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LEONAS SABALIŪNAS, LITHUANIA IN CRISIS: NATIONALISM TO COMMUNISM, 1939-1940 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972) 293 pages. \$11.50

Dr. Leonas Sabaliūnas, Associate Professor of Political Science at Eastern Michigan University, was born in Lithuania. But one hardly notices it reading his book. This may indicate a good degree of objectivity. However, objectivity in easily accessible data may hide essential facts that are hard to uncover; thus, this type of objectivity may be misleading. On the other hand, the author may succeed in guarding against possible partisanship in assessing various data in the subject matter studied, but he may slight his own beliefs, which he may consider as a universal measure. These two are the basic faults that this reviewer has found in the book.

In the Lithuanian language there are many publications covering the crisis period in Lithuanian history that is the subject of this book. However, Dr. Sabaliūnas' endeavor appears to be the most ambitious so far in the English language. He tells us that the purpose of this book [is] to show diverse problems facing Lithuania in terms of an analysis of crisis. Part I reviews Lithuanian domestic and foreign affairs in the inter-war period. Parts II and III examine the politics and survey the social and economic conditions in the closing years of independent Lithuania. Parts IV, V, and VI consider three crisis situations: the loss of Klaipėda (Memel) to Germany in 1939, the impact of World War II, and the demise of Lithuanian independence in 1940" (pp. XX-XXI).

Dr. Sabaliūnas shows, first of all, a tendency to view the situation, the government, and the society according to whether they are democratic or not. More specifically, he measures the country in terms of his "liberal democratic" expectations (though there is no definition of that term given in the book; one wonders how it is comparable to "people's democracy"). To him, the political affairs are decisive. Even the subtitle of the book "Nationalism to Communism" appears to imply not only chronological dates between two periods in Lithuanian history but also a surreptitious cue of one idea leading to the other. Though he mentions that "adverse circumstances prevented the Russian Army from absorbing Lithuania in 1920, but a propitious turn of events enabled it to accomplish that purpose in 1940" (p. 48), nevertheless, he stresses "the fact that internal friction continued unabated in Lithuania testifies to the partial success of Moscow's strategy which was to annex the Baltic states gradually and with the seeming consent of their peoples" (p. 215).

The author gives the impression that the politics of the country overshadowed, if not dominated, all other aspects of Lithuanian society: economics, education, religion, and the family. This happened because he could not overcome the problem which is called the "tyranny of words." He quotes extensively from Lithuanian (and to a lesser degree from English and Russian) sources and too often takes for granted what a political propagandist or observer writes with his own purpose without much consideration of the real situation under analysis.

In a democratic society, we use the so-called fifty-fifty yardstick (i.e., partially accepting the statements of contending parties as true and partially rejecting them as false or exaggerated, in more or less equal proportions). But in authoritarian or totalitarian countries, the use of this yardstick is misleading. In the former society, a person using a "big axe" technique is checked by the laws against libel, but under the latter rule, he could invent or fabricate necessary "facts" with impunity. The scientist of social phenomena, in the latter case, ought to consider perhaps only five percent of the official statements, if any, as truly representative of the real situation and reject the rest, i.e., 95 percent. Dr. Sabaliūnas lacks this caution.

Contrary to the author's conception, the Nationalists (the members of the Nationalist Union, *tautininkai*) had not pervaded all spheres of life. Actually, only the political field directly associated with the government was not quite open to non-Nationalists. Family life was not touched by politics at all. Education was left in the hands of educators, not politicians, even if the top positions were filled by people who were more faithful to the Nationalist ideology or, at least, who did not show real opposition.

In general, politics did not rule or mix with education. In high schools, officially all political organizations were banned: Nationalist, Catholic, Social Democratic, or any other, though often many youths had their clandestine meetings. Nationalist youths caught *in flagranti* were not reported for sanctions, Catholic and leftists youths often would not escape censure (Communists were persecuted).

Students in higher education were free to form ideological political groups. They were clearly differentiated from each other. The strongest in numbers were the Catholic and Nationalist or other national and professional fraternities and sororities. Schools were free to exercise intellectual endeavors: the University of Vytautas the Great, for instance, became rather notorious for its leftist leanings.

When I was a high school (gymnasium) teacher in a provincial town, only one of the score of teachers was really a committed Nationalist, while the rest were independent or favoring any ideology they wished, and no one bothered them. (I admit that in the capital of the country the situation may have been somewhat more oppressive, but not radically different.) It is a moot question whether the parents of the majority of students would have tolerated, for example, a hard-core atheistic explanation of the world. But politics had nothing to do with it.

Dr. Sabaliūnas deprecates the achievements of dairy work, husbandry, and other economic forces in independent Lithuania. In view of my readings, more or less contradicting those of the author, it is better to leave the question to the economist. However, the reader may be surprised to find such faults in the country's economy as "no minimum wage law" (p. 78) or "the inequality of wages" (p. 101). Is it not a little premature to expect a minimum wage legislation in a non-industrialized Lithuania in 1939 -1940 at about the same time it was enacted by the federal government in the already industrialized United States for the first time? As to "inequality of wages" — does Dr. Sabaliūnas know any country where all people are paid equal salaries and wages.

The author criticizes the land reform, though the picture may have been different had he tried to compare it with other countries where land reforms were far less successful (for instance, Hungary). To him Lithuania was poor, but the tables (No. 4 or No. 5) do not indicate that she lagged behind other countries. One should smile with condescension or contempt after reading the following two sentences:

The statistics published by the Communists attest to the growth in the intervening years of a rural population which could barely subsist on its small land allotments. By patronizing the relatively affluent rural society, the owners of average and large holdings, the Nationalist legislators were largely responsible for widespread destitution of agriculture. (p. 71)

This may be good Marxism, but it is hardly supported by true data from reality.

Many a communist source is prepared with an eye to attracting the favorable attention of the naive Western intellectual. And such sources succeed. Suffice it to mention just two examples. After deploring the conditions of labor during the final years of Lithuanian independence, the author says:

The four political parties responded to these economic and social grievances in different ways. The Nationalists were dilatory, the Catholics and the Populists occasionally exposed bad conditions, but only the Communists for their own reasons viewed them in all their seriousness, (p. 91).

One needs to live in a Communist society to be able to appreciate "their seriousness." A little earlier, Dr. Sabaliūnas finds "another indication of the worsening trend in the labor situation" in the fact that

During the first six months of 1940, between 6,000 and 9,000 laborers were supplied jobs at various public work projects, (p. 90).

Doesn't this fact indicate the contrary, namely, that the labor situation improved because thousands of workers were provided jobs?

Dr. Sabaliūnas appears to be confused about the basic features of European nationalism. The United States gained her independence from Great Britain politically and economically, but not in terms of culture in general. Most European countries based their national independence and statehood on cultural concepts where language, common history, real or supposed racial type, and territory were paramount ingredients of national consciousness and identity. But Dr. Sabaliūnas tried to measure Lithuanian nationalism by the American model and missed the point.

When Lithuania proclaimed her independence in 1918, she had to reassert her national identity since her notorious, if not glorious, past in the Middle Ages had already been overshadowed by several centuries of foreign domination by Poles (culturally, on the level of the aristocracy) and Russians (under their occupation).

The Russians, as well as many Europeans and Americans, considered Lithuania as Russia's legal province; Poles considered it their inseparable limb. For instance, the view of the latter was represented by a Mr. Tyszkiewicz a score of years ago in New York. He has consistently believed that Lithuania is not a separate nation, but an artificial contrivance of the Germans for sinister purposes. The Germans, in turn, wrote Lithuania off the political map and relegated her to the realm of songs and tales. Thus, the Lithuanians not only had to fight in their wars of independence with Russian Bolsheviks, Bermondists, and Poles, but also encountered difficulty afterwards in seeking recognition of their independence (de facto and de jure) from other states. It was quite natural for them to justify their claims by calling attention to their past and to strengthen their identity by traditions. In this sense, most, if not all, Lithuanians were nationalists, but Dr. Sabaliūnas cannot understand that and frowns upon it. He seems to confuse Nationalists (*tautininkai*) with those who are more conservative, not liberal, even when all Lithuanian parties (except a few minorities) consider themselves nationalistic (cherishing Lithuanian culture).

There can be little doubt that Dr. Sabaliūnas' lumping together of Nationalists with some Catholics like Professor Antanas Maceina because the latter wrote that "Religion and nationality are two basic elements in man's life which impart meaning to this life and make it precious" (p. 37) is erroneous. To this the author adds that "The passage could have been attributed to President Smetona himself." (ibid.)

I will add that the social scientist in the 20th century would more or less agree with Prof. Maceina's observation. People are very much concerned with ultimate values (religion) and their own way of life (national culture), regardless of whether their religion is Christian or Marxism, regardless of whether their nationalism or ethnocentrism is American, Lithuanian, Russian, or Zulu.

The author treats Stasys Šalkauskis, another Catholic philosopher, in the same manner. Šalkauskis allegedly supports "Nationalist ideas on the 'organic' structure of society" because of the following statement:

As a matter of principle the Catholic world view is prone to defend the organic and hierarchical organization of society and... to consider best that form or government which brings the monarchic, aristocratic and democratic elements into a most perfect union." (ibid.).

I might add that most social scientists and philosophers, especially since Herbert Spencer's times, toyed with the concept of organicism. In recent decades, social theorists substituted the word "system" for the word "organ." Thus, Maceina and Šalkauskis should be considered modern social thinkers for their time. And thus, Dr. Sabaliūnas' interpretation that the Nationalists gained support for their modern nationalist creed from Catholics is unfounded.

It is ironic to note that Dr. Sabaliūnas (rightfully criticizing the Nationalist authoritarian regime) blows the whole party out of proportion, making it seem far more formidable than it really was. Inadvertently he gives credit to the authoritarian Nationalist for not being so much out of tune. As if legions of Lithuanians gladly followed their lead! Thus, to a large extent, he fights with his own bogeyman.

As a matter of fact, his personal bias against the Catholics may be discerned in other places, too. For instance, the Populists are called a democratic party:

... They persistently criticized the Smetona dictatorship for the suppression of individual rights, favored radical agrarian reforms, tended to support planned economy, and deplored public indifference to the affairs of state." (p. 43).

So did the Catholics, since two of their representatives left Smetona's government early in 1927. And who is to say whether more radical land reform than that which Rev. Mykolas Krupavičius executed would have been more profitable to the country? Moreover, the author does not hesitate to venture an insinuation:

A National writer had good reason to assert that "so far... the young Christian Democrats lack an intelligible political ideology. It is not clear whether they tend towards an authoritarian or a democratic regime." (p. 41).

Dr. Sabaliūnas appears to be temporarily converted to a new faith. He takes for granted that what a Nationalist ideologist or propagandist talks about must 'be a scientific truth! In other places the author adds on his own, "the evidence indicates," but is never explicit as to what that evidence is.

Had he read Prof. Maceina's or Šalkauskis' works and other publications more carefully, he could have found more essential differences between the Nationalists, the Catholics, and the Populists. While the Nationalists stressed that the individual first and foremost belongs to the state, the Catholics would give priority to God; the Populists, to the individual himself. The author did not mention the fact that the Nationalists dismissed the papal nuncio from Lithuania, though they supported all religions, not exclusively Catholic.

Catholic, Russian Orthodox, or Jewish clergy who taught religion in schools were paid without discrimination. Dr. Sabaliūnas gives in light-heartedly to another insinuation about the possible deal between the Nationalists and the Catholics when he says: "For such agreeable assistance the Nationalists replied in kind: they paid salaries to Catholic clergy and appropriated generous sums to Catholic schools, seminaries, monasteries, and churches." (p. 38).

For this the Lithuanians would call him *Pilypas iš kanapių* which could be roughly rendered into English as Johnny-come-lately.

The support for private schools (Catholic and other religious and minority schools...) by general taxes originated before the Nationalist regime, still in parliamentary Lithuania. Of course, we may debate the pros and cons of having one monopolistic (monolithic) set of schools with one official philosophy or allowing parents to decide the directions of their offspring's education according to their specific philosophic inclinations. I am not sure which alternative would be favored by a liberal democracy. But we should stop here, since it leads us from the subject of this review.

In addition to the misconceptions pointed out here, the author engages in other occasional rootless speculations. There is no space to cover all of them. Now and then he falls into a cliché journalistic style with terms such as "totalitarianism," "total," "totally devoid of originality," "the Kaunas nationals," "astronomical prices," and "impetuous chauvinism" not supported by real facts. On the other hand, it is doubtful whether objectivity is served by the author who does not call a spade a spade; for example, the Ribbentrop - Molotov pact in 1939 is described as a mutual division of interests in Eastern

Europe. Actually, the secret supplementary protocol of that treaty states that one partner sold a foreign country (a part of Lithuania) to the other partner for a stipulated sum of money.

The author painstakingly collected much valuable material, showed occasional deep insights into complex problems, and was able to place them properly into a broader context of the European political situation. But these merits are marred by great misconceptions, lack of ability to discriminate between real and/or possible propaganda pieces and factual description, between a part and the whole. Nevertheless, he deserves credit for shocking the older generation of Lithuanians who lived in Lithuania in those fateful years. Their lost country may be sprinkled with rosy fragrances in reminiscences. Dr. Sabaliūnas' criticism may stimulate them to arrive at a more balanced picture of the real Lithuania.

The foreword by Prof. Charles L. Lundin helps little to clarify the picture, because even he does not make a distinction between an authoritarian regime and a totalitarian one. Both are calamities, but the latter is much worse.

I was struck by Prof. Lundin's remark about "the lack of any real moral authority... on the part of the authoritarian regime." (p. XVI). It is true. But that we miss moral authority in other forms of government, though perhaps to a lesser degree, is also true. Thus, after World War II many displaced persons were forcibly returned to the totalitarian regime (eventually to "correctional labor camps" and possible liquidation) of the Soviet Union by the democratic allies. At about the same time Sweden followed suit with the interned Baltic nationals. And is not Sweden an example of what is called liberal democracy?

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