

LITUANUS

LITHUANIAN QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Volume 20, No.4 - Winter 1974

Editors of this issue: J.A. Rackauskas

Copyright © 1974 LITUANUS Foundation, Inc.



Algis Rukšėnas, *Day of Shame*: The truth about the murderous happenings aboard the Cutter *Vigilant* during the Russian-American confrontation off Martha's Vineyard. David McKay Company, Inc., New York, 1973. Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 73-76564.

This is a book about the Lithuanian sailor, Simas Kudirka, who attempted to defect to the U.S.A. on November 23, 1970, but was returned to the Russians. Several books have been written about this tragedy, and we will list here the most important ones:

1. Jurgis Gliuda, *Simas*, Viltis, Cleveland, 1971. (156 pages; in Lithuanian).
2. Jurgis Gliuda, *Simas*. Translated from Lithuanian by Kęstutis Čižiūnas and J. Žemkalnis. Manyland Books, New York, 1971. (Translation into English of No. 1, plus the text of the defense speech of Simas Kudirka).
3. *Attempted Defection by Lithuanian Seaman Simas Kudirka*. Hearings before the Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Foreign Operations of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 91st Congress, Second Session, December 3, 7, 8, 9, 14, 17, 18 and 29, 1970. U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1971. (247 pages).
4. *Lituanus*, vol. 18, No. 3, 1972.
5. Bernhard Späth, *Amerikaner verweigern politisches Asyl*. Die Auslieferung des Matrosen Simas I. Kudirka an die Sowjets. Süddeutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, Ulm, 1973.

There is no doubt that of all the publications, the *Day of Shame* is the most valuable one, the most comprehensive, and well written. Algis Rukšėnas managed the most important thing: to present the intertwining events, opinions, messages, conversations, and finally, later interviews, in such manner that a reader never loses the track of events. The happenings unfold in a tragic way. Rukšėnas writes calmly, but warmly, clearly describing the actions and the reactions of all the people involved in this unparalleled real life drama.

Once the book is started, it is difficult to put it down, without having completed it. Even though I was very well acquainted with the events of Simas Kudirka's tragedy, it was, as though I was reading about a fresh event, a new drama.

In addition to the survey of the minute events in their important background, what makes this book particularly valuable is the painstaking collection and vivid presentation of its various aspects which the author gathered through many interviews with the people involved.

The photographs are also selected very well: they illustrate the vital points in this unfolding story of one man trying to break free into the Promised Land of Freedom. And the Promised Land through indescribable blunders, stupidity and mistakes cruelly rejects him.

The appendix contains nine of the most important documents concerning this case and its aftermath. These documents are now available in one place, instead of in various and very often scarce publications. The *Notes* give a complete documentation and pertinent literature. There is also a copious Index which makes it very easy to look up almost any person, place and event mentioned in the book.

It is indeed a valuable book. If it reaches a great number of Americans, it will assure anew that such a betrayal as that of Simas Kudirka will never take place again. If it reaches more people outside of the US, then it will contribute to the growth

and understanding of the value of freedom. We believe that every public library, as well as school and college libraries should have this book. May be it would be a good idea to re-issue this book in a paper back edition.

Antanas Klimas
The University of Rochester

On August 23, 1974, Simas Kudirka was released from the hard labor camp. On November 5, 1974, he arrived in the United States, with his mother, wife and two children. This was primarily due to the fact that his mother was found to be a U.S. citizen: she was born in Brooklyn, lived in the U.S. for 6 years, then was taken back to Lithuania. Under public and congressional pressure, the US State Department granted US citizenship to Simas Kudirka. (Ed.)