

SEIZURE OF VILNIUS DISCUSSED BY MINISTER OF LITHUANIA

States Lithuanian Claims to Historic City

By P. ZADEIKIS
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My attention was drawn to the article which appeared in the August 17th issue of the New York Times under the title "Poles Tell of Row Lasting 300 Years".

The article in question simply quotes a few sentences from a bulletin published by the Polish Information Bureau at Washington, D. C. Among controversial sentences so quoted is one which, to my mind, is contradictory to the generally known facts, namely, that "Poland seized Vilna from the Bolsheviks and not from the Lithuanians".

The occupation of the Lithuanian capital Vilnius (Vilna or Wilno) by a Polish "rebel" army took place on October 9, 1920. At that time Poland was at war with Soviet Russia, while Lithuania, after signing a peace treaty with Moscow on July 12, 1920, maintained strict neutrality. The inconsistency of the above referred to statement of the Polish Information Bureau is apparent even from this fact, that Gen. Zeligowski's army of occupation was officially proclaimed in Poland as a "rebel" army; certainly, if at that time Vilnius belonged to the Bolsheviks, there was no sense in calling Gen. Zeligowski a rebel.

The City of Vilnius is and always will remain dear to the hearts of the Lithuanians not only because it was the capital of the vast Lithuanian Empire of five centuries ago, (and the seat of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes from Gediminas down to Vytautas the Great), but also because Vilnius was the cradle and center of the Lithuanian national renaissance and political resurrection: in 1904 the czarist ukase forbidding Lithuanian printing was revoked and Lithuanian societies and newspapers appeared in Vilnius; in 1905 a multitudinous convention of the Russian czarist regime self-rule for Lithuania; during the World War and German military occupation a convention of delegates from all parts of Lithuania took place in Vilnius and elected a National Council, which, on February 16, 1918, proclaimed Lithuania's independence and in the following year, after the Armistice, the first government of independent Lithuania was organized there: most of all because the people of the Vilnius region and the people of independent Lithuania were united racially, culturally and economically for centuries and lived together as one national unit. Even now, regardless of polonization tides and the so-called plebiscite, the local population deep in their hearts still feel Lithuanian tradition and resent the imposed separation.

All these facts and reasons undoubtedly also indicate that the seizure of Vilnius by Polish troops was a greater blow to the Lithuanians than to the Bolsheviks.

It is true that the first Lithuanian government soon was forced to retreat to Kaunas because the German military command prevented the organization of an adequate army to resist the Bolshevik invasion. But the following year, in 1920, after concluding the peace treaty with Moscow, the Lithuanian army and governmental departments reentered Vilnius and legally and actually took possession of it, while the Bolshevik army was in the process of evacuating the City and the region of Vilnius.

Because of all these facts, Gen. Zeligowski's march on Vilnius and his occupation of it hardly can be viewed as the retaking of Vilnius from the Bolsheviks and not from the Lithuanians. To corroborate this conclusion and in order to reject definitely the above quoted statement of the Polish Information Bureau, may I quote from the Encyclopedia Britannica, which cannot be suspected of favoring Lithuania's cause too much:

"On December 8, 1919, the Supreme Council of the Allies in Paris laid down a provisional eastern frontier for Poland, the so-called 'Curzon Line' which assigned to Poland most territories where the Polish element was in a majority, but excluded mixed and doubtful districts, the principal among these being Vilna City and province which the Bolsheviks, with whom the Lithuanians were then at war, had succeeded in capturing for themselves. The provisional Lithuanian Government fled to Kaunas. Three months later, the Lithuanians by arrangement with the Poles were on the point of recapturing Vilna when it fell to Polish troops (in 1919).

Soon after, the Poles, fighting Russia single-handed, lost not only Vilna, but nearly all their country. Nevertheless the fact of the war changed, and the Poles drove back the Bolsheviks who, no longer able to hold Vilna themselves, handed it to Lithuanian troops (end of Aug. 1920), and from that time forth remained consistent in their recognition of the Lithuanian claim. On Oct. 9, Lithuanian troops under the 'rebel' general Zeligowski recaptured the town thereby breaking the agreement signed at Suwalki in the presence of the military control commission of the League of Nations two days earlier, whereby the Poles recognized the Lithuanian occupation of Vilna and Vilna region. Since then the Lithuanians have never ceased to protest against the Polish occupation of their historic capital, of two-fifths of their historic territory and the alienation of nearly half their historic population. They had the sympathy of the League of Nations".

(ED. NOTE: Italicized sentences indicate portions of this article which were omitted when it was published as a letter to the editor in the New York Times of September 18, 1938).

Gets \$2,000 Scholarship

A Baltimore boy has received a four-year scholarship from Columbia University, valued at \$2,000, university authorities announced yesterday. He is Albert Milanauskas, of 5111 Plainfield avenue, a graduate of the Baltimore Polytechnic Institute in the class of 1937.

At Poly. Milanauskas was vice-president of the senior class and a member of the student council. He was captain and left tackle on The Sun's all-Maryland scholastic football team. A member of varsity teams in football, wrestling and track, he was graduated in the first fifth of his class.

Colorful Attire Suits Barbara



A winsome study in peasant fashion is Barbara Stanwyck, one of screen's best-liked stars who, in private life, revels in casual sports attire—and loves to tie a colorful bandana peasant-fashion over her famous head. In her latest RKO Radio vehicle, a serio-comic adventure titled "The Mad Miss Manton," Barbara co-stars with Henry Fonda.

Theatre Guild Starts with "Dame Nature"

The Theatre Guild announces that seven members of its acting company will appear in "Dame Nature" which opened at the Booth Theatre last Monday evening (September 26) as the first production of the Guild's twenty-first subscription season. The seven players are: Jessie Royce Landis, Onslow Stevens, Harry Irvine, Kathryn Grill, Lois Hall, Wilton Graff and Forrest Orr. Several other members of the cast may be added to the company in the near future.

The group has been active throughout the past summer at Lawrence Langner's Country Playhouse, Westport, Conn., and will continue to work as a group during the coming season in New York. Members will be used whenever possible in Guild plays, and new additions will be made as necessary. Players in the permanent company may work for another producer when roles are not available in Theatre Guild productions.

An auxiliary company, consisting of several players who were connected with the acting company at Westport this summer, will also be associated with the group as further productions demand it.

Worthington Miner will act as director, while Theresa Helburn and Lawrence Langner will serve with him as a supervising committee. Armina Marshall has been appointed secretary.



SCREEN ROMANCE—Reel romance turned into a real romance when Ronald Colman, English film actor, and Benita Hume, also English and of the movies, were married at San Ysidro Ranch, near Santa Barbara, Cal. Mr. Colman, a war veteran, came to America in 1918. Mrs. Hume, a native of London, has played on the New York stage.

This Month in Lithuanian History

October 1, 1252—Mindau gas crowned King of Lithuania.

October 1, 1921—Armed Poles attacked Lithuanian cultural institutions in Vilnius, closed universities and tortured Lithuanian students.

October 3, 1421—Pope ordained first Lithuanian bishop.

October 7, 1920—Lithuania and Poland signed historic Treaty of Suwalki, bringing to a close the state of war which existed between the two countries.

October 9, 1920—Deliberately ignoring the Treaty of Suwalki, Polish troops under the "rebel" General Zeligowski, unexpectedly attacked and occupied Vilnius, Lithuania's historic capital.

October 23, 1793—Birth of the eminent Lithuanian historian, Simanas Daukantas.

October 24, 1795—The Russian Empire annexed Greater Lithuania.

October 24, 1864—Death of the historian, Simanas Daukantas.

October 27, 1430—Death of Lithuania's Grand Duke Vytautas the Great.

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REASONS WHY POLAND SHOULD RETURN VILNIUS TO LITHUANIA

For the benefit of those of our readers who are not familiar with the Polish-Lithuanian dispute regarding Lithuania's historic capital Vilnius, we present the following data in support of Lithuania's claims to the territory at present occupied by Poland.

1. Vilnius was founded by the Lithuanian Grand Duke Gediminas in 1323. Since then it was the capital of Lithuania until the last partition of the Dual Republic in 1795, and even later under Russian rule.

2. The old Lithuanian state grew around it into a great power extending from the Baltic to the Black Sea. It was the cultural and religious center of Lithuania. Under its Cathedral an altar of the ancient pagan Lithuanians has been preserved. On the highest hill in the city stands the Tower of Gediminas with the ruins of the palaces of the Lithuanian Grand Dukes. The names of the various parts of the city and of the surrounding towns and villages are purely Lithuanian, though some of them have been changed by the Poles.

3. Compact Lithuanian masses, speaking Lithuanian, live to the north, south, east and west of the city. No aborigines of the Vilnius district speak pure Polish, but a mixture of Lithuanian and Slavic, sometimes erroneously called Polish or White Russian. The customs, attire, mode of living, character and style of architecture, despite the dialect spoken, are similar to those of the Lithuanians, not of the Poles.

4. The Jews, White Russians and other national minorities of Vilnius and the district have always regarded themselves as Lithuanians, not Polish citizens. They, with the Lithuanians, constitute an absolute majority in the district.

5. Vilnius and the territory of Vilnius has never belonged to Poland. In every older encyclopedia, geographic or historical manual in any language Vilnius is indicated as the capital of Lithuania.

6. Vilnius is the principal city of the Nemunas basin, constituting Lithuania into an indivisible economic and territorial unit. The unit without Vilnius is like a body without a head.

7. Vilnius is the only Lithuanian province contiguous with the Russian border. In that respect it is the gateway to Russia with its vast opportunities of trade.

8. The city of Vilnius and its territory under Russian domination from 1795 to 1915 were made a separate administrative unit, called at one time the Lithuanian Government; later it was recast into three provinces: those of Vilnius, Kaunas and Gardinas and constituted as the Lithuanian General-Governorship, which subsequently received the name of the Northwestern provinces.

9. During the German occupation of 1915-1918, the Vilnius Territory, together with Kaunas, Suwalki, Gardinas and Baltstoge were formed into a unit called "Militargebiet Litauen," and when the Germans set afoot a plan to establish a separate kingdom of Lithuania under a German prince, Vilnius was chosen as its capital.

10. It was at Vilnius that the delegates from all communities of Lithuania assembled in 1905 as the "Grand Diet" and adopted a resolution demanding the freedom of Lithuania from the Tsar's Government. In the same city an all-Lithuanian Congress was called in 1916 to elect members of the Lithuanian National Council, which proclaimed Lithuania's independence on February 16th 1918.

11. Vilnius and its Territory was ceded to Lithuania by the Treaty of Moscow of July 12th, 1920.

12. The League of Nations, after Zeligowski's coup in 1920, protested and demanded the withdrawal of his troops. Thus recognizing Lithuania's claims to Vilnius.

13. Lloyd George, the then Prime Minister of Great Britain, in one of his parliamentary addresses treated Vilnius as the capital of Lithuania and denounced the Polish occupation as "sheer banditry."

14. The Poles themselves, by the Treaty of Suwalki and during the conferences in Spa, Belgium, and in Riga in 1920, during the Bolshevik advance on Warsaw, recognized Vilnius as belonging to Lithuania.

15. A superficial glance at the map of the present reconstructed Poland is sufficient to convince any one that Vilnius with its Territory form an unnatural corridor. The city is less than fifteen miles from the provisional "line" which the Poles call "frontier," and about two hundred miles from Warsaw, the capital of Poland.

16. It is significant that prior to the Polish occupation no burgomaster of Vilnius was a Pole.

There are many more arguments, but these are sufficient to prove that Vilnius was and is a Lithuanian city, and that the Poles had no conceivable right to seize and hold it. And if, regardless of that fact, the Poles did occupy it, they merely did it on account of a morbid urge towards territorial expansion and domination at the expense of weaker peoples.

—V. B.

PROTEST POLISH OCCUPATION OF VILNIUS SATURDAY

BROOKLYN, N. Y.—The Lithuanian "Gedulos" Day will be marked Saturday evening by many various local Lithuanian American organizations in cooperation with the Lithuanian American National Youth League at Alliance Hall.

"Gedulos Diena" (October 9th) is the day on which Lithuanians throughout the world gather together and protest against the occupation of Lithuania's historic capital Vilnius by the Polish legions.

Organizations cooperating with the National Youth League in the Brooklyn commemoration are: Birute's Girl's Club, Darius-Girenas Lituanica Club, Gelezinio Vilko (Iron Wolf) Society, Operetta Society, Moteru Vienybe, Lithuanian Press Club, Tautininku Club, SLA Lodge 372, Lithuanian Art Theatre, VIENYBE and others.

The program will begin at eight o'clock Saturday evening. Prominent speakers will deliver appropriate addresses and the admission will be free.

HEART ATTACK FATAL TO JUDGE KAY

SEATTLE, Wash.—Kazis Kraucunas, better known as Judge Kazis Kay of King County's Superior Court, died recently of a heart attack in his home at 4324 35th Avenue W. He ended a colorful career that included sweating as a coal miner, laboring as an unknown journalist and pondering over law books in dim candlelight during long Alaskan evenings. For the last seven years, the former Lithuanian immigrant boy had been a member of the Superior judge staff.

Judge Kay had been a Seattle resident since 1913. He was in the Spanish-American war, and served two enlistments, in the First and Second artillery. On the bench, Kay was known as a kind man and as an accomplished scholar, being able to read and speak Lithuanian, Russian, German, Polish and English. He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Lillie Munson Kay; a son, Kazis Kay Jr.; four daughters, Mrs. Agle Reedy, Mrs. Julia Dennon, Mrs. Alice Hilling and Mrs. Beth Sievers.

IN QUEST FOR LITHUANIAN WAYS IN LIFE

By C. R. Jurgela

(Continued from last issue) Lithuanian contacts with the Swedes are more ancient than those with the Germans (except probably the Goths) and may be traced to the early Christian era. Mutual contacts left heavy imprints upon both nations.

Lithuanian contacts with Goths had been most frequent during the Great Migration of Nations. Lithuanian culture in the VII and VIII centuries had been considerably high and their products (textiles, knittings, amber, iron-wrought and wooden handicraft) reached the remotest corners of Europe and had been of a higher quality than the similar products of the Central, Northern and Western Europe.

In more ancient times, long before the Christian era, Lithuanians had lived in close neighborly relations with Finnish tribes who learned from us agriculture and homecraft.

Finnish linguists freely admit that there are a great many Lithuanian words in their language to describe agricultural implements and products, plants, tools, machinery etc. and Finnish folklore and songs attest to that. Finnish songs and legends (especially Carelian) show that their relations with the Lithuanians had been friendly. Primitive agricultural nations had not been migratory and had had limited commercial relations. In view of the fact that the Finns had borrowed from us so much (and, unlike Germans, gratefully admit that), our relationship must have been very long indeed.

For many centuries a great wall of Slavonic tribes separated our ancestors from the Germans, and our contacts with them must have been subsequent to relations with Norsemen and Goths.

