

# LITUANUS

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*Juozas Skirius*

THE ISSUE OF LITHUANIA'S INTERNATIONAL  
RECOGNITION BY THE USA IN 1922

*Vygantas Vareikis*

THE WINNER TALE: SOME REMARKS  
ON THE LITHUANIAN MARCH  
INTO KLAIPĖDA REGION

*Prepared by Arida Riaubienė*

"TODAY IS A JOYFUL AND GREAT DAY..."  
(Excerpts from the Diary of Matas Šalčius,  
Related to the Klaipėda Revolt)

*Juozas Grikis*

POEM

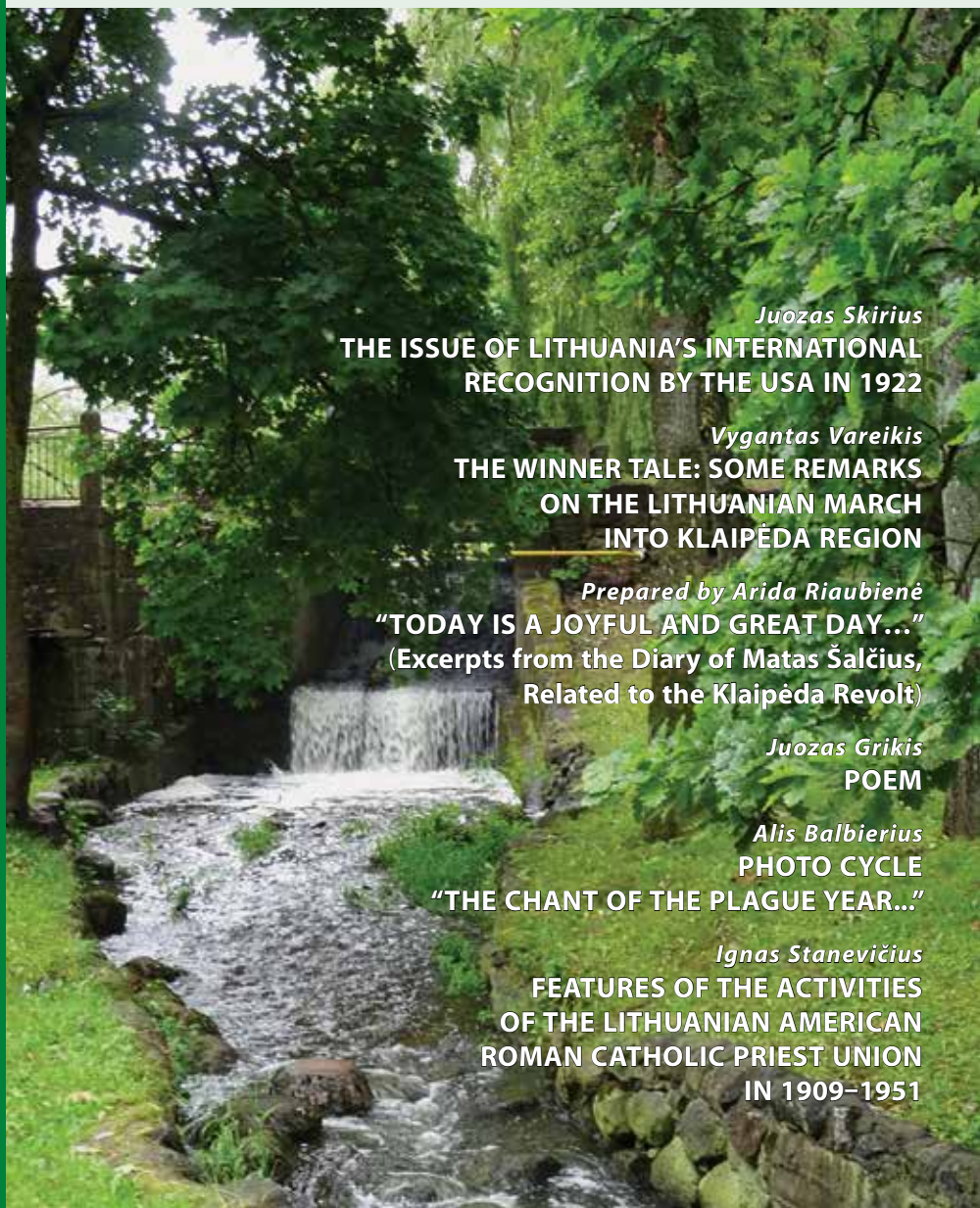
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PHOTO CYCLE

"THE CHANT OF THE PLAGUE YEAR..."

*Ignas Stanevičius*

FEATURES OF THE ACTIVITIES  
OF THE LITHUANIAN AMERICAN  
ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST UNION  
IN 1909–1951



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# The Issue of Lithuania's International Recognition by the USA in 1922

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JUOZAS SKIRIUS

## Introduction

The year 1922 was important for the young Lithuanian State since at that time, it was also recognized by major Western countries. The accorded legal recognition provided conditions for this new, small country to integrate into the then global political, economic, and cultural structure.

International recognition *de facto* and *de jure* was sought in 1918–1922. The recognition of Lithuania in 1922 was achieved with difficulty, after fulfilling the conditions of major countries officially and unofficially. Those conditions seem to show a lack of guarantees for the statehood of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia alike. For example, the US Government obviously sought temporary existence of the Baltic States in 1918–1922.

The author of this article has already investigated the process of, and motives for Lithuania's recognition *de jure* by the international political organization – Conference of Ambassadors (Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan) on December 20, 1922.<sup>1</sup> At this point, it would be appropriate to insert a comprehensive investigation of the US diplomatic approach. Therefore, the purpose of this article is, using the method of comparative analysis, to investigate and evaluate the approach the US government

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<sup>1</sup> Skirius, *Lietuvių visuomenininkas*, 225–240.

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announced on July 28, 1922, to the issue of the recognition of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The disclosure of this particular issue is also important for the history of international law.

## Historiographical Review

The historiography on the issue of the recognition of Lithuania, as well as Latvia and Estonia, is not sizeable, moreover, that the researchers of the relations between the Baltic States and the USA did not carry out a thorough analysis of the nature of the recognition itself. One of the first to research the Lithuanian-US relations in 1918–1922 was Kostas Jurgėla, a Lithuanian American historian. He announced the fact of the recognition in his dissertation that he defended in 1954 in Fordham University in New York.<sup>2</sup> William Morris David, a US professor of International Law and History, in 1962 defended a doctoral dissertation *Development of United States Policy toward the Baltic States 1917–1922*, which has never been published. The professor discussed the conditions for the official recognition of the Baltic States in 1922 more thoroughly than Kostas Jurgėla.<sup>3</sup> He was the first to examine the original documents of the US Government held in the US National Archives. Shortly afterwards, a book by Albertas Tarulis dedicated specifically to the issue of the recognition of the Baltic States came out.<sup>4</sup> The author examined the official position of the USA towards the newly established Baltic States more widely than the previous authors. He was the first to note that it was proposed as early as 1920 to recognize these states temporarily, as long as the Bolsheviks were in power in Russia. Tarulis elaborated on the pro-Russian orientation of the USA touched upon by Jurgėla. He tried, though superficially, to associate the recognition by the USA in 1922 with the events of 1940 and the US

<sup>2</sup> Jurgėla, *Lithuania and the United States*, 264.

<sup>3</sup> Jasys, "Amerikos politika," January 31, 1969, No. 9, 4; Ibid., February 7, 1969, No. 10, 4; Ibid., February 12, 1969, No. 11, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Tarulis, *American-Baltic Relations*, 386.

position on them. But he did not analyze the content of the recognition act of 1922 itself. All the aforementioned historians, having no access to the archives in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, basically researched and described the official policy of the US Government towards the Baltic States.

The first to draw attention to the fact that, in 1922, the USA recognized not the Baltic States, but their governments was the Estonian historian H. Talvar and the Latvian historian A. Puga.<sup>5</sup> In his dissertation, the latter evaluated it as the expression of the anti-Bolshevik policy of the USA. The works of the historian Juozas Skirius explore the issue that was not too widely examined by the previous historians – the activities of Lithuania's representatives in the USA in pursuit of the recognition of the country, discuss the character of its recognition in 1922, and attempt to explain this recognition.<sup>6</sup>

More than one article on the history of the Lithuanian-US relations was published in the periodical press of the Lithuanian diaspora and Lithuanian. The articles tried to comment on the recognition in 1922 more widely.<sup>7</sup>

## Overview of Sources

The material of the article and the theoretical summaries made in it are based on archival documents. It includes the originals of the correspondence of the US Department of State leadership with their responsible officials on the issue of the recognition

<sup>5</sup> Talvar, *The Foreign Policy of Estonia*, 130; Puga, *Politika imperializma*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Skirius, "Lietuvos pripažinimo," 1989; *Lietuvos užatlantės diplomatija*, 1995; *U.S. Government Policy Toward Lithuania 1920–1922*, Chicago, 2000.

<sup>7</sup> Bačkis, S.A. "Lietuvos-JAV santykiai dviejų šimtmečių (1776–1976) laikotarpyje," *Karys*, No. 6, 1976; Kostas R. Dirgėla, "Lietuvos saitai su Jungtinėmis Amerikos Valstijomis," *Karys*, No. 7; Simutis A. "Kova Amerikoje už Nepriklausomos Lietuvos pripažinimą," *Naujoji viltis*, No. 15, 1982; Skirius J. "Istorinė uodega. 1922 metais Jungtinės Amerikos Valstijos nepripažino Lietuvos nepriklausomybės," *Lietuvos aidas*, No. 12, July 24, 1997; "Nauji faktai apie JAV 1922 metų ribota Lietuvos pripažinimą," *Lietuvos aidas*, June 23, 2002.



kept in the National Archives in Washington.<sup>8</sup> Also, it includes the reports of Lithuania's representatives from the United States and the instructions of the leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania to the United States accumulated in the funds of the Lithuanian Central State Archives (hereinafter – LCSA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, and the Legation of Lithuania in Washington.<sup>9</sup> The fund of the Lithuanian American Council of the World Lithuanian Archives in Chicago contains surviving documents pertaining to the recognition in 1922. This material was used for political purposes by diaspora organizations working with the liberation of Lithuania in the post-war period. Some of the US Department of State documents, e.g., correspondence with US representatives in the Baltic States in 1920–1922, have been published.<sup>10</sup> These documents reflect the American sentiment, position, and arguments for recognition or non-recognition.

The most important documents analyzed in the article are the July 28, 1922 declaration of recognition and the July 24, 1922 letter from the US Secretary of State, Ch. Hughes to the President of the United States.

## **1. Circumstances of the Recognition of Lithuania**

The January 13, 1922 decision of the League of Nations to liquidate the neutral zone and draw a new demarcation line between the Lithuanian State and the territories occupied by General Lucjan Zeligowski was a blow to the national interests of the Lithuanians. However, it now became clear to the Lithuanian

<sup>8</sup> National Archives of the United States (hereinafter – NAUS). – M1178 – 3, 8, 19; M1185 – 1, 2.

<sup>9</sup> Lithuanian Central State Archives (hereinafter – LCSA). – F. 383, ap. 2, 3, 7; F. 656, ap. 1, 2.

<sup>10</sup> The Department of States. Papers Relating to the Foreign Regulations of the United States (hereinafter – FRUS). 1920. – Washington, 1936, Vol. 3; FRUS. 1921. Washington, 1936. Vol. 2; FRUS. 1922. Washington, 1938. Vol. 2.

diplomats that this forcible change in the *status quo* position opened up new opportunities for them to act more successfully in the international arena in order to achieve recognition *de jure* by major Western powers. The official invitation for the Lithuanian delegation to the International Conference in Genoa, received with difficulty, strengthened this hope. In a secret meeting of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 2, an instruction was approved – to coordinate the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the representative offices in pursuit of Lithuania's recognition at the Genoa Conference. Lithuanian diplomats predicted that before starting to put pressure on the diplomatic services of major countries, they needed: to assure that the public in those countries had a favorable disposition towards Lithuania; to facilitate their favorable attitude towards Lithuania; to explain that in order to maintain a strong peace in Europe and to recover its economy, the situation in East Europe was first to be stabilized. It was suggested to make use of influential local people with a favorable disposition towards Lithuania for Lithuania's interests, to use the influence of Russian emigrants in Paris, Prague and the USA in addition, as well as to contact the representative offices of the countries that had already recognized Lithuania so that they would declare to the major powers that Lithuania was completely ripe to be recognized.<sup>11</sup>

The Washington Conference ended on February 6, 1922, during which the US diplomats took revenge for the defeat at the Peace Conference in Paris. The treaties approved at this Conference for the first time reflected the increased political influence of the USA in the international arena. Lithuania's representative in London, T. Naruševičius, claimed that the USA would start to take a greater interest in European affairs because, as a country of powerful industry, it was interested in a faster settlement of affairs in Europe. The diplomat noted that the USA was influencing the policy of Great Britain and France, as their financial situation made them heed the opinion of the Americans. Therefore, the word

<sup>11</sup> Skirius, *Lietuvių visuomenininkas*, 225, 227–228.

spoken by the Washington administration will also have an impact on the governments of Great Britain and France.<sup>12</sup>

The authorized representative of the Lithuanian Government in Washington, Voldemaras Čarneckis, in early 1922 sought connections with prominent US political figures, trying to win them over. He urged the Lithuanian Americans to get more actively involved in the political activities of Lithuania's recognition. It should be noted that the efforts of the Lithuanian Government and the activities of its representatives in the USA in 1918–1922 were analyzed quite comprehensively in the aforementioned works by Juozas Skirius. It was these efforts that were one of the reasons that prompted the US Government to officially recognize the governments of the Baltic States on July 28, 1922. The material found in the US archives shows that as early as September 7, 1920, the US Department of State was recommending the recognition of the governments of the Baltic States *de facto* and *de jure* as part of Russia.<sup>13</sup> This proposal was, however, delayed until 1922, leaving a lot of uncertainty in the field of international law as well. At this point, it would be appropriate to note that on April 25, 1922, the US Government unequivocally declared that it recognized the “independence of Egypt”.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. Recognition of Government. What is it?

In the practice of international law, this is a rare and unique recognition. Therefore, a special study is necessary to find out why the Americans chose this form of recognition, why and in which ways it was useful for US diplomats, and what it gave to Lithuania and its neighbors.

On July 24, 1922, the US Secretary of State, Ch.E. Hughes, addressed a special letter to the President of the USA, W.G. Hard-

<sup>12</sup> Skirius, “Lietuvos pripažinimo,” 92–93; *U.S. Government Policy*, 39.

<sup>13</sup> 1920 09 07 letter, the US Secretary of the Navy to the US Secretary of State. NAUS. – M1185–1. P. 588.

<sup>14</sup> FRUS. 1922. Vol. 2. P. 105.

ing, asking for his approval to accord recognition to the governments of the Baltic States. According to him, the “time has come” for this, and “this step is consistent with our general policy towards Russia”.<sup>15</sup> The President approved. Interestingly, it was suggested to read out a verbal communication: “The Government of the United States recognizes the governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania” and to prepare a broader declaration in writing.<sup>16</sup> All this was to be done by the US consuls who were to inform the Ministries of Foreign Affairs in Riga, Tallinn, and Kaunas on July 28 at the same time. Efforts to come across in the Lithuanian archives the material about the official declaration of the USA with the comments or discussions of Lithuanian diplomats have failed. The declaration was printed in the official collection of US diplomatic documents without the aforementioned communication.<sup>17</sup> Assumingly, it was a conscious attempt not to publish the verbal communication. All the more so because the declaration, based on major European countries, which had already recognized the governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania *de jure* or *de facto*, refers to the recognition quite vaguely. So, as if logically following the European policy, the US leadership nonetheless does not want to stand out “by according recognition to them from their side”.<sup>18</sup> It must be noted that at that time, the European countries such as Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany had not yet officially recognized Lithuania *de jure*, but were already openly considering such a possibility. American diplomats were aware of that and followed those events closely. Their decision to accord recognition on July 28 can be seen as an effort to get ahead of the Europeans. Thus, US diplomacy did not only win in a political, but also in a moral point of view. In

<sup>15</sup> 1922 07 24 correspondence between the President of the USA, W.G. Harding, and the US Secretary of the State, Ch.E. Hughes. Lithuanian World Archives (hereinafter – WLA). American Lithuanian Counsel (1939–1990) fund. Files and pages are not numbered.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> FRUS. 1922. Vol. 2. P. 873–874.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

the eyes of the Baltic nations, the Americans were able to remain as a country of great democracy, the defender of small nations, thus strengthening its international authority.<sup>19</sup> However, the Americans underestimated European diplomacy. The Conference of Ambassadors, in their December 20, 1922 note, decided to recognize the Republic of Lithuania *de jure*.<sup>20</sup> This international recognition was of a higher level than that of the Americans.

Professor of International Law V. Vadapalas noted that the criteria for government recognition are less obvious than those for state recognition.<sup>21</sup> The practical difference comes to light in the case of the recognition accorded by the USA. As early as June 1921, during a conversation with Lithuania's representative Jonas Vileišis, the US Secretary of State gave away that "he does not object to the recognition of our independence, with a small remark that such recognition is given temporarily".<sup>22</sup> This is an excellent comment in the third paragraph of the official declaration made on July 28, 1922. This paragraph states that

the troubled state of affairs in Russia cannot be the reason for the division of Russian territory, and it is considered that this attitude does not affect the current recognition of the Governments of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.<sup>23</sup>

The conclusion is quite clear: as long as the Bolsheviks are in power in Russia,<sup>24</sup> it is expedient to support the independence of the Baltic States. It is a kind of way to weaken Bolshevik Russia. In the aforementioned letter of July 24 to the President of the United States, the Secretary of State clearly noted that intended recognition of the Baltic States

<sup>19</sup> Skirius, *Lietuvos užatlantės diplomatija*, 65.

<sup>20</sup> Skirius, *Lietuvos visuomenininkas*, 232.

<sup>21</sup> Vadapalas, *Tarptautinė teisė*, 219.

<sup>22</sup> LCSA, f. 383, ap. 7, b. 192, I. 23.

<sup>23</sup> FRUS. 1922. Vol. 2, 873–874.

<sup>24</sup> After Bolshevik government and kaiserlich Germany signed a Treaty of Brest on March 3, 1918, RTFSR (Soviet Russia) became Germany's ally and, at the same time, an enemy of Triple Entente and the USA.

by the United States was delayed in order to consider the conditions related to the general issue of Russia, especially due to the need at the time to oppose the tendency of some European states (Great Britain – J.S.) to incite the division of the Russian State, and the United States felt that their interests required a strong and united, and democratic Russia in the future.<sup>25</sup>

This is clarified by the Secretary of State himself: on May 11, 1921, he gave away that “the recognition of the Baltic States is possible with a remark that if the old Russia comes to the normal state of affairs again, then the issue of the recognition of these States can be reconsidered.” Thus, a reserve is left in favor of non-Bolshevik Russia – temporary recognition of the Baltic States.

On the basis of the May 26, 1919 letter signed by the leaders of the USA, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan to Admiral Kolchak, as the leader of the White Russians, we can claim that the concept “temporary” in American diplomatic terminology is not accidental. In this letter, Kolchak is actually recognized as the leader of the future democratic Russia, if non-Russian peoples, including the Lithuanians, will be granted wide autonomy in Russia.<sup>26</sup> Since this letter was initiated by the Americans, Lithuania, in their opinion, must also be a constituent part of the Russian State with autonomous rights, just like Latvia, Estonia, Ukraine and other countries. Germany foresaw that these autonomous territories would also have their national governments subordinate to the center, Russia. Even in their declaration of recognition of 1922, which the Lithuanian Government received as well, the Americans noted that this act did not violate the principle of Russia’s indivisibility. Thus, the Americans committed no crime against the Great Russians at all, because, basically, in 1922 they recognized, of course, in a covert form, the autonomous territories and autonomous governments, which, if necessary, will automatically and painlessly “return” into the composition of democratic Russia. It should be noted that the idea

<sup>25</sup> WLA.

<sup>26</sup> *Russian-American Relations*, 339.

of such autonomy was completely unacceptable to the societies of the Baltic States and their leaders. The Americans were well aware of that. Therefore, wishing to avoid a negative disposition of Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian societies towards them, they contented themselves with an official verbal communication. Vladas Jurgutis, a member of the Lithuanian Government, Minister of Foreign Affairs, informed the Seimas and the press that the USA “recognized Lithuania.” Lithuanian diplomats found a neutral option, which established itself for a long time in the press and in the terminology of diplomats and historians later. This way, the essence of real recognition by the USA was disguised for a long time.

The principle of Russia’s indivisibility is, from a certain point of view, recorded in a personal letter of Augustinas Voldemaras, the chairman of the Lithuanian delegation at the Peace Conference in Paris, written to the British politician, Prof. D. Simpson in June 1919. The essence of the letter is that – if the democratic system is restored in Russia, then Lithuania could become a part of the Russian Federation on the grounds of autonomy, like Bavaria in Germany.<sup>27</sup> However, in writing this, the head of the Lithuanian diplomatic service did not, himself, believe in the restoration of the democratic system in Russia soon. It was just a political game of Voldemaras and Western diplomats. But this letter of his was accepted by the politicians of the Entente countries and the USA as the official position of the Government of Lithuania with all consequences arising from it. For the Westerners, this letter became an argument for Lithuania’s possible relations with the future democratic Russia. It was no coincidence that the US Secretary of State, R. Lansing, in his official letter of October 15, 1919, recommended the Lithuanians to get into agreement with Admiral Kolchak and become a part of Russia with autonomous rights. Only with such circumstances will the USA

<sup>27</sup> See more: Laurinavičius Č. *Lietuvos-Sovietų Rusijos taikos sutartis (1920 m. liepos 12 d. sutarties problema)*. Vilnius, 1992, 75–76; *Lietuvos užsienio reikalų ministrai 1918–1940*. Kaunas, 1999, 29–30.

be able to maintain relations with the Lithuanian Government.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the issue of Lithuania's independence depended on the outcome of the struggle between the White and the Red forces in Russia. The victory of the White Russians entailed autonomy within Russia for Lithuania. It must be noted that the Bolsheviks were aware of such federal provisions of the Western countries and thus, when declaring the establishment of the USSR at the end of 1922, they adapted them to their own interests. The emergence of the Ukrainian SSR, the Belarussian SSR and others within the State of the USSR was a kind of idea of autonomy similar to the Western concept yet distorted in terms of content. The incorporation of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia into the USSR in 1940 in a way corresponded to the 1919–1922 American concept. Everything would have been fine if it had happened without the Bolsheviks in power.

### **3. Why the Recognition Took Until 1922**

This issue is directly related to the nature of the recognition. Analysis of archival documents shows that even recognition of such a limited nature was coercive for the Americans, and without their initiative. US politicians did not show any efforts to speed up the recognition of the Baltic States; on the contrary, they looked for reasons to slow down the very act of recognition, to postpone it to an unforeseeable future as much as possible. First of all, this can be explained by the fact that the leaders of the Entente countries and the USA followed the position that the territory of the Russian State, except for Poland and Finland, which were recognized as independent, is indivisible and integral. This was established in the document mentioned above – the May 26, 1919 note of the Supreme Council of the Allies to Admiral Kolchak. The Westerners' hope that the Bolsheviks will soon be crushed in Russia prevented the recognition of Lithuania,

<sup>28</sup> Skirius, *Lietuvos užatlantės diplomatija*, 36–37.



Latvia, and Estonia for a long time. The ambassador of the White Russians, Boris Bakhmeteff, had a particularly strong influence on the Washington administration – by trying to represent the interests of the peoples of prewar Russia. The historian A. Tarulis has proved that until mid-1921, the leadership of the US Department of State consulted and coordinated their actions with Bakhmeteff on all the most important issues of the Baltic States.<sup>29</sup> The political White Russian forces in Paris, Berlin and Washington were hostile to the efforts of Polish politicians to join Lithuania in different ways. Ambassador Bakhmeteff's position is explained as follows: it will be more difficult to recover Lithuania if, after the overthrow of the Bolsheviks in Russia, it will have been annexed by the Polish State. It is therefore better to recognize Lithuania's, as well as Latvia's and Estonia's temporary independence. Moreover, as it was becoming clear that the Bolshevik rule in Russia had established itself for a long time and no material political changes could be expected there in the near future, Bakhmeteff's status in Washington changed as well. When resigning, he presented an official Memorandum on the Baltic States to the Department of State on July 1, 1921. In this document, he proposed that these states be "recognized conditionally," i.e., temporarily. The Ambassador noted that this form of recognition had no precedent in diplomatic practice.<sup>30</sup> But the principles of such recognition had already been laid down in the aforementioned note of May 26, 1919. More on that a little later. Whereas the form of recognition proposed by the Ambassador was formulated and dictated, as was already mentioned, by the Americans themselves even before the submittal of the Memorandum.

It should be noted that the strained relations between Lithuania and Poland were one of the obstacles for major European powers to recognize Lithuania. On January 26, 1921, Latvia and Estonia were recognized *de jure* (most probably, their governments – J.S.), whereas the recognition of Lithuania was withheld

<sup>29</sup> Tarulis, *American-Baltic Relations*, 348–350.

<sup>30</sup> FRUS. 1921. Vol. 2. P. 755–759.

until its border with Poland was settled. This withholding of recognition had repercussions in Washington.<sup>31</sup> It was one more pretext for the Americans, and a hedge at the same time, to stop the recognition of not only Lithuania, but also Latvia and Estonia, disappointing their politicians. What is also important is that this position of the Americans and the aforementioned Memorandum explain to us why US diplomats widely use the terms “Baltic provinces” and “Baltic States” trying to avoid distinguishing national territories. The thing is that they were viewed as a constituent part of the Russian Federation, and it was avoided to grant exclusive rights to any of them thus enabling any of them to stand out in the trio in pursuit of the establishment of their independence and faster recognition.

Ambassador Bakhmeteff’s position formally “untied the hands” for the US administration to interpret the status of the Baltic States more freely. However, preparations for the international conference in Washington to be held on November 11, 1921 to February 6, 1922 and its organization “froze” the issue of the recognition of the Baltic States for some more time. For the Americans, who were pursuing their own goals, it was not useful talking about the division of Russian territories as this was what the Japanese delegation sought in particular. However, after the Conference, in March and April of 1922, intensified activity was observed again – individual US politicians and public figures, not to mention the Lithuanian diaspora, constantly urged the US Department of State to recognize the Baltic States.<sup>32</sup> The representative of the USA in the Baltic States, E. Young, in his letter of April 6 (The Department of State received it on April 26), tried to convince the US Secretary of State that it was necessary to recognize the Baltic States because, according to the information he had collected, the restoration of democracy in Russia will be a very long process. He noted that the Baltic States

<sup>31</sup> The Commissioner at Riga (Young) to the Secretary of State. Riga, May 9, 1921. FRUS. 1921. Vol. 2. P.755.

<sup>32</sup> Tarulis, *American-Baltic Relations*, 354, 356; “Pagaliau Lietuvą pripažino ir JAV prezidentas,” *Darbininkas*, February 12, 1969, No. 11, 4.

had made tangible progress on the issue of administration of their territories, that they were operating according to permanent or temporary constitutions, that their democratically elected parliaments were passing laws necessary for the wellbeing of their residents, and that taxes were being collected in accordance with the laws. Each of the states had a small but disciplined army. Thus, each of these states fully met the basic requirements for the international recognition of their governments.<sup>33</sup> Probably, these arguments prompted the US diplomatic service to take more practical action.

On May 1, 1922, the employees of the Russian Affairs Department of the US Department of State prepared a secret document for the Secretary of State in two parts: Arguments for the recognition of the Baltic States and Arguments against the recognition of the Baltic States.<sup>34</sup> Consequently, the Americans wanted to summarize the pros and cons of the recognition. In presenting positive arguments for the recognition, they confined themselves to the fact that the Baltic States had existed *de facto* for three years and had already been recognized by the League of Nations and some major powers. They also took into account that they were old European nations with a specific language and culture that were now creating an independent economic life. According to the Americans, the recognition of the Baltic States would strengthen the development of democracy in the states themselves and in the surrounding countries.<sup>35</sup> These, more moral, but obvious arguments were also put forward at the beginning and end of the 1922 declaration of their recognition: "The Governments of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have already been recognized *de jure* or *de facto* by major European governments and have contractual obligations with their neighbors [...] are established and supported by the local population".<sup>36</sup> This formalization of the

<sup>33</sup> The Commissioner at Riga (Young) to the Secretary of State. Riga, April 6, 1922. FRUS. 1922. Vol. 2. P. 869–872.

<sup>34</sup> Division of Russian Affairs. May 1, 1922. NAUS. – M1185–2. P. 495–496.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 496.

<sup>36</sup> FRUS. 1922. Vol. 2. P. 873–874.

diplomatic and legal document is logically based on objective conditions arising from the principles of US foreign policy. One of them is not to show initiative first if it is not important to US policy. It was no coincidence that, in presenting one of their arguments “against,” the Americans doubted if it was expedient for US diplomacy to show the initiative of recognition, which “will not be a gain of US diplomacy.” The more so because this could be harmful for future relations with Russia.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, we can say that there is an economic factor that promotes US diplomacy. Facilitation of US trade with Russia through the Baltic seaports and faster repayment of the Baltic States’ debts to the USA are cited as a positive argument for the recognition.<sup>38</sup>

Whereas the arguments “against” once again clearly testify to the desire of US authorities to maintain an undivided “strong and united Russia.” The Americans were convinced that the recognition of the Baltic States would “change the former international balance” and even cause a so-called political chain reaction, and then other non-Russian nations could try to demand recognition. According to the Americans, the recognition of the Baltic States will reduce their responsibility for part of the debts of the Russian Empire and will hinder trade between the USA and Russia in the future (transit, customs fees, etc.).<sup>39</sup> Thus, the document gives the impression that the arguments “against” outweigh the arguments “for” in their political significance as well. This, of course, had influence on the leaders of the US Department of State in formulating a specific form of recognition of the governments of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

It is worth noting that, for the US Government, the USA itself was an ideal state. Therefore, as a supporter of federations and unions, it naturally opposed the establishment of new small countries. For the Americans, such states seemed unstable and dangerous. The Balkan states, which were constantly at war

<sup>37</sup> NAUS. – M1185–2. P. 495.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

among themselves, served as an example for them. In addition, the Americans were strongly affected by economic factors as there is little benefit from small states – small trade and small capital investment. The Baltic States attracted the Americans' attention due to their strategic, economic and military position. In the period under review, they were a perfect bridge into Russian markets.

#### 4. The Issue of the Category of Recognition

In the July 25, 1922 telegram to E. Young, the representative of the USA in the Baltic States, signed by Ch.E. Hughes, the US Secretary of State, instruction was given to inform the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania that on July 28 in the morning the USA will accord "full recognition" to each of these countries.<sup>40</sup> Whereas in the official declaration it was noted that the USA is according "recognition" (without the word "full"). Before that, it is indicated that the governments of the aforementioned countries have already been "recognized *de jure* or *de facto* by major European powers".<sup>41</sup> US diplomats are obviously avoiding indicating a specific category of recognition – *de facto*, *de jure* or both at once. The expression "full recognition" could mean the last option. The leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, having received the declaration of recognition from the Americans, sent a copy of it and a comment about the "*de jure* recognition of Lithuania by the United States of America" to the representative of Lithuania V. Čarneckis in Washington.<sup>42</sup> Historian A. Tarulis also supported this interpretation.<sup>43</sup> International law textbooks, too, refer to *de jure* recognition as "full" (or

<sup>40</sup> FRUS. 1922. Vol. 2. P. 873.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> 1922 07 31 report, Secretary of the General Department at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, St. Jaloveckienė to V. Čarneckis in Washington. LCVA, f. 565, ap. 1, b. 245, l. 99.

<sup>43</sup> Tarulis, *American-Baltic Relations*, 358.

“complete”) recognition.<sup>44</sup> In theory, yes, but the available facts make us interpret this recognition somewhat differently.

Lithuanian society in Lithuania and the USA expressed their joy at the recognition through the press, in rallies and demonstrations – thanking the Americans for Lithuania’s recognition *de jure*.<sup>45</sup> Hence, everywhere *de jure* recognition is talked about, although the official declaration does not mention it directly. Furthermore, maybe “full recognition” means both *de jure* and *de facto*? How could one understand *de facto* in this US 1922 act of recognition? Was there such recognition at all? In discussing this, it is necessary to recall the May 26, 1919 note to Admiral Kolchak mentioned more than once above. The fifth clause of the note, in relation to the autonomous territories of the Russian Federation, states that “the Russian State agrees to recognize these territories as autonomous and approve *de facto* relations, which may be between these governments and the Union, the United governments”.<sup>46</sup> On this basis, *de facto* recognition was first accorded to the Lithuanian Government by Great Britain on September 24, 1919, France on May 11, 1920, and even Poland on July 7, 1920. But no official recognition from the USA was received, neither Lithuanian nor US press coverage of that is available, no corresponding documents have been found in the archives. It is more likely that the July 28, 1922 recognition covers both *de facto* and *de jure*. Interestingly, Lithuania’s representative Jonas Vileišis and the Lithuanian American figure Matas Vinikas, who had a diplomatic education, noted more than once that the US Government does not practice *de facto* recognition, applying only one – *de jure* recognition. According to them, the US Government does not make a distinction between these two forms of recognition.<sup>47</sup> However, archival diplomatic documents show that *de facto* recognition could exist in US diplomacy. Lithuania’s rep-

<sup>44</sup> Vadapalas, *Tarptautinė teisė*, 213.

<sup>45</sup> “Amerika pripažino Lietuvą,” *Vienybė*, July 27, 1962, No. 29, 1, 4–6; “Didžioji New Yorko demonstracija,” *Ibid.*, 10, 12; Tarulis, *American-Baltic Relations*, 358.

<sup>46</sup> *Russian-American Relations*, 339.

<sup>47</sup> Skirius, “Lietuvos pripažinimo klausimas,” 96.

representative Vileišis was received on April 3, 1920, according to him, “semi-officially” by Secretary of State, B. Colby, with whom he talked about the recognition of Lithuania *de facto*. Colby said that the Lithuanians would get what they demanded in a short time and promised to “speed up” this matter.<sup>48</sup> Whereas in a telegram dated July 23, 1920, the US representative in the Baltic States, E. Young, recommended the US Department of State to immediately recognize all three states *de facto*, and to accord *de jure* recognition to Latvia and Lithuania in the near future.<sup>49</sup> Later, the talks about *de facto* recognition stop in the US diplomatic circles, but *de jure* recognition is talked about quite often.<sup>50</sup> An opinion is formed that Lithuania, or rather its Government, is already considered recognized *de facto*. In the theory and practice of international law, recognition *de facto* is possible even without making a formal declaration, when normal international relations are maintained with a new state or government: international agreements are concluded, diplomatic or consular relations are maintained, official visits of representatives are organized, etc.<sup>51</sup> In the practice of Lithuanian-US relations all that is there. Even the US Secretary of State himself, in his letter to the US President, notes the relations of the US representative in the Baltic States and Consul in Kaunas with the Lithuanian Government, as well as the representatives of the Baltic governments in the USA received informally in Washington.<sup>52</sup> The opening of the US Consulate in Kaunas on November 7, 1921, is the most obvious fact. True, the official representatives of the USA stated that the establishment of the Consulate had nothing to do with the recognition of Lithuania, it only had “to mediate business matters”.<sup>53</sup> But even at this point, the Americans spoke about “recognition”

<sup>48</sup> 1920 04 03, Copy of J. Vileišis's letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. LCVA, f. 656, ap. 1, b. 234, l. 239.

<sup>49</sup> FRUS. 1920. Vol. 3. P. 652.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.; FRUS. 1921. Vol. 2. P. 755; FRUS. 1922. Vol. 2. P. 872.

<sup>51</sup> Vadapalas, *Tarptautinė teisė*, 213.

<sup>52</sup> WLA.

<sup>53</sup> Skirius, *Lietuvos užatlantės diplomatija*, 67–68.

abstractly, without categorizing it. Lithuanian historiography has already drawn attention to the forms of recognition. Historian R. Žepkaitė, without carrying out a more detailed analysis, linked the Consulate with recognition *de facto*.<sup>54</sup> It can be said that with such a complicated situation of the Baltic States, the US policy plans did not provide for a formal legal naming of *de facto* recognition. In fact, no formal declaration was made, which, naturally, was harmful for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia on an international scale. Consequently, based on the May 26, 1919 note to Alexander Kolchak, it can be claimed that the Americans unofficially maintained *de facto* relations with the Lithuanian Government. The more so because the Memorandum prepared by the Foreign Trade Adviser of the US Department of State on April 2, 1921, unequivocally noted that the USA “recognizes the fact of the existence of the Baltic States”.<sup>55</sup>

## 5. Conclusions

Thus, there are grounds to believe that the relations between the USA and Lithuania in 1919–1922 were based on the unnamed recognition of the Lithuanian Government *de facto*, which is indirectly recorded in the declaration of July 28, 1922. However, at that time, states talked about *de jure* recognition, especially major European states. Therefore, the public’s attention was on it in assessing the recognition accorded by the USA. The Americans, avoiding international obligations to the Baltic States, not only found an interesting textual arrangement of the wording of recognition, but also an unconventional way of recognition. The lack of specificity in the formal declaration of recognition provided possibilities for further manipulation in considering recognition forms in the future. It was done deliberately for the sake of the future relations with democratic Russia, at the same

<sup>54</sup> *Istorija Litovskoj SSR*, 342.

<sup>55</sup> Memorandum. April 2, 1921. NAUS. – M1185-1. P. 726.



creating a precedent for the temporary nature of the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian States.

Such limited recognition of the Baltic States was favorable in some respects. First of all, the recognition was accorded to the Lithuanian Government at a time when it had already lost the Vilnius Region, and the Klaipėda Region had not yet been legalized internationally as a part of Lithuania. *De jure* recognition of the Lithuanian State (accorded by the USA) would have prevented it from the recovery of the aforementioned territories. Second, the USA was the first among major Western countries to recognize Lithuania at this level, which gave the country confidence on an international scale and moral strength in the fight for its national rights. The Americans themselves noticed that. The US Consul in Kaunas claimed in his letter to Washington that the recognition “had inspired the Lithuanians with new strength in the difficult fight for their rights”.<sup>56</sup> The Lithuanian Government’s refusal to accept the proposal of the Conference of Ambassadors regarding the internationalization of the River Nemunas confirms the Consul’s words.

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# The Winner Tale: Some Remarks on the Lithuanian March into Klaipėda Region

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VYGANTAS VAREIKIS

## Introduction

The 15th of January, widely commemorated in Klaipėda this year, is by far the most significant historical date uniting the population of Klaipėda, as is Independence day (the 16th of February) which unites all Lithuanians. Before World War II, political debates between Germans and Lithuanians arose in the course of discussions as to whether the occupation of Klaipėda Region in 1923 was a legitimate act. The legal aspects of so-called uprising in Klaipėda once again took on political overtones at the end of the twentieth century, as Russian politicians tried to find additional arguments that could help them retain Lithuanians within the Soviet Union. The march into Klaipėda, the resolution by the Conference of Ambassadors of 16 February 1923 on the handover of the Klaipėda region to Lithuania, and the Convention of Klaipėda (Memel) Region adopted in May 8, 1924, were the decisive political and legal factors which consolidated Lithuania's sovereignty in the Klaipėda region. Hence, the occupation of Klaipėda region of 1923 was the essential and main event, without which the dependence of the Klaipėda region on Lithuania would not have been realized in the legal sense, either. It should be noted, however, that the very term "uprising" (or rising or revolt) is not exactly precise from the historical point of view, as it was not organized

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*Lithuanian fighters in Rimkai (Carlsberg) railway station*

by the local population in the Klaipėda region. Other definitions can be used, too: occupation, incorporation or military operation; so, let us consider all these terms to be equivalent.

One can argue the legitimacy of the Klaipėda march in 1923; however, according to the classical definition by the German philosopher and lawyer Carl Schmidt, “the sovereign is the one who makes decisions in emergency cases (*Ernstfall*)”, that is to say in cases when the regular law does not work and one needs to realize an act of will that has no clear-cut legal definition. When such an emergency case has come to an end, this event can be evaluated from different positions; however, there is no other way out but to squeeze it into the context of legal norms or create a new legal model”.<sup>1</sup>

*Quelle est l'histoire si ce n'est pas une histoire racontée par le gagnant?* (What is history if not a fairy-tale told by the winner?), the Emperor of France, Napoleon once said. Throughout history, Lithuanians have been both winners and losers; however, the arsenal of significant symbolic commemorative dates is not abundant. We can mention the Battle of Grunewald (Žalgiris), the

<sup>1</sup> Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 13.

impressive leap by the medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania towards the East, the victory at the Orsha battle against Russians and some other events. However, we would hardly find such victories in the twentieth century. And in this context, the successful operation of the occupation of Klaipėda in January 1923, now usually called a revolt, takes an exceptional place due to its efficient political and diplomatic preparation, the arrangements for the military march and, finally, the patriotic determination by Lithuanian citizens which flashed brightly 100 years ago.

## Versailles and After

Following World War I, the aspiration of France to create buffer zones around Germany, its search for allies in the East who would be united by the fear of German revenge-seeking, and France's attempts to weaken its "eternal enemy" by depriving it of its territories inhabited by other ethnic groups essentially predetermined the territorial solutions of the Versailles Peace Conference.

On 28 June 1919, at the decision of the Versailles Peace Conference, a new administrative formation almost as large as Grand Luxembourg emerged in the northeast of Europe. Its territory of 2,708 km<sup>2</sup> included parts of five East Prussian counties separated from Germany. This was how the Klaipėda region called *Memeland* by Germans emerged for the first time in history.

On 13–15 February 1920, 800 soldiers from the French 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Rifle Battalion marched into this new administrative geographical formation; the battalion was supposed to maintain order until the final decision on the political dependence of the region was made. There are two main reasons why the Klaipėda Region was not given to Lithuania outright in June 1919. Firstly, the Lithuanian government at this time wasn't recognized *de jure* and its survival was questionable because of the Bolshevik invasion in the Baltic region. The second reason was the French desire to see that the Polish-Lithuanian union and the promise of Klaipėda be used as a prize for Lithuania to enter



*Lithuanian horsemen on the outskirts of Klaipėda*

in such agreement. Thus, the inability to settle the fate of the Klaipėda region.<sup>2</sup>

The decision to separate the Klaipėda region from Germany was largely influenced by the anti-German stand taken by French politicians, and especially Prime Minister George Clemenceau, to weaken Germany and not to allow it to come into close contact with Bolsheviks in Russia by creating a *cordon sanitaire* in central Eastern Europe. On the other hand, Germany feared the strengthening of Poland's influence in the region and was rather willing to hand it over to Lithuania until the geopolitical conditions became more favorable. The French intended to hand the region over as a present to Lithuanians after the unification of the Lithuania-Polish state. Some Polish politicians put forward an idea to incorporate the Klaipėda directly into Poland on the basis of the Fourteen Points by US President Woodrow Wilson. As long as the possibility of the creation of the Lithuanian-Polish confederation still existed, the Polish delegation at Versailles essentially supported Lithuania's aspirations concerning Klaipėda in order

<sup>2</sup> Misiūnas, *Versailles and Memel*, 72.

to counterbalance Germany's influence. Poland's proactivity manifested itself in the background of restrained economic and political activities of Lithuania and Germany; therefore, the Poles were willing to leave Germany and Lithuania behind and be the first to conclude a separate trade agreement with Klaipėda. Such a consolidation of Poland's positions in the Klaipėda region would have meant the weakening of Lithuania's economic and political positions following the loss of the Vilnius region, and the cutting off of Lithuania from the only accessible sea port.

At least, such were the schemes being drawn up in Paris and Warsaw...

## Preparation

When the Lithuanians opposed plans of accommodation with the Poles in the form of a federation, the Klaipėda region – in line with the new decisions by the Conference of Ambassadors – was to become a free region, *Freistaat Memelland*, but the Lithuanians did not intend to agree to such an idea, either. In the beginning of 1922, Lithuania's representative in Klaipėda, Jonas Žilius, a priest and a writer, was the first to suggest that Klaipėda should be taken by force, and that the Lithuanian Rifle-men's Union should be involved in the operation. Jonas Žilius received financial support from the Lithuanian government for pro-Lithuanian propaganda in the Klaipėda region. Some more time had to pass before, in the autumn of 1922, a secret meeting of Lithuania's Council of Ministers, the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Ernestas Galvanauskas, who had already obtained preliminary approval from Berlin, suggested that the General Staff should draw up a plan for the revolt and select its commander. In his memoirs written in emigration, Galvanauskas claimed that a decision had been taken "to organize the so-called revolt by the local Lithuanian population of the Klaipėda region against the German Directorate and its mainstay, Petisné, to occupy Klaipėda region, and to put the



*Lithuanian fighters gather for photo session in Klaipėda*

object of the dispute into the hands of the Lithuanian government.”<sup>3</sup> The Cabinet of Ministers approved Galvanauskas’ plans and entrusted him with the arrangements for and coordination of this operation.

On 16 November 1922, at the meeting of the Presidium of the Central Board of the Lithuanian Riflemen’s Union, the Prussian Lithuanian Erdmonas Simonaitis expressed a position which coincided with Ernestas Galvanauskas’ opinion: “The revolt is indispensable; otherwise, we will lose the Klaipėda region. But the people of Klaipėda will not rise in arms themselves, the Riflemen’s Union must do this. The insurgent government should be formed of people from Klaipėda, whereas the Lithuanians from Lithuania Major should take command of the revolt and supply the fighters.”<sup>4</sup> Although the commander of the Lithuanian Army Gen. S. Žukauskas declared at a meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers that he would occupy Klaipėda within 24 hours, acting in such a straightforward manner was not acceptable, as the Great Pow-

<sup>3</sup> Galvanauskas, *Kova dėl Klaipėdos*, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Krėvė, *Bolševikų invazija*, 97.



ers, too, could reinstate *status quo* by force. Despite objections by some high-rank officers, the final decision to occupy Klaipėda region by the efforts of “insurgents” was nevertheless adopted.

## Operation

During 1922, Lithuanian intelligence agents were sent to the Klaipėda region, among them Jonas Polovinskas, head of the Counterintelligence Agents’ Unit of the Intelligence Department, and Matas Šalčius, a journalist and a representative of the Riflemen’s Union, who later became a famous traveler. Information on the situation in the region was continuously sent to E. Galvanauskas, who on 2–6 January, 1923, discussed with J. Polovinskas, J. Žilius, E. Simonaitis and Lithuanian officers the final matters concerning the preparations for the military action. The Klaipėda operation had to be carried out by the Special Task Detachment (*Ypatingosios paskirties rinktinė*) formed in Lithuania. Jonas Polovinskas, who took the pseudonym Budrys, was appointed commander of the detachment. This surname typical of Lithuania Minor stuck for the rest of his life. The staff office of the revolt was formed. Captain Pranas Klimaitis, chief of the Riflemen’s Union, who officially had left “on a service trip to the province”, became J. Budrys’ deputy; Juozas Tomkus, a General Staff officer, was appointed chief of staff. Since the surnames of the “insurgents”, just like in the surname of J. Budrys, were supposed to be similar to the surnames of the local population, Juozas Tomkus became Oksas, his assistant Captain Šarauskas became Juozapaitis, Captain Kynas took the name of Bleivys, Captain Kalmantas became Bajoras and so on.

Whilst trying to get a clearer picture of the operation of Klaipėda’s occupation, one should feel the people’s moods of that time. The fervor of Lithuanian patriotism in 1919–1923 might be compared to the massive rallies at the dawn of independence in the late twentieth century.

In the summer of 1919, when the Klaipėda region was separated from Germany, one could feel in Lithuania a certain con-

fusion and distrust in the nation's forces. The lawyer Mykolas Römeris who was travelling around Lithuania then, emphasized "lack of perception among Lithuanians of statehood as their own creation, because highly significant is the fact that German occupants – I will put it like that – automatically, not by the country's forces like in Poland, were driven out of the country"<sup>5</sup>. What could strengthen the confidence in the future of one's country – the feel of a struggle for the land and the seacoast, which was so strong during Klaipėda Revolt of 1923?

Although the Klaipėda region was occupied *manu militari*, through the efforts by Lithuanian military men, members of the Riflemen's Union and volunteers from Lithuania, it would not have been possible to legitimize this deed without certain manifestation of political will by the local Prussian Lithuanians (*mažlietuviai*): Martynas Jankus, Jonas Vanagaitis, Erdmonas Simonaitis and others.

On 7 January 1923, a group of 1,079 persons set out from Kaunas towards Klaipėda; the group was called a Special Task Detachment and included servicemen of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiments, the Military School and the Military Militia School, as well as units of riflemen groups formed in Vilkaviškis, Kaišiadorys and Panevėžys, and about 300 volunteers from Lithuania Major. Jurgis Straukas, a participant to the revolt, recalls:

On 7 January, we were conscripted to the first volunteer regiment of the Klaipėda region, and in the evening, when it was getting dark, we loaded our machine guns and ammunition boxes into horse-drawn carts and marched secretly across the bridge of Panemunė and Šančiai towards the Green Hill, where a train ready for departure was waiting for us. We loaded all our belongings onto the train and went to Kaišiadorys, where we were given plain clothes; we left our military garb on the train. Then, we continued our journey in the direction of Šiauliai...<sup>6</sup>

"Trains are full of unarmed stalwart men in plain clothes travelling in the direction of Klaipėda", secret sources informed

<sup>5</sup> Römeris, *Dienoraštis 1919 m. birželio 21-oji*, 23.

<sup>6</sup> Genienė, *Kova dėl Klaipėdos*, 12.



*French garrison arrives in Klaipėda in February, 1920*

the German Foreign Ministry. Arms were distributed among the insurgents when they approached the Klaipėda region, whereas their military garb and other personal belongings that could indicate that they originated from Lithuania Major were left in the railway stations of Kretinga and Tauragė.

The historian Edvardas Gudavičius once said that he would not exchange a single volunteer for all the grand dukes of Lithuania... The dukes saw Lithuania as their own backyard, whereas the volunteers sacrificed their lives for the Motherland. The persons who are usually mentioned first when talking about the Klaipėda operation are Ernestas Galvanauskas, Prime Minister of Lithuania, Jonas Budrys, the commander of the march, and the Prussian Lithuanian Erdmonas Simonaitis, who was awarded an Iron Cross for his courage in World War I. Other prominent persons who made their contribution in the Klaipėda operation were the writer Vincas Krėvė-Mickevičius, chairman of the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union, who, to tell the truth, then wanted to take upon himself all the merits of the organizer of the revolt, and the future Lithuanian president Antanas Smetona, who was then appointed Lithuania's special authorized representative in Klaipėda region after the march and who per-



*Soldiers of the French rifle battalion in Klaipėda railway station in February, 1920.*  
 Photos provided by the courtesy of Mažosios Lietuvos (Lithuanian Minor) History Museum

ceived the subtleties of the integration of Klaipėda region into Lithuania very well. The writer Ieva Simonaitytė, too, was labelled as “an insurgent.”

However, it often happens that ordinary fighters – modest heroes of history – are forgotten. Young men, college and grammar school students from Kaunas, craftsmen and farmers who had been given land, school boys and riflemen-partisans from Lithuania Major volunteered to fight for Klaipėda. They were eighteen, nineteen, twenty years of age... Nobody forced them to march to the city permeated with a German spirit. Other volunteers who took part in the revolt were Alfonsas Braziulis, a journalist from Kaunas, who later became a news editor of ELTA news agency, and Vytautas Bulota, a 19-year-old student of law, who was an interrogator in the 1934 court proceedings in Kaunas against pro-Nazi organizations of the Klaipėda region. Upon his return to Lithuania, the future prominent agriculture professor Viktoras Ruokis, who had fought in the front in the army of the Russian Empire, gathered a group of 23 students of the Dotnuva School of Agriculture to take part in the march to Klaipėda.

At midnight on 15 January, Algirdas Jesaitis, a 16-year-old rifleman and a grammar school student from Kaunas, was killed near Althof Manor, not far from Klaipėda which he had seen for the first time in his life... On the same day, Lieutenant Viktoras Burokevičius, who had taken the pseudonym “Šepetys” (Brush), was killed by machine-gun fire while trying to toss a grenade into the prefecture defended by the French.

The aviation officer Steponas Darius, the commander of the detachment that attacked Klaipėda from the direction of Šilutė, demonstrated exceptional courage during the Klaipėda march. Just like always and everywhere. He seems to have been an image of *an ideal Lithuanian*, a patriot who had come back from America to help the young country; a pilot, a military serviceman and war hero, a sportsman who had brought boxing, ice-hockey, basketball and baseball to Lithuania. American Lithuanians provided support to the preparations for the revolt, too: they collected funds for the march to Klaipėda, whereas American companies donated two vehicles for the military operation.

12 Lithuanian fighters, two officers, eight soldiers, and four riflemen, died during the Klaipėda operation. Another participant of the uprising, Andrius Martus-Martusevičius, who, too, had returned from America, caught a cold and died on 19 January. He and three other Lithuania fighters were buried in the cemetery of Klaipėda city. Priest Dr. A. Gaigalaitis delivered the farewell speech. Other dead soldiers were taken out of Klaipėda secretly by train and buried in the cemetery of Kėdainiai, Kaunas, and other Lithuanian cities.

## **After the March**

Following the successful January march, the Army of Klaipėda region under command of J. Budrys-Polovinskis was formed of local volunteers and Lithuanian riflemen who had stayed in the region after the revolt. On 16 February 1923, the Conference of Ambassadors announced its resolution to transfer the Klaipėda

region to the sovereignty of the Republic of Lithuania. Three days later, the French 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Rifle Battalion, the Extraordinary Commission of the Conference of Ambassadors, and the Commissar Gabriel Petisné boarded the warship *Voltaire* and left Klaipėda. The Lithuanian officer Petras Tarasenska, who later became a famous archaeologist, entered Klaipėda together with Lithuanian troops on 20 February. He described the day in his diary as follows:

At 11 o'clock, the detachment began its march to Klaipėda, to Turgaus Square next to the city's theatre. At 12 o'clock, as the troops had lined up in formation, the 2<sup>nd</sup> squadron fired a salute and an orchestra was playing the national anthem, the state flag of Lithuania was hoisted on the Prefecture; the flag was being hoisted on the barracks at the same time, too [...] At 20 o'clock, the officers took part in a festive dinner held in the hall of Hotel Rytas attended by both the revolt commanders and a large number of public figures from the Klaipėda region. Quite a few speeches were delivered, and "Hurray!" could be heard continuously for the bright future of Klaipėda and Lithuania.<sup>7</sup>

The occupation of Klaipėda was one of the essential factors that shaped the young country. On 20 February 1923, Mykolas Römeris noted in his diary:

The annexation of Klaipėda in Lithuania is causing a great deal of passion. It is a triumph of the state. The nation knows that, despite the conditions, Klaipėda was obtained solely by its own efforts and its immense willpower. This makes the region even more precious to Lithuania. The uprising staged by Kaunas, Lithuania, which no longer was even attempted to be covered up, was stronger than any diplomatic move. The fate of Klaipėda has a very good effect on Lithuania [...] It is one of the most important factors that create a state.<sup>8</sup>

Lithuanians gained more confidence in their own strength, and here and there one could hear voices calling to march to Vilnius. To paraphrase Napoleon's words, in January 1923 Lithuanians wrote the story of their success.

<sup>7</sup> Vareikis, *Archeologas ir karininkas*, 189.

<sup>8</sup> Römeris, *Dienoraštis. 1922 m. birželio 16-oji*, 271.

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## **“Today Is a Joyful and Great Day...”**

Excerpts from the Diary of Matas Šalčius,  
Related to the Klaipėda Revolt<sup>1</sup>

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Prepared by ARIDA RIAUBIENĖ

The Rare Books and Manuscripts Unit of the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania holds the diary of Matas Šalčius (1890–1940) written in 1923 while he was undergoing treatment in one of the clinics of Königsberg. In 1923, Šalčius was admitted to the clinic because he was unable to cope with the tension of preparing for the Klaipėda Revolt.

The diary records Šalčius’s reflections and experiences; he also writes about daily events. The first entry in the diary, made

<sup>1</sup> The Klaipėda Revolt took place in January 1923 in the Klaipėda region (also known as the Memel Territory or Memelland). The region, located north of the Nemunas River, was detached from East Prussia, German Empire by the Treaty of Versailles and became a mandate of the League of Nations. It was placed under provisional French administration until a more permanent solution could be worked out. Lithuania wanted to unite with the region (part of Lithuania Minor) due to its large Lithuanian-speaking minority of Prussian Lithuanians and the major port of Klaipėda (Memel), the only viable access to the Baltic Sea for Lithuania. As the Conference of Ambassadors favored leaving the region as a free city, similar to the Free City of Danzig, the Lithuanians organized and staged a revolt.

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on January 15, 1923, coincides with the arrival of the Lithuanian army into the Klaipėda region, which at that time was administered by the French. Šalčius writes about this significant military and political event in the history of Lithuania in an elated manner, hoping that when Lithuania regained Klaipėda, it would also recover the Polish-occupied Vilnius.

In his diary, Šalčius writes a lot about the tensions between the Entente and Lithuania after the successful Klaipėda Revolt. After reading articles in the German and Lithuanian press, he reflects on the intentions of the political-military bloc to expel the Lithuanians from the Klaipėda region with the help of the Poles. The diary also mentions the participants in the Klaipėda Revolt, and describes the political mood in Königsberg.

Matas Šalčius, journalist, public figure and traveler, was born on September 20, 1890. In 1901–1905, he studied at the Marijampolė Gymnasium, in 1908, he graduated from the Saulės Teachers' Courses in Kaunas. From 1908 to 1914, he worked as a teacher. In 1910–1914, Šalčius edited the Teachers' Union publication *Mokykla* (1909–1914). For his speech against Russification at the Russian Teachers' Congress in St. Petersburg (1914), Šalčius was banned from teaching and exiled from Kaunas province. In 1915–1918, while living in the United States, he took part in the activities of the Educational Commission of the Society of Homeland Lovers, lectured in Lithuanian-American colonies, collaborated in the newspapers *Tėvynė* (started in 1896) and *Vienybė* (1920–1985), edited the weekly *Ateitis* (1914–1918).

In 1920–1922, Šalčius was the editor of the daily *Lietuva* (1919–1928), and in 1922, he was appointed the director of the press agency ELTA. In the same year, his health deteriorated, and he moved to Klaipėda, where he was the head of the Press Department at the Lithuanian Legation. Šalčius took an active part in the preparation of the Klaipėda Revolt. In 1920 and 1925–1926, he was the editor of the magazine *Trimitas* (1920–1940); in 1927–1928, he worked in the Information and Propaganda Bureau of the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Lithuania. From 1929 to 1933, Šalčius toured thirty-five countries in Europe, Africa, and Asia. He wrote textbooks, popular books

on science, essays and travel books. In 1936, he received the Press Foundation Award for his book *Svečiuose pas 40 tautų* [Visiting Forty Nations; 6 vol., 1935–1936]. In 1936, Šalčius went to South America. In 1936, while in Argentina, he founded the weekly *Išvien* (1936–1939), which he edited until 1938. After leaving the newspaper, he began to travel to various South American countries. Šalčius died on May 26, 1940 in Guayaramerín, Bolivia.

January 15, 1923

Today is a joyful and great day for me.

The news has arrived that Klaipėda is ours! Taken with a fight, as befits a nation that wants to live independently. And with heroism! This is the best proof that our independence and freedom will endure, because where one knows how to die and sacrifice one's life, there can be no slavery! I would say that this day begins a new era in the history of our nation, because today we have appeared for the first time on the aggressive side in the struggle for the collection of our lands, which means that we have a strong will to assemble our lands. With the capture of Klaipėda, it now appears that Vilnius will certainly be ours as well, and perhaps soon...<sup>2</sup> Then the home of the Lithuanian nation will be cleared of the intruders and we can begin to settle in, become real masters and beautify it. Now I could die peacefully and satisfied. [...]

January 16

[...] The German press here spreads fear about Klaipėda, saying that the Poles will be ordered by the Entente<sup>3</sup> to drive the Lith-

<sup>2</sup> In 1932, the Council of Ambassadors and the international community (except for Lithuania) recognized Vilnius (Wilno) as part of Poland in 1923. The Lithuanian authorities never accepted the *status quo* and continued to claim sovereignty over the Vilnius region. The city itself was declared the constitutional capital of the Lithuanian state while Kaunas was only a temporary capital of Lithuania. Lithuania closed the border and broke all diplomatic relations with Poland.

<sup>3</sup> The Triple Entente (from French *entente* meaning “friendship, understanding, and agreement”) describes the informal understanding between the Russian

uanians out of Klaipėda and that the high mood of Lithuanian “freischärlers”<sup>4</sup> when the ships of the Entente arrive to the port of Klaipėda, will drop. Why be scared, if there is nothing else left. But will anyone get scared? If that were the case, {if the Entente dares}<sup>5</sup> the Lithuanians would fight, in both Klaipėda and elsewhere. And in this corner of Europe, a new war would break out, because Russia would not remain calm, and Germany is only waiting for Russia’s rise. The fate of the Poles and Latvians would be lamentable. It would not be easy for Lithuania either, but the Poles, who have been digging a hole for Lithuania, would be {themselves} the first to fall into it. We shall see what happens next. [...]

January 18

[...] I have received the daily “Lietuva,”<sup>6</sup> as usual. It mentions the takeover of Klaipėda in large letters on the front page. The joy is apparently beyond words throughout Lithuania.

In the evening, I was insulted by a German nurse who, upon entering the treatment room, shook her finger at me and said contemptuously: “ah, Lithuania has stolen Klaipėda! Wait, the time will come when the French disappear, [and] the Lithuanians will be gone as they never were there!” It made my blood boil – how could such a shrew threaten me? // The Germans, it seems, are still harboring old, pre-1914 feelings,<sup>7</sup> when they were going to teach everyone a lesson and swallow up everyone in their wide jaws. But unfortunately, the throat proved too narrow. It will be the same next time, if they repeat the folly of 1914! [...]

Empire, the French Third Republic, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland as well as Romania, which joined later. It was built upon the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1894, the Entente Cordiale of 1904 between Paris and London, and the Anglo-Russian Entente of 1907. It formed a powerful counterweight to the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy.

<sup>4</sup> German: a volunteer, partisan.

<sup>5</sup> Hereinafter, inserted by the author.

<sup>6</sup> *Lietuva* was an official publication of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania on society and politics, published daily from 1919 to 1928.

<sup>7</sup> Here, the author refers to World War I (1914–1918).

January 25

Mr. Lisauskas<sup>8</sup> and Mr. J. Ašmys<sup>9</sup> from Klaipėda, who is now doing my work there, visited me. He told me that Mr. Petisne's<sup>10</sup> agents had searched for me in my flat during the siege of Klaipėda. They had requisitioned the car of the Legation,<sup>11</sup> and Mr. Petisne was planning to shoot Mr. Žilius.<sup>12</sup> They were sending their "hoodlums" after Him all the time, dressed as sanitarians, asking Him to give them permission to cross the Lithuanian front, so that they could help the "wounded" there. But Mr.

<sup>8</sup> On October 24, 1919, Andrius Lisauskas (1898–?) was appointed the Lithuanian government's temporary plenipotentiary representative in Odessa. When the Bolsheviks occupied Odessa in 1920, he returned to Lithuania, and for several months served as the Director of the Chancellery of the Constituent Seimas. In September 1920, he again went to Odessa and Crimea, and later was part of the delegation to the peace talks with Ukraine (March 3, 1921). Lisauskas returned from his mission in at the end of April 1921. From May 1, 1921, he was Director of the Eastern Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania. For more, see: [https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Vesture\\_XXIII\\_2020\\_DRUKA.pdf](https://du.lv/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Vesture_XXIII_2020_DRUKA.pdf) [Accessed on January 20, 2022].

<sup>9</sup> Jurgis Ašmys was the editor of the liberal Lithuanian daily *Prusu lietuviu balsas* [The Prussian Lithuanian Voice] (1919–1923), worked at the Consulate General of Lithuania in Königsberg. In 1923, after Matas Šalčius felt ill, he served as the head of the Press Department of the Lithuanian Mission in the Klaipėda region. In 1936, he became the Lithuanian Vice Consul in Hamburg.

<sup>10</sup> Gabriel Jean Petisné (1881–1931) was a lawyer and the highest French official in the Klaipėda region. From June 1920 to April 1921, he served as a Prefect of the Klaipėda region; and from May 1921 to January 1923, as a Civil High Commissioner. He ruled on behalf of the Triple Entente states, promoting the idea of a free state of Klaipėda (German: *Freistaat*) in the French protectorate, avoiding closer economic and cultural ties with the Republic of Lithuania, and appeasing the Germans of the Klaipėda region. After the Klaipėda Revolt on January 15, 1923, he capitulated together with the French garrison.

<sup>11</sup> The Lithuanian diplomatic representation in Klaipėda region (1920–1923) was established in 1920. In June 1921, the representative of the Republic of Lithuania was Captain Leopoldas Dymša (1893–1959), who in 1922 was replaced by Jonas Žilius. In 1920–1921, it was called the Lithuanian Military Representation in Klaipėda region. It also served as a consulate.

<sup>12</sup> Jonas Žilius-Jonila (1870–1932) was a Lithuanian writer, statesman and public figure. In 1921, he moved to Klaipėda, was the consul of the Lithuanian Legation in Klaipėda. In January 1923, together with his associates, organized the Klaipėda Revolt.

Žilius successfully fended off all these tricks of theirs, by which they wanted to catch Mr. Žilius in the act that the Lithuanian Legation had organized the revolt.

January 29

Today Mr. Milčius<sup>13</sup> came. We chatted about this and that. He had heard that the German student corporations had petitioned the rector to expel all Lithuanians from the University of Königsberg because of the Klaipėda events, but the rector replied that there is no ground for that. [...]

February 1

[...] This morning the nurse at the clinic told me that // yesterday a crowd in Königsberg surrounded the “Central Hotel,”<sup>14</sup> where a Frenchman had stopped and was shouting so furiously, so violently, that the poor Frenchman began quaking in his boots and turned white as a canvas. The owner of the hotel calmed the crowd by immediately refusing the Frenchman a room and posting a sign saying that French and Belgians were no longer welcomed there. The gendarmerie, which today is patrolling in two rows around the livelier parts of the city, must have got involved in the whole matter. All this makes people nervous, especially strangers. When at the Consulate, I met Mr. R. Dulskis,<sup>15</sup> former Director of the Department for the Security of Citizens, I heard him say that we should get out of here as soon as possible, because today the Germans are “harassing” the French, and tomorrow they might start to harass Lithuanians... about Klaipėda. They smashed the Consulate’s signboard with a *vytis*<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Antanas Milčius (1895–?) was a Lithuanian political and public figure, representative of the Constituent Assembly (1920–1922) and the Third Assembly of Lithuania (1926–1927). In February 1926, he received a doctorate in law from the University of Königsberg.

<sup>14</sup> This hotel in Königsberg was opened around 1889.

<sup>15</sup> Romualdas Dulskis (1893–1956) was a lawyer and financier. In 1919–1921, he worked as Director of the Department of the Security of Citizens of the Ministry of the Interior, and later as Director of the Department of General Affairs. In 1922–1924, he was the Vice-Director of the Bank of Lithuanian Economy.

<sup>16</sup> Vytis, a mounted armored knight holding a sword and shield, is the coat of arms of Lithuania. Since the early 15th century, it has been Lithuania’s official coat of arms and is one of the oldest European coats of arms.

on the street and put up a threatening sign. I replied that I do not think of running away so soon, I do not care what will come, because I cannot stop my treatment, which is halfway through and has borne fruit so quickly. Therefore, I'm staying...

February 5

[...] Today I have learned from "Lietuva" that Entente has handed our government an ultimatum to withdraw // the army from the Klaipėda region, to dissolve the Simonaitis's government,<sup>17</sup> the Rescue Committee<sup>18</sup> and to restore the old Directorate.<sup>19</sup> I went

<sup>17</sup> Erdmonas Simonaitis (1888–1969) was one of the most prominent leaders of the national and political movement of Lithuania Minor. In 1920, when France took over the Klaipėda region, from March 12 together with Mikėlius Reijis (?–1937) he was a representative of Lithuanians in the Directorate of the local government. In the same year, in Paris, he participated in the negotiations of the Lithuanian delegation of Minor Lithuania with the member states of the Conference of Ambassadors (Great Britain, Italy, Japan and France) regarding the future of Klaipėda region. During the Klaipėda Revolt, Simonaitis was its political leader. In February 1923, on behalf of the government of the Klaipėda region, he notified the states of the Conference of Ambassadors and the Union of Nations about the declaration announcing that the region joins the Republic of Lithuania with the rights of autonomy. Later, he served as deputy governor of Klaipėda region.

<sup>18</sup> The Supreme Committee of Rescue of Lithuania Minor was the organization on whose behalf the uprising in Klaipėda region was carried out. Its aim was to bring together the inhabitants of the region who supported the idea of joining Lithuania, to prepare for the revolt, and to show that the revolt was an initiative of local Lithuanians. The Committee was active from December 18, 1922 to September 1925.

<sup>19</sup> The Directorate was a local governing body of the Klaipėda region, which operated in 1920–1939. The chairman of the Directorate was appointed by the governor of the Klaipėda region, representing the Lithuanian government, from among the local population. It handled economic and educational affairs, managed the administrative apparatus of the region, and supervised the police and the courts. In August 1921, Vilius Steputaitis (1868–1941), a political and social figure in Prussia and Lithuania Minor, poet and lawyer, became the chair of the Directorate. In January 1923, after the outbreak of the Klaipėda Revolt, the Supreme Committee of Rescue of Lithuania Minor dismissed Steputaitis's Directorate and assigned Erdmonas Simonaitis to form a new one. After the note of the Entente states to the Lithuanian Government of February 2, Simonaitis officially handed over the power to the Directorate of Viktas Gailius (1893–1956) appointed by the Entente. Togeth-

berserk when I read this. The French are apparently determined to defend Polish interests in Klaipėda with all it takes, and they are doing so in the name of this. And the Poles are now rubbing their hands gleefully because this is their chance to show Lithuania once again that Entente only respects Poland. But that is nothing. Our government seems determined to reject boldly that shameless French ultimatum. Will it break off diplomatic relations with us? will it complain to the League of Nations?<sup>20</sup> will it unleash Poland to go against us? Who cares! Diplomatic relations will be resumed as soon as they get used to the idea of incorporation of Klaipėda into Lithuania. If they appeal to the Union of Nations, the Lithuanian question will be better known in the world and Lithuania will win. And if they unleash // Poland, then Russia is standing ready at the Vilnija<sup>21</sup> border, and this will only resolve the Vilnius question faster. Will the French drop off the army in Klaipėda? What a joke, if they tried, it would only bring us success! So, all in favor of a bold rejection of the ultimatum!

## February 6

[...] I went to our Consulate.<sup>22</sup> I found Kostas Jurgelevičius,<sup>23</sup> a “freisschär!”<sup>24</sup> from Klaipėda region. He arrived in Königsberg

er with the Lithuanian government’s plenipotentiaries, Antanas Smetona (1874–1944) and later Juozas Budrys (1889–1964), it administered the Klaipėda region until August 1925.

<sup>20</sup> The Union of Nations was an international organization that was active from 1919 to 1946 to guarantee international peace and security, to promote friendly relations and cooperation between nations, and to preserve the political status quo after World War I.

<sup>21</sup> The Vilnius region.

<sup>22</sup> The Consulate General of Lithuania in Königsberg, from 1934 – Consulate General in Königsberg, was in operation from 1921 to 1939. The first consul, Vytautas Jonas Gylys, was in office from August 1, 1921 to August 16, 1922. One of the most important tasks of the Lithuanian Consulate in Königsberg was the formation of a positive image of Lithuania in Germany and the promotion of relations with local Lithuanians.

<sup>23</sup> Kostas Rudamina Jurgėla (Jurgelevičius) (1904–1988) was a lawyer, historian, and Lithuanian-American public figure. In 1922–1923, he served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, founded the first scouting magazine *Skautas* (1922–1923). In 1919, he volunteered for the Lithuanian army, and in 1923, he took part in the Klaipėda Revolt.

<sup>24</sup> German *Freischärler* meaning a volunteer, partisan.

wearing all insignia: the stitching on his sleeves, the evidence of the insurrectionary army. He told me all about the preparations for the revolt and how poorly the revolt was carried out. In Klaipėda, the French are hostile to the rebels, and the English are friendly. The captain of the English “Caledon”<sup>25</sup> gave the “Soldiers’ Aid Committee”<sup>26</sup> a sack of sugar. // The English sailors do not get along with the French, often get into fights, and the English usually win against the French with their boxing skills. People have been indifferent. The Germans and their agents spy on everything. Aukštuolaitis<sup>27</sup> with Wanding<sup>28</sup> in Tilžė<sup>29</sup> is preparing a counter-attack against the rebels. I met General Skomskis<sup>30</sup> and Sinkus<sup>31</sup> in the street in the evening. They

<sup>25</sup> HMS Caledon was a C-class light cruiser built for the British Royal Navy during World War I. In response to the events in Klaipėda, the Triple Entente states sent six warships to Klaipėda, including the British HMS Caledon and the French battleship Voltaire. For more, see: *Kova dėl Klaipėdos: įvykiai ir žmonės 1918–1923 m. = Struggle for Klaipėda: Events and People*: [A publication dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the annexation of Klaipėda to Lithuania]. Ed. by Zita Genienė, Vygandas Vareikis; transl. Vidmantas Štilius. Klaipėda: S. Jokužio leidykla-spaustuvė: Mažosios Lietuvos istorijos muziejus, 2013, p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> After the capture of the Klaipėda region, the women of the region organized a committee, which provided food to volunteers.

<sup>27</sup> Jurgis Aukštuolaitis was a Lithuanian politician, originally from Lithuania Minor. In January 1919, he organized and was the commander of the Prussian Lithuanian (Samogitian) Volunteer Battalion in Tauragė to fight against the Bolsheviks. In February–July 1919, he was an official of the Ministry of National Defense. Recruited by Polish intelligence in the summer of 1919, he helped the underground anti-state Polish military organization POW (*Polska Organizacja Wojskowa*) to organize an uprising against the government of Mykolas Sleževičius. After the uprising was disclosed, he fled to Vilnius. In 1919, he moved to Klaipėda, where he was actively involved in the plans of annexation of the Klaipėda region to Poland.

<sup>28</sup> Not identified.

<sup>29</sup> Tilžė (or Sovetsk; Russian: Советск, German: Tilsit) is a city on the banks of the Nemunas River. Today it belongs to Russia, the Kaliningrad region. During the nineteenth-century press ban, Lithuanian literature was printed in Tilžė. On November 30, 1918, the members of the National Council of Lithuania Minor gathered in Tilžė and adopted the Act of Tilžė, demanding the incorporation of Lithuania Minor to the Lithuanian state.

<sup>30</sup> Bronius Skomskis (1864 or 1865–1935) was a Lithuanian general (1921).

<sup>31</sup> In fact, it was an officer, Feliksas Senkus (1898–? ). He graduated from the Military School and in 1919, joined the Lithuanian army as a volunteer. In



have come here on business, but they do not miss the opportunity to have fun and buy what they need. [...]

## February 17

Yesterday evening I was at our Consulate to celebrate February 16.<sup>32</sup> The entire Lithuanian colony, consisting mainly of students, has gathered. Among them were a few Lithuanian Germans who are here to learn from the descendants of the East Prussian Order how to further Germanize Lithuania proper. There was dinner, speeches. The speakers were Mr. Milčius,<sup>33</sup> who is a student, but who has occupied a flat in the Consulate with // his wife, Mr. Stankaitis,<sup>34</sup> an official of the secret militia, who has been learning his trade here with the Germans, a student, Mr. Pašys, Mr. Poželienė,<sup>35</sup> and myself. Mr. Hasford,<sup>36</sup> the Consul of Lithuania, did not utter a word (for he, as a Major in the German service, is a man of “deeds” and not “words”). In all the speeches and toasts there was a great pandering to the Germans, because our students are very much intimidated by the German threat to expel them from their universities and know from ex-

1920, he was appointed to the Intelligence Department of the General Staff. On January 9–13, 1923, he took part in the Klaipėda Revolt and was the head of the Rebel Intelligence Department.

<sup>32</sup> On February 16, 1918, the twenty members of the Council of Lithuania signed a document, the Act of Independence, declaring Lithuania a sovereign democratic state with the capital city Vilnius. Today, the celebration on February 16 is actually called the State Restoration Day (Lithuanian: *Lietuvos valstybės atkūrimo diena*).

<sup>33</sup> Antanas Milčius (1895–?) was Lithuanian political and public figure, representative of the Constituent Assembly (1920–1922) and the Third Assembly of Lithuania (1926–1927). In 1926, he received a doctorate in law from the University of Königsberg.

<sup>34</sup> In 1922, Jonas Stankaitis was a Commander of Kaunas City Public Police, briefly worked as the head of the Criminal Police. For more, see: *Lietuvos vidaus reikalų istorija* [History of Lithuanian Internal Affairs]. Vilnius: Vilniaus dailės akademijos leidykla: Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus reikalų ministerija, 2008, p. 212.

<sup>35</sup> Enny Poželienė was the wife of lawyer, advocate and political activist, Vladas Požela (1879–1960). In 1923, she lived in Königsberg.

<sup>36</sup> K. Herman Hasford was a Vice-Consul, from August 16, 1922, also acting as Consul.

perience that the German authorities will know tomorrow every single word of what has been said and done at that celebration.

In my speech, as a private person and a sick man, I tried to be a little freer, and I brought into view the slanders and attacks of the local German press on Lithuania and the Lithuanians in connection with the Klaipėda events. I pointed out that these attacks were very wrong, unjustified and // very apolitical. After all, it is the East Prussians who must be most interested in the existence and strength of the Lithuanian State, because only the existence of the Lithuanian State shields the Other East Prussians from the Poles, and gives them the possibility of existence and of being part of Germany. Until the revolt, Klaipėda was a base for French and Polish encirclement of Lithuania and the constant threat to it, to Soviet Russia and Germany, and especially to East Prussia. If it could not be returned to Germany, in whose hands would it be better for it to be – in the hands of Lithuania, or in the hands of the company, that has held it so far? A clear understanding of politics dictates that it should be in Lithuania's hands, but it is a pity that German, and especially short-sighted East Prussian, politicians do not see this. It is the task of our colony to make this as clear as possible to the local Germans. The Lithuanian national anthem was sung several times, a salute to independence, to the government, to the consul, to the academics, to the cooks, etc., and a lot of beer was gulped down.

I left immediately after dinner and did not see the end.

## February 24

[...] The death of the American Martus<sup>37</sup> at the Kretinga District Hospital, where he was lying ill with typhus fever, after having gone to the Klaipėda region to help with propaganda, made a very strong impression on me. He died alone, leaving no family behind and not even mourned. Only a short message, in the form of a correspondence, appeared in "Lietuva"! Although he was a

<sup>37</sup> Andrius Martus (Martusevičius) (1874–1923) was a public figure, participant of the Klaipėda Revolt. In 1920, he returned to Lithuania from the USA. In 1920–1922, he visited Klaipėda region with lectures. He spoke at the rallies organized by the Supreme Committee of Rescue of Lithuania Minor and took part in the siege of Klaipėda Prefecture on January 15, 1923, where he caught a cold and later died.

man of little education, he was a patriot (and that in him, as a man of little education, should be especially cherished) – for this reason it was necessary to include at least a small obituary, because he had worked for the welfare of his homeland in both America and Lithuania, and he had accomplished a bit. But, of course, the insensitivity and narrow-mindedness of our Lithuanian spirit (only those who are of their own party are honored) – or perhaps because of the lack of awareness and ignorance of our “editors” about their own people!

*Translated by Dalia CIDZIKAITĖ*

# Offering to the Bloodbank

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JUOZAS GRIKIS

When I was a child, my mother explained the colors of the flag to me: yellow is the wheat field in the month that I was born; green is the forest tree in the summer; red is the blood that flowed so she could be here to tell me.

Land pulls at us; draws us in like a black hole. Like the event horizon, steppe stretches to nothingness, like body on the rack. Or body compressed and dwarfed — as with all good intentions — on the surface of a neutron star.

Winter always leaves, eventually. Tractor eventually replaces armored vehicle. Tractor tills the loam: upturns shrapnel, pieces of body armor, 100-year teeth from strategic famine, bone with fresh marrow from someone's miscalculation.

Land always rebirths and always through decay. Decay of plants; decay of animal and human waste products; decay of animals; decay of humans in death pits and the ashes from portable crematoriums.

In this place, how does someone smile at  
me? Lift a hand in greeting? Give me direction to a  
street or building? Sing in harmony without tears? Is  
everyone that much better than me?

Where I live now, people cheer on the  
sidelines — like at a soccer match or game of tennis,  
but on top of faraway body parts. People root for  
innocence, but not more.

It is something in our water that leaves us  
voyeurs? Something inert in the soil unless mixed  
with blood? Is here where the Lotus Eaters keep  
farms and gardens?

## A Few Words about the Photo Cycle “The Chant of the Plague Year...”

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ALIS BALBIERIUS

**T**aken by some visual idea, sometimes I simply rely on feeling, intuition, I want to do something somehow, and how and what without knowing yet consciously...

I don't even know when the image of figures in black masks of medieval plague doctors entered my mind and settled there. They might have come from the books I have read or films I have seen, but more probably from old engravings about the year of the plague. Those strange bird-beaked people might have possibly subconsciously got connected with my ornithological experience, a passion for watching birds I once had.

I downloaded the masks and costumes from the internet. I already had the paraphernalia a few years before the covid pandemic, but I didn't plan to do anything about it – sometimes I would just take them with me, for example, to the legendary annual workshop of photographers in Nida or elsewhere. I had already abandoned the idea, but it turned out that the masks and costumes were just waiting for their moment.

The pandemic somehow broke through that inactivity. The first photos were taken in February 2022 with the aid of my cousin Giedrius Balbieris who agreed to serve as a model... Later I posed a lot myself, running around the fields in the right weather, and these acts in themselves created a gloomy, dark atmosphere. My camera perched on the tripod like a bird and performed its job without being in any way directed by the photographer. I decided to make these photos whenever mist or evening was approaching, and in fact I didn't take a single photo during summer.

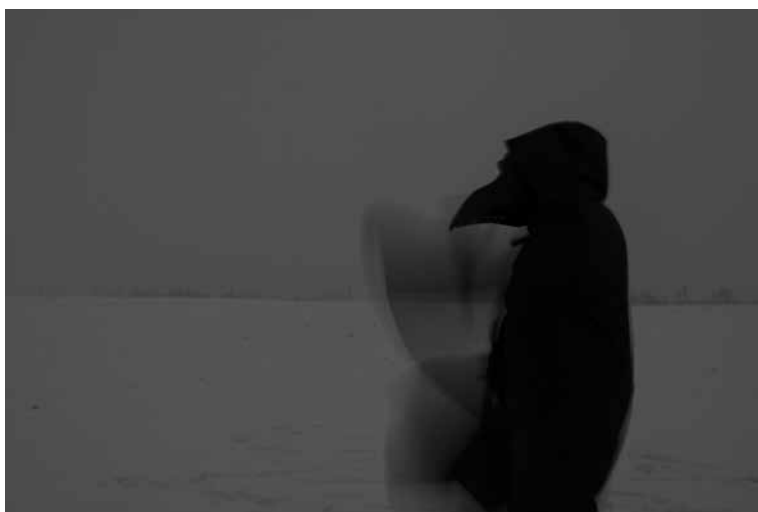
I do not want to comment on the possible meanings, associations, and contexts of these photographs. They, however, contain some meaning, but I am leaving it to the viewer to decide what they see in them.

The Covid pandemic seems to tell us that no plague year ever ends. It can resurface anytime and take other forms. After all, for those who know a little about ecology, according to Desmond Morris, we are only “naked apes” who are subject to the laws and fluctuations of animal populations, such as overpopulated lemmings or locusts...













# Features of the Activities of the Lithuanian American Roman Catholic Priest Union in 1909–1951

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IGNAS STANEVIČIUS

With the start of the rapid process of industrialization in the nineteenth century, immigrants began to flood major Western countries in search of both material welfare and a space that did not limit the freedom of speech. Many migrants were lured by the possibility of easy money though having little idea of the challenges that awaited them in new, unfamiliar countries. The most popular destination was the United States of America. Most of the Lithuanian arrivals were Catholics; therefore, they first tried to gather on a religious basis, coming together with Poles into parishes and associations. Gradually, the relations between these two culturally close, but linguistically different diasporas became tense. The Polish diaspora had already taken deeper roots in North America than the Lithuanians who arrived in the late nineteenth century. This was also evident in the church hierarchy. The Poles had bishops of Polish origin among them, who defended the interests of their compatriots. Whereas the Lithuanians did not have a Lithuanian pastor who would be responsible for the pastoral care of Lithuanians all over the world

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IGNAS STANEVIČIUS is a doctoral student at the Faculty of History of Vilnius University, who is preparing a dissertation on the topic *Lithuanian Catholic Clergy in Exile, 1944–1990: Between Pastoral Challenges and Social Mission*. This article analyzes the activities of the first organization of Roman Catholic priests, the Priest Union. The study uses archival sources and periodicals collected at the Lithuanian American Cultural Archives in Putnam.

up until the second half of the twentieth century. The threat of losing national identity encouraged Lithuanian clergy without a pastoral mission to engage in the work of social consolidation and education. The consolidated organization, Priest Union, performed the role of a collective Lithuanian bishop in the diaspora, even though it did not have any jurisdictional powers.

The Lithuanian American Roman Catholic Priest Union was also the first professional organization of priests consolidated on a national basis. Its focus was not only on everyday issues of church life, but also on the preservation of the language, education, and aid for Lithuania. Throughout the entire historical period of more than a hundred years, it still gathers Catholic priests of different generations of the Lithuanian diaspora and provides mutual assistance.<sup>1</sup> The study of the Priest Union organization can not only help fill historical gaps, but also show, on a case-to-case basis, what role religious structures play in responding to social challenges facing the diasporas.

The aim of the article: to reveal major trends in the activities of the Priest Union in the first half of the twentieth century. Accordingly, I set the following tasks to myself:

1. To ascertain the circumstances of the establishment of the organization;
2. Discuss its charitable and social activities;
3. To ascertain the Priest Union's relations with Lithuania;
4. To analyze how the Priest Union helped the Lithuanian priests who arrived in the USA after World War Two and how their integration influenced the nature of the organization's activities.

The study chronologically covers the most dynamic period of this organization's activities from 1909 to 1951, marking accordingly the year of its establishment and its final date – the arrival of war refugee Catholic priests after World War Two and their involvement in the Priest Union organization. This study aims to highlight the first phase of the operation of the Priest Union,

<sup>1</sup> Priest Unions are currently active in the USA and Canada.

analyzing specifically the case of the United States and the first steps of this organization. After the spread of Lithuanians across other parts of America after World War Two, Priest Unions were established in Canada and South America. However, the available sources are too fragmentary to be able to discuss their activities. Therefore, the basis of the historical sources of this article are the Priest Union session protocols, the correspondence between the priests, and the published periodicals of informative character, which had changed their names over the decades: *Kunigų Vienybės Forum*, *Kunigų Vienybės Biuletenis*, *Lux Christi*. A lot of historical documentation about the cultural life of Catholics in the diaspora is stored in the Lithuanian American Cultural Archives in Putnam, Connecticut. Also, the most prominent features and issues of this organization in this period are indicated: mutual consolidation, the use of the Lithuanian language during church services, organization of financial aid, support for Lithuanian war refugees. Their arrival marks the renewal of the Priest Union.

Research on the Lithuanian Catholic diaspora in the United States has so far received the most attention when discussing the processes of the formation of the Lithuanian National Church in the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> Also, different research on the history of war refugees after World War Two is gradually getting attention from the historians, including Catholic pastoral care,<sup>3</sup> the first challenges faced by clergy in emigration,<sup>4</sup> and youth

<sup>2</sup> Strumickienė, Ilona. "Lithuanian National Catholic Church in America: features of religious and national identity," *Oikos: Lithuanian Migration and Diaspora Studies* 14, 2012, 43–51; Vaitkevičienė, Kristina. "Lithuanian National Catholic Church in America: Some Historical Features," *Oikos: Lithuanian Migration and Diaspora Studies* 19, 2015 53–81.

<sup>3</sup> Vitkuvienė, I. and Vasiliauskaitė A. "Essential Components and Their Implementation in Pastoral Care of Lithuanian Catholics in Emigration in 1945–1984," *Soter: Journal of Religious Science*, Kaunas, Vilnius: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Versus Aureus, 2016, 47–63.

<sup>4</sup> Stanevičius, Ignas. "The First Integrational Challenges of Postwar Lithuanian Catholic Clergymen in the West." In *Migration: Concepts and Experiences. A Collection of Scientific Articles*, ed. Margarita Matulytė. Vilnius: Lithuanian National Museum of Art, Lithuanian Culture Research Institute, 2022, 180–203.

organizations.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the only source of information about the Priest Union is in encyclopedic publications, which become a necessary starting point for studying the organization's activities.<sup>6</sup> The organization is discussed somewhat more extensively in the historian Antanas Kučas' book about the history of the Lithuanian Americans: the features of its activities, the forms of its material support, relations with other organizations and Lithuania.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the work of a synthetic character familiarizes us with only the most general features of the Priest Union. It is also worth mentioning the book in three volumes by priest V. Valkavičius about Lithuanian American parishes, which is particularly important for the research of the clergy of the diaspora.<sup>8</sup> In these books, we will not find an extensive empirical analysis of the Priest Union, but we will be able to fragmentarily trace the extent of the participation of the clergy in their professional organization in their everyday life, the concerns the Lithuanian clergy faced in politically and ethnically diverse parishes in the twentieth century, and what kind of issues were discussed during this organization's sessions.

## The First Lithuanian Priests on American Soil

To find a starting point to mark the history of the Lithuanian Catholic clergy who arrived in the United States, let us go back to the period of the first trans-Atlantic economic migration in the second half of the nineteenth century. With the rapid devel-

<sup>5</sup> Ūsaitė, Kristina. *World Lithuanian Youth Association in Exile. 1950s to 1980s*, Vilnius: Versus aureus, 2013; Bučinskytė, Ilona. *Idealų vedami: ateitininkai išeivijoje XX amžiaus 5–7 dešimtmečiais*, Versus aureus, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> *Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija* 11, Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidybos institutas, 2007, 268; *Lietuvių enciklopedija* 13, ed. Antanas Bendorius, Lietuvių enciklopedijos leidykla, 1958, 359–362.

<sup>7</sup> Kučas, *Amerikos lietuvių istorija*, 220–234.

<sup>8</sup> Wolkovich-Valkavičius. *Lithuanian Religious Life in America, A Compendium of 150 Roman Catholic Parishes and Institutions* 1–3, Norwood: Lithuanian Religious Life in America, 1991–1998.



opment of industry and logistical innovations, many Central Eastern Europeans both from the Tsarist Russian Empire and the neighboring countries decided to leave their homeland due to the hardships and oppression they were enduring. After the suppression of the uprisings against the tsarist rule, young men left to avoid compulsory military service in the tsarist army or just in search of material prosperity. Since many Lithuanian immigrants were Catholics, the parish became a cultural center for them. Before the first Lithuanian parishes were established, Lithuanians had shared the houses of worship with Poles, which often became an arena for national identity conflicts. This became a challenge for the Lithuanian priests who arrived in North America after their compatriots.

Priest Juozas Juškevičius was one of the first priests to reach America. After the Uprising of 1863, he was exiled to Siberia, from which, via Japan, he later arrived in San Francisco. Not finding a place where he could continue his service as a priest in the Lithuanian and Polish languages, he left for Chicago, where he founded the Polish St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in 1869. However, he spent only two years there, because the Poles wanted a parish priest of their own nationality. He visited the Lithuanians living in Shamokin (Pennsylvania), where he, jointly with Poles, founded the St. Adalbert (Vaitiekaus) parish in 1874. From Shamokin, priest Juškevičius visited the Lithuanians in New York and other areas, especially during Lent, when people wanted to make an Easter confession. It must be admitted that his work was complicated: he constantly had to mediate between Lithuanian and Polish believers and address conflict situations; therefore, he left the parish two years later.<sup>9</sup> Priest Valkavičius, who thoroughly examined Lithuanian parishes in America, claims that Polish believers were hostile to priest Juškevičius' attempts to deliver sermons in Lithuanian; even bricks were thrown at the priest's windows because of that.<sup>10</sup> Even though Lithuanian arrivals knew the Polish

<sup>9</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 13–14.

<sup>10</sup> Wolkovich-Valkavičius, *Lithuanian Religious Life* 2, 80.

language and tried to co-exist peacefully in common parishes or even establish joint associations, the nationalistic movements in their home countries exerted an influence on the lives of immigrants as well. Religious, aid, and cultural societies began to be established on a language basis.<sup>11</sup>

Pennsylvania became the center of Lithuanian immigrants. Railway construction works had recently begun, so many of new arrivals found employment in coal mines. Many Lithuanians lived in New York and its surroundings. They found work there, as they did not have enough money to go somewhere farther; moreover, they did not want to get into hard work.<sup>12</sup> The first clearly Lithuanian parish was that of St. Casimir, which was established in 1885 in Pittston.<sup>13</sup> According to the information of the Catholic Directorate from 1884, six priests lived in America at that time: Tutkevičius, Bolujauskas, Čižauskas, Radavičius, Rackevičius and Zlotižinskas.<sup>14</sup> The circumstances of their arrival, whether they had been sent by bishops, are hard to verify due to fragmentary information. However, based on the research of the historian Algimantas Katilius on the Lithuanian Catholic clergy who studied abroad in the nineteenth-twentieth century, some priests may not have wanted to return to Lithuania because of their participation in the Uprising of 1863 or their underground activities, as, e.g., priests Antanas Milukas and Vaclovas Matulaitis.<sup>15</sup> It should also be mentioned that the above number of priests could have been several times higher, because in the US official statistical documents, Lithuanians were often mixed with Russians, as migrants from the Tsarist Russian Empire.

The Lithuanian clergy often visited each other, as there was a need to help each other in pastoral work, in preparing publications; there was also the growing need to establish Lithuanian parish schools. The desire to get rid of the influence of Poloni-

<sup>11</sup> Eidintas, *Lietuva ir masinė išeivystė*, 92.

<sup>12</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 14.

<sup>13</sup> Wolkovich-Valkavičius, *Lithuanian Religious Life* 2, 143.

<sup>14</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 14.

<sup>15</sup> Katilius, "Į Vakarų Europos katalikų universitetus," 181.

zation and the fear of losing one's national identity while living in the Anglo-Saxon culture in particular, encouraged the narrow circle of Lithuanian intellectuals to pay special attention to the preservation of the language. The first attempt to bring together the Lithuanian priests who lived in America was the meeting organized by priests Juozapas Žebrys and Aleksandras Burba in Plymouth, Pennsylvania, in December 1894, during which the Society of Lithuanian Priests in America (*Lietuvų Amerikos Kunigų Draugystė*) was established.<sup>16</sup> The founding of a convent of the Lithuanian Sisters of St. Casimir congregation was discussed.<sup>17</sup> The priests hoped that the establishment of Lithuanian convents and monasteries would help ensure education in Lithuanian. This initiative was, however, suppressed in 1901, when the US Catholic bishops decided to organize children's education in English. The Lithuanian press called to protest against this decision of the bishops.<sup>18</sup> The Lithuanian clergy continued to develop plans to circumvent this decision of the hierarchs. A conference of priests took place in Pittsburgh in 1903, where further discussions were held regarding the establishment of the convent and transfer of the organization of education to nuns. As a result of the aforementioned meetings, with the help of priest Antanas Staniukynas and bishop Jonas W. Shanahan, the convent of the Sisters of St. Casimir was founded in 1907 in Mt. Carmel, Pennsylvania.<sup>19</sup>

With the growth of the number of Lithuanians, their organizations also grew in number. Mutual aid and religious societies bringing Catholics together were established around the parishes, all of which were united under the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Alliance in America (1886) and the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Federation of America (1906). As often as not, Catholic clergy stood behind the steering wheel of these unifying organizations, and were members of the boards of their governing bodies.

<sup>16</sup> Wolkovich-Valkavičius, *Lithuanian Religious Life* 2, 41.

<sup>17</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 14.

<sup>18</sup> *Eidintas, Lietuva*, 110.

<sup>19</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 9.

Unlike laymen, Lithuanian priests in America worked in different dioceses and depended on the grace of local hierarchs. However, the common desire to preserve the native language and culture encouraged the priests to unite themselves in a professional organization formed on a national basis. Moreover, Lithuanian parishes lacked prayer books, and there was a need to standardize church singing, and prepare Lithuanian catechisms.<sup>20</sup> The Priest Union was established in Astor House Hotel in New York on 5 May, 1909. Priest Staniukynas was elected as the first Chairman of its Board, priest J. Čėpanonis as Secretary, and priest S. Pautienius as Treasurer. Fifty priests joined the Priest Union. As priest Razminas put it, it was “like a special union – labor union, an official tribune for Lithuanian issues, mutual material aid, Lithuania’s representation.” At first, it was called the Lithuanian American Roman Catholic Priest Union, but in 1920 it was renamed as the Priest Union. The organization was registered officially, its regulations were approved by James Edward Quigley, the Bishop of Chicago in 1910, and it was registered and blessed by Holy Father’s delegate in Washington in 1931.<sup>21</sup>

The Priest Union organized annual sessions – *seimas*, with the aim of gathering scattered priests and discussing questions of concern in person. To this end in view, the Priest Union was divided into six regions (Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Scranton and Chicago); later, two more joined – those of New Jersey and Shenandoah. The Union’s governing body was its Central Board, which had chairmen of the regions subordinated to it. They also annually organized local sessions of priests. The Priest Unity published an information circular, also referred to as a bulletin, which changed its name over the years: *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* (1935–1938), *Kunigu Vienybės Biuletenis* (1940–1951), *Lux Christi* (1951–1973).<sup>22</sup> The change of names also marks the different historical periods of this organization: the internal

<sup>20</sup> Kučas, *Amerikos lietuvių istorija*, 220.

<sup>21</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 20, 60.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

consolidation of Catholics, the organization of aid to Lithuania during World War Two, and the integration of war refugees in the new world.

## The Education Mission

The main and most prominent role of the Priest Union was organization of education. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the Priest Union created an education network. Nun sisters were the Priest Union's main helpers. The priests invited brother monks and nun sisters from Lithuania to come and contribute to the fostering of Lithuanian education in the diaspora. The Sisters of St. Casimir Congregation, founded on the initiative of priest Antanas Staniukynas, led twenty-three Lithuanian schools as early as 1913.<sup>23</sup> To support this Congregation, the members of the Union had to pay an annual tribute and organize fund raising in their parish or church once a year. The issue of education and the importance of support was emphasized during many Priest Union meetings. It was written in the weekly, *Žinynas*, in 1923:

With the absence of a sufficient number of nun sisters, at least larger parishes should take care of the establishment of parish schools. Parish priests should encourage more girls to join Christian communities of nuns and save Catholicism and Lithuanity. Parish priests should support poorer girls provided that their Christian community of nuns would provide their parish with teachers at the first opportunity.

The Sisters of St. Casimir Congregation alone was not enough for the growing Lithuanian diaspora, whose communities had been dispersed at great distances one from another. The Franciscan Congregation was established in Pittsburgh in 1922 on the initiative of the priests Magnusas Kazėnas, Mykolas Krušas, and Jonas Sutkaitis. Once it was established, at the meeting of the

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 25.

Priest Union it was decided to support both Lithuanian congregations. Thanks to the material and moral support of priests, two more Lithuanian congregations were established: the Crucified Jesus Congregation and the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>24</sup>

The Priest Union organized the establishment of the Lithuanian Catholic Society “Motinėlė” (Mother) (est. 1901). After the consolidation of priests into the Priest Union, this society, which had already been operating for some time and was led by the same clergy, was joined to the Priest Union as a unit of material aid. The purpose of this society was: “to win for Lithuania and the Lithuanians the freedom of speech, the freedom of belief, the freedom of independence, and to revive the awareness of the nation through education.”<sup>25</sup> The original plans of the Society included helping writers of merit with regular salaries or gifts, and announcing competitions. During the first years of the Society’s activities, mainly schoolchildren who were determined to continue their studies at European universities, later – also Lithuanians born in America who went to study in Lithuania were mainly supported financially. In the 1930s, particular attention was devoted to the education of nun sisters (Casimirians, Franciscan and the Sisters of Jesus Crucified). They were sent to Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas to study the Lithuanian language and pedagogy. In 1935, scholarships were awarded to Franciscan nuns for Lithuanian Studies in Lithuania. The Society wanted the sisters “to learn the Lithuanian language, fall in love with Lithuania, and be able to instill love for the homeland upon return.”<sup>26</sup> The awarding of these scholarships disposed the Lithuanian public in America so favorably that donations started pouring into the Society’s treasure, which had been almost depleted Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas provided benefits to the students who arrived; they were not charged tuition fees. The scholarship recipients responded with thanks:

<sup>24</sup> Kučas, *Amerikos lietuvių istorija*, 225.

<sup>25</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 32.

<sup>26</sup> *Kunigų Vienybės Forum*, 3, 1935, 17.

For us, Lithuanian Americans, taking residence in Lithuania, seeing the precious land of our ancestors, its fascinating nature, learning its great language and history, it was something we could only dream about but not realize; after receiving the scholarship from “Motinėlė”, all this became a reality.<sup>27</sup>

The scholarship recipients had to repay the money after graduation, as scholarships were granted in the form of loans, and under the condition of repaying the money. When World War Two broke out, all material aid was reorganized and directed to Lithuania, and was later allocated to the Lithuanian war refugees in Germany and Austria. After the war, there were thoughts about continuing the work of the Society, but that required repayment of debts by all recipients of the scholarship. The recipients of the scholarship of the “Motinėlė” Society included prominent Lithuanian cultural figures, such as M. Pečkauskaitė, Prof. Pranas Dovydaitis, Dr. Adomas Dambras, composer Stasys Šimkus, Prof. V. Mykolaitis-Putinas, Bishop Pr. Borisevičius.<sup>28</sup>

At the Priest Union meetings, great concern was expressed about the maintenance of the Lithuanian language in parish schools. The priests constantly took care of the organization of parish schools, with the nuns of the St. Casimir Congregation as their biggest helpers. It soon turned out that there was a lack of teachers; therefore in addition, in 1922, the Franciscan Congregation was established in Pittsburgh, and later, support was provided for the establishment of the Jesus Crucified Congregation and the Congregation of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.<sup>29</sup> The nun Marija Kaupaitė of the Franciscan Congregation, in her letter of 1924 to the Secretary of the Priest Union, priest Pranciškus Juras, complained that in many places, parish priests insist on teaching catechism to children in English, because the diocesan exams are held in English, and the children who are only prepared for them in Lithuanian do not pass them.

<sup>27</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 33–34.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Kučas, *Amerikos lietuvių istorija*, 225.

Attention was also paid to the fact that the textbooks received from Lithuania are outdated, written for rural children, and are not suitable in America.<sup>30</sup> Problems with textbooks could also constantly arise because the Lithuanian government itself did not try to at least send in an education specialist and support the spread of Lithuanity in the diaspora.<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, the opinions of priests themselves also varied at their meetings. Some priests saw the threat of “Americanism,” others thought that “the English and the Lithuanian languages were reconcilable in churches.”<sup>32</sup> At the session of the Chicago Province of the Priest Union in 1936, the priests discussed why fewer and fewer children attended Lithuanity schools. Among the reasons, priest M. Urbonavičius indicated the alienation of nun sisters towards schoolchildren, and priest J. Vaičiūnas claimed that nun sister teachers avoid getting to know the families in the parish.<sup>33</sup>

The spiritual leadership of secular Catholic organizations occupied a special place in the activity horizon of the Priest Union. Priests took an active part in the activities of the Lithuanian Catholic Federation of America, which took care of the establishment of Catholic societies and the development of the press. Priest Paukštis summed up the totality of Catholic organizations as follows: “The P[riest] U[nion] is the roots, the Catholic Federation is the trunk, and all the other societies are the leaves.”<sup>34</sup> Almost every society that operated under parishes or separately, had its spiritual leader, who was as if the Priest Union’s delegate to serve in the communal pastoral matters. As can be seen from *seimas* protocols, challenges that were faced by the unions such as the Organist Union, the Women’s Union, the Union of Professionals and Students, the Workers’ Union, the Lithuanian Philanthropists’ Union, and also by the Lithuanian school commissions,

<sup>30</sup> Eidintas, *Lietuva*, 111.

<sup>31</sup> Kučas, *Amerikos lietuvių istorija*, 233.

<sup>32</sup> *Kunigų Vienybės Forum* 4, 1935, 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Kunigų Vienybės Forum* 15–16–17, 1937, 40.

<sup>34</sup> *Kunigų Vienybės Forum* 1, 1935, 28.



were discussed during meetings.<sup>35</sup> Priests were encouraged not only to intercede and support the activities of these organizations, but also to subscribe for the publications issued by them for their parishes.<sup>36</sup> In 1935, the Chairman of the Priest Union in the *seimas*, priest J.A. Karalius, provided the following statistics on the subscriptions: 137 out of 206 Lithuanian priests are members of the Priest Union, the most subscribed publications are *Draugas* (73 priest subscribers), *Darbininkas* (68), *Laivas* (64).<sup>37</sup> Of course, in addition to Catholic publications, the clergy subscribed for other publications and those issued in Lithuania as well.

## Relations with Lithuania

The constant focus of the Priest Union was also on social and political issues in Lithuania. In addition to the information bulletins subscribed to the Lithuanian American priests, in 1933–1940 the Priest Union edited one column in *Tiesos kelyje* that was issued in Lithuania. Sermons were shared and current affairs of the Roman Catholic Church were discussed in it. Close correspondence with Catholics in Lithuania regularly took place. Three bishops from Lithuania visited the USA at the invitation of the Priest Union: Jurgis Matulaitis in 1926, Teofilus Matulionis in 1936, and Mečislovas Reinys in 1937. US priests took care of the bishops' stay. They organized their visits to local officials and Church hierarchs, planned their travel itineraries, and visited Lithuanian parishes together with them. By inviting the bishops, the Lithuanian American priests hoped to strengthen the divided diaspora community and the Catholics in their ideological fight against communists.<sup>38</sup>

US priests were not indifferent to Lithuanian issues. The case of Lithuania regarding the occupation of Vilnius was decided in 1931 in Geneva. The drawn up memorandums were sent to the

<sup>35</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* 4, 1935, 1, 6, 8–9.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>38</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* 21–22–23, 1937, 33.

League of Nations in Geneva, with a special request for the US delegation to support Lithuania's right to Vilnius. Lithuania's representative, Mr. Balutis, wrote to priest N. Pakalnis, the then Chairman of the Priest Union:

Dr. Zaunius asks me to sincerely thank you for sending him to Geneva for resolutions... The united voice of the Lithuanians matters in international issues and in foreign policy matters. All Lithuanians must act as a unified and conscious front.<sup>39</sup>

As the rights of Catholics began to be restricted in Lithuania in that same year, the Priest Union closely followed the situation of the believers, and prepared a memorandum to President Smetona.<sup>40</sup> In protest against the attempts to close the Faculty of Theology-Philosophy, the memorandum of 1937 emphasized: "The Americans will always stand for the rights of Lithuanian Catholics."<sup>41</sup> Quite many memorandums were also addressed to Catholic bishops in foreign countries, as well as to the US Congress and President Roosevelt, in order to draw their attention to Lithuania's concerns during World War Two. When planning President Smetona's visit to the colonies of the Lithuanian Americans in the USA in 1940, the Priest Union was reserved in its position: as the Head of State, he must not be the "leader of the activities of the Lithuanians, and is not considered as such."<sup>42</sup>

It was aimed to help Catholics in Lithuania not only by the printed word but money as well. The Central Board of the Priest Union must have had a great liking for prof. Pranas Dovydaitis in 1936–1937, because it established his personal fund on the occasion of his 50th anniversary, into which monetary aid was sent on an annual basis. *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* issues often called on priests to more willingly donate for the putting up of the Professor's buildings in Prienai village.<sup>43</sup> The repercussions of the coming into power of the nationalist regime in Lithuania were felt in

<sup>39</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 28.

<sup>40</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* 3, 1936, 18–21.

<sup>41</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* 24–25–26, 1937, 30.

<sup>42</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Biuletenis*, 1940, 11.

<sup>43</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Forum*, 7, 1936, 31–32; *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* 10–11, 17.

the diaspora as well. Prelate Krušas, while visiting South America in 1938, was surprised that Lithuanian officials “persecute Lithuanian Catholics more than in Lithuania itself [...]. Priest Ragažinskas and priest Arminas were simply driven in a corner by the Consul of Lithuania in São Paulo and the leaders of local heathens; they even stopped granting subsidies to them.”<sup>44</sup>

### **Attempts to Stop the Spread of Secularism in the Lithuanian Diaspora**

Lithuanians also brought their political views to the new world which offered them even more opportunities to strengthen them. At the end of the nineteenth century, the socialist and libertarian movement became widespread among the Lithuanians in the diaspora, because of which, according to the calculations of priest Vincas Valkavičius, as many as a quarter of Lithuanian immigrants became alienated to religion.<sup>45</sup> Most of the early immigrant press was in the hands of unbelievers. In 1914, twenty newspapers were issued in the USA, of which 30 percent belonged to the Catholic wing.<sup>46</sup> One of the main ideological opponents of the Catholic press wing was the herald of liberal ideas, Dr. Jonas Šliūpas.

A closer look at the liberal early twentieth-century press reveals a confrontation between these two ideological currents. The weekly *Tėvynė*, which was issued in Boston by the Lithuanian Alliance of America, can be considered one of the fiercest critics of the Lithuanian Catholic clergy. The press as often as not criticized and ridiculed certain actions of priests and published grievances over the inappropriate behavior of the clergy.<sup>47</sup> The weekly *Keleivis* of socialist orientation issued in Boston also crit-

<sup>44</sup> Prel. Mykolas Leonas Krušas to Fr. Jonas Krušas. May 7, 1938.

<sup>45</sup> Wolkovich-Valkavičius, *Lithuanian religious life* 1, 22.

<sup>46</sup> Eidintas, *Lietuva*, 107.

<sup>47</sup> *Tėvynė*, 10, 1928, 1.

icized clericalism quite frequently, issuing different, poorly-substantiated facts about the misdeeds of priests.<sup>48</sup> Such criticism could also be incited by the first steps of the clergy in the new continent, which were not easy. Catholic priests immigrating to the USA or deciding to stay had to register themselves with local dioceses and express their submission to the diocesan bishop. However, not every parish Ordinary tolerated the desire of Lithuanians to use their native language during the Holy Mass nor the obstinacy of some clergy. Particularly strong opposition was felt from the bishops of Irish origin. According to priest Albavičius, libertines lodged complaints to local bishops of Irish origin, and these, not bothering themselves with understanding the problems of Lithuanians, believed the complainants.<sup>49</sup> The extent to which this occurred in reality is difficult to ascertain due to fragmentary information. Given that not all the priests who came from Lithuania knew English and local procedures, it can be assumed that this fact could have aggravated the Church servants' mutual communication and the settling of matters. For example, there was a hostile attitude towards new clergy arrivals, who sought to get rich from excessive donations, which was a common issue of Polish and other immigrant clergy. They demanded organizing annual parish levies, collecting offerings for sacraments, and abused the so-called Easter card.<sup>50</sup> It should be noted that not all local bishops, who were of different nationalities themselves, knew how to properly deal with arriving clergy.

The weekly *Draugas*, established in 1909, was at first published by the Priest Union, but a few years later, it was transferred to the Lithuanian Marian priests who established themselves in the USA. Before the newspaper was taken over by the Marians, the Priest Union supported the newspaper with \$100 as the admission fee until January 1910, \$50 until 1912, and \$25 later.<sup>51</sup> The

<sup>48</sup> *Keleivis*, 8, 1933, 1–2, 4–6.

<sup>49</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 51.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Kučas, *Amerikos lietuvių istorija*, 223.

later established newspapers of Catholic worldview, *Darbininkas*, *Amerika* and *Amerikos lietuviai* were to become a counterweight to the socialist and libertarian press. Therefore, priests were encouraged to support journals of Catholic thought, to contribute to them on church matters, and share their thoughts in them. It was hoped that this should slow down the loss of national identity by people and strengthen parishes. Priest K. Urbonavičius claimed that “if Saint Paul lived in our time, he would be the editor of one of the biggest newspapers.”<sup>52</sup> Following the latest papal encyclicals, priests prepared liturgical literature – ritual books, and often shared Lithuanian sermons in the internal information bulletins of the Priest Union. During the Priest Union’s *seimas* in 1920, priests called for strengthening the fight against unbelievers even more through passing the following resolution:

to issue weekly a popular leaflet for people of deep faith, containing the following very popular chapters: a) explanation of faith and virtue, b) refutation of giving up faith, c) a detailed statement of healthy asceticism, d) the Gospel and its explanation. That leaflet will be published by *Draugas* at the expense of the Lithuanian American Priest organization. Its full-page corrections will be sent to all Lithuanian Catholic newspapers ten days before publication, so they too, could reprint them.<sup>53</sup>

Discussing and interpreting religious issues was extremely necessary in order to self-protect against the growing influence of communism in both Lithuania and the United States.

## Internal Problems

Opinions and attitudes of the secular part of society towards Catholicism that were constantly in the spotlight of the press, urged the clergy themselves to call into question the service of the clergy in relation to the interests of the nation and the Church.

<sup>52</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 25.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

Almost every issue of the Priest Union publications from 1935–1938 contains articles dealing with the priestly ideal. Priests shared visions and advice on how to bring the clergy closer to society. There was quite a lot of criticism of the confreres themselves in the internal press of the priests. The Jesuit priest J. Bružikas who arrived from Lithuania in the United States on missions, noted that local Lithuanian priests should stop playing cards during the 40 Hours Devotion.<sup>54</sup> Separate articles analyzed why the Priest Union was an aging organization, how to attract more young priests into the organization, what were the internal organizational problems. In the opinion of the Marian priest Aleksandras Bublys, the gap between the younger and older generations of Lithuanian priests could have arisen because of the fact that most priests maintained just official relations with the youth, alienating them by their words and example.<sup>55</sup> At the sessions of the Priest Union, mostly parish priests or priests from larger parishes participated; sessions took place during celebrations or indulgences, so vicars were left alone at that time. It was also believed that the sessions themselves were empty talk and the resolutions – too broad. When the Union was dealing in 1936 with the issue of how to attract more younger priests into it, the Chairman of the Chicago Province stated that young priests belong to the local province of the Priest Union, subscribe to the Bulletin, participate in sessions, but do not intend to register for the central Priest Unity organization as real members. As the reason, they point out that they see no point in listening to empty and boring talks with old priests for two days.<sup>56</sup> The obligation of the Lithuanian priest was understood not only as his spiritual service, but also as his active involvement in national affairs. The fact that there was a lot of polemics about the preservation of national identity also encouraged not to give in to secularization. In parish life, it was encouraged to combine as many ele-

<sup>54</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* 1, 1935, 4.

<sup>55</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Forum* 3, 1936, 4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

ments of Lithuanian culture as possible. The renewal of the flock highly depended on the origin of the pastors themselves: whether the priest was born in the United States or arrived from Lithuania; when he arrived in the United States; whether he ever visited Lithuania; where he received his clerical training. Answering these questions would require a separate study, but it would allow us to better understand the challenges the Lithuanian diaspora had faced in the United States.

### **Mobilization of the Diaspora to Save the Nation**

As World War Two broke out, the Priest Union called on all Catholic Lithuanian Americans to organize aid for Lithuania which found itself between two invaders. In 1940 it was agreed with American bishops that a part of the common donations to support affected countries would be allocated to Lithuania. The donations collected in Lithuanian parishes were allocated to a special fund to save Lithuania. When a number of priests left Lithuania as early as the first years of the Soviet occupation, the Lithuanian American priests began to look for ways to support them or even invite them to the United States. To this end in view, a separate benevolent fund, the Lithuanian Fund for the Protection of Faith (*Lietuvos Tikėjimui Ginti Fondas*) was established to support priests, which, after the war, became the basis for the creation of the Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid organization.<sup>57</sup>

With the joint efforts of priests and the Lithuanian American Catholic Federation, \$10,000 was collected to maintain Lithuania's Representation to the Holy See from 1940. Fund raising was organized not only during the Holy Mass, but also by organizing various concerts, picnics, and involving parish societies in charitable activities. The priests of the Philadelphia region asked their parishioners to accept the children of Lithuanian refugees. In

<sup>57</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 37.

addition to gathering all kinds of support, priests called on their colleagues to create prayer groups for the support of soldiers' mothers and wives in parishes, and to consolidate Lithuanians who served in the US army.<sup>58</sup>

The Lithuanian Catholic Priests Committee of America for Relief of Lithuanians (*Kunigu Vienybės Šalpos komitetas*) provided information to the American Catholic Hierarchy about Lithuania during the occupations, supported refugees and the Lithuanian Diplomatic Representation to Vatican City. When analyzing the Priest Union's bulletins, it turns out that priests often wrote memorandums about the Lithuanian Catholic Church to American bishops. To draw even more attention, the US authorities, the Department of State, the Red Cross Center were also applied to.<sup>59</sup> During the annual conference in 1945, the American Episcopate decided to organize a special fund raising campaign in Catholic churches to support the Lithuanian Diplomatic Representation to Vatican City.<sup>60</sup> In addition, bishops allocated special sums to aid Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian refugees. They allocated \$60,000 in 1941, and when asked for more – another \$10,000 for medicine and for sending it to Lithuania via the Red Cross. The medicine was brought to Sweden, but due to the blockade imposed by Germany did not reach Lithuania, but was kept in Swedish warehouses until the end of the war. Interestingly, the same medicine was later handed over to UNRA (the United Nations Relief Association), to be distributed to the refugees in DP camps. In addition to general aid to Lithuania, priests kept organizing separate funds for private individuals as well. For example, during a Priest Union's session in 1944, financial aid to the family of the diplomat Valdemaras Vytautas Čarneckis in Soviet Russia was discussed.<sup>61</sup> Also, in 1945, Vincas Balickas,

<sup>58</sup> Priest Union session protocol, August 23, 1944, 10, American Lithuanian Catholic Archive, Box 5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>60</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (11), 36–37.

<sup>61</sup> Priest Union session protocol, 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1944, 11.



Advisor to the Legation of Lithuania in London, applied to priest J. Karalius, asking for financial aid from Catholic organizations to keep his post.<sup>62</sup> Whether his request was satisfied, the protocols provide no information. However, similar requests to financially aid Lithuanian war refugees or employees of the Lithuanian diplomatic corps can be found in the archives of the received letters of the Priest Union.

The changed global political situation encouraged paying more attention to the processes taking place globally. In comparison with the internal press of the Priest Union that was published during the years of the war, more topics appeared concerning the issues faced by the Universal Roman Catholic Church across the world, mainly focusing on the infringement of the rights of Catholics in Lithuania and other countries. Information about the crimes of the Soviets in occupied countries was published in almost every issue of the Bulletin. The October 13, 1942 memorandum of the Catholic bishops of Lithuania to the German occupation authorities was republished in the July-August 1943 issue; however, the Bulletin does not provide any information on the position held by the Lithuanian priests in the United States during the years of the German occupation.<sup>63</sup> Although the memorandum dealt with the situation of Catholics in Europe generally, its aim was to give an overview of the situation of believers in National Socialist Germany.<sup>64</sup> Whether the clergy did not want to complicate the relations of their compatriot brothers with German occupation authorities by showing such self-restraint, remains an open question for further research. Trying to draw the attention of the free world to Lithuania during World War Two, the priests discussed during their meetings the need to organize publishing of historical publications in English.

<sup>62</sup> Vincas Balickas to Fr. Juozas Karalius, March 26, 1945, ALKA, Box 5.

<sup>63</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Biuletenis*, July–August, 1943, 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Kunigu Vienybės Biuletenis*, March–April, 1943, 6.

## Integration of Post-war Refugee Priests

After the end of World War Two, many migrants war-refugees headed to Western countries, leaving their home countries due to the occupations or repressions. The majority of the refugees from Central Eastern European countries stayed temporarily in special camps for displaced persons (DP) set up in Germany and Austria. But there were few who wanted to stay in the war-torn defeated Germany; all were drawn to overseas countries, which offered a possibility to start life anew. It is worth noting that many refugees were educated, had a profession, or were skilled workers. Of course, the USA must have been interested in such a new mass of migrants arriving across the Atlantic, among them quite a few scientists, famous professors, various professionals. The clergy who left Lithuania, too, as often as not were more educated than the average Lithuanian American priest. Many had studied abroad, worked administrative work in dioceses in Lithuania, and had been actively involved in Lithuania's public or even political life. The Priest Union became like a bridge to the United States, which, by virtue of its communication links, helped many refugee priests to arrive in the USA and even find employment in Lithuanian parishes. However, not everyone was guaranteed a job; soon, even an ideological confrontation arose between the local clergy who grew up in America and the new arrivals.

As soon as the Lithuanian refugee priests settled in DP camps, they, together with three Lithuanian bishops who also left Lithuania, started looking for ways to distribute the clergymen between the new migrants and the old diaspora. In 1947, bishops Vincentas Brizgys and Vincentas Padolskis, who departed from Lithuania, appealed to "the Lithuanian brothers in America," asking for help for the Lithuanians stuck in DP camps. In their letter, they asked, where possible, to invite Lithuanians to live in the USA, to aid them financially or encourage everyone to support refugee families with many children.<sup>65</sup> In that same year,

<sup>65</sup> *Kunigu Vieniybės Biuletenis*, July, 1947, 7–8.

the chairman of the Priest Union, priest Pranciškus M. Juras applied to the US President Harry Truman in order to draw his attention to the status of the Lithuanians, DP (Displaced Person, Lith. *dipukas*); he asked not to restrict the correspondence of Lithuanians with their relatives living in America – not to censor, and allow them to write in their native language; to protect DPs from the attempts of the Soviets to repatriate them to their occupied homeland; not to restrict the rights of the Lithuanians in DP camps. The House of Representatives was also appealed to, asking for support for the legislation bill of William Stratton according to which, 400,000 war refugees were to be admitted to the USA.<sup>66</sup> The Lithuanian bishops in exile, making use of the Priest Union as an intermediary, applied to the American bishops, asking them to take care of DP priests. In 1948, the hierarchs of the American Catholic Church authorized prelate Emil Komora, Head of the Immigration Department in New York, to attend to the matters of DP priests.<sup>67</sup> Lithuanian priests did not want to stay long in DP camps – some looked for opportunities to continue their studies in foreign universities, the new Lithuanian College in Rome in particular, or to cross the Atlantic for work in Lithuanian parishes. Not everyone was destined to arrive though. First of all, one needed to get references from their Lithuanian priests in exile and an invitation from the receiving bishop. That was emphasized as early as 1946 by bishop Brizgys in his private letter to priest Juras, so that American bishops would not incidentally invite suspended (there were three of them) or non-recommended priests.<sup>68</sup>

In order to prepare the ground for Lithuanian priests in America, bishop Vincentas Brizgys visited the USA from 1948.<sup>69</sup> The Priest Union took care of the organization of the Bishop's trips to Lithuanian American parishes and his patronage. According

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 26–36.

<sup>67</sup> *Kunigų Vienybės Biuletėnis*, 1949, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Bishop Vincentas Brizgys to Fr. Pranciškus Juras, April 14, 1946, Box 5.

<sup>69</sup> "Pagerbtas Garbingasis Svečias," *Darbininkas*, 85, 1948.

to the schedules of his visits, Bishop Brizgys' trips in America were quite intensive – almost every day in a new parish. The holy man also visited Lithuanian schools, the Franciscan, Jesuit and Marian Lithuanian monks, small groups of the Lithuanian Catholic Federation “Ateitis” (Lith. *Ateitininkai*).<sup>70</sup> During public meetings and sermons, Bishop Brizgys shared his experiences from the first occupation of Lithuania by the Soviets, thanked for the support for DPs in Germany, and urged to continue contributing to charitable activities. Along with his usual pastoral services, Bishop Brizgys met with US bishops. He noted in his memoirs that from the first day of the New Year 1949 to his departure back to Europe, he visited 91 Lithuanian parishes.<sup>71</sup> Reviewing his trip, the Bishop assessed that

there is no shortage of Lithuanian priests in America, and the great many of young Lithuanian priests who were born here, working in non-Lithuanian parishes, are waiting to be able to move to Lithuanian ones. I wrote a letter to Canon V. Zakarauskas in Germany, urging him to advise all priests to learn diligently the English language, because there is no hope that all our priests in exile there will find a place for themselves in Lithuanian parishes.<sup>72</sup>

As can be seen, the visit to Lithuanian parishes in the USA allowed Lithuanian bishops in exile to see more clearly the situation of the trans-Atlantic migration that had begun, to assess the spirituality and nationalism of the Lithuanian Americans, and perhaps even to foresee future pastoral challenges.

234 Lithuanian Catholic priests who found themselves in emigration needed multiple support.<sup>73</sup> Many of the refugees, when leaving Lithuania together with Germans, mostly took only the most essential things with them. In the first post-war years it was still hoped that, with help from the West, the Soviets-occu-

<sup>70</sup> “Vyskupas Brizgys Chicagoje kalbėjo ateitininkų suėjime,” *Draugas*, 293, 1948.

<sup>71</sup> Brizgys, *Gyvenimo keliai*, 159.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 166–167.

<sup>73</sup> *Biuletenis*, July, 1947, 11–13.

pied Lithuania would be repelled and it would be possible to return soon. DPs, who found themselves in a state of uncertainty about the future, lacked different things, especially clothes. Bishop V. Brizgys, when asking for help from Lithuanian American priests, pointed out that

meeting a Lithuanian priest wearing, e.g., black pants, a gray jacket, a brown hat and in other motley colors is a common thing [...] If your bishops do not want to receive our bishops even before seeing them, they would not receive them even more after seeing how many of them look like this.<sup>74</sup>

General aid to all Lithuanian refugees was a matter of concern of the United Lithuanian Relief Fund of America (*Bendrasis Amerikos Lietuvių fondas*, BALF) led by priest Dr. Juozas Končius, an active member of the Priest Union. In a Priest Unity's bulletin from 1949, the Lithuanian American priests are applied to with a request to provide liturgical items and clothing. Financial aid was also organized – as many as 3,000 Mass scholarships were awarded to priests.<sup>75</sup> Young clerics and priests who wanted to continue their studies were in need of financial aid in particular.

During the annual session of the Priest Union in 1951 it was established that the organization's membership was 230, yet only a small part of its members had paid the membership fee. "It was difficult to attract young Lithuanian American priests to join the Priest Union. However, the Lithuanian priests who have recently arrived from exile, of whom there are now 158 in the USA, showed great interest. One-third of them work in Lithuanian parishes. Just a small number of them had managed to join the Priest Union by now. Effort must be made to have all of them to join the Priest Union."<sup>76</sup> Priest Valkavičius noted that, sometimes, disagreement arose between DPs and American-born clergy in dioceses where the latter was numerous. There were cases when

<sup>74</sup> Bishop Vincentas Brizgys to Fr. Pranciškus Juras, April 14, 1946.

<sup>75</sup> *Kunigų Vienybės Biuletenis*, 1949, 19.

<sup>76</sup> Priest Union Session Protocol of April 18, 1951, Supplement of *Lux Christi*, 4.

the new arrivals ridiculed the quality of the Lithuanian language of the second-generation Lithuanians, taught those born in America to write their last names correctly.<sup>77</sup> The arrival of war refugees entailed a recovery in the cultural life of the diaspora as well. Gradually, a new batch of clergy, prepared in the Lithuanian College of St. Casimir in Rome, got involved in the Priest Union, and priests who grew up in Lithuania and studied at European universities stood at the helm of the organization. Scout and *Ateitininkai* organizations had been restored as far back as in Germany, whose main activity centers later moved to the USA. Two huge bastions of Catholic thought settled themselves next to the youth organizations that had long been active there. The Priest Union, understanding the importance of the *Ateitininkai* organization in strengthening Catholicism among the diaspora, urged to maintain relations with it in every way possible.<sup>78</sup>

The arrival of DPs in America marks an ideological and intellectual renewal of the diaspora. Unlike the previous generations of immigrants, the arrivals were burning with hope of consolidating all Lithuanians, spreading Lithuanian culture, and looking for ways to help reinstate Lithuania's independence. In 1951, many outstanding representatives of the Lithuanian Catholic world had already arrived in the USA, including famous priests such as Stasys Yla, Vytautas Pikturna, Valdemaras Cukuras, Viktoras Rimšelis, MIC, who got actively involved in the activities of the Priest Union. The Bulletin under a new title, *Lux Christi* was launched, the first editor of which was priest Stasys Yla, who had gained a lot of experience while editing the information journal for the priests, *Auka*, back in DP camps. As in the previous bulletins, clergy continued to contribute on religious topics, preached sermons, discussed the mission and ideal of the priest, and looked for ways to weaken secularization and losing one's national identity. A lot of attention was devoted to over-

<sup>77</sup> Wolkovich-Valkavičius, *Lithuanian religious life* 1, 41.

<sup>78</sup> Priest Union Session Protocol of April 18, 1951, Supplement of *Lux Christi*, 10.

viewing the situation of Lithuanian Catholics all over the world and Catholics in general, especially to the delivery of priests' messages from the Soviets-occupied Lithuania. Unlike in the previous bulletins, these short chronicle reports was a source which enabled the learning about the fates of Lithuanian clergy in Europe, South America, and the Far East countries, such as India or Japan, Australia.<sup>79</sup> A humor section to lift the spirits of the clergy and to laugh at each other was published in the Bulletin for ten years. Gradually, the Priest Union became a global unit that gathered Lithuanian clergy from all over the world and united them for church and national activities.

## Conclusions

1. The Lithuanian priests of the Roman Catholic Church in America founded the Priest Union in order to ensure mutual assistance and communication in religious matters. The clergymen were not only concerned with religious matters, but devoted considerable attention to the preservation of the native language among the Lithuanian diaspora. On their initiative, schools and congregations of nun sisters, whose mission was to take care of the education of young people, were established. The lack of a bishop appointed for the religious matters of immigrants prodded the priests themselves to seek ways to agree among themselves on the renewal of liturgical books, prayer books, and hymns. Lithuanian priests took an active part in public organizations uniting Catholics; coordinated the organization of publishing; and the consolidation of Catholic organizations into a joint trade union to facilitate the development of pastoral and cultural activities in Lithuanian parishes.
2. The activities of the Priest Union encompassed not only churchyard matters; this organization also devoted consider-

<sup>79</sup> *Lux Christi*, 3 (10), July–September, 1953, 80.

able attention to the Lithuanian education of parishioners and all Lithuanian immigrants. The first and utmost social mission of the Priest Union was to ensure the widest possible use of the Lithuanian language among the diaspora. To this end in view, it was heavily invested in the preparation and aid of teachers. The Lithuanian Catholic Society “Motinėle” under the patronage of priests supported nuns going to Lithuania for Lithuanian studies with scholarships. Lithuanian American priests faced the issues of losing one’s national identity and secularization; therefore, they tried to solve them by urging the clergymen to be more actively involved in publishing work, to take an interest in the social teaching of the Church, and to take care of the spiritual leadership of Catholic organizations.

3. The Lithuanian American priests closely followed the cultural, political and religious life in Lithuania. They shared their current affairs, thoughts and sermons with the Catholics in Lithuania by contributing to a section in the Catholic newspaper, *Tiesos kelias*. They also fostered relations with church hierarchs in Lithuania – in the interwar period alone, three Lithuanian bishops arrived in the USA and visited Lithuanian parishes. After the breakout of World War Two, the Catholics in America did not remain indifferent to their Soviets-occupied home country. Their press constantly criticized Soviet crimes in Lithuania, and financial aid for Lithuanian residents and priests who left Lithuania was organized. The Priest Union also put a lot of effort toward the US authorities to draw their attention to the situation in Lithuania during the war. Memorandums to the US President and members of the Congress were written, close relations with bishops of the Roman Catholic Church and charitable organizations in the USA were maintained.
4. After the end of World War Two, many Lithuanians departed from Lithuania together with the retreating German army. At the same time, more than 200 Lithuanian Catholic priests left Lithuania, to face unusual living and pastoral work conditions. The Priest Union in America made efforts to get more active-



ly involved in the comprehensive support of war refugees, to support the clergy with liturgical items necessary for pastoral care in DP camps, to provide possibilities for refugee priests to emigrate to the USA and work in Lithuanian parishes. While the Priest Unity could not guarantee work for the arrivals, the refugee priests shortly renewed the priests' organization by getting actively involved in its activities. With the new generation of immigrant priests in the USA, the structure of the Priest Union and its publishing work were renewed.

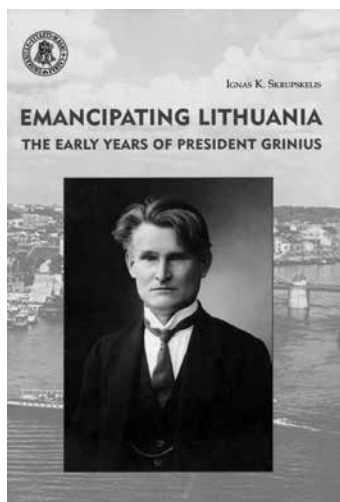
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*Translated by Dalia ŠATIENĖ  
and Kerry SHAWN KEYS*

## BOOK REVIEWS

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Ignas K. Skrupskelis  
*Emancipating Lithuania:  
The Early Years of President Grinius*  
Kaunas: Vytautas Magnus  
University, 2020. 358 pages  
ISBN: 978-609-467-453-2 (Print),  
978-609-467-445-7 (Online)

The title of this work suggests that it is a biography of Kazys Grinius (1866–1950), an activist in the Lithuanian national movement and, after independence, the third President of Lithuania. It is in fact both a biography of Grinius from his birth until 1909 (with some biographical vignettes from later in his life) and a history of the Lithuanian national awakening roughly from the appearance of *Ausra* (The Dawn), the first patriotic Lithuanian newspaper, in 1883 until 1913. These two narrative streams, however, are only loosely connected throughout the book. The result is that the narrative flow of the biography is often interrupted by digressions into various aspects of the awakening that have little or nothing to do with Grinius' life. This is the most serious flaw in the book and is likely to try the patience of even

the most disciplined reader. It is also unclear why Skrupskelis, a Lithuanian-American philosopher, chose to end the biographical and historical narratives when he did. It would have been better if he had written either a biography of Grinius that covered his entire life or a history of the Lithuanian national awakening until the restoration of independence in 1918.

Grinius is not a promising subject for a biography, which Skrupskelis admits, but only indirectly. There are several reasons for this: (1) very few of his personal letters have survived, (2) there are no revealing accounts of Grinius by his friends, (3) in his memoirs, which fill three volumes, Grinius avoids discussing subjects that he considered to be personal and private, and (4) because Grinius published works using around 250 pseudonyms his authorship of a work is sometimes uncertain. The fact that Grinius is not a promising subject for a biography may explain Skrupskelis' frequent digressions into the history of the Lithuanian national awakening. When Skrupskelis does write about Grinius, he frequently cites the pseudonymous works mentioned above, sometimes noting when Grinius' authorship is uncertain. Given the fact that he relies heavily on these pseudonymous works, it would have been helpful if Skrupskelis had explained how he determined that Grinius is the author.

Throughout the book Skrupskelis is critical of the American historian Timothy Snyder, the author of *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus (1569–1999)* (2003) and *Bloodlands* (2010). He correctly points out that Snyder suffers from a serious handicap: he does not know Lithuanian and is largely unfamiliar with the work of Lithuanian historians, even though some of it is available in English. His main criticism, however, is that Snyder has narrowly focused on the role that the spreading of historical myths played in the construction of the Lithuanian nation. Skrupskelis acknowledges that some activists in the Lithuanian national movement tried to construct a Lithuanian nation by talking about past glories and suffering but considers the existence of Lithuanian language newspapers

to be more important. Skrupskelis argues that the articles that Lithuanian activists published in these newspapers created “a sense of greater community [...] by writing about others far away who speak the same language and share the same concerns” (p. 157). The argument that print media played an important role in the creation of modern nations is not new; it was first made by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1983; p. 44). Skrupskelis, however, never mentions Anderson in this book.

The book consists of a brief foreword by Valdas Adamkus, an introduction, thirteen chapters, a postscript, a selected bibliography, and an index. Chapter 1 is a series of vignettes from Grinius’ later life, sometimes covered using reverse chronological order, that are loosely connected by the theme of displacement. The repeated use of reverse chronological order is particularly annoying and serves no other purpose than to confuse the reader.

The formation of national identity is one of the recurring themes of chapters 2–4. The highlight of Chapter 2 is a series of biographical sketches about people who thought that they were Poles “only to awaken to the fact that they were Lithuanians after all” (p. 70). Chapter 3 is about Grinius’ childhood. At the age of eleven he, like other Lithuanians, was on the path to becoming a Pole. Skrupskelis, however, does not tell us whether he thinks that this was a voluntary or involuntary process or to what extent Grinius actually Polonized. Chapter 4 is about the influence that Petras Kriaučiūnas, a teacher at Marijampolė secondary school, and *Auszra* had on Grinius and other future activists in the Lithuanian national movement. Kriaučiūnas taught a Lithuanian language class that Grinius and his friends attended. According to Skrupskelis, Grinius’ decision to attend this class was “most fateful” for his life because “gradually he and his friends began to think of themselves as Lithuanians” (p. 115).

Chapter 5 is about Grinius’ time as a student at Moscow University, where he earned the degree of medical doctor in 1893. Chapters 6 and 7 consist mostly of summaries of articles

that Grinius published in the newspapers *Varpas* (The Bell) and *Ukinikas* (The Farmer). Chapter 8 is about Grinius' life from 1894 in Marijampolė and elsewhere and includes information about his wife and children.

Chapter 9 is about why Grinius did not become a Marxist. Grinius himself provides the answer to this question in his memoirs. Skrupskelis, citing these memoirs, explains that when Grinius was a student at Moscow University he belonged to a Lithuanian-Polish group for the study of socialism, but after reading *The Coming Slavery* by the English philosopher Herbert Spencer he concluded that under socialism all would become slaves of the central government, bound by socialist dogmas and centralization. Grinius writes that Spencer saved him from a "complete commitment to the teachings of Marx-Engels" (p. 226). This would seem to be the end of the discussion of this question. In a later chapter, however, Skrupskelis makes the puzzling claim that Grinius "in his memoirs [...] does not explain why he did not follow the same path as Kapsukas and others" (p. 291). Vincas Mickevičius-Kapsukas was an activist in the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party who later joined the Bolsheviks. Skrupskelis appears to have forgotten what he wrote in the earlier chapter.

Chapter 10 is mostly about Grinius' solution to what he considered to be the unfair distribution of land in the Lithuanian provinces of the Russian empire. In chapters 10–13, digressions into the Lithuanian national awakening become more frequent, pushing Grinius farther and farther into the background. Chapter 13, for example, is about elections to the Russian Duma in the Lithuanian provinces, the Lithuanian deputies who served in the Duma, and sessions of the Duma relevant to Lithuanians.

Unlike several other scholars who have published works in English about Lithuanian history Skrupskelis' proficiency in English is very good—almost that of a native speaker. Language proficiency is therefore not a barrier to understanding the text. The text, however, contains careless mistakes (e.g., spelling,

word choices, and missing words) that reveal that the manuscript was not even proofread prior to publication.

This is a deeply flawed book. One gets the impression that Skrupskelis wrote it quickly because he is conscious of his own mortality. For scholars of an advanced age like Skrupskelis “publish or perish” is a very real dilemma.

Charles PERRIN

## ABSTRACTS

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JUOZAS SKIRIUS

### **The Issue of Lithuania's International Recognition by the USA in 1922**

The declaration of the US Diplomatic Service of July 28, 1922, recorded in a covert form the temporary statehood of Lithuania, at the same time of Latvia and Estonia, i.e., as long as Bolshevik Russia exists, and the conditionality of these states, recognizing only their governments, but not the states themselves. In principle, this was in line with the Western countries-promoted vision of the national governments of autonomous Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia as part of democratic Russia. Such a vision was supported not only by the governments of the USA, France and Great Britain, but also by the leaders of the White Russians. The wording “full recognition” used in the declaration of recognition meant recognition *de jure* and *de facto*. The USA, in envisioning its relations with the future democratic Russia, did not name these concepts directly in its document of recognition.

Before the official, though peculiar, diplomatic act, the USA maintained informal relations with the Baltic States. Their basis was the indirect recognition *de facto* based on the May 26, 1919, note to Admiral Alexander Kolchak. The USA, unlike major European countries, did not announce it officially until 1922.

VYGANTAS VAREIKIS

### **The Winner Tale: Some Remarks on the Lithuanian March into Klaipėda Region**

The Seimas (parliament) of the Lithuanian Republic declared 2023 the Year of the Klaipėda Region, marking the centenary of

the seizure of Klaipėda Region in January 1923. As a result of the success of this march, the Conference of Ambassadors on February 16, 1923, granted Lithuania sovereign rights to Klaipėda Region. The article reveals the idea of the military seizure of the Klaipėda region, provides information about the organization of the military march, and reflects on its significance in the creation of the Lithuanian nation.

ARIDA RIAUBIENĖ

**“Today Is a Joyful and Great Day...”**

Excerpts from the Diary of Matas Šalčius,  
Related to the Klaipėda Revolt

Matas Šalčius (1890–1940), Lithuanian journalist, public figure and traveler, wrote his diary in 1923, while he was undergoing treatment in one of the clinics of Königsberg. In 1923, Šalčius was admitted to the clinic because he was unable to cope with the tension of preparing for the Klaipėda Revolt. The diary records Šalčius’s reflections and experiences; he also writes about the daily events. The first entry in the diary, made on January 15, 1923, coincides with the arrival of the Lithuanian army into the Klaipėda region, which at that time was administered by the French. The author of the diary writes about this significant military and political event in the history of Lithuania in an elated manner, hoping that when Lithuania regained Klaipėda, it would also recover the Polish-occupied Vilnius.

IGNAS STANEVIČIUS

**Features of the Activities of the Lithuanian American  
Roman Catholic Priest Union in 1909–1951**

With the start of the rapid process of industrialization in the nineteenth century, immigrants began to flood major Western countries in search of both material welfare and a space that did



not limit the freedom of speech. Many migrants were lured by the possibility of easy money though having little idea of the challenges that awaited them in new, unfamiliar countries. The most popular destination was the United States of America. Most of the Lithuanian arrivals were Catholics; therefore, they first tried to gather on a religious basis, coming together with Poles into parishes and associations. Gradually, the relations between these two culturally close, but linguistically different diasporas became tense. The Polish diaspora had already taken deeper roots in North America than the Lithuanians who arrived in the late nineteenth century. This was also evident in the church hierarchy. The Poles had bishops of Polish origin among them, who defended the interests of their compatriots. Whereas the Lithuanians did not have a Lithuanian pastor who would be responsible for the pastoral care of Lithuanians all over the world up until the second half of the twentieth century. The threat of losing national identity encouraged Lithuanian clergy without a pastoral mission to engage in the work of social consolidation and education.

#### ERRATUM

The article about Vidas Morkūnas in the winter issue misstated his biographic details. He was born in 1962, and has raised two daughters and one son.

The Editors

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*The City.* Painting by Tomas Kiauka

### MOVING?

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FRONT COVER: A Stream in Kretinga

Photo by Almantas Samalavičius