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PERSECUTION OF AN INTELLECTUAL



Juozas Keliuotis
(August 22, 1902 — March 25, 1983)

LITUANUS is pleased to introduce **Juozas Keliuotis**, a Western-educated, Lithuanian cultural leader, whose memoirs documenting his life during the second Soviet occupation of Lithuania reached the West.

Excerpts from his memoirs, due to be published in book form in 1985 in the United States, have been translated into English especially for LITUANUS. LITUANUS gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of the publisher, the American Foundation for Lithuanian Research, Inc., and Mrs. Sigita Naujokaitis who translated the material for this issue.

The translation is appended with Keliuotis' biographies from two encyclopedias — one Soviet and another published in the West. Finally, a 1981 episode dealing with Keliuotis' portrait completes this sad but significant human drama.

MEMOIRS

by
Juozas Keliuotis

[During the German occupation of Lithuania (1941-1944) Juozas Keliuotis got into trouble with the occupying authorities but avoided capture.]

Spring 1944 in Kaunas. The air is transparently clear, invigorating, sweet. The sun smiles amicably, trying to cheer up our universal mother — the earth. But I, a true son of the earth, am unhappy although all of the trees hereabouts are green, fragrant and flowering. For three months now I've been hiding from the Nazi Germans. This is the seventh time I've changed apartments in war-time Kaunas, and I can't find a quiet corner anywhere to work or rest. It's as if I were a thief or a murderer. I have the constant feeling of being an unarmed jungle dweller, surrounded day and night by man-eating animals lying in wait. In what possible way could I be dangerous to the powerful and well-armed occupier?

The first time I got into trouble was while I was still teaching at the university. A big meeting was organized in the Great Hall. There, an agent of the occupation government was urging the students to forgo their education and either march to the front to defend the Reich or join the ranks of civil workers in the rear. I went up to the podium and stated hotly that it made no sense for Lithuanian students to go to the front or to join the Nazi workforce. The war that's going on is not ours: it is totally foreign to us, inimical and unnecessary. It's a war between two monstrous imperialisms — Nazism and Communism. This war promises nothing good for Lithuania. On the contrary, both of these imperialisms spell disaster. Both one and the other are a noose around our neck: they are destroying our freedom and independence, they bring us only slavery and death. That's why we must be neutral and indifferent to this war, not take any part in it nor pledge ourselves to either of the imperialisms. We must stay free and independent, saving our forces to defend our nation's freedom and to forge our own national civilization. The students greeted my words with a storm of applause, and the traitorous agents of the Nazi Reich, shamed and roundly trounced, had to hastily leave the meeting.

I only did my duty, as any ordinary conscientious Lithuanian citizen would have. But the Nazis, evidently, noticed me and inscribed me in their list of enemies. Thus I was drawn into the swiftly moving current of a dangerous life, one from which I could no longer escape. I had been living, unregistered, in my fourth apartment. Once, ten o'clock at night, someone called on the telephone: "Don't sleep in your apartment tonight." — "Who is it?" — I asked. "It doesn't matter who this is. What matters is that you don't spend the night at home." — "I understand. Thank you very much." — I answer and escape into the street.

Heavy army trucks clatter down the streets while arrogant and insolent Nazi officers run around in light, shiny automobiles. Women and men, girls and boys, hurry along the sidewalks. Children of various ages dart about everywhere. They all live somewhere and have a place to spend the night. I am the only one in this multi-colored crowd who no longer has a place to rest his head; for me alone there is no safe spot on earth. I am suspended in the air — and I can neither drop to the ground nor fly into the heavens. With these sad thoughts I spend the entire day visiting friends and strangers, finding no one to take me in. Some have no extra space, others are afraid to let in a person in trouble with the authorities. They think to themselves: "He's done for, but we still have a chance. And why should we take a risk if nothing can help him anyway? Where's he going to disappear to if the military police are looking for him? Sooner or later he'll end up in their iron claws!.." Only one artist's family treated me to a nourishing meal and strong black coffee, but adamantly refused to let me spend the night.

It's getting dark and I'm still wandering the streets aimlessly. I remember that at seven o'clock I have to give two lectures for the European psychology course at the university. Without delay I begin to slowly wend my way in that direction, forgetting all of my troubles. The auditorium is filled with students. Some of them, not finding any free seats along the benches, are sitting on the window sills or snoozing crouched on the floor. There are perhaps five hundred of them. According to German law, institutes of higher education are autonomous thus precluding students from being taken to the front or sent to work in Germany. So now young people are coming to institutes of higher learning in droves, where, for a time at least, they will feel safe. Now the youth, serious and diligent, listens attentively to lectures and studies in earnest. No longer is our youth footloose; it doesn't spend its energy senselessly but, rather, understands the seriousness of our situation. It feels the ever present threat of slavery and death, and it is in no mood to play, to joke, or frolic. In this chaotic and absurd world, it searches for the meaning of life.

[The second Soviet occupation once again forced Keliuotis to seek refuge in the streets or with good friends. Early in 1945 he had found shelter in the Archbishop's residence. It wasn't long, however, before the Soviet secret police arrested him.]

For a long, long while I sit in Vytautas Park. I am now a person with no present and no future, one who no longer has a place on this earth. But the sun shines happily on. The sky is still delightfully clear. Trees bloom peacefully in the park, rustling in harmony amidst the intoxicating scent. Birds chirp prettily, hopping from branch to branch...

At dusk, I once again make my way, circuitously, through Žaliakalnis, to the Archbishop's residence. We drink coffee at dinner. One or another of us tries to joke. I remain silent all evening. I have no desire to joke, nor speak. In my mind's eye I see the threatening sword suspended above me. From time to time I'm tempted to cry out. It's pointless though to try and summon help from anywhere. Not a ray of hope. It seems that one could just as easily hang oneself or give oneself up to the torturer. I think back to my childhood when seeing a ghost, I would throw myself screaming into my mother's arms. She would always calm me down and chase away the ghosts. My mother is long dead, however, and I am no longer a child, but a grown man. I have no shelter from earthly conflagrations. All manner of scoundrels can betray and vilify me. Their time has come. Like venomous snakes they've slid out of their holes in the Fascist secret police and Nazi Gestapo. Now they're slinking along all of the streets, all of the squares, crawling through all of the homes and gathering bloody offerings for the red secret police. They're climbing into speakers' podiums, sitting in chairs of authority, filling the pages of newspapers. It's the same terror, only decorated with another color; earlier — the tri-color, yesterday — brown, today — red. War presents perfect opportunities for all of the scum to rise to the top. Lithuania is overrun with sadists looking for decent people whom to grab and to abuse, to incriminate and to condemn, to murder and to drink their still-warm innocent blood.

Night. I lie in my narrow bed. I cannot lie down for I'm totally exhausted. My head and my legs ache. My heart weakens from pain and from terror. Perhaps this is my last "free" night. Anxiety forces me to arise and go to the open window. The air is fresh and chilly, brimming with all of the smells of spring. Not a breeze. An awesome silence all around. No hint of rustling in the nearby lindens and poplars, elms and chesnuts. They think deep and mysterious thoughts. Perhaps tonight they are trying to solve the great problems of this world and of this life? Or maybe they are solving nothing, only resting in their everlasting existence? Or maybe it is only people, alive and real, who, uneasy in their fragile existence search for a more solid foundation? I lift up my head. The endless starry sky glitters before me. It too is peaceful and entrancing. Only the land of Lithuania is distressed: drenched with blood, bound with lies and treachery, maimed and in disarray, it is filled with anxiety and terror. In all of Lithuania I can find no safe or quiet spot to still my heart and rest my aching head. I lie down again; my head is spinning and my legs buckle under me. Sleepless — a terrible fear and cold sweat. Asleep — only nightmares, one more horrible than another.

I spend the whole night and the entire morning prostrate. It is 11:00 A.M. when I finally get up. I get dressed, wash up, comb my hair. I feel pangs of hunger and thirst. I go outside at noon to have lunch on the other side of Town Hall square. Slowly, I make my way along the sidewalk. Suddenly, behind me there is an unruly, loud rumbling sound. I turn around: five youths scurry behind me — of abject appearance, shabbily dressed. They look like street urchins or petty-thieves who roam the street at night. I quicken my steps. They immediately pick up their pace. I'm almost at a run. They begin to out-run me. Two of them suddenly jump in front of me, blocking the door of the cafeteria where I had planned to go. The other three grab me from behind. The two in front grab both of my arms. All at once, I'm gripped and surrounded by unknown thugs. Not saying a word, they drag me forward. Stunned, I walk along surrounded by them, dragged. I too remain silent: an unknown force has paralyzed my voice. Passersby glance fearfully at me and hurry away. No one is determined to rescue me. We pass an acquaintance, a student of mine, who, seeing me in this situation, blesses herself and runs away. Another woman I know makes the sign of the cross, blesses me also and hurries away as fast as her legs will carry her. She manages a quick glance, looking in my eyes with her own, brimming with tears, and which seem to sadly say: "You're finished. No one can help you now!" I don't answer. Although I'm walking, dragged along by five young thugs, I'm as rigid as marble. I'm already separated, not only from "free" people, but also from the living. My escorts speak a Yiddish, Russian and Polish jargon amongst themselves. I can't understand an entire phrase of anything they are saying. They don't address themselves to me. They have nothing to say to me. They don't know me and I don't know them. The caretaker at the Archbishop's residence pointed me out to them; he betrayed me and now he sits peacefully sipping whiskey with his spiritual fathers. Of course, later, he will, in turn, betray his spiritual fathers too, for a sufficiently high sum.

I finally end up at secret police headquarters, a place I've avoided up to now. They take me into the "waiting room." This is the "waiting room" for those condemned to die. I don't "wait" long. The secret police investigator quickly appears. He takes all of my identification, all of my money, all food ration cards, an agenda, fountain pen, tie, even a handkerchief...He cuts all of the buttons from my suit... Calls the guards and tells them to lug me off to the basement. As they begin to drag me, he lets out a stream of the filthiest Russian oaths, though he himself is Lithuanian.

This is how they end, my days of freedom...

[The chief of the secret police, General Guodaitis-Guzevičius, and the Russian General Gladkov interrogate Keliuotis in the Kaunas prison.]

The head that General Gladkov has beaten — my head — is swollen and bleeding. No one bandages it. I'm weak and can't manage to walk any longer. I stand for hours at a stretch now, but I even get tired standing. I'm close to losing consciousness. Is it day or night? The meager electric light hanging from the ceiling is no help. I no longer get any food. I'd eat dirt if there were a speck of it here. Totally sapped, I sit down in the middle of the cell. A guard jumps in immediately and says that that's strictly forbidden. He orders me to stand up at once. "I have no more strength," I answer. If he wants to he can kill me, but I am unable to get up. — "Well alright, then sit like this. But don't you dare stretch out on the floor or then I'll really kill you!"

I don't know how many days or nights go by like this. I have no thoughts; I feel nothing. Maybe I'm already dead. The electric light goes out. Total darkness in the cell. I lose all sense of my existence and roll off into some dark maw where any form of life is extinguished. After some time I feel hard, booted kicks all over my body. I open my eyes. The prison director is standing over me with a flashlight, kicking me savagely and shouting:

— "How dare you stretch out on the ground when our commissar has strictly forbidden that! Stand up at once!"

I don't answer since I have no strength left even to speak. I lie powerless.

— "How long since the light's gone out? And how long have you been unlawfully lying like this, breaking prison rules?"

— "How do I know," I answer almost inaudibly. "It seems I lost consciousness..."

Finally even this sadist realizes that I am a dying man, unable to stand or to speak. Spitting out an angry Russian oath, he exits, leaving me supine. After a while a guard enters with the news that the chief of the secret police is curtailing my punishment and allowing me to be taken to a cell with other prisoners. He orders me to get up and follow him. I cannot move. Then he calls another guard over and the two of them carry me to another cell, placing me on the cement floor amongst other prisoners who look at me with pity. They try to talk to me but, unable to speak, I don't reply. A no-longer-young collective farm worker offers me a bite to eat, feeding me small pieces of the meat and bread which his wife has brought him. Somehow I manage to eat something and then fall into a deep and long sleep.

At this very instant the cell door opens and the guards drag in a semi-conscious old man whose four sons have taken to the woods.* He stretches out on the cement floor. His head is smashed and covered with blood. His arms and legs are askew, twisted and broken. Glimpses of his naked, sallow and wounded body can be seen through his tattered clothing. The ČEKA** have apparently tortured him day and night demanding that he tell them of his sons' whereabouts, even though he had no way of knowing anything for certain. Unable to get his sons, the ČEKA have poured out all of their Bolshevik hate on this old man. They tortured him in every imaginable way — beating him, breaking his arms, twisting and straining his legs — until there was no human aspect left to this bleeding pile of wounds.

Looking at him we were sure that he was dying. Not a moan, nor breath. Someone runs to the door and starts beating it vehemently. A guard comes to the prison door window.

— "Hurry-up and call the prison doctor! A prisoner is dying!"

The guard goes away but no doctor comes. The old man is in his last hour. An entire group of prisoners starts banging on the cell door demanding a doctor. He finally shows up together with the prison warden who reprimands the prisoners and announces that they will get no food for three days. The doctor doesn't even deign to bend down and take the old man's pulse. He begins to yell at him, kicking him:

— "Finally, you capitalist beast, you've come to a disgraceful end! Your death matches your life! Your whole life you've sucked the proletariat's blood; perish now like a rabid dog. No one's going to bury you and put flowers on your grave!"

The prison warden scolds him with unmentionable filthy words; it's a lexicon unknown to normal human beings but which is commonplace now, continually used by "the creators of the new world." He kicks angrily at the old man, dropping those "pearls" with which the Bolshevik Revolution is adorned.

Only on the fourth night do they start interrogating me again. The interrogation is monotonous, boring and tiresome. They ask the same questions and make the same accusations a million times. A million times I answer the same thing and deny all of the accusations. From time to time the interrogations are varied: hours on end my eyes are scorched with the beam of a strong electric light while I am asked how I feel and how I like it, and then assured that the next time the beam will be stronger. Sometimes the interrogator holds a revolver to my chest or to my forehead, threatening to shoot me if I answer any questions "incorrectly." But that doesn't impress me. I look indifferently at the blinding light and the revolver pointing straight at me: live or die, it's all the same to me now whether I die this night or live to see another. I now well know that they are not going to let me go. They're going to condemn me and deport me to the North or Siberia. It's useless to try and escape. I thirst for only one thing — that they hurry-up and finish with their interrogations, sentence me and deport me. Then I will at least know my fate. This uncertainty only increases a prisoner's torment and adds to his no longer bearable anxiety.

Once I was called to be interrogated during the day. The interrogator orders me to sit down at a small table on which there are several pieces of paper, an inkwell and a pen. The interrogator then orders me to write down my social and political views. I start to put them down remembering my pre-war published work, *The Social Ideal*. Of course, I mention only some fragments of the affirmations I had made there since I cannot think seriously about these questions under prison conditions and, moreover, my memory is flagging. I stress that every civilized society or nation must adhere to four principles — authority, freedom, justice, and love — and that by seriously injuring one of them, society decays, degenerates or even becomes a barbarian collective. I spend almost the entire day writing and write only several pages. I give them to the interrogator and am taken back to my cell.

[Keliotis is sentenced to three years hard labor in a forced labor camp and is deported to Siberia together with other prisoners.]

Dusk. Silhouettes of houses are barely apparent through the autumnal fog. A dismal autumn rain is misting down. We're walking along Adomas Mickevičius Street. A hundred years ago this genius of freedom lived on this street and dreamt of a new epoch of love and freedom, poetry and greatness. For his brave dreams he, too, was imprisoned and exiled to the East. A new epoch came, only z more cruel and more frightful one. The new epoch, armed with a more powerful technical science, can put into practice a boundless despotism and commit a thousand times greater crimes. With lightning speed it can round up hundreds of thousands of free Lithuanians and transport them to the shores of the Arctic Ocean. They'll not be friends with Pushkin there, but with polar bears. And they won't read their ardent poems in the bright salons of Moscow or St. Petersburg; they'll shiver in Siberian huts and die in the Siberian forests with a shovel and a saw in their hands.

We are now in the steely grip of the gigantic new "progress." Huge, powerful millstones crush us: not one single grain escapes from them. The giant new dragon requires so much food! Nothing satiates it. It swallows and swallows entire nations, large and small, it swallows millions and still is hungry. Having gorged itself on the entire human race it would still not be sated. Yet, millions of people oblige this monster believing that they will be the last to be swallowed. Oh, Adomas, if you were alive, what songs would you be singing now?

Grim and sullen we walk along Adomas Mickevičius Street. We're surrounded on all sides by grim and sullen ČEKA men with rifles and bayonets extended. Not one star in the sky. It, too, is grim and sullen. Large drops of autumn rain pelt us. People hurry along the sidewalk passing us unawares, as if they didn't see us at all. Only an occasional woman stops, shakes her head, blesses

herself and moves slowly on. No one in our country can help us in any way! They can't wave a hand or give us a morsel of bread. An elderly peasant walking next to me continually cries silently. He had never left his birthplace and this departure, apparently, seems to him worse than death. I fear that he won't collapse entirely, for he leans ever heavily on me and squeezes my hand more and more tightly. Perhaps he left his wife and children at home, or are they departing with a different echelon to foreign regions? I don't dare say anything to him nor ask him a question. Most likely it's forbidden and they'll smash your face or split your head if you do. We move along like the living dead or like the neither living, nor dead — our human dignity trampled, the foundations of our lives sundered. All of our plans and our projects, our dreams and hopes have become merely shattered illusions. But a tiny spark of life glimmers yet in us, and our dying hearts beat on.

In front of us flashes the silhouette of the Carmelite church. Fervent prayers flare up in juvenescence in one's soul and just as quickly die. Everything is finished. God is silent and doesn't restrain the miscreants. Somewhere, Youth, with all of its dreams and all of its hawk-like resolutions, has drowned. Dashed to the ground, our homeland runs with blood: it dares not even to cry aloud. Our homeland is silent; God is silent, our souls cry noiselessly. And we, sons of the former and the latter, are being herded into darkness, into hopelessness and non-existence. No one stands up for us. The Western world, unseeing of our torment, fraternizes with our torturers, looks for war criminals yet blesses the newest evildoers! Ah, it's better to not even think, for all thought cells are liable to burst...

From the Carmelite church we turn towards the railroad. We by-pass Station Street. They're herding us circuitously. Still in all, one can't boast of such deeds nor show them too publicly. We're no better off for that. Only the trip to the train took longer. The railroad. In front of our eyes stretches a long, long chain of railroad cars — yet more instruments of torture. And this isn't the station. It seems our executioners are ashamed to do their work in the station. Here there's nothing but a huge puddle. It's pouring rain now but they order all of us to stay there and keep quiet. I've no strength left to keep standing. I kneel down in the water. Pebbles scrape my knees. Pain pelts my entire body like the rain. It's forbidden to talk or to moan loudly. My neighbor cries more convulsively and more quietly. Where does he still have the strength to cry? Not one tear of mine spurts out, probably there's not even one left.

Finally they order us to get into the railroad cars. These are not passenger cars. These are for transporting freight, or cattle. And that's understandable. Our hosts no longer consider us humans. To them we are just animals, war booty, objects of hate and revenge. No stairs, no ladders. The devil knows how, but we climb up and squeeze in anyway. There are no benches here, or windows, or shelves. Only the dirty uncovered floors and walls, hammered together out of rough planks. No conveniences. Just a small hole in the center of the car where one can relieve oneself. At one end — plank beds, which are quickly taken over by the common criminals. Not one political prisoner dares go near them. The criminals' ringleader is designated this car's supervisor. He'll be responsible for the order here. It'll be up to him to distribute the food.

The crowd presses me against the side of the car. It's getting very crowded and damp, and it's just the beginning. We'll have to travel like this for a month, maybe two. The North and the East are far from here. Then again, there's no need to hurry. First one, then another, then a third whistle is heard. The car doors are noisily bolted shut. Only the condemned are left inside. There are separate cabins for the guard escorts by each railroad car. They run along the roofs of all of the cars, checking if there are any openings through which one could escape. Clambering over the roofs, they bang the ceilings loudly thus checking their solidity and their ability to resist the prisoners' dreams. And they truly are solid — not for these prisoners to break through them.

The wheels of the nightmare train click into motion. A rumbling shakes all of the railroad cars and, even more, jolts the prisoners' hearts. They're being ripped from their homeland for all time; torn away from loved ones, from a bright and free life. How many times have we criticized our own country — it's not attractive enough, it's not as rich as other countries... its inhabitants aren't perfect... But how lovely, dear and precious our country seems now that we must part with it forever. One could fall to one's knees and kiss its breathing earth unto death. Even the shortcomings of one's fellow countrymen seem innocent and dear to one's heart.

We're our homeland's children and by losing it we seemingly lose all purpose in life. Perhaps there are people somewhere who are strangers to their land, but these are no doubt wanderers, or those who were not long ago, and who, because they are rootless, have become cosmopolitans living an artificial life. We Lithuanians have lived in our country for thousands of years, letting our roots down deeply and widely; we bleed when we are torn from our country, we lose our reason and become soulless automatons, invalids, the mortally wounded. It's under these circumstances that we leave for the cruelest the most terrible enslavement that has ever existed on this earth. The "unheard of progress" of the twentieth century has created the conditions for such slavery. It will disappear, melt away like the snow at the first ray of springtime sun.

— "Isn't anyone going to keep this train from going?" — whispers a youngster.

[After a long and terrible journey the prisoners-deportees reach their designated place of punishment.]

The train stops suddenly. The floor ceases to slap my stiffened body. I half-raise my head and open my eyes, wanting to ask my neighbor something. I don't know whether it's day or night. My initial desire quickly dies: the others know no more than I do, and maybe they no longer want to know anything. It's all the same to these people whether the train stops or goes or whether it's day or night. These things won't change their situation. Space and time have lost all meaning for them. It's all the same to me, too. I close my eyes again and lay my head down on the cold floor. The ring and clatter of iron door bolts. I re-open my eyes and lift my head. The door opens noisily. A blurred vision of several guards, a loud shout:

— "Everyone out!"

The entire car begins to move and clamor at once. Prisoners climb down from their pallets, get up off the floor, grab their bundles and shove towards the door. Those not quick enough to get up are trampled and kicked. The air is filled with curses and moans.

— "My Lord, you've stepped on my hand! You broke my leg! My ribs are crushed! Pigs! Beasts!"

— "So why are you lazing around? Didn't you hear that we had to get out? Are you waiting for them to carry you out on pillows?"

I try to get up too, but something keeps me secured to the floor as if nailed to it. I strain with all of my force, unsuccessfully, and fall back, powerless. It's so hard to breathe. An uneasiness runs through my body. I really don't know whether someone has truly nailed me to the floor, if I've no strength left, or if I'm dead or dying... I can raise and move only my head, my body is stuck, immobilized on the floor. And now my head's on the floor, too. But my heart is still alive and I hear its anxious beating. It seems that everyone but me has gotten out of the car.

I press my head to the dirty floor and try not to think about anything. My consciousness ebbs as a dark emptiness overpowers me. Lost — all sense of time, space, being. No past. No future. I have never existed and will not ever exist. No knowledge of who I am nor where I am. Emptiness and darkness. Darkness and emptiness and nothing more... I can't say how long I stayed like this. Suddenly I feel that someone is pulling me off the ground. Swearing and pulling. Ripping and pulling and swearing. It seems I'm frozen to the filthy floor. We left Vilnius in Autumn, now it's winter and -40°C. So I'm frozen to the floor and can't tear myself up off it. One of them pulls me by the shoulders, the other by my feet.

— "He's not getting up, the bastard, and now we've got to fool with him!"

My clothes can't take the pull of strong hands. They rip; part of them staying on the floor, the other on my body.

— "Get up and get out of here!"

I try to get up but don't even manage to sit up.

— "He's faking, that wretch!"

They kick me with their dirty shoes. I can't even moan, though. Then one of them takes me by the shoulders, the other by the legs and they lift me out of the car. Apparently I'm not the only one in that state. After a while they drag over one more such creatures, then a third, a fourth, a fifth...

— "Get up, you wretches, and go where you're told!" No one moves. We all lie in the snow, quiet and still, exhausted, torn, beaten.

Afterwards they drag us into the station and throw us on the floor in the corner. A small electric light hangs from the ceiling. Is it hot or cold? — I don't know. It's all the same. I lie on the floor looking at the flickering light. From time to time one being or another hurriedly scuttles through the hall. Not one of them looks at us. The sight of half-dead humans slumped against the wall is perfectly commonplace here, ordinary, normal, not surprising or interesting to anyone. It's a whole new world here with entirely different customs. If someone's dying — let him die! Whoever is hitting — let him hit! Whoever is stealing — let him steal! Who cares? The people hereabouts have enough troubles of their own to worry about someone else's fate. They know, after all, only too well that they can't help anybody, and just the fact of showing an interest can bring them new hardships, a commodity of which there is no small supply here. They scurry unconcernedly through the station hall. Only one or another of them, very carefully, so that no one will see, glances at us and then hurries away so as not to see us anymore. I myself, am uninterested in who the people are slumped there with me. It doesn't concern me whether they're alive or not since I don't quite know whether I'm alive or dead, or dreaming a horrible nightmare, or actually lying on the station floor. How am I to worry about the fate of others if I'm indifferent to my own?

[A Hungarian doctor, herself a political prisoner, saves Keliuotis who, in his weakened state, was waiting for death. In her care he regains his strength.]

The doctor smiles a friendly smile and leads me to the hospital ward which she heads. There are ten patients there of various nationalities and ages, all of them sick and exhausted from hunger and from cold. Some of them seem hopelessly ill and condemned to a sure death. Others can get better if fed enough over a period of time, protected from the cold, and given the hope of one day returning to freedom. But having just gotten a bit stronger they'll be sent out to work and to live in such barbaric conditions that they will be able to stand if for maybe two weeks at the most. During those couple of weeks some of them will die on the spot while others will be brought back to this same hospital. Only then will the majority of them be deathly ill, with but a small portion of them fighting, hopelessly, against death. That's the order of things here; one which nobody can change and which no one even bothers to challenge. Here is the fate for which millions of wholly innocent people, many of them the noblest and brightest of human beings, have perished and will yet perish. Looking at such a life one ceases to understand the twentieth century and its vaunted progress. One loses sense of what man is and no longer understands God.

The doctor points out my cot and introduces me to two of her fellow Hungarians. They're both good-looking, generous youths who apparently posed a threat to the Soviet system and communism, and especially to Hungary's enslavement, which | is | why they found themselves here. They seem healthy, but the doctor wants to save them: they came here as patients but, once healthy, she

made one of them a hospital attendant and the other a technician. By such a "combination" she hopes to keep them alive somewhat longer.

These two young fellows quickly become my best friends. They take care of me, trying to help me at every turn. In their free time they tell me of their country's beauty, about the blue Danube, about superb Budapest and about its beautiful women. They remind me of Hungary's noble past, of its heroism, and of its high culture. Not only do they "distract" me by their talk, they forget themselves and how they are living now, and begin to dream, traveling to their own country as if to a paradisiac garden. It appears to them that they've gone back, that they once again walk through their country's blooming gardens listening to the nightingale's song, and swim in the blue Danube, and race on unrestrainable steeds across the boundless green plains fragrant with all of the world's flowers; that they sit in Budapest's roomy cafes listening to gypsy orchestras play Liszt's and Bartok's preludes, quartets, rhapsodies and symphonies.

I don't stay in their debt for long. I remind them that although Lithuania doesn't have such wide plains as Hungary, nor such a large river as the Danube, that it is no less beautiful or interesting. Only her beauty is different from Hungary's. All of Lithuania is strewn with hills and dales, and etched with rivers and lakes. Small farmsteads stand on the hillocks protected by centenary oaks and maples, lindens, chestnuts, bird cherries and fruit trees. In Lithuania even the most abject shack has trees planted around it. You'll not see huge empty plains. There are woods and green undergrowth. Along the by-ways and on the hillsides, everywhere, a myriad trees, large and small. Deep piney forests with fir, oak and birches extend over much of the land. And all of the forests and woods, the farms and border trees spill over with song birds singing in all their differing voices in early morning and late evening. Lake shores and river edges are rimmed with trees and bushes. Driving through Lithuania you'll not see a great emptiness: it all seems to be wavy and green, blossoming fragrantly; everywhere there's work in full swing, the sounds of singing and the voices of birds.

In this, Lithuania stands in starkest contrast to Russia where empty boring plains stretch for thousands of kilometers and homesites are barren. Everywhere there is emptiness and boredom. Maybe that's why a Russian, instead of planting birches and windbreaks for his farmstead, instead of planting an orchard or fencing his garden, or cleaning and decorating his cottage interior, begins to dream of world revolution and to plan how, in one sweep, he can destroy a world culture and civilization thousands of years old in order to create an entirely new world. Maybe that's why there's nothing but nihilism and radicalism in Russian heads, so many unrealistic but big plans. A Russian, apparently, doesn't esteem his work or that of others, either his past or that of others; he has no respect for himself or for other people, he only fabricates world-wide plans, threatening everyone and promising everything to everybody, teaching everyone but knowing nothing himself, looking into the cosmic vastness but trampling in mud and leading a bestial life. He knows not, it seems, how much work and perseverance, love and patience it takes to clean one's room everyday, to plant fruit and flowering trees in one's orchard, to fructify and bring to blossom the smallest corner of one's land. If he knew this then he would value and love his own work and that of others, his own and other cultures. Moreover, the Russian has not yet embodied the feeling of equilibrium: he flings himself from one extreme to another, but without equilibrium there is no civilization.

*[Keliuotis is freed after several years due to the protection of J. Paleckis.*** He is allowed to return to Lithuania. However, shortly after his return, he will once again be arrested and sentenced to six years of exile.]*

POSTSCRIPT

The memoirs are supplemented by Keliuotis' biographies and an incident illustrating the unrelenting suppression directed at the aging victim in the hands of the Soviet authorities.

The shorter biography was translated verbatim from the *Mažoji Lietuviškoji Tarybinė Enciklopedija (The Small Lithuanian Soviet Encyclopedia)* published in 1968 in the Soviet-occupied Lithuania. The reader will note the absence of any reference to Keliuotis' arrests, sentencing, Siberia, etc. For comparison as well as completeness, Keliuotis' biography from the *Encyclopedia Lituanica*, published in Boston, 1973, is given as well.

An interesting incident involving Keliuotis' portrait (page 5, LITUANUS) took place in Vilnius, the capital city of Lithuania in 1981. To commemorate the "glorious" Soviet October Revolution (among other festivities and public parades), a Republic-wide art exhibition was to be opened at 4 P.M. on November 5, 1981. Included with other works of art by numerous Lithuanian artists, there was a large-sized, color portrait of an aging, elegantly dressed man done by a young established artist. The portrait was accepted for exhibition.

Some time before the ceremonial opening (the main opening speech began with a quote from Lenin...) the organizers realized that the portrait was of none other but Juozas Keliuotis. The portrait was hastily removed from the exhibition space and relegated to storage rooms.

Juozas Keliuotis was present at the opening ceremonies of the exhibition. Seeing him there, some 16 months before his death, it was obvious that he was not well. His face and his stance displayed considerable pain and concern, possibly sorrow, while his clothing was shoddy and worn, attesting to his dismal subsistence. Without any doubt, he knew the fate of his portrait at the exhibition. In retrospect, it is reasonable to think that the artist chose the elegant dress for the portrait to convey his subject's spiritual and intellectual finesse and erudition. As can be seen from the picture, one may say that Keliuotis is dressed "out of this world", given the world of the Soviet occupation.

The enclosed picture of the portrait was taken at the storage rooms of the exhibition hall. Very likely, this is the first time that this portrait of a great Lithuanian by a bold, aspiring artist is permitted to be viewed publicly. LITUANUS is pleased to publish it.

Keliuotis Juozas (born August 22, 1902 in Joniškis, County of Rokiškis) — journalist, translator. Graduated from University of Kaunas in 1926, continued his studies till 1929 in Paris (Sorbonne) majoring in literature, art, philosophy. During 1931-1940 edited magazine "Naujoji Romuva", participated in the Lithuanian Writers' Society activities. Published a philosophical book "Visuomeninis Idealas" (1935) and a collection of articles "Šių Dienų Spaudos Problemos" (1936). In his writings he promulgated idealistic philosophy and neo-catholicism. In 1940 he published a mediocre novel, "Svajonės ir Siaubas". During the Nazi occupation edited literary magazine "Kūryba". During the subsequent Soviet era translated foreign authors into Lithuanian.

Translated from *Mažoji Tarybinė Lietuviškoji Enciklopedija*,
Volume II, Vilnius, 1968, page 119.

Keliuotis Juozas (1902-), journalist and author, born in Joniškis, county of Rokiškis, on Aug. 22, 1902. After graduating from the University of Kaunas in 1926, he studied journalism, philosophy, literature, and sociology at the Sorbonne in Paris from 1926-29. From 1929-35 he was editor of the daily Rytas (The Morning). In 1931 Keliuotis founded, published and edited until 1940 the magazine *Naujoji Romuva*, which exerted considerable influence on the cultural, social and political life of the country. The magazine, devoted to cultural and sociological topics, numbered among its contributors practically all of the noted men of science, art, and literature in Lithuania. Besides his work on *Naujoji Romuva*, from 1930 he edited an almanac of contemporary literature entitled *Granitas* (Granite), which published the works of young authors of Catholic persuasion. From 1943-44 he edited the cultural magazine *Kūryba* (Creativity). Keliuotis is the author of the novel *Svajonės ir siaubas* (Dreams and Horror) 1940, and of a major study on social philosophy published in 1935.

With the return of the Soviet regime in 1944, Keliuotis was accused of anti-atheism, nationalism, cosmopolitanism, and counter-revolution, and for each of these offences was sentenced to 25 years in a so-called correctional (forces) labor camp. When the era of the Stalin purges ended, he appealed to the Russian author and journalist I. G. Ehrenburg; both of them had been members of the International Pen Club. Through Ehrenburg's intervention three of the four sentences were rescinded, and later, about 1955, the remaining sentence of 25 years was commuted. Keliuotis was granted permission to reside in Vilnius but was not able to find permanent employment. Forced to make a living by occasional translations and book reviews, he nevertheless found means of obtaining a number of the latest French literary works, and he tried to introduce new ideas from Western Europe in the literary and artistic circles of Vilnius.

Taken from *Encyclopedia Lituanica*,
Volume II, Boston, Mass. 1973, page 104.

*To join the partisans.

**ČEKA — Bolshevik secret police proceeding the NKVD, KGB.

***Justas Paleckis, a Lithuanian journalist, writer and a high Soviet official, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR.