

## Miscellanea

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### DO YOU KNOW THAT...

... The first Lithuanian newspaper in the United States was **GAZIETA LIETUVIŠKA**, published in 1879 in New York.

... In the free world, about one hundred newspapers and magazines are published in Lithuanian.

... The Lithuanian language is taught at the University of Pennsylvania and at Columbia University.

... Under the Russian rule of the Tsars in Lithuania, printing of any kind in the Lithuanian language and in the Latin alphabet was prohibited for 40 years — 1864-1904. Though these regulations were strictly enforced by the police, book-smuggling from Prussia flourished, for the prohibited books were published across the border.

... Two Lithuanians, Steponas Darius and Stasys Girėnas, crossed the Atlantic Ocean with their airplane **LITUANICA** on July 15-17, 1933. It was the second longest transatlantic non-stop flight (surpassed only by the R. Boardman and J. Poland flight from New York to Istanbul) and the seventeenth transatlantic flight. They flew 3,984 miles in 37 hours 11 minutes, without radio or robot, from New York to Soldin, Germany, where they crashed without reaching their destination, Kaunas, thus demonstrating the need for flight instruments for use in bad weather.

... During the International Aviation Festival in Kaunas in 1939, where Latvian, Estonian, Finnish, Polish, and German aviators contested, Lithuanians won the first places.

... The biggest and longest river flowing through Lithuania is Nemunas, which is 536 miles long and has a basin of 37,840 square miles.

... There are about 2,000 lakes in Lithuania which add much to the beauty of the scenery. The largest lake is Narutis, having an area of 30 square miles.

... Oak forests were once very plentiful in Lithuania and oak trees were venerated in religious ceremonies. An oak tree famous for its thickness is the Stelmužės Oak, in Zarasai county. It is estimated that it is about 2000 years old, and it is considered the largest (in circumference) oak in Europe;

... The first German "Drang nach Osten" (push to the East) carried out by the Teutonic Knights was effectively stopped in 1410 at the battle of Tannenberg by the Lithuanian forces under the leadership of the Lithuanian Grand Duke Vytautas and with the help of the Polish forces.

... Of the 34,000 Lithuanians deported to Soviet Russia and accused of subversive activity against the Soviet government, 3,791 were children under 10 years of age.

... During the years of independence, Lithuania made great economic progress, as can be seen from the fact that, before World War II, Lithuania had 29 hogs for each 250 acres of cultivated land while Soviet Russia had only 2.3 hogs for the same area of cultivated land.

... The first Lithuanian high school was established in Vilnius in 1570.

... The first Lithuanian university, called the Academy of Vilnius, was established in 1579 and, with various changes, continues to the present day.

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## HISTORY AND IMPORT OF "THE PAGES OF LITERATURE"

One of the salient features of twentieth-century literature is its diversity: numerous distinct schools and movements evolve ~ side by side in the same era and compete for the attention of the same readers. However, the present writers as a rule do not capture the general public. They are too individualistic to appeal to everybody; and, as a consequence, they write for more or less closed groups of devotees. The literature produced by these authors is highly developed and original — opening new vistas of thought and feeling. Modern authors do not have to make too many compromises with the passing fashions and moods, but they win personal freedom to create their art according to their talent and belief.

Hence, it is not extraordinary that we also find good literature produced in languages little known to the world. There is a marked literary activity among Lithuanian immigrants living in the Western World. Lithuanian authors, especially poets, have won their personal freedom at double costs regarding the public. First, they are writing for a small group of Lithuanian immigrants. Second, they have freed themselves from the immigrant's weakness for writing political literature which would exert favorable influence on the world's opinion concerning the liberation of Soviet-occupied Lithuania. This group of Lithuanian writers established, in 1951, a vanguard journal called "Literatūros Lankai" (The Pages of Literature). The aim of the journal is to encourage good literature — avoiding the artificiality, the commonplace, the immigrant's defeatism and servitude to politics and propaganda. The group shares at least one idea with the Existentialists: the principle that life is lived to its fullest only in intense activity — intense literary activity if one chooses to be—"come a writer.

"Literatūros Lankai" is really an outgrowth of a cénacle of highly educated poets, who have a wide background in languages, literary history, and philosophy. In 1951 this group published an anthology of their poetry called "The Earth", the name symbolizing the poets' conscious desires to be Lithuanian authors even when living a-broad. The poets who participated in the anthology were: Kazys Bradūnas (the editor, living in the United States), Juozas Kėkštas (living in Argentina), Vytautas Mačernis (killed during World War II), Henrikas Nagys (living in Canada), Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas (living in the United States). The group has been joined by Juozas Girmius, a leading Lithuanian philosopher and a student of Jaspers. In the same year, they also organized "Literatūros Lankai" the chief editor being again Kazys Bradūnas (1127 Bayard Street, Baltimore 23, Maryland). Up to now, 5 issues of the journal have appeared. The group has also been active in presenting Lithuanian literature to foreigners. Just recently, in the Polish journal "Culture", which is published in Paris, there appeared a selection of Lithuanian poetry and some expert literary criticism.

"Literatūros Lankai" is composed of two parts. There is a section devoted to literature and a section to literary criticism. Only literature of outstanding merit is published. The literature section usually consists of the naturalistic and philosophical poetry by Lithuanian poets, modern Lithuanian drama and prose, translations of important contemporary literature, etc. In this section the following

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### NEWSMAKĖR

- Professor Zenonas Ivinskis is president of the Baltic Research Institute at the University of Bonn, Germany. The institute is dedicated to the preservation of Lithuanian, Latvian, and Estonian cultural traditions.

- \* Samuel Cardinal Stritch, archbishop of Chicago, is honorary chairman of the building campaign committee which seeks to raise \$250,000 for a new building for **DRAUGAS**, the largest free Lithuanian daily in the world. The Cardinal has commended the newspaper for "effectively combating communism with the force of the press." **DRAUGAS** marks its fortieth anniversary this year.

- Charles J. Kersten, former U.S. Representative from Wisconsin and at present a Presidential assistant, was chosen to receive the first Knights of Lithuania award medal in recognition of his "invaluable service in behalf of Lithuania's right to freedom." Mr. Kersten was author of House Resolution 346. which created a select House Committee to investigate Soviet seizure of the Baltic states and Red atrocities there. After the resolution's unanimous passage, Mr. Kersten served as the committee's chairman.

- Professor V. K. Banaitis, now a resident of Brooklyn, N. Y., has composed an opera based on a Lithuanian legend. Entitled "Jūratė and Kastytis", it is the story of a young fisherman who becomes enraptured by a mermaid queen.

- Darius Lapinskas, a young Lithuanian composer, was awarded the first prize for his trio for the piano, oboe, and cello by the Brookline, Mass., library's Music Society. Judges in the annual contest were Arthur Berger, professor at Brandeis University; Dr. Klaus Liepmann, head of the music department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Hubert Lamb, professor at Wellesley College.

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## LITERATURE RECOMMENDED

VILNIUS, THE CAPITAL OF LITHUANIA by T. J. Vizgirda

LITHUANIAN FOLK ART by J. Baltrušaitis, Ph. D.

LITHUANIA (illustrated) V. Augustinas

POPULAR LITHUANIAN RECIPES edited by J. Daužvardienė

LITHUANIA THROUGH THE AGES by Dr. A. Šapoka

THE STORY OF ART and JUOZAS PAUTIENIUS by Ig. Šlapelis

LITHUANIAN SELF-TAUGHT released by Marlborough

LITHUANIAN-ENGLISH and ENGLISH-LITHUANIAN DICTIONARY released by Marlborough

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## NO LONGER WITH US

**VACLOVAS BIRŽIŠKA**, one of the most prominent figures in the Lithuanian academic world, died on January 2nd in Waterbury, Conn.

Born in 1884 in Lithuania, he received his education in Lithuania and Russia and graduated from the University of Petrograd (now Leningrad) with a degree in law, which he practiced until after the First World War. After a brief career in the Lithuanian Army, he shifted his interests to education and was active in this field until his death. From 1922, when he became professor at the University of Kaunas, he has taught many a Lithuanian student. His major interest was the Lithuanian book, and he will always be remembered for his extensive work in assessing a bibliography of every published work in Lithuanian.

He was the founder of the university library in Kaunas and devoted many hours to the education and training of specialists in library work. Prof. Vacl. Biržiška has written many books and edited some of the more known Lithuanian periodicals in the field of humanities.

In 1932 the first volume of the Lithuanian Encyclopedia was published, and prof. Vacl. Biržiška was the chief editor of this momentous work. These activities continued until 1944, when many Lithuanians were forced to leave their native country. In 1946 he went to the newly founded Baltic University near Hamburg, Germany, and taught there until his immigration to the U.S.A., where for some time he worked at the revised edition of the Lithuanian Encyclopedia. He died at the age of 72.