

## **THE "ATEITIS" FOLK DANCERS**

Rare are the occasions when a well executed folk—dance fails to remind the audience of its historical pact or of its homeland. Especially to refugee groups, the folk—dance is a visible symbol of their nationhood, of communion, alities, it becomes a vivid representative of a national culture and national customs. The folk—dance, therefore, is frequently danced, for audiences, by special groups in colorful native costumes, by almost all the different refugee peoples. Among the Lithuanians, one of the oldest such folk—dancing groups in the United States is the "Ateitis" folk—dancers

In the spring of 1941, the Lithuanian immigrants around Chicago decided to organize a choir and a folk—dancers group. The attempt, from the first, was successful, and since that time the "Ateitis" folk—dancers have appeared in more than a thousand programs and some twenty television shows. During the sixteen years of its existance, several hudred Lithuanian youths have passed through its ranks, and it now numbers about thirty members, students and non—students, and those somewhat older. In most Lithuanian folk—dances both, men and women, participate.

The group has always been successful, but during the years of the Second World War, the then young group, experienced some critical moments. Since many of its members were serving in the armed forces, and several more prominent members had moved from Chicago, it came close to disintegration. With the return of Mr .Bruno Shotas from the armed services, it was reorganized. He was elected president and has served in that position since then. With the exception of from 1949— 1952.

Most often, now the dancers appear before non—Lithuanian audiences, in folk—dance festivals, United Nation Days, or other like occasions. During the Second World War it performed for soldier audiences. In 1943, in the "Harvest Moon' festival in Chicago, sponsored by the Chicago "Sun—Times' they won first prize. In the United States Folk—Dance Festival, held annually in St. Louis Missouri, they have performed some seven times. They have been invited to Washington D.C., Toronto, and to a whole series of American and Canadian cities, where they acquit-ed themselves with great credit. They have danced in the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, and in 1956, in the traditional United Nations Day in Barrington, 111. Also, in February of 1956, they participated in "brotherhood day", sponsored by the Chicago Board of Education in the Chicago Museum of History.

Their record of over a thousand performances is impressive, in some years they have danced on more than a hundred occasions. Although Mr. Bruno Shotas is the only original members still associated with the dancers, the groups traditions have been preserved. In competition with dancers of other nationalities, or before Lithuanian audiences, the "Ateitis" Folk — Dancers, have established an impressive record.

**S. K.**