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BALTOJI VARNELĖ

Turinys

Thomas A. Michalski

THE NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AMONG LITHUANIAN EMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES AT THE ENDING OF THE 19TH AND EARLY 20-TH CENTURY

The rise of ethnic and national consciousness among Lithuanian emigrants to the United States has been the subject of some study and speculation among homeland and overseas scholars for several generations[1]. Most of the studies have reflected a chronological, political or economic approach to history. Very little has been written about the transformation of psychological state of mind of individual Lithuanian emigrants to America and of the group as a whole. The reasons are many, not a least of which is, it is hazardous for the historian to generalize and describe such a transformation of a psychological state of mind of either individuals or groupings. To ascertain how each individual person tried to accomodate his or her traditional culture with his new one while his or her old culture and understanding were in flux, it is necessary to ascertain the newcomer's individual and group consciousness upon arrival. Just what was his or her ethnic and national awareness, if any, on arrival in America? To what extend did the individual emigrant consider him or herself to be part of the "Lithuanian nation"? What was their understanding of the concept "Lithuanian nation"?

According to some scholars, an individual's ethnic or national awareness can be illuminated by dividing the general feelings of ethnicity and nationalism into three subsidiarity categories[2]. An elaboration of these subdivisions is necessary in order to clarify the entire nationalization process of which "ethnicization" or ethnic consciousness making, the subject here, is only a part.

The first level of evolution of nationalism can be described as a form of ethnic naïveté[3]. The over-

whelming number of Lithuanian emigrants to the United States from the middle of the nineteenth into early twentieth century fell into this category. They all possessed and practiced certain cultural characteristics of their group. For example, they all spoke related dialects of a common language which was not yet fully standardized in either speech, grammar or orthography. Overwhelmingly they were of the Roman Catholic faith. Their faith separated them from their immediate neighbors, the Russians and the Prussians in Europe. It also separated them from Anglo-American majority they encountered in the United States. At the same time, their Catholic faith joined them in some fashion to their Catholic neighbors in Europe, particularly the Catholic Poles. It also joined them to Catholic immigrants in America among whom they lived, particularly the Irish and the Poles. It was the many frictions with the Catholic Poles and Irish in America which contributed to the raising of their own national Lithuanian consciousness. They certainly knew that they where not Russians or Prussians and they where quite certain they were not Yankee, that is to say English-speaking Protestant Americans. Whether or not they were still in some respects "Poles" was problematical, especially given the fact that historically they had been identified in the American mind either as poles or a certain type of Pole. When asked for their own group identification they would more often than not respond by region and more so dialect as being "dzūkai", "kapsai", "zanavykai" or "žemaičiai" or "aukštaičiai"[4]. Their ethnic identification was strongly linguistic. Those who were somewhat more politically astute would simply refer to Lithuania as "krajus" or "po ruski". Some would simply state that they came from "Kauno gubernija" or would mention the town or village of their origin. When they used the term "lietuvys" rather than the later pronunciation "lietuvis", they were speaking in terms of their linguistic identity not national identity[5].

A much more advanced stage of ethnic feeling which

was much less evident among the early Lithuanian mass emigration mentioned above could be determined cultural or polycentric nationalism. This feeling was evident among some of the more formally educated, such as the clergy and few lay intellectuals among emigrants. It was they who not only carried on but propagated tradional customs and mother tongue; among the general emigrant populace who were simply "ethnic". Yet, their nation was but one among many. Their ethnicity was not entirely ethno-centric. It was not aggressive, nor was it messianic. It differed substantially from the later political nationalism which sought to and eventually did go further advocating the establishment of a sovereign, ethno-centric, national state. While in this stage of development, Lithuanians could refer to themselves as linguistically Lithuanian yet also Poles, Americans and even in a sense Russian or Prussian based on their former citizenship without contradictation[6]. At this stage they did not yet fall into the later category of a "tikras lietuvis" which combined all of the above characteristics of language, nationality, religion, culture and citizenship, leaving little room for hyphernation.

The third stage of the development of Lithuanian nationalism in America was most advanced national group sentiment, that of the "tikras lietuvis" mentioned above. This form of nationalism was exclusive and ethnocentric. It eliminated those who were not Roman Catholic, Lithuanian-speaking people. Jews and those Lithuanians who identified culturally with the Poles, as well as Byelorussian-speaking Lithuanians or simply the "tutejszy" were no longer considered Lithuanians, even though such people being in their own stage of naïveté referred to themselves in some way as being "Litwinie" or "Litvaks"[7]. People with such feelings were rare among the overhelming population of Lithuanian emigrants to America at the turn of the century. Those felt this way were a tiny minority, an elite, primarily refugee intellectuals and a handful of priests and certainly not all of the priests. Not a few of the early Lithuanian emigrant priests were

at the first stage of their own Lithuanian rebirth while simultaneously espousing a Polish national ideal which included Lithuania within a future dual monarchy of Poland-Lithuania[8]. They were in a word ethnically Lithuanian yet politically considered themselves as Polish nationals. They too were among the Lithuania elite. The former worked passionately for the revival of a "tikras lietuvis" Lithuanian ideal. The latter worked just as passionately for a resurected Polish-Lithuanian unified state. This clash of the elites resulted in the evolution of the Lithuanian national ideal in the United States. Sides were drawn and it became no longer possible to be both a political Pole and an ethnic Lithuanian in America. Both sides of the elite in their own way worked enthusiastically to perpetuate and proclaim their Lithuanian name and identity, the first on their own and the second within the context of some sort of established relationship as a subculture among the Poles in America.

Unfortunately, historians of American immigration have paid little attention to this matter of national consciousness among the Lithuanian newcomers to the United States. Among American historians of non-Lithuanian or non-Polish background only Victor Green has significantly contributed to such study in his classic work *For God and country. The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America.* Most studies of Lithuanian scholars both in the homeland and in America with some notable exceptions have assumed that the emigrants already had a well-developed sense of ethnic identity before emigrating to America and that upon arrival in the United States the Lithuanian communities were already well-drawn entities with a highly developed sense of ethnicity and nationalism which remaind static over time. Nothing could be further from truth.

As a matter of fact, most early Lithuanian emigrants to America at that time had no strong ethnic feelings on interest in politics upon their arrival in the United States[9]. At the time, Lithuania herself languished under the political indolence of tsarist rule, Polish cultural

and religious domination and an alien control of the economy, even on the local level. The last tsar, Nicholas II was considered by many Lithuanians as a benevolent ruler given the circumstances. What most Lithuanians resented most about Russian rule at the time was the draft and alcohol producing monopolies licensed by the state. There were past grievances galore such as the abolition of printing in the Lithuanian language and tsarist pressures against the Catholic church[10]. Yet the Roman Catholic church grew stronger under persecution and Lithuanian books were replaced by Polish language Catholic texts which were legal and generally accepted by the populace without much consternation[11]. In America, their primary point of reference was the parish to which they belonged in America.

The sources of ethnic and national arrival among the early Lithuanian emigrants were internal and external. Of primary importance was the life of their parish around which they centered all of their lives with the exception of their workday. In the American workplace they worked hand-in-hand with members of other ethnic immigrant groups particularly the Poles, other Slavs, the Germans and the Irish. They quickly learned that they were a distinct group. They certainly were not Poles even though many of them were familiar with Polish to some degree as a second language. Politically they may have become Americans from the point of view of citizenship but culturally they remaind Lithuanians, at least that is true of the first generation of emigrants. The contacts in parish and workplace with Poles from Poznan, Krakow and Warsaw as well as the Carpathians made it clear to most Lithuanians that they were in no way Polish, now that they were in America. This feeling was quickly reinforced by their membership in mixed Lithuanian-Polish or Polish-Lithuanian or Irish or German parishes. The inter-ethnic conflicts in those areas contributed to their Lithuanian consciousness. In Lithuania proper, Poles and things Polish were generally associated with an upper class elite and the clerical

estate and had assumed an air of superiority. There was nothing "superior" about the Polish immigrants in America who sweated along with the Lithuanians in the mines, sweatshops, foundries and slaughterhouses. Once that lesson was learned, the Lithuanians were then free to establish and build their own institutions in America free of the Polish connection which existed in the homeland. It was indeed a paradox, but the early Lithuanian emigrants in America were more truly free to be truly Lithuanian or "tikri lietuviai" in America than in their own homeland[12].

Yet there were a good number of Lithuanians who had linked-up with the Poles in America who were perfectly satisfied to remain a sub-group under a Polish-American umbrella. Early on, they had joined the already well established Polish community in America. They were priests, organists, small businessmen and workers. They became fully integrated in Polish-American parishes and neighborhoods. Most of the earliest Lithuanian emigrants were males. They naturally gravitated to polish working-class neighborhoods where they met and married Polish women with whom they shared the same Catholic faith and with whom they could communicate with. Very few Lithuanian men married outside of their own group and when they did they tended to marry Polish women. The Polish women in turn for the most part spoke Polish in the home with their spouses and raised their children more as Poles and Lithuanians. To some Lithuanian intellectuals and the growingly nationally conscious Lithuanian clergy, such persons were considered as "lenkberniszki". Yet, the "lenkberniszki" saw no reason to advance beyond their more primitive form of naive ethnicity as described earlier in this study. Many of their Lithuanian contemporaries saw the "lenkberniszki" as being disloyal to a rising Lithuanian self-consciousness[13]. Later Lithuanian oriented historians have tended to consider the "lenkberniszki" as traitors and rarely mention them[14]. Later Polish historians have rarely mentioned their existence as a viable subgroup within the

merican-Polish community. Polish historians consider ıem as Poles[15]. Yet, it is estimated that about $^{1}/_{10}$ or ıore of the Polish-American community is of Lithuanian rigin. The percentages vary by location and community nd may be adjusted anwrap or downwards accordingly. s national distinctions in the United States became ıore defined, the "lenkberniszki" disappeared in the merican Polish community and were lost to the Lithuanian ommunity forever.

A second group which may be called the interna- ionalists, saw themselves primarily from a class rather ıan a national or ethnic perspective. They saw themselves s members of the Socialist or Communist internationale. hey first of all sought class solidarity with workers f other kindred ethnic immigrants in America. They ere either indifferent or inimical to organized religion, articularly the Catholic church. Members of this group entered their lives around citizens clubs and organizations t odds with the local Lithuanian Roman Catholic parish. hey saw themselves as progressives and in many instances hey were. They formed an essentially counter-cultural ıovement, often in conflict with their more ethno-centric ithuanian brethern. They have been well studied and ell researched by homeland Lithuanian marxist-leninist uthors, but have often been given importance in the ithuanian emigrant community beyond their actual influence nd numbers due to ideological preferences of certain ithuanian homeland authors[16].

The third group which eventually became the dominant orce in the old Lithuanian emigrant community were he Catholic nationalists. They centered their lives around he local Lithuanian parish and accepted the leadership f nationalistically oriented priests and intellectuals. They ejected both Polish or "lenkberniszki" cultural influences s well as internationalist non-Catholic influences which hey identified with atheistic communism centered in he Soviet Union.

Scholars of nationalism on both sides of the Atlantic ave offered models of the entire enlightenment process,

from an awareness of nation onward to the most spirited agressive and even chauvinistic political nationalism During the Soviet period, homeland scholars have generally used a marxist-leninist approach to such models. Those outside of Lithuania have more often than not been influenced by the historical schools of thought of the nations in which they lived or by the modes of analysis prevalent in the inter-war Lithuanian republic[17]. Yet, they generally agree about the origins of national consciousness; nationalism and its less developed form, ethnic awareness, is born out of hostility toward another group to one extent or another. They differ in whether they attribute such hostility solely to economic forces as do the marxist-leninists or other forcers such as culture religion, language etc. as do the non-marxist-leninists. Some sort of internal or external friction or hostility toward another group is unfortunately needed to stimulate such consciousness[18]. A people must feel some sence of oppression and bitterness before it can develop an idea of nationhood[19].

For some time, American historians have concluded that immigrant ethnic-awareness and nationalism was built upon frictions between immigrants and native Americans, particularly Anglo-American Protestants. This assumption also applies to Lithuanian emigrants[20]. An examination of the evidence indicates otherwise. Most early Lithuanian emigrants had little direct contact with White Anglo-Saxon American natives. They lived in multi immigrant neighborhoods and rarely rubbed shoulders with White Anglo Saxon Protestants either at home or at the workplace. They associated mostly with themselves and to a lesser degree with immigrants from other countries, especially the Poles, other Slavs, German Irish and Jews. If an enemy was needed, one had to be either found or fabricated.

The idea that group hostility produced group consciousness arose in the West just before World War when most Lithuanians emigrated to America, and so many oppressed nationalities particularly in East and

Central Europe were struggling to achieve self-determination from the rule of the Romanovs, Habsburgs, Hohenzollerns, Windsors and lesser monarchs, not to exclude the Ottomans in the Balkans. Lord Acton designated the source of mass support for national movements when he said, "A national impulse... is only awakened when there is an alien element, the vestige of foreign domination to dispel". And, another scholar observed "a common hate is one of the most effective ways in making a nation"[21]. According to this view, Lithuanians first sensed membership in their nation when they began to respond to external domination. In other words, consciously felt Irishness began with animosity toward English; Polish sentiment was essentially directed against the Russians or Germans; Slovak sentiment was anti-Hungarian; Greek sentiment was fanatically anti-Turkish. If we accept such model for Lithuanians, it would seem that essential ingredient of Lithuanian nationalism is anti-Polishness.

Although Lithuania had been occupied by Russia and was part of the Russian Empire for some 100 years in the later part of the nineteenth century, Russia and the Russians did not become the main and much needed Lithuanian enemy. Neither did the German-Prussians whom the Lithuanians had fought against for some 250 years in the Middle Ages culminating in World War I and World War II. A much mor intimate and closer enemy was needed. It found expression in anti-polishness. In one way, shape or form, Lithuania had been entagled with Poland and the Poles and more so experienced an internal polonization of its upper social, religious and cultural strata for over 500 years. It was the very closeness of the Poles and Lithuanians which brought about forms of mutual hostility based upon a buberesque love-hate relationship over the ages. Lithuania had been appended to Poland for a long time religiously, culturally and politically as well as geographically in Europe. It was no surprise that the first Lithuanians in America sought a haven among the then well established Poles[22].

Begining with the 1860's well into the early twentieth century Lithuanians and Poles were indistinguishable from one another in the popular American mind and among other immigrants as well, especially the Catholic Irish who dominated the Roman Catholic church hierarchy. From time to time, Irish catholic bishops would send Poles to serve in Lithuanian parishes, simply because they could see no difference between both nationalities. The issue was futher complicated by the fact of the "lenkberniski" element in some Polish parishes and the fact that many Lithuanians used some form of Polish as a second language. In fact, some Lithuanian priests and intellectuals spoke a better form of Polish than did most of the Polish emigrants to America of the time. Many early Lithuanian priests had finished Polish dominated seminaries. They considered themselves "natione polonus, gente lituanus". They saw no cotradiction in both orientations[23].

These facts were recognized early by the lay leader A. Šliūpas Rev. Alexander Burba and other more nationalistically oriented priests. Yet even here, it was not so much the ethnic-Poles they considered their enemy but the "lenkberniszkas" element among the Lithuanians, who had remained at the first level or naïve stage of ethno-nationalist development. In America, the Russians who were few could not be the enemy. Germans in America were looked up to by Lithuanian emigrants primarily because they often were their bosses and foremen. In America the enemy was defined. The enemy was to be polishness and by implication all Poles. Anti-polonism became a trademark of Lithuanian-American patriotism, as it became a lingering, almost required feature of rising Lithuanian ethnic consciousness in the homeland, for the same reasons[24].

Conclusions

In the nineteenth and early twentieth century Lithuanian immigrants in the United States arrived at different

stages of national consciousness. They held certain things in common, such as a common origin, mutually intelligible dialects of the same then yet to be standardized language and their overwhelmingly Roman Catholic faith. Initially, Lithuanians in America defined themselves linguistic according to dialect and the region of their origin. If one were to conceptualize the first level of consciousness was simply based on a naïve consciousness of language. Cultural or polycentric nationalism, was the prerogative of the more enlightened emigrants such as some of the clergy and a few intellectuals. They valued their ethnic heritage and traditions but had not yet come to the third stage or development of a full-blown ethno-centric nationalism which demanded the establishment of a free and independent Lithuania freed from all ties and entaglements with Poland, Russia and Prussian-Germany.

The earliest Lithuanian emigrants often assumed multiple identities in America. They were linguistically and ethnically Lithuanian but some also gravitated to Polish communities where they maintained their naïve Lithuanian ethno-centrism while espousing the Polish national cause. They found no contradictions in such a position which had a long honorable history in their homeland for generations among the upper strata of society to include the Roman Catholic clergy.

The development of Lithuanian national consciousness over three stages occured due to internal community and external frictions with other groups at home and in America. The democratizing influences of the workplace led many to espouse one of three possible orientations. The first was the "lenkberniszkas" orientation of the earliest arrivals who had become ensconced in the well established Polish communities in America. The second tendency was one of proletarian democracy wherein the immigrant who worked in the factories, mines, slaughterhauses and sweat-shops of an industrializing America found more in common with persons of other nationalities based upon economic interests than they did with com-

patriots. This element has been well researched in Soviet Lithuanian historiography, although it also has been overlay valued out of proportion to its influence in the Lithuanian-American community of the times. The third orientation resulted from conflicts between the religiously oriented nationalists and the "lenkberniszki" element as well as the proletarian element. This third element may be described as religious-national in essence. It excluded non-Catholics and those who did not speak Lithuanian or were oriented towards atheism, indifferentism and the Socialist International particularly as espoused by the USSR. The third group which absorbed many of the "lenkberniszki" element, although not all, was in constant conflict with the internationalist element. According to Lord Acton and other scholars, one characteristic or indeed necessary ingredient in the development of nationalism from the naïve, through the polycentric to the last and final third nationalist phase which can also evolve into chauvinism is the need for a perceived enemy. Examples are the Irish versus the English, the Poles versus the Russian and, or the Germans, the Greeks versus the Turkish and the Slovaks versus the Hungarians. To develop into a form of full-fledged nationalism, a common enemy must be identified. In the instance of the Lithuanians, the perceived and even cherished national antagonists are the Poles and in particular the "lenkberniski" elements in both Lithuania and America. This antagonism was furthered during the interwar period by territorial and other disputes in Europe between Lithuania and Poland. Such disputes had marked reverberations among Lithuanians in America. Polishness and Poles became traditional ingredient in Lithuanian nationalism. During the early period of Lithuanian national development an enemy was needed and found. Lithuanian attitudes towards the Poles at home and abroad were hardened by dispute over the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius and Polish occupation of the city and district of Vilnius and adjacent areas in southeastern Lithuania. The feelings of bitterness have not yet dissipated and remain if even passively.

his study ends on the eve of World War I and the eestablishment of an ethno-centric Lithuanian republic reed of all entanglements with Poland, Russia and ermany.

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[1]Wolkovich-Valkavicius W. Towards a Historiography of Lithuanian mmigrants in the United States // The Immigration History Newsletter. Vol.] 15 (November 1983). P. 7-10. This paper addressed only English-anguage works published in America; also Michalski Th. A., Wolkovich-'alkavicius W. Another Look at the Historiography of Lithuanian mmigrants to the United States // Ethnic Forum: Journal of Ethnic tudies and Ethnic Bibliography. 1989. Vol. 9. Numbers 1-2. P. 31-4. This paper expands of the previous citation, adding works published ot only in English in America, but works published in Lithuania, oland, Russia and Germany.

[2]I use the breakdown offered by Kohn H. Die Idee des Nationalismus. rankfurt/Main), 1944. P. 1-30; Smith A. Theories of Nationalism. ondon, 1971, as cited in Greene V. For God and Country: The Rise f Polish and Lithuanian Ethnic Consciousness in America. Madison, 975. P. 3-4.

[3]Greene V. Op. cit. P. 3.

[4]Vizbaras M. Oral Interview. Scranton, 1974.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Greene V. Op. cit. P. 6.

[7]M.Vizbaras: With the arrival of the Displaced Persons more commonly nown as "dipukai" after World War II, the concept of a "tikras etuvis" was applied by the "dipukai" to themselves alone as another ngredient was included in the definition, that of being born in ndependent inter-war Lithuania. By so doing the "dipukai" excluded lder immigrants who had left Lithuania when it was under tsarist ule, as well as their American-born children and grand-children. This reated a major fissure between the "old" and "new" Lithuanian nmigrants in America and their descendants which has never really roperlly healed for most part.

[8]Wolkovich-Valkavicius W. Queen of Angl es Parish. (Unpublished anuscript). 1990, Boston; also Michalski Th. A. Soviet Archival ources for the Study of Emigration from the lands of the Polish-ithuanian Commonwealth to America // Polish American Studies. 990, Vol. XL. No. 1., Spring. P. 75-80; also Michelsonas S. Lietuvių eivija Amerikoje. Boston, 1963. P. 33. Michelsonas states: "... Lithuanian riests always tried to shore up the Lublin Union".

[9]There is a considerable body of knowledge written on the subject f ethnic enlightenment of immigrants to the United States. Those sted below are cited in Greene V. Op. cit. P. 7-9. Carlson Smith /. Americans in the Making: The Natural History of the Assimilation f Immigrants. New York, 1939. P. 57-58; Neibuhr H. R. The Social

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[10]Vizbaras M. Op. cit.

[11]Stukas J. J. Awakening Lithuania. Chicago, 1966. P. 119-145 also Prapolenis K. Polskie Apostolstwo w Litwie. Wilno, 1913, passim The Lithuanian edition was published as Lenkų apaštalavimas Lietuvoje in Chicago, 1918, also Kruszka X. W. Historya Polska w Ameryce Milwaukee, 1905. T. 1-12.

[12]Vizbaras M. Op. cit.

[13]Greene V. Op. cit. P. 146-147.

[14]Kučas A. Shenandoach, lietuvių parapija (1891-1966). Brooklyn 1968. P. 170, 175, 180, 196-197.

[15]Szawleski M. Wychodźtvo Polskie w Stanach Zjednoczonych Ameryki Lwów, Warszawa, Kraków, 1924. P. 14-19, also Wachtl K. Polonja w Ameryce Dzieje i Dorobek. Filadelfja, 1944. P. 57-61., also Wandycz S. The Lands of Partitioned Poland (1795-1918). Seattle and London, 1974. P. 239-247.

[16]To list specific works at this point would require a listing of every homeland Lithuanian historian of emigration. For a start, the reader is invited to consult the works and bibliographies of A Eidintas, L. Kapočius, E. Vidmantas, L. Truska and E. Vaitekūnas as well as the Moldavian scholar N. L. Tudorianu Ocherki Rossiisko Trudovoi Emigratsii. Kishiniov, 1986.

[17]Šapoka A. Lietuvos istorija. K., 1936, passim, also Sruogienė Daugirdaitė V. Lietuvos istorija. Čikaga, 1956, passim.

[18]Greene V. Op. cit. P. 10-12.

[19]Kohn H. Op. cit. P. 1-30.

[20]Stonquist E.V. The Marginal Man: A Study In Personality and Culture Conflikt (reprint of 1937 edition), New York, 1961, as cited in Greene V. P. 7.

[21]Dalberg-Acton J.E.E. The History of Freedom and Other Essays (reprint edition). Freeport, New York, 1967, as cited in Greene V P. 6.

[22]Greene V. Op. cit. P. 143-161.

[23]Wolkovich-Valkavicius W. Queen of Angles.

[24]Kučas A. Op. cit. P. 170, 175, 180, 196-197.