

# Bridges

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Unify, world-wide, to secure the survival of Lithuania!

Mark Skirgaudas  
(Yale University)

## CROSSES

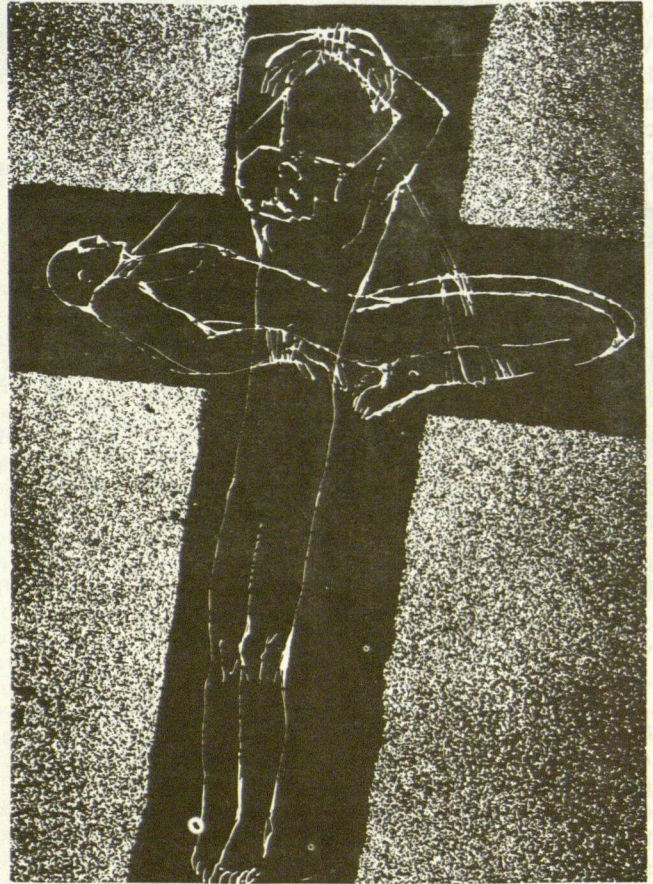
A SHORT STORY

What made him open his old eyes, bleary with the grime and stress of travel? Was it a sudden lurch of the creaky train, a crack of much used bones, or his weakening heart skipping a beat? With all the effort his exhausted frame could muster, he sat precariously atop the bunk in his sleeping compartment and fumbled for the curtains hanging like rags from a rusted fixture over the window.

He gazed and he was filled with a sudden satisfaction as he looked upon that early morning mist rising spectrally over the river. The instinct to return had persevered and festered in his heart. He was like certain animals who must return over great and seemingly insurpassable distances. A salmon swimming upstream to greet a mate, birds flying across vast oceans to escape winter snows; a tired old man returning to his place of birth.

No, the river had not changed, and neither had his fright and paranoia. Red banners and the demanding rhetoric of the workers accosted him from passing streets and corners. Red flags had replaced the colorful market district he remembered so fondly. That little eastern European country, Lithuania, known to so few, but cherished by those who had left its shores had undergone many changes. He had left almost half a century before, leaving behind family and friends as Russian troops entered the city of Kaunas. That day would live with him like a scar. He had lain hidden with other members of the little country's fledgling government, in a decrepit freight train. How he had counted the seconds and the miles that were slowly separating him from his loved ones. There were many who had thought him a coward over the years but he acknowledged them only with silent protest. He, like many others, thought that the army would not stay long. Instead they claimed the country as one of their provinces. Wouldn't they just drive out the Germans? They stayed in Lithuania and their government spread and festered until it was part of the land.

Aras Mitkus, agent of the Lithuanian SSR, watched the old man descend from the train onto the dirty railway platform. Could this be the proud delegate from Kaunas who had served in the first Lithuanian Congress? A ruthless capitalist who had lived off the spoils of his immense land holdings. No, this was just a broken old man, returning to



Graphic by Stasys Krasaukas, Vilnius

cleanse himself of the demons of his troubled past. Aras thought of the man with compassion, even respect, although he would never dream of voicing his thoughts to anyone.

"You are Vytas Seilas?" called the commissar. The old man acknowledged with a gruff gesture of his head. His coolness was betrayed by a glaze in his terrified eyes. They were fixed on the hammer-and-sickle medal pinned to the commissar's coat.

"I have been assigned to accompany you on your trip. May I help you with your bags."

This man who spoke in his own tongue wore the colors of the Soviets. He was one of them. How many years had it been since the communists had taken his family away? What had gone on here? This man was his countryman yet

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*(Continued from page 1)*

he spoke like those who answered his inquiries about his family so seldom. Forgive? But how?

"I have no need for a guide, I have been traveling for many days. Could you please take me to a hotel. I must sleep," he lied, anxious to rid himself of his new found captor. How like himself in his youth did the officer look.

An ironic mockery, an image of himself transformed into something he hated. They drove in silence, studying each other, looking for a weakness, a reason to despise the other. When they arrived at the hotel, another grey sterile building, Vytas left the young man sitting purposefully in the lobby. He entered his room and hurriedly unpacked his belongings and formulated his second escape from captivity. The second in fifty years. He would get a cab, pretend to be a relative of a farmer in the nearby fields and find his old house. The desire to fulfill his anxiety destroyed any distorted paranoia about his being captured for an illegal trip.

Minutes later he sat in a rusted Volga, eyes locked on the rearview mirror. Why did he have to live through that adrenalin rush again, the panic of escape and the fear of pursuit? The cab turned onto a dusty road, changed too much. He recognized the lake he had fished in, storks still nested proudly on thatched roofs, and the fields were still plowed by the same rough hands. He gratefully paid the cab driver, braced himself for the brisk autumn wind, and stepped out into a flood of dead leaves. Their crackling drowned out his own rasping breath.

Beyond the glades would be his old house, fields, and farm. Instead he was greeted by a horrific mass of barbed wire and anti-tank traps. His momentary nostalgia was drowned out by the roar of a military jet taking off over what were once his lands, rightfully earned by his ancestors and forcefully taken by foreigners.

"A spy" thought Aras. Those who had trained him had told him that a thief always returns to the setting of a crime. Aras stealthily watched the old man's every move from the grove. How stupid did the emigrant think the authorities were? Aras had embraced the party-line since adolescence, his parents had been listed as killed in the second world war and his only companions had been the authority of the politburo. He was tall, handsome, but had few friends. He spent his evenings working or reading the few books he could get his hands on. This bent figure looking so menacingly at the barbed wire evoked his sympathy. There was some secret recognition he could not explain.

Walking towards a low hill, Vytas stopped before the crumbling foundation of his old home, now humbled before

the Soviet installation. This was it, memories, ghosts, accosted him through its inanimate brickwork. In the family room he stood with his wife. He once again played with his baby boy, bouncing him on his knee. His wife's trembling face spoke to him about the coming war. The questions, the anxious evenings spent with friends discussing a cloudy future. The trample of iron shod boots, rumbling tanks, and far off shells exploded in the distance.

The officer inquisitively followed. What was this old man doing, talking to himself, to "others"? He jumped and scurried about an old ruined house, wept, shouted, and laughed. Was it his past he was talking to? This man was perhaps not a spy but a delver into more sacred secrets. A man with a more pressing business than military secrets. Aras had to be sure.

"Mr. Seilas, you are in a restricted area," the officer said without emotion.

"What's that? You knew I was leaving? Yes, just a short vacation. I thought I'd be back after the trouble, just a month or two. The Russians will be gone soon enough. Don't worry, my dear." The old man conversed with a burnt out chimney. He sat with his legs crossed, gesticulating and assuring the ruin. He heaved a sudden sob and fell to the ground, "My dear wife, my baby son, my loves, where have they gone? Oh, tell me, why."

Aras wondered what the man's family had been like. Had he simply been dropped out of the heavens? The ideal communist? No, certainly not.

Aras had looked with spite on his empty childhood. Now he saw that he was not alone. Another had lost his family to the war. Unknown emotions breathed life into his cold intellectual heart suddenly free with compassion, pity, empathy. He must know what this groveling spectre was at his feet.

"Dear old man, please get up and walk with me. Do not be frightened. Just do me the pleasure of walking with me," whispered Aras.

The man got to his feet and stared at Aras without seeing him. He looked upon his past. It walked before him leading him up the hill. A ghost of surprising resemblance to himself as a younger man, but with a visible sign of remorse and sadness implanted upon it. The sun had begun to set, glowing red over the flowing green fields and cool winds gusted at his face blowing open his coat and lashing his tie about his chest. He reached the summit and stood looking across a valley at another hill with a remembered and not destroyed monument.

Hundreds of crosses stood side by side. Their silhouettes

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## FORCES TODAY IN LITHUANIA

### Challenging Soviet Authority

By Michael Parks

With a dramatic surge of long-suppressed nationalism, Lithuanian political activists launched a powerful grass-roots movement to reassert Lithuanian "sovereignty".

In a series of resolutions that challenged, outright, almost every aspect of nearly five decades of Soviet rule here, delegates at the founding congress of the Lithuanian Reform Movement called for control over Lithuania's political system, its economy and natural resources and its educational and cultural institutions to be vested totally in local bodies of democratically elected representatives—and no longer in appointed communist Party organizations responsible largely to Moscow.

As excited crowds numbering tens of thousands filled the streets waving the yellow, green and scarlet flag of once-independent Lithuania, speaker after speaker at the congress demanded an end to what they called the Soviet "occupation" of the republic.

Only when the Soviet Union has renounced the pact with Nazi Germany under which it occupied the Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1940, they

contended, can Lithuania's problems begin to be solved.

"We are here to say that this situation cannot be tolerated," said Justinas Marcinkevichius, one of the founders of Sajudis, the Lithuanian word for "movement."

The Communist Party, which is committed to "socialist pluralism" and shared political power under Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev's reform program, responded with a pledge of cooperation, and underscored it with a series of good-will gestures, including the return to the Roman Catholic Church of the city's cathedral after nearly 40 years of use as a picture gallery.

Algirdas Brazauskas, appointed first secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party, recently told the congress that the party under Gorbachev is committed to "developing and expanding a new type of democracy."

Quoting Gorbachev, Brazauskas described Sajudis as "the driving force of reform ... a mighty life-giving force" in Lithuania.

"We should not be frightened by the fact that the forms of activities and viewpoints of Sajudis and the party differ to a certain extent," Brazauskas said to the applause of



Algirdas Brazauskas, new leader of the Lithuanian Communist Party

the delegates. "Our understanding of basic principles is the same, and our cooperation can be fruitful."

He pledged that there would be multi-candidate elections at all levels within the next year and that the system of elected councils, known as soviets, would form the basis of government under Gorbachev's reforms.

"We used to have a slogan, 'The will of the party is the will of the people,' but we must revise that to 'The will and the plan of

cast shadows upon the ground and valley. They stood, a silent testament to faith and belief. This time they were real, not ghosts, not dreams. A glimmer of hope showed on the old man's furrowed brow.

"Šiauliai, the hill of crosses!" muttered Vytas, "I had forgotten them. I was not a very religious man then."

"Nor I," added the officer, "but I come here often. Each time they are torn down, they are built up again by the peasants. It is the only successful rebellion I have ever seen. I like its simplicity for it remains powerfully effective."

"It is not a rebellion, but merely the continuance of the

past. This is what I have sought. Something that has survived. My family was lost here. Perhaps they are on that hill. Oh, to have a family!"

"To have a family," muttered Aras. The thought of his own lost childhood.

Their eyes met as those of long lost friends, two who interpreted one another. They stood side by side, tears filled long dried eyes, and emotions suddenly flowed like a spring thaw. Anyone who might have passed the road beneath the two hills would have seen only more crosses casting shadows in the twilight.

(From page 3)

the people is the will of the party," he said to loud cheers.

Brazauskas also apologized for the party's initial refusal to deal with Sajudis—with 180,000 members in 1,000 grass-roots groups; it is already nearly as large as the party—he described the early hostility as being among the political "mistakes" of his predecessor, who was abruptly retired last week.

But the new party leader made clear in a second speech to the closing session of the congress that there are still limits to the new political activism here.

"Some of the speeches I have heard here have saddened me," he said. "How can we solve such things in a free manner? We must work in a rational and businesslike way."

Cautioned by Brazauskas, the delegates then rejected a draft resolution that would have reserved Lithuania's right of "secession" from the Soviet Union, although this is theoretically guaranteed by the present Soviet constitution, and adopted more moderate language, close to that of the Communist Party itself.

Lithuania's relations with the other Soviet republics and the central government, the final resolution said, "should be based on the Leninist principles of federalism, national

equality and self-determination" as laid down by V.I. Lenin, founder of the Soviet state.

Other resolutions, aimed at asserting Lithuanian "sovereignty," called for the republic's economic independence within the Soviet Union, genuinely free parliamentary elections, establishment of Lithuanian citizenship, curbs on immigration and abolition of privileges for Communist Party officers.

Moving quickly to calm the political passions aroused by Sajudis, the party did make a series of unprecedented concessions to Lithuanian nationalism, promising to repatriate all Lithuanians still living in remote parts of the Arctic and Siberia where they were exiled for political activities, to rehabilitate all those jailed or exiled during the Stalinist era and to review the case of others now serving prison terms for "anti-Soviet" activities.

Brazauskas also promised greater efforts to protect Lithuania's fragile ecology and to ensure the safety of a controversial nuclear power plant in the republic—two of the most volatile issues here.

The two-day congress, attended by more than 5,000 observers and broadcast live on television and radio, became a national catharsis—an emotional outpouring that reflected upon all of Lithuania's unhealed

wounds over the years, its fears of annihilation, its hopes of revival.

"Our common work, creativity, concord and patience must revive and nourish all that is still alive," co-founder poet Marcinkevičius said at the opening, "and we must rekindle all that which is not extinguished in our state, in our nation and in our people."

The debates were often stormy as moderates and militants battled over how far Sajudis should go in condemning past policies, in asserting Lithuania's sovereignty, in demanding autonomy from Moscow and in threatening secession if the republic did not get all the powers it wants to manage its own affairs.

But the prospect of a "national rebirth," as Sajudis described its principal goal, filled Lithuania with tremendous excitement and joy.

On Sunday morning, Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, the chairman of the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Bishops Conference, celebrated Mass on the steps of St. Casimir Cathedral for 20,000 people who had gathered for the first outdoor service there in nearly half a century. And, like the congress, it was broadcast live by state television and radio—probably the first Roman Catholic service ever televised in the Soviet Union.



**Sigita Geda, poet-leader of the Perestroika movement**

its counterparts in the Baltic republics of Latvia and Estonia, is pressing for greater economic and cultural autonomy from Moscow, backing these demands with mass rallies.

As a result of his new role, Mr. Geda has had to set aside the written for the spoken word, trading in poetry for speeches before crowds of 200,000 "in the Ciceronian tradition."

"This is a bad period for literature, very bad," he said in an interview in New York. "In Brezhnev's time, we used to gather for cultural evenings, but not anymore. For literature, you need a period of stability; right now, we don't have it."

In the era of Leonid I. Brezhnev, before Mikhail S. Gorbachev's policies of glasnost, or greater openness, Mr. Geda played it safe, but not meek. Neither an underground dissident nor an official glad-hander, he was published (15 books, including librettos and screenplays), but in the early 1970's was removed from literary journal and attacked in print for his "subjective, super-individualistic manner of depiction."

A wiry man with unruly hair, Mr. Geda described his manner of survival as one of

"desperate self-defense," made bearable, it seems, by a certain self-irony.

"Can a mouse defeat an elephant?" he asked. "No, but it can get inside the elephant's trunk and cause some pain."

"The mouse—that's me," he said, looking puckish.

Mr. Geda, who returned to Lithuania this month, was in the United States on a tour sponsored by a group of Lithuanian-Americans who last spring invited three well-known cultural figures—an actor and a professor, in addition to Mr. Geda—to speak to an annual gathering outside Chicago. As it turned out, between invitation and arrival, all three had become members of the movement's leadership—a coincidence that shows how culture and politics are intersecting under the banner of perestroika.

Like its counterparts in Latvia and Estonia, the movement in Lithuania has focused on issues that are now possible in the Soviet context, such as restoring Lithuanian as the primary language, loosening economic ties to the center, defending the environment and even establishing a Lithuanian military unit that would allow Lithuanians to serve in their own republic.

But the Lithuanian movement has a reputation for taking greater risks and has met with greater resistance from local Communist Party authorities.

For Mr. Geda, the guiding focus of the

## Ethical, Not Political Movement

By Celestine Bohlen

Until the Movement for the Support of Perestroika sprang up last spring, Sigita Geda, 45 years old, existed as a poet, a translator and as free a spirit as one could be living in the Soviet republic of Lithuania.

Then on June 3, Mr. Geda became one of the 36 leaders of the movement, which, like

## Rev. A. Svarinskas and activist nun Nijole Sadunaite



### "No One Could Change Me"

By Greg Erlandson

Just three months earlier, 63-year-old Rev. Alfonsas Svarinskas' address was Permanent Labor Camp number 35.

Now he was standing in the brightly lit lobby

of Rome's Holiday Inn at a cocktail reception and banquet for a fellow Lithuanian clergyman.

The Oct. 5 gathering was in honor of Archbishop Audrys Bačkis, the Lithuanian under-secretary of the Vatican's Council for the Public Affairs of the Church prior to his ordination as archbishop Oct. 4 by Pope John Paul II. The archbishop will be the new apostolic nuncio in the Netherlands.

Also attending the reception was Bishop Julijonas Steponavičius, allowed by Soviet authorities to leave Lithuania Sept. 28 after 27 years of internal exile.

Because Archbishop Bačkis' ordination coincided with a meeting of the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of the Sciences, as well as with the arrivals of Father Svarinskas and Bishop Steponavičius, the first week of October was transformed into a mini-summit of Lithuanian exiles, Church officials and emigres.

In the midst of it all, standing quietly, was Father Svarinskas, who had been in the labor camp for five years. One could almost mistake his calm for meekness, except for the

rebellious shock of white hair refusing to lay down on his head and his open watchful eyes.

The 63-year-old priest wore a small square lapel button commemorating the 1987 celebration in Rome of the Lithuania's 600 years of Christianity— an event he was unable to attend because of his previous engagement in camp number 35.

Father Svarinskas said he was released last July 11 from that camp after agreeing to seek medical treatment in the West—a euphemism for expulsion. Six weeks later he left his homeland on a one-way ticket to Augsburg, West Germany.

With his departure the authorities ridded themselves of a man who has been a thorn in their side since 1946, when he was first arrested at age 21.

Father Svarinskas was ordained while in prison, released in 1956, then arrested in 1958 for anti-Soviet activity and sentenced to six more years.

In 1976 he was a founding member of the Catholic Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights.

In 1983, after a series of run-ins with authorities, he was arrested for "anti-constitutional and anti-state" activities, and sentenced to seven years of labor and three years of internal exile.

The years of prison and harassment seem to have had very little effect upon him, despite health problems ranging from heart disease to a bleeding ulcer. The explanation may be his attitude.

"Labor camp is really a re-education center," Father Svarinskas said through an interpreter. "If you can't be re-educated, you can't leave."

"But from the very beginning I laughed," he added, "knowing that no one could change me."

He attributes his release less to *glasnost* and *ostpolitik* than to prayers and pressure from the West.

Father Svarinskas said he came to Rome both for the elevation of Archbishop Bačkis and to see Bishop Steponavičius.

The bishop, who had a private lunch with the Pope Oct. 5, is the unofficial leader of Catholic Lithuanian resistance, despite—or because of—his banishment to the village of Zagare. He has been impeded for 25 years from assuming his duties as apostolic administrator of Vilnius.

Father Svarinskas said he and the bishop, who turns 77 on Oct. 18, "are like brothers; we supported each other."

He was the first person Father Svarinskas visited upon his return to Lithuania from the camp, seeing him even before the country's new cardinal, Vincentas Sladkevičius. That lent credence to a report by Keston College that Bishop Steponavičius—believed by many Lithuanians to be the secret cardinal appointed by the Pope in 1979—is the country's de facto "senior bishop." (To page 6)

movement is Lithuania's ancient European and Catholic culture.

"It's a matter of historical roots," he said. "We are among the most ancient peoples of Europe. If old Christian nations like Lithuania and Armenia don't survive, then Europe's proto-homeland will be lost."

Independence is a word that Mr. Geda said he and his colleagues prefer not to use, although more dissident groups in Lithuania frequently do.

"I am afraid of the word in the economic sense, among others," he said. "We have lived so long in Soviet society that we have to look at the question realistically, not romantically.

"The problem is one of spiritual renewal," he said. "This movement is ethical, not political: the point is not to replace one group with another, but to make it so that power is no longer amoral."

Still, Mr. Geda's contempt for Soviet rule is frank and harsh. He compared the moral compromises required by the system to the peculiarly Soviet legend of Pavlik Morozov, a young boy lionized for denouncing his own father as a traitor to the revolution.

"We all became Pavlik Morozovs," he said. "We had to sell our fathers, our god, our country. Now we have the chance to tell people about that drama. Socialism is drama in a vacuum, drama without God. It is horrible."

"What happened in the Soviet Union was also a linguistic problem. Words, words, words—it was always words. And even in the words, there was an aggressiveness; when you keep repeating the word peace—peace, peace, peace—even that is aggressive. It is a frightening paradox."

Since the Gorbachev era began three years ago, Mr. Geda has benefited directly; he has been allowed to travel to Finland, West Germany and Japan as well as the United States. For a man who studied 12 languages and never had the chance to speak any but Lithuanian and Russian, this was, he said, like a release from prison.

The energy released in Lithuania by the new atmosphere of openness and the appeals to national culture has caught even Mr. Geda by surprise. "I myself wonder how so many people come out for these rallies," he said. On Aug. 23, when 250,000 people gathered in Vilnius, the movement had been allowed only three minutes on television, while official spokesmen were on the air repeatedly, urging people to stay away.

"The word went out like an electrical current," Mr. Geda recalled. "The national feeling is stronger, more frightening than even we realized. We can be proud. Some thought the Lithuanian nation was dead and in fact it is in excellent health. Now I am sure, if perestroika doesn't work out, it will repeat itself again—in 5, in 10 years."

(From page 5)

Lithuanians attending the week's events were full of speculation about the reasons why the Soviets allowed Bishop Steponavičius to leave Lithuania at the present time, and whether he will return to his country.

According to this scenario, the Soviets will not allow the bishop to return. A second scenario suggests the Pope will accept his letter of retirement, submitted by all bishops at age 75. The bishop would be able to live at the Vatican, or resettle in the West—so this speculation goes—no longer a stumbling block in church-state negotiations for greater church freedom in the Soviet Union's only Catholic republic.

Among the exiles, there is little faith that Soviet human rights moves are stimulated by anything other than calculated self-interest.

If the priest and the bishop are witnesses to the persecuted Church in that Baltic country, the reception's guest of honor, Archbishop Bačkis, is a testament to the successes its people have achieved beyond Lithuanian borders. The son of the Lithuanian government-in-exile's former charge *d'affaires* in Washington, Archbishop Bačkis's recent elevation is a point of pride for the exiles gathered in Rome.

The week was a kind of "mini-view" of the Lithuanian church, said Rev. Casimir Pugevičius, director of the Brooklyn-based Lithuanian Information Center: "the Church suffering, the Church militant, the Church triumphant."

But the week also highlighted the uncertainties of the future. The Lithuanian exiles gathered in Rome are growing older while their children adapt to new cultures—not as "displaced persons," but as citizens.

*Courtesy of the Catholic Standard and Times.*

## "The Jury is Still Out"

**B**altic American organizations are rejoicing over the resurgence of nationalist sentiment sweeping their ancestral homelands.

"Today I am euphoric," said Victor A. Nakas, manager of the Washington office of the Lithuanian Information Center. "I am delighted by the news that the Soviet authorities have returned the cathedral in Vilnius, Lithuania, to the Catholic Church for religious use. That was a dramatic gesture, totally unexpected."

But he added: "No one really knows whether these people will be allowed to keep the freedoms they are winning for themselves. The jury is still out. The danger is that people in the Baltic states will push so hard that the authorities feel compelled to crack down."

*Courtesy of The New York Times*

## Soviet Paramilitary Attacked The Peaceful Crowd Calling:

# "Occupiers, Out of Lithuania!"

**T**he evening of September 28th was one of bloodshed in Vilnius. What began as an evening of commemoration, found local Lithuanians standing shoulder to shoulder, facing Soviet truncheons, and shouting their nation's anger, pain and frustration at their oppressor, while Soviet blows stung arms, heads and shoulders.

Hours after the event, Baltic-Americans heard that 200,000 people had gathered in Vilnius, at the public meeting called by the Lithuanian Liberty League, to mark the 49th year since the signing of the second secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. The protocol paved the way for Soviet troops into Lithuania.

We learned that the peaceful crowd had been attacked and beaten by the Soviet paramilitary. Vytautas Bogusis, a long-time human rights activist in Lithuania, reported that the militia—wearing helmets, carrying riot shields, and waving truncheons—beat those who had gathered. They beat everyone—children, old women, young men and women. The beatings were harsh and uncontrolled; the militia trampled people who had sat down, landing blows on heads, backs and shoulders. People scattered in all directions, regrouped and came back yelling, "Occupiers, out of Lithuania!"

Upon learning this, we were determined that this injustice, perpetrated against our fellow Balts would not go unnoticed, and uncondemned by the Free World.

And we kept that promise.

September 29th, thirteen Baltic-American organizations signed telegrams to President Reagan and Secretary of State Shultz, demanding that the United States, in keeping with its long-standing policy of non-recognition towards the illegal occupation of the Baltic States, condemn, in strongest terms, the Soviet violence perpetrated against peaceful Lithuanians. The telegram was signed by:

Joint Baltic American National Committee (JBANC)  
American Latvian Association  
American Latvian Youth Association  
Estonian American Council  
Lithuanian American Council  
Lithuanian American Youth Association  
Baltic American Freedom League (BAFL)

ELTA Lithuanian Information Center  
Knights of Lithuania  
Lithuanian American Community  
Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid  
World Federation of Free Latvians  
Baltic Youth Congress (BYC)

The following day, the pressure increased. JBANC met with State Department officials and demanded that the United States not meet the Soviet violence with silence. The heavy wheels of the State Department began to turn.

To speed the tempo of the wheels, JBANC requested that the Congressional Ad Hoc Committee for the Baltic States and the Ukraine, as well as other members of Congress, urge the State Department to issue a condemnation of Soviet actions against peaceful demonstrators in Vilnius. It delivered the request personally to each Ad Hoc Committee member's office.

Having set the groundwork, we turned to you—our Baltic grass-roots network—asking that you contact your own Congressmen and Senators, encouraging them to urge the State Department to respond in defense of the Lithuanian people, and indeed all Balts.

The pressure intensified. With your encouragement, 69 Congressmen signed a letter to the State Department.

The State Department's wheels turned slowly; but October 6th, in response to a VOA reporter's question, the State Department issued remarks condemning, "recent patterns of systematic violence by the Soviet authorities directed against peaceful demonstrators in Lithuania... We call upon the Soviet authorities to refrain from the use of force against peaceful marchers and to discipline those officials responsible."

Although the proclamation was not issued for eight days, a reporter assured us that it was a major accomplishment; it is not easy to draw a reaction from the State Department—and even more so, to have the statement prepared for the press, he explained. This is progress.

The State Department proclamation marks great progress for all Balts. It has shown that our coordinated efforts make us more effective politically, and, that we are able to respond quickly to events taking place in the Baltic States.

# 7 TROUBLE IN "PARADISE"

**R**ioting in Armenia...200,000 Demonstrate in Lithuania...Polish Workers Strike Again...Ferment Brews in Soviet Baltics...Nationalists Demonstrate in Soviet Georgia...Estonians Demand More Self-Rule...Latvians Call for Autonomy...Major Shakeup in Soviet Hierarchy...

Recent headlines such as these, gathered from a variety of newspapers, tell us conditions are far from rosy in the workers' "paradise" which Vladimir Ilich Lenin planned early this century and brought into bloody being in late 1917.

The revered Marxist revolutionary and founder of Russian communism, whose body lies entombed in Red Square and whose statues stand everywhere in USSR, never imagined that it eventually would take concrete walls, barbed-wire fencing and hordes of secret police and soldiers with tanks to contain and control the unhappy peoples. Among the hapless souls are those the Russians wrested from czarist tyranny in Lenin's time and who, the East Europeans the communists claim, were "liberated" from "fascist" domination by "welcomed" Russian troops in our time.

We know, of course, that the last government of Lithuania under President Antanas Smetona was a democratic one. But the untruth is being taught—along with the Russian language and atheistic propaganda—to school children in the birthland of our parents and grandparents.

Not long after Mikhail Gorbachev assumed leadership of the Soviet Union several years ago, he moved quickly to introduce a strong anti-alcoholism policy. A large-scale educational program was initiated and the number of treatment centers was increased greatly. Liquor prices were raised; liquor store hours were reduced. Vodka production was decreased, except for export to foreign markets. Why were so many Russkies drinking so beyond control?

Then came Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) program. The comrades loved it. For the first time, Soviet newspapers printed pages full of their complaints on just about everything—food shortages, shoddy goods, poor pay, lack of housing, mistakes of the factory managers and more. The most remarkable examples of openness occurred when the official government newspaper *Izvestia* denounced the ruthless rule of Joseph Stalin (1929-1953) and more recently in a series of articles assailed the Siberian labor camps and challenged the centuries-old system of forced labor.

Recently, tens of thousands of workers in Poland went on strike for higher pay and better working conditions. The Christians in Armenia switched from protests to riots in a stronger demand for the freeing of their brethren, along with the land they own, from the control of Moslems in next-door Azerbaijan. Elsewhere in the Soviet empire—in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary and in Romania—tensions have kept mounting.

There are reports the mushrooming unrest in the Baltic States poses a greater challenge to the Soviets than the strife in Armenia. Gorbachev's new *perestroika* (restructuring) means an opportunity to loosen the ties that bind them to Moscow. The growing mass movements in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are uniting and seeking linkage to other republics south of them. Their goal is to change the character of the Soviet system from a tightly centralized state to a loosely held confederation of republics.

Recently, Victor Nakas of the Lithuanian Information Center in Washington said that here must be maintained a "careful optimism" about the freedom movements and the unprecedented demonstrations. The former president of the American Latvian Association states he is under no illusion that Moscow "is going to give up the Baltic States in the near future." Ann Rikken, vice president of the Estonian American National Council, voices concern because the Estonian movement's members include many who worked earlier to maintain the Communist Party line. She is worried that the communists might seek to infiltrate the mass movements and hurt the move for independence.

John Chancellor, ending a NBC News commentary on the unrest in the communist world, recently said, "the current crisis marks the decline and fall of the orthodox socialist empire." Former White House national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski feels that the Soviet Union is sliding into "a potentially classic pre-revolutionary situation." Noted foreign policy expert Henry Kissinger expects Gorbachev to "tighten up on East Europe" and to become "stern" in dealings with the West.

The trouble in "paradise" began shortly after Lenin launched his new dream state, a closed, classless socialist society. He abolished the ownership of private property, land was redistributed, and the workers were given control of the factories. Not long after he got things going, he had to create his secret police force. First it was the Cheka, and then the

OGPU to keep the comrades in line.

Torn by civil war between the Red army and the White resistance forces supported by the Allies of World War I, the country suffered violence, famine and epidemics. Lenin was forced to backtrack. The frustrated leader placed light industry and some other operations in private hands. To appease the disgruntled peasants, he let farmers sell their produce on the open market. At once, Lenin sought help and trade from the very foreign capitalists whom he despised.

Under Joseph Stalin who took control in 1928, agriculture was placed under state ownership at great human cost. The kulaks, a group of comparatively prosperous peasants once favored by the communists, resisted the farm plan. They burned crops and slaughtered livestock. By the mid-1930s, more than five million peasant house-holds were wiped out. Many were sent to forced-labor camps in Siberia, and famine caused many deaths.

To this day, the Soviet Union that is blessed with vast, lush farmlands, but cursed with a collectivized agriculture program, has not been able to feed its citizens without help from the free world. Huge amounts of grain are purchased from the United States, Canada, Australia and other countries on a regular basis.

The secret police of Lenin's time gave way first to the NKVD, then MGB, and finally to the KGB. The latter, still in force, is said to have had a 1978 budget of \$10 billion with a staff of 500,000 people. The KGB operates the prison camps and mental hospitals to which many political and religious activists are sent in violation of the Helsinki Agreement signed by the Soviets in 1975.

Now is the appropriate time to point out that the much boasted about "classless" society envisioned by Lenin has long fallen by the wayside. The political and professional elite in Russia today enjoy a vastly different lifestyle than the masses. For these favored few there are in Moscow a well-stocked food store, a fine restaurant and decent apartments. The privileged ones can drive their autos—an unaffordable luxury for most of the people—to dachas (mansions) tucked away in the countryside or off the Black Sea.

Except for its tanks and missiles, the Soviet Union does not impress people anymore as a model for the future.

by Donald Wieta

## A Profile of an Artist

# JUOZAS BAGDONAS

When Juozas Bagdonas arrived in the United States from Colombia in 1958, and settled in Washington, D.C., he did not come empty-handed. Although he couldn't bring his major artwork with him, he brought along about fifty watercolors, painted in post-war Europe and South America.

His oil paintings had been left behind in his native Lithuania, where he had been exhibiting as a young painter since 1933, earning a State Prize for his figurative painting, "Home From the Sea" in 1938.

His massive sculpture and sleek modern ceramics remained in Colombia, where he lived for ten years after the war, teaching those two art forms at the State College and at the Fine Arts Academy in Bogota.

Bagdonas also brought along a tremendous supply of creative energy and brand new artistic ideas which he began to develop in the New World. First, he opened a private sculpture studio, then a new art gallery in Georgetown (International Gallery of Modern Art), and proceeded to make his contribution to the development of modern art movements in this country.

He taught sculpture in his studio, ran the new gallery and worked on his own sculpture and paintings, exhibiting extensively all over the United States (Washington, Baltimore, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc.) and in Canada.

Switching completely to abstract form in sculpture and paintings during this period, he shocked some of his Lithuanian viewers, who were brought up on figurative works. At times, he was completely misunderstood and even abused in the Lithuanian emigré press. But he continued unabashed to develop his own artistic idiom and soon became a pioneer of abstract expressionism in Lithuanian art.

When he moved to New York City in 1964, and settled down in the Lithuanian community of Woodhaven, Bagdonas started painting huge abstract canvasses of subtle tonal harmony and evocative power.

The evolution of his abstract idiom seems to have progressed in three distinct phases.

First, the artist adopted a linear style. In his geometrical design, abstract shapes were areas of pure color, confined within their own boundaries. Outlined by thin black lines, they produced the effect of stained glass. Later, his abstract compositions were enriched by collages and by interesting texture (with layers of paint sometimes mixed with sand or even cement).

During the second phase in the development of this abstract idiom, the artist created three-dimensional designs. Areas of color lost their restrictive geometric outlines and burst out into free, fantastic shapes, also acquiring mass.

The artist achieved subtle color tonalities of yellows, blues, browns and other hues. Furthermore, in many of his canvasses, Bagdonas developed dramatic contrasts of light and dark.

In the "stormy" third phase (which started around 1963/1964), these dramatic contrasts were used in expressive designs. Powerful movements of massive shapes, in a spatial perspective of great distances produced the effect of clashing forces of nature, or of other powers of destruction. They evoked a universe in turmoil and an inner world in strife, also suggesting the helplessness of man, faced by these cataclysms, which threaten his familiar universe.

But the artist also painted a vision of strange new worlds, which evolve from this chaotic state—new colors and shapes which never existed before—a new dynamism, expressed by sweeping powerful brush strokes.

It is not surprising that talented Lithuanian writers have described Bagdonas' work in poetic terms. Writing about his early abstract paintings, poet Kazys Bradūnas said that their hues evoked the mood of summer's end in Lithuania with its ripe yellow apples, freshly harvested fields of rye and the clover meadows under an autumnal sky (*Draugas*, 8.26.61).

Prose writer A. Vaičiulaitis discussed the later work as a "vision of dynamic chaos. Shapes move, run, lines break off, heavy masses seem to fall into abysses." . . . It is not a sentimental and lyrical world, he says, but a dynamic one, full of dramatic suspense, conflict between good and evil, where unusual shapes and symbols suggest many possible interpretations (*Draugas*, 2.8.64).

Poet Bernardas Brazdžionis, who opened Bagdonas' exhibit in Los Angeles, also stressed the hidden meaning of the work (*Draugas*, 4.3.62), and our own editor of *Bridges*, poet Demie Jonaitis, who wrote a beautiful article in *Bridges* (December, 1986) said that some paintings "portray the world blown up to smithereens so that nothing fits together any longer and the universe seems acute with bleak loneliness and abandonment. . . . But if you study the cumulative effect of these paintings, you experience cosmic space travel in which the presence of the ultimate unity of the universe grows manifest."

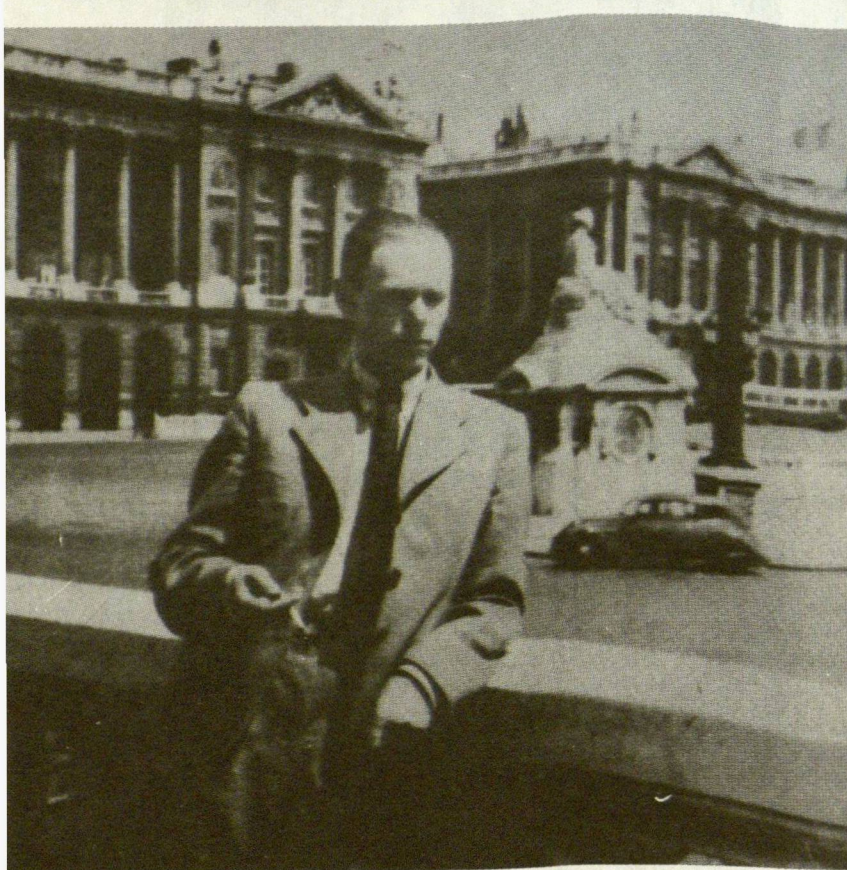
In contrast to these dramatic canvasses, the intimate and subtle watercolors, which Bagdonas brought with him from Colombia (and some created later) seem peaceful and serene. They are mostly figurative works.

Like the artist's early realistic and impressionistic oil paintings left behind in Lithuania, the watercolors suggest a primordial harmony of the universe, the world's innocence





Bagdonas  
(standing  
far right)  
with colleagues  
in Kaunas



Bagdonas in Paris

Above, at a gathering of artists and writers in Kaunas in 1938, we see on the wall the large seascape for which Bagdonas was awarded the National Award. Years brought changes of scene and style.

What happens to a talented artist whose homeland suddenly becomes a political pawn subjected to annihilative violence? Creativity is a gift with an inner force which demands to be expressed openly, freely.

“before the fall”. What another writer-editor, Paulius Jurkus, said about the early oils in his monograph (*Juozas Bagdonas*, Brooklyn, 1972), is also true of the watercolors. They are full of “playful sunlight and air vibrations”, as well as atmosphere and mood.

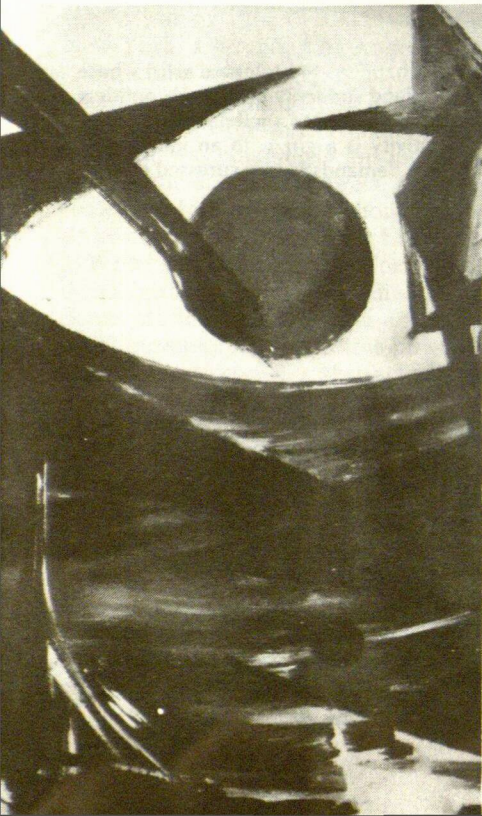
About 45 of these water colors were recently exhibited at the Lithuanian Cultural Center in Brooklyn (10/8-10/9). They included landscapes and cityscapes of Southern Germany (with its typical architecture), as well as watercolors of sunny, colorful tropical villages in Colombia. There were

also nostalgic landscapes of the artist’s native Žemaitija: tender birch saplings growing on a hill, with a wide, wide horizon in the distance and a high, delicately shaded sky above. In one of the landscapes, the young birch trees are blown by a violent wind, as if being ripped out of the ground. This also suggests a hidden meaning: the fate of hundreds of thousands of Lithuanians blown out of their homeland by the powerful winds of war. One of them was the artist, Juozas Bagdonas. He never went back. But some of his paintings should go home some day.

## BAGDONAS' ART

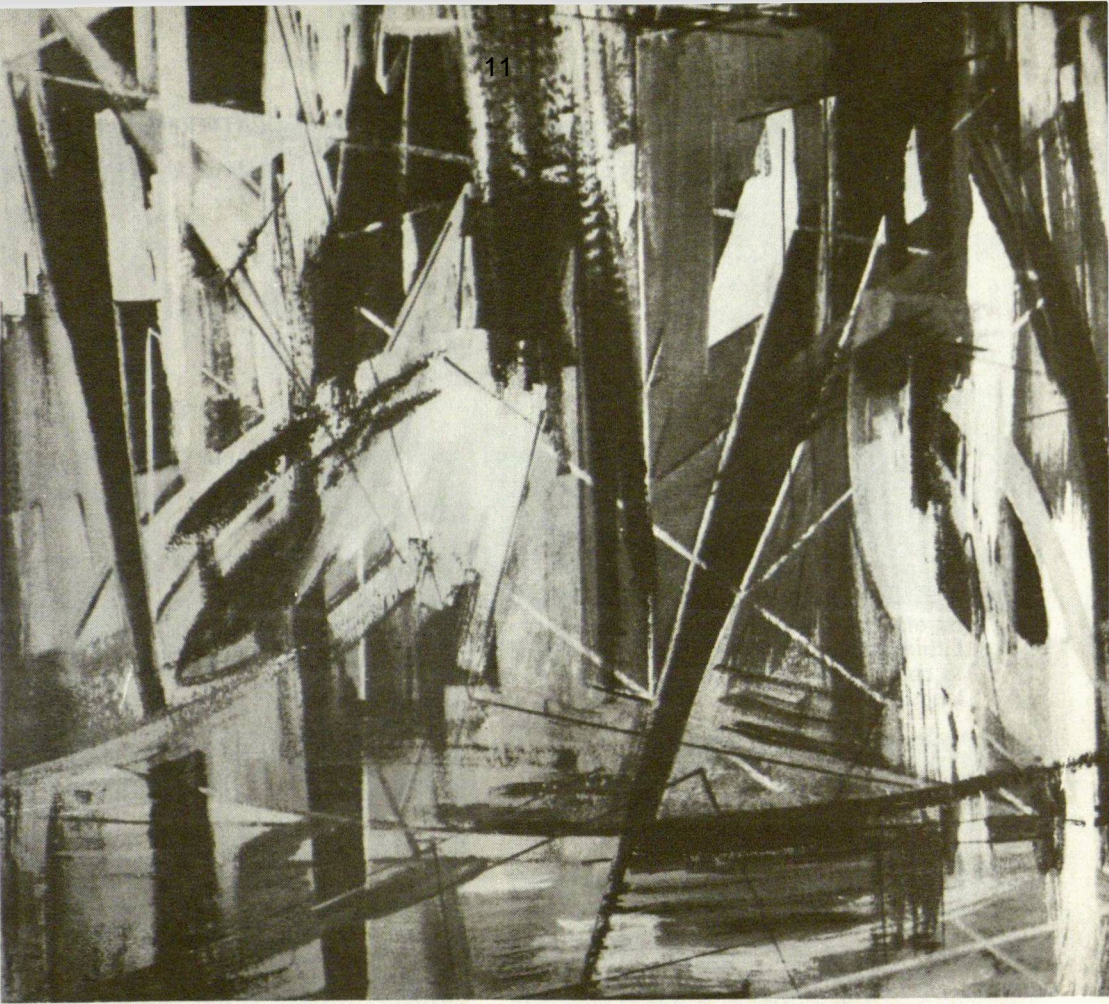


In 1939, Juozas Bagdonas and his wife Victoria stood in front of the Mozart monument in Vienna, facing life with their wealth of talent, love and dreams. They resembled the young, sun-drenched couple in his 1938 award-winning painting beside the Baltic, a classic statement of young free Lithuania.



The Soviet occupation of Lithuania destroyed thousands of lives and dreams. Bagdonas' art changed to new forms and moods. Fellow Lithuanians were scattered to graves in Siberia or they fled to new lives in America. Through his developing work there is a haunting suggestion of sailboats of their youth moving and changing.

◀A sailboat heaves bravely through dangerous waters in "The Black Sun, 1962".



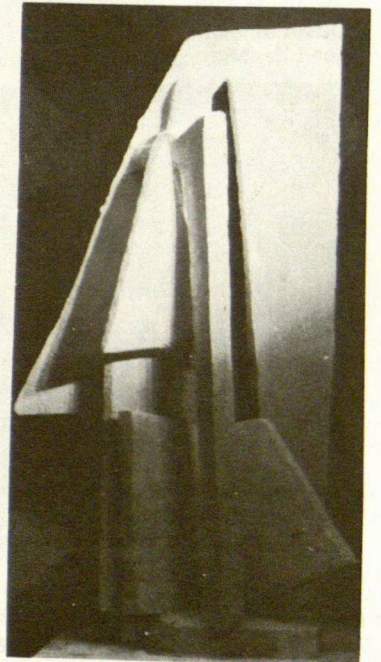
▲ Storms violate humanity with death and destruction. In “Judesys 1962” (Movement), sails change their appearance into earth-shattering lightning that purges the devastation.

◀ Evil rips apart the world. Houses and mountains crack into jagged pieces. The light-toned boulder seems to be striking down, as if to re-enter the womb of the earth, seeking rebirth of some vanished humanity.

▶ In 1963 Bagdonas gives his sculpture the title “Insight”. The form suggests irrepressibly vital sails concretized into a statement that man’s spirit can victoriously outlive destructive forces. (D.M.J.)

## INSIGHT

MASTIMAS



SCATTERED OVER THE GLOBE  
BY WAR AND POLITICAL STRIFE

## TODAY LITHUANIANS UNITE

WITH EACH OTHER  
AND WITH THE WORLD



Barefoot in Polonized Lithuania, pupils learned to be ashamed of their language and culture.



Crowned with big bows, pupils in Lithuania today learn atheism, Russian and denationalization.



Celebrating her 133rd birthday, Barbora Jasaite has experienced much Lithuanian history...

Kulturos Barai



"Miss Omaha" Kristina Prismantaitis with her sister Victoria

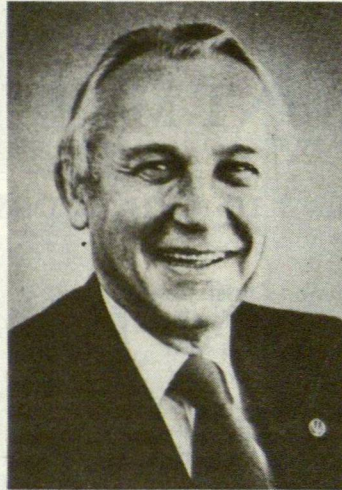
**K**ristina and Victoria grew up in a family of seven children in USA. They enjoyed folk dancing, scouting, choir and Saturday school where they learned to speak Lithuanian. Their parents were post-WW2 emigres.

Last summer, Kristina was married to Lawrence Dodge at Osage Beach, Missouri. Two hundred Lithuanians from Omaha were invited. They were

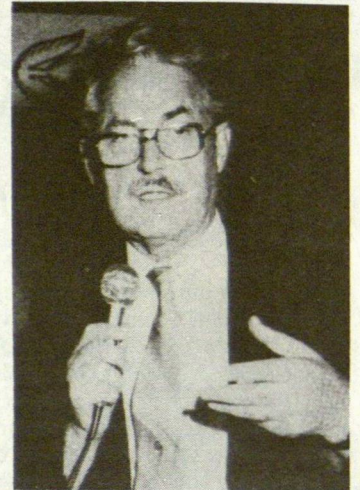
joined by 300 Americans from California and Kansas. Like an old style wedding in Lithuania, this one lasted several days, replete with elegant food, music and dancing. There was caviar and champagne, orchids and roses. There was boating, swimming, tennis, golf, and horseback riding. A Lithuanian dance group performed at the banquet. Culturally and internationally, it was a multimillionaire event.



Ann Jillian and A. Underiene



Dr. Vytautas Bieliauskas



Dr. Antanas Razma



Dr. Rimvydas Šilbajoris



Algimantas Kezys

Lithuania's story, too little known so long, has recently made a strong political impact on the world. Our intellectuals are distinguishing themselves in all fields in America and Europe. Photographer-artist Algimantas Kezys, renowned for his own work, travels country-wide to present Lithuanian Art Shows. Dr. Rimvydas Šilbajoris conducts stimulating seminars on Lithuanian literature. Heritage-proud filmstar Ann Jillian helps promote the Tamošaitis' new book on Lithuanian culture "Sashes". Dr. Bieliauskas, the president of the World Lithuanian Community, sojourns to communicate with leaders in Lithuania. Dr. Antanas Razma, newly elected president of the Lithuanian-American Community, USA, takes over the task of uniting us for greater action.



Jane Filomena Galdikaite with a friend in Indonesia where her distinguished scientist mother Birute Galdikas works.

# THE DEEP ANCIENT MEANING OF "KŪČIOS"

## *The Lithuanian Christmas Eve Supper*

Following our parents' customs, we gather on Christmas Eve around a common table which symbolizes the family altar. Here we renew those inner ties which bind us each to one other and to our God. This holy Christmas Eve, our hearts speak out to one another. We forgive one another and express to each other our fondest wishes for the Christmas season. Whether this be done in a poor dwelling or a well-to-do home, those who gather together on Christmas Eve feel something sacred, holy, and mysterious. During this evening, the light of two worlds intermingles, the light of this world and that of the divine world.

It is winter and the sun has crossed over its threshold and seems to be renewing the world again. The great light which is greater than the sun, God Himself, having stepped over the threshold of time that first Christmas, sends forth a new ray of light: His Son, Who was born as man and Who brings into the world a spiritual renewal and, with it, peace, love and happiness.

Kūčios, the Christmas Eve supper, is indeed a holy mystery. By means of its light from this world and its light from the divine world, it illuminates the mystery of man's victory over darkness.

Mysterious worlds open up to the hopes of mankind. All of man's five senses, his everyday ordinary senses, feel a deep awe and penetrate more deeply into the truths of this mystery. The human senses see new stars appearing, hear the angels singing; they even hear, it is said, the animals speaking. People say that on Christmas Eve animals speak in a way that man can understand. Man's senses touch these things and they open up the doors of the future, so that Kūčios becomes an evening of deep mystery.

### **The Kūčios Supper—A Unique Meal**

Our people gather together around a common table; but this is not an ordinary, everyday table, because the family table on Christmas Eve has little to do with the everyday, commonplace chore of taking a meal. The family does not get together this evening merely to feed the body, nor to enjoy a feast. The bread-wafers of unleavened dough, the boiled wheat grains, the fish—these are elements of a sacred meal, as are, too, the hymns sung around the family table and the prayers with which the meal is begun and ended. There is an air of seriousness and devotion. All these things envelop this Christmas family gathering with a special aura of mystery and holiness.

The Christmas Eve supper table reminds us of that other supper, the Last Supper of the Master, on the evening before He died, a supper which is unique in all human history. At that Last Supper, ordinary wheat bread became the mysterious Bread which nourishes the soul more than the body. And for three hundred years after the Last Supper,

small groups of Christian people gathered in their own homes, or in Catacombs, where they sat around a common table and broke bread in a spirit of unity and communion with each other with their Divine Master.

In our times we do not find many countries in the world which are accustomed to this type of commemorative meal, except on Holy Thursday.

Somehow, from the depths of the centuries, from the cradle of Christianity, this sacred family meal was transferred to Lithuania and has persisted through the centuries up to the present. Many observers in the Christian Western world regret that their Christmas celebrations in comparison with the celebrations in Lithuania do not retain such definite ties with primitive Christian observances.

Our Kūčios, our Christmas Eve supper, is the only celebration that joins the table of the Last Supper with the Crib of Bethlehem.

The bread-wafer and the hay are the two symbols which restate the mystery. The bread-wafer bespeaks the bread become Body, the hay speaks of the Word becoming Flesh. These two mementos of God's transubstantiation lie on the Lithuanian Christmas Eve table, just as in ancient Christianity, side by side on the same altar there rested the Sacred Host and the Book of the Gospel, the living Bread and the Living Word.

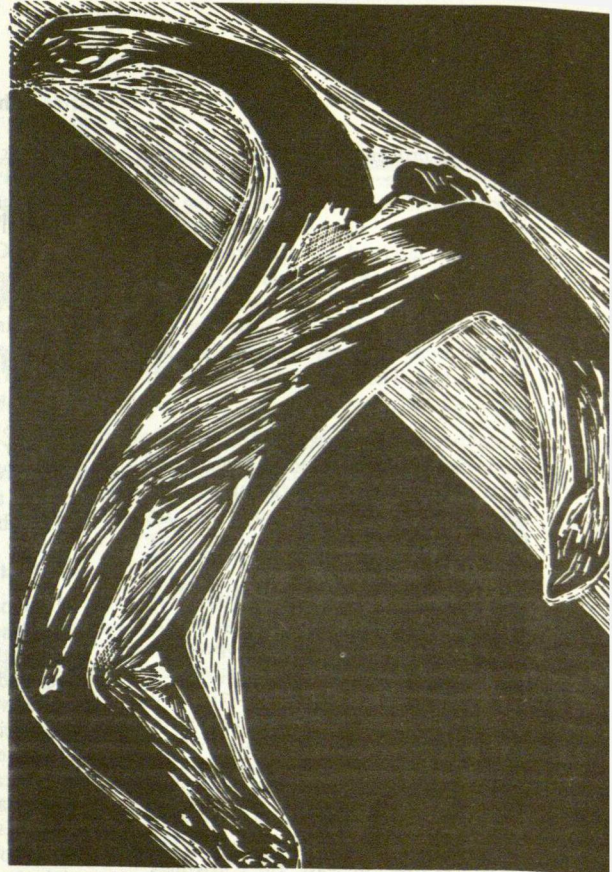
### **Evening of Family Union**

These two mysteries—the Christmas and Easter mysteries—are in essence one and the same. What happened at the Christmas crib and what took place in the Upper Chamber at the Last Supper may be likened to the same ray of light which appears as two different colors of the spectrum when shining through a prism. Looking at the one ray of white light, we cannot distinguish the two colors, but through the prism many colors become visible.

The coming of the God-Man into the world would have been like the flash of a meteor, if He had not become incarnate under different species. That which began with His Birth had to be perfected in the Eucharistic substantial change.

Kūčios—the Christmas Eve meal—is a night of mystery. It is, also, a night of communion. At the very least, our Kūčios joins the two greatest mysteries of our religion: the Birth of Christ and the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

The Lithuanian Christmas Eve supper unites the hearts of men and thus forms the oneness of mankind, which is in itself a great mystery. Some inexplicable and sacred force binds the hearts of men together. One cannot explain how the evening that brings hay into the home and sets bread-wafers on the table serves to unify all members of the Lithuanian family and the entire country.



Why is a crucifix, not a Christ Child, placed in the Christmas Crib?

S. Krasauskas

**THE SYMBOLISM**

The Christmas Eve supper creates a very special atmosphere and we ask ourselves why it is that in the same home and at the same table and with the same people we feel so differently on Christmas Eve? Why is it that each Christmas we participate in the Kūčios supper in an ever deepening experience of family unity. Perhaps, because the Christmas Eve meal is so unusual in its ritual, in its foods and in its signs.

All this is meant to teach us something important. What does the table symbolize, as it is spread with hay? What do the twelve foods signify? What is the significance of the bread-wafers which are broken and shared with all members of the family, while each one expresses to all the holy greetings of the Christmas season? And why does the family after the meal indulge in a session of foretelling the future by pulling out the dried blades of grass from under the tablecloth?

**The Meaning of the Table**

The table is a visible sign of family unity. It brings together all the family members and points out to them the meaning of family hierarchy: father, mother, children. The table serves not only to set out the food to feed the body, but also serves to nourish, uplift and renew the very soul of the family.

Thus, the family table becomes a sacred

altar. It is somewhat similar to the "family altar" mentioned in the marriage prayer. All the more so, the family table becomes the family altar at the Christmas Eve supper, when upon it are placed religious symbols, when around it special family prayers are recited, when the father of the family sits at the head of the table to lead in the family customs, thus becoming the family priest.

The Christmas Eve table is first spread with hay to recall the crib in which Christ was born. The hay is covered with an immaculate white tablecloth on which a crucifix is placed, not upright, but flat upon the table. Why the crucifix, and not a crib with a Christ-Child?

The Christmas Crib is not a symbol, but a real representation of the Christmas event. The realistic-minded Westerners used a crib in their homes and churches; they placed a crib with the Christ-Child on the altars, and even on the tabernacles, in place of the crucifix, on Christmas Eve.

Was there some historical reason that kept the Lithuanians from making Christmas cribs and using them, or was there some inner sensitivity in the hearts of Lithuanians themselves that refused to make the cribs and to use the crucifix instead? It is hard to say.

A crucifix on the hay is clearly a contradiction, a paradox, because it represents Christ's death at Christmas. However, this shows a unique understanding of the Christmas mystery among the

Lithuanians. After all, Christmas was the first step in the preparation for the first Good Friday and Easter. The Birth of Christ leads to spiritual renewal and redemption which was gained by the death of Christ upon the Cross. Liturgically, these two events are inseparable, because in the Midnight Mass on Christmas Night the same Sacrifice of Good Friday is represented and renewed. So why should these two events in the life of Christ be separated in the Christmas Eve celebration?

**Hay on the Table**

Hay is a valuable commodity, because it was drenched with the sweat of a man at harvest time and it is used as food to feed the animals who are man's helpers. Furthermore, it reminds us of the flowers of the fields.

It is not brought into the home at other times and not placed on the table except on Christmas Eve. Once on the table, the hay reminds us of the Birth of Christ in the Christmas crib, and it also becomes a sacred object which, in its own way can say something to man. It is covered by the table cloth, covered by mystery.

After the Christmas meal, strands of hay are pulled out and examined. Its dried blades suggest and point out what the future will hold for the members of the family. Different forecasts are made depending upon whether the blades of grass are short or long, whether they are

(From page 15)

straight or broken, whether they are branched or single. Once the hay on the Christmas Eve table is blessed by the prayers, it is not unceremoniously discarded later. After the meal it is carefully gathered together again and returned to the stable and given to the animals to eat. Why? Because even the animals were witnesses to the birth of the Christ Child. Their breath kept the Christ Child warm.

Maybe, in their own way they understood what was taking place that night and what a great change was taking place in their world too. People say that on Christmas Eve animals talk to each other about men's future.

The hay on the Christmas Eve table reminds us of the poverty in which simplicity and sincerity of heart opens up. No one places crystalware, silver or porcelain on the Christmas Eve table. No one comes to the table dressed in silks or finery. All the glitter and glamour which other countries surround Christmas Eve would be in dire contrast to the simplicity of Lithuanian Christmas Eve. Our people do not make much of decorating the Christmas tree...at least, the Christmas tree is not lit up during the Kūčios supper. The festivities around the Christmas tree itself are left for the following morning.

#### Host from Wafers

Just as the hay is placed on the table and covered with a table cloth on which is placed a crucifix and these are considered symbols of Christmas, so, also, a secondary symbolism is brought out, one which is more closely related to the Last Supper: oblong or rectangular bread-wafers, an unusual food which is prepared from wheat flour, just like the Hosts for Mass. They are baked in the same way. As a matter of fact, wafers are first baked in an oblong shape and only later, the round hosts are cut from them. While the round hosts are used on church altars, the rectangular wafers are placed on the Christmas Eve family table.

They are always placed on a dish, or on a napkin, just as the Host at Mass is always placed on the paten or on the linen cloth corporal. The bread-wafer is the symbol of the Mass and of the Last Supper: it is not a festive cake, which would ordinarily remind us of a birthday. In some places in Lithuania the bread-wafer used to be called the "Christ-Child cake". The wafer is a symbol of the living Bread which became flesh. The Christmas Eve wafer used to be a single wafer which was divided among the whole family. It was always set at the place of the father, who,

after he had said the prayer, took it into his hand and turned to the mother and asked her to break the bread-wafer. Then he would say: "May you live until the next Christmas. God grant you happiness and health all through the coming year, until the next Christmas holidays." In a similar way the father would give the wafer to the children, to each according to his or her age, asking each of them to break off a portion while he expressed the same prayerful wishes. Lately, however, wafers are obtained in sufficient numbers for all members of the family. The father breaks his wafer first, then each member of the family breaks off a portion from his own plotkelė and they all share their wafer with each other.

#### Wheat and šližikai and prėskučiai

Two other foods have a symbolism quite close to the symbolism of the bread-wafer: the boiled grains of wheat, sweetened with honey, and the little pieces of unleavened bread called "šližikai and "prėskučiai", which are prepared from unleavened dough. There is no doubt that the šližikai and the prėskučiai remind us of Eucharistic bread, which in former times was used for Holy Communion.

It is possible that the šližikai were the original symbol of our Eucharistic bread and the bread-wafer was a later version, which came into the Church with the custom of parish priests visiting the families before the Christmas holidays. When the wafers became the primary form of bread used, the šližikai became one of the other twelve foods prepared, and lost some of their original significance. However, the šližikai are used again on New Year's Eve, when the Octave of Christmas, the Christmas meal is repeated.

#### The Twelve Foods

Among the twelve Christmas Eve dishes which remind us of the Last Supper and of the twelve Apostles is found "Eden fruit", that is, apples. This Eden element in the Lithuanian customs is also found in some marriage customs where the "tree of Eden" reminds us of the beginning of life, while here "Eden fruit" recalls the first sin and the promise that a Redeemer would come to redeem mankind and that He would be born of a Virgin, the second Eve.

Christmas Eve is the liturgical feast day of Adam, so the symbolic apple relates him with the new Adam-Christ, and with the symbol which refers to Christ as the New Adam. Thus it is that the father of the first family has a relationship to the Child of the new family of God in this Lithuanian family feast. The element of Eden in our Christmas Eve supper, as we have, has not become too common

among Western nations. The Christmas Eve meal represents an abstinence from food, with twelve different dishes in honor of each of the twelve Apostles. Fish in many forms, cheeses, oatmeal, and poppy seed milk are also served.

#### PRAYERS

Ordinarily, the father of the family leads the Christmas Eve supper prayers. He takes his place at the head of the table. Beside him, or at the opposite end of the table, sits the mother. The children group themselves according to age: the boys on the father's right, the girls on the mother's right hand, if she is sitting at the opposite end of the table. Empty places are set for those who are away from home, or for those who have died, so that symbolically, they too are considered as participating in this family supper.

The prayers, according to the traditions of the people, were recited kneeling around the family table with all eyes looking at the crucifix which was placed on the table. Usually, seven Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glory be to the Fathers were recited for the deceased members of the family. But in some places the number recited was twelve. Other prayers, asking for health, blessings for living and peace for all mankind were added.

After the meal, the family was in no hurry to leave the table. They would begin singing Christmas carols and then would continue in conversation, until, finally, the plucking of the hay from under the tablecloth would begin: the fortune telling.

There are several books listing the various "fortunes" corresponding to the kinds of blade of hay that were plucked out. The elders usually made these forecasts concerning the youngsters. They would guess who would get married first, or where the husband or wife would come from.

People would listen from which direction the dogs were barking. This would mean the place from which the husband or wife would come. They would count the number of logs in the fireplace, or the number of pickets in the picket fence to see if the number was even or odd. The basis for this forecasting of the future was the fact that this was a special, mysterious and holy night.

Finally a closing hymn would be sung. "Sveikas, Jėzau, Gimusis". In English it reads:

*"Hail, Newborn Jesus! Holy Child of God! Celebrating this precious day, The birthday of the Lord, Let us rejoice and let us be glad Let us sing giving praise to God. Amen"*

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## LITHUANIAN FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

**K A S A**

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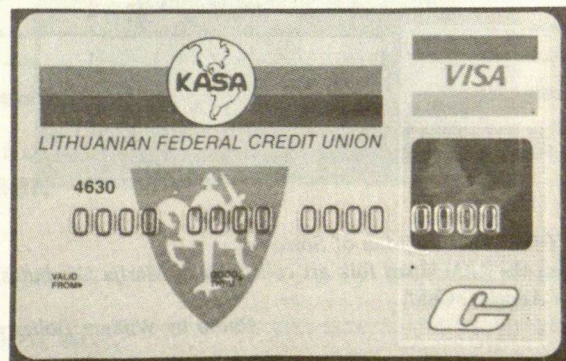
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The greatest service that could be rendered the Christian peoples would be to convert them to Christianity.

Oscar Wilde



RŪPINTOJĖLIS (Man of Sorrows)  
From the Lithuanian folk art collection of Marija Gimbutas,  
Los Angeles, Calif.

Photo by William Doherty

## Refugee Baltic Beachcomber on Fire Island

I sift the globe to find him: red noons he sheltered me  
(the trees shook off their leaves);  
corpsed nights, he kindled me new countrymen (they changed  
to stone and smoke and sleet).

He walked with us through Vilnius, Kaunas, Klaipeda  
(bloody, his amber cross);  
to save his bread from godless men, I fled our fields  
(now, refugee, I'm lost...);

earth wanderer, I live on strangers' alien bread  
(like eyes, the shorelines shift);  
the ocean, chanting solace, churns the rock to sands  
(I sift and search for him...)

Nickels and dimes I find on Fire Island, and bonds  
of gospel paradigms:  
dustmote minds fragment the atom, man and planet  
(all he unifies).

I burned to rise to him, his image in each flame  
(straws and cinders rose).

Why can't I find him? He never fled. He stayed to guard  
the bread of life back home.

—Demie Jonaitis

Dear Readers: This is my final issue as Bridges editor and I bid you farewell. I hope you will give the incoming editor, Eduardas Meilus, the same warm, generous support you have given me during our five years together. The poem, originally printed in Lituanus 1967, is a symbolic statement about our

past and present history in both Lithuania and America. It introduces my restored faith in today's world where our long forbidden flag waves again over Lithuania. Let us help Mr. Meilus spread Bridges far and wide, uniting our scattered family of Lithuanians.  
—Demie

# NIGHT AT SEA

By Albert Cizauskas

When I look upon the face of the night  
 And see space unbound,  
 I see the beginning of infinity  
 And feel the awe of Adam,  
 When first he saw creation.  
 Far behind are the fickle humors of man,  
 The fret and fever of existence,  
 And, here and now, under the jeweled arch  
 of night  
 I begin to see the face of God.

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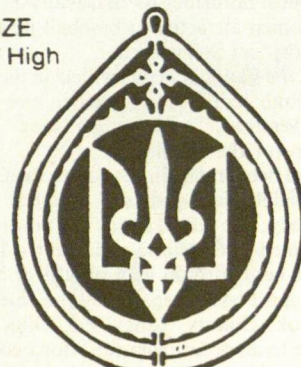
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Ira Berkow

## THE SHOOTING OF BASEBALL IDOL EDDIE WAITKUS

The most notorious of "Baseball Annies" (women attracted to baseball players) was Ruth Ann Steinhagen.

From the stands in Wrigley Field in the late 1940's, Ruth Ann Steinhagen fell in love with Eddie Waitkus, a smooth-fielding first baseman for the Phillies.

He had been traded in 1948 from the Cubs to Philadelphia, and she missed him desperately. She talked about him constantly, dreamed about him, even built a little shrine in her bedroom with photos of him.

In a report later prepared by the chief of the Cook County behavioral clinic in response to an order from the felony court, which found her deranged, she admitted: "As time went on I just became nuttier and nuttier about the guy and I knew I would never get to know him in a normal way...and if I can't have him nobody else can. And then I decided I would kill him."

She purchased a second-hand rifle, checked into a room at the Edgewater Beach Hotel, where Waitkus and the Phillies were staying during a series against the Cubs, and sent a note to the front desk for Waitkus. The message said that a woman named Ruth Ann Burns wished to speak to him in her room—Room 1297-A—about "something important."

This was close to midnight on June 14, 1949. Waitkus, a bachelor, went up to see what this mystery was all about.

The rifle shot that soon exploded in the room that night exploded the next day onto the front pages of newspapers across the country.

Some time back, after a reference about Waitkus, I received a letter from Edward Waitkus Jr., the son of Eddie Waitkus, and a lawyer in Boulder, Colo.

"In every dismal event," he wrote, "there is something positive which comes of it.

While recovering from the shooting, my dad met my mother. Had it not been for this horrible event in his life, my sister and I would probably not be here. Life is very ironic. I think sometimes that all horror that comes to us has reason...

"It really was a miraculous recovery from the shooting that Dad made, coming back the next season, playing the entire 154-game schedule, winning "Comeback Player of the Year" and getting into the World Series. He said the Series was the high point of his career...

"He had always told me he understood the four years of his career lost to World War II. 'Everyone went,' he would say. He, however, never quite accepted being shot, that is, the time lost because of the shooting."

Eddie Waitkus Jr., in a subsequent conversation, remembered as a boy feeling the deep indentation in his father's back which was made from several operations. Even though Waitkus was shot in the chest and lungs, doctors had to operate from his back.

His father told him that it was hard to believe that "a little bullet could make you feel as though six men had slammed you against the wall."

"My dad was an easy-going, trusting guy at the time, and kind of flippant with women," said Waitkus Jr. "He walked into her hotel room and said something like, 'Well, babe, what's happening?' He didn't know anything about her, that she was so

crazy about him she even learned Lithuanian, which was Dad's heritage. I guess she was a fanatic in the way the guy who shot John Lennon was. Then she went into a closet, took out the .22 and shot him. The first thing he said was, "Why'd you do that?"

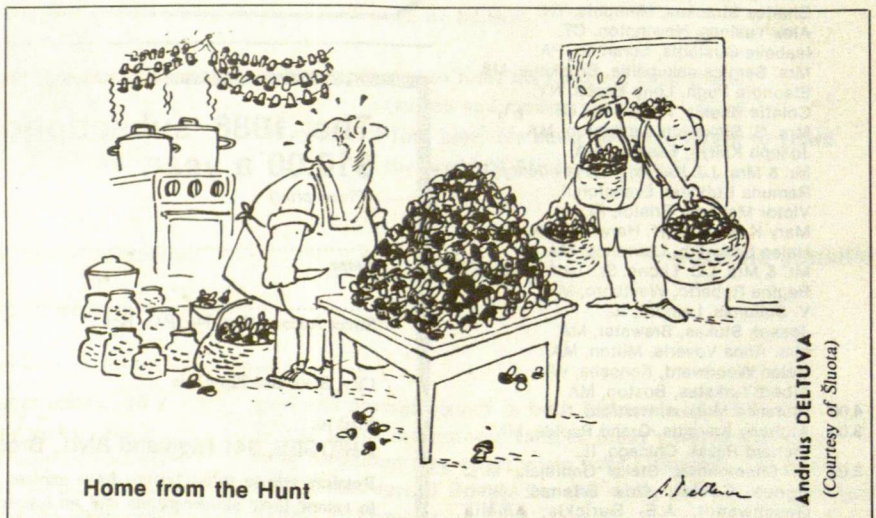
"The shooting changed my father a great deal, as you might imagine. Before, he was a very outgoing person. Then he became almost paranoid about meeting new people, and pretty much even stopped going out drinking with his teammates, which is what I guess they did in those days.

"When she was about to be released from the metal hospital after only a few years—they said she had fully recovered—my father and my family fought to keep her in. My father feared for his life."

Ruth Ann Steinhagen was released, and Waitkus never heard from her again.

On September 15, 1972, a little more than 23 years after the shooting, Eddie Waitkus died of cancer. He was 53 years old.

"Different doctors through the years have expressed the theory that the stress of the shooting, combined with the four operations, allowed the cancer to take hold," wrote Waitkus Jr. "Cancer of the lung or esophagus can take up to 20 years or more to be fatal. My dad was never diagnosed as having cancer. It wasn't until after the autopsy that this came out. So I think Ruth Steinhagen was more successful than she thought."



Home from the Hunt

Andrius DELTUVA  
(Courtesy of Sibota)