

## THE ACTIVITIES OF LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS IN EXILE

The Association of Lithuanian Professors in America was founded in 1950. This was the culmination of a continuous effort on the part of the personnel of Lithuanian universities who found themselves in 1941 among the 60,000 Lithuanian refugees in Europe. Professors, docents, lecturers, they were about 300 in number and were concentrated for the most part in Germany.

They were unable to develop any common intellectual activity in the then Nazi Germany while the war was still being fought, since they were widely dispersed throughout the country and all contacts between them had been lost. At the end of the war they gathered, like the other exiles, in displaced persons camps. Here a general renaissance of Lithuanian cultural life was beginning, but they were unable to function as a group at first, even in these altered conditions. Travel restrictions and poor communications were the great barriers. Consequently they had to content themselves with participating in the cultural life as individuals, each in his own locality. But this was not enough—an academic life was lacking; they wished to continue their intellectual life with the many students who found themselves in a similar situation.

In 1946 these hopes were in part realized. In March of that year a university for exiles held its first lecture in Hamburg. With the permission of the United Nations Refugee Agency (U.N.R.R.A.) and the British occupational government, 50 Lithuanian professors and 450 students, began working at the Baltic University. Somewhat later several other institutions of higher learning were founded: the U.N.R.R.A. University for Displaced Persons, at Munich; the Institute of Technology, with hydrometry and hydrology sections, at Kempten; the Institute of Commercial Art, at Freiburg; and others. The Institute of Technology was the only one of these institutions staffed and attended entirely by Lithuanians. The teaching personnel at the institute of Commercial Art consisted of Lithuanians, but all exiled students were admitted. The other schools had mixed staffs and students bodies, but even they provided work for many Lithuanian professors and accommodated a substantial number of Lithuanian students. German was the language used in all the mixed schools, but several professors in the humanities faculty at Hamburg — V. Biržiška, P. Cepenas, P. Jonikas, V. Maciūnas, J. Puzinas, A. Salys—lectured in Lithuanian.

But it was fully realized that such institutions could only be temporary. A new period of emigration was coming, and the students and professors would soon disperse. And in any case, still closer ties were needed. To enable the Lithuanian professors to work together in the future, the Association of Lithuanian Professors in Exile was founded on June 8, 1947. Prof. S. Dirman-tis, from Reutlingen, was elected chairman. The association was able to unite some 100 Lithuanian professors and to permit them collectively to enter the cultural life in exile. Then, however, came emigration; within a year, and before the association could realize its maximum potential, the number of members began to diminish. The officials of the association maintained their relationship and titles until April, 1950, when the last of them, Prof. Dirmantis, left for the United States.

At one time it appeared that it might be possible to transfer a whole university—teachers, students and accumulated equipment—to the American continent. The professors, especially those at Pinnenberg, whence the Baltic University had been transferred from Hamburg, made every effort to bring this about. Canada seemed to offer the most likely haven. But the university dispersed before the transfer could be arranged. The largest number of emigres came to the United States, so it was natural that the association should be re-established here. The pressen, acsccatxn was formed in Chicago in 1950, and Prof. A. Gylys was elected as its first chairman. It was obviously impossible to establish universities, as had been done in Germany, but a forum for the exchange of ideas could be provided and some important projects could be undertaken.

The first thing the association's officers did was to inform American colleges and universities that among the recent immigrants were many capable professors, who could be useful to American institutions. The effectiveness of this appeal is difficult to determine, but a number of Lithuanian professors were able to find work in American schools and research institutions. Many who were otherwise qualified, however, were prevented by language barriers from continuing their academic work. [The demand for specialists in Lithuanian is extremely limited, and here was a large group for whom American Institutions could find no use.]

Although many Lithuanian students are being trained for all academic fields, very few of them are specializing in Lithuanian, owing to the absence of opportunities for such studies. (The University of Pennsylvania is one of the few higher

schools to grant degrees in Lithuanian, though a number of others offer courses in it.) Through the initiative of the Lithuanian Professors' Association an Institute for Lithuanian Studies, under the presidency of Prof. P. Jonikas, was established in Chicago. This institute organised a school for higher Lithuanian studies during the 1955-1956 academic year, but it was not as successful as it might have been.

Members of the association are editors and active contributors to the Lithuanian Encyclopedia. This work, which will comprise some twenty volumes, is in process of completion; four volumes become available to the public each year. The association's members also organize ceremonies in commemoration of important events, such as the 375th anniversary of the University of Vilnius. Occasionally they organize public lectures and assist other Lithuanian cultural organizations.

The association is particularly concerned about the many unpublished manuscripts of Lithuanian scientists and teachers that fail to reach the reading public because of lack of funds. At present the officers are trying to solve this problem, along with several others. They are trying to attract all Lithuanian professors—whether recent refugees or longer-established immigrants, many of whom are working at American colleges and universities—to join the common effort.

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