

House of Lithuania

House of Pacific Relations, International Cottages, Inc., Balboa Park, San Diego, California

February 2005 – Vasaris 2005

Newsletter – Žinios

Volume 3, Issue 2

Independence Day

In the aftermath of World War I, Lithuania was one of many “new” nations. According to President Wilson’s democratic vision, the majority ethnic group in a given geographical area should have national sovereignty. In contrast with many of the newly freed people who had never before been independent, Lithuanians fondly remembered their past freedom.

Lithuanians were proud of their language and culture. They remembered their homeland’s history as an independent and powerful state during the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. A stubborn and independent-minded people, Lithuanians had participated in the Polish Revolt against Russia in the 1860s. They also defied the Russian ban on Lithuanian books printed in the Latin alphabet so persistently that Russia rescinded it in 1905. Oppression only fueled the fire of the Lithuanian nationalist movement.

Shrove Tuesday

- The Lithuanian term for Shrove Tuesday is *Užgavėnės*.
- Did you know that *blynai* (pancakes) are the traditional Shrove Tuesday dish?
- In Lithuania, it is bad luck to do any hard work on Shrove Tuesday.

For information about the *House of Lithuania*, please call (619) 654-9722 or visit <http://houseoflithuania.org> If you have not already paid your dues, please send them to:

House of Lithuania
c/o Francesca Williams
39890 Ivan Dr.
Anza, CA 92539

House of Lithuania UPCOMING EVENTS

Meeting & Potluck Saturday, February 12th

1 P.M. – Allied Gardens Rec. Center
5155 Greenbriar Ave., San Diego

Lithuania was a part of Czarist Russia at the onset of World War I, but was seized early on by Germany. Towards the end of the war, the German people were weary of fighting and felt that they had acquired enough land. The moment was ripe for Lithuania’s nationalist movement to realize its political goals. In September of 1917, Lithuanian representatives gathered to advance the cause of Lithuanian freedom.

On February 16, 1918, the Council of Lithuania (a group of democratically elected representatives) boldly declared Lithuania’s independence, even though the Germans controlled the country. A month later, Kaiser William recognized Lithuania’s independence. Lithuania’s status was in limbo until the treaty between Russia and Germany was signed on August 27, 1918. With Germany granting Lithuania its freedom, the new independent Lithuanian government effectively existed under German sponsorship. Despite being defeated on the Western Front, it is important to remember that Germany emerged victorious against Russia on the Eastern Front. The new independence of the Baltic States served Germany’s aims by whittling away at the Russian Empire.

The road to independence was a long one for Lithuania. Unfortunately, Lithuanian democracy only lasted until 1926. At that point it was replaced with a dictatorship that lasted until the Soviet occupation of 1940. Lithuania reclaimed its independence in 1990, reminding us that Lithuanians will always struggle for and treasure their freedom.

—F.W.