SSSR i Litva v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voyny: Sbornik dokumentov, vol. 2: *Litva v politike SSSR i mezhdunarodnikh otnosheniiakh (avgust 1940-sentiabr' 1945 gg.)*, eds. Algimantas Kasparavičius, Česlovas Laurinavičius and Natal'ia Lebedeva, Vilnius: LII leidykla, 2012. 952 p. ISBN 978-9955-847-61-8

This superb collection of documents on 'the Lithuanian question' in Soviet and international politics is a worthy sequel to its excellent predecessor, which explored the same theme leading up to and through the formal Soviet annexation. While the title 'The Soviet Union and Lithuania' remains the same, Lithuania practically ceased to exist as a sovereign state after annexation, and the documents tell the story of a territory and people under occupation and the diplomatic maneuverings over their legacy and assets.

The volume assembles some 333 documents from a variety of archives, including the still largely inaccessible Russian Foreign Ministry Archive, the intermittently accessible material of the special Bureaus of the Central Committee for the Baltic Republics, and the open archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (RGASPI), the state Military Archive (RGVA) in Moscow, and the archive of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party in Vilnius (LYA). The editors provide lucid introductory essays on the international context of the issue, the structure of the volume, the types of documents selected, and detailed annotations and an index. The result is a comprehensive and balanced volume, in itself a remarkable achievement, given the complexities and sensitivities of the themes under investigation.

The documents are divided into four chronological and thematic subsections. The first, from August 1940 to June 1941, concerns the initial domestic Sovietisation drive, the international reactions (or lack thereof), and the deterioration of German-Soviet relations. The second section engages the period between June 1941 and mid-1943, and deals with the consequences of the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the ruthless occupation policies, the emergence of an active anti-Soviet resistance and collaboration with the Nazi authorities inside Lithuania, and the desperate attempts by Lithuanian diplomats in exile to keep the Lithuanian question alive in the face of utter international indifference. The third section, from mid-1943 to January 1945, covers the period from the Teheran to the Yalta conferences, when the future of Lithuania was practically settled in international agreements according to Stalin's wishes, albeit with cosmetic propagandistic moves of Lithuanian representation in the newly established UN. The final phase, from January to July 1945, signaled the practical end

of the Lithuanian problem as an international dilemma for years to come and the fate of Lithuania as a Soviet republic was considered *fait accompli*.

As the title suggests the focus of the volume is on diplomacy and the international arena that surrounded the destruction of Lithuanian sovereignty and its incorporation into the Soviet Union. The documents offer a mostly familiar tale, albeit with occasional surprises and often with devastating lessons. If there is a single common thread that runs through the over 850 pages of documents, it is the travails of state sovereignty during the tumultuous time of World War II, and more specifically, the cynicism of the great powers toward the fate of a small country that was abandoned to the two totalitarian giants despite the public façade of reassurances to the opposite (in stark contrast to the fixation on Poland that has constantly overshadowed that of the Baltic States). With few exceptions of principled idealism, such as the Welles Declaration on 23 July 1940, the documents convey *realpolitik* par excellence. The US administration, whose position was pivotal, was no exception. In a revealing conversation with Molotov and Litvinov, the American president repeatedly emphasised that he was in agreement with Stalin on most major issues – the Baltics, Bessarabia and Bukovina included – and had always considered the detachment of provinces from Russia after World War I a mistake. Only he could not state these views in public since Americans were not yet ready for such a position, intimated Roosevelt (see in particular Litvinov's telegram to Molotov on 12 March 1942 regarding his conversation with Roosevelt, doc. 210). And so, the Americans, along with their British allies, acquiesced to persistent Soviet demands to gain control over Lithuanian assets and substitute their diplomatic missions, saving face only by evading formal recognition of the Soviet annexation. One may argue, and rather convincingly, that preserving the anti-Nazi alliance would have been a top priority for anyone at any time, and there was little the West could have done in any case (see Eden's references to Roosevelt's and other American officials' statements in the course of his conversation with Maiskii, the Soviet ambassador in London, on 7 April 1943, doc. 252). Still, the sense that Roosevelt (much like Churchill and Eden) was taking an unnecessary extra step in delegitimising the Baltic States and their cause is unavoidable.

A related and intriguing feature is the explicit understanding that the sovereignty of small states was conditional and not a given. Rather, it had to be earned in blood, something that the Lithuanians, as well as the two other Baltic nations, understood too late. The so-called silent submission of the Balts (the subject and title of Magnus Ilmjarv's definitive monograph) stood in sharp contrast to the Finish reaction and fate. Whether it was a realistic option was neither here nor there. Hence, we read the desperate memo by Bronius Balutis, the tireless Lithuanian representative in London, to Eden in January 1943. Balutis builds the case against Soviet claims on Lithuania around Lithuanian active resistance, starting with the indigenous

general revolt on 22–24 June 1941 before the arrival of the Germans in Kaunas, which aimed at restoring Lithuania's independence and cost over 12,000 casualties (doc. 241). As the rest of Balutis' numerous memos show, this had no impact on the perceptions of the Lithuanian issue among the British political elites, which continued to view Lithuania as a nuisance and intrusion on the more important matters of relations with the Soviet Union and the fate of Poland.

Similar logic applied to Soviet reactions to the domestic situation, especially the evident lack of local popular support for the communist regime. Various Soviet organisations on the ground conveyed to the Kremlin the hostile political mood and the bloody struggle against Soviet rule with no attempt to hide the facts (see, in particular, docs. 311, 320, 326, 327, 330), but also with no effort to change course and accommodate the population. When it considered it useful, the Kremlin offered faux concessions, such as the creation of a Soviet Lithuanian Foreign Ministry (docs. 301, 308, 316), but no one seemed to be fooled. Lithuania was to stay in the Soviet Union and Sovietised no matter what.

In the same vein, the Soviet regime had fairly accurate information on the genocide of the Jewish population in Lithuania, and their reports from the field made clear that the Holocaust was a distinct Nazi policy (for example, Beria's report to Stalin on 3 August 1944, and the report on the Warsaw Ghetto uprising on 21 April 1943, docs. 293, 254). Yet, these reports adhered to the official policy of lumping all atrocities under the category of 'atrocities of the fascists and their helpers against Soviet people', thus denying a distinct Jewish fate. Moreover, as Laurinavičius points out, Lithuanian diplomats who called attention to the fate of Poles in Nazi-occupied Lithuania did not utter a word on the fate of the Jews in their reports. The result of this denial, which lasted to the very end of the Soviet era, was to add yet more casualties of the war: memory and education of future generations.

This impressive volume is a boon for students of international relations, Soviet domestic and foreign policy, and Lithuanian history. It is a rich source from which to launch advanced research and expand on the many important themes explored in the collection. Indeed, one hopes for more volumes to come. For policymakers and observers of current events, this volume is also a grim and relevant reminder concerning small sovereign states, not just those under investigation here: beware of reliance on the grace of great powers in turbulent times.

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