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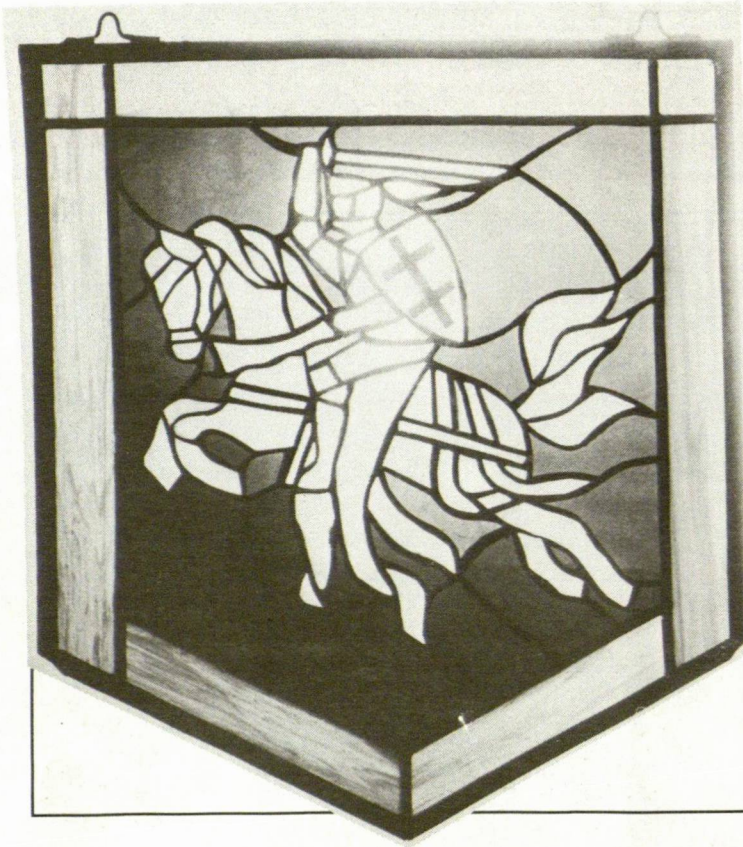


Volume 13, No. 6

JUNE 1989



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Through the news journal, the publishers hope to re-establish ties between the detached mobile Lithuanian-Americans and their Lithuanian heritage by presenting items on Lithuanian culture, conditions in the homeland, events and personalities in America, and the aspirations of all who subscribe to the goal that Lithuania must and will be an independent free nation again.

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## From the Desk of the Managing Editor

June is a youthful month, and a happy month. Most people celebrate the verdant joys of early summer. Each year in the middle of June, everything is so beautiful when nature is in her splendor. It is a happy time for most people. Lithuanians the world over, in contrast, meet in solemn assembly to mourn, because a black mark dots June 15, 1940 in the history of the world. It was on that date 49 years ago, that the Soviet Union, with numerous divisions of troops, the secret police, and its reign of terror invaded Lithuania, and began its unrelenting attempts to destroy the Lithuanian Nation.

Lithuanians sorrowfully remember the atrocities perpetrated against our seven-century-old nation. Many vividly remember having seen, or having personally experienced the inhuman acts of Stalin and his agents.

The annual observance of the Terrible June Days has become the grim reminder of the genocide that befell the Lithuanian Nation.

The word, genocide, is of 20th century coinage and means the deliberate and systematic destruction of a people, a nation, or the followers of a religion. The 20th century has truly earned the label of the age of ideological fanaticism. It was truly Lithuania's misfortune to have fallen victim to a three-fold genocide, first that of the Soviets, followed by that of the Nazis, and ultimately for nearly five decades, that of the USSR again.

The terrible June days designate not only the loss of Lithuania's restored independence in this century on June 15, 1940, but also reminds us of the genocidal policies of the Soviet Union against the Lithuanian Nation.

Lithuania saw devastation, denial of all basic human rights and the onset of forced exile to the barren northern wasteland of Siberia. This was the Soviet's attempt to quell resistance to its earlier act of unilateral aggression.

As early as July 20, 1940, the Soviet's arrested and eliminated over 2,000 prominent Lithuanian political activists and civic leaders as a precursor to future acts. On the night of June 14, 1941, the Kremlin ordered the most brutal of many mass deportations of Lithuanian men, women and children.

It was on this terror-filled night of June 14, 1941, that 34,260 Lithuanian citizens were arrested and then deported at the hands of the Soviets.

These 34,260 Lithuanian citizens, in the largest single deportation order were harshly treated — as less than human. They were given no time to even collect a few personal belongings. They were stripped from their homes, separated from their families, just because being Lithuanian was not in the interests of the subjugating government.

At gunpoint, Lithuanian citizens were thrown into army pick-up trucks to be taken to railway stations, where they were herded as innocent sheep to the slaughter, by way of railway transport wagons. These crude cattle cars had no light, no water, and no sanitation facilities. It was under these inhuman conditions that the 34,260 Lithuanian men, women and children were deported on that night alone, exiled far from the land of their birth. Countless thousands died enroute and what I find to be the most devastating statistic of all, nearly one-third of those deported on this night alone, were young children and junior high school age students.

Other such incidents of note are that:

- Between August of 1940 and June of 1941, the Soviets repatriated 54,000 Lithuanian citizens to Germany.
- 5,000 innocent people were slaughtered by the retreating Red Army in June of 1941.
- As a result of the Soviet Union's agreement with the Lublin Government, 180,000 Lithuanians were deported to Poland from 1944-1946.
- During the partisan war between 1944-1954, nearly 50,000 patriotic men and women perished in the uneven struggle.
- During the attempt at collectivization and sovietization of Lithuania from 1944 until 1951, 570,000 Lithuanians were either liquidated or deported.

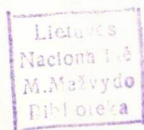
So then, what were the losses that the Soviets have caused? It is truly difficult to document with precise accuracy, but best estimates indicate that the Lithuanian Nation lost 895,260 men, women and children at the hands of the Soviets, for the simple reason that these people fostered values dear to the Lithuanian character.

We live in a callous age which reduces human losses to abstract statistics. Nonetheless, a rollcall of those lost is our duty, lest we forget.

The news from Lithuania these days is of particular interest to us here in the free world. The Lithuanian parliament declared that Lithuania is economically autonomous and sovereign, refusing to pay taxes levied by the Kremlin (echoes of "No Taxation without Representation?").

Is it premature to think that Lithuania's perestroika is the harbinger to the break-up of the Soviet Empire? In any event, as we remember the events of five decades ago, let us also keep in mind that the prospects for restored total independence in Lithuania are better today than they have been in the last 50 years.

*Eduardas V. Meilunas, Jr.*



This article responds to and discusses the issues raised in the article by Dr. Thomas A. Michalski, a contributing editor, entitled *Sajudis, Lithuanians, Poles and Others* which appeared in the April 1989 issue of *Bridges*. Volume 13, Number 4.

## Patriotism or Chauvinism

© by Albert Cizauskas

Dr. Michalski should be commended for his thought-provoking and well-written article in the April issue of *Bridges* on Lithuanian patriotism today and its alleged distortions. Certainly it is true that Lithuanians should discard ancient prejudices in dealing with today's changed realities. There are, however, several aspects of Dr. Michalski's exposition that require comment and elucidation.

For example, it is not clear whether the quotation attributed to Sajudis at the beginning of the article is employed in a positive or pejorative sense. If the former, the reader may readily agree that the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was singularly free of prejudice against other nationalities that had come under the sway of the Vytis banner. But, later in the same article, Dr. Michalski speaks of "Vytautian vainglory," meaning, I suppose, foolish dreams of resurrecting a past when the country stretched from the Baltic to the Black seas. The Sajudis quotation, so far as it went, did not appear to deserve this negative connotation, if one were so intended.

Yes, there has always been a large element of pride in Lithuania's past, but, such pride is an attribute of every nationality. The point is whether the sentiment becomes so strong that it deludes later generations into believing the past can become the future. I do not find this to be the case. Lithuanian patriotism at the present time appears to be centered upon the recovery of independence in peace and justice within borders that correspond to ethnic and linguistic lines and not to "Vytautian" hallucinations. There will always be extremists and youthful pranksters who perpetrate the kind of anti-Polish acts cited in the article but it would be wrong to confuse their antics with the sentiments of the majority. Dr. Michalski, on the other hand, characterizes displays of Lithuanian patriotism today as "totally xenophobic and self-centered."

This is a very harsh and sweeping indictment. Patriotism need not be a negative virtue (which the author grudgingly admits) but in the larger context of modern society, it is today a somewhat discredited emotion. "It takes a certain greatness of soul to interpret patriotism worthily," wrote the noted Polish novelist Joseph Conrad. "Modern thought cannot understand the simplicity of a sentiment proceeding

from the very nature of things and men." This is a very different matter from the sometimes excessive clanishness of Lithuanians living abroad who tend to isolate themselves in linguistic islands like today's Hispanic immigrants.

### Heroes and the Dark Ages

Dr. Michalski goes on to assure us that historians are doing "a lot to bring the real issues to light in Vilnius and Warsaw." It would be instructive to know the nature of these "real issues." The author, however, goes on to state that, by comparison, "New York and Chicago are in the 'Dark Ages,'" Here, I must confess, the author leaves me in the dark as to his meaning.

With regard to the nationality of persons long since dead, Dr. Michalski is right on the mark, however. It is indeed foolish and counterproductive to engage in what he appropriately calls "cultural grave robbery." That is why I find it unseemly that Poles have an ingrained habit of arrogating to themselves those who were not Polish by heritage but were members of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. What persons like Kosciusko, for example, did were done in the name of the Commonwealth, and not that of Poland or Lithuania alone. It should be the responsibility of those concerned with historic truth to set the record straight. There is no need for chauvinistic rivalry about our common heroes, only an objective acknowledgement by both sides of the facts.

Here I speak from personal experience. When I sought Polish historians' assistance in my research project on the life of Kosciusko, they were initially enthusiastic, until they learned I intended, among other things, to clarify the question of Kosciusko's Lithuanian heritage. From that moment on, their enthusiasm faded and I received no further assistance.



## The Vilnius Issue

Dr. Michalski states that Poles today are totally disinterested in the political status of this once-disputed city. This is encouraging, because in 1920, after the Parish Peace Conference had assigned the city to Lithuania as its capital, the Poles illegally seized it. The aggression was planned by Pilsudski, the Polish leader, and carried out by his agent, General Zeligowski, in a Machiavellian series of maneuvers in which force predominated. Sadly, it was the first act of postwar defiance of the League of Nations. Ironically, Poland itself fell victim to Hitler's later defiance of the League.

As to Marshal Josef Pilsudski, a Polonized Lithuanian, I find it surprising to learn that many Poles consider Pilsudski a "Lithuanian freebooter who destroyed Poland with his Lithuanian dreams." Pilsudski ruled Poland with what historians have characterized as "fascistic severity and aggressiveness" for many years in the interwar period. His antagonism toward Lithuania, the land of his birth, was almost psychopathic in its hostility. Upon his death, however, he was honored by the Poles as one of their great heroes. In what sense, then, did Pilsudski's "Lithuanian dreams" turn into nightmares that "destroyed Poland?"

## Joint Ventures

Dr. Michalski ends his article by stating that the process of Polish-Lithuanian rapprochement should begin with what he terms "joint ventures" in the cultural and political spheres. This is an unassailable proposition. As a first move, I would suggest that the Poles in this country, as the larger community, invite Lithuanians to share in their commemoration of common heroes, like Kosciusko. In Lithuania, Solidarity and Sajudis might open lines of communication that would benefit both countries' march toward genuine independence, if done in a spirit of mutual cooperation.

But, joint ventures with the Poles do not have an encouraging history. Joint ventures began with the Union of Lublin in 1569 when the Grand Duchy was relegated *de fact* if not *de jure* to a junior role within the newly-formed Commonwealth. In time, the latter's sense of nationhood eroded until its revival by Lithuania's peasants in the latter half of the 19th century.

Lithuania's new Cardinal, Vincentas Sladkevičius, was recently interviewed by the Vatican's official organ, the *Osservatore Romano*. He was asked about Polish Cardinal Glemp's statement, "We would like to establish relations with the Lithuanian episcopate to be able to clarify certain questions." Our Lithuanian Cardinal replied, "There are no problems in relations with the Polish episcopate...such contacts are (taking place)... The Poles, (however) have always had the tendency to become our protectors, but, the Lithuanians are not in agreement."

Cardinal Sladkevicius said it all. Certainly, sincere overtures by the Poles for cooperation should not be spurned, so long as they are done on a basis that respects Lithuania's rightful interests. It's a seeming paradox that, in this fractured world of ours, nationalism must precede internationalism.





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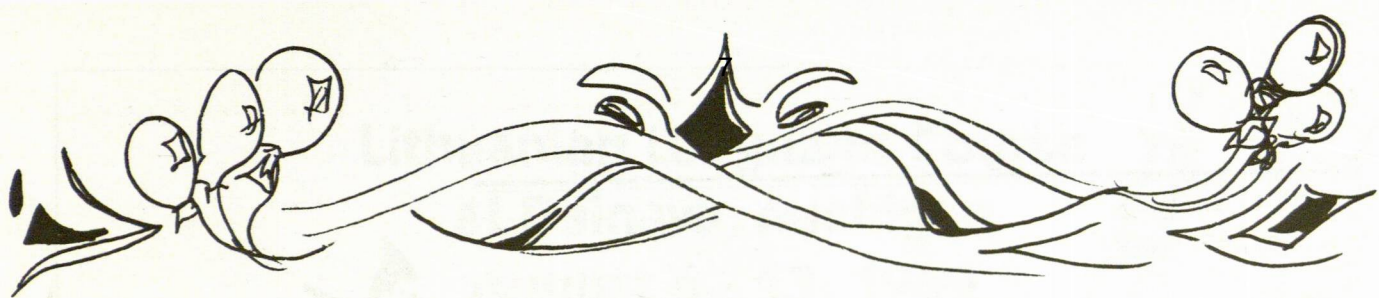
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## Lithuanian Festival In Putnam

The sisters of the Immaculate Conception are preparing for their annual festival on the grounds of their convent in Putnam, Connecticut. This festival is also called Lithuanian Friendship Day. This day usually draws two to three thousand Lithuanians and people of Lithuanian descent, many of whom come from far away such as Chicago, Florida, Ohio, Canada and other states and countries.

This year the celebration will be on Sunday, July 23. The program, in addition to being recreational, will also include religious and cultural activities. Thus, the guests will have opportunities to meet new people, to socialize with friends and acquaintances from nearby as well as from far away, and will also have opportunities for spiritual strengthening and cultural refreshment.

The festivities will begin at 11:00 a.m. with a High Mass celebrated by the Very Reverend Paulius Baltakis, bishop of Lithuanian expatriates and co-celebrated by many priests. The sermon will be delivered by Reverend Alfonsas Svarinskas, a former political prisoner in his native Lithuania.

Immediately following the Mass, food and beverages prepared by the Convent kitchen will be available either indoors or outdoors or at many booths on the Convent grounds operated by many organizations which support the sisters.

At 3:00 p.m., there will be a program of folk dances, games and songs performed by campers of Neringa, a youth camp operated by the sisters of Vermont.

After the youth program, there will be a religious procession from the statue of Mary of Šiluva located at the Eastern wall of the chapel to the garden of Mary of Fatima near the cemetery. This procession will be in commemoration of the 350 year anniversary of Zemaičių Kalvarija, an important Lithuanian shrine to honor the Virgin Mary and said to contain a miraculous painting of her there. Participants of the procession, carrying religious flags and placards, will sing hymns in honor of the Virgin Mary and will pray the mysteries of rosary at the altars located along the procession route.

A tent will be set up in the convent's rose garden to display the paintings of A. Galdikas and the woodcarvings of Edvardas Sakalauskas of Baltimore. This exhibition is being organized by Birute Simkute with the help of Lithuanian youth.

There will be opportunities to view Lithuanian cultural treasures collected at the nearby ALKA — the American Lithuanian Cultural Archive. A memorial castle of King Mindaugas (the only crowned King of Lithuania) contains works of art and artifacts representing the tragedy of the king's family and of Lithuania is located on the convent grounds.

Films about current events in Lithuania will be shown at Raudondvaris hall located on the convent grounds. These will be of special interests to many, since the rapidly growing re-awakening toward freedom and independency in Lithuania is causing a rapid succession of important events. This program is being organized by Juozas Bružas.

The lottery for young people will continue throughout the afternoon in the hall below the chapel. The main lottery will have many prizes, including: a painting by A. Galdikas, a Lithuanian folk costumed doll, a hand-knitted bed cover and a \$100 cash prize, all donated by supporters of the Sisters. All drawings of prizes will be completed before the end of the festivities.

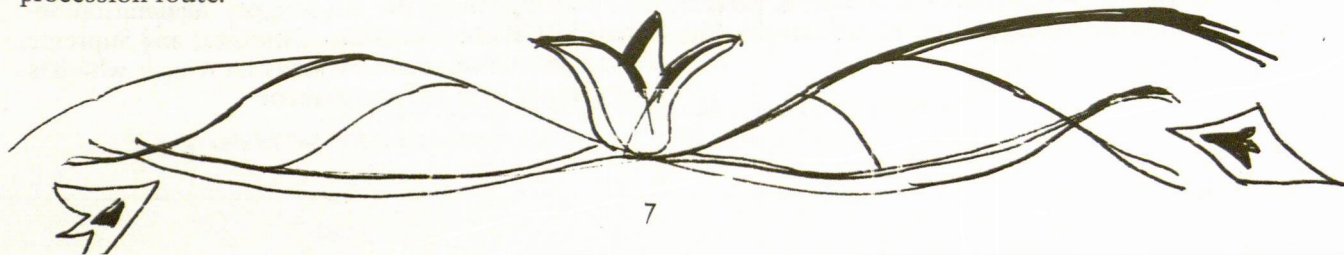
Books, other printed material and souvenirs will be available at the Convent book store. Books will be available at ALKA as well.

Bus charters are being organized in Boston and New York. Those interested should make reservations as early as possible.

Inquiries about the Festival or any related matter should be directed to:

Immaculate Conception Convent  
Route #21  
Putnam, CT 06260  
Telephone: (203) 928-5828

**Contributed by Juozas Kriaučiunas**



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## News & Views from Lithuania

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### Lithuania Declares Itself Sovereign

The Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian SSR declared Lithuania's national sovereignty, asserting the supremacy of Lithuanian law over Soviet law and revising the Lithuanian constitution accordingly, reports the Lithuanian Information Center. Only five deputies in the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet voted against the sovereignty declaration, and three abstained.

The overwhelming vote for sovereignty is in direct contrast to last November's actions, when the Lithuanian Communist Party leadership blocked consideration of the measure by the local Supreme Soviet, preventing Lithuania from seconding Estonia's declaration of sovereignty a few days previously.

In addition to adopting the sovereignty declaration, the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet unanimously adopted changes to four articles of the Lithuanian Constitution. Article 70, which provided the constitutional basis for the sovereignty declaration, was changed to read: "Only those laws are in effect in the Lithuanian SSR which are adopted by its Supreme Soviet or by referendum. Laws of the USSR and legal acts of the USSR state government and governing bodies are in effect in the territory of the Lithuanian SSR only upon their approval and registration by the Lithuanian SSR Supreme Soviet according to established procedure."

Article 11 of the Lithuanian SSR Constitution was revised to state that all of Lithuania's natural resources, all its territory, buildings, transportation and economic enterprises comprise "the republic's national wealth and are under its jurisdiction." In addition, Article 11 now places questions of private ownership under the regulation of Lithuanian SSR laws.

Articles 31 and 37 declared Lithuanian citizenship and stated the rights and freedoms of those citizens derived from the Lithuanian SSR Constitution as well as universally accepted legal conventions.

The sovereignty declaration by the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet was also remarkable because it explicitly criticized the USSR's annexation of Lithuania. The declaration stated that the independent Lithuanian state had signed a peace treaty with Russia in 1920, renouncing in perpetuity all claims to Lithuanian territory. It noted that on the basis of the secret protocols to the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, "the sovereign Lithuanian state was forcibly, illegally attached to the Soviet Union and lost its political as well as cultural independence." The declaration criticized the current Soviet leadership, saying that "today it ignores even the republic's goal of economic independence."

According to the declaration, henceforth the Lithuanian SSR's relationship with the USSR and other states is to be determined by international treaties.

The driving force behind the revisions to the Lithuanian SSR Constitution and its sovereignty declaration was the Lithuanian Reform Movement *Sąjūdis*, the national democratic movement whose candidates recently took 36 of Lithuania's 42 seats in elections to the Congress of People's Deputies. *Sąjūdis'* leadership declared in February that the movement's goal is to re-establish Lithuania's political independence.

Those opposing the sovereignty declaration included KGB chief Eduardas Eismuntas and Supreme Soviet Presidium secretary Jonas Gureckas, who has been forced into early retirement.



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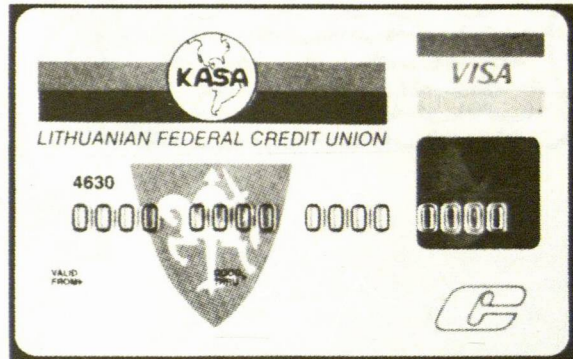
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# Feedback

Dear Mr. Meilus,

Each of your *Bridges* publications intrigue and interest me so deeply because I am 100% full-blooded Lithuanian — born in Worcester, MA coincidentally, — and finally visited relatives in Lithuania last summer in their home after attempts failed in 1960 and 1978.

Your April issue overwhelmed me. The brilliance of Kezys' Cityscapes leaves me amazed.

I plan another trip to Lithuania in about a year or so to visit the birthplace of my father — the location of which was discovered since my return last summer.

Jonynas is also a favorite of mine. Unfortunately, his exhibit in Vilnius closed just before my arrival in Lithuania last summer. He executed a contemporary masterpiece in St. Casimir's Church in Worcester, MA where I was baptized, as well as the chapel on the grounds of the Matulaitis Nursing home in Putnam, CT, where my mother finally passed on. I remember also, his bas reliefs on the Vatican Pavillion at the New York World's Fair. Keep up the good work.

**Bernice B. Kellogg**  
San Mateo, CA

Dear Sir,

I wish to congratulate you on the refreshing changes to *Bridges*. I have enjoyed the Architectural photographs and the spirited coverage of Sajudis.

**Al Rudis, Jr.**  
San Francisco, CA

Dear Mr. Meilus,

I just read an article in *The Anchorage Daily News* by Melvin Madocks, a former columnist for *The Christian Science Monitor*. The article is entitled "We need more than a little self-interest to save the world." The commitment of politicians and socially responsible scientists to ecology is the usual alliance for hope.

The author goes on to say that more is required than the recognition of self-interest.

"Something like the holy love of Mother Earth shared by poets, children and primitives."

The devastating oil spill in Alaska has come within ten miles of Homer where I live. Many wilderness beaches are left with no living things. Oiled birds and otters are being eaten by other birds of prey and mammals like bears and fox. The deer eat the oiled kelp, unknowingly, and oil has entered the food chain.

My point is this: the Lithuanian culture has in its roots, as do many old cultures, a deep love for the earth — a reverence. Would you please print more articles and poems that express this idea. (the connection with the land) One of the oldest languages in the world must have some valuable truths to share with the world!

Enclosed is \$20.00 for a year's subscription. Please keep the extra as a donation. I am half Lithuanian as my mother's parents who both came from Lithuania. Your publication has helped me to understand much about the culture. Thanks!

**Karen C. Bury**  
Homer, Alaska

*Thank you for your interesting comments, suggestions and your donation. Ecological issues are slated to be discussed in the future.*

Editor

Dear Mr. Meilus,

We enjoy *Bridges* very much, however, it seems that it would be nice if once in a while you could have one page in the Lithuanian language, just so the people who can read it a little, can practice up on it. Old timers like us and the younger generation also would benefit. Of course we could subscribe to an all Lithuanian-written newspaper, but we don't, and maybe many others don't. Well, this was just a thought.

We wish continued success to *Bridges*. Keep up the good work

**Anne Karris Palkot**  
Garden City, NY

**Well readers, what do you think?**  
Editor

To all of you at *Bridges*,

Please extend my subscription to *Bridges* for another year and accept my \$5.00 donation to cover other expenses.

It is with joy in my heart and pride in my soul that I read and enjoy your journal.

I grew up in Lithuania, but with each issue, I learn something new about the land of my birth.

Thanks for your fine efforts and best wishes for future success.

**Gail Barkus**  
New Kensington, PA

Dear Sirs,

Please renew my subscription. One of these days I will send an article for your publication. I have been to Lithuania seven times and will go in 1990 for six weeks. I was at the Song and Dance Festival in 1985 and wish to see it again in 1990.

I enjoy your magazine.

**Natalie N. Phillips**  
Alhambra, CA

# Gera Gaspadinė

Recipes are found in *Family Favorites — From Our Best Cooks* published by the American-Lithuanian Roman Catholic Women's Alliance (1982) used with permission.

## POTATO PANCAKES

- 6 med. potatoes
- 1 egg
- 1 med. grated onion
- 3 Tbsp. flour
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ c. shortening or margarine

In small bowl, beat egg with salt until thick.

Peel and grate potatoes (about 4 cups). Drain excess juice from potatoes and mix with egg, onion and flour.

In large skillet, melt shortening and lower heat. Spoon half of the mixture into skillet, forming four pancakes. Cook, turning once until golden brown. Place on paper towel. Make four more pancakes. If you double the recipe for a larger batch of pancakes, they can be kept warm in low oven until all are made.

Serve with sour cream or applesauce.



## MOLDED SHRIMP SALAD FOR DIETERS

- 2 envelopes unflavored gelatin
- 1½ c. skim milk yogurt
- 1 c. low-calorie mayonnaise
- ½ c. chili sauce
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped green onion
- 1 tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. dried tarragon leaves
- 2 cans small shrimp
- ½ c. chopped celery lettuce

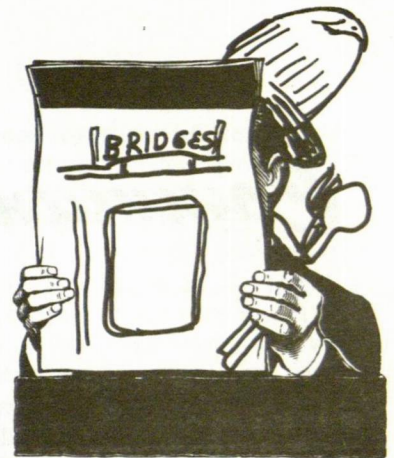
Sprinkle gelatin over 1½ cups of cold water in medium saucepan. Let soften - about 5 minutes. Bring to a boil, stirring until gelatin is completely dissolved. Set pan in a bowl of ice cubes until gelatin is cold; stir 2 or 3 times.

Add yogurt, mayonnaise, chili sauce, lemon juice, onion, salt and tarragon to gelatin. Mix until well blended. Refrigerate or place over ice, stirring occasionally, until mixture is consistency of unbeaten egg white.

Add shrimp and celery to yogurt mixture and mix well. Turn into a chilled 2 quart mold or 8 individual molds. Refrigerate until set - about 6 hours or overnight.

To serve, unmold onto crisp lettuce. Garnish edge with cherry tomatoes, cut in half.

Makes 8 servings.



## STUFFED CABBAGE

- 6 large cabbage leaves
- ½ c. water
- ½ c. instant beef-flavored rice
- 1 Tbsp. instant beef-flavored seasoning
- 1½ lb. lean ground beef
- 1 egg
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ⅛ tsp. pepper
- ½ tsp. thyme
- 1 pkg. (1¾ oz.) dry onion soup mix (divided in 2)

Gravy:

- 1 can (No. 10½) golden mushroom soup
- ¼ soup can of water
- 1 can (4 oz.) mushrooms, stems and pieces (divided in 2)

Drop cabbage leaves into boiling water; simmer until crisp-tender and drain. Bring ½ cup water to a boil in small pan; add rice and half of the seasoning mix. Cover and remove from heat. Let stand for 5 minutes.

Combine beef, egg, salt, pepper, thyme, ½ pkg. dry onion soup mix and ½ can of mushrooms. Add rice. Divide meat mixture into 6 balls.

Place one in each cabbage leaf; roll and secure with toothpick. Place in shallow roasting pan.

Combine mushroom soup with remaining soup mix and mushrooms.

Bake at 325 degrees in the oven for 1 hour. Add more water, if necessary, during baking.

# Community with a Capital "C"

**The Lithuanian-American Cultural Council** presented awards for achievement in various spheres of culture. On May 20 at Chicago's Lithuanian Youth Center, the following were honored: academicians (mokslininkai) and authors Algirdas Julius Greimas and Petras Jonikas; musician Andrius Kuprevičius; Los Angeles Drama Ensemble; journalist Vytautas Meškauskas; artist Zita Sodeika; and radio show host Juozas Stempužis. The awards were presented by the Lithuanian Fund's Executive Council

President Stasys Baras and President Marija Remys, and the Lithuanian-American Community's Executive Council President Dr. Antanas Razma and Cultural Council President Dalia Kučėnas. The awards banquet was the ninth. Over the years, a variety of Lithuanian emigre cultural figures have been honored. The categories have changed over the years, but the honors themselves remain under the jurisdiction of the Lithuanian-American Cultural Council, and the funding for the awards comes from the Lithuanian Fund.

*submitted by R. Kubilius of the Lithuanian-American Community's Executive Council.*



# Remembering <sup>16</sup> *Ratilio*

by Rita Likander

As a direct result of Gorbachev's openness policy and reform ideas within the Soviet System, many people are traveling in both directions across the Atlantic, while they still can. Not only are individuals traveling between America and Lithuania, but a vibrant cultural exchange program has started up between these two countries. Many dancing groups and theater groups are heading from the United States and Canada to Lithuania to visit the land of their ancestors, to perform for these song-loving people; to make new friends. The same is true the other way around. Within the last couple of months, many Lithuanian groups have come to the United States and entranced Lithuanian-Americans everywhere with their performances and their friendliness. No exception to this is the *Ratilio* ensemble, who has just recently finished a very successful concert tour in America. They actually took us by storm performing to sold out audiences everywhere they went. The chief organizer of this concert was Romas Kezys from New York. He, in turn, encouraged other Lithuanian communities in the United States to sponsor their concerts. As it turns out, people of different ages and backgrounds were working together to make the concerts as successful as possible. In some cities, the *Ratilio* concerts were organized by chapters of the Lithuanian Community, Bendruomene, in others it was the local Youth Association chapters, in still others it was the Lithuanian Radio programs. The talented performers of the *Ratilio* folkloric ensemble did concerts in at least 14 American and Canadian cities (Philadelphia, New York, Boston, Hartford, New Haven, Cleveland, Detroit, Kent State, Chicago, St. Petersburg, Miami, Washington D.C., Baltimore and Toronto). Sometimes more concerts were added, other times, plans changed at the last minute, most of the time, the *Ratilio* members saw only the inside of their bus or the back of the hall they performed at, but their enthusiasm never waned. They were always very cheerful and willing to adapt to the situations. Many times they had a concert in one city on one night, and another one in another city the next afternoon. They were very tired, but they never let their audiences know that — their shows were always high on energy and fun. After reading the reviews of their concerts in various U.S. cities, and having spent the weekend with them in Chicago, I decided to share some of my reactions and feelings with *Bridges* readers.

The concerts in Chicago were organized by a special committee of the Lithuanian-American Community, headed by the energetic Mrs. B. Jasaitis. Asked to be a member of this committee, I was delegated the task of tour guide/entertainment committee! Since their concert schedule in Chicago left all day Saturday (April 22) open, it was my job to show them around the town and to make sure that they got to do some sightseeing!

I got some of my friends together and we dubbed ourselves "the entertainment committee." We wanted to show them the city, so that they could see as much of Chicago in as little time as possible. Rumors had already made their way back to us — the performers were very tired, especially because of all the travel, but they haven't had a chance to see very much of America. They wanted to see everything, but we didn't want to wear them out even more. So we tried to present an interesting and worthwhile tour for them, but as the day came around, this too, was changed several times. Nonetheless, we managed to show them the most impressive sites in Chicago, introduce them to caramel popcorn, show them how ATM cash machines work, take them to a popular Mexican restaurant and then to a Lithuanian dinner dance for the evening. One Sunday, after the concert and the dinner in their honor, we went dancing at a disco on the shores of Lake Michigan. Monday was a free day for them in the sense that they could go shopping before their evening concert.

My first impressions upon seeing them get off the bus at the Lithuanian Youth Center in Chicago on April 21 (about two-thirds of their concert tour was over by then) was one of amazement (the "entertainment committee" had somehow expected them to be older). I thought they were very young and they looked very worn out — I didn't think they would make it through all their shows. They all were excited about being (in what some people call "The Lithuanian Capital,") outside of Lithuania's borders even though only a few of us locals turned up to greet them. After my initial reaction, curiosity got the better of me and I approached several of them. Yes, they were tired from constant traveling, but they were excited about seeing the city. They were excited to be in Chicago (or was it a feeling of relief at having completed about two-thirds of their scheduled concert tour???) and were looking forward to some sightseeing and shopping.

The Lithuanian-American "entertainment committee," and the "Lithuanian-Lithuanian" entertainers soon formed fast friendships. Even though there were 30 of them for us to remember, but, by the time Monday evening came around, when we were saying goodbye to them, we knew them all by name. They were no longer just *Ratilio*, they were Saulius, Dainius, Asta, Ingrida, Aušra, Regis, Virgis,, Diana, Irena, Žilvinas, etc. It was hard, very hard, to say goodbye to our new friends, especially because nobody really knows when we will see each other again.





The *Ratilio* troupe did three very successful, standing-room-only concerts in Chicago. The concerts were scheduled for Friday night, Sunday afternoon and then Monday evening. This unusual scheduling was due to the fact that there was no hall available on Saturday evening. The first two concerts were sold out almost immediately, so Mrs. Jasaitis, together with Mr. Kezys, decided to add on a third performance. Tickets for this show were gone almost before they became available from the printing company. I'm sure that if there would have been more time, we could have easily had a fourth just as successful performance. The evening shows were considered to be big risks because they started at 7:00 p.m., and people weren't home from work yet, and Monday evening was bad because it was a work night, but they turned out to be just as crowded as the Sunday matinee concert.

*Ratilio* — the word itself is hard to explain in Lithuanian, and it has no specific meaning in English. The word *ratilio* comes from *ratas*, *ratelis* (circle, little circle, going around in a circle) and is used as a nonsensical refrain in a few of the songs or *sutartinės* that the group sings. The songs and dances were collected by members of the ensemble, most of whom are students at the University of Vilnius, from the old timers still living in some small wayward farm villages somewhere in *Aukštaitija* or *Žemaitija*. Some of the songs were documented in the 18th and 19th centuries, and are presented to the audience as they were sung in the old days. The group sang songs, danced folk dances and played old Lithuanian musical instruments — concertinas, violins, horns, *skuduciai*, *kankles*. They performed solos, duets, just the men's choir, just the women and full ensemble. *Ratilio* sang sad songs, lively songs, teasing and poking fun of songs, as well as patriotic songs from the forced labor camps of Siberia. The group was always introduced by their lively, yet disciplined leader, Zita Kelmickaitė. During the three concerts in Chicago, she spoke differently each time — during one concert, she explained about the different costumes the women wore and what regions they came from. During another, she talked about the songs and instruments and the history behind them. She could have easily done the whole concert program by herself. The concerts always started with the group walking in through the audience, singing and dancing as they went toward the stage. They also surprised many people by coming off the stage during several numbers and dancing with members of the audience. Even though some people protested, most went out in good spirits to dance with the costumed *Ratilio* members.

The most touching moment of the concert came when they recited several poems by a Lithuanian poet, Miškinis, who had been exiled to Siberia. The *Ratilio* ensemble sang patriotic songs and many members of the audience were seen wiping the tears from their faces. Especially moving, was the performance of Miškinis' poetry by soloist, Veronica Povilioniene. As a gesture of unity between the performers and the audience, all the concerts ended with the singing of the Lithuanian National Anthem. This also brought tears to everybody — it was then, that people both on stage and in the audience, realized that we are all one proud people, the only thing separating us is the Atlantic and the Iron Curtain. The concerts ended much too quickly — I'm sure the audience could have easily sat through another two hours, but, the performers were tired after all. However, they did have enough material in their repertoire to go on for another three hours.

After Sunday's concert, the group presented gifts to the chief organizer of the Chicago concerts, Mrs. Birutė Jasaitis, and to the President of the Lithuanian-American Community, Dr. Antanas Razma. *Ratilio* then surprised everyone by presenting the people of Chicago with a loaf of black rye bread brought over from Lithuania. The loaf was quickly divided among many of the participants. The performers did not go unnoticed — they each received flowers, a monetary gift from the organizers, and their leaders received books and more books.

There were receptions after all the concerts to give the performers a chance to unwind and to give the locals a chance to meet the talented musicians, singers and dancers. Friday night's reception was



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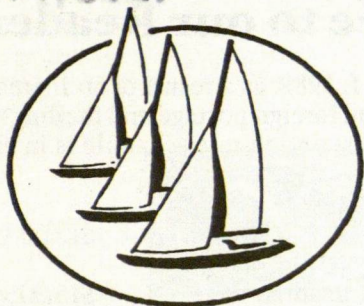
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rather awkward, because everyone was just getting to know one another. During the dinner after the concert on Sunday, people were friendly, warm and cheerful. Everybody felt like members of one big family — no longer strangers, but close personal friends. After the concert Monday night, *Ratilio* quickly ate their last dinner in Chicago, then hurried to pack up the bus and get ready for their long trip to Florida. While they were packing up their costumes, props and musical instruments, the organizational committee managed to put all the leftover food and drinks on the bus so that they would have something to munch on during their long ride. New friends exchanged addresses and token gifts of friendship — members of *Ratilio* presented "the entertainment committee" with momentos of their visit — posters, postcards, amber earrings, wooden pins, palms of Vilnius, *Vilniaus verbos* and many other things. Having said their last farewells, they hugged everybody and cried on our shoulders, then tearfully boarded their bus. With that, they left quietly, gracefully, confidently, just as they had come.

These four days with them passed very quickly. It is hard to believe that they are now back in Lithuania with their families and friends, no doubt reminiscing about their very successful trip. They left everybody with a very favorable impression — the local people fell in love with all of them and went out of their way to care for them, showing them true Lithuanian hospitality. I wonder if we left as big an impression on them as they did on us? Even though they met many people during the course of their extended stay in the United States, I'm sure they will remember each and every one of us. (We will be sending them clippings from the papers of their concerts and pictures to make sure they do remember us!!)

Good luck in your future concerts and trips, *Ratilio*. Thank you for making us realize who we are and where we came from. Thank you for the entertainment you provided us, as well as for your friendships. May our paths cross many, many times — maybe at an upcoming *Dainų Šventė* (International Song Festival) — either here in the United States and Canada, or possibly even in faraway Lithuania.



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L A B E L



## Bonn says it has proof Baltic states seized

A microfilm of secret protocols detailing how Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union colluded to seize Poland and the Baltic states has survived and is in West German archives, officials said Friday.

Information Minister Hans Klein told reporters the film has been inspected by two Soviet historians investigating the Soviet Union's 1940 annexation of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Foreign Ministry officials said the Nazis destroyed documents deeding the Baltic nations to the Soviet Union but that an unidentified diplomat saved a copy on microfilm.

On Thursday, the new Soviet Congress approved a Kremlin inquiry into the non-aggression pact that paved the way for the takeover of the independent Baltic states and the Nazi invasion of Poland.

Independent groups challenging Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to prove the sincerity of his reforms are pressing the Kremlin to admit it has been lying for more than 40 years with its claims that Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania willingly joined the Soviet Union.

Gorbachev himself requested Bonn's help last fall when he met with Chancellor Helmut Kohl and asked if the West Germans had a copy of the secret protocols.

Klein told reporters Friday the original pact signed August 23, 1939, by the wartime foreign ministers, Vyacheslav Molotov and Joachim von Ribbentrop, remains in Bonn's Foreign Ministry archives.

But the secret protocols detailing the Baltic takeover and Polish invasion were destroyed by Nazi officials in the last days of World War II, Klein said.

"However, a microfilm copy of this and other documents was preserved by a diplomat," Foreign Ministry spokesman Juergen Chrobog said.

The officials said they do not know who preserved the microfilm or why.

The so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement has come under close scrutiny over the past year as Soviet reforms have allowed open discussion.

It freed German troops to attack Poland in September 1939. The Germans agreed not to defend the Baltics, to which they were closely allied, leaving the Soviets to seize eastern Poland.

**Associated Press**