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Editor of this issue: Antanas Klimas

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## COMING EVENTS

### STRENGTH IN ADVERSITY: A FESTIVAL

Expected to draw active participants from every free-world country in which Lithuanians reside, the Second Lithuanian World Festival, scheduled for early summer in Chicago, promises to be the major collectively significant event in the Lithuanian emigre community this year. This grandiose celebration, successor to the First Lithuanian World Festival held four years previously in Toronto, will weave political, cultural, religious, athletic, and social strands together into a multifarious tapestry of happenings in a style expressive of the Lithuanian penchant for public festivity and spectacle. While the purpose of these events is to give fresh impetus to Lithuanian community life outside the mother country, the very fact that they can be organized and sustained on such a huge scale affords proof of the continuing vigor of that life (even as its supports are slowly corroding.)

In this survey each of the major components of the up-coming festival will be briefly characterized. A more detailed schedule of planned events is appended at the end.

### The Sixth Lithuanian World Community Congress

One sign of the Lithuanian talent for organization is the existence of an entity called the Lithuanian World Community, Inc. (Pasaulio Lietuvių Bendruomenė, or PLB for short). This entity, in effect, functions as an instrument of self-government for Lithuanian communities throughout the free world. Any person of Lithuanian descent is considered to be a member of PLB; there are no additional enrollment requirements. Membership entitles one to participate as voter and/or candidate in periodically held elections whereby officers invested with certain community responsibilities are chosen. Whereas PLB exercises responsibility for the Lithuanian emigre community as a whole, its subdivisions in each of the free-world countries with non-negligible Lithuanian populations function more or less autonomously within their own narrower sphere of responsibility. Each of these subdivisions, or National Lithuanian Communities (for example, in this country, the Lithuanian-American Community of the USA, Inc.), operates along the same principles of non-restricted membership and periodic free and secret elections of responsible bodies. The largest national organizations are in turn subdivided into regional (apgyardos) and local (apylinkės) organizations, where identical principles apply.

Each of the world, national, regional, and local organizations is popularly called *Bendruomenė* (meaning "Community"). The same designation applies also to the hierarchical structure as a whole. Every body elected within *Bendruomenė* at whatever level has been entrusted with responsibility in directing all phases (political, cultural, educational, religious, athletic, social, and financial) of Lithuanian community life, but only to the extent and in the manner permitted by relevant *Bendruomenė* constitutions and by-laws, and checked by the consent of its constituency.

Historically, the process of organizing *Bendruomenė* began in the late 1940's and was completed a decade later. Since then, *Bendruomenė*, both in abstract principle and in concrete realization, has received widespread recognition with Lithuanian populations everywhere. Occasionally friction arises in dealings with Lithuanian organizations that are more narrowly-based or that represent a partisan or other type of special interest within the Lithuanian diaspora. By contrast, *Bendruomenė* aims to represent the free-world Lithuanian constituency as a whole rather than any special interest within that constituency. It might also be conceded that *Bendruomenė* has had some difficulty in involving persons of Lithuanian descent who no longer speak the Lithuanian language or who have never spoken it. One reason, especially at the world (or PLB) level, is simply this: if there is any language that is common to all persons of Lithuanian heritage, that language most likely is going to be Lithuanian, so naturally PLB communications and proceedings tend to remain in Lithuanian.

However, at the national and still lower levels, this constraint, for better or worse, has tended to loosen: in Latin American countries, use of the language is dramatically receding; while in the United States the national *Bendruomenė* organization has, without compromising in principle, made a marked effort to reach out to generally non-Lithuanian-speaking third, fourth, and fifth generation Lithuanian-Americans.

It is this world-level organization — PLB — which is the chief sponsor of the World Lithuanian Days Festival. Coincidentally, and in accordance with its constitution, the sixth World Community (PLB) Congress will take place June 26 - 30 at the Lithuanian Youth Center in Chicago. Approximately 140 delegates from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, France, Great Britain, Italy, the United States, Uruguay, Venezuela, West Germany, and other countries will report on the state of their respective Lithuanian communities as well as debate and adopt proposals to meet the needs of these communities during the next four-year period.

In addition to the elected delegates, non-voting guests and observers from the public will be freely allowed to attend the sessions of this congress.

## The Fifth Lithuanian World Youth Congress

Operating under the aegis of *Bendruomenė* is the Lithuanian World Youth Association, an organization patterned after *Bendruomenė*, with membership restricted to persons between the ages of 16 and 30 (35 in some countries). This organization is the sponsor of the Fifth Lithuanian World Youth Congress, an extended event of structured activities designed to bring together Lithuanian youth from the entire free world for a collective exploration and reaffirmation of their common heritage. Only the opening of this Congress will take place in Chicago (at the University of Illinois campus July 1); from there participants will proceed to an open week-long Youth Camp (July 4 -10 at Oberlin College in Ohio) for 600 people, to be followed by a nine-day Seminar (July 11 - 20) at Trent University in Ontario, Canada, for elected youth delegates and a limited number of non-delegates only. The congress will conclude later in July with scheduled political activities on behalf of the Lithuanian cause (visitation of foreign embassies located in Ottawa) and a press conference, concert, and banquet in Montreal.

Expected to participate are 120 delegates from 14 countries, along with a much larger number of young people on an open basis subject to limitations of space (and, in some cases, preregistration).

## The Second Lithuanian Sports Festival

Organized in cooperation with the North American Lithuanian Physical Education and Sports Association (ŠALFASS in Lithuanian), this version of the "Lithuanian Olympics" will take place June 26 -July 3 on the University of Illinois at Chicago campus with nearly 1,000 athletes participating. (Some of the planned competitions are scheduled for other times at other locations.) Scheduled events include soccer, golf, basketball, tennis, ice hockey, track and field, swimming, racquetball, ski, table tennis, chess, marksmanship, and volleyball.

## The Sixth Lithuanian Song Festival

One of the highlights of the Festival will be the Sixth Lithuanian Song Festival July 3 at the U. of I. at Chicago Pavilion. A mass chorus composed of 1,800 singers from 45 Lithuanian choruses and choirs throughout the U.S and Canada will perform a program of folk songs and original songs by Lithuanian composers. The *daina* has long been the crown jewel of Lithuanian popular culture, and this concert, complete with folk orchestra accompaniment and folk costume pageantry, promises to give splendid expression to that tradition. It is also expected that this colorful event will gain the largest share of attention from the American media.

## The Opera

Part of the Lithuanian song tradition is a predilection for the opera. For more than a quarter-century now the Lithuanian Opera Company of Chicago has been staging productions in the Lithuanian language of classical operas as well as operas written by Lithuanian composers. Recently the company resurrected an almost forgotten opera about the Lithuanians: *I Lituani* by the Italian composer Amilcare Ponchielli (1834-1886), most famous for his *La Gioconda*, which is still a staple of the world repertory. Written to a text by Antonio Ghislanzoni, Verdi's famous librettist, and premiered at Milan's La Scala in 1874, *I Lituani* deals with the 14th century struggle between Lithuania and the Teutonic Order. Conceived in the extravagant style of grand opera, this work was last staged in 1903 under the direction of Arturo Toscanini. Since then, concert versions of the entire opera or selected excerpts from it have been repeatedly performed in Italy, most recently under maestro Andrea Gavazzini of the Rome Opera House.

However, it was not until 1981 that a full-scale stage production of *I Lituani* was again undertaken, this time by the Lithuanian Opera Company of Chicago. The production, visually enhanced by sets borrowed from Milan, was such a musical success that WFMT, Chicago (the largest and most prestigious FM station in the United States) agreed to tape the performance for broadcasts in this country and (via satellite hook-up) throughout 11 foreign countries as well. The company took its production to Toronto last year and will offer it again as a special highlight of the Second Lithuanian World Festival at the Auditorium Theater in Chicago on July 1.

## Other Events

The Festival program will be rounded out by a large array of exhibits, concerts, theater and film presentations, and other entertainments, only the most important of which are listed in the calendar below. Of special significance are two exhibitions of works by Pranas Domšaitis (1885-1960), an expressionist master who spent most of his creative life in Germany and South Africa and who once was a target of Hitler's drive against "decadent art." A large collection of his paintings and prints was recently acquired by the Lithuanian Foundation, Inc. (see LITUANUS, Vol. Nr. 27, Nr. 4), a move which caused an immediate upsurge of Domšaitis prices on international art markets.

## Festival Headquarters

The office of the festival organizing committee (Lithuanian World Festival, Inc., a subsidiary of the already mentioned Lithuanian World Community, Inc.) is located at 5620 So. Claremont Ave., Chicago, IL 60636 (312-778-2200). Specific information on planned events, tickets and registration (where applicable), hotel accommodations, and anything else pertaining to the Festival may be obtained by contacting that office by letter or phone.

All events comprising the Festival are open to the public (with the exception of some restrictions imposed on participation in certain phases of the Youth Congress).

M. Dr.

