, I accepted, requesting him not to call for me before eleven.

I scarcely had time to dress and have a little breakfast, when Dekanozov arrived. Another person, whom he introduced as his assistant, newly appointed to the Moscow Legation in Lithuania, arrived with him. His name was Vasiljev; and later I actually did see him in Lithuania at the Moscow Legation.

We left for the Exposition in which I had not the slightest interest. I went only to be polite. I was accompanied by Mr. Natkevičius and Mr. Bagdonas, the secretary of our Legation. We rode in our legation's car, while Dekanozov and Vasiljev went in their car.

"You have been back to Kaunas?" I asked Dekanozov, recalling his statement that he had flown into Moscow that morning.

"I had flown to see my family," he replied. "I had hoped to spend a few days with them, but I was suddenly instructed to return. You, Sir, are to blame for that."

We inspected the entire Exposition which interested me little, for I well knew how the Soviet Union's expositions are prepared and for what purpose. I was only amused when I saw women's stockings of the "Kotton" firm of Kaunas displayed in the Exposition as the product of White Russia.

At the end, Mr. Dekanozov said that he would like to show me the "seas of Moscow," which Mr. Natkevičius and Mr. Bagdonas had undoubtedly seen many times and would therefore be uninteresting to them.

We understood that Mr. Dekanozov wished to speak privately with me. Mr. Natkevičius and Mr. Bagdonas left for home, while I seated myself in Dekanozov's car, and we set out to admire the "seas of Moscow." Mr. Vasiljev was also with us.

When we reached the port Mr. Dekanozov disappeared somewhere. The installations of the port and later the sluices were shown and explained to me by Mr. Vasiljev. He was very courteous and spoke in a quiet, monotonous voice. While explaining he kept glancing into my eyes as if to determine whether I had understood.

After inspecting the sluices we returned to the port. Mr. Dekanozov had reappeared.

"I interrupted your breakfast this morning. Therefore we shall go in here and have a bite to eat," he offered. "I must admit that I am also hungry. What about you?" turning to Semionov.

"I wouldn't mind having something myself," he answered with a smile.

We went not into the main dining room but into a small, private room where an elaborate repast had been prepared, complete with drinks. We seated ourselves and began to eat. When I was offered a drink I replied that my doctor had forbidden it.

"Life is not worth living if one listens to doctors," Dekanozov pointed out, but did not insist. I had suspected that they wished to get me drunk in order to loosen my tongue. We ate in silence. Evidently my companions were hungry indeed, for they ate with gusto and drank much. Having satisfied his hunger, Dekanozov leaned back in his chair.

"Comrade Molotov is very displeased with you," he said to me. "I received a scolding."

"Do you think that I am pleased with comrade Molotov?" I answered. "Do you know what he told me?"

"I know," he replied. "I already knew what you would hear when you left for Moscow."

"And do you recall, Mr. Dekanozov, what you told me when trying to get me to participate in the government?"

"That was one political situation, this is another," he explained. "Political situations have completely changed."

"Everyone is responsible for his own words, even a politician," I told him. "Who can assure me today that conditions are to blame and not you, deliberately telling me lies."

I saw Dekanozov's face flush, he was greatly offended. Vasiljev also noticed it, and immediately interrupted our conversation, trying to mend the situation.

"Comrade Dekanozov is a Georgian, and all Georgians are very frank and sincere people, like comrade Stalin. Georgians do not know how to be hypocritical and therefore are sometime harsh," said Vasiljev. "You see, Sir, comrade Dekanozov, as well as the entire administrative head (golovka) of our Union, actually is just the executive organ of the Communist Party. The Communist Party rules the Union; it alone makes the decisions which we all must carry out. Neither I, nor comrade Dekanozov belong to those who make the decisions. We are all just blind executors of the Party's decisions, therefore we cannot be blamed for the Party's motives and change of tactics. Comrade Dekanozov was then, as he is now, frank and sincere."

"In other words, today your party is determined to reinstate in its entirety the 'united and indivisible' Russia (edi-nuju i nedelimuju Rossiju) on the lines of the old czarist empire. It seems that at the sight of food an appetite was born."

"Do not say and do not think such a thing, Sir," cried Dekanozov, leaping from his chair. "We are not concerned with the 'united and indivisible,' but with all humanity, with the proletariat of the entire world. We must gather everything under one red flag, — and we will. This second World War will put all Europe into our hands, like so much ripe fruit. The third World War, which we will not avoid, will give us victory throughout the whole world."

"That is still a question," I said doubtfully. "Comrade Mo-lotov himself told me that the United States are seriously thinking of entering this war. On whose side — it's apparent. I doubt that, having won the war, the United States would be disposed to let you bring about a Communist order in all Europe."

"This nation will not fight us for Europe, I can assure you of that," stated Dekanozov. "And they will be even less inclined to fight for the little Baltic States which have no value in their eyes. What! Do you have oil refineries, gold mines? Perhaps they have capital invested in your industry? Or perhaps you are an important market for their products?"

"I shall explain frankly all to you." began Vasiljev in a honeyed tone. "Our leaders are very cautious in their policies. Our party always strives to examine seriously each question that life and circumstances bring forth, and only then does it make

the proper decisions. It is our custom to become well acquainted with every country, its people, their ways, customs, and viewpoints, if we foresee that, on one level or another, it will be necessary for us to have dealings with them. I can tell you, Sir, that the Soviet Union has only two real enemies to consider today: Germany and Japan. But Germany will be conquered and trounced without us, and Japan will be crushed. As for the United States of America, in whom you personally, and the diplomats of the Baltic States, — we are well aware, — and the people of these States have so much faith, a faith which is in vain, she forms no problem at all for us. It is true that today this nation gives the impression of being a giant. The thing is that this giant is suffering from an incurable disease. Perhaps you do not know, Sir, that the inhabitant of the United States, no matter who he is, an ordinary laborer or a political leader, neither takes an interest in nor concerns himself with anything but money. Talent, or education, or culture is neither respected nor appreciated there, only the dollar. The dollar is their God, for whom they are ready to sacrifice not only their country's interests, but also the well-being and honor of their friends, parents, and even children. But there no one has any understanding of honor, since their only source of honor is that same dollar.

"The people of the United States like to talk of democracy, equality, and liberty, and even boast of these to others. But no one, aside from us, knows that it is a country of vile Nazism and inequality. Those of Anglo-Saxon origin are actually convinced that they alone are worthy people; they alone have the right to govern and dominate, while the rest are inferior animals fit only for hard labor. Those of German origin, of whom there are a great many, look upon others, not of their nationality, with the contempt so typical of the Germans, and they also have the greatest hatred for the Anglo-Saxons because they refuse to consider them as equals. In other words, all the inhabitants are divided into various national groups, and each group hates and despises some other group.

"Nowhere in the world will you find such sharp class distinction, such wide barriers between one class and another, and still worse, such barriers between the classes and the masses of the people, as in the United States. This class distinction is, of course, based on the dollar. Those who have piled up millions, will have nothing to do with those who, as yet, have no such pile. Those who have hundreds of thousands of dollars will have nothing to do with those who have no hundreds of thousands of dollars. They regard with the greatest disdain those who have less than they, and those who have more than they, with the greatest envy, and refuse to admit either into their sphere.

"On the whole, dollar-hunting (pogonia za dollarom), hate and envy are the basic principles of the social order of the United States. That sort of nation is not dangerous to us neither as foe nor friend. Besides, we have no desire, and we shall never have the need for desiring, to be at war with her. But should there be any who dream of going to war against us, we shall know how to prevent the realization of that dream.

"When the time comes, we will destroy that nation from within by the hands of her own citizens . . . With the aid of that all-powerful dollar.

"As for the British, should they see danger in us, I understand very well that they are unable to fight us, and never will be able, alone. We could have had trouble only with Germany, but she will be trampled, and will fall of her own accord into our hands. France is already crushed, and, as a military power, will never recover."

"Moreover, she has belonged to us for a long time," put in Dekanozov. "Fifty thousand Communist teachers have long since been working there in our interests. The new French generations are already ours. We could have seized the government a long time ago, and we will — when the need arises."

"So you see, Sir, there are no such forces in the world today that could prevent our party from gaining power throughout Europe," continued Vasiljev. "Now you yourself must understand, Sir, why our party's aims have changed in regard to the Baltic States. Their incorporation, and therefore Lithuania's, in the Soviet Union is one of the first steps toward those aims. Our party can delay no longer, for such favorable circumstances might not repeat themselves. We wish that these first steps be taken without any disturbance. Latvia and Estonia cause us no concern, but your country is an entirely different case. Lithuania is a Catholic country, her inhabitants, her entire populace, are fanatically opposed to the aims of the party, and so we must be extremely careful. Comrade Molotov knows that your people, especially the younger generation, have faith in you, therefore he wishes that you remain in the Government until your country is incorporated into the family of the Soviet Union. Your resignation at this time would be rather hard for us to explain to the people."

"Or we would have to explain your resignation in a way that would be unpleasant for you," threatened Dekanozov. "You would be doing the wisest thing if you would join the Party."

"This would please us very much, and we would try not to bother you with the usual formalities connected with joining the Party," added Vasiljev. "But the decision, of course, is up to you. I must also say that comrade Molotov has further instructed us to request that his as well as our conversations with you remain confidential, and that there be no reports on this subject, either in public or at a Cabinet meeting, since these conversations took place on the basis of mutual trust."

I replied that I shall have to think about what action I shall have to take in this situation. "I shall not conceal the fact that I shall act in the best interests of my country."

"To influence the people favorably toward our aims is in the best interests of your country," stated Mr. Dekanozov.

Thus our conversation ended. They drove me back to our legation. I related this conversation to Mr. Natkevičius, and we immediately put it down in writing (Pro Memoria).