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Lithuanian diaspora: An interview study on the preservation or loss of Pre-World War Two traditional culture among Lithuanian Catholic Émigrés in Western Australia and Siberia, in comparison with Lithuanians in their homeland

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CHAPTER 4

LITHUANIA DURING THE PERIOD OF OCCUPATIONS

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> If the Russian Tsars, beginning with Ivan the Terrible, were trying to reach the Baltic Sea, they were doing this not for their own personal ambitions, but because this was required for the development of the Russian State and the Russian Nation. It would be unpardonable if the Soviet Union did not seize this opportunity which may never recur. The leaders of the Soviet Union have decided to incorporate the Baltic States into the family of the Soviet Republics (Molotov, in Harrison, 1944, p. 27).

This chapter presents an interpretative account of the periods of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (1939), the First Soviet occupation (1940-1941), the Nazi-German occupation (1941-1944) and the Second Soviet occupation (1944). I have decided on these events in the history of modern Lithuania as I consider them to be crucial in the development and character of the Lithuanian diaspora and which have shaped the experience of Lithuanian *émigrés* and exiles that are the focus of my study.

As noted in Chapter 1, the available scholarship can be broadly divided into two streams. The literature written by historians and scholars shaped in the pre-WWII period such as Michael Bordeaux (1979), Albertas Gerutis (1969), E.J.Harrison (1948), Jonas Savasis (1966), Alfred Erich Senn (2001), Stanley Vardys (1965, 1978), Vittorio Vigneri (1969), who foreground traditional liberal, religious and cultural practice and interpretations of the Lithuanian experiences' and the work of those scholars of the post-WWII period, such as Alfonsas Eidintas (1998) and Zigmas Kiaupa (2002), formed by the education and political system operating in Soviet occupied Lithuania.

In the works of Zigmas Kiaupa and Alfonsas Eidintas the analysis and evaluation of the partisan movement, the Roman Catholic Church and the development of Soviet education policies are fragmented or absent. I have found it difficult to deal with this more recent scholarship that largely ignores or provides minor analysis of historical data and facts which are relevant to my present study. For statistics and figures I have had to rely principally on the findings of the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of

Lithuania (2004) based in Vilnius and on the work of Rimvydas Racenas (2005), a member of the former Siberian Lithuanian deportees' community

In my consideration of all these works, however, and in the topics which are the focus of my study, I argue for the recurring importance of land, religion and language to the cultural and national formation of the Lithuanian people. I demonstrate how they continue to retain the critical influence which they exerted in the centuries and decades before and during the first period of independence and which they still exert over the cultural beliefs and customs of the Lithuanian communities in Lithuania and abroad.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of non-aggression signed on August 23, 1939 between the Soviet Union and Nazi-Germany appeared to seal the fate of Lithuania in the context of developing European politics and history. It contained supplementary secret protocols demarking the future spheres of influence of the two countries in Eastern Europe. According to this secret agreement, Finland, Estonia and Latvia would fall into the Soviet sphere of influence, while Lithuania fell into the sphere of influence of Germany. On September 1, 1939 Germany attacked Poland and WWII began. The defeat of Poland and the Nazi-Soviet partition of the country changed the future of Lithuania. Lithuania entered the sphere of interest of the Soviet Union and Poland under German military control (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 362).

From 1940 to 1941 approximately 50,000 Lithuanians of German ethnicity were allowed to leave Lithuania for Germany. Significantly, among them was a large number of high ranking Government and military officials who served Independent Lithuania (Eidintas, 2003, p. 204).

On June 15, 1940 Soviet troops entered Lithuania after having delivered an ultimatum that demanded Lithuania "to guarantee the free entry of Soviet military units into the territory of Lithuania and their deployment in major centers in such numbers as to guarantee the necessary execution of the mutual assistance pact" (Eidintas, et al., 1998, pp. 174-176). At the same time the Lithuanian president Antanas Smetona with members of his government, fled to East Prussia. Contrary to the assertion made by the Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov the previous year, that the Soviet Union would confirm Baltic Independence, the Soviet Army wasted little time in asserting its authority.

> The Pacts with the Baltic States in no way imply the intrusion
> of the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Estonia, Latvia or
> Lithuania. … These Pacts are inspired by mutual respect for the
> governmental, social and economic system of each of the
> contracting parties….and [we] declare that foolish prattle of
> Sovietisation of the Baltic States is of use merely to our
> common enemies and to all kinds of anti-Soviet provocateurs.
> (Molotov, in Harrison, 1948, p. 24).

The first acts of the occupying forces, even before the official incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR, were the arrest and deportation to Siberia of the Lithuanian Prime Minister Antanas Merkys as well as a large number of other Lithuanian leaders with their families, and the beginning of the systematic elimination of those who opposed the New Order.

On July 21, 1940 Soviet rule in Lithuania was declared and the Sovietisation of the country began with Lithuania officially annexed into the Soviet Union as a Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (Eidintas et al., 1998, pp. 152-158). This put an end to the brief period of independence which had been so long in the making. Once again the people of Lithuania had to negotiate the issues of cultural identity and continuity in a shifting political context.

The First Soviet Occupation (1940-1941): The Elimination of the Intelligentsia

> Vilnius belongs to us, but we belong to Russia – *Vilnius mūsu, o mes rusu*
> (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 364).

The policy adopted by Moscow was to isolate Lithuania from the rest of the West, suppress any form of democracy and begin Sovietisation on the Stalinist model of socialism (Eidintas, 2003, p. 204). The Soviets dissolved the Lithuanian Parliament; abolished the Lithuanian currency, the *litas*; the national army became the Red Army's 29th Riflemen's Corps; and the police force under a changed leadership became a Soviet militia (Eidintas, et al., 1998, p. 185). Even before the official incorporation of Lithuania into the USSR and the election of the Lithuanian representatives to the new People's *Seimas* (Parliament) in July 1940 the Soviet authorities arrested all those elements who opposed the New Order or who had campaigned against the elections. The country's

intelligentsia, the leaders of political parties, government officials, civil servants and military personnel were all targeted.

This process of systematic elimination of the social structure associated with the class system anathema to socialism was in clear opposition to the stated aims of the 1939 Mutual Assistance Pact. It revealed the Soviets to be another Russian authoritarian regime which, like its Czarist predecessors, considered Lithuanian territory and its population as a device to be used to protect and promote Soviet interest. Soviet supporters denied the ideological outcomes which these policies were designed to achieve, arguing that Lithuania, as part of a worker's state, would develop eventually a culture, 'national in form, socialist in content' (Eidintas, et al., 1998, p. 188).

To achieve their objective the Soviets divided the population into the "people workers, whom they represented and defended and the enemies of the people" (Kiaupa, 2002, p. 377). This enforced Sovietisation affected all aspects of Lithuanian life. Massive arrests soon began to take place and it is estimated that by August 1940 about 1,300 people were imprisoned and without any formal trial or conviction some were summarily sentenced and deported to remote areas of the Soviet Union (Kuodyte and Tracevskis, 2004, pp. 5-6). From October to November of the same year, expanded lists of so called anti-Soviet elements were drawn up, this time targeting a wide range of people including members of religious congregations and anyone who was considered a potential political and or class danger to the New Order.

During the first mass deportation from June 14 to June 18, 1941 a total of 16,246 people were deported (Kuodyte, and Tracevskis, 2004, pp. 18-19). The NKVD (Soviet Secret Police), assisted by local collaborators, carried out the whole operation. The people listed were notified that according to a government decision, they were to be resettled in other regions of the Soviet Union. Moscow's instruction required the separation of men from their families. Thus, 3,915 men and 12,331 women, children and elderly people were deported to the territories of the Altaij Mountains, the Komi Republic, the Krasnoyarsk, Kolyma and Tomsk regions, to Kazakhistan and Tadzhikistan (Racėnas, 2005, pp. 1-20). Formal procedures for carrying out these deportations are shown in Appendix 1.

Official data has established that an additional 3,542 people were arrested, imprisoned and sent to Siberia directly from prisons. A further 450 children disappeared from summer camps, as well as 426 soldiers and 54 members of military families (Eidintas, 2003, p. 206). Further deportation plans were disrupted by the outbreak of the Soviet-German conflict on June 22, 1941. Prior to evacuating the country, the Soviet Army massacred a large number of political prisoners at Petrasiunai near Kaunas and in the Rainiai Forest in the Telsiai and Panevezys counties (Vardys, et al., 1965, p. 63). The severity of these massacres even in a time of war was such that they have become symbols, for continuing generations of Lithuanian scholars, *émigré* Lithuanians and those still living in the country, of the brutality and injustices which they associate with Soviet rule.

The first Soviet occupation lasted one year from June 15, 1940 to June 22, 1941 (Vardys, et al., 1965, pp. 61-63). Those members of the government who fled Lithuania, left behind a country in a political vacuum and in a weakened position to organize, from within the country, any effective political or military resistance to the Soviet occupation. As most of these refugees went to Germany it was from there that the Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) was formed on November 17, 1940. Contacts with the LAF were maintained by Lithuanian underground and these groups emerged when German-Soviet hostilities began in June 1941 (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 378-381).

The German Occupation: The Lithuanian Jewish Holocaust (1941-1944)

> The subject of the holocaust in Lithuania exemplifies the arguments of those who insist that there is no such thing as "objective history". …The moment a historian begins to analyse the larger context, his findings become unacceptable to one or another group of readers (Senn, 2001, p. 1).

On June 22, 1941 Germany attacked the Soviet Union and the German army crossed into Lithuania. A popular uprising against Soviet rule broke out throughout Lithuania in the same month. The re-establishment of the Lithuanian state was declared by the anti-Soviet Lithuanian Activist Front (LAF) which established a Provisional Government (Senn, 2001, p. 23). The uprising demonstrated to the Germans the Lithuanians' will to regain their independence.

In a short period of time the German Occupation Authorities suppressed the Provisional Lithuanian Government. The Nazi authority's objective was to include the Lithuanian territory with its population into the German war machine (Senn, 1998, p. 189). Although the *Ober-Ost* (German Occupation Directorate) approved the partial re-establishment of pre-Soviet administrative forms and practices, the introduction of a German civilian administration, the dismissal of the provisional Government, and the failure to restore the Lithuanian currency, the *litas*, were signs that Lithuania was to be just another occupied territory. Independent political or economic life was not tolerated and German rules were *de rigueur*.

The country was divided into districts and local Lithuanian authorities were recruited to oversee them. While, for the Germans, Lithuania represented a territory for later colonization, in keeping with the German policy of *Lebensraum*, their immediate focus was to mobilize and conscript labor to serve in Germany and to establish military and paramilitary corps to support the German war effort. The Lithuanian economy was also organized to meet German war needs. Farmers were required to fulfill requisition quotas of agricultural products and livestock. All industries previously nationalised by the Soviets were now controlled by the German authorities, with all farms that had formerly belonged to the State, deportees of the First Soviet occupation, Jews and Germans who were repatriated to the *Reich*.

The German failure to return confiscated properties to their legitimate owners provoked anti-German feelings among the rural population, which intensified when the authorities allowed German citizens to settle on some of these properties, while only a small number of Lithuanian farmers were entitled to regain their land. Indeed, most of the remaining land was retained by the Germans as state property. On May 2, 1942 Germans demanded the mobilization of 100,000 Lithuanian men for labor service in Germany (Kiaupa, 2002, pp. 387-388). This was followed by a second mobilization in autumn 1942, for military reinforcement of the Eastern German front. All men of seventeen years and over had to register for the *Waffen SS Force*. The military recruitment as a whole was not successful, leading to random arrests and deportations to Germany. Lithuanians again demonstrated through this passive resistance their sense of identity and nationhood.

The retreat of the Soviet army aroused anxiety in the Lithuanian Jewish community. Although the Soviets had deported thousands of Lithuanian Jews in June 1941, identifying them with the Lithuanian intellectual and middle classes (Reitlinger, 1962, pp. 260-267), most of the Jewish Lithuanians perceived Soviet rule as far more acceptable than Nazi occupation. Ben-Cion Pinchuck, in his study *Shtetl Jews under Soviet Rule*, stated that "Pogroms and Nazi terror, not enthusiasm for Communism, were the dominant forces that drove the Jews towards the Soviets" (Ben-Cion Pinchuck, 1990, p. 22), adding that the more affluent Jews had found it difficult to adapt to the New Order. The less affluent often associated with small rural communities and younger and more secular Jews had seen the possibility of finding a better opportunity for them in Soviet-occupied Lithuania. This was their hope after their experiences with the government policies which had sought to promote the interests of ethnic Lithuanians over other sections of the population.

For ethnic Lithuanians who had previously exercised political and administrative power, the Jewish participation in the government under the Soviets led to tension and to an increase in conflict between the two ethnic groups. The interpretation of Soviet rule from 1940 to 1941 held by these two groups therefore differed sharply. Jews erroneously saw Soviet rule as a possible protection against the Nazis, while for the Lithuanians the Soviet suppression of their culture and political independence was the primary reality. As a result, at the time of German occupation tension between ethnic and Jewish Lithuanians was at a dangerous level, with some, according to Senn, even complaining about the 'Jewish Government' (Senn, in Eidintas, et al., 1998, p. 189).

When Jews tried to follow the retreating Soviet army in a desperate attempt to avoid the approaching Germans, they were turned back at the Soviet border. Their attempt to escape was perceived by the ethnic Lithuanians as confirmation that Jews were anti-Lithuanian and therefore Soviet collaborators. Thus, they started to be subjected to violence by elements of the ethnic Lithuanian population in addition to the anti-Semitic laws introduced by the Germans and their Lithuanian and Soviet collaborators (Senn, 2001, pp. 6-7). Anti-Semitic German propaganda, calling on people to join the fight against 'Jewish bolshevism' resulted in 'spontaneous' pogroms. In Kaunas alone, partisans from June 25 to June 26 killed 3,800 Jews (Reitlinger, 1962, pp. 260-267). Nazi propaganda which equated Jews with Bolshevism appeared credible to a people

who had endured Soviet rule and who wanted a scapegoat for their hardship and losses. As a consequence, thousands of Jews were killed even before the Germans took control of the so-called 'Jewish Question'.

The Nazi occupation with its military and racial agendas had a different outcome for the ethnic and Jewish Lithuanians. The systematic repressions, arrests and massacres of Lithuanian Jews organized by the special German group *Einsatzgruppe A* with the recruitment of ethnic Lithuanians in carrying out its actions, resulted in the annihilation by the end of the war, of more than 80% of Lithuania's pre-WWII Jewish population (Eidintas, et al., 1998, p. 190).

The Second Soviet Occupation (1944): The Mass Deportation of the *Kulaks*

> Their official guilt was their social class; they were owners of
> private farms (Kuodyte and Tracevskis, 2004, p. 20).

When the Soviets regained Lithuania from Nazi-Germany in autumn 1944, mass deportations to Siberia were resumed. The Soviets argued that the action was necessary to eliminate the outlawed anti-Soviet partisan movement and their supporters. Significantly, the farming and rural classes, which during the war had provided both fighters and tactical support to the partisan movement, whose operations were mainly based in the rural areas, were also targeted. Mass reprisals were launched against entire villages whose inhabitants were said to have given help and shelter to the partisans. In some small villages not a single person was left behind (Kuodyte and Tracevskis, 2004, pp. 19-21).

Arrests followed by deportations took place throughout the remaining period of the war and for many years to follow. In 1944 approximately 1,338 Lithuanians were imprisoned. In 1945 under more systematically organized repression 7,368 Lithuanians were exiled and 31,661 imprisoned. From 1946 to 1947 approximately 4,864 were exiled and 36,506 imprisoned. These figures do not include the 18,000 partisans and guerilla fighters who died from 1944 to 1953 (Racėnas, 2005, p. 11).

In 1947 a campaign began for the introduction of the *kolkhozes* (co-operative farms) under Soviet control while the *kulaks* (small landowners) were burdened with progressive taxes and forced to make large requisition payments. These measures made their ability to remain on the land as independent landowners increasingly untenable. In spite of this initial Soviet campaign, only twenty *kolkhozes* were formed and in March 1948 a new resolution was passed enacting the Organisation of Collective Farms in the Republic. The resistance to join the *kolkhozes* among the Lithuanian farming class induced the Soviet authorities immediately to begin a new programme of deportations to purge those who opposed the decrees and farm holders who employed paid laborers, the latter being seen as *buozės* (bourgeois) exploiters of working people (Gerutis, et al., 1965, p. 299).

The landholders' classification as class enemies meant that the deportations were aimed at whole families. The largest deportations took place in May 1948, March 1949 and October 1951. In May 1948 more than 41,000 people were deported (12,100 families). In March 1949 another 30,000 people with more than 8,000 children were exiled while in the third operation, in October 1951, almost 17,000 people with approximately 5,000 children among them were deported (Kuodyte and Tracevskis, 2004, pp. 20-22). These deportations continued until Stalin's death in 1953. After his death the period of physical terror slowly began to ease and by the late 1950s his successor, Nikita Khrushchev, allowed deportees to return home following a series of amnesties.

About 50,000 deportees were unable to meet the criteria imposed by the Lithuanian Communist authorities for returning to Lithuania, and they were forced to settle either in Latvia or Kalinigrad, or had to remain in Siberia (Kuodyte and Tracevskis, 2004, pp. 20-31).

During these two Soviet occupations Lithuanians were deported for sentences of varying lengths of time: twenty years in June 1941; ten years in 1947 to 1948; and for an unlimited period of time from 1949 to 1953. Data from the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania records that 132,000 Lithuanians in total were exiled from 1940 to 1953, to remote areas of the Soviet Union; and that they were not allowed to leave these isolated zones during the whole period of Stalin's rule (Kuodyte and Tracevskis, 2004, p. 5). The high numbers of women and children among the deportees

clearly indicates that the action was taken against a class and not individuals, the aim being the control and re-organization of both the social and economic fabric of the Lithuanian state.

But this is not to say that armed resistance was not mobilized amongst the Lithuanian population.

> The Lithuanian nation, separated for more than three years from the outside world by a wall of bayonets, desires that the world should hear the true voice of the Lithuanian people (Harrison, 1948, pp. 46-47).

Partisan groups and opposition to the Soviet and Nazi-German occupations had been active since the beginning of WWII both in occupied Lithuania and outside its borders among the *émigrés*. At the time of the second Soviet Occupation (1944) Lithuania was predominantly a rural country. Most of the ethnic Lithuanian population was engaged in farming and living in villages and small country towns. The rural areas became the stronghold of Lithuanian national identity and provided both fighters and tactical support to the partisan movement which opposed the collectivization of the country's agriculture, and protected the cultural and religious values of the ethnic Lithuanian population. The resistance movement, although based in rural areas, drew supporters from all different social and political backgrounds of the Lithuanian population who shared the same goals. On January 16, 1944 – the twenty-sixth anniversary of the declaration of Lithuanian independence – a supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania was established. The stated objectives were:

> To liberate Lithuania from the occupation and to restore the functioning of Lithuania's sovereign organs, temporarily impeded by foreign forced … [and called on Lithuanians] … to imbue themselves with the spirit of unity and collaboration in this unequal struggle for the liberation of Lithuania (Harrison, 1948, p. 47).

While the organizational structure of the partisans' groups differed from region to region, all individual organizations were built around the principle of secrecy and military discipline. The partisans worked against the establishment of Soviet cells of local Lithuanian collaborators and on sabotaging all Soviet institutions including the NKVD (Secret Soviet Police). The official Declaration of the Supreme Committee of Liberations is shown in Appendix 2.

Active partisan resistance under the second Soviet occupation lasted for eight years from 1944 to 1953. By the spring of 1945 the resistance's operative forces were estimated at around 30,000 fighters (Vardys, et al., 1965, p. 85), with partisan units of varying sizes operating actively all over Lithuania except for areas near the Baltic Sea and the Prussian borders where Red Army contingents were stationed. Being familiar with the local area and armed with automatic weapons left behind by the retreating German army, the partisans inflicted heavy casualties on the Red Army through their guerilla strategies of ambushes and night raids. The repressive measures adopted by the Soviets aimed to defeat the underground guerillas included the mass deportation of the *kulaks* with their families, and the establishment of local militias known as *stribai* (people's defender) to undermine and paralyze the activity of the partisans.

Open warfare could not be maintained and consequently, the partisans who had been always associated with the Lithuanian nationalism started a new type of resistance, sabotaging the attempts of the Soviet authorities to repress key national symbols. In the early 1950s the singing of the national hymn and displaying of the tricolour yellow, green and red as well as the use of national symbols such as the knight on horseback or the schematised representation of the pillars of Gediminas, were banned. Partisans retaliated with symbolic actions such as tearing down the Soviet flag and raising the tricolour in its place.

In spite of such sporadic and symbolic resistance, by 1952 the partisan movement had failed to reverse the second Soviet occupation. Two factors appear to have been pivotal in this outcome. Firstly was the miscalculation by leaders of the partisan movement of Soviet resources and therefore of the chance of a military and political victory. A long guerilla war against the Soviets was militarily impossible without support from abroad. Secondly, an incorrect interpretation of international developments led the leaders of the partisan movement to erroneously rely on the idea that support would come from the United States and Great Britain at the time when war-weary nations were dividing Europe and looking to their own internal re-construction. Although the partisans failed to achieve their primary political purpose of restoring Lithuanian independence, their resistance encouraged nationalist ideas and loyalties in Soviet Lithuania making it more difficult for the Soviet authorities to re-shape Lithuania in their own image.

The Church during the Second Soviet Occupation

> Our goal is to put into practice the real freedom of conscience.
> Let the believers believe, but the non-believers should not be
> forced to study religion, marry in Church, be baptized, or pay
> for the support of the church (Vardys, 1978, p. 46).

The Church was another significant mobilizor of resistance and its clergy received corresponding attention from Soviet authorities. Following the Soviet occupation in June 1940, the control of religious practice and the consequent elimination of the Roman Catholic Church were the objectives for a Soviet administration determined to re-shape Lithuania as a people's Socialist Republic. In June1940 the Soviet authorities decreed the separation of Church and State and annulment of the Concordat of 1927 with the Vatican State (Vardys, 1978, p. 47). Although these initial measures signaled secularisation rather than the systematic destruction of the church and religious life, subsequent actions and decrees made evident that the Soviet position was far more hostile. Church property was confiscated and parishes were only allowed to retain 7.5 acres of land, which included the ground occupied by the church and the parish cemetery. State financial support for the clergy instituted by the Smetona government was discontinued (Bordeaux, 1979, p. 4).

On October 31, 1940 all private buildings owned by the Church were nationalized including parish housing, so that priests were forced to rent their accommodation from the state. A significant number of churches, religious buildings and monasteries became state property, used by the Soviet army stationed in the major cities or converted for other administrative purposes. See photographs in Appendix 13. The clergy's survival depended increasingly on contributions by the parishioners, whose ability to sustain the clergy during a time of war was made even more difficult by the collapsing value of the *litas* (Vardys, 1978, p. 53).

Having acted against Church property, the Soviet authorities turned their attention to the teaching and practice of religion in the country. On June 28, 1940 the Communist Party banned the teaching of religion and its practices in public schools, with the removal of all crosses and religious objects from the classrooms. All private schools were nationalized and the Catholic Faculty of Theology and Philosophy at the University of

Kaunas was closed. Chaplains were dismissed from their positions in hospitals, the army and prisons (Savasis, 1966, pp. 16-20). Faced with a clergy and a population who continued to conduct and receive religious instruction in secrecy, the Soviet authorities demanded each individual priest to sign a declaration in which they renounced to disseminate religious instruction.

> I, the undersigned, a religious servant, residing at _____ village, _____ county, testify by my signature, that on April _____, 1941 I received a formal announcement forbidding the giving of religious instruction to school children and those of pre-school age, at school, at their homes or at my quarters – in a word, anywhere. Similarly, I have no right to discuss religious questions with them. I also understand that, failing to observe this order, I shall be liable to legal action (Savasis, 1966, pp. 17-18).

A programme of intensive surveillance was established in the cities. The aim was to intimidate the population and, in particular, public servants and teachers, preventing them from attending religious services and having any form of association with the clergy (Bordeaux, 1979, pp. 6-10). The battle against the superstition of the masses was also fought through the abolition and re-naming of religious feast days. Christmas and Easter were declared working days and those who missed work or school on these days were threatened with dismissal. Sundays were often declared working days, particularly when a Party celebration had been held during the week (Savasis, 1966, p. 72).

The Soviet authorities believed that, as a result of these measures, Lithuanian priests would be persuaded to leave the priesthood and take up civilian positions in some 'productive area' (Savasis, 1966, p. 19). Most of the clergy, however, continued to resist these measures and to pursue their ministry, with some choosing prison or exile in Germany rather than recruitment as government respondents against other priests or parishioners. All priests themselves became the subject of organized surveillance through the NKVD and were targeted in a systematic programme by the State-controlled press as 'enemies of the people' and 'exploiters of the working class' (Savasis, 1966, p. 19). As part of the Soviet recognition of the threat posed by the clergy's position and influence on Lithuanian population and the strong identification with the Nationalist movement, most priests were among the groups selected for deportation in the mass operation which occurred on June, 1941 (Vardys, et al., 1965, pp. 218-220).

From 1946 to 1949, approximately 180 priests were deported to labor camps in remote areas of the Soviet Union (Vardys, et al., 1966, pp. 220-222). By 1947 only one bishop, K. Paltarokas of Panavežys remained in Lithuania. The seminaries that had been re-opened during the period of the Nazi-German occupation of 1941-1944, were now closed for the second time, with the exception of the seminary in Kaunas. Student admissions were strictly monitored and limited and some members of the administrative and academic staff were arrested and later deported, effectively neutralizing the Church's ability to prepare a new generation of priests. By 1947 all convents and monasteries were closed, and their members dispersed, imprisoned or deported, so that within three years of the Soviet return, the ground work for the achievement of the stated goal of a secular society seemed to have been laid (Vardys, et al., 1966, pp. 220-222).

With Stalin's death in 1953, a new phase and strategy began in the war against religion. His successor Nikita Khrushchev, (1953-1964) in a speech in November 1954, acknowledged that a brutal anti-religious assault had been inflicted upon Lithuanian priests and believers, and argued that: "In the future the fight against religion must be conducted on a purely ideological basis by persons especially trained for the purpose" (Savasis, 1965, p. 28). This ideological warfare against religion advocated by Khruschev was subject to various interpretations and created a climate in which people felt able to express their religious convictions openly. The Soviets soon realized that the situation had gone far beyond that which they had intended, and tried to regain control through a new programme of education.

This plan aimed to isolate the clergy, to restrain religious practice and lastly, and perhaps most importantly, to establish a programme of atheistic propaganda (Vardys, et al., 1966, pp. 225-232). 'Schools of atheism' were established throughout the country in which the youth were educated about the dangers of religion and the crimes perpetuated by the clergy, through a programme of lectures and the distribution of relevant literature. The following excerpt from an article published in a Lithuanian Teachers' Journal of 1958 encapsulates both the philosophy and the approach used to achieve these ideological goals.

> One of the most important tasks of a teacher is to implant in the child a materialistic outlook on life … teachers of biology, physics, chemistry, history, and literature … they must show by convincing facts and examples how priests tried to distort

scientific truths and used them as a means to keep the people in ignorance. They must show the pupils the irreconcilability of science and religion, and religion's reactionary role in the advancement of science (Savasis, 1966, p. 52).

The young Lithuanian generation constituted the main focus for the Soviets as the older generation was seen by them as entrapped in the religious 'web' and so in need of other more formal measures to control and change their religious practices (Savasis, 1966, p. 32). Under these circumstances it was virtually impossible for young Lithuanians to maintain their religious beliefs. Religion was banned in the schools and openly attacked and no overt support was available from the Church. In its drive to eliminate religious practices and beliefs the Soviets sought to control and re-order family life in ways which would separate religious parents from their children during the formative education years. A system of boarding schools and vacation camps, work on collective farms and lectures all functioned to undermine the traditional roles of the Church, family and parents and to centre instead the Party and its version of scientific and materialistic truth (Vardys, et al., 1965, pp. 226-228).

The re-organization of the calendar with the abolition and re-naming of religious feast days which began in the year of the first Soviet occupation (1941) were introduced and became law until the Soviet withdrawal in 1991. Their religious character was stripped, and these feast-days were used as an instrument of the Communist Party. Thus, Easter Day was considered a Spring Festival, Pentecost was a celebration of a shepherd and his herds, St John's Day a summer solstice festival and New Year's Day a festival of the Russian 'Old Man Frost'. Christmas Day proved to be difficult to change. When substitutes for Saints' day were not found, the Soviets organized music and dancing festivals directly in front of the church when the services were held.

Pupil's parent meetings and film showings were also held on Sunday to discourage church attendance. Lithuanians had to accept Soviet holiday celebrations such as The First of May, The October Revolution Day and A Lenin day. After one of these holidays, the following Sunday was declared a work day (Savasis, 1966, pp. 72-74).

The Soviet's severe repression of the clergy and of overtly religious practice, together with the significance of and the continuing emotional ties to traditional cultural

practices, beliefs and festivities, took on an even greater importance as a way to assert and maintain cultural and national identity during the years of the Soviet occupation.

The Church's sole authority to perform, register and preside over birth, marriage and death was removed and these events came under the cultural and later, legal control of the State (Savasis, 1966, pp. 76-81). Sanctions against those who ignored the civil ceremonies were introduced, with the religious ceremonies banned, rather than discouraged. Communist data had revealed that after almost twenty years of Soviet rule, while Church attendances had decreased by approximately 50%, the number of Church baptisms, weddings and funerals had only decreased by approximately 10% to 15%, and more significantly, they were still being performed for Party members (Savasis, 1966, pp. 74-75). The propaganda bans and sanctions carried out by the local Communist Party to fight religious beliefs appeared to have failed in a country whose history and sense of national identity had been forged in close association with the Roman Catholic Church.

> In the area of people's education, the Communist Party's main purpose is to complete the work of the October, 1917, revolution, transforming the school into an instrument of Communist education (Vardys, et al., 1965, p. 178).

Like their Czarist Russian and Lithuanian Nationalist predecessors, the Soviets knew that the ideological formation and control of the people had to be achieved during the formative years of education. This meant that the control of the structure and programmes of all levels of schooling and the language in which education occurred, were seen as essential components of the Sovietisation policy to build a communist society free from the 'cobwebs' of religion and nationalism (Savasis, 1966, p. 32).

Education in Occupied Lithuania

The Soviets from 1944 onwards began a wholesale re-structuring of education across the sectors of kindergarten, primary, secondary and higher education. In 1940, the year of the first Soviet occupation, all private schools had been closed, a move which radically weakened the Church's role in education and cultural formation. In 1944 the years of attendance in primary school were reduced from six to four years, thus cutting the total

number of years at school from thirteen to eleven again and reversing the reforms introduced during the period of the independent Lithuania (Vardys, et al., 1965, p. 173).

A system of State Boarding Schools was developed to complement the radical re-structuring of courses and instructions that occurred. The new boarding schools or *Internat* which were first established in the 1956 and 1957 school years aimed to eliminate parental and religious influence, and to produce a system in which children were available for farm and factory work during the week. This would diminish the time spent with their families and decrease the hours of instruction allocated to traditional subjects, including history and Lithuanian language, as well as making available an extensive programme of after hours lectures, youth groups, camps, concerts and other activities formulated to achieve 'the civic education, of children as good Party members' (Vardys,1978, pp. 173-182).

A network of evening and correspondence courses started in the 1940s and then continued in the 1950s with the Khrushchev's education reforms which allowed workers to be available to help to re-build economies and land damaged by six years of intense warfare, but facilitated the provision of basic levels of education in the impoverished country. After having completed this level of education, the students were channeled into a series of specialized technical schools organized to meet the economic and ideological objectives of the Soviet State aimed to educate children for a range of specific jobs required in the economy. Those who proceeded to higher education had a choice of a polytechnic institute; medical, art, or physical education; a conservatory, agricultural, or veterinary medicine institute; or of one of the three pedagogical institutes at the University of Vilnius (Vardys, et al., 1965, p. 176).

At all levels of education text books, language, course contents and examples centered and promoted Soviet culture and values, often being translated from original Russian texts. The subjects were progressively taught by Russian teachers who, with large numbers of Russian students, were brought into the Lithuanian education system to promote the "friendship of Soviet peoples" and to fill the places of those class enemies who had been deported and so removed from positions of influence in Lithuanian schools and communities (Vardys, et al., 1965, p. 180).

All these measures were a deliberate attempt to deny and silence Lithuanian cultural identity, language and nationalism. Indeed, from the start of schooling, Russian language and literature studies progressively occupied larger periods of the school week thus, diminishing the time available for Lithuanian language classes (Gerutis, et al., 1969, pp. 305-306). Article 121 of the Soviet Constitution guaranteed the right to education in the native language while Article 93 of the new Lithuanian S.S.R. Constitution also guaranteed this right. In opposition to these stated rights, however, a new law allowed parents "the right to decide in what language their children would receive instruction" (Vardys, et al., 1969, p. 190), so allowing them the right to choose schools in which Russian was the language of instruction.

In these ways the Soviet programme for education undermined the survival of the Lithuanian language and culture. In March 1985, the Soviet Central Committee elected Mikhael Gorbacev as its General Secretary. A programme of reform engulfed the Soviet Union and its Satellite Republics. This was the beginning of the period of *Perestroika* (re-structuring) and *Glasnost* (openness) that implied a new relationship between the State and its citizens. Gorbacev wrote "We want more openness in public affairs, in every sphere of life" (Strayer, 1988 pp. 98-99).

The intelligentsia and the professional class in the Soviet Union that had for a long period of time hungered for cultural freedom supported Gorbacev against the Orthodox bureaucracy. In June 1988 a Lithuanian *Perestroika* movement known as *Sajūdis* was formed in Vilnius. This group of intellectuals was opposed to the Soviet regime and reflected the national sentiment of most of the Lithuanian population. *Sajūdis* supported Gorbacev's reforms in Lithuania but demanded Lithuanian autonomy.

On March 11, 1990 Lithuania with its 3.5 million inhabitants formally declared its independence from the Soviet Union, after forty-six years of occupation and the unlawful presence of Soviet troops in its territory. This independence was ultimately successful after seventeen months of confrontation with the USSR which was reluctant to grant this demand.

By the end of 1991 over ninety countries including the USSR recognized Lithuanian independence. In the same year, Lithuania became a member of the United Nations and

on March 29, 2004 was officially accepted as a member of NATO (National Atlantic Treaty Organization). Finally on May 1, 2004 Lithuania became a member of the European Union. This was the end of a long and difficult struggle to re-gain independence.

Conclusion

Notwithstanding the political, cultural and economic changes which took place during the period of German and Soviet occupations, the Lithuanians were able to challenge the power of the Nazi-Germans and the Soviet-Russians. Central to this was the development of the partisan movements working in close association with the ethnic Lithuanian population and the Roman Catholic Church, whose common goals were the restoration of an independent Lithuania and the protection of the Lithuanian culture with its traditions, values and beliefs.

The primary focus of my thesis was to ascertain the cultural changes which have taken place in the three distinct Lithuanian communities of Western Australia, Siberia and Lithuania over a period of fifty years and to discover to what extent the core markers of the pre-war Lithuanian culture have been maintained, lost or adapted in the existing situation in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of cultural changes. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were selected as the most appropriate methodologies for this empirical, historical investigation. The complete description is explained in Chapter 5.