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AN ADDRESS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.
REPUBLICAN LEADER, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BEFORE THE AMERICAN LITHUANIAN COUNCIL, INC.
AT CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
7 P.M. SATURDAY, JUNE 13, 1970

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

My dear friends, we are gathered here to mark the 30th anniversary of a day of international shame, the day when the Soviet Union robbed the proud nation of Lithuania of its independence and plunged its people into political slavery.

Lithuania fell under the yoke of totalitarian dictatorship on June 15, 1940, and was annexed to the Soviet Union. This was an act of infamy which must never be acceded to by the Lithuanians themselves or by any of the freedom-loving peoples of the earth.

Today I voice my earnest support for the just efforts of Lithuanians everywhere to reestablish their country as an independent state and to free their homeland from Russian control.

It is my view that any man who is dedicated to the principles of freedom and justice and informs himself of the manner in which the Soviet Union subjugated the Lithuanian people cannot help but be a Lithuanian ally in a continuing struggle to free them.

As a student of Lithuanian history, I am aware of how Lithuania first emerged as a nation in the 12th and 13th centuries, became known as the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and dominated Eastern European affairs for several hundred years only to fall under Russian domination for a period lasting until World War I.

It was a glorious day, that February 16th of 1918, when Lithuania declared its independence. And it was a tragic event when in 1939 Communist Russia and Nazi Germany divided Eastern Europe between them. We know that in the summer of 1940 Lithuania was overrun by Red Army troops and was subsequently absorbed into the Soviet Union -- and that except for a three-year period of German occupation it has remained under Soviet control ever since.

What many Americans do not know is that more than 400,000 Lithuanians were swallowed up in Russian and Siberian slave labor camps through mass deportations between 1941 and 1950, ripped from their homes by Soviet terrorists -- Soviet murderers.

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What many Americans do not know is that about 30,000 Lithuanian freedom fighters were killed in guerrilla warfare, resisting the Soviet occupation.

What some Americans have forgotten is that Lithuania and 21 other countries are captive nations which were pulled behind an Iron Curtain of slavery and terror by Russian Communist leaders in a pattern of occupation, annexation and tyranny.

Too few Americans are aware of Lithuania's proud history as an independent nation. Too few Americans recall that the Russians on July 12, 1920, signed a peace treaty with Lithuania which stated that "each nation has the right of self-determination, and becoming entirely independent from the state which it is now part of, without any reservations Russia recognizes Lithuania's independence and self-government with all its due jurisdictional rights, and with good will renounces for all times, all rights of Russian sovereignty which she had over the Lithuanian nation and its territories."

Too few Americans recognize the crime against an entire people that was committed when the Russian Communists took over the Lithuanian nation in June 1940.

My heart cries out when I think of how, with one stroke of the pen, Russian laws became immediately effective in all of Lithuania, how the Soviets substituted their entire way of life for that of the Lithuanians and swept away all of their modes of living, how they banned the teaching of religion from school curricula and dismissed the chaplains from the army and the prisons, how they shut down the faculty of theology and philosophy at Kaunas University, how they closed down the monasteries, expelled the monks, and branded all members of the clergy as enemies of the people.

The same terror techniques that were practiced within the Soviet Union itself were applied to Lithuania, and on June 14, 1941, the first mass deportation was carried out. It is reported that Moscow had reached a decision to deport one-third of the Lithuanian nation -- and my information is that approximately 25 per cent of the people actually were deported.

Why hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians were sent to Russian slave labor camps we will never really know. It must have been fear that prompted the Soviet masters to do this -- the fear that springs from occupying a free nation by force of arms. After all, the Soviet Union had violated her treaties with Lithuania.

The Russian Communists had reason to fear their Lithuanian subjects, for in 1940 there began a period of fierce guerrilla resistance to both Soviet and Nazi occupation -- a resistance that lasted for 12 years.

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The general revolt against Soviet rule which broke out in Lithuania on June 22, 1941, was a complete repudiation of the Soviet lie that the Lithuanians had renounced their independence of their own free will.

It is most unfortunate that after the three-year Nazi occupation Lithuania could not be reconstituted as an independent state but fell again under Russian rule -- a second and harsher Soviet occupation.

Too few Americans today know that this second cruel Soviet occupation resulted in an undeclared war between the Lithuanian people and the Soviet Union which demonstrated to the entire world the gallantry and independent spirit of the Lithuanians.

Although there is some question about the exact number, it is estimated that from 30,000 to 50,000 Lithuanian partisans lost their lives fighting the Soviet security forces.

Moscow had reason to be alarmed by the partisan movement in Lithuania. From 1945 to 1952, historians tell us, the partisans put to death about 4,000 Communist activists and killed about 100,000 MVD, NKVD and Soviet Army troops in battle.

I marvel at the spirit and tenacity of the partisans, fighting as they were against overwhelming odds. Despite those odds, I cannot believe that the spirit of the Lithuanian partisans is dead today. It still lives in the fierce nationalism that the Soviet Union will never be able to crush.

I am not surprised that Lithuanians consider themselves betrayed by the agreement entered into February 11, 1945, at Yalta by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin. There is no question that the Yalta Agreement appeared to seal the fate of all the nations of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Government of the United States had clearly closed its eyes to aggression by the Soviet Union after fighting a bloody war to cleanse the world of aggression by Nazi Germany and Japan.

However, the fact remains that the United States has never formally recognized Soviet annexation of Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia and has officially condemned "the devious processes" by which the Soviet Union "annihilated" the three Baltic Republics.

Although the western democracies were victorious in World War II, they did not win the peace. But it is a fact of historic importance that they have never recognized the validity of Russian occupation of the Baltic nations. And in this

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there is hope not only for Lithuanians, Latvians and Esthonians but for the entire world. It means that the concept of freedom still lives -- that it can never be extinguished by force of arms or the brutal suppression of a people. It means that there comes a time when the forces of freedom rally to turn back the forces of darkness and oppression.

There are many potential captive nations in the world today -- in Indochina, in the Mideast and in Latin America.

The United States is at war in Indochina -- at war with the North Vietnamese but also at war with the Soviet Union by proxy.

In the Middle East we are engaged in a power struggle with the Soviet Union which gives its military support to the Arab states while gallant Israel strives valiantly to maintain its independence. The Soviet Union is seeking to replace the United States as the dominant power in the Mediterranean. The Russians are seeking to dominate the Mediterranean, undermine the southern flank of NATO, and spread Communist influence from the Indian Ocean to the South Atlantic.

At the same time the Soviet Union is underwriting the Communist regime of Fidel Castro in Cuba, from whence it hopes to export communism to the assorted nations of Latin America.

Some Americans yearn so desperately for peace that they close their eyes to the Captive Nations -- both actual and potential. But the nightmare will not go away just because of the wishing.

The hard facts are that the Soviet Union today is still playing the game of world expansionism, the game of imperialist aggression -- but is applying far more sophisticated procedures than in the crude days of World War II and the immediate postwar period.

And so now we have Cuba, and Israel, and Vietnam.

Why do I say we are at war with the Soviet Union by proxy in Vietnam? Because the Soviet Union is supplying the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong with 80 per cent of their weapons. Because the war in Vietnam could stop if the Soviet Union would stop supplying arms to Hanoi.

Yet we have thousands of students and other Americans shouting at our own government leaders, "Stop the war." Whose side is justice on? On the side of the United States and the Captive Nations or on the side of the Soviet Union and the North Vietnamese?

The protesters are said to be highly idealistic. They view Vietnam as a moral issue. They believe the war in Vietnam is wrong. Yes, the war in Vietnam

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is wrong, but the sins are on the other side. The Communists today are committing the same sin of genocide in Vietnam that they committed in Lithuania 30 years ago. What a bloodbath we would see in Vietnam if the United States were to precipitously withdraw all its troops there! And yet this is what the self-righteous moralists who yell "Stop the war" are demanding.

If the moralists on Vietnam want to be on the right side of an issue they should be demanding that Russia withdraw its troops from Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia, free them from Soviet control, and return all of the living deportees to their homes from Soviet prison camps.

Who is in the right? Whose side is justice on? The Soviet Union recognized the independence and sovereignty of Lithuania by peace treaty in 1920 and confirmed this by other treaties in 1926 and 1939.

Instead of shouting "Stop the war" in Vietnam the moralists should be concerned that still another nation -- South Vietnam -- is in danger of becoming a Captive Nation. Instead of shouting "Stop the war" in Vietnam the moralists should be pounding at the Iron Curtain in an effort to free Lithuania, Latvia and Esthonia.

We know who the international criminals are. We know who brutally slew the freedom fighters in Hungary. We know who ruthlessly crushed the people of Czechoslovakia.

We must never tire of telling this story to the world. We must never give up in our fight to free the Baltic peoples. It is groups like the American Lithuanian Council that must provide the leadership. And I will certainly stand shoulder to shoulder with you in your struggle.

While the Soviet repression in Czechoslovakia was a demonstration of strength, it was also a confession of weakness -- and this is the lesson we must carry forward in our continuing struggle for Baltic liberation today.

The Soviets' Czechoslovakian campaign pointed up the insecurity felt by the Russian leaders -- an insecurity they feel regarding all of the Captive Nations.

The more we in America concentrate on the issues of the Captive Nations the more we exploit the insecurity the Soviet Union feels. The more we preach the doctrine of self-determination the more we stir the fires of nationalism in the Captive Nations.

The Soviet Union is a federal state in name only. The spirit of independence burns fiercely among the non-Russian nation-states within the Soviet system.

There is no solidarity in the Communist empire. The inner conflicts within

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the Communist camp are many. We have witnessed the deviations of the Yugoslav, Czechoslovak and Rumanian Communist parties from the Moscow line. These developments have repercussions within the Soviet Union. There is ferment in Russia itself against the Soviet dictatorship. Latent conflict continues to fester between the Soviet Union and Red China.

I do not despair for Lithuania. I shout with you, "Lithuania for the Lithuanians," and I believe the day will come when we will together toast a Free Lithuania.

There is a spirit of independence that burns in the hearts of all Lithuanians -- in the hearts of free men everywhere. The Communist criminals may crush the bodies of their victims in slave labor camps but they will never succeed in blowing out the lamp of liberty.

Lithuania's national anthem urges her sons to draw strength from the past. All Americans can find strength in that past but let us also look to the future and make a firm and fervent pledge -- that we will never rest until Lithuania is once again an independent nation, free of the Russian oppressor.

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