

**LITHUANIA'S CASE
FOR INDEPENDENCE,
PP. 1-93**

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Lithuania's case for independence, pp. 1-93 by T. Norus & J. Zilius

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T. NORUS & J. ZILIUS

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LITHUANIA'S CASE FOR INDEPENDENCE

BY

T. NORUS AND J. ZILIUS

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IN UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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PREFACE

In the course of the great international drama which culminated in Allied victory in November, many characters have been brought upon the world stage with whose talents, traits, and antecedents most of the world is unfamiliar and with whose ideals and aspirations, stifled as they have been by centuries of despotism, the world is practically ignorant. Isolated as she had been by distance, by policy, and by intense application to domestic affairs, America in particular had grown out of touch with, if not utterly confused by, the mazes of European politics and the clash of national interests in the Eastern Hemisphere; but as the urge of autonomy forced out the pillars which supported imperialism, whilst the battering guns of democracy were leveling thrones in the dust, the interest of humanity in those small nations on which autocracy has for so long battered was aroused, and with the clearing away of the smoke and wreckage of empire it becomes appropriate to present to the public "Lithuania's Case for Independence."

At the outset let it be noted that as late as the Middle Ages Lithuania was one of the largest States in Europe, her expansion being due not so much to aggressive policies as to the fortuities of civilization's defense. But ceaseless defensive warfare with neighbors growing ever more powerful eventuated in her subjugation, and for centuries she has been, in turn and by joint action, the victim of the crushing oppression of Russia and Germany. The chief instrument in perpetuating her subjection has been the proscription of her language and her press. "To take the language from a nation," said one of Lithuania's venerated authors, Nicholas Dauksza, "is like expunging the sun from the heavens, destroying world order, imprisoning the life and soul of that nation."

Another cause for Lithuania's decadence may be blamed to the old aristocracy itself, which, after the marital union

with Poland, supinely permitted itself to be influenced and controlled by the Polish nobility, while the proletariat was being reduced to serfdom and bondage. Not until 1861 did the Lithuanian renaissance take place, by which time her identity had become merged with that of Poland to a degree which confused in the mind of the world what were in fact two distinct racial and national entities, a confusion which Poland has fatuously believed to be to her self-seeking interests still further to confound, as she does today, politically, territorially, and linguistically.

Hence it is that Lithuania, on whose domain many of the bloodiest campaigns of this great war have been waged, has received relatively little attention from the world at large, her sufferings have received scant sympathy, and she has bandaged her own wounds.

It is with the purpose of acquainting the public, particularly the American public, somewhat with Lithuania and her people, her history, her struggles against annihilation, her ideals and her aspirations, that this synopsis of events and conditions is sent forth, and if the truths herein contained may at times be crudely stated, it is hoped that the reader will be lenient, bearing in mind the wide difference between a language, cousin to the ancient Sanskrit, and the English tongue.

This much is believed to have been made clear: On the broad issue of self-determination Lithuania stands four-square to every principle enunciated by the world's great statesmen while the war was at its height. Not one side obliquely to negative a perfect case. If the laws laid down by these international judges is as impartially administered as it is fundamentally sound, then Lithuania rests confident that her case as presented to the jury of the world will receive that verdict which will justify the peace conferees in striking off her shackles and restoring to her freedom of government and equality among nations.

GEORGE CURTIS PECK.

THE LITHUANIAN NATION

ORIGIN.—The Luthuanians are a branch of the Indo-European race, quite distinct from the Slavs and Germans. Earliest history found them dwelling on the shores of the Baltic Sea in the territory situated between the Vistula and the Salis rivers. According to the opinion of philologists the influence of the Lithuanian language on the cultured terminology of the Finns to the north, especially prior to the division of the Finnish language into the many dialects of today, clearly indicates that the Lithuanians lived near the Finns long before the appearance of the Slavic or the Germanic peoples in that part of Europe. The Lithuanians brought the first traces of culture and knowledge of religion to the peoples living north of them. The Lithuanians may therefore be considered as having an autochthonic as well as an historic claim to live and develop in this region, where their forefathers have dwelt from time immemorial. Anthropologically they belong to the dolichocephalic type. They are a blonde race, the light-haired, blue-eyed coloration predominating, tall of frame and massive of physique.

PHILOLOGY.—The Luthuanians have a distinct language which properly belongs to the Eastern Indo-European division. It is one of the oldest living languages, possessing a certain similarity to the Latin and the Greek, but more closely resembling the ancient Sanscrit. While it contains some Slavic adulteration, this is but the natural result of centuries of contiguity with Slavic races, and from the standpoint of the philologist the Lithuanian language resembles the Slavic no more than do other languages of the Indo-European division. Comparatively speaking a Slav is no better able to converse with a Lithuanian than an Englishman with an Italian or Frenchman. Professor Maksimov (*Encyclopedia Brokhaus*) says: "The Lithuanian and the Slavic languages have much in

common in their words for designating plants and vegetables, and tools used in tilling the land, which shows a common growth in culture during the latter period of their history." Otherwise, the professor continues, there is nothing in common between the Lithuanian and the Slav languages.

In the study of philology the Lithuanian language is of the highest importance, appreciation of this fact being indicated by the establishment of chairs for its instruction in some of the world's greatest universities. Kant, the philosopher (he was of Lithuanian descent, born in Prussian Lithuania), in his introduction to Ruhig's Lithuanian Dictionary, says that the language should be preserved as the best means for the dissemination of culture and advancement among the Lithuanians, as the best expositor for linguists in their study of languages, and as the pharos to the means of communication of the races of antiquity. The Lithuanian language, as well as the language of the ancient Prussians, now extinct, together with the Lettish language of today constitute the Baltic branch of Languages, as is illustrated by the following chart of the Indo-European linguistic division:

THE POSITION OF THE LITHUANIANS IN THE FAMILY
OF INDO-EUROPEAN NATIONS

