

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 16, No.4 - Winter 1970

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

Copyright © 1970 LITUANUS Foundation, Inc.



RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LITHUANIA

Vytautas Vaitiekūnas editor, A SURVEY OF DEVELOPMENTS IN CAPTIVE LITHUANIA IN 1965-1968, (New York: The Committee for a Free Lithuania), 160 pp.

Vytautas Vaitiekūnas makes available a considerable mass of raw data, data which, for all practical purposes is not available anywhere else outside the Soviet Union. For what Vaitiekūnas has done is to put together excerpts from newspapers and periodicals published in Lithuania. These excerpts are arranged in seven sections to give a fairly complete picture.

The first section is devoted to the political situation and provides statistics on the Lithuanian Communist party as well as its auxiliary organizations, information about Lithuanian elections, legislation, trade, and cultural exchanges. The second section is somewhat more interpretative. It is titled "Indoctrination-Russification" and describes the goals and machinery of the party's propaganda activities. In the third section we find the usual economic information, on industrial output, gross national product, economic plans, and reforms. In terms of current interests, the fourth section could well be the most valuable as it deals with labor and social problems. It presents statistics on population, personal income, family budgets, personal services. It also discusses the problem of pollution. The fifth section deals with education while the sixth, depicts the country's cultural life, literature, music, theater, sports. The last section surveys the condition of religion.

It is important to emphasize what is perhaps the chief merit of this work: almost all of the information is taken from Soviet sources and even where there is some editorial bias in selection and presentation, this does not affect the worth of the information actually presented. The periodicals used are hardly accessible. Even when they are obtainable, nothing like an index exists to assist the reader. And thus, even those who want to get their information without the intervention of an editor will be helped a great deal, for they can use this work simply as an index.

There are, however, several shortcomings. The fact that it is mimeographed makes its storage and use by libraries more difficult. Furthermore, the English while grammatically correct is at times not very English sounding, but this rarely if at all interferes with one's comprehension. There is a tendency to interject explanatory phrases, enclosing them in parentheses. Often, these explanations are really useless; for example "protectors of Fatherland (i.e., USSR)," p. 44. At other times, they may be misleading; for example, "the friendship of (USSR) nations," p. 54, where perhaps more than the USSR was intended. In still other cases, they introduce a sarcastic tone which does not belong in a work of this kind; for example, "fighters for (Soviet) peace," p. 38. Also useless is the device of enclosing a word such as "elections" in quotation marks. The belief that Soviet elections are mostly a fraud is, no doubt, justified. But this is a matter of interpretation which should be kept separate from the reporting of data. One final shortcoming, p. 9 is out of place.

In the mass of information presented, there are several items which point up the more ludicrous side of Soviet life. Thus, we discover that in February of 1966, a new Lithuanian foreign minister was appointed. It turns out that the post was unoccupied since January of 1960. Or again, we might consider the following excerpt from an editorial which appeared in *Tiesa (Truth)* for December 23, 1967:

All our USSR nations are equal and have equal rights, belong to one great family — the united and indivisible Soviet Union However, everywhere, in a mountain AUL, in a KISLAK of the steppes, in a seacoast city, or in a camp beyond the Arctic Circle, one can hear the same words: Russia is the first among the equal nations, the Russian nation is the elderly brother.... The Russian people of which Radishchev had said that it is a "Nation born for greatness and glory" today has not lesser and worldwide authority It is the nation that went on the road of freedom herself and led so many nations on it.

Is it any wonder, then, that a number of Lithuanians, after returning from a visit to a Scandinavian country, complained in the press because they had been introduced as Russians?

