

Iš archyvų

Asta PETRAITYTĖ-BRIEDIENĖ
Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas

Ištrūkti į laisvąjį pasaulį: Viktoro Kamantausko epistolinis palikimas Jeilio universitete

Viktoras Kamantauskas (1899–1951) – lietuvių kalbininkas, vertėjas, pedagogas, spaudos agentūros redaktorius ir konsulas. 1906 m. su šeima jis išvyko į JAV, 1919 m. pradėjo studijuoti klasikinę filologiją Jeilio universitete. Nebaigęs studijų, 1921 m. grįžo į Lietuvą, o 1923 m. išvyko į Prancūziją ir Monpeljė universitete studijavo prancūzų kalbą. Po metų su žmona Irena Eimaityte grįžęs į Lietuvą, V. Kamantauskas mokytojavo Telšių ir Plungės gimnazijose. 1929 m. pakviestas į Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministeriją, jis pradėjo dirbti spaudos agentūroje ELTA anglų kalbos stilistu, nuo 1931 m. – vyriausiasis redaktorius, 1939 m. laikinai ėjo ELTA direktoriaus pareigas. 1939 m. spalį V. Kamantauskas paskirtas Lietuvos konsulu Liepojoje (Latvijoje) ir ten dirbo iki konsulato uždarymo 1940 m. rugpjūtį. Grįžęs į Kauną, dėstė anglų kalbą Vytauto Didžiojo universitete. 1944 m. su šeima pasitraukė į Vakarus. Gyvendamas Tiubingene (Vokietijoje), dirbo vertėju Vyriausiajame Lietuvos išlaisvinimo komitete ir Raudonajame Kryžiuje. 1950 m. pabaigoje išvyko į JAV, ten po metų mirė nuo širdies smūgio.

Platesnė V. Kamantausko biografijos analizė pristatoma šiame žurnalo numeryje skelbiamame straipsnyje „Kalbininko, vertėjo ir konsulo Viktoro Kamantausko biografinės trajektorijos“, kuriame atskleidžiami jo nuopelnai gryninant kalbą, saugant raštijos paminklus, produktyvus pasaulinės literatūros klasikos vertėjo įdirbis, trumpa konsulo karjera ir aktyvi veikla draugijose ir apskritai visuomenėje. Visos V. Kamantausko veiklos kryptys ne tik nubrėžia esmines jo biografijos trajektorijas, bet ir atveria daugiasluksnį šios asmenybės fenomeną.

Dėl neišlikusių ar dar neatrastų archyvinių dokumentų menkiausiai žinoma V. Kamantausko biografijos dalis apima jo gyvenimo ne Tėvynėje etapus, ypač laikotarpį po 1944 m. pasitraukimo iš Lietuvos ir vėlesnio atvykimo į JAV. Jeilio universiteto Beinecke'ės retų knygų ir rankraščių bibliotekoje saugomi keturi V. Kamantausko laišškai.¹ Vienas laiškas – su siuntėjo² ir gavėjo adresais – parašytas studijų kolegai Johnui Barlow Derby'ui (prie abiejų jų pavardžių esanti santrumpa „23“ pagal JAV universitetų tradiciją rodo, kad jie buvo Jeilio universiteto kurso draugai, turėję baigti studijas 1923 m.; toks skaičius, ypač Antrojo pasaulinio karo metais, buvo svarbus identifikacinis ženklas). Kiti trys laišškai skirti anglų literatūros profesoriui Chauncey'ui Brewsteriui Tinkeriui, Jeilio universitete saugomos XIX a. britų literatūros kolekcijos pradininkui, pirmam šio universiteto retų knygų saugotojui (jo veikla brėžia ryškią paralelę su kitu V. Kamantausko autoritetu, teisininku ir bibliografu Vaclovu Biržiška). Šis epistolinis palikimas ne tik dokumentuoja bei papildo V. Kamantausko biografiją po 1944 m., bet ir patvirtina tai, kad keliuose universitetuose studijavęs, aukštas pareigas ėjęs V. Kamantauskas neturėjo oficialaus diplomo. Vis dėlto jo gabumai, talentas ir ilgametė praktinė veikla neleidžia abejoti šios asmenybės kilnumu, profesionalumu bei nuveiktų darbų verte.

Viktoro Kamantausko laiškų komentarai ir tekstologinės pastabos

Pirmas iš keturių nuo 1947 m. kovo 25 d. iki 1948 m. vasario 18 d. parašytų laiškų buvo skirtas J. B. Derby'ui, kiti trys – profesoriui C. B. Tinkeriui. Tikėtina, kad J. B. Derby'is, į kurį V. Kamantauskas kreipėsi vardu ir po laišku pasirašė taip pat be pavardės, tik vardu, pasidalijo laiško kopija su profesoriumi, o šis atsiliepė gegužės 17 d. V. Kamantauskui į Tiubingeną parašytu laišku. Tai patvirtina antras, lygiai po 2 mėnesių C. B. Tinkeriui parašytas V. Kamantausko laiškas tikint, kad studijų kolega pasidalijo su profesoriumi visomis detalėmis (angl. *I believe John has given you some details*), t. y. apie metus, praleistus laisvoje Lietuvoje, kuri politine prasme jam buvo kaip „laimingas kortų namelis“ (angl. *the happy house of cards*), bet mokslinė prasme – kaip Pradžios knyga, kurios dalis jis pats buvo³, ir išgyvenimais per dvi okupacijas bei pasitraukus iš Tėvynės, kai neviltį keitė absurdas (angl. *out-Nazied the Nazis*). Vėlesnis V. Kamantausko laiškas vertė jo

¹ Chauncey Brewster Tinker Papers. GEN MSS 354. Box 2, folder 84. Series I. Correspondence CHAUNCEY BREWSTER TINKER CORRESPONDENCE. Homentowski, Victor / 1947–1948, Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University. Straipsnio autorė dėkoja Jeilio universiteto Beinecke'ės retų knygų ir rankraščių bibliotekai už galimybę susipažinti su dokumentais ir juos paskelbti.

² Kai kurių laiškų pradžioje ar pabaigoje V. Kamantauskas nurodė savo adresą, kuris buvo visada toks pats; kai kada prie adreso užrašydavo ir namo, kuriame jis gyveno su šeima, savininkės Osswald pavardę.

³ *Life in general in those days in Lithuania was something like the Genesis. A new world was coming into existence out of the chaos which the First World War had left in its wake in our part of Europe. Lithuania had to start from scratch and had to create an administration, an educational system, a literature, a press, in short, all the paraphernalia of modern civilized existence, practically out of nothing. It was an epic time, and I can say that I was a "pars" of it all, even if not a very "magna" one.*

autorių spėlioti ir nerimauti, kad ankstesnis laiškas adresato nepasiekė (išlikęs šiandien jis liudija, kad nerimauta be reikalo). Paskutinis V. Kamantausko laiškas profesoriui C. B. Tinkeriui buvo padėka už maisto paketus, pagalbą ieškant darbo bibliotekose, kuris garantuotų jo ir jo šeimos persikėlimą iš karo nualintos Europos į JAV. Akivaizdu, kad kreiptis pagalbos į profesorį (ir į mokslo draugus) V. Kamantauskas ryžosi skatinamas žmonos, nes šis, nuolat prisimenamas šeimos rate, buvo ypač gerbiamas autoritetas. Sovietų okupacijos metu patirti išgyvenimai, kai mirties buvo net trokštama (angl. *and a calm, peaceful death was the object of vehement, almost desperate longing*), o karas tapo svajone ir atokvėpiu (angl. *But the German-Soviet War broke out, and we obtained a temporary reprieve. How terrible the strain had been may be gathered from the fact that we had actually prayed for war.*), ypač paveikė V. Kamantausko sveikatą. Ne viename laiške užsimindamas apie ilgą gydymą, jis pasidalijo savo poliarizuotos kasdienybės tikrove: slegianti DP (perkeltųjų asmenų, angl. *displaced persons*) stovyklos buitį, kova už bilietą į gyvenimą, leidimą išvykti iš Vokietijos (kai net sesers vyras, tuo metu Niujorke rezidavęs danų konsulas Viggo'as Jensenas, negalėjo padėti) ir kryptinga intelektualinė veikla – knygos apie pirmąją sovietų okupaciją vertimas į anglų kalbą, lietuvių–prancūzų, lietuvių–anglų ir lietuvių–ispanų kalbų žodynų rengimas. Taigi, keturi V. Kamantausko laišakai liudija, kad, nepaisydamas visų nusivylimų, jis turėjo didįjį tikslą – padėti savo tautai (angl. *As you see, most of my work in Tübingen has had the object of helping my fellow-countrymen in the new life awaiting them in various parts of the world.*). Šį V. Kamantausko kasdienybės kontrastą laiške paryškina trumpa, bet įspūdinga jo autobiografija, kuri galėjo paskatinti J. B. Derby'į kreiptis į C. B. Tinkerį. Tą tekstologiniu aspektu liudija pirmo V. Kamantausko laiško kopija. Kiti trys jo laišakai atspausdinti mašinėle (nebūtinai paties autoriaus) ir jo pasirašyti pieštuku kaip *Victor Homentowski*. Tai – ta vardo ir pavardės versija, kuri užfiksuota Jeilio universiteto dokumentuose.⁴ Šaltinio autentiškumą liudija laiškų paraštėse paties autoriaus palikti įrašai. Tekste matomi pabraukimai ir raidžių paryškinimai (*bold*) interpretuotini kaip spausdinimo klaidų taisymai, atlikti rašomąja mašinėle. Pieštuku daryti taisymai yra pažymėti kursyvu. Dokumentai pateikiami originalūs (be rašybos, stiliaus ir gramatikos taisymų), su komentarais ir nedideliais grafinės struktūros (eilučių ilgio ir skaičiaus bei tarpų tarp jų) pakeitimais.

⁴ *Catalogue of Yale University 1920–1921*. New Haven: Yale University, 1921, žiūrėta 2026 vasario 4, <https://archive.org/details/catalogueoffice02univgoog/page/520/mode/2up?q=Homentowski>.

Copy of a Letter

From: Victor Homentowski, '23
Tubingen, Herrenbergerstr. 65

To: John B. Derby, '23
57 West 9th Street, New York, N.Y. (GRamercy 5-4003)

Date: March 25, 1947

Dear John,

You have certainly heaped coals on my poor head with a vengeance by the wholly unmerited warmth and kindness of your response to my "clamavi"⁵, after such a long break, which I can account for now, on looking back, only by a vicious heredity or escapism of the most rabid kind. Your very generous attitude has given me great comfort and has helped me to recover some of my faith in humanity, which I have come to regard as hopelessly depraved, and to rediscover the good old USA, which I knew and loved and which I had failed to find in the representatives which you sent over to Europe in the role of conquering heroes.

But as I have a great deal of ground to cover to make up the arrears and time is short – a French friend is leaving tomorrow for France and has promised to post my letter by air mail, I shall plunge into "medias res"⁶ without further apologies.

Here are some of the jobs I have worked at after my last fling at Montpellier and after I got married in 1924 and was obliged thereby to settle down: I taught Lithuanian, English, and Latin in two Lithuanian state colleges for about five years; helped to found and edit a weekly for farmers; worked for about ten years in the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs where I was editor, editor-in-chief, and director of the Lithuanian Telegraph Agency; was string representative of the Associated Press in Lithuania; was Foreign Commissioner of the Lithuanian Boy Scout Association; was Lithuanian Consul in Liepaja, Latvia; was a regular contributor to the Lithuanian daily press and various scientific publications; and during that period wrote a number of text-books for Lithuanian secondary schools, some of which were of a pioneering character, and made heaps of translations in an effort to popularize Occidental⁷ literature in my country. The list appended hereto will give you some idea of my literary activities, which in numerous instances were not dictated by my personal tastes, but an urgent necessity for keeping the pot boiling, especially after my two boys were born.

Lithuania is a very small country, and it was not very difficult to be in the swim and to be in touch with the leaders of the country's political, social, and cultural life. Life in

⁵ *Clamavi* (lot.) – šaukiau.

⁶ *In medias res* (iš lot. k. „į reikalo vidurį“) – nuoroda į romėnų poeto Kvinto Horacijaus Flako (65–8 m. pr. Kr.) traktatą „Poezijos menas“ ir posakį „iš karto prie reikalo“.

⁷ *Occidentalis* (lot.) – vakarietiškas, vakarinis.

general in those days in Lithuania was something like the Genesis. A new world was coming into existence out of the chaos which the First World War had left in its wake in our part of Europe. Lithuania had to start from scratch and had to create an administration, an educational system, a literature, a press, in short, all the paraphernalia of modern civilized existence, practically out of nothing. It was an epic time, and I can say that I was a “pars” of it all, even if not a very “magna” one.⁸ In view of my philological interests, I devoted most of my energies to the development and standardization of the language, which up to the middle of the nineteenth century was but a peasant dialect, but had made, as the result of the loving labor of a number of gifted philologists, considerable advances as a literary medium. Independent life made new and great demands on the language, especially in the field of technical terminology, and here there was a very wide scope for

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creative effort. Expert philologists and amateurs applied themselves to this task with such good effect that now the most abstruse philosophical treatises can be written in the vernacular, and I myself have been able to make faithful renderings of some of the masterpieces of Western literature without any particular difficulty. All this involved a great deal of research, and in making my translations I have been often obliged to refer to the simple people for enlightenment /just as Martin Luther had done in making his translation of the Bible in similar circumstances/. For instance, in translating “Treasure Island”, I continually kept in touch with the Lithuanian fishermen on the Baltic seaboard, who supplied me with the necessary seafaring terms. When the living language failed, new words had to be invented, and many are the words which I have coined and put into circulation.

On the whole, it was a rich and ample life. But black clouds were gathering, and the first Soviet occupation brought the happy house of cards in which we had been living tumbling down about our ears. Because I had been a consul, because I had relatives living abroad, in short because I was a “bourgeois”, a democrat, a patriot, a Catholic, I was suspect to the new regime and had to lie low. I did not dare to look for a job, and we were obliged to sell our clothing, furniture, and other bourgeois paraphernalia, which our new overlords were exceedingly avid to acquire. But to remain workless in the sweated Soviet society was equally dangerous, and I finally applied for an editor’s post in the University publishing house. My application was turned down by the political commissar of the University because of my allegedly bourgeois antecedents, but with the help of a former scout-master now high up in the Soviet hierarchy I was finally passed. I worked as editor up to the terrible month of June, 1941, when the mass deportations to Siberia began. We knew that we had been blacklisted and earmarked for deportation and for two long weeks we lived in nerve-racking suspense. But the German-Soviet War broke out, and we obtained a temporary reprieve. How terrible the strain had been may be gathered from the fact that we had actually prayed for war.

⁸ V. Kamantausko panaudoti *pars* (iš lot. k. „dalis“) ir *magna* (iš lot. k. „didelė“) yra nuoroda į Vergilijaus poemą „Eneida“ ir frazę *quorum pars magna fui* (iš lot. k. „kurio didžiule dalimi buvau“) – taip pabrėžta, kad asmuo ne tik stebėjo įvykius, bet ir aktyviai juose dalyvavo.

During the German occupation, we went through a similar ordeal. Because of the all-prevailing presence of the German labor office, I had to look for work, in spite of my failing health, to avoid deportation to Germany as I was in the affected age bracket, and finally landed the English lectureship at the University of Kaunas. But my joy at having secured my immediate present was of very short duration as the Germans in their fury over the complete failure of their pet scheme of raising a Lithuanian SS-Legion closed the University, along with the other institutions of higher learning.⁹ In the meantime, my elder son, who had reached the age of eighteen, became liable to conscription for labor in Germany and was obliged to interrupt his studies and to go into hiding; and while hiding developed typhus and then contracted pneumonia, and our measure seemed to be very full.

We were deliberately put by the Germans, from the very start of their occupation, on a starvation diet; and to eke out the miserable rations we were issued my wife was obliged to make periodic sorties to the countryside where, in exchange for articles of clothing and household chattels, it was possible to obtain such necessities as fat and flour. Every time she left, she risked imprisonment for black-market activities, and often her life as the railroad lines over which she had to travel were regularly mined by the partisans. I was ill at the time – the extermination of the Lithuanian Jews was afoot under way, and the grisly processions of utterly cowed men, women, and children past our house in the grey of the early morning had been too much for my overstrained nerves – and I had to content myself with cooking of a very sketchy sort and other household tasks.

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In 1944, we were so hard up as regards food that we moved to a small cathedral town¹⁰ in Southern Lithuania where my brother was organist and as such was abundantly provided with food by the devout country people. The Russian advance of that summer caught us there, and after spending over a month in barns and dugouts, from eight to ten kilometers from the front lines where furious battles were raging in the Germans' desperate effort to stem the Red tide before it reached the East Prussian frontier and in the Russians' equally desperate effort to break through at any cost, we were rounded up by German military police and taken to a series of congested and vermin-infested camps for *Ostarbeiter*¹¹. We were auctioned off to the Berlin labor office, but in the confusion ensuing upon the Russian break-through managed to escape to a village in Thuringia. There we worked on a farm and there, at long last, we witnessed the arrival of American troops.

We thought that now that we had contacted Allied troops the worst of our troubles would be over and that justice would be done by us. But we were met with distrust and suspicion and often found ourselves in the paradoxical and rather ludicrous position of being considered as having, somehow, out-Nazied the Nazis. And again we lived in fear

⁹ 1943 m. lietuviams atsakius stoti į nacių organizuotą SS legioną, vokiečių valdžia keršydama suėmė ir į Štuthofo koncentracijos stovyklą ištremė 46 visuomenėje gerai žinomus Lietuvos inteligentus.

¹⁰ V. Kamantausko brolis Vaclovas buvo vargonininkas, prieš pasitraukdamas 1944 m. iš Lietuvos dirbo Vilkaviškio katedroje.

¹¹ *Ostarbeiter* (vok.) – rytų darbininkas; nacistinėje Vokietijoje vartotas terminas, apibūdinantis iš okupuotos Rytų Europos į Vokietiją priverstinių darbų išvežtus civilius.

and suspense, under the constant threat of deportation to Soviet-occupied Lithuania where we were faced, at the best, with exile to a concentration camp in Siberia.

A couple of weeks before Thuringia was turned over to the Russians, we managed to get away to Wurzburg. As the town had been completely gutted by an Allied air raid, together with the university library, and as I had begun to work on a Lithuanian-English Dictionary, to meet the very urgent demand for such a work on the part of my fellow-countrymen, and access to a university library was absolutely necessary to me, we moved to Tubingen, in the French Zone /October, 1945/ where we have been living since, as DPs.

DP life, in spite of all the Soviet agents say to the contrary, is not exactly a bed of roses. After a great deal of trouble, we were able to obtain a little room in the outskirts of the town to house us /four persons in all/, and we considered ourselves in a privileged position, as compared with those DPs who have been cooped up in DP camps. We had our first experience of DP diet upon coming to Tubingen. Up to then we had been living on the German ration, and it may interest you to hear that when we lived on the farm in Thuringia, I never felt so ravenously hungry as after eating the “hearty” German farmer’s dinner. The French, whose larders were not too well provided, very generously shared their little with us, and as we were issued Red Cross packages pretty regularly, we were pretty well off as regards food. But when Unrra¹² took over in spring last year, things changed very definitely for the worse.

But, in spite of shortages and deficiencies of all sorts, I have continued work on my Dictionary, have written a French Manual for Lithuanians DPs and have published it, have issued a second edition of my English Grammar, have compiled a Spanish Manual for Lithuanian DPs intending to emigrate to South America, and have translated a book on the first Soviet occupation of Lithuania into English. As you see, most of my work in Tubingen has had the object of helping my fellow-countrymen in the new life awaiting them in various parts of the world.

This brings me to the question of our emigration. Of course, we would be very glad to come to the United States. But there are two major obstacles in our way: our residence in the French Zone, from which no one is permitted to apply for an emigration visa for the present, and our lack of affidavits¹³. The first obstacle could be overcome if I could get a teaching job in some American college¹⁴ or university /I

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could teach Greek, Elementary French, Russian/, and the second has been partially overcome by my brother-in-law, the Danish Consul General in New York, who has undertaken to defray the expenses of our passage. On the whole, I have very little hope of ever seeing the United States again.

¹² UNRRA (angl. *United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*) – Jungtinių Tautų pagalbos ir atkūrimo administracija, veikusi 1943–1949 m. ir teikusi įvairią pagalbą nukentėjusiesiems Antrojo pasaulinio karo metu.

¹³ *Affidavit* (angl.) – dokumentas, kuriuo JAV pilietis laidavo už asmenį, atvykstantį į JAV, ir prisiėmė finansinę atsakomybę.

¹⁴ Dėl spausdinimo klaidos raidė „e“ atkurta pagal kontekstą.

But I must end this long letter. I am afraid it is rather disjointed and sketchy¹⁵, but I was obliged to write it in a great hurry. My next will be, I hope, a definite improvement. Of course, I was very glad to hear of the other fellows and was rather surprised that they still remembered me. I was particularly glad to hear of Professor Tinker, for whom I have a particular corner reserved in my heart. I have been trying to trace Jimmy Angell through the American Consulates in Baden-Baden and Stuttgart, but they could not supply me with any information about him. So, poor Goldberg¹⁶ has gone the way of all flesh. He was very good to me.

Mes hommages respectueux a Madame Derby.
Please write.

Victor

Nr. 2

Tuebingen, May 25, 1947.

Dear Professor Tinker,

To hear from you /your extremely kind letter came into my hands only on May 17/ was a privilege which I appreciate all the more greatly in view of my previous extraordinary behaviour; and has been the cause of great joy to my family, to which you have been a household word ever since it became a family, and of joyous but rather ungenerous "I-told-you-sos" on the part of my wife, who had been going at me hammer and tong for ever so long in an effort to convince *me/* of the propriety of writing to you.

I believe John has given you some details of the ordeal ~~through~~ which we have been through, and I shall confine myself, availing myself of your very kind offer of help, to our most urgent present need, i.e. that of leaving Germany at the earliest possible moment and opportunity. We who have had the close-range experience of the late paradoxical war, which seems to us to have been even more senseless than the general run of wars, react with extreme morbidity to the possibility of a recrudescence. Hence the ardent desire of all those ill-starred people such as we to put as much distance as is humanly possible between themselves and Europe, and especially the Gallant Ally.

I wonder if you remember what you once said about your fear of mobs and mob-rule /following the smashing of the painted windows in the Old Library/? Your words made a great impression upon me at the time, and on my return to Lithuania I was continually haunted by a vague fear of falling victim to mob-rule, but never dreamed that actual reality could be so horrible. You may wonder, but during the Bolshevik occupation of my country, to die in bed, surrounded by my family, had become almost an

¹⁵ Dėl spausdinimo klaidos raidė „h“ atkurta pagal kontekstą.

¹⁶ Spėjama, kad V. Kamantauskui studijų draugo J. B. Derby'io, tuo metu gyvenusio Niujorke, kontaktus galėjo surasti sesers vyras; taip pat buvo ieškomi ar prisimenami kiti bendramoksliai – Jamesas Knickerbockeris Angellas ir Henry'is Robertas Goldbergas (mirė 1927 m.), kuris kartu su V. Kamantausku dalyvaudavo ir laimėdavo konkursų prizus, buvo vienas geriausių universiteto studentų (*Catalogue of Yale University 1920–1921*).

obsession with me, who hated and abhorred the very idea of death; and a calm, peaceful death was the object of vehement, almost desperate longing.

My sister and her husband have been doing all in their power to get us away, but have run against two fundamental difficulties : their inability to make out proper affidavits /they are Danish citizens/, and the fact of our residence in the French Zone, from which no one has been eligible up to now for emigration to the United States. The first difficulty has been partly got over by the intervention of the Catholic Refugee Committee, which has instructed its delegate at Stuttgart to provide us with a corporate affidavit. But the latter has refused to do so on the ground that our application for an American visa would not be honoured by the American Consulate at Stuttgart because of our residence in the French Zone. This difficulty, we have been told by the aforesaid delegate, could be got over if I were able to get a legal contract from some American college or university as teacher for a specified period of time, at a specified salary, etc. /After writing the obnoxious abbreviation, I remembered your dislike for it./ But any procedure aimed at getting such a teaching position brings me against a new difficulty, i.e. the fact that though I have taught¹⁷ for five years at two Lithuanian State Colleges and for three¹⁸ years at the University of Lithuania, I have no regular university¹⁹ degree, to say nothing of my innate dislike for teaching.

Your letter would seem to open a new prospect for me. If I could really be useful in the Library and could obtain a regular situation, it would not only mean the realization of a life-long dream, but would also be a very great help in getting us to the United States, if the bill before Congress is adopted, admitting refugees and *dis/placed* persons²⁰ in greater numbers, or if /as I have just learned/ residents²¹ of the French Zone are permitted to apply

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for visas as from July 1.

Please forgive me for entering in such boring detail into the peculiar features of our case, but this matter of leaving Germany is of such overriding importance to us.

I have taken the liberty of mailing to you two books which I have published in Germany after the war. At present, I am engaged on my Lithuanian-English Dictionary, which I would like to make my magnum opus. I have been working hard, in spite of distractions and handicaps of all kinds, and have accomplished a great deal. I have been most greatly handicapped by the lack of the necessary literature. Oh! to be in – Yale! – working in that magnificent library.

¹⁷ Dėl pažeisto lapo raidė „u“ atkurta pagal kontekstą.

¹⁸ Dėl pažeisto lapo pirma raidė „e“ atkurta pagal kontekstą.

¹⁹ Dėl pažeisto lapo raidė „t“ atkurta pagal kontekstą.

²⁰ Dėl pažeisto lapo raidė „e“ atkurta pagal kontekstą.

²¹ Dėl pažeisto lapo pirma raidė „e“ atkurta pagal kontekstą.

Please accept the heartfelt thanks of my family and myself for your very great kindness in writing to me.

Yours sincerely,
V. Homentowski

Tuebingen,
Herrenbergstrasse 65,
bei Frau Osswald.

Nr. 3

Tuebingen, October I, 1947.

Dear Professor Tinker,

I have reason to believe that my reply to your very kind letter did not reach you, and I am writing to you to express over again my sincere gratitude for your exceedingly generous reaction to my present plight and to dispel any impression of churlish insensibility which silence on my part, due to a strayed letter, could have created in the circumstances.

As I have just returned from hospital, after a stay of five weeks, and am still rather under the weather, I shall make this letter short.

My family and I have been deeply moved by your²² kind offer of help, which was all the more precious for being so wholly unmerited by me.

Of course, I am most anxious to return to the United States. The possibility of a new war has made our further stay in Germany - intenable as it was up to now - extremely hazardous. Certain death will be our lot if we are caught up by our mortal enemies, the Bolshevik Communists. And having lost all that can be possibly lost in this world, except our lives, we are extremely unwilling to part with them now that the denouement seems to be approaching. I agree, such an attitude on the part of such pitiful outcasts as we have become, *though*²³ through no fault of our own, is very unreasonable, *but* such it is.

Naturally, I would be exceedingly glad to work in the Library, but I am afraid that the only possible way for my family and me to enter the United States would be by getting a teaching job in some American college or school. President Truman's directive expressly forbids the admission of DPs from any other zones than the American, and we, very unfortunately, have been residents of the French Zone for quite a while. I have been a college teacher and a university lecturer in Lithuania /I have had about seven

²² Už lapo paraštės atspausdinta raidė „r“ atkurta pagal kontekstą.

²³ Žodis „though“ įrašytas pieštuku kairėje lapo paraštėje.

years of actual teaching experience, all told/. I could teach Russian, French, Greek, and Latin. But I have no university degree. If I could get a contract from some American college or school as a teacher, in spite of that deficiency, I believe I could wangle a visa from the American consular authorities, if not in Germany, in Paris. At least, two of my former colleagues at the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who were circumstanced exactly as I am /they were residents of the French Zone/, have left for the United States, after getting situations as instructors in two American colleges.²⁴

If we could only get away from Germany! We would be willing to go almost anywhere. To us Germany has been a regular prison – even after the advent of the Allies, and the Germans who bear such a large share of responsibility for all our misfortunes are now enjoying much more freedom than we, their victims. To feel ourselves/, free to live in a free country again/ has become a passionate longing with us. Indeed, this ardent longing of freedom and security makes our lives so miserable at present because of the seeming total impossibility of satisfying either in present circumstances. This, and the constant feeling of impending calamity and death.

Yours sincerely,
Victor Homentowski

Nr. 4

*Herrenbergerstrasse 65, Frau Osswald
Tuebingen, February 18, 1948.*

Dear Professor Tinker,

I have been very ill since last October, and my wife thinks it is a miracle that I am still alive or not paralyzed. Now I I am making a very slow recovery and am already capable of taking walks by myself, though I am still unable to do any work. This is why I have not thanked you for your very great kindness in sending me the two CARE parcels and in procuring me the temporary position at the Library of Congress. We all were very greatly touched by these new marks of your generosity and Christian charity, and I believe I do not need to say how welcome the extra food and the suit were. There are indications that our part of the French Zone may be joined to the American Zone /to re-establish the unity of the former State of Wuerttemberg/, and in that case the photostatic copies of Mr. Evans's letter to you, which I have received from my brother-in-law, may prove very useful.

My "Dictionary" has become an obsession with me, and I am eagerly looking forward to the day when I shall be able to resume work on it. When I look at what I have already

²⁴ Tikėtina, kad V. Kamantauskas kalbėjo apie Antaną Trimaką, kuris 1935 m. pradėjo dirbti Lietuvos Respublikos užsienio reikalų ministerijoje, 1944 m. pasitraukė į Vakarus, buvo Vyriausiojo Lietuvos išlaisvinimo komiteto narys. 1947 m. išvyko į JAV, dėstė prancūzų ir rusų kalbas Gannon koledže Eryje (*Erie*), Pensilvanijoje.

done I am myself amazed. I started on a shoestring. I was beset by numerous difficulties. A miniature pocket Lithuanian-German Dictionary was the foundation on which I began to build. I lacked writing materials. Some of the paper I needed came from as far afield as Austria, and for the soft-leaded pencils I could use, due to an idiosyncrasy of mine, I had to scrounge in all the four zones of Germany /I had lost my fountain-pen, and none could be got here for love or money/. It took me a whole year to get a simple pencil-sharpener, and up to then I used a safety-razor blade fitted into a handy device put on the market by the ingenious Germans for cutting cigars. Pen-knives, too, were here a thing to dream of. I had to work in bad light, in spite of defective eyesight, for electric bulbs above 40 candle power were simply ungettable. It took me eleven months, to be exact, to have my eye-glasses changed, and that in the land of Zeiss. I was obliged to live and work in a room in which the proverbial cat could hardly be swung and which housed, for a time, five adult persons. I was harassed on all sides by Lithuanian organizations and private individuals to act as interpreter and translator of patriotic memorandums, etc. A_t the same time, I had to write and to see through the press three manuals. Nevertheless, drawing largely upon my memory and using whatever literature I could lay my hands on, *up to my illness*²⁵ I had expanded my foundation pocket dictionary to and exceeded the proportions of the “meatiest” existent Lithuanian-foreign language dictionary compiled by a team of three Swiss professors who had carried on their work over a number of years in perfectly normal conditions. I believe I can now say, in all humility, that my dictionary will be superior to any existing Lithuanian dictionary of this type, incorporating as it does a number of entirely new features. I have been lead into such a wide digression because of my pride in my achievement and my passion for lexicography and because I believe I shall strike a responsive chord in your heart – because of your love and affection for the Great Lexicographer.

My wife was so worried about my not being able to write and thank you for your unfailing interest in our poor miserable case, that she wrote you a letter in French /she knows no English/ before last Christmas, but was unable to mail it because of her virtual ineluctation in connection with the then state of my health. I should like to quote a passage from it as it gives some idea of the position you have always held in our affections:

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“...Je comprends bien, Monsieur le Professeur, qu’après tant d’années de silence il est bien difficile de renouer des liens non rompus, mais relâchés. Cependant, croyez-moi, Monsieur le Professeur, que pendant toutes ces années de silence son affection pour vous n’a pas diminué et que votre nom recourrait constamment dans nos conversations familiales. Même un souvenir du temps de mes fiançailles est lié à votre personne. A cette époque-là, mon mari futur m’avait demandé une fois si je serais capable de recevoir dignement son professeur, Mr. Tinker, s’il venait par hasard chez nous. Ma réponse était un “oui” très déterminé...”

Affectionately yours,
V. Homentowski
Homentowski

²⁵ Žodžiai „up to my illness“ įrašyti pieštuku kairėje lapo paraštėje.

ESCAPE TO THE FREE WORLD: THE EPISTOLARY LEGACY OF VIKTORAS KAMANTAUSKAS AT YALE UNIVERSITY

Summary. Viktoras Kamantauskas (1899–1951) was a Lithuanian linguist, translator, educator, press agency editor, and consul. In 1906, he emigrated with his family to the United States. In 1919, he began studying Classical Philology at Yale University. Without completing his studies, Kamantauskas returned to Lithuania in 1921. In 1923, he left for France, where he studied French at the University of Montpellier. A year later, he returned to Lithuania with his wife, Irena Eimaitytė, and taught at the gymnasiums of Telšiai and Plungė. In 1929, Kamantauskas was invited to join the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he began working as an English-language stylist at the ELTA News Agency. In 1931, he became its editor-in-chief, and in 1939 he briefly served as acting director of ELTA. In October 1939, he was appointed consul of Lithuania in Liepāja (Latvia), where he served until the consulate was closed in August 1940. After returning to Kaunas, he taught English at Vytautas Magnus University. In 1944, he and his family fled westward. While living in Tübingen (Germany), Kamantauskas worked as a translator for the Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania (VLIK) and the Red Cross. At the end of 1950, he emigrated to the United States, where he died of a heart attack a year later. A more comprehensive analysis of his life is presented in the article “The Biographical Trajectories of the Linguist, Translator, and Consul Viktoras Kamantauskas”, published in this issue of the journal.

The least explored period of Kamantauskas’s biography is the time he spent outside his homeland, particularly after his departure from Lithuania in 1944. The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University preserves four of Kamantauskas’s letters written between 25 March 1947 and 18 February 1948. The first letter (a copy) was addressed to his fellow Yale student John Barlow Derby, while the remaining three were sent to Professor Chauncey Brewster Tinker, a scholar of English literature, founder of Yale University’s nineteenth-century British literature collection, and the university’s first curator of rare books. In these letters, Kamantauskas recounts his life in independent Lithuania, his experiences during the two occupations, and his exile from his homeland. Describing everyday life in the displaced persons (DP) camps, he reveals the stark contrast of his existence: the hardships of daily life, the struggle to obtain permission to emigrate from Germany to the United States, and his persistent intellectual work, including the translation into English of a book on the first Soviet occupation and the preparation of Lithuanian-French, Lithuanian-English, and Lithuanian-Spanish dictionaries. The four letters thus testify that, despite numerous disappointments, Kamantauskas remained committed to helping his fellow Lithuanians, as he himself wrote: “As you see, most of my work in Tübingen has had the object of helping my fellow-countrymen in the new life awaiting them in various parts of the world.” All four letters were typewritten and signed in pencil by Kamantauskas as Victor Homentowski, the version of his name recorded in Yale University’s archival documents. The authenticity of the source is further confirmed by handwritten notes left by the author in the margins. Underlining and boldface letters appearing in the text should be understood as corrections of typographical errors made directly on the typewriter. Corrections added in pencil are indicated in italics. The documents are reproduced in their original form, without any corrections to spelling, style, or grammar, and are accompanied by editorial notes and minor adjustments to their visual layout (line length, line breaks, and spacing).

This epistolary legacy not only documents Kamantauskas’s life but also reveals that, despite having studied at several universities and holding prominent professional positions, he never obtained an official university degree. Nevertheless, his intellectual abilities, exceptional talent, and many years of professional experience leave no doubt about his integrity, professionalism, and the lasting significance of his achievements.