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Bronis J. Kaslas, ed: THE USSR-GERMAN AGGRESSION AGAINST LITHUANIA (New York: Robert Speller and Sons, 1973). 544 pp.

Dr. Kaslas, Professor of History at Wilkes College (Wilkes Barre, Pa.), has edited a collection of documents and documentary materials on the Nazi-Soviet conspiracy and aggression against Lithuania, as well as on the consequences of aggression — the resistance of the Lithuanian nation and the international treatment of the act. The scope of this collection is evident from the major chapter headings: Chapter I: Lithuanian-Russian Relations, 1918-1939; Chapter II: Lithuanian-USSR Relations During World War II, 1939-1945; Chapter III: The Aftermath of Incorporation; Chapter IV: Principle of Non-Recognition of the Use of Force and Conquest in International Relations. Thus the collection spans the period since 1918, although the emphasis is on World War II and principles of international law. The book's value is exactly in the convenience of a single collection of major diplomatic documents, treaties, and political materials. At the same time, however, the volume suffers from a lack of depth in the coverage of major events.

The collection contains 250 documents, most of which are accompanied by an editorial commentary. Although the commentary on the whole is objective, in many instances it is superfluous. Throughout the text the editor evidently felt the need to emphasize the political and legal significance and meaning of documents even though this is evident from the documents themselves. Occasionally, the editor gets carried away in his enthusiasm in proving Soviet aggression against Lithuania. Thus, for example, after the rather innocent article of Prime Minister Merkys on Baltic collaboration (Doc. No. 74), which was used by the Soviets to accuse the Lithuanian government of conspiracy against the Soviet Union, the editor comments: "The Soviet Government felt so threatened after reading it, that it felt compelled, in self defense, to invade and annex the Baltic States", (p. 209) This article, as well as other accusations against Lithuania, were mere pretexts to justify Soviet occupation and obviously the editor here is missing the point. He would have done better by emphasizing documentary materials instead of commentary.

The vast majority of the documents cited have been previously published. Among the most heavily relied on sources are the German Foreign Office records, specifically the serial publication *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, series D, and the collection *Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941*, issued by the US State Department in 1948. Only 12 hitherto unpublished documents from the German archives have been used in this collection. Another heavily relied on source is US collections of diplomatic papers — *Foreign Relations of the United States*. Many of the published documents also appeared in the records of the Select Committee on Communist Aggression, US House of Representatives, 83rd Congress, known as the Kersten Committee, which in the early 1950's made a thorough investigation of the incorporation of the Baltic States into the Soviet Union. The Kaslas' collection is essentially a selection of documents from published American, German, and Lithuanian sources. For some reason the editor did not search out the already accessible diplomatic archives of Western powers for new materials on the fate of the Lithuanian state.

It is quite obvious that the selection of documents was guided by one principal objective: to present material, showing the applicability of the principle of non-recognition of the use of force and conquest in international relations (the Stimson doctrine) in the case of Lithuania. The collection, therefore, emphasizes the legal aspects of Soviet-Lithuanian relations, the Nazi-Soviet conspiracy of August 1939 and its results, and the international law consequences of non-recognition of Soviet aggression against Lithuania by the United States and other Western powers. The collection thus may be of value to the international law specialist, but of marginal utility to the political or diplomatic historian. The editor's criteria for selection of documents and approach will become evident from a survey of several parts of the book.

The first chapter, including only 13 documents, consists of the notes of recognition of the Lithuanian Republic and the principal treaties and protocols between Lithuania and Soviet Russia. No effort is made to show the gist of political relations between Lithuania and Soviet Russia throughout the inter-war period. The editor here focuses on the essentially legal aspects of relations: the Peace Treaty of 1920, the Non-Aggression Pact of 1926 and its extensions, the Convention on the Definition of Aggression of 1933. In effect the editor begins to build a legal case of Soviet aggression against Lithuania. Despite the title of this book, the background chapter completely omits German-Lithuanian relations.

The first part of Chapter II deals with the German-Soviet Pact of August 23, 1939, and its consequences to Lithuania. Here the editor presents the well-known documents from the German Foreign Office archives pertaining to the German-Soviet

agreements, partitioning Eastern Europe into spheres of influence. At first Lithuania was placed in the German sphere. Dr. Kaslas documents extensively the German efforts to involve Lithuania against Poland during the German-Polish war and Lithuania's determination to remain strictly neutral. No effort is made to explain the Lithuanian policy of neutrality or the alternative options. The selection of documents implies that the editor considers strict neutrality as the only realistic option. He cites the September 20, 1939, outline of a proposed treaty between Germany and Lithuania, found after the war in the German archives, (Doc. No. 31), as proof that Germany "was preparing to incorporate Lithuania into the German protectorate system" (p. 126). This unsigned document apparently was a contingency draft, a basis for negotiations, and it is problematical how much significance the document deserves. The Lithuanian policy is presented indirectly mainly through German diplomatic dispatches. The picture intended is one of great power conspiracy against a small, innocent, strictly neutral state. No role is ascribed to Lithuania in the determination of its ultimate fate. Even so, for example, the historian is still left with the question of how it came about that Germany decided to surrender Lithuania to the Soviet sphere of influence.

For some reason the editor does not attempt to document the circumstances leading to the conclusion of the Mutual Assistance Pact between Lithuania and the Soviet Union on October 10, 1939. Direct and indirect accounts of the negotiations leading to the pact and the admission of Soviet troops to Lithuania are available. The editor includes only brief fragment from a Lithuanian report about the negotiations (Doc. No. 48), followed by the text of the treaty. Again, probably the legalistic objectives of the editor determined the choice of materials.

Similarly, the circumstances preceding the Soviet ultimatum of June 14, 1940, and its acceptance by the Lithuanian regime is treated in an outline and formal manner. The available reports of the Lithuanian Minister in Moscow on the Soviet-Lithuanian conversations in June of 1940 are omitted. These very revealing reports, most of them published in the Kersten Committee records, show not only the intentions of the Soviet government, but also suggest the failure of the Lithuanian decision-makers to comprehend that the Soviet charges against Lithuania were mere pretexts for far-reaching demands. The editor attempts to document the genuine Lithuanian efforts to satisfy the Soviets, to show that the Soviet charges were not true. From a strictly legal point of view all this is, of course, true, but it is only a legal aspect of Soviet aggression against Lithuania. The acceptance of the Soviet ultimatum by the Lithuanian cabinet, meeting with President Smetona during the night of June 14-15, is omitted, although at least three participants in the meeting wrote memoranda about it within a month. Thus, the question why Lithuania did not resist Soviet occupation, which would have strengthened its international law position, remains unanswered.

All in all, the collection is essentially a legal brief of Soviet aggression and applicability of the Stimson doctrine to the Lithuanian case. To what extent does the editor succeed in accomplishing this objective? The legal documentation of aggression is irrefutable. The Soviet Union, clearly contrary to its international obligations, forcefully occupied and annexed Lithuania in 1940. This act was not recognized as legal by the governments of the United States, Great Britain, and a number of other Western states. The aggression and the applicability of the Stimson doctrine is clearly established. However, in respect to the consequences of non-recognition, the documentation is less adequate. Best documented is US policy of non-recognition and its legal consequences. But on the whole, the contemporary meaning and significance of the non-recognition policy in respect to Soviet aggression against Lithuania is not documented. There is no systematic treatment of the present policies of various states in this respect. What is the exact status of Lithuanian diplomatic representatives still recognized by several states? What has been the fate of Lithuanian gold reserves in the United States and Great Britain? How do the courts of various countries handle inheritance and other property questions? Finally, to the extent that non-recognition policy is still in effect over thirty years after its declaration, what are some of its political consequences, such as its impact on cultural exchange agreements? Unfortunately, answers to these and other questions are lacking.

Within the limited legal objectives, and despite some of the critical remarks herein, this collection of documents is a convenient and valuable addition to the documentation on the fate of the Lithuanian state. Finally, it is a welcome edition, for it is a timely reminder of one of the unsettled issues of World War II as Europe moves toward the stabilization, if not legalization, of the existing political and military arrangements.

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