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BRIDGES IS PUBLISHED BY THE LITHUANIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY OF THE U.S.A., INC. THROUGH THIS NEWSLETTER, THE PUBLISHERS HOPE TO RE-ESTABLISH TIES BETWEEN THE DETACHED, MOBILE LITHUANIAN-AMERICANS AND THEIR LITHUANIAN HERITAGE BY PRESENTING ITEMS ON LITHUANIAN CULTURE, CONDITIONS IN THE HOMELAND, EVENTS AND PERSONALITIES IN AMERICA, AND THE ASPIRATIONS OF ALL WHO SUBSCRIBE TO THE IDEA THAT LITHUANIA DESIRES TO BE AN INDEPENDENT AND FREE NATION AGAIN.

LITHUANIA AND THE ROOTS OF INDEPENDENCE

Americans tend to forget that July 4th, the anniversary of the signing of the American Declaration of Independence, did not automatically usher in a period of new-found freedom. The Revolutionary War, which ended with the defeat of the British at Yorktown in 1781, was still followed by decades of skirmishing, negotiation, and yet more wars with the British and with other European powers before American independence was assured.

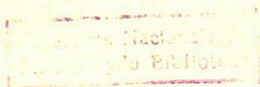
Similarly, February 16th, which we all celebrate as Lithuania's Independence Day, tends to be regarded as the benchmark from which we measure Lithuania's short period of twentieth century freedom. The hurricane of events which envelopes that date is often overlooked.

A better understanding of the origins of Lithuania's independence (as well as an appreciation of Lithuania's legitimate claims to national sovereignty) depends on a wider historical perspective.

Lithuanian nationalism, which had lain dormant since the ill-fated commonwealth with Poland was partitioned in the 18th century, experienced a steady revival in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Efforts to undo the earlier Polonization of Lithuanian language and culture ran parallel with tentative steps to negotiate with the Russian czars for greater autonomy. These building blocks of a new Lithuanian identity were radicalized by the onset of World War I.

The Independence Declaration of February 16th, 1918, was actually issued while Lithuania was under German occupation. World War I had moved onto Lithuania's doorstep when German troops battled with the Russians on Lithuanian soil throughout 1915. After they successfully ousted the Russians, the Germans replaced them as Lithuania's rulers. Up to that point, Lithuanians of various ideological orientations had been getting increasingly vocal in complaining of Russian tyranny and in negotiating for limited self-rule. Now, instead of traveling to Moscow with their entreaties they traveled to Berlin. Constant pressure and the wildly fluctuating international situation succeeded in maneuvering the German administration into a series of concessions. By December 1917, the Lithuanian National Council prepared an earlier version of the Declaration which was agreed to by Kaiser Wilhelm. Some self-rule was assured, at least on paper, but in this version, the Council had succumbed to German pressure to also declare

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MEDIA

The following statement was issued by the State Department on October 15: "In early October, the State Department lodged a protest with the Soviet embassy about the August, 1980 issue of *Soviet Life* magazine. That issue was dedicated to the subject of 40 years of the Baltic republics under Soviet rule.

"The Department informed the embassy of the impropriety of using the supposedly non-political 'Soviet Life' medium for the dissemination of distinctly political views. The Department reminded the embassy that the United States' position with regard to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania remains unchanged."

The August, 1980 issue of "Soviet Life" was exclusively devoted to the Baltic States, with an abundance of political commentary on the "benefits" of Soviet rule, the standard castigations of the 1918-1940 Baltic independence period and the Soviet interpretation of the annexation process.

Under a US-USSR cultural exchange agreement, "Soviet Life" is published by the USSR in the English language and disseminated throughout the US. At the

same time, the US publishes "America Illustrated" in the Russian language and it is distributed in the USSR. Kaunas, Riga, Tallinn and Vilnius are a few of the many cities where it is offered for sale.

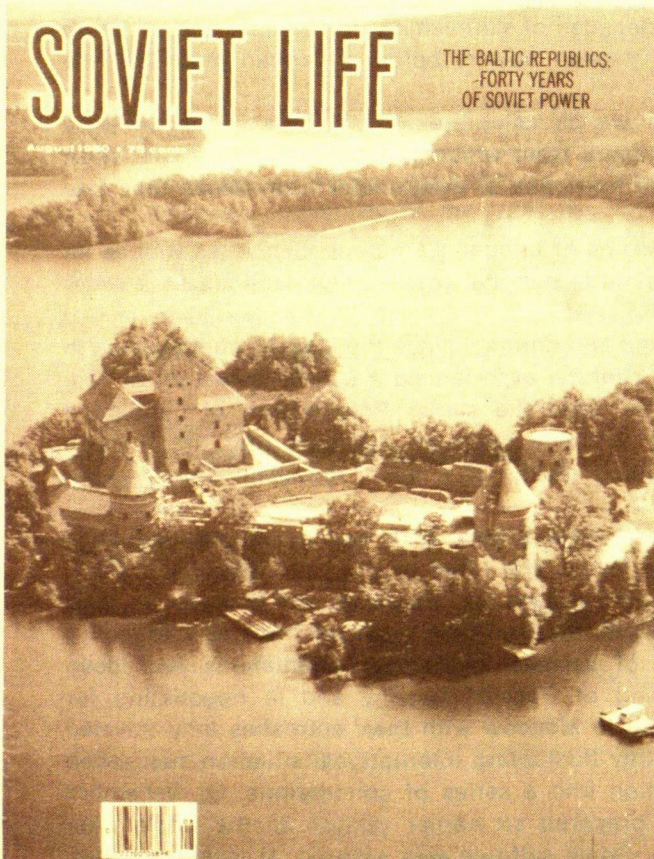
Under this cultural exchange agreement, the contents of both magazines are to be devoted to cultural topics, a rule which "America Illustrated" closely follows. On the other had, "Soviet Life" is all too often characterized by politically motivated articles. The August, 1980 issue is only a recent and very blatant example. Its wholesale treatment of the Baltic States was a factor prompting the State Department's protest.

THE CASTLES OF TRAKAI

The front cover of the August 1980 issue of *Soviet Life* was captioned "The Trakai Castle in Lithuania: a tourist attraction." There are two castles at Trakai, actually: the Peninsula and the Island castle (the latter is the one shown on the cover of *Soviet Life*). Moreover, while they may be tourist attractions for the Soviets, to Lithuanians they are also national monuments.

Peninsula Castle, surrounded by Lake Galvė on the north and Lake Luka on the southeast and east, was one of the largest defensive castles in Lithuania during its time. Built by Kęstutis, son of Grand Prince Gediminas, during the second half of the 14th century, the Peninsula Castle held out against the invading Teutonic Knights in 1377 although the surrounding residences were burned to the ground. The castle was destroyed later in the century during internal struggles over control of the Trakai principality, but it was rebuilt by Grand Prince Vytautas in the 15th century. It was finally burned by the Russians in 1655 during the first Muscovite invasion, and was never rebuilt. Some remaining castle fragments were preserved in 1930-31 in what is now a municipal park.

Island Castle (Trakų pilis) occupies all of an island in Lake Galvė, about 1/2-mile north of the peninsula. Island Castle was constructed by Vytautas the Great during the first decade of the 15th century. It became the residence of Lithuania's grand princes throughout the century and was a commercial and administrative center for the country until its political role was overshadowed by Vilnius, about 14 miles to the northeast. Although it too was attacked during the Muscovite invasion, it suffered relatively minor damage. Its greatest enemy over the ensuing centuries was neglect. Restoration work was performed intermittantly by Lithuanian archeologists during the years of independence, then by the Poles when the Vilnius territory, including Trakai, was under Polish occupation. Restoration was resumed under Soviet rule.



Cover of the August 1980 issue of *Soviet Life*, showing the Trakai Castle . . . "a tourist attraction." See text for full story.

PUBLICATIONS

Adomas and Filomena Kantautas have produced a *Supplement to A Lithuanian Bibliography*, a further checklist of books and articles held by the major libraries of the United States and Canada. This is a follow-up to their earlier bibliography which appeared in 1975 and which included 10,000 bibliographic entries. The supplement provides an additional 4,000 entries. It was first published by the University of Alberta Press with the support of the Multiculturalism Program of the Government of Canada and with a grant from the Lithuanian Canadian Foundation.

This 316-page, large format, hard-cover book can be obtained for \$15.85 (including postage and handling) by writing to *Draugas*, 4545 West 63rd St., Chicago, IL 60629.



In 1980, the Lithuanian Franciscan Press came out with a **biography of Reverend Joseph (Juozas) Žebriš** entitled *Lithuanian Pioneer Priest of New England*, by Rev. William Wolkovich-Valkavičius.

Juozas Žebriš was born in Palaukiai, county of Panevėžys, on February 16, 1960. He was educated at the Kaunas Theological Seminary and ordained in 1884. Although originally assigned to a local Lithuanian curate, he immigrated to the U.S. in 1893 at the urging of Rev. Aleksandras Burba, pastor of the Lithuanian St. Casimir parish in Plymouth, Pennsylvania. Burba was the ideological spokesman for Lithuanian Catholic activists and was a leader of the late-nineteenth century Lithuanian nationalist movement in America.

In 1894, Rev. Žebriš was appointed pastor of St. Joseph parish in Waterbury, Connecticut. St. Joseph's was the first Lithuanian parish in New England and, from it, Žebriš began a campaign to organize Lithuanian communities throughout the area. He was instrumental in founding up to ten other Lithuanian parishes in New England, including those in Hartford and New Britain, Connecticut, and in helping them set up their own schools and societies. He was appointed pastor of St. Andrew's parish in New Britain in 1898.

Rev. Žebriš's concern with the well-being of his fellow countrymen led him to encourage the establishment of grocery cooperatives and other similar mutual-assistance ventures. He also founded a bakery and bought a farm on which he planned to establish a Lithuanian agricultural school and a home for the aged. In December, 1894, Žebriš founded and became the first president of *Lietuvių Amerikos Kunigų Draugystė* (Alliance of Lithuanian Priests in America). In addition, he wrote, edited, and published a score of Lithuanian newspapers and books. These included the short-lived *Bostono Lietuviszkas Laikrasztis* (Boston Lithuanian Newspaper, 1895), and the first edition

of poems by Antanas Vienožinskis (1894). His own works included *Kankinimas Katalikų Lietuvoje* (The Torture of Catholics in Lithuania, 1894), about the massacre of Lithuanian peasants at the hands of Russian cossacks in the town of Kražiai on November 22, 1893; *Trumpas apraszymas žemės* (A Short Description of the Earth, 1895), the first geography manual in Lithuanian; *Mokinimas lietuviszkos kariuomenės* (Training the Lithuanian Army, 1894); and *Knygelės dėl lietuviszkų kareivių Amerikoje* (Booklets for Lithuanian soldiers in America, 1894).

Žebriš's activities were abruptly curtailed in 1915 when, on February 8, two Lithuanian bandits broke into the rectory of St. Andrew's parish in New Britain and brutally murdered the pastor.

Aptly subtitled "The Life, Struggles and Tragic Death of Reverend Joseph Žebriš, 1860-1915", this 214-page book, richly detailed and illustrated with photographs, provides an important contribution to fully appreciating the ethnic history of Lithuanians in America. It is available for \$7.00 (including postage and handling) from Franciscan Press, 341 Highland Blvd., Brooklyn, NY 11207.

ORGANIZATIONS

The Fourth Lithuanian Symposium on Arts and Sciences is scheduled for November 25-28, 1981 in Chicago, IL. The symposium is being sponsored by the Institute of Lithuanian Studies, the American Lithuanian Engineers and Architects Association, and the Lithuanian American Community of the United States (Bendruomenė). This fourth symposium will have basically the same main objectives as the previous three symposia, namely, to unite scholars of Lithuanian descent, to strengthen their ties with the whole Lithuanian community, to provide a forum for exchanging experiences in the areas of common interest, and to promote their scholarly and professional activities. The program of the Fourth Symposium will consist of invited lectures, paper presentations, and several special events.

The Symposium will be convening with the memories of the 400th Anniversary of the University of Vilnius still fresh in everyone's minds. This anniversary was widely observed because of the great significance of the University of Vilnius in the advancement of science in general and in the cultural development of the Lithuanian nation in particular. By emphasizing in the upcoming Symposium the contributions to science and arts by emigre Lithuanian scholars, the sponsors and organizers propose to dedicate the proceedings of the Symposium to that venerable institution of higher learning in the old capital of Lithuania.

Papers on any topic of a participant's scientific or professional interest are being solicited, but the deadline is April 5, 1981. Each contributor would have 20-25 minutes time for the presentation. Two copies of abstracts approximately 120-140 words long, one copy in Lithuanian and the other in English, should be submitted to the Technical Program Committee by that date. Notices of acceptance with further instructions will be mailed to each author by May 30, 1981. Although submission of full papers will not be required, they are strongly encouraged, since it is intended to publish complete Proceedings of the symposium. The length of full papers should not exceed 2,500 words. Copies of abstracts are to be mailed to: Pranas Zundė, 1808 Timothy Dr., NE., Atlanta, GA 30329. Individuals interested in attending the symposium should contact Mr. Zundė at the above address as soon as possible. The information you should provide includes your name; position; university, institute or company affiliation; an indication as to whether or not you intend to participate in the symposium or to present a paper. If you intend to present a paper, include the topic of that paper.

PERSONALITIES

Laisvės varpas — The Liberty Bell, a Boston area weekly Lithuanian radio program founded and still operated by Petras Viščinis of Brockton, Mass.—last year won the \$500 first prize in a broadcasters' evaluation sponsored by the Cultural Council of the Lithuanian Community. The prize-winning broadcast was a two-part Lithuanian language program in honor of the 400th anniversary of the University of Vilnius, which was founded in 1579. Other prizes of \$300 and \$200 were given in the competition.

This year's prize is the second achieved by Mr. Viščinis. In 1979, Mr. Viščinis earned a \$1,000 second prize for his 1978 Christmas broadcast. That year, four prizes of \$1,000 each were given.

The first broadcast of *Laisvės varpas* was on March 7, 1954. Today, Mr. Viščinis broadcasts two programs on each Sunday: a one-half-hour Lithuanian language program from a Medford, Mass. station and a 50-minute bilingual program from Brockton, Mass. The Brockton broadcast, Mr. Viščinis points out, is the only ethnic program on that particular station, giving reason to believe that a number of Americans might be listening to the bilingual program of music and of information about Lithuania and Lithuanians.

Mr. Viščinis's programs combine Lithuanian popular and serious music, local news and announcements, and political and cultural commentary.

Laisvės varpas was also the initiator of English language broadcasts on the anniversaries of the



Petras Viščinis during a 1954 broadcast of *Laisvės varpas*.
(Photo by K. Daugėla)

February 16, 1918 declaration of the restoration of Lithuanian independence and of the Tragic June Days of 1940 and 1941. These programs have been broadcast over a number of stations. Later, other Lithuanians began to follow this example.

Radio programs are not the only activities undertaken by *Laisvės varpas*. Twice each year, *Laisvės varpas* sponsors two concerts, of which 40 have been held to date. All of the most important emigre artists have participated in this series of concerts.

Mr. Viščinis was born in 1912 in Druskininkai in southern Lithuania. He graduated from Vytautas Didysis High School in Vilnius, which was then under Polish occupation, and studied law at the University of Vilnius, graduating in 1943. All his life he has actively participated in Lithuanian cultural and political affairs.

A LAST GLANCE AT THE CARTER WHITE HOUSE

Former President Carter's **White House Office of Ethnic Affairs** began a newsletter in June of last year. The newsletter, simply called "News," was being produced to help the Administration in "developing, promoting and implementing" a philosophy dedicated to the new pluralism in American society. The "new pluralism" refers to the national, linguistic and geographic diversity in this nation. As explained by **Dr. Stephen Aiello**, Special Assistant to the President for Ethnic Affairs, "in a sense we are all ethnics in the United States." For the purpose of the office, Ethnic-Americans were defined as persons of Eastern European, Southern European, Middle Eastern, and Asian backgrounds.

In an article in that premier issue, Dr. Aiello also explained that "this constituency shares many of the concerns of other Americans, including but not limited to full employment, inflation, the elderly, health care and social services, fiscal matters, housing, and urban, educational, environmental and foreign policy issues. "In addition to those concerns that are shared with

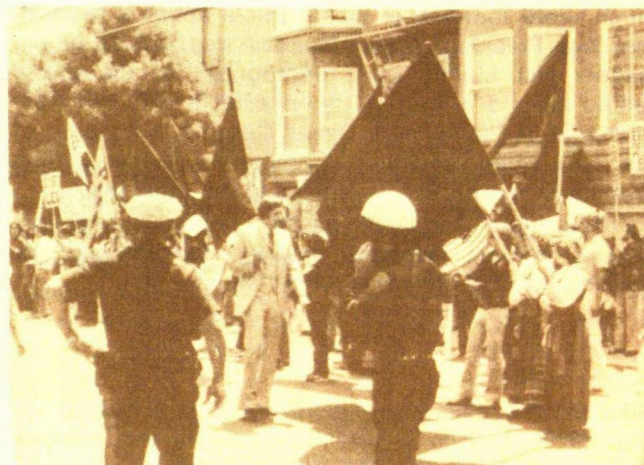
the rest of the society, Ethnic-Americans also have special concerns of their own. Chief among these are: preservation of their culture and language; the process of integration into the political, social and economic mainstream of American society; and foreign policy issues that affect their native countries."

As an example of the type of material covered in

THE SUMMER OF 1980: A LAST "HURRAH" OR TASTE OF THINGS TO COME? STORY AND MORE PHOTOS IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF BRIDGES



(Bridges photo)



(Photo from Lithuanian Days - Lietuvių Dienos)



Clockwise from upper right: Lithuanian protest rally at the Soviet mission in San Francisco, joint Latvian - Lithuanian youth demonstration near Independence Hall in Philadelphia, two scenes of confrontation with uniformed Secret Service police in front of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, D.C. (Eighteen protesters arrested, including Simas Kudirka, Rev. Casimir Pugevičius, and Bridges editors Rimantas Stirbys and Jūratė Krokys-Stirbys).



(Bridges photo)

the newsletter, one of the two articles in a section entitled "Foreign Policy Notes" is about how "plans for an alternative means of financing the Lithuanian Legation were successfully resolved in February by the Office of Ethnic Affairs, the National Security Council, and the State Department." Quoting from a White House Statement, the article explained that "the arrangement involves a reorientation and reinvestment of certain blocked Baltic assets to derive additional interest income sufficient for the needs of the Lithuanian Legation without drawing down asset principle amounts. It does not involve Congressionally appropriated funds."

Actually, Lithuanians made it into this newsletter twice in this 12—page issue. The second instance, much more indirect, is in an article about a meeting that Vice President Walter Mondale had with 40 ethnic leaders last March. In a photograph of the group seated around a long conference table with the vice-president at the far end, Rimas Česonis, a member of the Lithuanian American Community Public Affairs Committee is prominently seated at the other end.

(Coming — the latest on the Lithuanian Legation, plus a look at relations between the Reagan administration and Lithuanian-Americans — ed.).

★ ★ ★

NEXT MONTH, Lithuanians and Republicans: a look at the relationship between Lithuanian Americans and the new administration under President Ronald Reagan.

THE LITHUANIANS

The literary world was astounded when, in October 1980, the Swedish Academy of Letters announced that the Nobel prize for literature was to be awarded to a relative unknown . . . **Czeslow Milosz**. While few people had ever heard of him, Lithuanian-Americans were delighted when early press reports accurately portrayed him as a Lithuanian-born poet and the first Lithuanian to ever be awarded a Nobel prize. Even though Polish pride was rescued when detailed accounts later described his Slavic background and indicated that Polish is his native language, Milosz reaffirmed his Lithuanian ties in a lecture just prior to the Nobel presentation ceremony in December when he said, "In spite of the Atlantic Charter, the principle that nations are objects of trade, if not chips in games of cards and dice, has been confirmed by the division of Europe into two zones.

"The absence of the three Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) from the United Nations is a permanent reminder of the two dictators' legacy (Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler and the Soviet Union's Joseph Stalin). Before the war those states belonged to the

League of Nations but they disappeared from the map of Europe as the result of the secret clause in the agreement of 1939," he said, in reference to the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact under which the Soviets were given control of the three countries by Germany.

On that same note, he added that the national leaders who exile poets and writers also "control the language. The language of a captive community acquires certain durable habits; whole zones of reality cease to exist simply because they have no name," he said, again in reference to the Baltic States.

Milosz, a shy man who is now a professor of Slavic languages and literature at the University of California at Berkeley, came to his knowledge through painful experience. Born in Vilnius in 1911, he attended Vilnius University while that city and the entire southeastern corner of Lithuania were under Polish rule (which lasted until 1939). He received his diploma in law and, at the age of 21, published his first book of poems, *Poem of the Frozen Time*. This work won him the chance to study in Paris for two years. Although he later returned to Vilnius, he was unable to stay because of leftist



Czeslaw Milosz, Lithuanian-born poet laureate, accepting his Nobel prize for literature.

(Photo from Aidai, a Lithuanian language cultural journal)

leanings. After moving to Warsaw, he joined the Polish radio, but when World War II erupted into Poland, he joined the underground movement against the Nazi occupiers. When the war ended, Milosz entered into diplomatic service for Communist Poland in an attempt to avoid censorship of his poetry. He served first in Washington, then in Paris until 1951. In that year, as cultural affairs attache at the Polish Embassy, he ignored an order for his recall. He did this, he said at the time, "because I knew perfectly well my country was becoming the province of (a Soviet) empire.

"I have rejected the Stalinist's new faith because the practice of lying is one of its principal commandments. The Soviet religion is only another name for lying," he explained.

Although Milosz's works are popular in Poland, they are printed mainly by dissident publishing houses. Only two of his collections have ever officially appeared in Poland—the first in 1949, then again in 1972. Milosz is a prolific writer of prose and poetry, but he considers himself chiefly as a poet. His first novel, *The Taking of Power*, earned him the European Literary Prize, presented by the European Community of Book Clubs in 1953. His other books include a novel, *Issa*, an autobiography, *Native Realm*, and a sharp repudiation of Stalinism, *The Captive Mind*. American academics are also familiar with Milosz. The University of Michigan published his *Selected Poems* (in Polish) in December 1976, and awarded him an honorary degree in May 1977. He had come to the United States in 1960 and became a naturalized citizen in 1970. Milosz is married and has two sons.

In winning the coveted prize, and the \$212,000 that goes with it, Milosz beat out such better-known writers as American Norman Mailer, Britain's Graham Greene, and Trinidad-born V. S. Naipaul, all of whom had been considered likely candidates. Announcing the name of the recipient, the Swedish Academy said that "Czeslow Milosz is a difficult writer, in the best sense of the word—complex and erudite, challenging and demanding, changing between different moods and levels, from the elegaic to the furious and from the abstract to the extremely concrete." The Academy also called him a writer "who with uncompromising clear-sightedness voices man's exposed condition in a world of severe conflicts."

As if to reaffirm that view, during the presentation ceremonies Milosz criticized what he described as a tendency to forget the past: "Our planet, which gets smaller every year, with its fantastic proliferation of mass media, is witnessing a process that escapes definition, characterized by a refusal to remember.

"Certainly the illiterates of past centuries, then an enormous majority of mankind, knew little of the history of their respective countries and civilizations. In the minds of modern illiterates, however, who know how to

write and read and even teach in schools and universities, history is present but in a blurred way, in a state of strange confusion."

Milosz seems to be describing the experience of many Lithuanian-Americans who come across textbooks, encyclopedia and dictionary entries, maps, and even more frequently newspaper and magazine articles which all seem as if they were written by the Soviets themselves and, in seeming collusion with the Kremlin, seem determined to erase the reality of a free Lithuania from the pages of history. Milosz's statement provides an apt warning by a man "describing freedom from the painful view of an exile." His Nobel award is a fitting honor for a poet Lithuania can proudly call one of its own.

(continued from page 1)

"permanent ties between the Lithuanian State and the German Empire," relegating Lithuania to a virtual fiefdom. As a result, the coalition of forces in the Lithuanian nationalist movement began to fracture. The February 16th declaration, by which the Council proclaimed Lithuania to be "freed from any unions with other nations which previously had existed", was as much a compromise to reunite the diverse political factions as it was a first step to true independence.

The February 16th version was, of course, rejected by the Germans. Furthermore, Lithuania's concept of self-government, a democratic republic with a duly elected president, also clashed with that of the German Kaiser. A Lithuanian monarchy appeared to be the only acceptable form. Pretenders to the throne abounded,

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but the Duke of Urach was finally chosen in June 1918 to ascend the throne as King Mindaugas II. He even started studying the Lithuanian language so that he could be prepared.

A revolution in Germany in November 1918 allowed the Lithuanians to reassert their own priorities, but the still on-going war between Germany and now-Soviet Russia (following the 1917 Bolshevik revolution) kept matters in turmoil. A Bolshevik invasion of Lithuania in 1919 was defeated by that nation's fledgling army only with the help of the Germans (who wanted to protect the administrative organs they still had scattered throughout Lithuania).

By mid-1919, the Germans had finished evacuating their nationals; meanwhile, Lithuanian troops — supplemented with partisans and virtually any able-bodied Lithuanian who could carry a gun — succeeded in pushing the Russians out of Lithuania.

Further negotiations ensued and finally, on June 12, 1920, a peace treaty was signed in Moscow. The significant, first article of the treaty read as follows: "Basing itself upon the declaration of the USSR's Assembly that each nation has the right of self-determination, and becoming entirely independent from the state which it is now part of, without any reserva-

tions Russia recognizes Lithuania's independence and self-government with all its due jurisdictional rights, and with good will renounces for all times, all rights of Russian sovereignty which she had had over the Lithuanian nation and its territories."

Although we now know how that treaty — and the sovereignty of the Lithuanian nation and its people — was grossly violated by the Soviets during World War II, it provided the first step toward international recognition of Lithuania as an independent nation, a recognition still maintained by the United States and other Western powers.

We at *Bridges* feel that it is important that Lithuanian-Americans be fully informed about important details of Lithuanian history, especially in the face of almost awesome ignorance often displayed by non-Lithuanians, including members of the news media, and especially in the face of Soviet *disinformation* intended to undercut Lithuania's claims. This article, which provided a thumbnail sketch of a short but crucial period of Lithuanian development, is the first of a multi-part series which will hopefully fill in some of the gray areas we all have about Lithuanian history. Reader comment will be greatly appreciated.

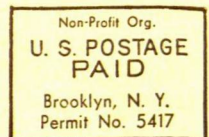
Rimantas A. Stirbys

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