

CONGRESS OF LITHUANIAN-AMERICANS

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Although Lithuanian immigrants have in general adjusted themselves quite well to the New World, their contacts with their native land—or the land of their ancestors—have always been rather close. It was therefore quite natural for the Lithuanian-Americans to be seriously concerned when, on June 15, 1940, the Communists occupied Lithuania. The people of Lithuanian descent or extraction immediately united their efforts to defend the freedom and the rights of the Lithuanian nation. A natural outcome of these joint efforts was the formation of the Lithuanian American Council, and August 10, 1940, is considered the birthday of this organization.

The Council consists of representatives of four major ideological Lithuanian-American groups as well as delegates of the two largest fraternal associations. The Council has branches in many cities throughout the United States and has the support of practically all patriotic Lithuanian-Americans.

The Council seeks to furnish the American people and the free world in general with true information about Lithuania and about the Communists and their methods. One of the major aims of the movement is to see Lithuania restored as an independent republic with her proper boundaries. The Council has been very active in its efforts to achieve this purpose. Many statements and memoranda have been submitted to the President of the United States and to the Department of State. The Council's executive officers have frequently visited various offices in Washington, and delegations from the Council have been received by all three Presidents of the United States who have occupied this high office since the Council was founded.

One of the Council's chief achievements has been to bring about the creation of a Congressional committee to investigate the facts and circumstances pertaining to the seizure and forced incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union.

National conventions sponsored by the Council have been organized to demonstrate the united desire of the overwhelming majority of Lithuanian-Americans to see the land of their ancestors a free country once more; these conventions have proved to be one of the best methods of expressing this aim to the American people. The fifth such gathering was held on June 27-28 in Boston, Mass.

The Congress was attended by 296 official delegates and by many guests and observers. During the proceedings reports were read by members of the Executive Board setting forth the achievements and also the problems and difficulties that exist. The discussions that followed these reports once again made it clear that Lithuanian-Americans have not diminished their efforts and aspirations with respect to Lithuania. Suggestions were made toward an even more successful course of action for the Council. Elections of members of the Council were held, and the members in turn elected the Executive Board. Mr. L. Šimutis, editor-in-chief of the Lithuanian daily newspaper *Draugas*, was again entrusted with the presidency; Dr. P. Grigaitis, editor-in-chief of the daily newspaper *Naujienos*, continued as Executive Secretary; Mr. E. Bartkus, a successful engineer, was elected Vice-President; and Mr. M. Vaidyla was re-elected Treasurer.

Senator John Kennedy presented the principal address at the Congress, and Foster Furcolo, Governor of Massachusetts, also attended. Greetings were received from the White House and the State Department, and from 27 Senators, many Representatives and other political dignitaries. Practically all the greetings included an expression of hope that Lithuania may soon be free again.

After two days of reports, discussion and exchanges of ideas and opinions, the Congress adjourned, and all the participants returned to their homes convinced that their efforts to achieve their basic aim—freedom for Lithuania—must

be even further intensified, but they also felt reassured that these efforts and the sacrifices they entail will some day be amply rewarded. Let us hope that this day will come soon.