

EDUCATION: A TESTED WEAPON IN BALTIC SELF-DEFENCE

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The histories of Lithuania on the one hand and Latvia and Estonia on the other are separated in space but are quite coherent in time.

The area of the present-day Latvia and Estonia comprises the territory of the medieval federation of Livonia, which existed for more than three centuries. Regardless of whether ruled by Germans, Swedes, or Russians, Livonia was an autonomous region with a very specific economic and cultural structure. Yet the native population of the area had no opportunity to participate in the government.

Lithuania was in the Middle Ages a large state ranging from the Baltic to the Black Sea. From 1569 Lithuania, that is the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was closely allied with Poland. However, Lithuania retained its independent statehood during the alliance. It was an economically autonomous state that collaborated with Poland. The preliminary results of our analysis show that such historical experience has an important influence on the national identity and self-respect of the native population. This experience has also affected the nature of scientific research at the Lithuanian universities of the 20th century.

INTELLECTUAL RESISTANCE: THE LITHUANIAN CASE

Higher education has a long history in Lithuania dating from the foundation of the University of Vilnius in 1579. It was the first university on the territory of the present Baltic states.¹

The main function of the University of Vilnius was the education of specialists and civil servants for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Thus, the university promoted statehood. Later, during the period of Russian occupation, the university evolved as a centre of intellectual dissent and opposition to the empire, thus contributing to revolt. Over the years the university stimulated the idea of independent statehood and ethnic identity.

¹ Kubilius, J., Merkys, V. (eds.). *A Short History of Vilnius University*. Mokslas, Vilnius, 1976.

After the revolt in 1832 against the occupying regime the Vilnius University was closed. The forced closing of the university deprived the Lithuanians of the opportunity of obtaining a higher education in their native land. It was only after 90 years that the university was reestablished. Meanwhile the inhabitants of Lithuania educated themselves at libraries, museums, archives and in several legal and illegal societies of learning. The young Lithuanians who were eager to acquire more knowledge made attempts to join the University of Tartu in Estonia, Riga Polytechnic School (founded in 1862) in Latvia, and St. Petersburg and Moscow universities in Russia. A few people studied at Polish, German, French and Italian universities.

After the revolt in 1863 the situation in Lithuania changed fundamentally. The period that followed was full of conflicts. The participants of the revolt against the Russian Empire were executed immediately. Many other educated people were deported to Siberia. The national schools were closed, all kinds of publications where the Latin script was used were forbidden and national activities were persecuted. The colonial regime started to carry out an active policy of Russification. Genocide was observed in all domains of life in Lithuania.²

After long political games and lack of alliance with Poland, Lithuania was finally incorporated into the Russian Empire. Yet the Lithuanian people were aware of one fact: they had never been conquered by the Russians. The feeling of ethnic identity and the severe repressions evoked mutual support inside the native community. These intrinsic factors excited a tacit resistance in the area.

It should be stressed that the tradition of education and learning in Lithuania took a very long and twisting road to the present status. The system of primary schools started to develop six hundred years ago. This year we are celebrating the 415th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Vilnius. The development of the system of education and science in Lithuania was often disrupted, suppressed and destroyed by external influences, particularly by several aggressions of the neighbouring Slavs during the period of the Russian Empire. Later it was the shameful Molotov—Ribbentrop Pact from 1939 that put an end to Baltic independence. However, oppression and loss of independence deepened self-awareness in the thinking of the Lithuanian society.³

The prohibition of Lithuanian schools and printed word in 1864 induced a new and successful type of nonviolent resistance all over Lithuania. This kind of resistance developed through illegal distribution of Lithuanian books and secret mobile schools. Illegal literature, which offered self-education and opened the doors to Western ideas of national self-determination, was printed abroad, especially in East Prussia, a wide region close to the city of Königsberg. A constant stream of Lithuanian printed word came in through the frontiers.⁴

In Lithuania itself a wide network of uncentralized distribution, based on the courage of individuals, came into existence. The gaps caused by the arrest of individual illegal distributors were filled by others, who operated equally independently.

² Russification spread to all Baltic regions but it was nowhere as severe as in Lithuania. After the two revolts the main attention of the empire seems to have been focused on Lithuania.

³ The specific streak caused by historical experience was brought to light in the post-War resistance as well as in the rebirth of statehood five years ago.

⁴ New documents connected with the prohibition of Lithuanian publications can be found in **Merkys, V.** *Draudžiamosios lietuviškos spaudos kelias. 1864—1904.* Mokslas, Vilnius, 1994.

In this way a unique phenomenon of intellectual resistance was created. It laid the ground for the rebirth of national statehood and the reconstruction of the Lithuanian university in the 20th century.

The experience gained through uncentralized, polymorphous and individualized activities was extremely useful during the Nazi and Soviet occupations. Then there was again a need to consolidate the Lithuanian society and to prevent collaborationism.

At the beginning of the 20th century Lithuania was independent only for 22 years — from 1918 to 1940. In that period the University of Lithuania and seven other university-level institutions were established. A project was suggested for organizing a centre of sciences. A research institution for Lithuanian and Baltic studies was founded only in 1938, just before the occupation. It became the base for organizing the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences in 1941 by the Soviets. It is somewhat paradoxical that the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences was founded after the Red Army had destroyed Lithuania's independence and a colonial regime had been established in the country. This act helped build up institutions following Soviet models. Nevertheless, at first the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences was not a bureaucratic Soviet institution as it was based on non-Soviet cultural premises developed during 22 years of independence.⁵

RESISTANCE DURING THE SOVIET OCCUPATION

The Soviet occupation, which lasted from 1940 to 1991, brought about Communist pseudoideas, confused the civic consciousness of the Lithuanians, who found themselves unprepared to counter and to cope with the very hard ideological aggression. One of the mistakes made by the occupied nation was its almost universal belief that it would be possible to preserve an autonomous status and that a "temporary" occupation was not the worst fate, since the war had enveloped the rest of Europe. However, the Soviets made the puppet government powerless to defend the national affairs. Cruel repressions and mass deportations followed by the Nazi occupation and then by a second Soviet occupation finally crushed any illusions about Lithuanian autonomy.

In 1945—46 many groups of young people retreated into illegal existence. They took part in the partisans' movement. Armed resistance of partisans was motivated by four factors: (1) genocide during the first Soviet occupation; (2) compulsory and unlawful mobilization into the Soviet Army even before the war was over; (3) abolition of land ownership (through total nationalization); and (4) deceptive Western propaganda promising liberation and all kind of assistance.

Having occupied the Baltic countries, the Soviets began a systematic destruction of traditional institutions.⁶ Scientific research was concentrated in local Soviet-established academies of sciences, which were separated from teaching at universities. Science was partly militarized and came under centralized control by the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow. The Baltic scientific activities were narrowed. The faculties at universities were overburdened with teaching duties to the extent that research at universities became impossible. The humanities and social studies at the universities were distorted by intensive ideological pressure. Both research and teaching were isolated from Western ideas. Under the conditions of spiritual imprisonment attempts were made to create an isolated, strictly controlled Soviet (GULAG) culture.

⁵ Krikštopaitis, J. A. The subjection of Lithuanian sciences to the Soviet state system: Consequences and prospects. — *Journal of Baltic Studies (USA)*, 1991, XXII, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 170—171.

From the experience of the first decade of Soviet occupation four conclusions can be drawn: (1) physical resistance by the partisans, who fought against much more numerous and professional military forces, could not last long (regardless of the hopeless situation the Lithuanian partisan warfare lasted for almost eight years); (2) underground anti-Soviet organizations are soon discovered; (3) repressions and mass deportations destroy the nation's most active intellectual forces; and (4) Communist ideology and Russification, encompassing all forms of activity, become a dangerous threat for the spiritual and physical existence of the nation.

After the collapse of the Lithuanian partisan resistance the psychological tension of the people subsided. This was not a symptom of a total collapse of the occupied society but a sign of a reorientation in the resistance.

During the period of the Soviet occupation the society adapted itself to resistance against hidden genocide and searched for means of self-defence. New tactics of self-defence crystallized in the Baltics. This specific tactics was neither discussed nor declared among the various groups of the population. It manifested itself as a synthesis of historical experience, as faultless common sense and an inborn defensive reflex. This phenomenon, which was particularly distinct in Lithuania, can be called a certain polymorphism of the activity and behaviour of the community. It was carried out through a more or less proportional scattering of the cultural resources, industrial structures and agricultural units throughout the territory. (Unfortunately, such efforts were not as successful in Latvia and Estonia and therefore they experienced an unstoppable onrush of immigrants, which was instrumental in causing the present demographic situation in these countries.)

Such polymorphism does not mean only scattering and decentralization, but also a variety of actions. It refers to the manner of teaching, several self-expressive forms in literature, art, and especially the theatre and the festivals of folk songs and dance involving large masses of people. Polymorphism was formed as a natural answer to the occupant's violence, as an ethnic homeostasis seeking to obtain an equilibrium under continuous aggression and genocide. The polymorphism that became a method of resistance by unarmed civilians helped take maximum advantage of the idiosyncratic and erratic qualities of the centralized empire.⁷ Furthermore, having adapted itself to the occupying regime, the national community and especially the educated citizens began to affect the Soviet system and constrain its activity.

It was not easy to apply the principle of polymorphism in nonviolent defence against a militarized system. However, two circumstances supported the use of this method: (1) the imperial system was deeply corrupt; among its officials bribery, greediness and hard drinking reigned; (2) the university-level educational institutions in the Baltics were capable of giving adequate education to specialists (especially during the first decades after the war). The universities awakened in students a desire for cultural values, disregarding strict ideological controls and continuous persecution of humanitarian education.

The self-expressive quality of culture played a significant role. Amateur choirs, theatres and musical groups appeared not only in the cities but also in the whole periphery of the country. Students and faculty became

⁷ Krikštopaitis, J. A. A peculiarity of the Baltic civil Resistance: Its historical and intellectual sources. — In: 17th Baltic Conference on History of Science: Baltic Science Between the West and the East. Tartu, 4–6 October 1993. Tartu Ülikool, 16–17.

involved in ethnographic and archaeological expeditions. A network of permanent libraries and museums served faithfully the goal of preserving cultural objects.

An interesting fact is that many of legal institution in the Baltic was successfully used for illegal actions. The cause seems to have been that the Soviets imagined that they would be able to establish a firm control over the people through such institutions. However, the regime suffered total defeat as these cultural activities were based on ethnic culture and traditions developed through centuries. Even the heavily distorted history and the ideology imposed by the Soviets could not curb the progress of national and historical consciousness.

Preliminary findings suggest that polymorphism had already been developing during the past centuries when the Baltic countries experienced Russian, German and Polish aggression accompanied by severe repressions. Further research of historical facts will help make more profound generalizations than could be made here. In addition, a thorough analysis of the Soviet period will help accumulate knowledge about the strategy of civilianbased resistance and for building up a general defence system in the Baltic states in the future.⁸ The use of such a strategy may form part of our options only in case it becomes part and parcel of our education.

To conclude this part of our discussion we could suggest a preliminary definition based on our research data: *polymorphism* is a form of total resistance as well as civil behaviour. It is a kind of tacit self-defence of a native population during external aggression. Polymorphism means decentralization (proportional scattering) of cultural and economic micro-structures throughout the territory of a country. Such tactics can prevent successful control by the occupying regime.

BALTIC EMIGRES

Baltic emigres have existed in various countries over a century. For the last half a century they have served the cause of Baltic independence. The period is long enough to estimate the significance of the activities to their native lands.

The Diaspora's contribution to the struggle of the Baltic nations has not been only an intellectual activity. There has been material, financial, and physical support and assistance as well. The Association for the Advancement for Baltic Studies (AABS) is worth special mentioning. This emigre institution in the USA has promoted Baltic studies. The members have investigated the demographic changes in the Baltic area, attempted to assess the damage done to the Baltic economies and cultures by the occupying power, promoted national and democratic values as opposed to artificial and false values in the Soviet system.⁹

Now that the Baltic countries have re-emerged from the hard grip of a destructive empire, we need to look at the Diaspora's past and say a few words about the emigre problem.

Emigration from the Baltic states before the Soviet occupation has been assumed to have been a voluntary process. This is only conditionally true since adverse economic pressures had an influence on the process.

⁸ In this issue we follow the conceptions of Gene Sharp, a well-known US researcher and advocate of civilian-based non-violent resistance (cf. **Sharp, G.** *Civilian-Based Defense. A Post-Military Weapons System.* Princeton University Press, 1990).

⁹ A Fond Farewell. Tomas A. Venclova's last address as AABS President. — AABS Newsletter, 1992, **XVI**, 3(63).

However, the emigration after the beginning of World War II can be called a forced brain drain since the intellectual resources of the Baltic states fled from Soviet genocide.

The Baltic intellectual resistance to the occupying forces can be divided geographically into two: (1) resistance within the historical ethnic area, and (2) Diaspora's resistance. A study of the human behaviour and activities supports the thesis that Baltic culture may not only survive but can also be cultivated in diverse areas of the world if both (separate) ethnic parts conduct their social, political, and cultural activities synchronously, regardless of civil dependency and deliberate interference in their mutual communication.

After the re-establishment of the independent Baltic states the Diaspora felt that it had completed its function of resistance. Therefore, its activity has forfeited its previous significance and historical meaning, the more so since it has become physically drained due to the ageing of its membership. The generation born into the Diaspora has lost its ethnic character and desire for cultural succession.

The advent of a wave of Westernization, which has accompanied the re-establishment of independence, has caused a phenomenon that can be justifiably called a brain drain. Attempts at trying to stop such voluntary behaviour would be futile. However, for the small communities like those of the Baltic states it would be worthwhile to direct the process so that it would be useful for the states concerned. A natural brain drain could enrich the diminishing Diaspora and replenish its resources.

The author believes that the Diaspora will have new purposes in the future. It will have four important functions. In the first place, the Baltic states are threatened because of their strategic location. They are at the crossroads of a perpetual military encounter between the West and the East. Therefore, in the geopolitical perspective we can say that the Diaspora will be of assistance as a competent representation of the Baltic states in exile. This means that during a possible aggression in the Baltic states the Diaspora, located at a safe distance and having autonomy of action, can protect their interests.

Secondly, mediation between the Baltic communities in exile and in the native countries is needed. This means mediation in such fields as culture and sciences, art and the humanities. Also, we need mediation between the Baltic states and the rest of the world.

The Diaspora's third function is to stimulate the Baltic identity in exile and promote a feeling of Baltic unity. At present the Baltic cooperation effort is not fully satisfactory but still in the spirit of Baltic unity, which is a living thing.¹⁰

The Diaspora's fourth function lies in its participation in the renovation process of the Baltic universities and its assistance in the founding of an alliance of the Baltic states, and, hopefully, in the cooperation of the Baltic states and the Nordic countries.

In conclusion, we can say that besides economic and political measures, which are not treated here, it was namely education and science that helped preserve the identity, self-consciousness, and traditions of the native populations of the Baltic countries under the conditions of occupations during the last centuries. During this century, the Baltic Diaspora, which has carried out its activities in free Western countries, has played an important role in preserving these. The combined effect of the two has speeded up the regaining of independence of the Baltic states in recent years.

¹⁰ A Fond Farewell. Tomas A. Venclova's last address as AABS President. — AABS Newsletter, 1992, XVI, 3(63), 3.

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INTELLEKTUAALNE ARENG KUI BALTIMAADE ENESEKAITSEVAHEND

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Haridust ja kultuuri on käsitletud kui Balti rahvaste poolt minevikus kasutatud enesekaitsevahendit võitluses überrahvastamiskatsetega. Analüüsitud on peamiselt leedulaste ajaloolisi kogemusi. Rahva visa vastu panu tõttu ei suutnud tsaarivalitsus aastail 1832—1905 leedu vabadusvõitlust lämmatada ega leedulasi venestada, kuigi keelati isegi leedukeelsete raamatute ja ajalehtede avaldamine. Saksa (1941—1944) ja Nõukogude okupatsiooni (1940—1941, 1945—1990) tingimustes õnnestus venestamis- püüded paralüeerida ning säilitada oma rahvuskultuur ja mõttelaad. Ka leedu pagulastel oli oluline osa võitluses omariikluse ja iseseisvuse taastamise eest.

ИНТЕЛЛЕКТУАЛЬНОЕ РАЗВИТИЕ КАК СПОСОБ САМОЗАЩИТЫ БАЛТИЙСКИХ СТРАН

Июнас Алгимантас КРИКШТОПАЙТИС

Статья подготовлена на основе доклада, прочитанного в Хельсинкском университете (22.04.94). Она посвящена обсуждению исторического опыта Балтийских стран, приобретенного в ходе постоянной агрессии со стороны имперски амбициозных соседей.

Обращено внимание на особый вид литовской интеллектуальной резистенции, который сформировался в ответ на физический и духовный геноцид, творимый репрессивными силами Российской империи, а в нашем веке — Советского Союза. В XIX в. в Литве было два восстания, за которыми последовали экзекуции участников, массовые ссылки в Сибирь, закрытие Вильнюсского университета, литовских школ и запрещение печатного дела на латинском алфавите. Постепенное расширение системы нелегальных школ, просветительных кружков и подпольное распространение книг на литовском языке привели к консолидации нации, воспитанию нового поколения образованных людей, которые возглавили национальное возрождение.

Результаты обсуждения указанного опыта совместно с учетом вклада в это дело балтийской диаспоры свидетельствуют о том, что образование, интеллектуальная активность закладывают основы национального самоопределения, гражданской ответственности, творческого самовыражения. Утеря этих качеств — весьма опасная перспектива как для самобытности балтийской культуры, так и для национального идентитета.