

Miscellanea

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THE FIRST LITHUANIAN CULTURAL CONGRESS IN U.S.A.

A nation's existence depends for the most part on her ability to develop, deepen, and forward— to the future generations her own particular cultural traits and creativeness. With no intention to lessen the importance of technical advancement, it may be stated that culture has the sole responsibility for making some nations great and leading others to extinction.

With this thought in mind and in heart the Lithuanian cultural workers in exile met in Chicago last June 30 in order to discuss their specific problems and responsibilities. Hotel Sherman was chosen as the place for this important convention which was sponsored by the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., together with the Lithuanian Canadian Community.

The finding of mutual understanding and establishing close ties between the scientists, writers, artists, musicians etc., and the whole body of the Lithuanian community in exile on the other hand was stressed as one of the basic topics of this congress. Also pointed out was that the vital need for establishing close cooperation between the intellectual workers in the cultural field and the younger generation, particularly the Lithuanian students in this country's colleges and universities. Their task was taken to be very extraordinary since they live between two worlds with somewhat different traditions. While actively participating in this country's cultural life and absorbing its cultural ideas they are also expected to remain true Lithuanians and use their knowledge and ability for the sake of eventual liberation of their motherland. This congress proved that the youth has no lack of idealism, for they responded to the invitation extremely well: they proved to be quite active in the work of the congress, and their session sponsored by the Lithuanian Students Ass'n, Inc., was one of the largest in attendance with over 250 participants.

On the whole, the congress was attended by over 600 persons, including some of the best known Lithuanian writers, scientists, educators and prominent personalities in other cultural fields. The guests included Mr. J. Matulionis, chairman of the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (VLIK' as), Mr. J. Zadeikis, Lithuania's envoy to the U.S.A. and many others. After short introductory speeches by Dr. J. Bajercius, chairman of the Chicago Chapter, which was responsible for most organizational work, and by B. Sakalauskas, the president of Lithuanian Community in Canada, the congress was officially opened with an address by Mr. S Barzdukas, president of Lithuanian American Community, Inc. He congratulated the cultural workers, gathered in Chicago from all over USA and Canada and pointed out the decisive moment and subsequent responsibilities that this congress must clarify. While Lithuanians in their own country are suffering from the International Communism, those who were fortunate enough to escape and are now living in this democratic and friendly country, must do their utmost to help preserve the Lithuanian nation.

After American and Lithuanian national anthems, and in-vocational prayers by Most Rev. I. Albavicius and Rev. A. Trakis, all deported, imprisoned or executed cultural workers were remembered in solemn silence.

In the first session of the plenum Dr. J. Girnius gave a well prepared talk on the subject of National culture as the basis for national survival.

Then the congress convened in different sections, such as student section (of collegiate level), Art, History, Literature, Science, Music, Education and Theatre sections. All discussions were centered around the general theme: the preservation, cultivation, and expansion of the national culture. Many speakers stressed the point, that the Lithuanian exiles must be loyal to America, and that they should contribute what they can to this country's cultural life.

In the afternoon the second section of the plenum took place, in which Miss Iz. Matusevičius from Canada delivered a talk on the ways and means in preserving one's own national culture in the environment of exile. Several resolutions were passed among them, one expressing sympathy with the Poznan workers who had started a revolt only two days ago.

The congress was closed in an encouraging atmosphere and with high hopes for the future.

The cultural congress coincided with the Lithuanian Song Festival, held in Chicago Coliseum the following day, July 1st, thus making these two days a meaningful festival for all Lithuanians.

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THE LITHUANIAN SONG FESTIVAL

Following the Lithuanian Cultural Congress in Chicago, on July 2nd about 15 choirs, the members of which totalled over one thousand, gathered from all over the United States and Canada at the spacious Coliseum Hall for the Lithuanian Song Festival. This was the first such event since the Song Festival in independent Lithuania in 1935.

The program started with services at the St. Peter and Paul Evangelical Church and Holy Mass at Holy Cross Roman Catholic Church. At three o'clock in the afternoon more than 10,000 Lithuanians and their guests filled the huge auditorium to overflowing. After the posting of Colors, a prayer, and Lithuanian and American Anthems, Miss Alice Stephens, Chairman of the Song Festival Committee, said a few words of welcome. This was followed by greetings from His Honor Richard J. Daley, Mayor of Chicago, and Stasys Barzdukas, President of the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Community in the U.S.

The first three songs, sung by the massed mixed choruses were directed by prof. Juozas Žilevičius, organizer of the first Lithuanian Song Festival in 1924. Alice Stephens directed the massed women's choruses, who sang four songs depicting the changing beauty of nature in Lithuania during the four seasons of the year.

A group of mixed choruses under the direction of Bronius Budriunas, director and composer, sang three powerful songs, including one composed by the director himself; it told of the loneliness of man exiled from his country, and of his desire to return some day to his fatherland. This song received ovations, and had to be repeated.

An intermission followed, after which Part II of the Song Festival began with the distribution of the Festival Song Contest Awards to Sister Mary Bernarda, S.S.C. and Mr. Juozas Bertulis of Los Angeles, who received first and second prizes respectively. "Evening Stillness," the song that won first prize, was sung with feeling by mixed choral groups under the direction of Alfonsas Mikulskis. A group of combined men's choruses followed.

The memorable program came to a close with "Freedom's Song," Kazys Steponavičius directing the massed mixed choruses. In his closing speech the Secretary of the Song Festival Committee asked Mr. Steponavičius to give his baton to the organizer and director of the next Lithuanian Song Festival, which, everybody hoped, would be in free Lithuania.

All of the thousand members of the massed choir were dressed in impressively colorful national folk costumes. This Festival required months, even years of planning and preparation, and the result was, as the sold-out performance indicated, a huge success. It indicates the inclination of Lithuanians to song and lyricism; it shows the wealth of folklore and tradition gathered through hundreds of years; finally it shows the fact that Lithuanians in the United States and Canada are united by these spiritual bonds, and therefore can hope for a free and independent Lithuania in the years to come.

D. Karaliūte

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LITHUANIANS MET IN WASHINGTON

More than one thousand Lithuanians from all over the United States met in Washington, D C., for a two day congress that was to reveal to the political circles there a treasure of Lithuanian folk art on the one hand and to give an opportunity for the Lithuanian youth to visit the scenic capital of the United States on the other. The congress opened on June 17th of this year. Some political overtones to the otherwise purely cultural gathering were implicated by selection of a time for the congress that coincides with a tragic anniversary of the first mass deportations carried out by the Soviet government in Lithuania fifteen years ago. The congress thus voiced an appeal of the homeless people for rights regarded as incontestable by the civilized community of the West — an appeal for national selfdetermination, independence, and freedom for the Lithuanian nation. Significant it is to note that the appeal came from the heart of a country that cherishes hopes of millions of people now oppressed in the vast regions of Soviet Union.

Importance of the congress is evident yet in another respect. Not only was it held in Washington, but many of its high officials, headed by Vice President Richard M. Nixon himself, were members of the Honorary Committee, thus giving the whole affair a special attention. The banquet was attended by some three hundred U.S. officials — including members of Congress and officials of the executive branch — as well as by ambassadors of foreign countries and members of the Lithuanian diplomatic and consular corps. Speeches were given by the Lithuanian political leaders in exile and the program included a concert given by the Lithuanian folk ensemble "Čiurlionis." An exhibition of Lithuania's folk art was also of interest to the various guests at the banquet.

The whole event in Washington was highlighted by the arrival from Italy of and presentation of an address by the Chief of the Lithuanian Diplomatic Service, Mr. Stasys Lozoraitis. Having briefly reviewed the Soviet-Lithuanian relations of the past

four decades, Mr. Lozoraitis had a comforting word for the West:

In this struggle (that between East and West) the West has also a powerful weapon. Opinions are sometimes voiced that in this fight against communism a new ideal is needed. I do not think that this is the case. There are two ancient but always valid ideals: faith in God and the devotion of people and nations to the principle of freedom. The intensified proclamation and implementation of these two ideals is that powerful weapon which I just mentioned. Its use in conjunction with peaceful coercion of the Soviet Union must bring the elimination of the danger which the Soviet Union constitutes to civilization...

Mr. Lozoraitis expressed his gratitude to the government of the United States for the efforts of the latter made in the cause of freedom.

The congress, sponsored by the National Lithuania Society of America, came to an end on June 18 with the honoring of the tomb of the Unknown Soldier in the Arlington National Cemetery.

Program at the congress was recorded and later transmitted via "Voice of America" to the countries behind the Iron Curtain.

L. Sabaliūnas

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LITERATURE RECOMMENDED

LITHUANIA (illustrated) V. Augustinas
Pictorial presentation of the country. \$6.00

CROSSES by V. Ramonas
A novel, depicting the life during the Soviet occupation of the country. \$4.00

THE EVENING SONG, compiled by F. Beliajus
A collection of various tales from Lithuanian folklore. \$3.00

THE ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION OF LITHUANIA AFTER 1918 by A. Simutis
Lithuanian economics in the inter-war period.

LITHUANIA'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM by E. J. Harrison
Presentation of Lithuania's case in her struggle with the invaders.

THE STORY OF LITHUANIA by T. G. Chase
A glance at the history of the country.

THE FOREST OF ANYKŠČIAI by Antanas Baranauskas
A poem written originally in 1859. Translation from Lithuanian by Nadas Rastenis.

THE LITHUANIAN SITUATION by Prof. K. Pakštas
A brief, informative publication, intended to acquaint the reader with the country of Lithuania. \$0.50.

EAST and WEST
A quarterly review of Soviet and Baltic problems

LITHUANIAN SELF-TAUGHT
Released by Marlborough