

## TENTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE WORLD LITHUANIAN ARCHIVES

The tens of thousands of Lithuanian exiles who were placed by the Western allies in displaced persons camps in Germany at the end of the Second World War almost immediately resumed their national cultural activities. Under the protection of the Allies they founded kindergartens, grammar schools and junior and senior high schools, and even universities, and established technical training courses and art ensembles, all in numbers that are now hard to estimate. Newly founded newspapers and publishing houses contributed to the success of this work.

It was clear to everyone from the beginning, however, that life in the displaced persons camps was only temporary; the time would bring an end to the enthusiastically built-up cultural life. Still, it was desirable, and even necessary, to find some way of preserving a record of these activities. The work of collecting and preserving the historical material was begun on Nov. 19, 1946. At first the work was done in more or less unorganized fashion, with the collected material being sent to the Convent of the Sisters of St. Casimir, in Chicago, Illinois, for storage. But this proved inadequate, and later a Commission for the Collection of Historical Materials was organized.

Because a considerable number of Lithuanians were already living in various parts of the world, and especially in the United States, it was decided to expand the scope of the original organization and not only to gather material on the life of the recent exiles but to document the life of Lithuanians throughout the world. A large amount of material had accumulated at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Casimir, but if the work was to be effective it was necessary that this material be well organized. Therefore, on Feb. 2, 1951, the executive council of the Supreme Committee for Lithuanian Liberation (VLIK) appointed Vincentas Liulevičius, the initiator of the work and chairman of the former Commission for the Collection of Historical Materials, to direct the vastly expanded work of organizing the existing material and collecting new documents. The new organization was named the World Lithuanian Archives. Its activities were extremely successful, and now, ten and a half years later, the collected material is housed in 25 steel cabinets with a combined shelf length of almost 400 feet.

The World Lithuanian Archives collects documentary, bibliographical and museum material. The archives department collects records and documents of Lithuanian organizations and institutions throughout the world. This material may provide future historians with their only means for evaluating the cultural work of Lithuanians in exile. The files from the displaced persons camps in Germany have already proved their value in historical research. The documents now being collected will be even more interesting and valuable to coming generations of historians.

The bibliographical department has more than 400 Lithuanian periodicals and several thousand books, some of which date back to the last century. The only collection of Lithuanian publications of comparable magnitude is in the Library of Congress.

The museum department possesses seals, organizational insignia, flags and other museum pieces. There is a "Memories of Lithuania" section that contains a flag of the Lithuanian Sharpshooters' Association (šauliai), independent Lithuania's army reserves; amber, sand and pebbles from the shores of the Baltic Sea; Lithuanian coins; a box of Lithuanian matches. These objects have deep sentimental value for the exiles. A handful of sand that someone scooped up before crossing the border and that has been preserved through long years as a relic of the forsaken homestead will speak eloquently to future generations.

The archives have been housed at the Convent of the Sisters of St. Casimir, the original donors of storage facilities, during all the years of their existence: even with the great increase in the amount of historical material they are still kept here.

The idea of the archives finds new supporters every day, and the amount of historical material received is steadily increasing. Even the U. S. State Department has contributed the transcriptions of 15 Voice of America broadcasts to Lithuania. Any article that is related to the life of Lithuanians in exile is accepted and carefully stored.

The increasing amount of use that the records receive justifies their existence. People who have lost their graduation diplomas or scholastic records have been able to find duplicates here; the archives have facilitated research on many articles and lectures; a number of people have received help for their theses. The archives will be even more useful in the future, for with the increase in material and its better organization it will be much easier to find needed documents.

Any inquiries concerning materials contained in the archives should be addressed to World Lithuanian Archives, 2601 West Marquette Road, Chicago 29, Illinois.

**V. Liulevičius**

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