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LITHUANIANS IN AMERICA. *By Dr. Antanas Kučas. Translated by Joseph Boley. Boston: Encyclopedia Lithuanica.* 1975.XIV, 349 *pages, $6.00.*

THE LITHUANIANS IN AMERICA: 1651-1975: A CHRONOLOGY AND FACT BOOK. *Compiled and Edited by Algirdas M. Bureckis. (Ethnic Chronology Series Number 21). Dobbs Ferry, New York: Oceana Publications.* 1976. VI 174 *pages. $6.50.*

The Lithuanian self-image in America has only been sharply defined over the past several generations. Coming from a region which for most of modern history was politically submerged within non-Lithuanian governmental structures, the Lithuanians were often confused with their Polish neighbors. As a matter of fact until relatively recently many Lithuanians regarded themselves as being "Lithuanians of Poland", with admitted considerable overlapping of cultures between the two peoples. For the Lithuanians resident in Europe as well as their former countrymen overseas this situation was clarified with the emergence of an independent Lithuania during the period between the two world wars. Overseas Lithuanians now had for some twenty-two brief years a sharply defined territorial base as a point of reference; a state of affairs which had a most positive effect in the maintenance of ethnicity among the group. Lithuanian-American musicians, athletes and scholars traveled to the homeland for a revitalization of their ethnic roots and a high degree of cultural cross-fertilization took place between the Lithuanians in Europe and those in the United States. With the implementation of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 independent Lithuania along with her Baltic neighbors was doomed. Once again, as had been the case for so many years of her sad history, the Lithuanian nation became a subordinate political part of a more powerful adjacent state.

The number of Americans having a Lithuanian ethnic origin has never been accurately estimated owing to the long period of time during which the group was included as part of other Eastern European immigration entities. Educated guesses as to the number of descendants from a Lithuanian background resident in the United States today range from 500,000 to about two million, with most enumerators favoring a figure close to the latter. Settlements of Lithuanians have been established throughout the United States, with the heaviest cluster in Pennsylvania and in Chicago. Chicago has with some justice been termed " the American capital of Lithuania" because of its large Lithuanian concentration and the until recent concentration of the ethnic group in identifiable neighborhoods, often in close proximity to Polish-American residential areas.

The heyday of Lithuanian immigration to the United States occurred during the years from the 1870's to the coming of World War I. The enforced Germanization of Lithuanian areas within that country's borders, coupled with Russian oppression in Czarist dominated Lithuanian regions and economic troubles impelled large numbers of the group to leave their home areas. In Russian dominated Lithuania a systematic effort was effected by the authorities to root out every vestige of Lithuanian cultural identity; a cultural pogrom which included the banning of publication of books in the Lithuanian language. The attempted Germanization of Polish and Lithuanian populations launched under the administration of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck also placed in peril the perpetuation of the ethnic entity. But the overriding factor in the emigration of Lithuanian peoples was an economic one, as the small farming system disintegrated under the onslaught of industrialization. The compulsory and highly onerous Russian military draft was also an important factor in causing many Lithuanians to leave areas under Czarist control.

The majority of Lithuanians coming to the United States down to World War I were workers and peasants arriving in the new land without any significant economic cushion to support them for any length of time. Whether interested in farming as a vocation or not, the greatest number of Lithuanian immigrants were compelled to take whatever jobs were available as soon as they arrived. Naturally they sought out their fellow countrymen already resident in America, and finding Lithuanian settlements in the coal field of Pennsylvania, thousands of Lithuanians made their way to this region. The Lithuanians became an important part of the coalmining force in Pennsylvania and constituted large segments of the population of such coal-mining towns as Shamokin, Shenandoah and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Others flocked to the factories and

stockyards of Chicago and the Middle West, again finding residence in neighborhoods in which their fellow Lithuanians and often Poles had already taken root.

With the passage of time a flourishing Lithuanian press emerged with thousands of copies of periodicals, newspapers and books being issued by ethnic entrepreneurs. The Lithuanian Catholic clergy was an important force in this literary effort, through publication and writing efforts perpetuating the Lithuanian culture in America. Dr. Kucas devotes a considerable amount of space in his overview of the Lithuanian-American community to the group's literary expression, emphasizing the difficulty of maintaining a written culture while Lithuanians under Russian rule were forbidden to publish in their native language.

The Lithuanian community in America before the first World War was far from being a united one. Both Kucas and Budreckis comment at times over the climatic struggles between supporters of the Catholic Church and the significant Socialist element in the group which viewed all religion as anathema. Virtually every Lithuanian fraternal society was wracked by this dissension. Added to these problems was the often acerbic relationship between the Lithuanians and the Poles in America, which manifested itself in disputes over control of local Catholic parishes and the appointment of priests. It should be pointed out, however, that this dissension, which is especially emphasized by Kucas, is viewed as overstated by Victor Greene in his recent book on the "God and Country" argument in the Lithuanian and Polish communities in the United States before World War I.

The suppression of Lithuanian independence by the Soviet Union and the country's incorporation into the USSR was vehemently opposed by Lithuanian-American groups. The common cause of fighting the Russian menace united the ethnic community to a considerable degree. Many of their ancient arguments faded into insignificance in the light of this new danger to the home land. Both Kucas and Budreckis devote considerable portions of their texts to this effort on the. part of the Lithuanian-Americans to prevent their country from falling under the Soviet yoke.

With the ending of World War II Lithuanian displaced persons began arriving in the United States, aided by strenuous efforts on the part of the Lithuanian-American community. These people have represented by and large middle and upper class ranks of Lithuanian society, including doctors, professors, lawyers and civil servants. Their coming onto the American scene has revitalized the Lithuanian-American ethnic culture. A rebirth of literary and artistic expression has taken place featuring a blending of Lithuanian and American influences.

Both Kucas' and Budreckis' books are worth reading as an introduction to a significant although little known ethnic group on the American landscape. Neither author pretends to present a definitive study of the manifold episodes in Lithuanian-American history but their overviews are accurate and relatively far-ranging in scope. Both books should find a place in the library of the observer of the ethnic experience in America.

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