

THE IMMIGRANT AND LITHUANIA:

You Will Be A Better American

"The question of loyalties is a perennial one for immigrants. It was a reoccurring theme among the Lithuanian Americans. The American-born Lithuanian for that matter still has to resolve the problem for himself. The first to seek a compromise between "Americanism" and "Lithuanian-ism" was Vytautas Sirvydas, who in the 1930s coined the succinct motto: "Americans first, but Lithuanians always!" The American-born Marian Father, Frank Yančius, in an editorial in the English-language magazine, The Marian, gives a rebuttal to the Lithuanian-Americans who reject the heritage of their fathers."

Source: Editorial, The Marian, March 1951

The Rebuttal by Father Yančius:

In your last letter you scolded me for my so-called "Un-American" leanings and found it difficult to understand how I, who was born and raised in this glorious land of ours, can call myself a Lithuanian and concern myself so much about things that are Lithuanian. In your opinion, it's downright unpatriotic for me, an American, to act so.

Well, Friend, as a fellow American and Lithuanian, you are entitled to an answer. There are many reasons why I am proud of my Lithuanian heritage.

First and foremost is the simple reason that God made me a Lithuanian. He allowed me to be born and to live in America as the son of wonderful Lithuanian immigrant parents. In other words, Friend, God made me at one and the same time a Lithuanian and an American. To deny my Lithuanian ancestry would be to find fault with the handiwork of my Creator.

Next comes the God-given command to love and honor one's parents. By being ashamed of my Lithuanian origin, I would be lacking in the proper filial respect for my parents. Furthermore, all religious motives aside, I would discredit myself in the eyes of my friends and relatives, for Lithuanian blood flows in my veins.

Our America is a melting pot of cultures, a mixture of many peoples and races who have all contributed their bit to our American way of life. To me, my parents represent America. Their sweat and blood and tears, their calloused hands and aching bones, like those of countless other immigrants, have helped build this glorious land of ours into a mighty bulwark of democracy and freedom. By being

ashamed of them, I would be ashamed of America and all it stands for today.

If you understand all this, Friend, you will readily see that I am not unpatriotic when I refer to myself as a Lithuanian and take such pride in things Lithuanian. Instead you will be glad that I have not betrayed my birthright--that glorious Lithuanian heritage of which I am so proud. You will be glad that I speak the beautiful tongue of my forefathers, that I live to hear and sing their songs, that I take a special delight in reading their literature, studying their history, for it helps to make me a better American.

Still more will you be glad that I fight for Lithuanian rights and freedom, for it means that I know the value of freedom and respect the rights of others to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. The enemies of Lithuanian freedom are enemies of American freedom. By fighting them, I fight for America.

Today, when the degradations of communism menace the freedom of America and the rest of the world, it has become my duty as an American and a Lithuanian to fight for Lithuanian freedom and independence.

Remember these things, Friend, the next time you feel uneasy over my "foreign" leanings and question my patriotism. Instead of criticizing, join my in the fight for Lithuanian independence. You, too, are a Lithuanian. By being a better Lithuanian, you will be a better American.

Submitted by Henry Gaidis

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BOO'S AND HISSES....

...go to the Baltimore Sunpapers for not covering immediately the tragic story of the border guards recently slaughtered in Lithuania. Call and complain! Was someone asleep at the news desk?

...go to President Bush for not taking a firmer stand during the talks with Gorbachev regarding the independence of the Baltic Republics. Double-speak still abounds: the U.S. does not recognize the incorporation of the Baltics but won't say it to Gorby's face. Call the White House and make it clear that all this political correctness causes us to be a two-faced nation. Gorby must be laughing up his sleeve....