

History of ownership of “Map of Concentration Camps in Soviet Russia” aka ‘First Propaganda Map of the Gulag Concentration Camps’ by Starzewski and Zamorski. The map’s original owner was Joseph (Juozas) Ramanauskas and this history was written by his daughter Grace Ramanauskas Silliman for the David Rumsey Map Collection’s catalog record for the map.

This Map was found among the many Lithuanian and German personal papers and documents, dating from the 1930s, of Joseph (Juozas) Ramanauskas. He was a naturalized American citizen but was also a Lithuanian immigrant, who arrived in the United States in late 1949 after more than four years in a Displaced Persons (DP) camp in Ingolstadt, Germany.

Joseph was born in 1920 in Lauzininkai which is in western Lithuania and began attending the University of Vytautas the Great in Kaunas in September 1940. I begin here as a backdrop to when and how he might have obtained this Map.

1940: Germany invades and occupies Denmark, Norway, Luxembourg and France.

June 1940: Russia occupies Lithuania and the other Baltic states of Latvia and Estonia. As part of an agreement with the Lithuanian government, Russia was allowed to create strategic garrisons for possible defense against the Germans. Russia then liquidated the Lithuanian army and declared it to be just a national militia unit. Lithuanian officers were relieved of their commands; many were jailed or placed under house arrest.

June 1941: Russia deports tens of thousands of Lithuanians to Siberia. Included were military officers, soldiers, intellectuals, clergy, professionals, teachers, students – anyone who was considered a nationalist or spoke out in any way against the Soviet occupation. Joseph continues as a university student, being allowed to do so since his major, Architectural Engineering, was seen as a possible asset to the Russians.

June 22, 1941: Germany and Italy declare war on Russia. Nazi planes bomb Kaunas, the second largest city in Lithuania, and the place where Joseph is attending university.

June 24, 1941: German troops capture Lithuania and the Ukraine and march toward Moscow. Now the citizens of Lithuania were subject to both German and Russian troops, each trying to defeat the other. Life was not comfortable or safe for most citizens.

February 1943: It becomes clear that graduating was not a possibility as the Germans demand allegiance from all students. Joseph withdraws from the university and returns to his home.

July 1944: Russian troops again invade Lithuania and occupy Kaunas and Vilnius, the capital. They continue trying to push the Germans west.

It was during this time that several of Joseph’s family decided that staying in Lithuania was going to be a no-win situation. If the Germans defeated the Russians, living under their control would not be good. If the Russians defeated the Germans and maintained occupancy of the Baltics, even though they were considered an ally by the western forces, the people of these

countries, having lived under Soviet domination in the past, knew that living under Stalin would be an even worse nightmare than living under Hitler.

Relatives of Joseph's family gather at his parents' farm in Lauzininkai from cities in eastern Lithuania, hoping to wait out the war and intending to return home eventually. However, as the Russian forces continued advancing through Lithuania, fearing communist persecution and deportations, the family decides to leave for the west and toward the American forces, which had just arrived to within 12 miles of Paris. Their hope was to reach the safety and protection of the American zone.

September 1944: Joseph, just turning 24, and my mother, 19, along with seven other cousins, ranging from 8 years old to over 60 years, left, aka 'escaped', in the middle of the night. One of the men had been an officer in the Lithuanian army so feared for his family's safety; his wife had been a teacher. The oldest man in the group, a medical doctor, had already been imprisoned for resistance to the communist occupation. These men, along with my father, as a university student participating in the resistance, believed that to protect their families and themselves, their only choice was to leave. Because of Joseph's many language skills, and, dare I say, the idealism of his youth, he became the designated leader of this group. Neither of my parents' parents wanted to join them, and it wasn't til the late 1960s that each learned that the other had survived.

This group of 7 adults and 2 children left with a wagon and two horses, taking very few personal possessions, food for their own use, plus a case of 150 proof vodka and smoked hams to use as bribes, if needed! Joseph alone carried a Belgium FN pistol that would certainly have ended in his death if discovered as both the Germans and Russians outlawed civilian ownership of guns.

They traveled for almost a year, primarily on foot as the wagon and horses were commandeered by Russian soldiers early in their journey. They went southwest from Lauzininkai (near Taurage), evading bombs and soldiers, sleeping in barns or under bridges, for over two months til they reached Kuppritz in Saksonia, Germany, which was about 100 miles southeast of Berlin. During much of this time, they were traveling through Poland but never were there any specifics (other than constantly evading capture) about these days in any of the documents or oral history.

November 1944 – April 1945: In Kuppritz, the group found a safe haven, living on 'a baron's farm estate.' They stayed in the servants' quarters. The women worked in the kitchen; the men worked in the fields. The two little girls developed friendships with the baron's children. There were some happy times here, as the baron had lived in America for many years but returned under German rule as part of Hitler's desire to populate the country with persons indebted to him. The baron confided that he had been 'given' this estate as an incentive to return. He shared that his decision to return was not a good one so would often talk with my father and the others about what the future might be for all of them. He owned a short-wave radio (which was against the law) and they listened regularly to it, learning what was happening as the war continued.

April 1945: After the American and British armies overrun central and southern Germany, the family decides to leave and continue west toward the American zone. The following was written by the youngest member of the group, a girl of 9 years at this time:

*I remember long lines of refugees on the roads of Germany, traveling west. German soldiers were taking the men and shipping them to labor camps. There was no food; we slept in stables along the way. We passed horrible, bombed-out sights, with people's body parts and clothing hanging from leafless trees. For the first time during this war, I remember being afraid.*

Recently, from the second youngest member, her sister, who was 12 when this journey began, we learned a little more. She wrote journals during the year on the road as well as during the group's time in the DP camp. Her son found these journals in his basement only about 5 years ago. She died in the early 1970s and no one knew they existed, not even her sister or her parents. These were written in those black and white school tablets and have amazingly survived all these years.

Translating them has been an interesting challenge for her son but doing so has given us a deeper glimpse into their lives. Once everyone emigrated to the US, conversations about this period in their lives were rare, as they all felt 'it was in the past' and there was no purpose in remembering. Growing up, I would hear bits and pieces but only obtained the full story in 1998 when we videotaped my dad and heard his account from beginning to end.

May 1945: From her journals, we learned that after they left the baron's farm, they traveled by foot and sometimes by train for about a month, ending up at the Czechoslovakian border. From there, they went by another train to Chemnitz, Germany. She writes:

*We finally got to the front lines but couldn't cross over right away. After Uncle (Joseph) talked with the British Commander, we were allowed to cross the first border line. We are staying in a music hall in Siegmarschonau as we can't go any further....It is another nice day today, but what good is it? We have ration cards but there's no bread. All the stores are closed. We can't eat these ration cards. . . . There are no potatoes either; where the farmers planted them, the Italians dug them out; they planted a second time and the Italians dug them out again. . . . Even the local Germans are suffering. . . .*

A few days later, after much effort and tension dealing with the British, the Russian, and even some German border guards, they are finally allowed to enter the American zone. She writes then:

*What joy! We crossed the line and kept walking, almost running, as fast as we could, not looking back, going through the checkpoints. We did not know what we were going towards; we were afraid of being stopped or called back.*

The group eventually came across some US troops and Joseph 'begged' them for a lift. Everyone was loaded into the back of an army truck. The soldiers convince my father not to go to Munich, about 240 miles away, because 'the city was overrun with refugees' so they took the family instead to Ingolstadt, just north of Munich, where there already was an established Displaced Persons (DP) camp, mainly for Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians.

Late May 1945 - June/July 1949: We live in this camp, where I was born in August of 1945. We think it had been a former military barracks. Our group of 9 plus me share one room, hanging blankets to make separate family quarters for ourselves. I have certificates for both my mother and father noting that they had completed training in the camp for various jobs, such as driver, knitter, electrician, housewife, construction, etc. One of our group became involved in teaching children and teens again. My father, as an Eagle Scout, continued that program in the camp. He also served as 'Interpreter for UNRRA Camp C' and as 'Welfare Officer UNRRA-IRO.'

UNRRA refers to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and IRO stands for International Refugee Organization, both of which played a major role in helping the millions of refugees either repatriate to their former countries or to resettle in other countries.

**THIS** is where I believe Joseph's "Map of Concentration Camps in Soviet Russia" might come into play. I have three documents written by him while in the DP camp explaining why displaced Lithuanians (as well as other refugees) did NOT want to be repatriated. I am including copies of these to better explain their strong aversion to living under the dominance and rule of the Soviet Union.

In none of these papers does he reference this Map. Yet he does talk about the jailings and deportations that were a routine part of Soviet Russia's protocol. All Baltic, and other, refugees knew about Russia's concentration labor camps. He must have obtained this Map, either with the book in which it was published, or in some other way, during this time in the camp. I would imagine that in his role as an interpreter as well as that of a welfare officer, he would have had access to military and political information and even propaganda that was being made available by the Allies.

The Map was included with these three documents when I found them and was already folded in fourths. One document had the original staple still in tact. One was held by a paper clip that turned rusty and therefore marked the top page. And the third document was loose. The right side borders were very close to the right edge, so the original borders look the same as these copies.

The process of being 'resettled' in the United States took about a year. Letters show that my parents began it in June, 1948. I have original copies of many letters of recommendation from other DPs who knew them, both in the camp and in Lithuania. There are certificates of 'good conduct' from camp personnel as well as immunization certificates and medical reports. There is also the IRO Resettlement Application Form listing the locations and occupations of my parents from as early as 1937.

Of additional great interest to me were the following:

- Two baggage claim tickets, showing that we departed from Bremerhaven for New York on July 29, 1949, the USAT General Langfitt, a 'transport' ship.
- Certification from 'Medical Department Area 8 Camp Grohn,' showing that we three were 'fit to travel.'
- A huge green canvas US army duffel bag that was used as luggage with my father's name stenciled on it.

Thank you, once again, for giving this Map a new home! I hope this narrative has enhanced understanding of what this Map very possibly meant to its original owner.