Antanas Smetona

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov)

Introduction

Antanas Smetona (1874-1944) was born in Užulėnis, Kovno Governorate, Russian Empire. In 1886, he became the only child in his family to go to school, and in 1893, he began attending Jelgava Gymnasium in Latvia. A teacher there promoted Lithuanian language and culture, but the school made everyone use Russian, and Smetona was expelled for non-compliance. After graduating from a different school, Smetona moved to Vilnius where he became active in Lithuanian cultural life, joined the Lithuanian Democratic Party, and worked on various Lithuanian newspapers and periodicals. During World War I, Smetona assisted Lithuanian victims and was elected Chairman of the Council of Lithuania. He was elected the first president of Lithuania in 1919, but was replaced the next year. In 1926, he became president again after helping overthrow the previous president. Following the Soviet Union occupation of Lithuania during World War II, Smetona turned over power to his prime minister and fled the country. He and his family eventually settled in Cleveland, Ohio, where Smetona worked on a history of Lithuania and his memoirs until his 1944 death.

Important Dates

- August 10 (July 28, Russian calendar), 1874: Antanas Smetona is born in Užulėnis in the Russian Empire. (Russia had annexed Lithuania in 1795.)
- 1902: Smetona moves to Vilnius, the largest city and capital of Lithuania.
- 1918: Smetona signs the Act of Independence of Lithuania.
- April 4, 1919: State Council of Lithuania elects Smetona the first president of the Republic of Lithuania.
- 1927: Smetona dissolves parliament. The following year he writes a new constitution, giving more power to the president, and in 1929 he assumes dictatorial powers.
- June 15, 1940: Smetona turns power over to the prime minister and flees Lithuania.
- March 1941: After many stops, Smetona and family arrive in New York where he is greeted by journalists and Lithuanian-American representatives.
- January 9, 1944: Smetona dies in a fire at his son's house in Cleveland, Ohio.

Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), proximity or as phrases: Antanas Smetona, Lithuania, president.
- Limit your search by date to find information about Smetona's politics.
- Search newspapers in all states, not just Ohio.

Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "Antanas Smetona Elected President of Lithuania" *Omaha Daily Bee* (Omaha, NE), April 10, 1919, Image 3, col. 3.
- "Lithuania Spares 4 Nazi Plotters" *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), May 18, 1935, Image 1, col. 6.
- "Dies in Ohio Fire" *Henderson Daily Dispatch* (Henderson, NC), January 12, 1944, Image 1, col. 2.
- "Clevelando Ir Apielinkēs Žinios" *Dirva* (Cleveland, OH), January 21, 1944, Image 8, col. 1, col. 4.
- "What Became of the Russia-Friendly Lithuanian Government?" *Dirva* (Cleveland, OH), July 6, 1945, Image 6, col. 4-5.