

October 15, 1940

[Delegation of Italian-American Groups]

FDR Speech File

RECORD OF CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN DELEGATION OF  
LITHUANIAN\*AMERICANS AND THE PRESIDENT DURING CALL  
OF THIS GROUP ON THE PRESIDENT TO THANK HIM FOR  
HIS STAND WHEN LITHUANIA WAS ANNEXED BY RUSSIA,  
AND TO PRESENT HIM WITH SOME LITHUANIAN TRINKETS.  
OCTOBER 15, 1940.

SPEAKER OF GROUP: Mr. President, <sup>the members of</sup> this delegation are  
loyal American citizens, first, last and always. We are  
sons of America but we feel that we are sons of Lithuania  
as well. We can be sons of both.

I would like to make a statement with reference to  
Lithuania. Probably I had better not, because I think you  
know it. The world knows of Lithuania, her losses, her  
difficulties. I think that I would better dispense with  
the conditions under which, as you stated, Lithuania  
temporarily has lost her independence, or it was suspended.

We feel, Mr. President, that when Lithuania temporarily  
lost that independence that other nations who had recognized  
her in the big family of nations should have taken some  
stand with reference to that Russian grab, bluntly speaking.  
However, nothing was done. The eyes of Lithuanians of  
America were turned towards those other Democracies that  
still remain in Europe, and our eyes were turned to you,  
Mr. President, for an expression. Sometime elapsed before  
any expression was made, but when you, Mr. President, stated  
the policy of the United States government with reference  
to that unlawful grab, it brought great hopes to us  
Lithuanians here in America, as no doubt it did to the  
Lithuanians of Lithuania. It brought new hopes to us,  
that ~~that~~ some day Lithuania will take her place among the  
other nations.

So, it is with that thought, Mr. President, that  
we come here today to express our gratitude to you for the  
stand which you have taken: Your foreign policy with refer-  
ence to these countries which have, as you stated, lost  
their independence temporarily. We have prepared this  
scroll and we wish that you would accept it in the spirit  
that we give it, with the thought that we are expressing  
our sincerest appreciation for what you have done, not only  
for us but for the other countries who are in the same  
position that Lithuania stands in. On behalf of this group,  
and particularly on my own behalf, I want to wish to you  
many, many years of good health and success in the  
administration of the affairs of this country.

THE PRESIDENT WAS THEN PRESENTED WITH <sup>AN</sup> STRING OF AMBER BEADS AND A SCROLL:

THE PRESIDENT: - Perfectly lovely amber. Well, you will probably see a photograph of my wife wearing this.

I am very appreciative and, of course, as you know, Lithuania eventually, in the end of this war, is going to be recognized as a nation just as much as a great many smaller countries. We think of Lithuania here as comparatively a small country, but we have a great many American Republics which are smaller than Lithuania, and we insist on them maintaining their independence. Take San Salvador and other small countries in Central and South America -- small populations but an absolute right to their own rights. It will be a long time before that can be applied to the small nations of Europe, but in the long run we have got to allow people who prefer to maintain a nation of their own, to do so. And that is what we are all working for, and that is why I say it is only a temporary suspension of independence and we will have Lithuania back on the map. And you will understand that I know how you feel, as my ancestors came here further back than yours, but nevertheless, I am an American, but I have a feeling for the Netherlands -- it is a sentimental feeling. I want the independence of the Netherlands. It is the same thing exactly. My mother's family comes from Belgium, ~~the~~ Belgium, and I have the same feeling about the independence of Belgium and that it will be restored.

It has been grand to see you.

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October 15, 1940

SPEAKER OF THE GROUP: Mr. President, the members of this delegation

are loyal American citizens, first, last and always. We are sons of America but we feel that we are sons of Lithuania as well. We can be sons of both.

I would like to make a statement with reference to Lithuania. Probably I had better not, because I think you know it. The world knows of Lithuania, her losses, her difficulties. I think that I would better dispense with the conditions under which, as you stated, Lithuania temporarily has lost her independence, or it was suspended.

We feel, Mr. President, that when Lithuania temporarily lost that independence that other nations who had recognized her in the big family of nations should have taken some stand with reference to that Russian grab, bluntly speaking. However, nothing was done. The eyes of Lithuanians of America were turned towards those other Democracies that still remain in Europe, and our eyes were turned to you, Mr. President, for an expression. Some time elapsed before any expression was made, but when you, Mr. President, stated the policy of the United States Government with reference to that unlawful grab, it brought great hopes to us Lithuanians here in America, as no doubt it did to the Lithuanians of Lithuania. It brought new hopes to us, that some day Lithuania will take her place among

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This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

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... of America ...  
... will ...  
... I would like to make a statement with reference to this ...  
... I think probably I had better not because I think you know it ...  
... the world knows of Lithuania, but because, for Lithuania ...  
... think that I would better discuss with the committee ...  
... as you stated, Lithuania's geographical position ...  
... is not ...  
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... paper to us, that some day Lithuania will take her place among

the other nations.

So, it is with that thought, Mr. President, that we come here today to express our gratitude to you for the stand which you have taken: your foreign policy with reference to these countries which have, as you stated, lost their independence temporarily. We have prepared this scroll and we wish that you would accept it in the spirit that we give it, with the thought that we are expressing our sincerest appreciation for what you have done, not only for us but for the other countries who are in the same position that Lithuania stands in. On behalf of this group, and particularly on my own behalf, I want to wish to you many, many years of good health and success in the administration of the affairs of this country.

(The President was then presented with a string of amber beads and a scroll.)

THE PRESIDENT: Perfectly lovely amber. Well, you will probably see a photograph of my wife wearing this.

I am very appreciative and, of course, as you know, Lithuania eventually, in the end of this war, is going to be recognized as a nation just as much as a great many smaller countries. We think of Lithuania here as comparatively a small country, but we have a great many American republics which are smaller than Lithuania, and we insist on them maintaining their independence. Take San Salvador and other small countries in Central and South America -- small populations but an absolute right to their own rights. It will be a long time before that can be applied to

the small nations of Europe, but in the long run we have got to allow people, who prefer to maintain a nation of their own, to do so. And that is what we are all working for, and that is why I say it is only a temporary suspension of independence and we will have Lithuania back on the map. And you will understand that I know how you feel, as my ancestors came here further back than yours but, nevertheless, I am an American, but I have a feeling for the Netherlands -- it is a sentimental feeling. I want the independence of the Netherlands. It is the same thing exactly. My mother's family comes from Belgium, and I have the same feeling about the independence of Belgium, and that it will be restored.

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