IMMIGRATION AND COMMUNIST NEWSPAPERS:
LITHUANIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, AND URUGUAY

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SUMMARY. The main task of this article is to study Lithuanian left-wing publications in South America and the information network that they were able to sustain for decades of political activities. We propose to analyze the main important Communist newspapers and the way they were organized. Special attention is given to how they understood the Lithuanian regime and the struggle against Fascism, and to how they regarded the Soviet Union after the Second Word War.
KEYWORDS: left wing, newspapers, South America, Communism, Fascism.

The main goal of this article is to point out the importance of considering Lithuanian left-wing organizations in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay in order to understand the Lithuanian diaspora. I will focus on Lithuanian Communist newspapers, their production and circulation, and show how they were able to build information networks crossing the borders of the states in which they had established themselves. Furthermore, I intend to demonstrate how important this political perspective was for Lithuanian immigrants and the protagonist position they had inside the Communist Party organization.

LITHUANIAN IMMIGRATION TO SOUTH AMERICA

Lithuanian immigration to South America began as result of complex changes in international relations. These changes started during the 1920s, when some countries imposed immigrant quotas according to the country of origin in order to accept an immigrant influx. The most important country to adopt the quota system was the United States, in 1924[1]. Simultaneously, Argentina, Brazil, and

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[1] The United States Congress passed the Emergency Quota Act in 1921, followed by he Immigration Act in 1924, which established that no more than 2% of immigrants from the same nation would be allowed

Uruguay opened up their borders and began accepting new immigration waves. In fact, during the 1920s these countries faced challenges regarding the attraction of immigrants – such as, for instance, the restrictions imposed by Spain and Italy over companies that promoted and financed immigration to America. As a result of this double movement, the Eastern European immigration wave shifted from North America to South America. Immigration companies were able to act freely in the European East: the social and economic crisis after World War I made it easier to spread propaganda about new promised lands.

The biggest Lithuanian wave to Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay rolled from 1926 to 1930. The figures were: 24.891 (14.173 men and 10718 women) entered Brazil; 4.202 (2.498 men and 1.704 women) entered Uruguay;[2] and 15.358 (9.254 men and 6.104 women) entered Argentina.[3] It is important to remark that Argentina had received an earlier Lithuanian immigrant wave at the end of the 19th century and the very beginning of the 20th; however, it is difficult to calculate how many entered the country, because Argentinean authorities considered them to be Russian, since Lithuania was part of the Russian Empire.

In 1929, with the New York market crash, prices of the main products in those three countries dropped very fast, as well as the amounts they exported. As a consequence, the number of immigrants to Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay fell very fast in 1929 and became almost extinct in 1930. This was the end of that immigration wave. In Uruguay, the best possibility for such immigrants was to find industry jobs in the city of Montevideo, so most Lithuanians settled in the Cerro neighborhood, where the meat companies were concentrated. In Argentina, Lithuanians settled in different cities like Buenos Aires, Avellaneda, Lanus, Quilmes, La Plata, in the Buenos Aires Province, and also in Rosario, Cordoba and in the south of the country. In Brazil, they worked on coffee plantations, but with the economic crisis, most of them moved to São Paulo to work in the industry.

Lithuanians had to adapt to a deep change in their ways of life. For most immigrants, that was the first time they had to live in an urban area and to work in an industrial plant under the most precarious working conditions. Their lives were marked by instability, economic crisis, abusive working hours, and no social security. This was a very insecure world for new immigrants who had to learn how to become organized in associations in order to obtain some stability and social support. As they were trying to establish their community and organize associations,

entrance, based on the 1890 census.

2   Juan José Arteaga, 2008. Breve Historia Contemporânea Del Uruguay. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Econômica.

3   Cuadroestatistico. Museo del Inmigrante de Berisso, Argentina.

certain political and ideological differences emerged in the guise of Socialist, Catholic, Nationalist, and Communist views.

In order to understand Lithuanian organizations and political activities, it is important to consider the political differences between Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay because at this time most working class organizations had been prohibited or were under surveillance. During the 1910s and 1920s, these countries underwent their first large strikes influenced by the Anarchist movement. Such strikes were violently repressed in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, and the Anarchist movement was almost completely quashed. In parallel, the end of the decade saw the growth of Socialist and Communist organizations. Influenced by the Soviet Union, Communist parties were founded as follows: the Argentinean Communist Party (PCA) in 1918, the Uruguayan Communist Party (PCU) in 1920, and the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) in 1922. It should be noted that the Argentinean and Uruguayan parties were founded on the basis of a Socialist party. In Brazil's case, there was no Socialist Party; so Brazilian Communists had more difficulty in organizing their activities and to be accepted by the Communist International.[4]

LITHUANIAN LEFT-WING ORGANIZATIONS

Having examined the social-political background, we can focus on Lithuanian left-wing organizations, despite the difficulty of pinpointing exactly where and who founded the first of them in South America. The first Lithuanian Socialist organization in Argentina was founded in 1914, and named the Lithuanian Socialist Alliance. Embracing the Argentinean Socialist Party policy, the Alliance was very successfully organized, being able to open, in the very beginning, chapters in cities such as Buenos Aires and Berisso. Nevertheless, news about the Revolution in Russia and the success of Bolshevism had an impact on Argentina.

A number of Socialists established the Internationalist Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista Internacionalista*), later renamed the Argentinean Communist Party (PCA) when they were accepted in the Communist International. This division affected the Lithuanian Socialist Alliance, and during a congress organized in the city of Quilmes in 1918 the Alliance decided to join the Internationalist Party.

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[4] LOWY, Michael. *Marxismona América Latina.* Uma Antologia de 1909 aosdiasatuais. São Paulo, Editora da Fundação PerseuAbramo, 2006.

A few years later it was renamed as Lithuanian Communist Alliance, becoming a PCA section.[5]

At that time, different Lithuanian left-wing organizations were founded in South America, but the majority of them were not able to sustain their activities for any longer period. Most of them were influenced by other organizations, particularly by Lithuanian organizations in the USA, where they encountered examples of working-class groups to base themselves on. The most important was the Amerikos Lietuvių Darbininkų Literatūros Draugija (ALDLD, American Lithuanian Workers' Literature Society), based in New York City, which became the main distributor of Lithuanian political literature all over the American continent. In 1916, a section of this organization was opened in Argentina, and so they were able to send books, magazines, and newspapers to different Lithuanian associations in the country. This action made it possible for them to undertake literature studies and organize libraries. The American newspapers *Vilnis* (Wave) and *Laisvė* (Liberty) started to be regularly distributed in South America. Later, a section of the ALDLD was opened in Brazil and Uruguay.[6]

Lithuanians in Argentina wanted to produce their own publications but this was no easy task as it involved technical knowhow and required investments; thus it constituted quite a challenge for workers living in difficult conditions. The first attempt made by the Socialist Alliance managed to generate only one information newsletter in 1918. In Berisso, a group of workers tried to organize a Communist newspaper named *Proletaras* (Proletarian), but without technical support and resources it lasted for only two issues in 1920.

Despite these failed attempts, Lithuanians still kept trying to organize themselves, and with the arrival of the largest immigration wave to Argentina, more possibilities for readers and workers arose. Finally, in 1927, Lithuanian left-wingers were able to organize a printing cooperative and produce the first and, at that time, the most successful Lithuanian newspaper in South America named *Rytojus* (Tomorrow). The beginning was very difficult as the publishers didn't have resources to obtain the appropriate printing machine with Lithuanian characters. The paper was produced (written, edited, and printed) by volunteer workers at the end of their working shifts, during the weekends, or whenever they had time, and always under very precarious conditions. For this reason, they decided to ask Lithuanian left-wing organizations in the United States for help.

In solidarity, Lithuanians in the United States sent to Argentina an experienced

[5]   CAMARERO, Hernán. *El Partido Socialista en Argentina*. Sociedad, política e ideas a través de un siglo. Buenos Aires, Promoteo Libros, 2005.

[6]   Laisvė 60-mečio Jubiliejinis Albumas 1911–1971. Išleido „Laisvė" 102-02 N.Y. 1971.

journalist who could organize a newspaper and gather together the necessary resources for that purpose. Rojus Mizara travelled to Buenos Aires in 1927 and, under his guidance, *Rytojus* became the most important left-wing newspaper for Lithuanians not just in Argentina, but in Brazil and Uruguay as well; issues of it were even sent as far as Australia.[7] In Brazil, the distribution was so effectively done in São Paulo that a funny expression became popular among Lithuanians: "hiding as a *Rytojus* distributor in the Luz Garden" (*Slapstosi, kaip Rytojaus platintojas Luz Sode*). The Luz Garden is in downtown São Paulo, very close to the two most important train stations, where most of the workers' newspapers was distributed – it was also a place where the police kept strict surveillance.

Further, Rojus Mizara contributed to a better knowledge of the Marxist-Leninist perspective in Argentina by organizing classes for, and meetings with Lithuanian workers in Buenos Aires. He also improved the ALDLD book distribution and debates. Mizara left Buenos Aires after one year and returned to United States, where he worked for many years in U.S. left-wing organizations.

To keep *Rytojus* running properly, Lithuanian Communist organizations sent to Argentina an experienced Lithuanian activist, Pranas Ulevičius. For a year he had been working for Communist organizations and for the Communist International. His experience and expertise regarding political organizations, politics, and the press contributed to *Rytojus*'s success.

Its new editorial board was able to distribute the newspaper regularly. This constant circulation made it possible for readers and publishers to create a stable network for exchanging information. Lithuanian readers were informed about the political situation and working-class organizations in these Latin-American countries. Whenever Lithuanians were arrested, the newspaper would spread the news and send out a cry for solidarity. One of the main targets of the publication was Antanas Smetona's government, considered Fascist, as well as Nationalist organizations in South America which received generous support from Lithuania to promote their political perspective. This clash was reflected in the pages of *Rytojus*. The newspaper was not directly connected to the Communist Party, but the Communists played a decisive role: they influenced the newspaper's attacks on other left-wing organizations.

By that time, Communists had taken a more radical position all over the world, violently criticizing the Anarchist as well as the Social Democratic perspectives and denouncing them as "social Fascism". In this way, *Rytojus* constantly lambasted other Socialist newspapers published in the Buenos Aires province, such as *Argentinos Naujienos (*Argentinean News*)* and the Anarchist *Darbininkų Tiesa* (Workers'

7   Mizara, Rojus. Arg*entina ir Ten Gyvenantys Lietuviai*, publicistika, Niujorkas, 1928.

Truth), and stopped supporting other Socialist viewpoints. Adhering to this orientation, the newspaper publishing board also expelled all members who were not part of the Communist movement, and *Rytojus* became a Communist-oriented newspaper under Ulevičius's leadership, but without becoming an official Argentinean Party organ.

One of the people rejected by *Rytojus* was Bronius Švedas, who moved to the city of Avellaneda and organized the Free Union of Lithuanian Workers in Argentina (Argentinos Lietuvių Darbininkų Laisvoji Sąjunga) as well as its newspaper *Darbininkų Tiesa* (Workers' Truth), which existed from 1929 to 1938. This was the only Anarchist newspaper in the Lithuanian language that I could identify in South America.

Lithuanians in Brazil also faced a challenging political situation in 1930. Those in São Paulo organized a Socialist newspaper named *Garsas* (Sound) in 1928. The newspaper came about through the efforts of the Lithuanian Association in Brazil (*Lietuvių Susivienijimas Brazilijoj*). The organization had as main goal the construction of a library; offering Lithuanian language classes; organizing concerts and theater groups; and promoting the reunions, festivals, and Lithuanian dance parties, especially during celebrations by Lithuanian national and cultural organizations. *Garsas* also asked for support from the ALDLD, which sent books at lower prices to Brazil, as well as their newspapers. The editors of *Garsas* were allowed to copy articles from *Vilnis* and *Laisvė* was well as to use all the information disseminated by both newspapers.

Communists and other left-oriented people had worked together in the Lithuanian Association in Brazil (Lietuvių Susivienijimas Brazilijoj) organization and in the *Garsas* Socialist newspaper, until the Communists began to put pressure on the editorial board to accept the Communist viewpoint, which resulted in internal conflicts and disputes. But this internal criticism was not what ultimately drove the newspaper to its demise. *Garsas* was denounced to the police by the Lithuanian Consul and the Catholic priest. As a consequence, the publisher Alfonsas Marma and the editor Antanas Zoka were arrested, prosecuted, and expelled from Brazil. Marma and Zoka decided to move to Uruguay, where they were accepted. Since Uruguayan authorities were used to accepting political refugees and sustained a very liberal immigration policy, that was a common decision for foreign Communists during the 1930s.

In Uruguay, Alfonsas Marma and Antanas Zoka helped Lithuanian Communists to organize their first newspaper, something that Brazilian authorities had been unable to foresee. The publishers established themselves in Montevideo, where they became engaged with Communist organizations and began to publish *Proletaras*

(Proletarian), a modest and short-lived newspaper. About a year later, Lithuanian Communists had improved their organization and were able to produce a better-organized newspaper, which was named *Raudonoji Vėliava* (Red Flag). In that same year, as observed earlier, Uruguay saw a wave of political turbulence – as a result, the Lithuanian newspaper was shut down by authorities and those responsible for the organization were arrested.

It should be noticed that during the 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s, Lithuanian leftists in Uruguay received support from organizations in Argentina. Leftist newspapers such as *Rytojus* circulated in Montevideo as well. This situation changed dramatically when Lithuanian organizations had to face authoritarian regimes in Argentina and in Brazil.

AUTHORITARIAN SOLUTIONS AND LITHUANIAN ORGANIZATIONS

Coinciding with the growth of working class organizations, ruling elites were carrying out essential changes in order to keep their power. Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay adopted authoritarian solutions in an attempt to solve the political-economical crisis and have control over the working class movement. This was the common solution in these countries, although with different aspects for each one. Such political changes had immediate influence over Lithuanian organizations.

In Brazil, 1930, Getúlio Vargas began a so-called "revolution" against traditional oligarchies, although the process was, in fact, a coup d'état. Vargas assumed dictatorial powers; in 1934 he was elected president by the parliament. With a new coup d'état in 1937, he created a "New State" (Estado Novo) based on the Italian Fascist constitution. During all this period, the Communist party remained illegal, despite keeping an active influence as well as taking clandestine actions.

After *Garsas* was shut down, the Lithuanian communist group had to be reorganized, even facing extreme political repression. The first Lithuanian newspaper connected to the Brazilian Communist Party was named *Darbininkų Žodis* (Word of the Workers). The newspaper was organized by a new association called *Lietuvių Artistinės ir Sportinės Kultūros Klubas* (LASK, Lithuanian Artistic and Sports Culture Club). Its editorial board was headed by Bronius Šabrinskas; because of his and other members' connection with the Communist Party, it was possible to use a clandestine printing press that the Party was running in a peripheral neighborhood of the city of São Paulo. The printing press was run by a Jewish Lithuanian named Abraham Kowalsky and his German wife Tzia. Both had entered Brazil clandestinely, and with help form the Communist Party, they were able to set up a

printing machine in a house in the city of São Paulo suburb where important news-papers and flyers began to be printed. Among the newspaper were the Lithuanian *Darbininkų Žodis* and the Yiddish *Our Words*. The newspaper strictly followed the directives of the Brazilian Communist Party, a policy called *Workerism* that defended the Communist political independence and spoke against alliances with other left-wing groups, especially the Social Democrats, whom they accused of Fascism.

However, against the Party's expectations and despite all the organization involved, the clandestine printing house was not successful. The Brazilian Secret Police was able to find the place after a few arrests conducted in March 18, 1932. Thus, the publication managed to be active for only one year, after which the majority of those involved in the publication were arrested and some of them banished from the country in the same year. While in prison, a few of the *Darbininkų Žodis* organizers began to prepare the next step for the Lithuanian Communist newspaper. In 1932, the São Paulo government decided to release all the political prisoners during the civil war against the federal government, an event which became known as the "Constitutional Revolution." During this period, Albinas Kynas and others who had worked for *Darbininkų Žodis* were free to reorganize the Lithuanian Communist newspaper. This was something they had been planning since their arrest, and even during their time in jail, according to Kynas' memories.

During the Getúlio Vargas administration, the Communist Party was considered an illegal organization, and an extreme persecution was conducted by the police. As a result, all the publications had to be kept clandestine, and Lithuanian activists had to confront the possibility of being arrested, banished, or killed by security forces. But even in such a challenging situation, Lithuanians managed to successfully publish another newspaper named *Mūsų Žodis* (Our Word), which was supported by the Brazilian Communist Party. Brazilian security forces were never able to locate the printing press or the publishers, despite intense investigation. It is important to remember that, in 1935, the Brazilian Communist Party attempted an unsuccessful coup d'état, and, as a result, the government adopted intensive repressive measures. Nevertheless, even in this situation Lithuanians were able to maintain their organizations functioning. The strategy was to keep a very small press board, and to locate the printing house in small towns near the city of São Paulo or running from one place to another.[8]

Military forces in Argentina also carried out a coup in 1930, and until 1943 an elite agreement ruled the country through fraudulent elections. This was certainly a difficult period for social organizations, especially for the Communist Party. The

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[8]   Zen, Erick Reis Godliauskas, "Attraction and Division: Lithuanian Organization in Brazil Under Surveillance of the Political Police (1924 – 1950)". Oikos 2010 Nr. 1 (9).

Lithuanian organizations were directly affected by these changes. In 1930, the *Rytojus* printing house was invaded by the police during the night, and destroyed. Simultaneously, *Rytojus* supporters began to be arrested, and printing of the newspaper was forbidden for two years.

Communist activists accused the Lithuanian consul of cooperation with Argentinean authorities, which resulted in detentions. In prison, political prisoners faced extreme conditions, because torture was a common practice which included, particularly, the use of electric shocks. Local newspapers began to criticize the violent actions undertaken by the police, and Lithuanians were mentioned in these newspapers because of their involvement. During that period, a few of the activists decided to move to Montevideo, Uruguay.

However, the remaining group of Communists had decided to reorganize their activities, and when Pranas Ulevičius was released by the Argentinean authorities, they managed to print *Tiesos Žodis* (Words of Truth) clandestinely; it was a small newspaper which had the purpose of denouncing the political persecution and the treatment and torture that political prisoners experienced at the hands of Argentinean authorities. It also claimed that the arrests were carried out on the basis of accusations made by Fascist and Catholic organizations that were cooperating with the police. According to the newspaper, they were also translating, for the Argentinean authorities, the personal papers and newspapers found in the possession of the activists, and even giving assistance during the interrogation processes, which could result in years of prison, or in banishment from Argentina.

In 1932, the new Argentinean president granted amnesty to the political prisoners. With this, the political reopening of *Rytojus* was carefully planned, and it was back in business the following year, with few editorial changes. This state of affairs changed once again in 1937, when another repression wave swept Argentina, and the paper was again shut down by the Argentinean government.

Simultaneously, part of the activists moved to Rosario, a city with better conditions due to its anti-Fascist government and a refuge to political activists such as Pranas Ulevičius. They formed the magazine *Dabartis* (The Present) in 1934, which was concerned with the theoretical Marxist approach, and also stimulated the translation of articles and the written production – both political and literary – by Lithuanian writers. The main goal of the publication was to present Lithuanian poetry and writers, and pave the road for Lithuanian cultural expression outside Nationalist and Catholic influences. The result was a magazine that not only published articles from Lithuanians in Argentina, but also received material from Brazil and Uruguay. In connection with United States, they also printed articles from important Lithuanian writers in that country, such as the previously mentioned

Mizara. When the Spanish Civil War began, however, a considerable part of the editorial board decided to join the International Brigade and the magazine could not be printed without their support.

Meanwhile, in Uruguay, the authoritarian solution was less effective because the country had the best-established democratic tradition in South America. In 1933, President Gabriel Terra closed the parliament and undertook executive actions in order to alter the Constitution; however, regular elections were immediately restored, and he in fact was re-elected in 1934. Social movements in Uruguay didn't face severe persecutions, as they did in Argentina and Brazil. The Uruguayan Communist Party was considered legal and it regularly participated in free elections, never having attempted a revolutionary action.

It was in this context that the most successful Lithuanian leftist newspaper was being produced. Founded in 1935, *Darbas* (Labor) can be considered as the most important Lithuanian newspaper in South America.[9] During the 1930s, the main subjects of the newspaper were the struggle against Nazi-Fascism and heavy criticism towards the Smetona government in Lithuania and other Lithuanian organizations in Montevideo. The newspaper published news and articles about the Uruguayan unions and politics. It also provided incentives for local participation and mobilization against the right wing, and, in this sense, it was pivotal for the introduction of Lithuanians in the Uruguayan political community.

Darbas's long years of activity were over in 1975, when a Uruguayan military coup shut down all left-wing organizations. But during its existence, it was able to establish a considerable information network, as it received all the other Lithuanian left-wing newspapers produced in South America, such as the *Mūsų Žodis* (Our Word) from Brazil, and *Dabartis* (The Present) from Argentina; it also received publications from North America, such as *Vilnis* and *Laisvė*, from the USA; and *Darbininkų Žodis* and *Liaudies Balsas* from Canada. Readers also contributed towards connecting the newspaper to local situations: they would write to the paper describing the conditions they were facing, as well as activities undertaken by organizations. Most of these letters were sent from Argentina and Brazil. The *Darbas* strategy was to create maximum connection with Lithuanian left-wing organizations and become an important information hub for all Lithuanians.

It is worth noticing the difference between a regular press, or a press made by media groups, and the workers' literature. In the regular press, readers are not directly responsible of what is being published and distributed – they are actually seen simply as consumers. In the workers' press, each individual has to take responsibility for the content as part of their own ideas and political perspective, because

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9   *Darbas* Colection, Montevidéu. Biblioteca Nacional de Uruguay (Uruguaian National Libery).

the acts of keeping, hiding, or merely reading such material could put them in danger of social/political exposure or even death. Imprisonment, torture, banishing, this was all part of the daily lives of political activists involved in press production and distribution.

In fact, a workers' newspaper is not made for individual readers. It was common for political activists to organize collective readings and debates. Thus, the reading moment was also a collective action of organization and socialization, bringing a deeper involvement with the newspaper's circulation and making it possible to build a community of readers. Individual readers would usually pass the newspaper to others after reading it, or even leave the newspaper in a strategic location, such as a hidden place inside a factory, a park or a club or association.

As we have seen, the clandestine production of "subversive" literature implied the making of a network in with each individual was involved as part of a chain. When this chain was broken, the result was always tragic for the participants.

LITHUANIANS AGAINST NAZISM-FASCISM

Inside the Communist movement, important changes were being carried out at the direction of the Communist International, in order to refine Red political perspectives and confront the growing Nazi and Fascist movements, both strengthened by the crisis in Spain and the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. In 1934, the Communist International organized their VII Congress, with a reorientation policy which allowed Communist parties to join in, and provided guidance to, other left-wing organizations in their common struggle against Fascism. In that same year, the III South American Communist Conference reinforced the new orientation. In Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay, organizations gathered in an anti-Fascist movement, and Lithuanian left-wing organizations became part of it.

As an outcome of their participation in the anti-Fascist movement, Lithuanian organizations conceived a new left-wing newspaper to spread their ideas and to rebuild networks as well as mobilize Lithuanians against Fascism. In 1936, *Momentas* (The Moment), the new anti-Fascist newspaper, was founded by a cooperative named *Talka*, organized to spread information and form political perceptions about the struggle against Fascism in Argentina, Lithuania, and Spain.[10] During the war, it was one of the main sources of information until it was shut down by the police. The movement against Fascism had special importance for Lithuanian leftists, since they considered the then Lithuanian president Antanas Smetona as part

[10]   *Momentas* Colection, Buenos Aires. Biblioteca de La Nación Argentina (Argentina National Library).

of the Fascist problem, and were determined to fight against his government. They would also oppose organizations in South America that received support from the Lithuanian government; this resulted in increased tensions between left-wing and right-wing Lithuanians, so conflicts became part of day-to-day Lithuanian community life in Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay.

The anti-Fascist mobilization increased when the Spanish Civil War began, and the Communist parties started to recruit volunteers all over the world to join the International Brigade. This mobilization was very important in Argentina, from where a significant number of volunteers where recruited, twenty-five of which were Lithuanian immigrants. In Brazil and Uruguay, Lithuanians also joined the International Brigades. It was a very important matter for Lithuanian newspapers in South America and North America, because by then the anti-Fascist message had been spread, as had been the information about the Spanish political situation and the Communist parties' mobilization. This mobilization also happened in support of brigadiers, and to gather donations of food, medicines, and other essential items. These actions involved a large number of people in neighborhoods and associations.[11]

In this sense, Lithuanian newspapers established different connections in order to bring information to the Lithuanian colony in South America. A particular connection to be analyzed was Albino Kynas, who, during the Spanish War, sent letters from the front in which he described the conjuncture, hopes, and problems. His letters turned dramatic when he realized that they were losing the war and that he would have to escape with other Lithuanians. Kynas left Spain and decided to return to his homeland, from where he had immigrated at the age of thirteen.

It is possible, therefore, to conclude that Lithuanian Leftists in South America have been connected with each other – as well as with Lithuanians in North America – since their first steps in the continent. They were able to build networks supporting newspaper production and circulation in different countries. As a consequence, it became possible to share information not just regarding political movements, but also the daily life in those countries – a reader could, for instance, know what kind Lithuanian organizations existed in each country, as well as the activities being carried out locally. They could also be informed about who had been arrested, or those who were in need some kind of financial support. In the same way, they were well informed about Party and Union activities and political outlook, and were able to share data and perspectives through a fast network – a remarkable feat, considering how difficult it was to produce and disseminate

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[11]   Dorado, Gustavo... (et. al.) *Voluntarios de la Argentina enla Guerra Civil Española.Buenos Aires*: Edicionesdel CCC Centro de Cultura de Coop. FlorealGorini, 2008.

newspapers in different countries, under constant surveillance. In the same direction, they formulated extreme criticism towards the government and the Lithuanian society. Smetona was considered a Fascist, as we mentioned, and accused of destroying Lithuanian culture and the political community.

Moreover, by getting connected and sharing information, Lithuanians reinforced the use of the Lithuanian language and common references, such as Lithuanian history, culture, and particular concerns regarding homeland. They showed concern with their national community even as they were spread across different countries. The Lithuanian press and its circulation across the borders created an extended political community, preserving and reinforcing the perception of a unity of people who shared the same destiny and who, at the same time, were influenced by local circumstances and political changes.

In order to understand this connection and how the newspapers could be sent to each country, it is worth pointing out that despite the distance from one city to another – Buenos Aires, Montevideo, São Paulo, New York – there was a web of communication among them. Regular mail was used in the beginning, but as the authorities realized that the newspapers had Communist content, this strategy became more difficult. In Argentina and in Brazil, for instance, all mail went through censorship, which made it impossible to send any kind of left-wing newspaper or book. However, regular commercial trade among these countries generated other effective ways of communicating information. Trading ships connected New York to Montevideo, Buenos Aires to Santos (which would then be connected by train to São Paulo), for instance. Ships not only transported industrial products or meat and coffee, they also transported printed ideas. The United States, Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay were connected via different regular routes, requiring an efficient network of supporters in order to ship and transport newspapers. This meant that disseminating this almost clandestine literature was hard work.

A close analysis of the newspapers shows that their own readers were involved in the production of the issues, as well. Issues would, for the most part, contain articles and letters sent by readers located in different parts of the countries where the publications were printed. In this way, these publications were not just the result of a single action, or of the Party's direction – they were a collective production that reflected the daily lives of immigrants, their political organization and life conditions, and their prospects and future projects. Thus, more than individual consumers, they were part of a political community sharing the possibility, as Lithuanians and Communists, of being participants and protagonists of this movement in the country they were living in and of Lithuania's political future and destiny.

WORLD WAR II AND COMMUNIST ORGANIZATIONS

During the 1930s, every Lithuanian newspaper was confronted with the question about how to fight Nazism and Fascism. Nevertheless, when the Second World War began, other questions arose and had to be considered, mainly because of the Lithuanian situation. As soon as the war started, Lithuania was occupied by Soviet forces which overthrew the Lithuanian government and replaced it for a Communist regime, while President Smetona left the country. The Smetona escape and the Communist regime were celebrated by all Lithuanian left-wing newspapers. They had understood this fact as a victory against Fascism and a possible resistance against the German Army. It is important to remark that the fall of Smetona also meant the disorganization of Lithuanian nationalist associations in South America, another reason for left-wing celebration.

This general sense of relief, however, was replaced by deep worry when news arrived about Nazi forces having occupied Lithuania. The struggle against Nazism was still the main reason for the Lithuanian lefwing mobilization, which implied a double move by these immigrants: supporting the Red Army in Europe and joining the anti-Fascist movement in the country where they had settled. Nazi-Fascist ideologies inspired government members and influenced the political status in South America. Argentina and Uruguay adopted formal neutrality as a foreign policy, while Brazil joined the Allies. The internal situation in these countries, though, was very different. In Brazil, the formal alliance with the Allies did not improve the scenario for leftists, particularly leftist immigrants. The police carried on with strong surveillance and repression, whenever they saw fit. In Uruguay, the president had to face the constant threat of coups perpetrated by Fascist-inspired politicians.

In Argentina, sympathy for Nazism was no secret, and the repression of left-wing movements was part of their existence. In 1943, another military coup was organized against the agreement and the conservative president. In the elections of 1946, Juan Domingo Peron won and ruled the country until 1955. He introduced deep changes in the state organization, as well as in the social security and labor sectors. This kind of government is commonly named "populism." "Populist governments from Latin America were marked by highly charismatic, reformist leadership which was simultaneously inspired by authoritarian ideas (e.g., Fascism) and repressive of certain political stances, especially those of left-wing orientation. Argentina's government not only forcibly subjugated unwanted movements: it also let Fascist groups act freely against said movements." As a result, conflicts were common.

This situation reflected on Lithuanian left-wing organizations in many ways. In Argentina, the newspaper *Momentas* (The Moment) was closed by the police, as we mentioned, and it became increasingly difficult for other Communist organizations to support their own projects and publications. They became dependent on legal newspapers and on the shipping of *Darbas* from Uruguay to Argentina. Brazil's conditions were no better, but Communist Lithuanians already had a long-term experience in acting clandestinely. In fact, the police were never able to find where the newspaper *Mūsų Žodis* (Our Word) was being printed and who its publisher was – although, for internal reasons, and for reorganizational purposes, the newspaper was closed in 1939. It was replaced by *Tiesa* (The Truth), edited, again, by Afonsas Marma.

Another Lithuanian association in Brazil struggling against Fascism was *Rytas* (The Morning), founded in 1935 by Lithuanians dissatisfied with the policies of Smetona, and with associations supported in Brazil by the Lithuanian government. *Rytas* had an important theater group with actors who performed regularly, and it also published a magazine with the same name for spreading the association's views. The association was constantly under police surveillance and, for this reason, had a limited scope of actions. One of those was to make donations in order to support the Red Cross and other associations in favor of the anti-Fascism/Nazism struggle in Europe – this kind of support became legal with the Brazilian Army engaging in the war. However, because of Nationalist laws, the group's activities were limited and the publication was forbidden.

The magazine published by the *Rytas* association was devoted to promote Lithuanian culture and literary expression. Its pages were covered by poetry, short histories, literary reviews, as well as analysis of Lithuanian history and social questions. The publication adopted a Socialist view, and its main concern, similar to that of the Argentinean *Dabartis*, was to form a Lithuanian Socialist culture different from, and better than, the Nationalist culture. When foreign-language publications were declared illegal, the magazine had to stop circulating. Since *Tiesa* was a small newspaper and *Rytas* could not be printed anymore, key activities came to be concentrated in Uruguay.

In Uruguay, the anti-Fascist movement was more expressive. *Darbas* became the main Lithuanian newspaper in South America, forming important connections in each country, bringing readers information about events in the continent. The newspaper also established networks in Lithuania and in the Soviet Union.

Some Lithuanians who had fought in the Spanish Civil War decided to go back to Lithuania, and from there they would send letters to *Darbas*. When the Nazi invasion began, they joined the fight as partisans. The other *Darbas* connection

was established directly with members of the Lithuanian Communist government, which had been removed to the Soviet Union. Those networks allowed *Darbas* to present Lithuanian readers with a view about war consequences in Lithuania, and encourage community mobilization. Lithuanians began organizing their community in order to support the war against Germany. Meetings, festivals, theatre performances, and parties were organized in order to gather funds which would then be donated to the Soviet Union and the Red Army.

When the Second World War was over, new directions and positions had to be taken, especially because Lithuania had become part of Soviet Union. This fact was celebrated by the Communist Lithuanians in America, and the relationship between *Darbas* and the Soviet Lithuanian government included telegrams and letters that politicians sent to the newspaper. This proximity with formal Soviet politics caused tensions to rise among Lithuanian groups, particularly the Nationalists and Catholics, and conflicts escalated inside the Lithuanian community. Other groups and newspapers supportive of the anti-Nazism/Fascism struggle did not agree with a Communist government in Lithuania obedient to Moscow. Protests against the Red Army presence in Lithuania became stronger during the last year of war. One of the newspapers which shared this view, *Balsas* (The Voice), was printed in Argentina.[12]

Confronted with such geopolitical changes, left-wing organizations saw a growing tension when Western countries such as Brazil began to receive Displaced Persons (DPs). Communist activists, as well as the Soviet Union itself, considered Displaced Persons to be collaborators with the Fascists and the Nazis; for this reason, they thought, countries should not allow their entrance as immigrants. To pursue these questions, Lithuanian leftists called for a congress in Montevideo.

In 1946, *Darbas* announced the congress and gained immediate support from Lithuanians in Argentina and Brazil and, more importantly, from the Lithuanian Communist government. The congress was held in Montevideo, on August 24 to 26 of that same year, with the name of *Pirmasis Pietų Amerikos Lietuvių Kongresas* (First United Lithuanian Congress in South America). It ended with the approval of ten resolutions which demanded that South American governments refuse to receive displaced persons, arguing that these should be deported as war criminals to the USSR. Likewise, they defended the recognition of "Soviet Lithuania", and did not acknowledge the country's former consuls. They also proposed supporting Lithuanian reconstruction. The newspaper *Darbas* was declared the most important press organ.[13]

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[12] *Balsas* Colection, Buenos Aires. Biblioteca de La Nación Argentina (Argentine National Library)

[13] *Pirmojo Pietų Amerikos Lietuvių Kongreso Leidinys*. Buenos Aires, 1947.

Despite all the participation and decisions, in most cases the Lithuanian leftists were not able fulfill the intentions decided upon in the Congress. The five Lithuanians who represented their community in Brazil were arrested in 1947, as political changes took place in Brazil, causing the Communist Party to be once again considered illegal, and left-wing organizations had to face widespread repression. Even *Rytas* was closed by police forces, and most of its readers were arrested. This fact was a blow to Lithuanians in Brazil, who were not able to rebuild a left-wing association or even a newspaper. For a short period of time, they tried to publish a newspaper, but it was not possible to maintain the newspaper due to political repression.

At this time, Soviet propaganda encouraged the return of immigrants to Lithuania, and over one hundred families from Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay went back to their homeland. Their comeback was not just a matter of successful Soviet propaganda: the perspective of returning has always been part of the immigrant imagination, and the Communist ideology was a part of Lithuanian daily life. Along with those feelings, the idea of a Soviet Union became part of their return, as it also meant hope for a better future. Furthermore, as was pointed out in this article, for decades Lithuanians maintained a political view about their homeland, and they still felt part of the Lithuanian political community. In this sense, going back to Lithuania under a Communist regime was a double wish fulfillment. In addition, the Soviet Union knew how to promote the progressive image of a Lithuania in reconstruction.

When the first families arrived in Lithuania, they sent letters to be published in *Darbas*, and also photos, which reinforced the idea of progress in the country. In 1956, the Soviet Union began to promote and organize commissions of visitors to Lithuania. The idea was to show Lithuanians in America how their country had become a better place. However, when commissions went back to Uruguay and Argentina, tensions inside the community were very strong: it had become clear that two different movements were trying to co-opt the Lithuanians: on the one hand, the Nationalist movement (in the liberal-conservative sense) together with the Catholic movement; on the other hand, the Communists. Leftists also sustained their network in the USA, particularly the *Laisvė* and *Vilnis* newspapers.

For as long as they existed, left-wing movements had to face extreme repression in the form of imprisonment, torture, murder, and people's disappearances – these were all part of an activist's life, even during the formal periods of democracy in South America. One of these activists was Alfonsas Marma. Marma had been responsible for important Lithuanian Communist newspapers, like *Garsas*, *Mūsų Žodis* (Our Word), *Tiesa*, and the *Rytas* magazine, in Brazil; as well as *Raudona*

Vėliava, in Uruguay. In the 1950s, the persecution of Communist militants became intense and Marma had to escape from city to city. However, Brazilian Security forces and the police had orchestrated operations in order to eliminate militants, and the security forces killed him in 1949. Marma's death was a shock to all Lithuanian left-wing activists and was reported by every Lithuanian newspaper in different countries. For many years *Darbas*, for example, published a memorial on the date of his death, which became a symbol of the oppressed. In North America, *Laisvė* reported Marma's death one week after it had occurred.

This conflict went on for decades, but the Lithuanian left-wing movement was crushed during the 1960s and 1970s, when military coups were carried out in Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay. The military violently repressed left-wing movements, resulting in thousands of imprisonments and deaths. Lithuanians were also victims in this process, and the repression put an end to their activities. In 1974, the newspaper *Darbas* was declared illegal. Indeed, Lithuanian leftists in Brazil had to look for support from Lithuanian associations and newspapers in other countries.

In Argentina, Lithuanian Communists were able to keep their associations and activities for decades despite the repression. Newspapers connected to the Soviet Union were founded, but most of them were closed by the police, such as *Vienybė* (Unity) and *Tėvynė* (Fatherland). The last one was the *Vaga*, which was shut down at the end of the 1980s.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Considering the large number and circulation of publications produced by Lithuanian Communist activists, one can understand how important it was for them to disseminate information. The Communist ideology was part of daily Lithuanian life. In the countries analyzed, Lithuanian immigrants became very organized and made important contributions to local Communist parties and to the struggle against fascism in the Spanish Civil War: it was this coordination among Lithuanian groups that allowed them to structure an information network and exchange local newspapers to the point of transcending state borders.

By doing so, they reinforced their original identities by using Lithuanian as a common language, constructing references about their past and culture, and, more importantly, by bringing into debate the Lithuanian governments and political regimes, as well as expressing hopes for a better future. In this sense, even as immigrants, they were still part of the Lithuanian political community. They were

left-wing, they were Communists, and they were proud of been Lithuanian and of their proposals for a different view of their political community.

It is important to underline this aspect, because in the 1990s, with the fall of the Soviet Union, another version of Lithuanian history was created – in it, the left-wing and Communist perspectives were condemned, or even banished from the official history, and from all memories. Such a fact has an even greater importance considering that other times of crisis may arrive, times when certainties are not so certain. Maybe it will be the right time for another Lithuanian history. A history open to complex views able to understand Lithuanian social traumas, the most important of which relate to dealing with two aspects of their past: the first is the fight undertaken by Lithuanians in order to build a Communist society in Lithuania and abroad, and the second is the fact that the Soviet regime resulted from a military occupation. Those are the issues for Lithuania's past, present, and future left-wing history.

Erick Reis Godliauskas Zen

IMIGRACIJA IR KOMUNISTINĖ SPAUDA: LIETUVIŲ ORGANIZACIJOS ARGENTINOJE, BRAZILIJOJE IR URUGVAJUJE

SANTRAUKA. Pagrindinė šio straipsnio užduotis – apžvelgti lietuviškus kairiosios pakraipos leidinius Pietų Amerikoje, taip pat ir per keletą jų politinės veiklos dešimtmečių išpuoselėtus informacijos tinklus. Mes analizuosime pagrindinius komunistinius laikraščius ir kaip jie buvo suorganizuoti. Ypatingą dėmesį kreipsime į tai, kaip jie suvokė Lietuvos valdžią ir kovą su fašizmu ir kaip jie žiūrėjo į Sovietų Sąjungą po Antrojo pasaulinio karo.

RAKTAŽODŽIAI: politinė kairė, laikraščiai, Pietų Amerika, komunizmas, fašizmas.