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VYTAUTAS ANDRIUS GRAICUNAS: A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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It has been over forty years since the first publication of Vytautas A. Graicunas' classic essay, "Relationship in Organization." It is seemingly remarkable that one short four-page essay could be the basis for the continued fame of one man about whom so little is known. Graicunas has been described variously as both a consultant and a mathematician of either French or Lithuanian nationality. In truth, none of these descriptions is fully correct. Graicunas was born August 17, 1898, in Chicago, Illinois. His father, Dr. Andrius L. Graicunas, was one of the first Lithuanian physicians in the Midwest. After completing his secondary education at Wendell Phillips High School, Graicunas entered the University of Chicago and graduated with a degree in accounting. Shortly thereafter, he qualified as a Certified Public Accountant in the state of Illinois. In 1917 he completed War Aviation School and in 1919 attended the University of Grenoble (France). In 1920 he continued his studies at the Armour Institute of Technology (now Illinois Institute of Technology), graduating in 1923 with a Master's degree in mechanical engineering.

Employed in 1927 by the Fabricus B. Smidt Company, Kaunas, Lithuania, Graicunas was noted as a specialist in industrial administration. He was a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineering, and later helped organize factories in the United States, France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland. In 1928 he cofounded the Lithuanian Scientific

Management Society, serving as its first Chairman. In 1929, Graicunas, then employed by the German firm Arlen, attended the Fourth International Management Congress of the International Committee for Scientific Management in Paris. It was there that he and Lyndall F. Urwick first met. Both were attending the official banquet honoring Henri Le Chatelier, recipient of the Gold Medal of C.I.O.S. It is the story of this meeting and the classic essay that developed from it that forms the basis of Lt. Col. Urwick's following article, "V. A. Graicunas and the Span of Control."

In 1931, Graicunas joined Hrant Pasdermadjian in Paris as an associate in his Department Store Management Research Group (later the International Association of Department Stores). From 1935 to 1938 he was a civil engineer and consultant to the Office of Lithuanian Aviation and Armaments. During the same period he was active in the Lithuanian Theater and Film Association and served as a professor at the University of Vytautas Didysis in Kaunas.

Great mystery surrounds both the activities of Graicunas during the Second World War and the events leading to his death. While maintaining his United States citizenship, Graicunas held the rank of Major in the United States Air Corps and served as an advisor to the independent Lithuanian Air Force until its disbandment by the Soviet occupiers in 1940. Virtually nothing is known of his activities from this time until 1947; however, it is strongly suspected that during this period he served with the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Sent to Moscow in 1947 on a business trip, Graicunas was arrested by the Russian Secret Police (NKVD) as he left the American Embassy. While at the Embassy, he had hoped to make arrangements for his and his wife's safe return to the United States.

Unable to endure the extended interrogations and torture that followed his arrest, Graicunas went on a starvation strike and finally died in prison. Graicunas' wife, Unė Baye, a well-known actress who had performed throughout Europe and the United States, was later arrested for attempting to locate and aid her husband. She was subsequently sentenced to a Siberian lumber camp. Suffering from failing health, she was finally allowed to return to Lithuania after serving nine and a half years of hard labor. She died there on August 1, 1961.

Bibliographical Note

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V. A. GRAICUNAS AND THE SPAN OF CONTROL

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I first met the late V. A. Graicunas at the Fourth International Management Congress organized in Paris by the International Committee for Scientific Management. That was in 1929. I was 38.

I had been allotted a seat at the top table. Seated on my right and left were distinguished French and German scholars of the, then nascent, Scientific Management movement. They were much too distinguished to be interested in the conversation of a strange young Englishman who had, quite recently, been appointed Director of the International Management Institute at Geneva. At that time, this was a novel establishment about whose duties and potential its founders (the International Labour Office and the Twentieth Century Fund) were by no means clear. I remember feeling very lost and rather bored, wondering why being interested in scientific management must include "official banquets."

While in no good humour for this reason, I realized suddenly that facing me at the far end of one of the long tables at right angles to the top table was a very pretty woman and next to her a good-looking man of about my own age or rather younger. They were obviously interested in my presence, probably the only people in a large room who were, and they were talking about me. So, when dessert was over and we rose, I made my way towards them as a human oasis in an otherwise desert landscape and they, obviously, had the same intention. There were mutual introductions and Graicunas waded in at once: "You know you're always saying that there is a limit to the number of subordinates an executive should try to manage directly. I think I have mathematical proof that you are right. Won't you come back to our apartment and talk it over? I want you to help me write it up. My English isn't good enough."