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## Book Review: MAN BETWEEN FASCISM AND COMMUNISM

**Aloyzas Baronas, FOOTBRIDGES AND ABYSSES, trans. from the Lithuanian by J. Žemkalnis, introd. by Charles Angoff (New York: Manyland Books, 1965).**

Mr. Baronas' novel reveals a writer eminent by any standard. It deals of war, which its author considers the ultimate in decadence and depravity. He runs the gamut of human emotions in depicting both victims and victors, plucking at every chord in man's emotional diapason, here tenderly, there harshly, evoking from the reader a spontaneous and unstudied, indeed, an unwrit-ing response to truth presented with limpid clarity and exquisite sensitiveness. He lyricises, he thunders. He rings with genuineness and authenticity.

The pattern of the story is classically simple, with no ingeniously woven intrigue to unravel. German soldiers are marching a group of Lithuanian prisoners to different points for slave labor in the Nazi war effort. The Lithuanians are confronted with a choice between two equally insufferable situations: continued enslavement by the Nazis, or "liberation" by the Communists, whom they loathe even more.

"The night rumbles on. Give it to 'em, Ivan, give it to 'em. Go deeper into real Europe. Lithuania is only a threshold, and even there your eyes swam in your head from so much beauty and wealth. Onward, onward, Mongolian soldier. Let your narrow eyes pop and open your mouth wide. The front is moving — we can escape. But which slavery is sweeter? To drown or to burn — there is no other choice. And so we hang above the abyss and have no place to land. And we walow in fear and tread a small circle until in the morning we hear the comand: 'March'."

Mr. Baronas penetrates with intuitive unerringness into the deepest and most hidden crevices of human nature with understanding and compassion, not to probe and turn up with skill and dexterity the facts of human suffering, misery, frustration, pur-poselessness and despair, but to embrace a soul trembling with terror, to quiet and reassure it, to console and sustain it, to raise its thoughts from the dark, impenetrable night of the present to the hopeful dawn of tomorrow.

In the tragic plight of Lithuania Mr. Baronas sees the pilgrimage of mankind, fumbling and stumbling through time and space towards eternity, because it does not and will not heed its beacon signals, nor grasp its saving life-line: the truth that the Supreme Master of time and eternity is mankind't loving Father in Whom all are brothers and sisters.

*Rev. Joseph Vaskas, MIC.*