

## THE 1863 REVOLT IN SOVIET HISTORIOGRAPHY

J. JAKŠTAS

L. Bičkauskas-Gentvila, *1863 m. Sukilimas Lietuvoje* (The 1863 Revolt in Lithuania), Vilnius, 1958.

J. Žiugžda, *Antanas Mackevičius — Lietuvos Valstiečių Vadovas Kovoje Prieš Carizmą ir Dvarininkus* (Antanas Mackevičius — Leader of Lithuanian Peasants in the Struggle Against Czarism and Landlords), Vilnius, 1951.

J. Žiugžda, "1863 Revolt in Lithuania," in Lietuvos TSR Mokslų Akademija, Istorijos Institutas, *Lietuvos TSR Istorija*, (History of Lithuanian SSR), Vilnius, 1963, vol. II.

J. Žiugžda, "Peasant Revolt in Lithuania in 1863," in *Lietuvos Valstiečiai XIX a.* (Lithuanian Peasantry in the 19th Century), Vilnius, 1957.

D. Fainhauz, "The 1863 Revolt and The Society of Western Europe," in *Lietuvos Valstiečiai XIX a.*, Vilnius, 1957.

A true historical science is not just a recounting of individual and separate events. If a historian would be satisfied to present the events in a chronological order, without connecting them causally or indicating their interdependence, he would be writing not a history but a chronicle. The historical material must be analyzed, categorized, explained, correlated, and changed or corrected, whenever it is deemed necessary by the critical analysis.

Working with the raw historical facts the historian is not devoid of the social ideas and values of his own environment, and often he is influenced by the prevailing ideological tendencies. For this reason frequently one encounters in the historical works a clash of two worlds, the past and the present. On the one hand the historian reveals to the readers pictures of the past and on the other hand he projects into the work, consciously or unconsciously, the current teachings of historical interpretation, which are often defined by the political system of his environment.

The influence of the political system on historical interpretation is most apparent in soviet historiography. The Marxist doctrine of historical materialism is an obligatory tool of historical analysis. The primacy of economic factors and the class struggle constitute the principal points around which all history is written. As can be expected, the doctrine of historical materialism has been imposed also on the Lithuanian historians. A review of soviet studies of the 1863 revolt in Lithuania indicates that ideological and political considerations in interpreting history have been imposed with an extreme severity on the soviet historians in Lithuania.

The most exhaustive study of the 1863 revolt in Lithuania written to date is that by L. Bičkauskas-Gentvila: *1863 m. Sukilimas Lietuvoje*. The author appears to be a russified Lithuanian who probably wrote the study originally in Russian. The study is superior to any other available work on the subject in scope as well as in the number of sources used. All facts and the conclusions derived from them are very scrupulously documented, mostly with references to archive materials and other basic sources. The Central State Archive of the Lithuanian SSR Ministry of the Interior in Vilnius (formerly the Archive of the Muravyev Museum) provided most of the original sources. The study is sprinkled with citations from the classics of Marxism-Leninism to express the interpretative theory, as is commonly the case with all soviet histories.

The title of the book does not describe properly the content of the study. It would have been more appropriate to call the book, for example, "The Peasant Struggle Against Landowners and the Russian Administration During the First Half of the 19th Century." Only 88 out of the 343 pages (pp. 201-289) are devoted to the revolt itself, while the greater part of the book deals with the unrest of the peasants and their struggle with the landowners and the administrative officials. The last section (IV) deals with the reforms instituted by the Governor-General of Lithuania Muravyev and with the final abolition of serfdom.

Basically, then, Gentvila's study deals with the struggle of the peasants against the landowners for land in the first half of the 19th century. The subject is analyzed in accordance with "the only scientific doctrine of Marxism-Leninism." According to this doctrine, the moving force of the historical process is the productive relations and the various resultant social

relations. Land ownership determined the relations between the peasantry and the gentry, a class struggle for land ownership ensued. Eventually, the peasant revolt of 1863 developed from this basic struggle for land. Professor V. N. Bočkariov, agreeing with Bičkauskas-Gentvila, approves this interpretation. In his introductory statement Prof. Bočkariov comments: "The revolt of 1863 in Lithuania was a great popular movement, whose driving force was the peasantry."

In substantiation of such an interpretation of the 1863 revolt the author has presented much archival material on the peasant struggle with the landowners. The account of peasant struggle is repetitive, monotonous, executed without chronological or subject-matter orientation.

The significance of the Manifesto of February 19, 1861, is lost in this monotonous account of peasant unrest. It is true, the "exploitative nature" of the Manifesto is defined; however, there is no indication of the reaction of Lithuanian peasantry to the Manifesto, it is a well known fact that the Manifesto was widely distributed and explained, and its provisions were read even from the church pulpits. With the rich archival resources available, the author could have provided a needed description of the reaction of Lithuanian peasantry to the controversial Manifesto on the abolition of serfdom. He probably would have been able to discover the peasant disappointment with the Manifesto and the ensuing intensification of struggle for land and freedom. The author appears to be detached from and alien to the Lithuanian people and cannot comprehend the real motives of the Lithuanian peasant unrest after the proclamation of the Manifesto. This was more correctly perceived by another Lithuanian historian, M. Jučas, who was educated in a soviet society. Jučas has said that "The peasants were of the opinion that the land is theirs for centuries, and freedom has been proclaimed to them by the Manifesto." (See his article in *Lietuvos Valstiečiai XIX a.*, Vilnius, 1957, p. 104). Bičkauskas - Gentvila, on the other hand, instead of determining the true meaning of the Manifesto to the Lithuanian people, describes its role in the following Marxist terms: "However, the reform of February 19, 1861, was a land-mark from which began a new epoch of Lithuanian history — the epoch of capitalism. This is the meaning of the reform, regardless of its limited class nature." (p. 76).

In the discussion of "class struggle" between the peasants and the landlords, the author introduces a third element — "autocracy." By autocracy the author means the Russian Government. Here the author's political bias becomes evident: the words *Russia* or *Russian* are not used in this connection. He attempts to avoid any suggestion of the fact that the peasant unrest was also directed against the Russians. He emphasizes that Czarism aided the landlords in defending them from the peasants and in calming the peasant unrest. The Lithuanian peasants, thus, struggled against the feudal lords and against Czarism.

The author repeatedly uses the word *Russian* when he talks about the revolutionary democrats and their ideology, who had "an immense influence on the social life of the national border lands, including Lithuania." Herzen, Ogarev, Chernyshevski and other democratic publicists and politicians are among those cited. The author emphasizes their association with the students from Lithuania and Poland and with other liberal activists. Numerous facts and names are given to show that "from the students of the Russian schools emerged the fighters for freedom of the Lithuanian, Belorussian, and Polish nations."

Among many fighters three great leaders of the Lithuanian revolt — Z. Sierakowski, K. Kalinowski, and A. Mackevičius — are distinguished by the author with biographical and political sketches. In describing the life "and credo of the Rev. A. Mackevičius, the author utilized trial records of A. Mackevičius, which recently (1950) were discovered in the former Muravyev Museum Archives.

The author's presentation of the conspiratorial activities of the radicals in the Russian Empire and their preparation for a revolution is marred by the ever-present tendency to show the leading role of the Russian nation in the struggle for freedom of the nations in the Russian Empire. It is true that Bičkauskas - Gentvila does not expound this obvious political idea to the extent as some of his fellow soviet historians. Nevertheless, he insists that "The best representatives of the suppressed nations of the Russian Empire took over from the Russian revolutionary democrats the idea of a common struggle of the Russian nation and all the other nations of Russia against Czarist autocracy and serfdom — against the social and national enslavement of the masses of people." (p. 160). Of course, the close relationship of the revolutionary leaders of the entire Russian Empire cannot be denied. They were educated in the same schools, followed the same literature, and participated in common organizations. But one must keep in mind that the revolutionaries, be they of Russian or other nationality, belonged to the intelligentsia, whose role is the revolutionary movements in Eastern and Central Europe is now especially emphasized (for example, see H. Seton-Watson, "Intelligentsia und Nationalismus," *Osteuropa*, Historische Zeitschrift, 1962, 195). The revolutionary democrats of these countries were mostly intellectuals of noble origin, of Western culture (especially French), who followed and propagated Western movements. Thus the idea of a common struggle against Czarism, autocracy, and serfdom had its roots in the West and it was adopted by the intelligentsia of Russia and of the other nations in the Russian Empire. It has been completely shown by a study of the Italian Franco Venturi that "Herzen and Bakunin in 1840, Chernyshevski in 1860, Ishutin in 1866, Lavrov and Tkachev, *Zemlia i Volia* and *Narodnaia Volia* in 1870 were a response to the problems of romantic socialism, to the beginning of the First International, and to its internal struggles" (see Fr. Venturi, *Il populismo russo*, 1952, vol. I, p. XIV). In other words, the Russian movement was not original but rather an echo of European radical currents.

Bičkauskas-Gentvila presents a loose but well documented description of the course of the revolt and its suppression and of the annihilation of the revolt leaders. The repressions of the Governor-General Muravyev are recreated extensively and vividly.

The author devotes a special section to "The Reactionary Role of the Clergy in the 1863 Revolt." It is a highly polemical passage, designed to destroy the contention of the "bourgeois" historians that the clergy supported the revolt. It is easy to select or ignore facts from a complex situation to prove one's point. Bičkauskas-Gentvila position is destroyed by facts that he ignores. Among them we find the exile of the Bishop of Vilnius, the transfer of the Bishop of Samogitia M. Valančius to Kaunas. Bishop Valančius was kept practically under a house arrest. He has recorded in a diary that "Through several years they threatened me with exile in Russia." (See M. Valančius, *Pastabos Pačiam Sau*, Kaunas, 1929, p. 70.) The most destructive proof against the author's position is the names of 106 priests, found in Bishop Valančius' diary cited above, who were punished for their support to the insurgents.

The concluding chapter is devoted to a discussion of the final abolition of serfdom, executed by the Governor - General Muravyev. According to Bičkauskas - Gentvila, the Muravyevian reform strived to maintain land ownership by the feudal lords. After a detailed and documented discussion on the conclusion of reforms, the author concludes that as a result of the revolt the peasants obtained more land, easier conditions for land payments, and smaller obligations.

Bičkauskas-Gentvila has provided the first detailed monograph, based on primary sources, on the conditions of Lithuanian peasantry in the middle of the 19th century. Unfortunately, the good historical material is too often distorted by the monism of historical materialism and the political precepts of soviet historiography.

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The senior of soviet historians in Lithuania J. Žiugžda has so far written three more extensive contributions on the 1863 revolt in Lithuania. The monograph *Antanas Mackevičius* is first of its kind and would deserve special attention if competently written. Unfortunately, the alleged historical study approaches what could be described as pamphleteering. Even the title is not appropriate since out of the 54 pages only 23 are actually devoted to the personality of Mackevičius. The major portion of the booklet is devoted to a Marxist description of peasant unrest. This work, written during Stalin's last years, provided a basis for Žiugžda's later studies on the 1863 revolt, reviewed in this article.

To Žiugžda, Mackevičius was almost a new type of a revolutionary, comparable to the Russian revolutionary democrats. The fact that Mackevičius was a priest complicated the interpretation of his ideological character. Žiugžda solves this problem by citing Mackevičius' written testimony to an interrogator, in which he de-emphasizes his collar: "I undertook the duties of the priest in order to reach my people and to have more basis to attain their confidence" (*Antanas Mackevičius*, p. 24). Here Žiugžda concludes that Mackevičius entered the seminary not from calling and that he remained uncommitted to religion even in priesthood. A more appropriate interpretation could have been that Mackevičius was influenced by the motto of the Russian revolutionary democrats "Going to the people" (*Chozhđemi v narod*). This motto was already well known in the 1850's (see Venturi, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 818). Mackevičius could have chosen priesthood as the way to the people, but this choice in itself does not exclude the possibility of a true calling to priesthood.

The last section of the monograph on Mackevičius is devoted to his social and political views. Here Žiugžda cites the testimony of Mackevičius to the interrogators after he was apprehended by the Czarist authorities and arrives at the following conclusion: "Mackevičius understood correctly that the Russian nation has nothing to do with the horrors of Czarist-feudal regime, and connected the possibility of success of the Lithuanian peasants' revolt with the aid of the revolutionary forces of the Russian nation." This is pure a contrivance of Žiugžda, having no basis in the documents that he cites. Actually, Mackevičius did not single out any nation with his ideology of national emancipation, which stemmed from the common European democratic movement. Thus, basically, Mackevičius could not have been an enemy of the Russian nation and, perhaps, in the long run he did connect the fate of the Lithuanian nation with other free nations, including the Russian nation. However, it does not follow that Mackevičius fought against the Czarist regime and not against Russian suppression in Lithuania. Mackevičius himself has testified: "While speaking I let it be sensed that the cause of his (Lithuanian's) suffering is the Russian Government" (*Antanas Mackevičius*, p. 24). Mackevičius with his scythe - men fought against this government, and Lithuania and Poland commonly fought "For Faith and Country." The soviet historian, however, cannot recognize this historical fact.

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The two other lengthy articles by Žiugžda, appearing in the works cited above, are basically general discussions, without deeper source analysis. Žiugžda starts with the February 19, 1861 Manifesto and with the resultant peasant revolts. According to Žiugžda, by revolting the peasants expressed a non-recognition of the freedom given by the Manifesto and a distrust of Czarism. Actually the contrary was true. The peasants were anxious to obtain the freedom declared in the Manifesto and demanded its execution without delay. The peasant revolt was a protest against delay and against the landlords and the regime functionaries for changing the established feudal relations to the disadvantage of the peasants. The peasant unrest was marked with the hope of true freedom, promised to them by the Manifesto.

A pro-Russian tendency of Žiugžda's studies is especially evident in his extensive consideration of the "help" of Russian revolutionary democrats to the revolt. Russian officers participated in the struggles of the Lithuanian peasantry, Russian revolutionary publicists gave a favorable attention to the revolt. According to Žiugžda, these Russians and Lithuanians fought together "against Czarist autocracy and against the landlords," It is true that the Russian populists (*narodniki*) sincerely supported the revolt in Lithuania, as also in Poland. The author, however, may be charged with bias, when he

speaks repeatedly about *Russia's* revolutionary democrats but neglects to apply *Russian* designation to the so-called autocracy and its representatives in Lithuania. Alexander II, Muravyev, Nazimov, Ganecki, were as much Russians as Herzen, Ogarev, Chernyshevski, Dobroliubov; nevertheless, only the latter are designated as Russians by the author, Žiugžda approaches the humorous when he describes the Warsaw Revolutionary Committee proclamation as calling for "armed struggle against Czarism," while the text of the proclamation, whose photostat is given on the next page, declares: "Laws given by the corrupt and cursed Moscovite Government are void." (*Lietuvos TSR Istorija*, vol. II, p. 36). In other words, the revolutionary proclamation called for a struggle not against Czarism but against the hated Russian government. The insurgents were convinced that they were fighting against their oppressor — the Russian government. This was indirectly testified even by their leader, the Rev. A. Mackevičius, who said: "The people are oppressed by the Government of Russia." Žiugžda, however, adopting himself to the political requirements of the day, corrects Mackevičius' testimony in the following terms: "He recognized, that the entire autocratic system is contrary to the (interests) of the people." (*Lietuvos TSR Istorija*, vol. II, p. 57.)

On the basis of Mackevičius' interrogation record, Žiugžda attempts to persuade the reader that the Lithuanian peasants fought only against Czarism and for a democratic Lithuania in a union with a democratic Russia. He arrives at this daring conclusion from the following statement by Mackevičius: "My desire to obtain better conditions for the people gave me strength and enabled me to incite them to revolt, and this had no other aim than to make them (the people) consciencious and to encourage them to decide with whom they want to be united — with Russia or with Poland." Žiugžda then makes the following statement: "The question posed in this manner... led to the demand of union of democratic Lithuania with democratic Russia." (*Lietuvos Valstiečiai IXa*, p. 166). Žiugžda here is distorting the testimony of Mackevičius, for he neglects the alternative stipulated by Mackevičius. The alternative in Mackevičius' mind was a union of democratic Lithuania with democratic Poland. Žiugžda's interpretation of Mackevičius' views is hardly possible. Most likely Mackevičius was influenced by the Western idea of a federation of free nations. This idea in the West was propagated in the middle of the 19th century by the great herald of national emancipation G. Mazzini (1805-72), with whom closely associated Herzen and other Russian populists. The Russian populists accepted Mazzini's idea of federalism of nations and intended to apply it to the relations of nations of the Russian Empire after its destruction. Mackevičius, thus, also could have considered the future of free Lithuania in some kind of federal relations with the neighboring countries,

The pro-Russian bias in Žiugžda's studies is the most obvious defect. In some places Žiugžda uses a journalistic style, unfit for a serious historical work. Sometimes he attempts to affect the reader even by being unhistorical. For example, Žiugžda is incorrect when he maintains that the leaders of the revolt, Sierakowski and Mackevičius fought against the aristocratic views of the revolutionary leaders, prohibited the use of physical punishment on soldiers, and used only the Lithuanian language in commanding the troops. It is known that Sierakowski studied the abolition of physical punishment while in the Russian army and applied his views on the subject to Lithuanian troops. The Lithuanian language was used along with the Polish and only the scythe-men were commanded in Lithuanian. It is not true that only Lithuanian language was used to command the insurgents — Sierakowski himself, as most of the military learners, did not know it. Žiugžda talks about mythical "progressive forces of the nations" and polemicizes against the "bourgeois nationalists." The influence of the political system in the interpretation of Lithuanian history is more than obvious in Žiugžda's works.

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The article of D. Fainhauz is a well documented Marxist study. The relation of the 1803 revolt in Lithuania with the Western liberal movements is well described. According to Fainhauz, the two political parties that were active in the revolt — the "reds" and the "whites" — are comparable to similar parties in the West. It is a Marxist distortion, however, that only the "reds" fought for freedom, while the "whites" were against it. Actually both parties sought national freedom, though they had different conception of it. On the whole, despite its clear political and philosophical bias, the article is worth some attention because of the freshness of the subject.