

public knowledge, he told a Lithuanian newspaper interviewer that he would continue in his grandfather and father's footsteps and eventually return to Lithuania. Privately he told his staff that he did not intend to stay in his diplomatic post in Italy long. I think he had decided that he could best serve Lithuania not in its diplomatic service but by fully participating in the political and civic life of Lithuania. Though it's only speculation on my part, I think he would have focused a great deal of his attention in Lithuania on the political and civic education of its youth. Keeping in mind his fondness for and support with young people and his habit of pursuing long-term goals, this would have been a very appropriate fit for him.

It's difficult to say what the long-term significance of Stasys Lozoraitis will be in Lithuanian history. It was clear to the people who worked for him that he was an exceptional person, the prototype of a wise ambassador and a leader dedicated to Lithuania. To me, he was the symbol of the ideal Lithuanian, undeformed, unsocialized and unamericanized. In every period of history, individuals emerge who come to represent its prominent heroes or villains. Many worthy individuals emerged during the rebirth of Lithuania at the end of the 20th century. But for me, the two giants of the age were and remain Vytautas Landsbergis and Stasys Lozoraitis. I don't know if historians will agree with my assessment. Ambassador Lozoraitis himself would not have cared too much about gaining their approval. According to one of my former colleagues, the ambassador never displayed a sense of pride. "He always said, it's not important what or how much a person has, it's important what he does with what he has."

I hope we don't ever forget all that Stasys Lozoraitis accomplished.

Victor Nolas

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## TRIVIA QUESTION

(#134)

Learned It

The Lithuanian word "LAIMAS" is a loanword from what language?

(A) Greek (B) Yiddish (C) Finnish

Answer to Trivia Quiz on page 22

## CSI Lithuania: the Tuskulėnai Mass Grave

Neither murder nor grief has a statute of limitations. When natural disasters such as tsunamis or hurricanes strike unexpectedly; or, when terrorist acts such as the 9-11 World Trade Center attack suddenly confront us, the scientific expertise of forensic anthropologists are quickly called upon. Whenever the remains of our fallen military are discovered whether in the Middle East, Viet Nam, or anywhere in the world, forensic anthropologists face the daunting task of recovering the remains for repatriation for an honorable burial by their family. Along with other investigators, these same forensic anthropologists have to painstakingly piece together minute bits of evidence preserved in the archaeological record as well as any evidence of trauma to the skeletal remains to determine what actually happened to the victims.



Dr. R. Janbacher at the excavation site.

In 1994 when the newly independent Republic of Lithuania discovered a Soviet era KGB "killing field" dating from the 1940s at Tuskulėnai, a park-like setting right in Vilnius, a call was immediately put out to find the best and the brightest of Lithuania's forensic anthropology talent to conduct the excavation and perform the forensic examination of this mass gravesite. An early member of this forensic "A"-team was forensic anthropologist Rimantas Jankauskas, PhD who holds dual faculty appointments at both the Faculty of Medicine, Vilnius University and Lithuania's national Institute of Forensic Medicine attached to the Mykolas Romeris



*Skeletal remains of some of the 734 recovered bodies at the mass grave.*

University also in Vilnius. Additional forensic scientists from Vilnius Lithuania were Antanas Garonas and Arunas Barkas. Lithuania's Centre for Investigation of Crimes, "Lietuvos pilys," produced Vytautas Urbanavicius to round out a few of the key forensic scientists. Many other institutions and agencies became involved. Very close collaboration using the diverse skills of legal, forensic medical, and archaeological professionals throughout every stage of the mass grave excavation and forensic investigation resulted in the identification of over forty individuals among the victims executed by the Communist regime from 1944 through 1947 as well as how and when the executions were conducted.

Using traditional archaeological principles and techniques, the goals of the team included the recovery of all remains present, the identification of individuals if possible, and the reconstruction of the history of the site, i.e. what happened and when. Initial reconnaissance of the site established a perimeter to the excavations. Archaeologists can employ geophysical detection methods looking for ground disturbances, ground penetrating radar, magnetometers, and even cadaver dogs to thoroughly survey an excavation site. Excavation began in the summer of 1994. Over the course of several seasons of digging, the skeletal remains of 734 bodies were recovered all but four were men and almost all of them

showed one or more bullet holes to the back of the head. Over 100 bodies also showed sharp force stab wounds consistent with bayonet or pick axe wounds. Some showed bone fractures resulting from blunt force trauma. A total of 43 pits, some of which showed shoring with timbers, were ultimately uncovered. Most of the pits had been dug into the floor of a former garage used by the occupying Soviets. The selected garage site had offered the Soviets an enclosed site protected from discovery by surrounding Lithuanian partisan activity. The garage's earthen floor was also soft enough to dig up during Lithuania's freezing cold winter months. Piecing together all the evidence, the Lithuanian forensic team meticulously documented what happened and when. Beginning in 1944 after the Russian reoccupation of Lithuania, the Soviets arrested hundreds upon hundreds of Lithuanians. Many were sentenced to death by the Soviets for "treason" or "betrayal of the motherland." Their execution would be performed in the execution chamber at the KGB prison in Vilnius by frequently drunken guards. The bodies of these Lithuanians executed each night would be dumped into a truck with a tarp covering their bodies. The truck would then be driven several miles to the Tashkolnai garage site where the bodies would be unceremoniously thrown into a common pit until that pit became filled with bodies. This murderous activity by the Soviet KGB continued until 1947 when Stalin declared that instead of death sentences, such prisoners should be sentenced to 25 years of prison labor.



*Superimposition of Bishop Vincentas Borisevicius' skull*

More than forty murdered individuals have been identified so far. The identification methods included photographic and skull superimposition, dental and DNA identification, as well as looking for individual known traits such as healed bone lesions. Data provided by surviving family members was helpful in identification as were secret KGB documents, which were secured for information on arrested Lithuanians in KGB custody. Who were these Lithuanian resistors arrested and executed by the Communist Soviet regime? Some we know. Some we will never know. Murdered Christmas Eve, Kibikon, 1945 was Povilas Vilkavicius, a pharmacist accused of supplying medicine to partisans. Bishop Vincentas Borisevicius, a Catholic bishop from northern Lithuania, was 62-years old when he

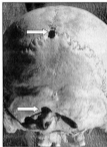


*A specially built columbarium – part of a memorial complex – containing recovered skeletons placed in separate numbered caskets.*

for their shared support and belief in a free and independent Lithuania. They all lie at rest now, honorably enshrouded, within a special memorial created by a free Lithuania at the site where their remains were first discovered, discarded like so much trash by their KGB killers. As the ongoing work of these Lithuanian forensic scientists continues, we can only wish them Godspeed.

*Dr. Thomas Resk*

*Dr. Thomas Resk is a forensic pathologist who practices as a Medical Examiner in Northern California.*



*Example of bullet entrance*

was executed on the night of November 18, 1946. Executed that same night was 36-year old Petras Pranas Gustaitis. The partisans Jona Sernaika and Leonas Tauzytis, executed the night of January 21, 1947. Suffering the same fate the following month was 28-year old Elena Vidugiryte. Nineteen-year old gymnasium students Alfonso Zukauskas, Vincas Baronas, Jurgis Dekaumpis, and Algimantas Gustaitis; all killed because they attempted to organize an underground resistance. The victims ranged in age from 19 to 66 years old. All of these Lithuanians were freedom fighters in their own right. Some were partisans who fought with a gun. Some fought only with their spirit. However, they were all resistors of the Soviet Communist regime occupying their native country – Lithuania. They all shared the same fate at the hands of their Russian oppressors paying the same price



*The Above!*