



BALTHERNET'S 9TH SUMMER SCHOOL TOOK PLACE DURING ESTO

As the ESTO Festival took place in Finland and Estonia this summer, the BaltHerNet summer school program on the topic of the cultural heritage of Estonians abroad was tied to ESTO events happening in Tartu and Tallinn. The main topics were the arts – we discussed culture and art history collections. At the request of many Estonians from abroad, the first day of the summer school also focused on family history research. The summer school was supported by the Compatriots Program. We are thankful to our partners at the National Archives of Estonia, the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum, the Adamson-Eric Museum, Estonian National Museum (ENM), and the Estonian Literary Museum for their help with coordinating the summer school.

On June 30 everyone gathered in Tartu at the new National Archives of Estonia building Noora for the seminar “Searching for Your Roots.” The National Archives of Estonia Head of Communications and Foreign Affairs, Birgit Kibal, introduced the necessary archival resources, databases, and methods for conducting family history research in English, and the Head of Access and Enquiry Department in Tartu, Tõnis Tärna, did so in Estonian. Seasoned summer school participants, as well as new participants from among the ESTOs, joined the group. The day ended with a tour of Noora and the opening of the new collaborative exhibit by the ENM and VEMU about the history of ESTO Festivals at the Estonian National Museum in Raadi.

On the morning of July 1, the Vanemuine lower parking lot was crowded – the ESTO participants were ready to go to the capital. We too, sat on a bus with our group in the direction of Tallinn to continue our summer school there. We spent a content-rich afternoon at the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum with a tour of the collections and talks on exhibits and research projects by the Chief Treasurer, Ann Aaresild, Scholar and Curator, Kaisa Luik, and Curators, Annely

FESTIVAL OF EXHIBITS OF/BY ESTONIANS
ABROAD

A RENDEZVOUS WITH FAMOUS
ÉMIGRÉ LITHUANIANS

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The Non-Profit Association Baltic Heritage Network was founded in Tartu on January 11, 2008. NPA BaltHerNet was established to foster cooperation between national and private archives, museums, libraries, and institutions of research, public associations and organizations collecting and studying the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora. It aims to facilitate the preservation and research of the historically valuable cultural property of the Baltic diaspora, as well as to ensure accessibility of these materials to the public.

NPA BaltHerNet is also committed to the organising of conferences, seminars and workshops, and to developing and administrating the electronic information website Baltic Heritage Network, a multilingual electronic gateway for information on the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora.

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Kaldoja and Kristo Matson. Maie Barrow from the Estonian Archives in Australia and Piret Noorhane from VEMU spoke about music and theatre history collections abroad. The NGO Annual Meeting was also held, where reports of the last year were done, the new auditing committee was elected, and it was decided to host the next 2020 summer school in Hiiumaa. For those interested, the evening was spent at Telliskivi Creative City at the Kärbes bar, where ESTOs were celebrating Canada Day.

Everyone gathered at the Adamson-Eric Museum on the morning of July 2, where the Curator/Collections Manager, Kersti Koll, discussed collecting art made by Estonians abroad as well as current research and exhibit projects. Ave-Marie Blithe from Lakewood, Maie Barrow from Sydney, and Piret Noorhane from Toronto gave overviews about the art collections in communities of Estonians abroad and their related issues.

After lunch, we all went back on the bus to Laulasmaa to visit the Arvo Pärt Centre that opened last fall. The VEMU archives have a video of a lecture Arvo Pärt gave at Tartu College in December 1981, a short time after he left Estonia, introducing his creative method. This rare recording was a very appropriate gift to the centre. Archivist Anneli Kivisiv led the tour of the Pärt Centre praising both the Spanish architects and the Estonian builders, as she gave an overview of the exciting Arvo Pärt legacy. Although we had been told that the composer would not be at the centre, we were unexpectedly lucky that Pärt made a surprise appearance. The more bold and quick in our group even got their photos taken with the living classic! It's great to know

that this special person has his own exceptional and stately place, which I recommend to all those who haven't visited it yet – it is both refreshing for the soul and visually enjoyable.

When the bus brought all the summer school participants back to Tallinn to the Baltic Railway Station, everyone must have felt that this time school was unfairly short. But a year flies by quickly and hopefully, we will have more time in Hiiumaa to talk shop and renew friendships. For now, I wish everyone who takes care of the heritage of Estonians abroad strength and endurance!

Piret Noorhane

FESTIVAL OF EXHIBITS OF/BY ESTONIANS ABROAD IS IN FULL SWING IN ESTONIA

The ESTO Festival, which took place in summer 2019 along with the Song Festival and upcoming 75th anniversary of the Great Escape, inspired the coordination of a festival of exhibits of/by Estonians abroad displayed throughout Estonia until the end of 2019. During the festival, exhibits by communities of Estonians abroad, Estonian memory institutions or collaborative exhibits between those on topics related to Estonians abroad are displayed.

Over the years, memory institutions located both in the homeland and abroad have created an impressive number of exhibits that cover the various periods and aspects of Estonian diaspora history. Some of the exhibits have been displayed in Estonia before, but a large portion of them are new to the Estonian audience. There are 16 different exhibits in the program from Estonia, Canada, Australia, and Sweden. The first round is over

the summer and features the exhibits in 14 different locations in a total of six cities – Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu, Rakvere, Valga, and Võru. Topics include stories about fleeing the homeland, life in DP camps, as well as different activities in communities of Estonians abroad, hobbies, and accomplishments. In addition to those who fled during World War II and their descendants, exhibits feature earlier emigrations to Canada and Siberia. There are historical exhibits, photo exhibits, and expositions, which have grown out of oral history projects or handicraft hobbies of Estonian women.

The first exhibit, "Two Edges of a Lifespan" was opened in Tartu at the Estonian Literary Museum in May. It was first on display at VEMU in 2018 in association with the Republic of Estonia's 100th birthday. Half of this double photo exhibit is dedicated to the older portion of Toronto Estonians: Toomas Volkmann's portraits with the individuals' memories pass on life experiences and wisdom to younger Estonians. The other half, Kristen Dobbin's photos of the Jõekäärü children's summer camp, illustrates whether and how Estonians and Estonianness has changed in Canada. The exhibit will be on display at the Estonian Literary Museum until the end of August.

A number of exhibits were dedicated to Canadian Estonians. A couple of exhibits associated with VEMU are: "The Story of the Baltic University" (in collaboration with Helga Merits and on display at the University of Tartu Library until the end of August) and the exhibit "Food: A Treasury of Estonian Heritage. Businesses and Factories in Toronto" (in collaboration with the Estonian National Museum



Opening of the exhibit "Sharing Our Stories" at the Patarei Prison in Tallinn. From left: Petra Grantham, Ambassador Kevin Rex, ?, Sandra Vokk. and on display at the Võru County Central Library until October 4).

The collaborative exhibit between VEMU and the Estonian Theatre and Music Museum "Roman Toi 100" was on display until mid-July in Tartu at Noora. In mid-September, it will be going to St. John's Church in Tallinn when the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church commemorates the anniversary of the Great Escape.

Kerly Ilves, a photographer from Estonia, dedicated two exhibits to Canadian Estonians. Her portrait exhibits "Canadian Estonians in Light and Shadows" and "Toronto Estonians Abroad and the Estonian National Museum" were on display during ESTO festival at the Telliskivi Creative City in Tallinn and at the Estonian National Museum (ENM) in Tartu. The exhibit "Kotkajärve Forest University – 50 Years Young" was also on display at Telliskivi.

The Alberta Estonian Cultural Heritage Society exhibit "Alberta Estonians from 1899 to Present" tells the story of early Estonian emigration and was on display until the end of July in Rakvere at the Lääne-Virumaa Central Library.

The story of the escape of Balts, including Baltic Germans, and their settlement in Canada as their new home is told in the exhibit "Sharing Our Stories. Baltic Diaspora at Home in Canada"

which was opened on the final day of ESTO festival at the Patarei Prison in Tallinn. The opening reception was supported by the Canadian Embassy and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The exhibit creators Petra Grantham (Canadian Baltic Immigrant Aid Society) and Piret Noorhani (VEMU) gave speeches as well as the Canadian Ambassador Kevin Rex, and Sandra Vokk, host from the Estonian Institute of Historical Memory. As the Patarei Prison is a very popular tourist attraction, over 12,000 visitors had seen the exhibit by the beginning of August. In the fall, the exhibit will travel to Latvia and Lithuania.

Swedish Estonians were represented with two exhibits: a handicraft exhibit by the Estonian national art hobby group Triinu located in Stockholm "Let's Decorate Estonia's Chambers with the Tricolours" and the Swedish Estonian Society's exhibit "Boat Refugees 1944. The Story of Four Boats" by Evelin Tamme, Mai Raud-Pähn and Taavo Kase. They were both on display at the National Archives in Tallinn on Maneeži Street. The National Archives' own exhibit "Estonian-British Relations" was on display in the research hall at the National Archives in Rakvere.

The exhibit "Siberian Estonians" by the Estonian Literary Museum and the Estonian Academy of Arts tells the story of the eastern diaspora and was on display at the Lääne-Virumaa Central Library in Rakvere.

Some brand new exhibits were also opened during ESTO festival. The collaborative exhibit by the ENM and VEMU, "ESTO – The Keeper of Global Estonianness," was opened with a lively ceremony and a large audience at the ENM

as part of the official ESTO program. In 2020, this exhibit based on memories, photos, and archival materials will arrive at VEMU in Toronto. However, at the Estonian Sports and Olympics Museum the exhibit "Estonian Sports in Canada" was on display and will soon be opened at VEMU in September of this year.

In the fall, the exhibits will go for a second round, which means they will change locations to make sure as many people as possible see them. The logistics work for their installation is in progress.

Summer was busy in Estonia, so, unfortunately, I haven't made it to Rakvere, Pärnu, Valga or Võru, where some of the festival exhibits were also on display. For this reason, I am all the more thankful to everyone who helped with finding locations for the exhibits, sending them and installing them: Tiit Kravtsev and Birgit Kibal from the National Archives of Estonia, Merike Kiipus, Marin Laak, Vilve Asmer and Anu Korb from the Estonian Literary Museum, Riina Reinvelt, Kristjan Raba and Karin Kiisk from the Estonian National Museum, Kalle Voolaid from the Estonian Sports and Olympics Museum, the Forest University contact person in Tallinn Elle Palumäe, Kerly Ilves and many others. The festival marketing material was designed by Einike Leppik. The official organizers of the festival were the NGO Baltic Heritage Network, which works with the cultural heritage of Estonians and Balts abroad, and VEMU in collaboration with a number of Estonian memory institutions in Estonia and abroad. I would also like to thank those who have contributed financially: the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research / Compatriots Program, the Estonian Studies

Centre/VEMU, the Canadian Embassy in Riga, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Information about the exhibits and where they are on display can be found on Facebook and the websites: <https://www.balther.net/et/> and <https://estofestival.com/>. Contact: piretnoorhani@gmail.com, t. +1 416 925 9405.

Piret Noorhani

A RENDEZVOUS WITH FAMOUS ÉMIGRÉ LITHUANIANS



The photo exhibition at the National Library of Lithuania

Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/National Library of Lithuania

The photo exhibition by the Lithuanian-American photographer Algimantas Kezys (1928-2015) which was opened this summer at the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania presents the portraits of more than 20 famous Lithuanian diaspora figures taken in various places, mostly in the US, from 1961 to 1966.

Among them are famous artists, composers, singers, sculptors, actors, photographers, clergymen, writers, and scientists, such as the composer, musicologist and organizer of the first Lithuanian Song Festivals Prof. Juozas Žilevičius, artists Vytautas Kasiulis, Česlovas Janušas, Žibuntas Mikšys and Viktoras Petravičius, sculptors Antanas Mončis and Petras Aleka, writer and art critic Jonas Grinius, composer Bruno Markaitis,

philosopher Dr. Povilas Rėklaitis, actors Algimantas Dikinis, Nijolė Martinaitytė-Nelson and Jonas Kelečius, photographer Vytautas Maželis, Jesuit and poet Leonardas Andriekus, writer Romas Spalis, soloist Stasys Baras-Baranauskas, choir conductor Alice Stephens, and others.

Algimantas Kezys left Lithuania in 1944. In 1961, he was ordained as a Jesuit priest. In Chicago, he founded the Lithuanian Photo Archive and the Lithuanian Library Press. For several years, Kezys headed the Lithuanian Youth Center in Chicago. He edited and published books and photo albums. Kezys' works consist of color and black and white photography. The artist had more than 60 personal exhibitions in Lithuania and abroad. His works were highly praised in the Lithuanian and foreign press. In 1964, he began to organize personal photo exhibitions at the Čiurlionis Gallery in Chicago and other Lithuanian communities in the US. In 1965, Kezys was invited to exhibit his works at the Art Institute of Chicago, followed by other prominent art centers in America, Europe, and the Far East.

Silvija Stankevičiūtė

“FERNFLOWER” – A RELAXING EVENING OF MUSIC AND POETRY

In June, VEMU had special guests from Estonia, actors Lembit and Mare Peterson, and musicians Marge Loik (piano) and Villu Veski (saxophone) performing a music and poetry program to



celebrate the Year of the Estonian Language. On June 6, the Tartu College hall was beautifully lit with candles for the intimate cultural experience. The evening was filled with Estonian poetry and original northern and Estonian musical interludes and improvisations. Enthusiasts also had a second opportunity to experience the program on June 8 in the forest setting of Seedrioru camp in Elora. To top off the week of performances, Lembit Peterson spoke about his theatre and music life at Tartu College on June 12 to a small group of theatre fans.



FOREST UNIVERSITY CITY LECTURES AT VEMU

As has become tradition, VEMU hosted two Forest University (Metsäülikool) City Lectures in August. Toivo Tänavsuu, one of the Co-Founders and Directors of the Estonian cancer charity Kingitud Elu spoke about the increase of donations in Estonia at Tartu College on August 8. On August 12, a frequent visitor to Toronto and literary scholar Sirje Kiin spoke about the well-known Estonian author Ene Mihkelson. These lectures were great opportunities to hear Forest University guests in case you were unable to make it to the forest.



Jolanta Budriūnienė, head of the National Library of Lithuania Documentary Heritage Research Department, presented the paper at the conference.

Photo: Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Panevėžys County Public Library

THE BALTIC DIASPORA CONFERENCE IN PANEVĖŽYS

In May 2019, the Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Panevėžys County Public Library together with Vilnius University Faculty of Communication organized the 20th international conference dedicated to the Baltic diaspora documentary heritage from 1944 to 2018. This year, the annual event earmarked the Year of World Lithuanians.

The organizers of the conference proposed more than ten subtopics, highlighting theoretical and methodological issues when dealing with the documentary heritage, cultural and scientific diaspora figures and their legacy, typology of publications and their repertoire, memory institutions and collections, archives, video and audio, as well as preservation, actualization, and digitization initiatives, new media, and the use of the diaspora documentary heritage for cultural communication.



Conference participants.

Photo: Gabrielė Petkevičaitė-Bitė Panevėžys County Public Library

The conference was carried out in two sections: “Archives, Collections, and Obstacles in Getting Them (Back)” and “Cultural Press and Literary-Historical Reminiscences.” 25 presentations were presented at the event. For the first time, the conference expanded its geographic boundaries becoming international. Participants from Estonia and Latvia attended the conference.

LITHUANIAN EXILE MEDIA HISTORY PRESENTED AT THE EMHIS SYMPOSIUM



Final discussion. Photo: Ina Ėmužienė.

On May 14-16, 2019 the 8th Symposium of the Entangled Media Histories research network “Current Challenges of Entangled Media Histories—Theories, Sources, and Methodologies” was organized in the Welsh countryside outside Newtown. The symposium was hosted and organised by Jamie Medhurst of the University of Aberystwyth in collaboration with the EMHIS coordinator Marie Cronqvist of Lund University. The main goal of the symposium was to discuss the future of the EMHIS network and to highlight personal challenges, as well as cooperation possibilities.

The researchers from nine countries gathered to discuss their problems and to present the sources and databases they use in their research. A few presentations addressed the complicated history of the Baltic region and research on migration.

One of them was Dr. Ina Ėmužienė, a researcher at the



*Symposium's participants.
Photo: EMHIS “Facebook.”*

Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania, participant of the BaltHerNet conferences. She presented a topic on Lithuanian media in exile. In her presentation, Ina talked about diaspora research, sources, and databases based in the Baltic region.

The EMHIS symposium was a great opportunity to present the Lithuanian case and research on diaspora in the Baltic region to a wider group of scholars and to gather information about the Baltic sources scattered throughout Europe and the possibilities of accessing it.

More information on the EMHIS network and its activities could be found here: <https://emhis.blogg.lu.se/about/>

THE LITHUANIAN HERITAGE SCHOOL TEACHERS' VISIT

On August 2, 2019, a group of Lithuanian heritage school teachers visited the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. Teachers, who teach Lithuanian as a heritage language outside Lithuania, came to Lithuania to learn more about the new Lithuanian language teaching methods and share their own experience.

Teachers from Egypt, the United States of America, Austria, Finland, Luxembourg, Russia, Estonia, and Belarus were welcomed by the director-general of the National Library



Lithuanian heritage school teachers enjoyed playing the game "To Lithuania."

Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/National Library of Lithuania

of Lithuania, Prof. Renaldas Gudauskas and the head of the library's Documentary Heritage Research Department, Dr. Jolanta Budriūnienė.

A very rich one-day program was organized by the staff of the library's Lithuanian Studies Unit. Valdonė Budreckaitė and Matas Baltrukevičius presented the traveling exhibition "Foreign Professionals for Lithuania" and the game "To Lithuania." Dr. Ina Ėmužienė prepared a presentation about Lithuanian education in Lithuanian émigré radio programs. Prof. Dainius Vaitiekūnas, the head of the Lithuanian Studies Unit, shared his insights on the role of the media and the traces of intermediality in Lithuanian education.



Teachers get acquainted with the traveling exhibition "Foreign Professional for Lithuania."

Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/National Library of Lithuania

THE DAMUŠIS ARCHIVES' NEW HOME

On July 1, 2019 Gintė Damušytė, the Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania to the Kingdom

of Denmark and the Republic of Iceland, handed over to the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania the archives of her mother, Jadvyga Damušienė, active émigré figure, educator, and a long-time patron of the organization "Ateitininkai" and the Lithuanian Camp Dainava (Manchester, MI). The ambassador also handed over part of her father Prof. Adolfas Damušis's, also the émigré activist and inventor, archive.



The signing ceremony. From the left: the ambassador Gintė Damušytė and the director-general of the National Library of Lithuania, Prof. Renaldas Gudauskas.

Photo: National Library of Lithuania

The Damušis' archive consisting of more than fifty boxes and containing valuable documents and photographs will be housed at the library's Rare Books and Manuscripts Unit.

THE ANNUAL SEMINAR OF THE DIASPORA RESEARCHERS

For the sixth year in a row, the diaspora researchers and archivists gathered at the National Library of Lithuania. The aim of the seminar is to bring together researchers working in the diaspora field, especially students, to give them the opportunity to share their research, and also to encourage the representatives of archives and museums to introduce the Lithuanian diaspora collections housed at their institutions to the broader audience.

The first seminar, entitled "The Young Diaspora Researchers'

Seminar," today is known under a slightly different name, "The Interdisciplinary Diaspora Researchers' Seminar." Currently, the community unites about 30 researchers working in various Lithuanian universities, institutes, museums, archives, and libraries.

SIX PERSPECTIVES ON DIASPORA



Ina Ėmužienė, Ph.D. Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/ National Library of Lithuania

Six perspectives on diaspora were presented at the sixth event. Ina Ėmužienė, Ph.D., who just recently defended her thesis on Lithuanian radio and TV programs in the US from 1944 to 1990, presented the Lithuanian-American electronic media. In particular she talked about the Lithuanian radio programs that were active in the country in 1944-1990: their frequency, geography, and the circumstances of their establishment. The researcher presented a list of the Lithuanian-American radio programs that ran during that period, stressing that it is not final. She is still discovering new archives, related to the topic she has been researching.

RESEARCHING THE LANGUAGE OF LITHUANIAN DIASPORA

The two researchers from Vilnius University, Eglė Gudavičienė, Ph.D. and Kristina Jakaitė-Bulbukienė, Ph.D., presented the linguistic research which they have been carrying since 2011. The project, dedicated to the language of Lithuanian diaspora and its linguistic identity, consists of two stages. During the first stage (2013-2015), the VU



Eglė Gudavičienė, Ph.D. Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/ National Library of Lithuania

researchers studied the language of Lithuanian immigrants; the second stage (2015-2017) focused on the usage and disappearance of the Lithuanian language in diaspora. The researchers managed to cover a number of countries and all three major Lithuanian emigration waves. The second stage concentrated on four cities: Oslo, London, Toronto and Buenos Aires. The material of the first stage has already been summarized and published in a book in Lithuanian, *Immigrants: Language and Identity* (Vilnius: Vilnius University Press, 2015). The second book will be published at the end of this year. All data collected during the project is stored in VU.



Kristina Jakaitė-Bulbukienė, Ph.D. Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/ National Library of Lithuania

Jakaitė-Bulbukienė talked about the linguistic behavior of the Lithuanians living in London. Most of the interviewees were young Lithuanians of a working-age, the representatives of the most recent emigration wave. The researchers were interested in the ways they communicate on social media, at work, how they read

newspapers, and what language(s) prevail(s) in their daily lives. Jakaitė-Bulbukienė noted that the Lithuanian immigrants in London have a more rational approach towards the Lithuanian language. The research has revealed that respondents' linguistic behavior depends on their social background, goals of emigration, and certain habits. Jakaitė-Bulbukienė also noticed that the Lithuanian language no longer prevails in the homes of immigrants. According to her, the community as such has lost its meaning to the third wave of Lithuanian immigrants. Instead, the social media has replaced it.

THE AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE LITERARY IDENTITIES

Rima Kasperionytė, a doctoral candidate at the Vytautas Magnus University Education Academy, spoke about the problems of researching the Jewish diaspora. To make her point she used the case of Grigory Kanovich (Grigorijus Kanovičius), a Russian writer who lived in Lithuania and currently lives in Israel. In her presentation, Kasperionytė raised an interesting issue of Kanovich's changing literary identity. Before he started writing novels, the writer was considered a Lithuanian-Russian author. At the beginning of publishing novels, he was a Lithuanian and a Russian author. At the peak of his literary career, Kanovich became the author of a Lithuanian and



Doctoral student Rima Kasperionytė Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/ National Library of Lithuania

Jewish origin, and when he was leaving for Israel, he became a Jew. Kanovich himself says that he does not belong to any of the above-mentioned literatures.



Doctoral student Marija Navickaitė Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/ National Library of Lithuania

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES OF THE LITHUANIAN DIASPORA

Marija Navickaitė, a PhD student at the Vytautas Magnus University History Department, presented the cartography of Lithuanian diaspora's cultural and political activities in Western Europe and the US during the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries. The final version of Navickaitė's e-map will contain information about Lithuanian cultural and social centers, such as societies, publishing houses, newspapers, and etc.



Senior researcher at the National Library of Lithuania Valdona Budreckaitė Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/ National Library of Lithuania

Valdonė Budreckaitė, a senior researcher at the National Library of Lithuania, took a closer look at the role of the diaspora in shaping Lithuania's image in the US in 1990. Although the role of the Lithuanian diaspora



The participants of the seminar.

Photo: Vygaudas Juozaitis/

in America in the struggle for Lithuanian independence is universally recognized, there hasn't been systematic approach to it. Budreckaitė briefly reviewed articles and editorials concerning Lithuania and Lithuanian people that appeared in 1990, grounding her analysis on the American daily *The New York Times*.

HUNTING DOWN THE LITHUANIAN ARCHIVES IN AUSTRALIA AND SOUTH AMERICA

Dr. Juozapas Balčiūnas, the director of the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art, talked about recent expeditions to Australia and South America. After two trips to Australia, the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Art has received almost 300 kilograms or over 230 thousand documents from the Lithuanian-Australian Community, including manuscripts, photographs, correspondence, video and audio material.

Another presenter, also from the Lithuanian Archives of Literature and Arts, Vaida Jonušytė, just recently returned from South America. In Argentina and Uruguay, she met with the members of five Lithuanian organizations. During her trip, Jonušytė and her colleagues identified 20 collections and brought 120 kilograms of documents to Lithuania. Balčiūnas says that the Archive is planning another expedition to Australia and New Zealand, which was the first country to start receiving the

WWII refugees. The head of the Archive also wants to organize an expedition to Belarus and Russia.

MEETING WITH THE FILM DIRECTOR RAKAUSKAITE

During the second part of the seminar, the participants had a chance to watch a recent Lithuanian documentary "Kelionės namo" (Back to the Dreamland) directed by Ramunė Rakauskaitė (2019, Studio Nominum). The film shows the late Soviet era, when the Soviet Lithuanian government began accepting more and more Lithuanian-American tourists. The director interviewed Lithuanian-Americans, who recalled first impressions from their trip to Lithuania, the dreamland which they knew only from their childhood or youth days or had never visited before.

Dalia Cidzikaitė

DRIVEN AWAY FROM THE HOMELAND - A REVIEW OF THE BOOK SONGBIRDS SWEEPED AWAY IN THE WIND BY LIDIJA MEDNIS.

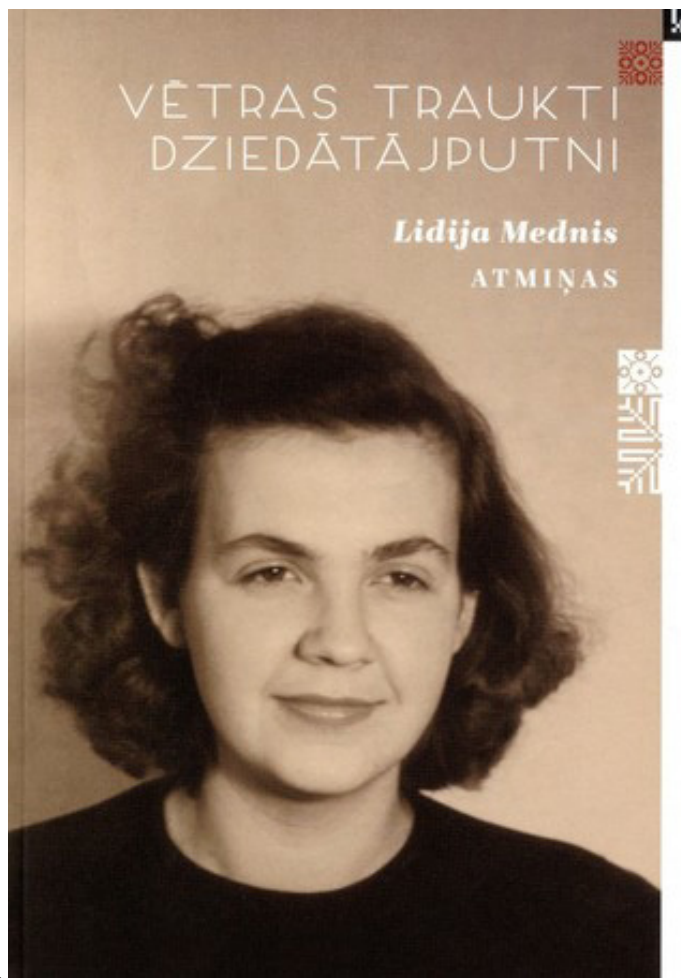
That January was exceedingly hot – the hottest in 50 years. Lidiya Mednis, a Latvian woman, had arrived in Australia in January 1951 after a long and tiring trip from Germany, where she and her husband had lived in a refugee camp after the war. Arriving in Australia, a country unknown

to them, a place so different from the Latvia and Germany where they had lived, they had to start building up their lives from nothing:

We were on tenderhooks about life, uncertain about what would happen, wondering on earth where we had arrived...I had never been so lost in my life.

Lidija was born in Riga in 1923 in the time of independence. Her father was the principal of the elementary school in Viesīte. Her mother worked as a teacher. In 1926, her sister Elga was born. Together they lived in the small community of Viesīte.

In her book *Songbirds swept away in the wind*, A memoir Lidiya Mednis describes her happy childhood in the village. She writes in fragmented pieces, about cooking jam, Mr. Mūrnieks and the herrings, the Red Cross group. What stands out is the social life of the village; playing and working



together, often improvising and helping one another. The small stories give an image of both a peaceful and joyful time.

Sometimes, in a few sentences she refers to tragedies that lay ahead, contrasting them with the stories of the harmonious life in the village. She makes clear that this way of living will end, becoming beyond reach. Reading about the happy days, you already feel the loss.

Inevitably the years of war approach. The stories make clear how life goes on, despite the war and the insecure fates of the boys and men. Work on the farms, carried on by women, needs to be done. In 1943, there is still a song festival: The audience was moved to tears by the song... May you live long Latvia, which was sung three times.

Most impressive are the letters at the end of the book, written during the war. These are about the day-to-day life devoid of a routine and about the uncertainties that follow. What makes it emotional is how information reported in a matter-of-fact way can hide a tragedy, like a letter from her mother writing from Riga to Lidija's sister: Elga, your coat is still with the tailor. Next week it will be ready.

But it is the end of September, and the front is getting closer quickly. Elga stays in the countryside and will not come to Riga any more. In early October both she, Lidija and their father--all separately--will flee the country, while their mother will stay behind in Riga taking care of an orphanage, not wanting to leave the children alone.

Their mother had already written: Please don't feel put out that I am not with you, but my responsibilities take first priority

and I feel that I'm needed here more. They will not see her again.

All three of them will arrive in Germany. It is there that Lidija's sister Elga, very shortly before the end of the war, is wounded and dies. Lidija just describes what happens, but you can feel the powerlessness between the lines, which is then concentrated in a single question: Why?

Lidija becomes a student at the Baltic University in Hamburg, and there she meets her future husband. Together they decide to emigrate to Australia, as friends from the university had already emigrated to this very hot and unfamiliar country.

The start is very difficult, but Lidia manages, with a tremendous amount of energy, to make something of her life. Though Lidija was trained as a nurse and a student of medicine, she becomes an art teacher and painter. In her sixties, she decides to attend a writer's course where I write and hope to become a serious writer.

Songbirds swept away in the wind is a very beautiful publication in two languages--English and Latvian. It has a great many pictures, dating from pre-war times, to the life in Australia. It has clearly been made with great care and love. It is to remember the life of Lidija Mednis and her family and all those who were in the same situation, facing a tragic era when war took over the lives of so many people.

http://lidijamednis.slb.org.au/index_EN.htm

Helga Merits

MAY 28TH - 30TH 2020 NEW DIRECTIONS IN BALTIC STUDIES CHARLOTTE, NC (USA) CALL FOR PAPERS

www.aabs2020.com

The Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS) conference will be held May 28th-30th 2020, in Charlotte, NC (USA) at Queens University. The conference theme is "New Directions in Baltic Studies." We encourage papers which explore new directions in the field: new and innovative research methods, case studies, pedagogy, and research areas. Paper proposals will be accepted from faculty, other scholars and independent researchers, and advanced graduate students. Proposals from undergraduates or first-year graduate students require lead authors to be full-time faculty members. We are accepting proposals for panels, workshops, posters, and individual papers in the fields of history, politics, social sciences, culture, economics, education and pedagogy, digital humanities, libraries, literature, film, language, the Baltic diaspora, and the arts.

Proposal abstracts of 250 words or less, with name, email, and institutional affiliation, can be emailed as an attachment to aabs2020@wingate.edu.

Proposals due October 15th

