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## Book Review

**Linas Saldukas, *Lithuanian Diaspora*.** Vilnius: Vaga Publishers, 2002. 198 pages. Photographs. ISBN 5<sup>^</sup>15-01652-X.

This publication appears to be rather hurriedly and less-than-meticulously crafted, like many others during the heady early days of the reemergence of Lithuanian academic life following the implosion of the Soviet Union. As the historian and diplomat Alfonsas Eidintas put it so succinctly, Lithuanian historiography then began to "unshackle itself" from the ideological bondage of Marxism-Leninism. During the process, a nation numbering approximately three million, with one venerable European university - once the oldest in the Soviet Union - suddenly sprouted several universities on a narrower demographic base and an even narrower academic foundation. An analogy would be the explosion of the community college system in the United States during the nineteen-sixties or so when academic standards, ever a problem even within more established systems, were unequally applied in research and in the rush to publish, even on the doctoral level.

To be fairly reviewed, *Lithuanian Diaspora* must be approached in this context. The Soviet system did produce some highly qualified historians within the limits set by the regime. A handful of historians were able to navigate the shark-infested waters of Soviet censorship. Others maintained their personal and professional integrity within the confines of a *redakcinė komisija* or collective editorial committee. As a result, what is missing in the present Lithuanian context are a sufficient number of established and experienced historians to mentor the new generation of scholars. To write usable history-as art, craft, and literature - young historians require the benefit of established mentors or, at least, qualified outside readers and advisors. That can only come in time.

This book consists of some 180 pages, divided into four to five major chapters unequally strewn together. Three pages are allotted to early Lithuanian emigres, from the 1600s to the 1860s; followed by eleven pages dedicated to the old emigration to the United States, from the latter part of the nineteenth to the beginning of the twentieth century. Next comes the post-World War II migration, highlighting cultural life in some fifty-one pages. The remainder of the book is devoted to the concept of the "World Lithuanian Community" as propagated by the organization of that name (Pasaulio lietuviu bendruomene) with subchapters outlining Lithuanian settlements in the United States, Canada, Australia, Argentina, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belarus, Latvia, Poland and Siberia. This last section alone is worthy of a substantial research project. Most American and Canadian readers are only slightly aware of the Lithuanian communities beyond the confines of North America.

Certain aspects of this publication are, however, very troubling. The first is the title of the publication, which is planetary in scope. The text begins flippantly with the 1600s, in folklore and myth, without any substantial basis in fact. One could just as easily conjure up a Lithuanian on a Viking ship among the first immigrants to the United States and Canada, all of coastal Europe, down through the estuaries of the eastern Slav principalities to Byzantium. There are only eighty footnotes, which suddenly cease on page 115. Seventeen of these are multiple citations of a few sources. Primary sources are pitifully few.

Although it is a given that there is little new in what the distinguished historian A.E. Senn describes as the "factology of history," given the chronological and geographical scope of this book, as well as the all-embracing title, one must question the depth as well as breadth of research. This is especially so in the first eighty-eight pages, which seem to closely parallel *Lietuvių kolumbai* by Alfonsas Eidintas published in 1993 (based on his doctoral dissertation *Lietuvių emigracija į Šiaurės ir Pietų Amerikos šalis, 1968-1940. Lithuanian Emigration to the Countries of North and South America, 1968-1940*, and defended at the University of Vilnius in 1990). After languishing some seven years on some bureaucrat's desk, *Lietuvių kolumbai* finally appeared in English in 2003 under the title *Lithuanian Emigration to the United States, 1860-1950*, published by the Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, Vilnius. Oddly enough, Saldukas's *Lithuanian Diaspora* managed to pass muster and be financed by the Lithuanian Ministry of Culture.

Unfortunately, there are several other shortcomings, involving quality control, which cannot be brushed aside. The publication lacks a foreword or introduction, as well as a thesis, followed by research and useful conclusions. A bibliography, not to mention an annotated bibliography, and an index, at least of persons and places if not themes, are missing. These are common irritants found in many contemporary Lithuanian academic publications and are not exclusive to Saldukas by any means. No doubt, in time, such deficiencies will self-correct as a new generation of post-Soviet historians evolves writing in accordance with an internationally accepted methodology.

English has rapidly replaced Russian as the international literary language in Lithuania. As a result, there has been a rush to publish in English to achieve international academic status. The translator of this book, Vjolė Arbas, is merely noted by name, without any information about her qualifications and background as a translator or whether the translation was also sponsored and financially supported by the Ministry of Culture or some third party. It is an excellent translation, although the translator did not stray far from Lithuanian stylistics. The translator herself, on page 39, cites the difficulty in translating *išėivija* into a good and comprehensive English equivalent. Nevertheless, the choice of "Diaspora" for *išėivija*, in a Lithuanian context, is misapplied and unsuitable. "Diaspora" is a biblical term of Greek origin. It was first applied to Jews after the Babylonian Captivity and then to Jews and early Christians scattered throughout the Roman Empire, especially after the fall of the Second Temple in 70 A.D./C.E., for almost 2000 years now. As a translator of two books from Lithuanian into English (including the above-mentioned *Lithuanian Emigration to the United States, 1860-1950*), this reviewer would advise translating *išėivija* as *emigration*, followed by the accepted period, especially for American readers. Also, *Lietuvių kolumbai*, cited by Saldukas, was never translated as Lithuanian "Columbuses" but as the more acceptable *Lithuanian Emigration*. In Lithuanian, *Diaspora* is a contemporary loan word in the same category as *vizitas*, *emocijos*, *asociacija*, *frakcija*, *mausas*, and *mitingas*, the predecessors of which were *strytas*, *karas* (car), *porkčopsas*, *boisiukas*, *stepsai* etc.

Much of what could and can be done concerning Lithuanian immigration in general, particularly to the United States, has already been done over the last half of the twentieth century. Excellent preemigration studies primarily in the spheres of economic and social history were safely generated during the Soviet period by homeland Lithuanian historians who simply added the required citations from Marx, Engels and Lenin to cover their tracks and avoid a one-way ticket to Arkhangelsk or Novosibirsk. At the present time, much more yearns to be uncovered by a new generation of Lithuanian homeland historians, not even dreamed of during the Soviet period. There remain stacks of untapped primary sources at the Central State Archives of Lithuania, the Central State Historical Archives, the Unpublished Manuscript Section of the State Archives, the files of the Ministry of the Interior and various police reports concerning illegal emigration during czarist times from the precincts of Trakai, Vilnius, Suvalkija, Augustava, and Seinai, not to mention Russian sources in St. Petersburg, now more accessible than before to Lithuanian scholars. The reports and activities of Czarist and Soviet Secret Agents among their compatriots abroad would certainly make fascinating though probably embarrassing reading for some.

Study of the "*išėivija*," or Lithuanian emigrants, need no longer go through Chicago, and a fresh homeland perspective is always reinvigorating. The recently-salvaged archives from the moldy attic of the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington eagerly await scholarly scrutiny. The ALKA archives in Putnam, CT, languish away in want of eager minds and itchy young hands to explore their riches. Much has been done in the history of nineteenth-century Lithuania to provide us with a richer understanding of the reasons for such massive emigration during that period. The last part of Lithuanian Diaspora, on the post-World War II emigration, points in yet another solid direction: the absolute necessity of gathering oral history from the remnants of the post-World War II Displaced Persons and their descendants, before it will be inevitably lost. More is needed for the English language reader about the various communities outside of North America. The story of those left behind in Germany after the mass relocation of Displaced Persons begs to be told. There is much more awaiting to be done by the new generation of Lithuanian historians than simply reheating *vakarykščiai barščiai* (yesterday's beet soup).

**Thomas A. Michalski**