

Editorial

LEST WE FORGET...

O ccasionally one may find in the American press a passing reference to "those Baltic peoples who have suffered more tragedy than one can bear to think about." And indeed, it does seem from our point of view that the free world sometimes prefers to forget about us, as though we were some distant relatives, now irrevocably dead, perished in a tragic accident. However, like all the oppressed peoples behind the iron curtain or, for that matter, anywhere else in the world, we want to be thought about, we claim that we are alive and that the wound still hurts.

Consequently, we make effort; to communicate with the free world. We present memorandums, we persist in asking that the principles of the United Nations Charter be applied to us as well. We also publish pamphlets and periodicals in which we try painfully, sometimes perhaps not entirely successfully, in an alien idiom, to explain who we are, what we have achieved in the past and what we could still contribute to the progress of mankind if we were now a free nation, able to guide its own destiny.

There is always the danger that our publications may create the impression of a quaint curiosity shop: a folk music instrument; a few names, difficult to pronounce; a sample of national customs; a hint of pride. Nothing really that could create a sense of intimacy with our readers. To a certain extent this is unavoidable, for those are indeed our customs and our thoughts—parts of a picture representing our own identity. We are much less anxious, however, to emphasize how different we are than to make our readers realize that we belong in the same community of human beings as does everyone else.

The cradle of Dylan Thomas' poetry is Swansea—a very small town on the Welsh coast. The people we see in "Under Milk Wood" are local and provincial to the core. It is the magic of the artist that makes us recognize their thoughts and feelings as our own, by the same token making them also universal. In the following pages you will find reproductions of the paintings of Čiurlionis—an artist who was born and worked in a very small country but who nevertheless, at the turn of the century, keenly felt the new dimensions of human experience that the modern age was to bring, as well as the impending terror that was to envelop the world.

It is for this reason that we present Čiurlionis and other Lithuanian artists, painters, thinkers and poets. We want our readers to think of them as people, not specifically Lithuanians, for it is only then that their work will become the heritage of all mankind, as befits any true effort of the human spirit anywhere in the world.

It is only then, of course, that our attempts at communication will succeed, for communication is nothing but the recognition of unity beyond the differences of language, customs and appearance. It is then, we hope, that our readers will understand that our tragedy is their tragedy as well, and that forgetting us means forgetting that part of themselves which makes their efforts to establish or maintain democracy worthwhile in the first place. Any success we may thus achieve will contribute toward the faith in the dignity of free men that is the ultimate weapon no tyranny can withstand.