









GARSAS • LITHUANIAN U.S. DIVISION OF AMERICA

# English Section

## DECLARATION OF LITHUANIAN INDEPENDENCE

After the last partition of the united Polish-Lithuanian state in 1795, Lithuania was subjugated by the Russian empire and ruled by it until 1915. At the end of World War I, while Lithuania was occupied by Germany, independence was restored through the Declaration of Independence proclaimed by the Council of Lithuania (q.v.) on Feb. 16, 1918 in Vilnius. The text of the declaration reads as follows:

The Council of Lithuania (Lietuvos Taryba) in its session of February 16, 1918 decided unanimously to address the governments of Russia, Germany and other states with the following declaration:

"The Council of Lithuania, as a sole representative of the Lithuanian nation, on the basis of the recognized right to self-determination of nations and the decision of the Lithuanian Conference in Vilnius, September 18-23, 1917 hereby proclaims the restoration of an independent, democratically organized Lithuanian State, with Vilnius as capital, and the abolition of all political ties which have existed with other nations.

"The Council of Lithuania also declares that the foundations of the Lithuanian State and its relations with other states must be finally determined by a Constituent Assembly (Steigiamasis Seimas) to be convoked as soon as possible and elected by all the inhabitants of Lithuania".

A postscript was added to the declaration: "The Council of Lithuania in informing the Government of ... to this effect kindly requests recognition of the Independent State of Lithuania".

The Declaration of Independence was signed by all twenty members of the Council who had convened for that purpose in the great assembly hall of the Lithuanian Committee for the Relief of War Victims on Grand Street (Didžioji gatvė) in Vilnius. The Declaration of Independence was to have appeared in Lietuvos Aidas (The Echo of Lithuania), a newspaper published in Vilnius by the Council of Lithuania. When the proof sheets of the news paper were shown to the German military censor he crossed out the entire first page with the declaration. This meant that legally the newspaper with the declaration could not be published.

Whereas, Thousands are persecuted and oppressed in various countries of the world, especially the brave and courageous dissidents in the communist dominated countries who are bringing to the world's attention, at the risk of their lives and security of their families, the degree of slavery and persecution their countrymen must endure: deprived of the right to work, the right to choose their place to live, the right to speak — even to listen; the right to join their spouse or family living in another country — all these basic rights which we take for granted, yet totally are denied these thousands of brothers and sisters...

(From a resolution, presented to the 87th Convention of the General Federation of Women's Clubs in Phoenix, Arizona, 1978, by the Federation of Lithuanian Women's Clubs)

lished. Consequently about 500 copies of the newspaper were printed secretly (Tuesday, February 19, 1918) and distributed all over the country. But the day before (February 18) the text of the declaration appeared in Berlin newspapers (Vossische Zeitung, Taegliche Rundschau, Kreuzzeitung) and was read in the Reichstag the same day. The declaration reached Berlin through unofficial channels and aroused varying reactions in German political circles. The German Government looked very unfavorably on the matter and enjoined German newspapers not to publish the text and to make no comment regarding this declaration. The Chancellor of Germany, Georg von Hertling, in a letter of F.E.B. 21 to the Lithuanian council de-

manded that the Council return to its earlier decision, called the Resolution of December 11, 1917, which had proposed a firm and permanent federation with Germany after the war. The Council of Lithuania refused to do this and explained that it was too late to revoke the Declaration of Independence. It could only be implemented when Germany lost the war and the first Government of Lithuania was formed on Nov. 11, 1918 (See Council of Lithuania).

February 16 became an historic day and national holiday. It was appropriately celebrated during the period of Lithuanian independence and is still observed by Lithuanians in the free world. Since Soviet Russia occupied Lithuania during World War II, commemorating February 16 has been prohibited; nevertheless this important day is remembered by the people and revives the hopes for freedom.

(Encyclopedia Lituanica)

## EVENTS IN COMMUNIST OCCUPIED LITHUANIA

### Priests Prevented from Attending Patients in Hospitals

On March 24, 1978, the Rev. Antanas Šeškevičius was invited to visit Stanislovas Milašius, who was gravely ill at the Gargzdai old people's home. Several other old people asked the priest to hear their confessions and to give them the Holy Communion. The director of the old people's home, Striauka, who abused the priest verbally, ordered him to get out. Šeškevičius invoked in vain the article by Commissioner Tumėnas (Tarybų Darbas, No. 5, 1975), who said that priests have the right to confer the sacraments in hospitals if the patients so desire. The Rev. Šeškevičius lodged a complaint to the authorities about the director's behavior.

Skuodas. Kazimiera Aklienė, 81, was brought to the Skuodas hospital after an operation. Feeling very ill, she asked for a priest with the last sacraments. Chief physician Mažrimas retorted: "As long as I am alive, no priest will set foot in my hospital". Then the patient asked to be taken to her friends in Skuodas, where she would receive the sacraments and would then return to the hospital. Dr. Mažrimas ordered to have her removed from the ward and left in the corridor. He told her husband that he would not allow her into the

hospital any more. Mrs. Aklienė was left without supervision in the drafty corridor and died on April 8th. Mrs. Magdalena Selenienė, 88, was also denied a priest, and died without the last sacraments on January 8th. Complaints to the Skuodas region Communist Party officials always bring an identical reply: "He is O.K. for us!"

### Authorities Dictate Priest's Funeral

The Rev. Antanas Tyla, Rector of Notėnai parish, was buried on January 27, 1978, after a prolonged struggle between the believers and the authorities. In his testament, Rev. Tyla asked to be buried next to his mother, in the cemetery of the Notėnai churchyard. But, when the believers began to dig his grave, the local Communist Party authorities immediately forbade it. The believers then went to the Curia of the Telšiai diocese for help. When the Curia turned to the Office of the Commissioner for the Religious Affairs, it received the reply that questions concerning funerals are handled by local authorities. The believers then gave an ultimatum to the chairman of Notėnai district, Šetkauskas; they threatened to leave their priest unburied if the authorities persisted in their injunction. Šetkauskas finally appealed to the Communist Party secretary, Sabanskis, saying that the people were "enraged" and that the whole matter may get into the Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania. Finally Sabanskis relented, and the priest was buried in the churchyard.

Druskininkai. Aldona Balevičienė, secretary of the town's executive committee, was preparing for a church wedding, to be held on April 15, 1978. Her superiors, deputy chairman V. Marimonokas and Navickienė, found out about it and attacked her for "holding on to religious superstitions". They hurled various threats at her; she would be dismissed from work, denied an apartment, and expelled from the university,

## MIDNIGHT

Translated by Antonia M. Wackell

There is one only special hour  
Within the night,  
When to the heaven's clustered stars  
You softly pray.

And the scintillating heaven  
Is so brilliant,  
That, it seems, you have all  
the stars  
Within your heart.

All reality — only one  
The sky's blue dome —  
And you yourself in its blue  
depth  
Have been engulfed.

No more are there sacred  
prayers  
Nor sinfulness:  
Soon as the heart will voice  
its song,  
Then heaven gains.

V. Mykolaitis-Putinas

## FEBRUARY 16

### Lithuanian Independence Day

Scranton — At the request of the Knights of Lithuania, a Catholic fraternal organization, Bishop J. Carroll McCormick has suggested that pastors in the diocese in the General Intercessions at Masses on Saturday and Sunday, February 10 and 11, the following petition:

"That God bless and strengthen the suffering Catholics of Lithuania and all those throughout the world whose spiritual and human rights are violated, we pray to the Lord..."

Since February 16 is Lithuanian Independence Day, the Knights have suggested that it would indeed be appropriate for American Catholics to pray for their fellow Catholics in Lithuania.

(The Catholic Light, January 11, 1979)

### Militant Atheist

Kaunas. On October 11, 1978, a militant atheist, A. Guiga, secretary of the Požėla region in Kaunas, was guest speaker at the course on atheism, which is required at the Kaunas Medicine Institute. He said that "reactionary priests" still existed and mentioned two of them — the rector of Adutiškis, the Rev. Laurinavičius who "tries to attract children to assist at the Mass" and the Rev. Valančiauskas (Švenčionys region), who is trying to "penetrate farms and factories". Guiga also mentioned that most believers get married and baptize their children in other churches than their own. Some written comments by students were critical.

(Elta)

unless she "renounced the church". When she said that this was the family tradition, her father was accused of "forcing his daughter to adhere to religious practices".

Prienai. The Easter services at the Užuguostis church this year were attended by many students. Some of these students... including Kazlauskaitė, Sinkevičienė and Krikščiūnaitė... were strongly reprimanded for attending church. The rectors of Pakuoonis, Skriaudžiai and Užuguostis were summoned to the executive committee of the Prienai region on April 17, 1978, where they were chastised for "allowing children attend religious services". The priests refused to bar children from the church and admonished the officials to adhere to the "new Constitution".

(Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania — Elta)

## TO THE CLOUDS ABOVE OUR FATHERLAND'S FIELDS

Translated by Antonia M. Wackell

As I lie in the vastness of undulating meadows  
I look at you, a cloud unrestricted,  
At your bottomless blue,  
At your inconceivable depths.

Toward these rugged fields you approach,  
Perhaps, wet with moisture from Nemen's  
bordering meadows,  
You bring to me the kisses of our native fields  
With rain you strengthen the dream of freedom...

— From In Siberia a Dying Partizan's Sighs

## HEALTH FOR ALL

### Separating Toddlers And Tiny Objects

What's the most common cause of accidental death in the home for children under six? Inhaling small objects into the windpipe and the lungs.

Almost everything young children get their hand on ends up in their mouths or up the nose. Whether they pick up a pin, a button, a peanut, or a tiny toy. From their mouth or nose, the object can slip down the throat and get into the windpipe. If it goes into the lungs, the object can block a breathing passage and cause permanent damage.

To prevent these tragic mishaps — which are completely preventable — the American Lung Association is conducting a nationwide campaign to alert everyone who takes care of children, including older brothers and sisters. This is the message: be sure to keep small objects out of the reach of very young children.

According to the Lung Association, swallowing the "wrong way" is a real hazard for children as well as adults.

Parents who teach youngsters not to talk and eat at the same time can help prevent problems.

Ordinarily, both food and air go into the upper throat. But at a critical point they take two very separate pathways. Just before we swallow anything, including food or saliva, we take in a little air and then hold our breath. This closes a valve in the throat called a glottis. As a result, air is cut off, and anything we swallow is forced down into the esophagus, which leads to the stomach.

However, the minute we talk, we start to breathe. The glottis opens to let air travel into the windpipe and lungs. When food or small objects travel this route, trouble is on its way.

To find out more about preventing lung trouble and about the campaign to keep youngsters from inhaling objects into their lungs, contact your Wyoming Valley Division of the Lehigh Valley Regional Lung and Health Association or the Christmas Seal people. They care about every breath you take. And every swallow.

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