

A PLEA

FOR THE

LITHUANIANS

LITHUANIA, like heroic Belgium, was completely devastated; her cities and villages have been reduced to ruins; and her population (over three millions) has been martyred.

The Male inhabitants were forced to take arms, while Women and Children, deprived of shelter, are starving and need urgent relief, not only in the name of Humanity, but also in that of Love for our neighbor.

CONTENTS

Plea for the Lithuanians	5
An appeal from the Lithuanians	7
Some interesting facts about Lithuania	9
Fate of the refugees	18
Some letters from war sufferers of Lithuania	20
An appeal to the Lithuanians in America	23
Are we aware of the serious effects of the war?	26

It is the object of the Editor in editing
this pamphlet, to conduct it along strictly
neutral lines.

J. J. K.
Editor.

No. 1

FEBRUARY, 1916

Price 10c

A PLEA FOR THE LITHUANIANS

A MONTHLY REVIEW
PUBLISHED BY
THE LITHUANIAN INFORMATION BUREAU

EDITORIAL OFFICE
324 WHARTON STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA., U. S. A.

EDITOR
REV. J. J. KAULAKIS

ASS'T EDITOR
M. M. SLIKAS, Student of Law, U. of P.

POLAND, LITHUANIA, LETTISH COUNTRY

TO the east of the Baltic, on both sides of the Niemen, there has dwelt for centuries past, between the Germans and the Slavs, a race which is neither Germanic nor Slavonic. This race is the Lithuanian. It had its days of glory during the period, when, by its incessant fighting, it stopped the progress of the Teutons towards the East.

Although not of Slavonic origin, the Lithuanians have, nevertheless, played an important part in the history of the Slav peoples, both Russian and Polish. They delivered the greater part of the former from the yoke of the Mongols, and protected them from that race for some centuries; while they allied themselves with the Poles by giving that people their dynasty, the Jagellons, and raised Poland to the rank of a Great Power.

Poland, in her subsequent fall, brought down Lithuania with her, and, consequently, the two countries fell an easy prey to their neighbors. The greater part of Lithuania was absorbed by Russia; the other and smaller portion of the country, extending from the mouth of the Niemen to Pregel, in Eastern Prussia, had already been occupied for some centuries by the Teutons. In this way the Lithuanian nation found itself cut in twain.

In spite of centuries of struggle, foreign influence and long-drawn-out suffering, however, the Lithuanians still preserve intact their remarkable language, their national customs, their love for their native soil, and the recollection of their great historic past.

The frontiers of Lithuania have long since disap-

peared, and the country now consists of nothing more than a few provinces belonging to two different empires. Nevertheless, Lithuania today proclaims her individual vitality and demands that the world shall recognize that which is an integral portion of her character, which makes her a distinct nation, and which nothing can efface.

In order to ensure the free development of all her powers and to enable her to fulfill her duty towards humanity, Lithuania, like all other nations, must be the mistress of her own destiny. The time has now come when this great humanitarian principle, which has so long been proclaimed by the peoples of France and England, must be recognized as well in its application to Lithuania.

It is our hope, that when the present gigantic war is over, the nations of Europe will no longer number among themselves either oppressors or oppressed, and that every nationality will obtain the right to govern itself. It is our ardent desire that Lithuania shall cease to be divided into two parts between Russia and Germany; that her sons shall no longer be exposed to the danger of being called upon to massacre each other in opposing armies, and that after having achieved her unification, the country will once more obtain complete autonomy.

Lithuania has hitherto often been confused or identified with Poland. This is a mistake. As a matter of fact, in the sixteenth century (1569) Lithuania contracted a political alliance with Poland, but, unfortunately, it did not bring any good. This alliance was brought to an end in the eighteenth century by the division of the allied States between the neighboring Powers.

There are at present about 400,000 Lithuanians in the Russian army, while the German forces include about 50,000 Lithuanians from Eastern Prussia, who have been enrolled by force.

An Appeal from the Lithuanians

It is known that the Germans have invaded Lithuania from the west (the Suwalki and the Kovna districts), whose population amounts to more than three millions. The invaders have carried away all the provisions, and having plundered the cities and villages, have set fire to them.

The inhabitants, scattered about, fled hundreds of miles from their native country places, where they are at present without shelter or the means of procuring their existence.

The country which has suffered most from the German invasion, in addition to heroic Belgium, whose cities and villages have been reduced to ruins, and whose population has been martyred, is Lithuania. This country, three times as large as Belgium, is situated between Germany and Russia. Since last September Lithuania has become the seat of war.

It has suffered two successive invasions by the German troops, and several districts of this once-flourishing country are literally desert wastes; the cities and villages are nothing more than ruins. The able-bodied male inhabitants were taken to Germany and forcibly enrolled in the enemy's ranks; whilst the women and children, deprived of shelter, were scattered in the interior of the country. The number of victims amounts to more than

a million, and the havoc caused by the barbarous and greedy invaders amounts to several billions of dollars. The whole country is completely devastated.

The generous help given to Belgium honors Humanity; but the Lithuanians in their turn need urgent relief, not only in the name of Humanity, but also in that of love for our neighbor. But they can claim other titles which speak in their favor before the whole world; for it was the Lithuanian people who, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, saved Europe from the Mongolian invasion, which was a menace to civilization then in its cradle. It was under the command of its Grand Duke Vytautas that the brave Lithuanian army crushed the German Knights at Grunwald (1410), the same Teutons who are at present strewing a path of fire and blood all over Europe.

In the present struggle, supported by the Allies, in order that right shall triumph over brute force, has not Lithuania put forth her greatest effort? . . . After having given 400,000 of her sons to the Russian army, she sustained the first shock of these modern barbarians, who ruined her prosperity.

The Lithuanian nation is now passing through the most critical hour of her history! While the flower of her youth has fallen on the battlefield, while her population is being massacred, led into captivity, scattered through a country ravaged by war, fire and plunderers, a country where the inclemencies of the season are prolonged, and while stoically supporting her suffering, she is worthy of the raising of our voices in her favor and making this appeal to generous hearts, to give assistance to her unhappy and poverty-stricken population.

Some Interesting Facts About Lithuania

Lithuania, prostrate under the feet of trampling armies, waits for the great war to end—and prays that the Allies may be victorious. For, this result, the people of Lithuania believe, will bring about a readjustment of European boundaries along racial lines, which in turn would assure the reestablishment of Lithuania as a distinct political and geographical entity.

Today battles of world import are being fought on the soil that was once the Lithuanians' heritage. Lithuanian towns are mentioned day after day in the despatches from the eastern war front—yet, here in America little is known about this country whence some 600,000 of our fellow citizens have their origin.

Lithuania's fate has been even stranger than that of Poland. Her identity was merged with Poland's centuries ago, and when the latter ill-fated country was parcelled out among the nations, Lithuania ceased to exist, except as a sacred and glorious memory cherished in the hearts of her people. The national spirit has never merged, however, with Poland or with Russia, and it is flaming out today, kindled afresh by the hopes of political independence after the war.

Lithuania, at present, like Poland, is a part of the Russian empire, but in the past it formed an independent political state, which exercised a dominant role in the politics of Eastern Europe. It was a state extending over a wide stretch along the Neiman, Dwina and Dnieper Rivers, from the Baltic Sea towards the Black Sea, thus including all of present Western Russia from Libau to Odessa.

In her prime, Lithuania occupied a territory exceeding in size that of France or Germany. But Lithuania of the present day is shrunk in size considerably. It approximately equals England proper.

Topographically the country is level, broken in its middle by a faintly defined chain of low hills. The region abounds in rivers, lakes, marshes, and, to a considerable extent, is covered with forests. The landscape, while in places of exceptional beauty and variety, as a rule, is characterized by dignity, repose, and captivating melancholy.

Such is the fatherland of the Lithuanians, a race of sturdy people that have the distinction of being classed among the aborigines of Central Europe. Historical and ethnological researches disclose the fact that the Lithuanians once occupied the greatest part of Central Europe, having for their neighbors peoples of Greek and Latin origin to the south, and Celts to the west.

Later, under pressure of the Teutons and Slavs, coming from the southeast, the Lithuanian tribes were compelled to retire into the more remote northern parts, and there, approximately in the territory of Lithuania of

the present day, the Lithuanians for a long time led a peaceful life as hunters, fishermen, and crude agriculturists.

Politically, however, the Lithuanians were subdivided into numerous independent clans and villages. This gave the neighboring Slavs the opportunity for frequent invasions.

By the eleventh century, in the face of imminent danger from the Slavs, the Lithuanians began to organize. A number of principalities, headed by strong leaders, were formed, and the Lithuanians gradually began to turn from a defensive into an aggressive attitude, in turn menacing their Slavish neighbors. The Slavs were already Christians, while the Lithuanians still remained heathens.

Western Europe came to the aid of the Christian Slavs in their troubles with Lithuania, and the two great Teutonic military orders, the Knights of the Cross, and the Knights of the Sword, were established on Lithuania's borders, early in the thirteenth century, for the purpose of subjugating and christianizing the heathen country.

In spite of the Teutonic Knights, Lithuania gradually became a power in Western Europe and extended her influences as far east as Smolensk and as far south as the Black Sea. During the Tartar invasion of Europe in 1224, Lithuania was Europe's bulwark and successfully beat back the Moslem horde.

Lithuania accepted Christianity in 1386, yet the Teutonic Knights—whose ostensible mission was the

conversion of the country—organized a new crusade against Lithuania. The pretext was that Lithuania's conversion was neither thorough nor sincere. The Poles and Lithuanians combined their strength against the Knights of the Cross, and, under the Lithuanian King Vitold, they annihilated the Knights of the Cross and broke their power forever in the great battle of Grunwald in 1410. The epic struggle of the Poles and Lithuanians against the German knightly organization has been immortalized in Sienkiewicz's splendid novel, "The Knights of the Cross." This successful war brought Lithuania and Poland closer together, notwithstanding Lithuania retained her identity until 1565, when she entered into a formal union with Poland. It must be remembered, however, that Lithuania's position was that of joint sovereignty, and not of dependence.

The influence of the vigorous Polish spirit and the advanced Polish civilization upon its less developed neighbor and ally was pronounced from the very beginning.

The Lithuanian nationality, however, was not entirely passive to the aggression of Polish spirit. From time to time Lithuanian patriots, belonging even to the most exalted noble families, rebelled against the suffocating influence of "Polonization." Writings in the Lithuanian language, religious treatises, poetical works, urged Lithuanians to remain true to their nationality. To that period belongs a great epic poem, "The Four Seasons," written in hexameter by Donelaitis.

The beginning of the nineteenth century was marked

by a vigorous Lithuanian revival. The independent Polish-Lithuanian State ceased to exist. Lithuania fell under the sway of Russia. Lithuanian nobility, although Polonized to a very great extent, ceased to be directly affected by the influence from Warsaw, and the native characteristics began to assert themselves. By 1860, the consciousness of the Lithuanian people was markedly aroused—and then a great calamity befell the Lithuanian revival. The Russian Government, availing itself of the opportunity afforded by the Polish insurrection of 1861, adopted oppressive measures against nationalities living within the territory of the former Polish-Lithuanian State. Lithuanians were prohibited to have books and publications printed in their own language.

The staunchest Lithuanian supporters, seeing no hope for their cause, began to turn toward Polish culture with greater energy than before. This attitude was emphasized by religious ties. The Lithuanians, being Roman Catholics, leaned toward the Poles, their co-religionists, in order to escape from encroachment of the Orthodox Russians.

The year 1862 liberated the Lithuanian peasantry from the yoke of serfdom. The desires for education, ever present in the most humble Lithuanian, suddenly received a stimulus. Many peasants began to send their sons to schools. Some of them reached universities. By 1880, numbers of young Lithuanians were already practicing various professions. These young university graduates, of most democratic inclinations and profound-

est love for the Lithuanian cause, took into their hands the uplifting of the Lithuanian spirit from degradation.

Time and again attempts were made to regain the press. The Russian Government, however, was firm, and the attempts were unsuccessful. Whereupon a representative circle of young Lithuanians undertook a bold, aggressive move. It was decided to establish a *Apzvalga* publication abroad and smuggle it into Lithuania. A periodical, "*Apzvalga*," (The Dawn), was founded in Prussian Lithuania in 1883. This marks a real dawn in the Lithuanian regeneration.

The "*Apzvalga*," published abroad and smuggled into Lithuania, at once received the stamp of illegality from the Russian Government. Serving the double purpose, as the organ of "*Young Lithuania*," and as the disseminator of useful knowledge to the masses, it was met with the greatest enthusiasm.

Russian reverses in the Russo-Japanese war (1904) were very fortunate for the people living in the Russian empire. Popular sentiment, always opposed to the arbitrariness of bureaucracy, encouraged by the current events, developed into an open revolution. Dissatisfied elements began to gain from bureaucracy concession after concession. The Lithuanian people, now a conscious nationality, following the trend of the times, sought to enforce their demands. Pressed on all sides, the Government was compelled to recede. The press was regained and immediately the first Lithuanian daily newspaper was established, being rapidly followed by other publications.

The revolution gaining in strength, the Lithuanians decided to take their fate into their own hands. A convention of representatives from all parts of Lithuania was called together in the ancient capital of the country, Vilna, and 2000 delegates took part in the convention, which in an unanimous resolution, preferred to the Russian Government, among others, the following demands:

1. Autonomy of Lithuania with a Diet in her capital, Vilna.
2. Compulsory education in the Lithuanian language.
3. Establishment of the Lithuanian University in Vilna.
4. Freedom of speech and the press, etc.

Events in Russia quickly followed each other. The government, after early reverses, gradually began to regain its foothold. Owing to this, the Lithuanian demands were granted only in small and very unimportant morsels. The psychological effect was, however, enormous. The Lithuanians, hitherto an inert mass of people, suddenly emerged as a nationality of clear ideals and conscious strength.

Reaction, following the Russian revolution, suppressed the more liberal tendencies in the Lithuanian revival. The people were compelled to curb their ambitions to a degree of patient plodding along educational and economical lines. Yet the following are the Lithuanian gains of the last ten years, or up to the outbreak of the present war:

1. There are over sixty daily, weekly and monthly publications issued in the Lithuanian language.

2. Hundreds of books are printed each year.

3. A scientific society and an art society, with a membership reaching into the hundreds, show lively activities in their respective fields.

4. Financial, commercial and industrial establishments are increasing in number and growing in size all over the country.

5. Schools, primary and secondary, are being founded everywhere, with the aim of establishing compulsory instruction in the Lithuanian language. How anxious Lithuanians are to obtain higher education may be judged from the fact that Lithuanian students are to be found practically in every university of Russia, Central Europe and the United States.

The unwritten popular literature is very rich, and contains true treasures of poetry. Popular poetry is especially rich in idyllic and lyric songs, imbued with tenderest love and melancholy, a most poetical feeling of nature. They are remarkable for their absolute chastity; the irony which sometimes appears in them is usually refined and gentle. The metrical elegies are very melancholy and of rare beauty. The popular architecture and ornamentation and the popular musical motifs are marked with unusual simplicity and grace. The Lithuanian artists and musicians aim to utilize those elements as the basic material for their respective arts.

Lithuanian ideals and aspirations aim at the unhampered development of their nationality. This finds its

best expression in the already cited resolution, adopted by the Vilna convention in 1905, where the autonomous life of Lithuanian nationality was demanded.

Unfortunately, the development of Lithuanian nationality has its own difficulties. The present war, however, is likely to bring many changes. The change that the Lithuanian nationality desires most is that all the divisions of Lithuanian territory would become united, and, as an autonomous country, would afford the Lithuanian nationality the opportunity of free development along the lines of progress and civilization.

J. J. K.

Fate of the Refugees

The Russian newspaper, "Russkija Viedomosti," publishes an account by a certain Mr. N. Makarov, of Veronezh (Russia), of the horrible fate of refugees.

"Refugees are moving like the waves of the ocean," says Makarov. "Among them are to be found many who have not eaten for four or five days. Knowing not whither they are traveling, nor for what purpose, in their company there is a common constant horror.

"Loaded and unloaded like bags in wagons are these wretched creatures, together with their belongings, from which they appear to be inseparable.

"Almost from every wagon at each railroad station along the way is carried a corpse of a victim of this suffering. Everywhere around us, in Russia, there appears to be an extreme lack of wisdom, organized forces, a comprehension of the true nature of affairs, and, indeed, above all, the lack of popular good will.

"The temporary places of refuge in the town are in a pitiable condition. It is of no infrequent occurrence that women pressed by suffering have turned to prostitution.

"Among the refugees there are at least 40% to 50% of the families where the fathers have been separated

from their children, husbands from their wives, brothers from their sisters, etc., so that now, all over Russia, the various members are searching, by means of the newspapers, for those dear to them.

"Give us our families—they call, and they search. But all is in vain." Thus write the Russians, concerning the refugees from places seized by the Germans. Among those refugees there is undoubtedly a large percentage of Lithuanians. These have nothing, not even a place to rest their tired head. Approximately, there are at least tens of thousands in such a condition. The greater part of the members of families have died as the result of suffering or disease. Indeed, the fate of the refugees is horrible and unknown.

Therefore, even if it is only to increase the last rays of hope for our brothers and sisters, let us Lithuanians residing in America unite in the noble work of aiding those unfortunate refugees who are being forced to the grave by their suffering.

Help to them is necessary. They are awaiting this help from us just as they await the dropping dew from the heavens. They are beseeching pity. Let us unite. Let us help the dying.

M. M. S.

Some Letters from War Sufferers of Lithuania

"Traveling in the war zone," writes S. Sarka, "I observed how our poor people, especially refugees, suffer all kinds of inconveniences. As the dwellings of all the farm hands are destroyed, the people are compelled to live in the woods, and satisfy their hunger with whatever they might chance to find in the wilderness. Though in the summer and the fall they manage always to find something to eat, what will they do in winter when the ground is covered with snow?

"They will simply become savage from hunger under the suffering of the cold Russian winter. What horrible suffering—several times I met refugees begging for aid from travelers. Once I met along the road several families with the children warming themselves at a little fire, drying the tears of suffering that were streaming down their little faces. Nearest to the fire were the children and the babies, who were crying from hunger and cold; farther away were the old men and women. As I came nearer a little girl approached me and begged bitterly for bread, but I answered that I have none; she then asked

for eggs, but I answered that I have not even that; then she pointed to my bundle, and asked, 'what is that?' I answered that that is my wash, whereupon she began to weep bitterly. Not being able to endure the sight of such sufferings any longer, I gave the innocent child some money.

"Others I found warming themselves in the wilderness. Coming nearer, I asked them how they could maintain themselves in hunger for such a long time. 'Indeed,' they said, 'we go to the fields when night comes on and there we dig up potatoes, gather up barley and oats, and bring them to our places of refuge—there we sustain ourselves and our animals. . . .' 'But,' I asked, 'what will you do later, when the fields will become barren?' Their response was, 'What else, we will live until we die, or it may happen that we shall have the opportunity to return to the fatherland.'

"Pity seized me as I looked upon these unfortunates. Not being able to help them otherwise, I recalled that I had a Lithuanian newspaper with me. I took it from my pocket and said, 'You would possibly wish to read the paper.' With ineffable joy they took the paper, for it had already been two months since they had heard of their people and of the occurrences on the battlefields. Likewise they had not been to a church since spring, or heard the words of the Gospel. These people, separated from their church and their neighbors, wandering over the fields and through the forests like some nomadic tribe, are becoming converted to the likeness of savage creatures—becoming regardless, disregarding laws, setting

aside their self-respect, becoming lazy, and all their nobler qualities becoming dulled.

“What unsophisticated girls there were seem to have lost all sense of morality, so that, instead of spending their Sundays in the worship of the Lord, they spend their time with the soldiers, not only by day, but also at night. What good would follow from them even if they should return to the fatherland?”

Not long ago the “Garse” of Riga printed an article to the effect that there is a necessity to exercise great precautions that loathsome and contagious disease might not be transplanted upon Lithuanian soil by those compelled by fate to wander in remote sections; yet, it appears to me, to be no less necessary, that those at home, as well as those forced to abandon their native soil, should be cautious that loathsome and contagious disease might not corrupt our members of the fair sex.

For this purpose it should be to the interest of us all to disseminate this knowledge, and to help establish places of refuge for these poor unfortunates, and to assist them both physically and spiritually by keeping them in touch with the word and teaching of the Lord.

M. M. S.

An Appeal to the Lithuanians in America

(As published in the "Draugus," January 13, 1916)

The committee for the aid of Lithuanian war sufferers in Europe, which committee has its headquarters in Albertinum, Frybourg, Switzerland, has published the following in the "Draugus."

"Christmas is approaching—that joyous holy day that brings rejoicings to the sad, encourages the suffering, and strengthens the weak. Accordingly we wish you a very happy New Year for 1916, and extend to you all our best wishes for success in your respective work. Likewise, we most ardently extend the greetings and best wishes of the Lithuanian prisoners, who seek to express their feeling through our medium.

"Bells will ring the joyful tidings of the 'Glorias,' commemorating Him, Who had come upon this earth bringing joy. And in these times when that joy alone is so necessary. Encouragement and peace of mind are necessary for those who are suffering during the days and nights from the bitter cold, and are thus sacrificing their health and lives. Encouragement and peace of mind are necessary for those, also, who are deprived of shelter and of their fatherland, and also for those poor little orphans

who are forced to wander from place to place. That same encouragement and peace of mind are necessary for those whose hearts are breaking from the grief caused by the loss of their beloved ones. For now Europe is the battlefield from whose shameful atrocities all nations shrink.

"It causes grief in the human heart to look upon the suffering of these poor and almost hopeless prisoners. Much more so when prisoners of other nations, as for some time past, will receive during the Christmas season contributions and gifts with various forms of greetings, while our people will look on with sadness when they will receive nothing in token of this holy season; involuntarily, but most naturally, there will spring from their breast the sadness of their fate. They will ask themselves why they are so ignored, why they are not remembered by the more fortunate, and why they are so unfortunate as to deserve less consideration than those of other nations.

"But there is no response. Pressed by the bitter cold and their grief the Lithuanians will be compelled to retreat to an abandoned corner and there bewail with sorrowful tears their own suffering.

"Thus stands that sorrowful fact; but, nevertheless it is a plain fact. To all those who had turned to us for aid we were able to give words of encouragement, but no substantial help, for heretofore we have received only \$23.

"We, indeed, have hope that in the near future your sympathetic hand will reach out to the suffering prisoners! We regret that at such a time and under such cir-

A PLEA FOR THE LITHUANIANS

25

cumstances we must call your attention to this fact. May God make the next year a happier one! Let us continue to have hope that these horrible atrocities of war shall cease and that the sun shall soon send forth its shining rays and bring courage, peace and happiness."

"Frybourg, 11-XII-15."

Are We Aware of the Serious Effects of the War?

Many unhappy effects have followed since the great European War began. Americans who seem to be able to look at this conflict with calm deliberation are able to observe what great world changes have been and will be wrought by this conflict. In consideration of the dire circumstances of the war sufferers they more than once extended their sympathetic hand across the sea to their suffering brethren, and have given them substantial aid by financial contributions.

The outbreak of the war had even caused grief to Pope Pius X, and it is thought that this was one of the contributing causes of his death. This event seems to characterize this period in which Christianity has been the witness of atrocious warfare and strife. It seems to me that the death of the Pope at that time had even a greater effect on the Christian world than the outbreak of the war, and, in fact, the American press issued sentiments of cordial grief on this occasion.

Despite the world-wide feeling to stop the war—the war took its own course. One after another the effects of war began to manifest themselves. Thousands of people were killed in Belgian towns; dwellings and cities were mercilessly destroyed; and Belgium, with its innocent inhabitants, was turned into a country of slavery.

A PLEA FOR THE LITHUANIANS

27

At this critical moment the Americans were the first to realize their position and rush relief ships to the aid of their more unfortunate Belgian brothers.

Although the first atrocity of modern warfare by civilized nations, this was not destined to be the last, for other and more serious effects were destined to take place, consequently we were informed of the devastation of Poland and Servia, two innocent nations, the victims that were enwrapped in the whirlpool of strife and thrust into the belligerents' abyss there to struggle at the mercy of their malefactors.

The American public is well aware of this fact, for they have lent aid to the suffering Poles on more than one occasion. This is or seems to be due to the fact that such prominent men as Paderewski and Sinkiewicz had espoused the cause of their native country and appealed to the world for aid by going about this country collecting money and organizing relief funds for the benefit of the suffering Poles.

But it seems that we see, know and hear only so much as appears in newspapers or magazines. It is true that the press keeps us in touch with some of the tragic events that are taking place in the war zone, but it just as certainly does not inform us of what is taking place beyond these scenes, nor what monstrosities are concealed there.

Strange enough to say that the place whose history and affairs are concealed from the world at large is the country of Lithuania. Oppression by her neighbors has made this country a closed book in the eyes of the world. History contains but meagre accounts of this country, which at one time was a primary factor in the subse-

quent development of Europe. (A valuable article treating of the country itself will be found elsewhere in this issue under the head of "Some Interesting Facts About Lithuania.") Newspapers in describing the region where Lithuania is located have ascribed various names to it, some calling it Poland (which it is not), others Russia, others Courland, and still others calling it Germany, and sometimes it is referred to as the Baltic Sea region, "Baltic" being a derivative of the Lithuanian word "baltas," white. So limited is the knowledge of the existence of this country on whose soil Germany and Russia have laid out their battlegrounds and fought their bloody struggles, while the world was kept in ignorance of the true facts. But even less seems to be known of the inhabitants of this country, for even historians have been kept in ignorance of its history.

In order to learn more about Lithuania and its unfortunate peoples, let us remove scenes and places, and view the Lithuanian nation and its suffering, and then let the world be the unprejudiced judge of who are the real sufferers in the European War, and who are in agony and appealing to deaf ears.

The country of Lithuania is situated in the northern part of Europe; it is bounded on the north by the Baltic Sea, on the west and south by Germany and Poland, and on the east by Russia. It embraces the following provinces: Suvalki, Kovno, Vilna, Grodno, Kursk, and East Prussia, together with the city of Koenigsburg. At present, however, East Prussia is under German rule, as well as Kovno, Vilna, Grodno, and Kursk.

In the early part of the war, when the Russian army invaded East Prussia and devastated the country, leaving behind them nothing but barren fields, they took the Prussian-Lithuanians into captivity and sent them to Russia. On the other hand, in revenge for the act of Russia, the Germans invaded the remaining Lithuanian provinces in Russia and destroyed the entire country surrounding.

This great conflict continued for some time, and was referred to in the American newspapers as the fighting going on in Poland, though it was actually carried on on Lithuanian soil. Cities and villages were taken and retaken by the enemy; hills were seized and the towns were invaded, each attack in turn bringing destruction to the Lithuanians. Finally, as the Russians were forced to retire farther into Russia, being unable to check the advance of the Germans, the Russian government ordered all the inhabitants to burn all their immovable property and flee farther into Russia for safety.

Thus deprived of their dwellings, the poor war sufferers were compelled to live in trenches dug in the earth to escape the onslaught of the belligerents. What few decided to remain in their houses were, nevertheless, forced to abandon them on account of the flying bullets that endangered their lives. As the Germans advanced farther on Lithuanian soil, what the people left behind undestroyed, they destroyed or carried away, if of use to them. And it is even stated that they would take the last morsel of bread from the children and the old men.

A complaint of the German treatment was sent to the Pope, setting forth these outrages committed on the

people, and especially those committed on the female sex.

At present the whole of Lithuania is occupied by the Germans. The most important cities under their control are the great, fortified city of Kovno, and Vilna, the capital of Lithuania. In the year of 1897 the population of these two provinces was as follows:

	Males.	Females.	Total.	Area in sq. mi.
Vilna	927,341	915,005	1,842,346	39,834.857
Kovno	836,693	870,865	1,707,558	38,103.637

Reliable statistics of the other provinces cannot be obtained, but the population is calculated to be approximately 7,000,000.

Most of the men of the country are on the fighting line, some in the German army, others in the Russian. But where are the rest of the people?

In the Lithuanian newspaper, "Lietuviu Balsas," published in Petrograd, we read that thousands of Lithuanian refugees are scattered throughout Russia. Most of them are children and females, ignorant of the Russian and Polish languages; they are in a deplorable condition and suffer considerably. Having no homes, they are forced to sleep in barns and temporarily constructed barracks that are overcrowded. For their meals they are compelled to go to the bread line, where their food is distributed to them, which, however, is very little. Many times those last in the line go away without being allotted anything. This is the side of the story as it is told in Russia. But what is going on in that part of Lithuania that is now under German control? Is it possible that these people could live any length of time in the trenches

A PLEA FOR THE LITHUANIANS

31

which they have dug out as a place of abode? We don't know, for we hear very little about them.

THE LITHUANIANS TRY TO HELP THEMSELVES

At the beginning of the war, when the fighting was going on in East Prussia and the province of Suvalki, the Lithuanians organized a committee for the aid of the war sufferers. For a year the headquarters of this committee was at Vilna, the capital. The duty of the committee was to raise funds for the relief of the Lithuanian war sufferers.

As the Germans advanced farther into Lithuania they took Kovno, and finally Vilna; the war sufferers had by this time increased enormously in number; but the relief committee were now unable to aid their brethren, for the approaching Germans had forced them to withdraw not only from Vilna, but also from Lithuania. However, the committee was divided into two parts, one, under the direction of Dr. J. Basanavicius, Rev. A. Dambrauckas, and others, remaining at Vilna to take care of the Lithuanian war sufferers there; the other, under the direction of Rev. Olsevskas, M. Ycas, and others, to take care of those Lithuanian war sufferers in Russia.

The task of this committee for the relief of the war sufferers is, indeed, great, but its fund is too little to render substantial aid. These wretched creatures are in need of food, clothes and shelter very badly. Their appeal for aid to their 600,000 Lithuanian brethren in America resulted in the calling of a convention at Chicago, Illinois, in 1914, to organize a relief fund committee.

The Chicago convention organized a central relief

fund committee, of which the president is Dr. K. Rutkauskas, 2302 South Leavitt Street, Chicago; secretary, Attorney A. A. Slakis, 3255 South Halsted Street, Chicago, and treasurer, B. Vaisnora, 1514 Carson Street (S. S.), Pittsburgh, Pa. At present, almost every Lithuanian parish in the United States is an organized branch of this relief committee. Up to the present time the relief fund committee has received contributions to the amount of \$30,000, which they have sent to Europe for the aid of the war sufferers; but this is comparatively little for the immense number of those in need of help and on the verge of starvation. Besides this, they are in need of clothes, and to receive contributions of clothes Rev. N. Petkus, 259 North Fifth Street, Brooklyn, N. Y., has been selected, and he is in touch with the Red Cross Society, with whom he is co-operating in shipping these clothes to the Lithuanian war sufferers.

As Lithuania has been a closed book under the oppression of the Germans and that of Russia for a long time, now that this book has been opened to the mind of the public, the long-oppressed Lithuanians appeal to humanity, "please help us; we are starving and perishing."

I. F—"MOKSLEIVIS."

Contributions for the relief of the Lithuanian war sufferers will be received at the following relief centres :

Rev. J. J. Kaulakis, 324 Wharton Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

Rev. Joseph Sestokas, 568-570 Broome Street, New York City, N. Y.

Dr. A. K. Rutkauskas, 2302 South Leavitt Street, Chicago, Ill.

Rev. Thomas Zilinskis, 50 West Sixth Street, South Boston, Mass.

Mr. B. Vaisnora, 1514 Carson Street, S. S., Pittsburgh, Penna.

This relief work has been highly commended and endorsed by Cardinal Farley, Archbishop of New York; the Most Reverend George W. Mundelein, Archbishop of Chicago, and by many other ecclesiastics of the Catholic Hierarchy.

11013