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Book Review: ARCHIVES AT THE DIASPORA INSTITUTE IN KAUNAS

By the time this essay is in print, the bulk of my Lithuanian archives will be in the hands of the Diaspora Institute (Išveivijos institutas) in Kaunas under the wing of Vytautas Magnus University. For the benefit of my historian colleagues in Lithuania and abroad, may I respectfully offer a partial description and commentary about these donated holdings. No doubt there is some duplication of the huge Kviklys collection at the Diaspora Institute. This essay addresses uncommon material, almost certainly not part of the Kviklys archives.

To begin with, is there anything rare in this collection? What I believe is literally unique is a small set of Lithuanian-related dissertations, both master's and doctoral, prepared in colleges and universities in the United States, delving into the fields of history or sociology. The doctoral studies are described in my article of 18 June 1988 in *Draugas*.

The earliest Ph.D. dissertation by a Lithuanian in the United States appears to date from 1924 at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., written by social and nationalist activist, Fr. Fabijonas Kemesis, on "Cooperation Among Lithuanians in the USA." This slender volume broke new ground. Its value lies in its seminal nature. Soon afterwards, the author returned to Lithuania to implement his knowledge of sociology, teaching at the Dotnuva Agricultural Academy.

Noteworthy is Konstantinas Jurgéla's 312-page typescript, "Lithuania and the United States: Establishment of State Relations," prepared at Fordham University in 1953. Several decades later, in 1985, a shortened version was published in hard cover. This monograph was one of the few dissertations to appear in printed form. Two others also met with this success.

In 1965, Jack Stukas achieved his doctorate for "Awakening Lithuania." My collection includes the published text of 1966 which gained a second printing years later.

Antanas Adomenas, using the pen name of Van Reenan, produced "From Koenigsberg to Chicago" at the University of Chicago in 1986. His dissertation, too, came out in printed form soon afterwards, receiving favorable reviews.

Two other Ph.D. endeavors warranted at least an abstract in paper cover. One of these came from the prolific journalist, Msgr. Juozas Prunskis, who wrote "Comparative Law, Ecclesiastical and Civil, in Lithuania," at Catholic University in 1945. Fr. Kazimieras Širvaitis composed a massive study, "Religious Folkways in Lithuania and Their Conservation Among Lithuanian Immigrants in the United States," at Catholic University in 1952. The abstract hardly indicates the vast scope of this monumental opus. When the author died as chaplain for the Sisters of St. Casimir in Newton, Pennsylvania, no one knew what became of his personal copy. My initial inquiries at the awarding institution also proved temporarily futile. Happily, a later archivist at the university located the misplaced dissertation. I promptly arranged for a copy, which required binding in two volumes.

Three other doctoral studies deserve attention here. Peter Jonitis [Jonaitis], a second-generation Lithuanian, native of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, researched a suburb of Philadelphia, to author "Acculturation of the Lithuanians of Chester, Pennsylvania," at the University of Pennsylvania in 1951. Much of his data derived from interviews, some hours long, asking probing questions like: "When did you first begin to use a tooth brush?"

Algimantas Gedmintas's study at another Lithuanian settlement, Binghamton, New York, resulted in "Dynamics of Ethnic Identity Among Lithuanian-Americans in an Urban Industrial Setting." The State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton awarded the scholar a doctorate in 1979.

A third noteworthy study probed still another settlement, this one on the West Coast. The title is: "An Urban Enclave: Lithuanian Refugees in Los Angeles," presented at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1971. The writer

is none other than Liucija Baskauskaitė, the celebrated (and later controversial) heroine of the Vilnius television tower tragedy, which took place as Lithuania's independence reemerged.

Two master's theses prepared by religious women deserve inspection. A nun of St. Casimir, Sr. Timothy Audyatis (Ses. Timotea Audyaitė), compiled a massive study called "Catholic Action of Lithuanians in the United States," prepared at Loyola University at Chicago in 1958. The unpublished work required two volumes, when I arranged for its binding. Though somewhat filiopietistic in the style of that era, the genuine value of this study lies in its compilation of information extracted from scattered sources, no longer readily accessible.

The second master's thesis is that of Sr. Annunciata Mazeikaite, whom I knew personally quite well. Noticeably modest by temperament, this Philadelphia-born woman throbbed with fervor for her Lithuanian roots. When her community sent her to Boston College to acquire a needed degree in English, she cleverly devised an acceptable topic with a Lithuanian motif. Her gem of a study is "Lithuanian Attitudes Toward America and American Writers," of 1966.

File folders with a wide range of subject matter abound in this collection. To cite two unusual examples, there are folders on the "Lithuanians and Poles at the Council of Constance," and one on Bishop Antanas Baranauskas and his letter in the Roman Catholic Archives of the Hartford, Connecticut diocese. Each has a story of its own.

Some thirty years ago, before my graduate studies, I used some days off to take a course on the Holy Eucharist at the Jesuit Seminary in Weston, Massachusetts. The late Fr. Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J., a world-renowned expert on this topic, was the professor. With my enthusiasm high at the end of the semester, I asked the priest to suggest a paper I might write. He recommended the Eucharist in Lithuania. Sifting through my small collection of three decades ago, I found very little. Yet I stumbled upon a fascinating topic—the Lithuanians and Poles at the Council of Constance, where they issued a formal complaint against the incursions of the priest-warrior Teutonic Knights. In the aftermath, the Council established a diocese (Samogitia) in Lithuania. As best as I could, I wrote a paper on this topic and submitted it to the *Catholic Historical Review*. The editor rejected the study, asking me to include German-language sources. I then successfully turned to *The Jurist*, organ of the Canon Law Society. The article appeared in the summer issue of 1973. The file contains notes from various publications that provided the basis for the article.

The Baranauskas letter has an intriguing background. In 1896 Lithuanian immigrants of New Britain, Connecticut, were worshipping in their new church of St. Andrew, serviced by Fr. Juozas Žebrius, commuting from Waterbury. Wanting their own resident pastor, the parish committee invited their acquaintance, Fr. Vincas Girdžiūnas in Lithuania, to assume the pastorate. He replied with a list of questions about church life in America to see if it was worthwhile for him to come across the ocean. In the early days of my research on Father Žebrius, I discovered Girdžiūnas's original letter, a Latin translation, and a subsequent English translation. I incorrectly surmised that Bishop James Tierney had asked Žebrius to provide the Latin translation since he was the only Lithuanian priest anywhere in sight. Instead, the bishop shrewdly sent the missive of Girdžiūnas to his Lithuanian bishop, requesting a Latin version, and also asking about the suitability of Girdžiūnas. Though Bishop Baranauskas's secretary prepared the Latin, Baranauskas's signature adorns this rare find. My file includes copies of these letters with an explanation about their significance.

Rare, too, is the small collection of microfilm, potentially transferable to computer discs. The indefatigable Fr. Juozas Žebrius traveled everywhere to organize parishes and chapters of the Lithuanian Alliance. In addition to starting a parish bakery and parish farm to provide jobs and wholesome food, for three years (1896-1898) he found time to publish a weekly newspaper, *Rytas*. While researching the Žebrius biography, I needed to read every page of this publication. I am indebted to Bronius Kviklys who risked mailing me bound copies of Volumes 2 and 3 (1989) of the weekly. While further searching, shelf by shelf, I examined the Marian Fathers collection at Marianapolis Preparatory School in Thompson, Connecticut. (I do not presume that card catalogues are accurate.) To my great joy, I spotted a bound copy of Volume 1 that contained the earliest issues of 1896. I promptly microfilmed the entire set.

One of the most useful publications has been *Vienybė Lietuvninkų*. (begun in 1886). I soon learned that the nationalists knew enough to microfilm their newspaper and place the reels in the New York Public Library. The Boston socialists also had the good sense to microfilm their news weekly *Keleivis* (started in 1905) and donate a set of reels to the Boston Public Library (at the South Boston branch). I negotiated an exchange with both libraries, swapping copies of *Rytas* and a cash donation to cover the difference, thus acquiring the first decades of both *Vienybė Lietuvninkų* (1886-1921) and *Keleivis* (1905-1925) for perusal with my own microfilm reader. Bronius Kviklys also lent me copies of Fr. Aleksandras Burba's weekly *Valtis* so I could microfilm a copy for myself. In addition, there are several Lithuanian-related dissertations on microfilm in my collection.

When *Keleivis* ceased publication, it gave away most of its library holdings. I came away with some twenty bags full of pamphlets and calendars, mostly socialist, including some hard-to-find publications.

Happily, I had saved a complete run of *Lituanus* to donate, and a nearly full set of *Lietuvių Dienos* [Lithuanian Days]. The latter, a slick California-based publication, was passed on to me by Dr. Jurgis Gimbutas. I was also fortunate to have all the issues of the Lithuanian Priests League organ which underwent several name changes, but was known for the longest time as *Lux Christi*. Most of these, bound together by year, were bequeathed by Fr. Stasys Yla to ALKA (American

Lithuanian Cultural Archives) in Putnam, Connecticut. To my good fortune, these journals were a duplicate set given to me by Fr. Rapolas Krasauskas.

Most uncommon is the material I unearthed in chancery archives while preparing my trilogy, *Lithuanian Religious Life in America*. Over a twelve-year period, during vacations and days off, I visited the diocesan depositories of Boston and Springfield in Massachusetts; Manchester, New Hampshire; Portland, Maine; Burlington, Vermont; in New York: New York City; Brooklyn; Albany; Syracuse; Buffalo, and Rochester; for the several dioceses of New Jersey—Seton Hall University in South Orange, where there is a joint depository; the dioceses in Pennsylvania, including: Scranton, Philadelphia, Allentown, Harrisburg, Erie, Greensburg, and Pittsburgh; also, Gary, Indiana; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Chicago; Detroit; Saginaw, Michigan; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

For instance, I left Philadelphia with a cache of 500 pages of photocopied data. What did such treasures contain? The bulk of the material was correspondence between pastors and bishops; annual parish reports; letters of praise or complaint from lay people; legal documents of litigation; and personnel questionnaires. This last-named material is priceless, because it is the priest's own testimony and usually gives his place and date of birth; seminary; ordination date; and assignments. From such documentation, it was possible to reconstruct parts of a parish history, otherwise unknown.

A major archival collection consists of Lithuanian colonies, alphabetized by city/town or state. These files include published parish jubilee memorials, diocesan materials, and newspaper and magazine clippings. The larger enclaves have multiple, thick files.

Because they handled money, fraternal-benefit societies (*pašalpinės*) were required by law to register with the various Secretaries of State. Visits to these offices in Massachusetts, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut yielded invaluable data. I inscribed this information on file cards, giving the society's name, city/town, date of incorporation, and death and weekly sick benefits. Immigrants in even smaller enclaves invariably quickly banded together for self-help. The appearance of these cooperative ventures allows one to plot the locations where newcomers settled.

For the benefit of comparative studies, there is a collection of 85 Polish parish histories (there were over 700 in the USA) and some thirty monographs about other ethnic groups. Two basic references are: Stephen Thernstrom, ed., *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* and Francesco Cordasco, *Dictionary of American Immigration History*. A further useful guide is Elliot Barkan, ed., *Making It in America: A Sourcebook of Eminent Ethnic Americans*. It was an honor to contribute entries on Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, and Albanians to the Cordasco book; and five entries to the Barkan essays, namely: Bronius Kviklys, Mother Maria Kaupas, Leonardas Simutis, the husband and wife duo of Loretta and Jack Stukas, and Fr. Juozas Zebrys.

There are extensive papers generated in the preparation of my monographs, i.e., the documentary about the 1926 Bimba blasphemy and sedition trial in Brockton, Massachusetts; Fr. Zebrys's biography; the diamond jubilee history of the Knights of Lithuania; and a seven-town study called Immigrants and Yankees in Nashoba Valley, Massachusetts: Interethnic and Interreligious Conflict and Accommodation of Irish, French-Canadians, Poles, Lithuanians, and Italians.

There is more that could be said about the sixty banker's boxes of papers donated to the institution in Kaunas. Meanwhile, this information, I trust, will suffice to whet the appetites of graduate students and established historians to probe the tantalizing story of Lithuanian immigrants abroad.

William Wolkovich-Valkavicius
Norwood, Massachusetts