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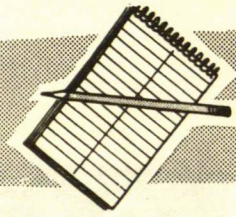
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From the Desk of the Managing Editor



As you read this month's issue of *Bridges* the eyes, ears, hopes and fears of the world are focused on Washington, D.C. the site of the Superpower Summit between Soviet President Mikhail S. Gorbachev and U.S. President George W. Bush. It is in our nation's capital, during these meetings that some observers say the fate of Lithuania's drive for the recognition of restored independence will be sealed. These several days in late May and early June are critical to the survival of the Republic of Lithuania.

Ever since the Declaration of the Restoration of Lithuania's Independence was promulgated on March 11, 1990, after 50 years of Soviet domination, Lithuanian-Americans have been called to political action on Lithuania's behalf. It should be noted that all of us should be proud of our activity, some of the actions have had positive results, but now is not the time to sit back and say, I did my part, let someone else take over the reigns. Such an attitude is completely inappropriate at this critical time.

All of us who can, should be in Washington D.C. during the summit. Massive demonstrations are planned for the White House and the Soviet Embassy, with the main demonstration point being the steps of the capitol. A Catholic Mass is scheduled also at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. These events are scheduled for Friday June 1st and Saturday June 2nd. Bus excursions are being organized by the local chapters of the Lithuanian-American Community (*Bendruomenė*) and other groups throughout the United States. Even Canadian-Lithuanians are planning to participate. Candlelight Vigils are also going to take place. These will commence on Wednesday May 30th and are being organized by Lithuanian-Americans who served in the United States' Armed Forces and also the Lithuanian Boy and Girl Scouts.

As you are well aware, these demonstrations are planned to influence public opinion in favor of Lithuania's right to sovereignty and nationhood. Also, of note is that Soviet Leader Mikhail Gorbachev is very public opinion conscious. He is experiencing trouble at home (witness how Gorbachev was jeered during the May Day celebration in Red Square). Gorbachev is having trouble convincing the world that he supports true *perestroika*, within his own nation. Maybe these demonstrations will be successful in turning "Gorby" around. But, sad to say, we also need to turn our own president around. Maybe these demonstrations will positively once and for all result in George Bush making good his campaign promise to support Lithuania's drive for independence, and reiterate the U.S. policy of the non-recognition of the incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union 50 years ago.

It was gratifying to see that the three Presidents of the Baltic Republics met earlier this month in Tallinn, Estonia in a Baltic Summit, to plan strategy, to share goals and aspirations, issue joint communique's to Gorbachev and Bush, to demand membership in the United Nations, in addition to reiterating a 1934 mutual assistance pact. In unity there is strength, yet it should be noted that Estonia's and Latvia's road to restored independence is a different one than Lithuania's. The sister republics passed and imposed constitutional changes. The sister republics, though following Lithuania's lead did not take the same bold steps that have resulted in economic starvation of Lithuania at the hands of the Kremlin.

Now is the time for action. Lithuania needs each and everyone of us to act. Continue to do your part because our righteous cause has the support of many.

Vardan tos, Lietuvos, vienybė težydi!

In the name of our Lithuania, may unity flourish forever!



Eduardas V. Meilus, Jr.

BRIDGES

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A Reader's Letter To President Bush

Dear Mr. President,

The *New York Times* quoted Marlin Fitzwater as saying that there was "relatively little interest expressed through public opinion polls, phone calls and letters" on the Lithuanian issue. Does this imply that you are running the presidency of this country on public opinion polls, phone calls and letters? I have strong feelings on many issues, but no poll taker has ever contacted me. I truly don't have the time to write you a letter on each issue, and I doubt that you would take my phone calls.

Lithuania is *not* just an upstart "republic" trying to jump on the perestroika bandwagon. You know of the secret German-Soviet pact which led to their forced annexation into the Soviet Union.

Thank goodness we never recognized that. But, not having recognized it, how could you vacillate — giving hope one day then snatching it away the next by inaction in the face of Soviet intransigence — then finally dashing all hope by your statement of April 24th? Do you not realize that the hopes of millions of people in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia were crushed? I'm embarrassed for our country. I only hope they understand that this was the action of one man and not the "strong" feelings of the American people — people not "polled" and obviously with misplaced confidence in your desire to take a stand for freedom.

Caution and dialogue *are* in order but not at the expense of Lithuania's freedom. I'm not suggesting that you cut off trade talks with the Soviet Union or impose other sanctions which could be counterproductive. You could try to give aid to Lithuania. Difficult logistically, perhaps, but certainly a worthy effort.

You seem to be willing to sacrifice the Lithuanian people for some greater good, as you said, "in order not to inadvertently set back the progress that has been made in Eastern Europe." Isn't this kind of like one step backward for two steps forward? Glad I'm not standing behind you on this issue. As President Landsbergis said, "Can the freedom of one group of people be sold for another? Of what value then is freedom itself?"

Lithuania is a country with a proud heritage. The fact is, the feelings of and for these people *are* strong. Not just because of some "ethnic" resurgence, but because of their right to exist as a *country* — whatever its present size — a sovereign state, no less so than Czechoslovakia, Hungary — or ours. Lithuania and the other Baltic states are not really in any different situation than the East European countries that are enjoying their recently regained freedom. The only difference is that 1940 secret pact. A piece of paper. Only a variation in the manner in which all of Eastern Europe was devoured by Germany and the Soviet Union in the same time period. Why then are we willing to accept and applaud what's happening in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and elsewhere and not see that Lithuania is really no different, just an unfortunate victim of the particular method used to gain control of it? Remember, we never recognized that pact.

The so-called iron curtain countries seem to have the advantage at present. Unfortunately, the same time, relatively speaking, that the iron curtain was drawn across Europe, a simple, illegitimate pact was all that was necessary to encompass the Baltic states within the control of the Soviet Union. What difference... the result was the same. Now, however, as the long-awaited process of extrication from Soviet influence and control begins, the Baltic states suffer from a technicality. The imposed "paper curtain" is proving tougher than any iron curtain; certainly stronger than the stones of the Berlin Wall.

To be sure, there are other republics within the USSR that are yearning for their measure of independence. It's tough to argue who should get what and when, since their incorporation happened at various times under different circumstances. The argument for Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, however, remains clear and unambiguous: they did not want "in." Puppet governments were put in place with rigged elections to legitimize the action that was taken. This didn't happen in some far distant past; this happened relatively recently.

The Soviets have formally recognized the illegality of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact; the Lithuanian Parliament, representing the people, has overwhelmingly expressed *their* desire. These people are asking only for what they deserve, in the same timely fashion as the rest of Eastern Europe. I only hope that they will accept help from the private citizens of our country, despite the "official" position of our President.

You stated that Americans "strongly support" you on this issue — well, this one doesn't, nor do I believe any thinking American does. You stated that you *hope* Moscow and Lithuania could work out their differences. Really? Moscow will devour Lithuania!

Mr. President, please consider the Lithuanian issue not as an isolated situation, not just another clamoring crowd demanding their "right" to self-determination, but as a people fighting strongly for their independence — just as we did.

Sincerely,
Charles R. Belensky

Editor's Note: Charles sent Bridges a copy of this letter saying: "Just thought I'd send you a copy of this since Bridges has been very instrumental in the facts and feelings I put into this letter. As you said — Let's all continue to do our part." You're so right, Charles, and thanks for sharing.



Lobbying and Foreign Aid

by Ramunė Kubilius

As Lithuania declared its restoration of independence, we in the West, particularly the United States, try to find our place in all of this. Of particular concern now is political and foreign support and aid for Lithuania, preceded of course by recognition for the Republic of Lithuania, and by unification of various Lithuanian emigre organizations on these issues.

The March 22, 1990 issue of *Draugas* featured a long article written by Povilas Žumbakis. In the introductory paragraphs, Žumbakis states that some people are comparing Lithuania's declaration with the French revolution. The author mentioned the personal request of Vytautas Landsbergis, the Chairman of Lithuania's Supreme Council. Landsbergis requested that Lithuania's emigre groups meet and together jointly acknowledge Lithuania's declaration of restored independence. (Such a meeting took place in Washington, D.C. the weekend of March 31 - April 1. The results of the closed meeting were announced. Among the results of the meeting, the gathered participants congratulated Lithuania on its declaration of restored independence. The meeting was called together by the Lithuanian World Community whose president is Dr. Vytautas Bieliauskas and VLIKAS — Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania whose president is Dr. Kazys Bobelis.)

In the *Draugas* article Povilas Žumbakis writes that we in the West stood by in a disorganized fashion, with our heads in the clouds, with no vision or plan. The declaration of independence in Lithuania has brought forth many Lithuanians of fourth and fifth generations. All want to help Lithuania. For all the dynamic energy created, we need guideposts, per Žumbakis. He feels that Prof. Landsbergis had to ask for something we should have all felt was necessary earlier — one voice in the U.S. capital. We should have the capability to clearly state our position on White House statements and the like. We need to raise all of this to a professional level. The suggestion of Žumbakis — form a PAC — Political Action Committee. He mentions a similar and effective organization of American Jews — the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (Žumbakis wrote "Action" but the *Encyclopedia of Associations* states otherwise). According to Žumbakis, this group is considered one of the most effective in America; the fruit of its labor is the financial support of the United States for Israel.

Žumbakis goes on to detail his idea for the formation of LITPAC. He sees it as being financed by the various Lithuanian organizations (Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.; Lithuanian-American Council; World Lithuanian Community, etc.). It should have seven directors. It should, without pause, inform Representatives and Senators, press for action from the White House. The LITPAC should be staffed by professionals, the work should be seen as critical and serious. Lithuania requests and requires that of us. It is our opportunity and duty to lead Lithuania towards the light, reach out a helping hand, per Žumbakis.

A recent meeting brought the issue of lobbying in Washington D.C. to a wider arena. The Midwest Director of the Jewish American Committee, David Roth, invited various ethnic representatives to a breakfast meeting April 6th in Chicago. The purpose of the meeting: "Consultation on Building a Broader Coalition for an Expanded Foreign Aid Policy." At the meeting were representatives from Chicagoland, Wisconsin and Indiana, representing Lithuanians, Latvians, Poles, Italians, Romanians, African Americans, Hispanics, Greeks; also represented were members of the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, and an ethnic radio station in Chicago — WCEV.

The speakers at the meeting were Richard Rice, Chairperson of the American Jewish Committee's International Relations; Esther Kurz, Legislative Director for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The topic of the meeting was to bring several points to the attention of the attendees. American foreign aid is the last issue on the table, first off. The House Budget Committee is scheduled to meet within the next month, and some of its members are not known for their support of foreign aid. Support for U.S. foreign aid is not popular among the American public either, according to the speakers. Some see it as a handout, almost like public aid. Rice mentioned the *New York Times* poll, published April 6th in which of those surveyed, opposition to increasing foreign aid in general has been between 68 to 71% in years since 1971. In the most recent survey, 44% said that the U.S. should not give financial aid to "those countries in Eastern Europe which have turned towards democracy."

Per capita, the United States is very low among world nations for foreign aid. Scandinavian nations rank among the highest for (usually humanitarian) foreign aid. Foreign aid represents a small part of the overall budget, less than 2% or \$15 billion, per Esther Kurz.

Israel has been receiving \$5 billion for the last 5 years. The terminology "foreign aid" has had a negative reaction among people, although specific help for the hungry in Africa or for emerging democracies will elicit a more positive reaction. Esther Kurz mentioned that the natural tendencies of Americans are to be isolationist. The fear factor of politicians is unfounded since no politicians have ever been defeated because of their support for foreign aid.

The breakfast, it was hoped by organizers, would be the beginning of an ongoing dialogue. Sen. Dole's proposal to shave 3 to 5% off the present budget to make new money was not seen favorably by speakers at the breakfast who said that it should not come down to allocating pieces of the pie without making the pie bigger.

The speakers felt that there is no foreign aid constituency in Washington D.C., that such a united front could provide a framework for the money, urging Congress to maintain levels of support to traditional recipients. The U.S. should continue

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its leadership role and its global responsibility. As the military steps out, economic aid should be brought in — it is in the interests of U.S. national security to do so.

These are two scenarios currently being discussed. Meanwhile, other Lithuanian-Americans are talking of economic aid on a different level, in the form of joint ventures. Others seek to sway public opinion by swamping local newspapers and magazines which are covering the scene in the so-called

"emerging democracies." Of concern the week of April 16th was the *Newsweek* poll: 66% of Americans questioned approved of President Bush's handling of the situation in Eastern Europe. 27% felt that the U.S. should recognize an independent country to pressure Mikhail Gorbachev into doing the same, but 59% said keeping good relations with the Soviet leader was more important. Foreign aid for Lithuania will not be in the minds of most Americans if this is how they feel about Soviet-U.S. relations. There is work to be done in this arena.

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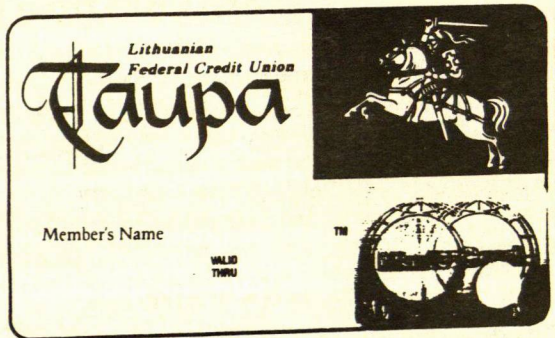
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SAFETY PAPER

A Bridges Interview

by Allison M. Stockno

Her name is Rūta Virkutyté. She is a 22-year-old American, born Lithuanian, who is a graduate of the Catholic University of America, located in Washington, D.C.. Her course of study was International Politics. What makes Rūta so special? Well . . . let me say that not many of us get the chance to utilize our college studies in the way that she did. Rūta has already been to Lithuania twice before, but this trip was different. She originally had set out on a quest; she wanted to better understand and put to use her course studies. Therefore, Rūta decided to experience what some may call the main artery of the Soviet Union; Russia. Having spent 4 months of study there, by family invitation she was now on her way for a 2-month stay in Lithuania.

In a time where so much of our world is changing, and whole areas of the continent are making a stand for freedom and justice, Rūta was one of the few Americans to say that she experienced first hand much of these changes.

What is all of this leading up to you may ask . . . read on and you will find your answer through Rūta's eyes.

INTERVIEWER: WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO GO TO LITHUANIA? WHAT WAS THE INTEREST YOU HAD IN THE COUNTRY?

RŪTA: "I had been to Lithuania twice before, and I really enjoyed both of those times and decided I was going to come back and stay longer. Everything that was going on was really interesting to me. I worked at the Lithuanian Information Center in Washington, D.C. during my college years. So I knew everything that has been happening, and I really wanted to see it first hand. I wanted to try to do something to help. I knew before going that they needed English translators, because friends of mine had gone over there and worked for Sajudis doing translations. So I knew that there was a chance to work and help out. Sajudis is one of the big places where students hang out in Lithuania. They have an Information Agency and they put out bulletins in English and they need certain things translated for their own use. I thought that working with Sajudis would be interesting. I also wanted to go to Lithuania to see old friends and family."

INTERVIEWER: HOW LONG DID YOU SPEND IN LITHUANIA?

RŪTA: "I spent two months."

INTERVIEWER: IS IT MORE DIFFICULT NOW TO GET THE PERMISSION TO GO OVER TO LITHUANIA THAN IT WAS BEFORE? IS THERE MORE RED TAPE AND POLITICS BECAUSE OF THE THINGS THAT ARE GOING ON IN THE COUNTRY . . . ALL OF THE UNREST AND UPRISINGS?

RŪTA: "I had a hard time, but I don't know how much of it was them wanting to stop me from going or how much of it was bureaucracy because I was trying to take care of all of that in Moscow and go after my studies ended in Moscow. That turned out to be really complicated because I was there on a student visa and then I wanted to go on a private visa. The way I went was I had an invitation from family to go. So it's two different visas, one is considered a business visa, one is a private visa. So it was a hassle to organize, but whether it was because they wanted to stop me from going or because I didn't know what bureaucrat to ask about it. I bounced around from different offices and it took me about three months to get the visa.

INTERVIEWER: HOW LONG DID YOU SPEND IN MOSCOW? WHAT WAS MOSCOW LIKE IN COMPARISON TO MAJOR CITIES IN LITHUANIA? WHAT WERE SOME OF THE DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES YOU FOUND?

RŪTA: "I spent four months in Moscow. I was studying the Russian language. I had studied it in college and I decided that the only way I was going to learn it was to go over there just for the experience. My concentration in college was Soviet Studies so I thought that seeing I've already seen the Lithuanian part of it that I should see what Russia was like. In my opinion Lithuania is very different from Russia. The standard of living in Lithuania is much higher. When I saw people's apartments in Moscow I was horrified in the fact that they can live that way. Maybe part of it is because a lot of them seem older than the places in Lithuania. Maybe part of it is the fact that Lithuanian's even if they are younger and didn't experience the independence period, they've always had their parents tell them about it, and they strived for something more. I think a lot of people in the rest of the Soviet Union, the memory of what it was like before has already dimmed. Apartments are nice. They have nice furniture in Lithuania . . . whatever little they have they keep up. The economic situation is better in Lithuania. There is more food in the stores than in Moscow, although to us here in America the shelves are empty in Lithuania. While I was staying in Moscow people told me that Moscow gets flooded by all of the people in the provinces. So everyone that lives around Moscow comes to shop and takes it back home. Although my family told me that a few years ago when they would go to Moscow they would shop there and bring things back home to Lithuania with them. Whereas now its the other way around. My cousins had two friends who live near Moscow come to visit in Lithuania, and they were amazed with what was in the stores. They commented, 'We haven't seen this kind of sausage or cheese in a year.' And they swept up everything they could find and brought it home."



A cross among the multitude on Lithuania's Hill of Crosses.

INTERVIEWER: HOW ARE PEOPLE DIFFERENT?

RŪTA: "The Lithuanians for a year-and-a-half have been talking about freedom, whereas the Russian people only have Gorbachev and he's been letting them down. So the Russian people don't have the same kind of hope as the Lithuanians. One thing I observed was that the Russians I've talked to I feel like they've lost something in trying to make the whole Soviet Union, Russia. In trying to Russify the whole Soviet Empire the Russians have lost a lot themselves . . . there is really little sense of nationalism among the Russians that I met. It's sort of like in creating this Soviet man that they've always wanted to they've lost their own national identity. It's become watered down. I think that's really sad, because every other republic still has their own strong sense of Nationalism. I mean Nationalism in a good sense, that's a bad word in Lithuania. You can't call someone a Nationalist — that's like calling him a Fascist. In a good sense that they've held on to their culture and traditions and they've tended to hold on to them more tightly because someone wants to take them away. Whereas the Russians who have tried to spread theirs around have lost a lot.

INTERVIEWER: LET'S TALK ABOUT LITHUANIA'S ECONOMY. WHAT'S IT LIKE OVER THERE RIGHT NOW?

RŪTA: "The economy is in bad shape. There is very little in the stores.

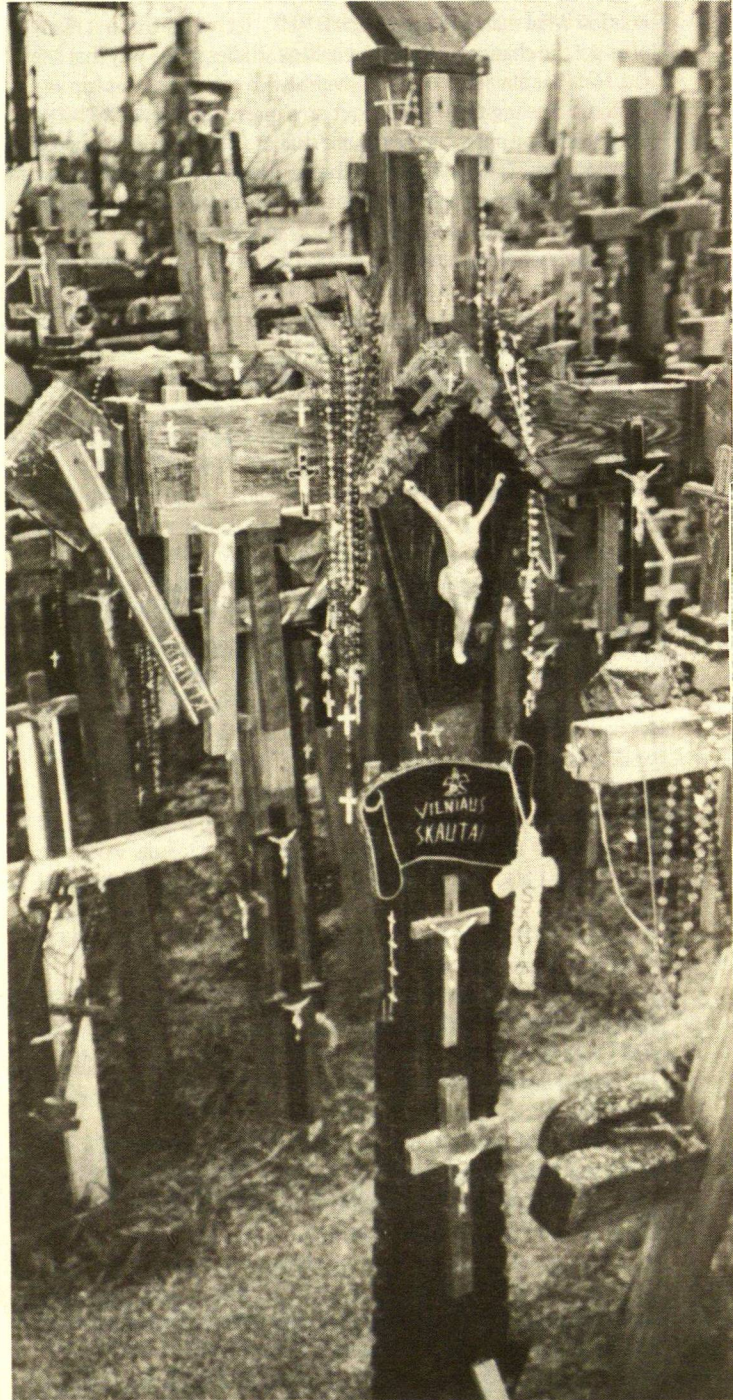
INTERVIEWER: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MAJOR SHORTAGES?

RŪTA: "Meat . . . everything is in shortage at some time or another. You can always get bread. You can almost always get cheese.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT IS THE REASON FOR THIS SHORTAGE?

RŪTA: "I think it's because a lot of what is produced in Lithuania gets shipped out to other republics. If Lithuania had to feed only itself they could do it. At one point he (Gorbachev) made the remark of oil being cut off from Lithuania, and I was at a demonstration, and one of the speakers said to Gorbachev that we could live without oil, it's not that bad to be a little chilly, but why don't you think about what it would be like to be hungry. That is the general opinion that Lithuania does provide a lot of food for the Soviet Union. People who get things like meat get them through friends. A friend who works in a store would put some meat aside for herself and her friends, that's another reason why there's nothing on the shelves . . . everyone is running their own little business. The economy is much worse than it was when I was in Lithuania two years ago. There was no rationing system then and there is now, for soap and sugar. Sugar is more to keep people from making moonshine, that's why that's rationed. Soap can be gotten with ration coupons. What happens though is that people tend to use the coupons and buy soap even if they don't need it. Therefore people have more than they need as far as soap is concerned. They don't have basic things like shampoo, toothpaste . . . the kinds of things that we in the U.S. take for granted. Good quality clothing, shoes, furniture. Any kind of home appliances are being rationed. The only way to get furniture is at people's places of employment. They have coupons that entitle you to buy some pieces of furniture or appliances. They get a certain amount of these each year, and they get divided up among the people who work there. Every place does it different, either by lottery, or who needs the coupons the most. The quality is lacking as far as furniture and appliances are concerned. A new washing machine is fresh from the factory, but it is just an agitator in this bucket, you pour the soap and water in and the

continued on next page



clothes, then you have to rinse the clothes out by hand. A dryer is nonexistent, you have to hang the clothes out on a line to dry. Their technology is behind the times. Anything that makes life easier in the home is behind the times.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ROLES DO THE CHURCHES PLAY NOW THAT THEY ARE ALLOWED TO PREACH THE WORD OF GOD OUT IN THE OPEN AS OPPOSED TO THE LAST TIME YOU WERE IN LITHUANIA?

RŪTA: "The churches now are always full. They are planning on building new churches in the nearer residential districts of the cities. I think more people are openly going to church and don't seem to have the desire to do so . . . but that happens here (the U.S.). It's hard to pinpoint why they didn't go to church.

INTERVIEWER: WERE THERE ANY BIG SCANDALS THAT BROKE OUT WHILE YOU WERE THERE AS FAR AS POLITICS WERE CONCERNED?

RŪTA: "There was one really big story that did occur while I was over there. It leaked out that the KGB was destroying their archives which go back to the very beginning of the occupation. The point of this is to get rid of any proof they had of torturing people, of recording peoples' conversations, following people . . . you know all of it. When this leaked out certain members of the government began to demand to see the archives to see what kind of shape they were in. These officials were refused by the head of the KGB in Lithuania. A picket then started outside of the KGB. The only people who can demand to inspect a car are the people who are members of the Congress of Peoples Deputies. So at all times there were deputies stationed there. They could at least check things being transported out of the building, although they couldn't see what was going on, on the inside. So that went on for a couple of weeks. I know that there was a demonstration in front of the Supreme Soviet . . . and that after a few

weeks what was happening kind of quietly seemed to fade out of the picture and nothing was really publicized. Therefore how it was resolved I'm not quite sure.

INTERVIEWER: WE'VE COVERED A LOT IN THIS INTERVIEW AND I'M SURE THAT THERE IS SOMETHING THAT I HAVEN'T ASKED YOU THAT YOU FEEL IS IMPORTANT FOR PEOPLE TO KNOW IS THERE AN IMPORTANT POINT THAT YOU FEEL IS SOMETHING YOU WANT TO SHARE WITH OUR READERS?

RŪTA: "What I saw gave me a lot of hope for the future of Lithuania. Before I went I was skeptical now I'm alot less skeptical about what's going to happen there. I saw that people really have the will to make it work, they're willing to knock themselves out and they're willing to live worse for a while if need be. They all know that there is going to be a time period where the economy is going to get even worse than what it is right now. They're willing to deal with that and they're willing to work hard for it. One thing that I want to say to people here that will read this is, that I think everyone that has a chance should go over there now, and see it for themselves. Anyone who has any particular expertise that can help, should look into going over there, and making connections with people in their field, whether it's medicine, engineering, or management; management is a big one. People just need training in everything, in the newest technology, techniques, they might be able to get a hold of once they've gotten on their feet economically. In management because when you're talking about turning something from a Communist system to a Market system it's completely different. Sajudis issued an appeal to Lithuanians living in the West saying we need everyone's help. They said that just being there is a help, because you talk to people and your ideas are different, just because you've grown up in a democratic atmosphere. I think that it's really important that anyone who has something to give should go and help."

Editor's Note: This interview was conducted prior to the declaration of restoration of Lithuania's Independence on March 11, 1990.

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Camp Neringa As Seen Through the Eyes of a Stage

by Kerry Stromberg

(Note: This paper is written from the point of view of the stage located in the central gathering hall at Camp Neringa.)

I can feel the autumn air coming down from the north, sweeping another summer away like a distant dream. The birds are preparing for their journey to warmer weather, and the squirrels are scurrying about, gathering food in anticipation of the cold season to come. Sister Igne, the camp coordinator, bolts the last door, and I hear the station wagon drive away. There is an echoing silence, and I am left alone.

I am tired from the busy summer and the years of use are apparent in my appearance. My curtains are discoloring from the warm sun rays beaming through the windows, waking me every morning. My lights are tired from the constant investigation by children's fingers learning how I can brighten and dim, all in one motion. My stairs have been worn by the many campers and counselors stepping forward to express and share themselves with each other. And my floor carries the imprints of friendship, devotion, unity, and love, all expressed through this stage. The walls echo with the sounds of laughter, music, prayer, and the unspoken word of the specialness that Neringa holds.

her neck. Her hair is graying and she carries a few wrinkles, evidence of many years of smiles and laughter. She holds her red accordion with the respect and fondness of an old friend, and begins to play. She tries to sing, but with her strained voice the tune is barely heard. Nevertheless, she is determined to pass on the Lithuanian songs on to the campers so that the songs will not die. At first, many of the children have difficulty with the foreign words, but later that is the very reason they come to mean so much. It is such a comforting thought to see youngsters coming from so many different lifestyles and backgrounds, to simply sing songs of their Lithuanian heritage.

There is a pride in the Lithuanian culture that is instilled in all who pass through Neringa. I have seen many children sign-up on registration day, Lithuanians merely by name, but upon graduation they leave with a heart of pride, compassion, and hope for that small country on the Baltic Sea. The counselors try to make sense of the plight of the occupied country by recreating Lithuanian history for the campers earnestly watching every move they make.

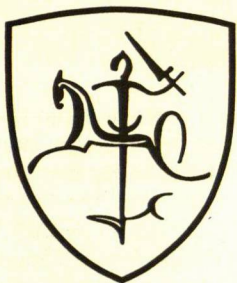
There is no movement now, but I remember the spirited enthusiasm of the campers creatively working together to perform an outstanding skit on Contest Day. Although the skits, especially of the seven year old's, are often too long, a little confusing, and not so funny, it is obvious by the expressions on their faces, that they see humor, wit, and creativity in their intense performance, even if the others did not. The counselors, dressed in piecemeal costumes, worked to create a world of fantasy for the campers through their portrayal of knights, explorers, and movie stars. The wheels of imagination are always turning here, for with the absence of television and radio, entertainment is created from within the individual. Imaginations run wild, and dreams see no end when the spirit of life takes hold.

Looking in front of me, the old, stone fireplace stands waiting for warmth and companionship. A single log has been left, half burnt and blackened, from a fire the campers built one chilly night. It was a beautiful evening, the fire was crackling, and yellow and orange flames danced upon the logs. The room was glowing, and the warmth spread throughout the room. The children were huddled close to one another, and their eyes were lit with excitement and anticipation for the night's festivities. Some of the older campers held the younger ones in their laps, teaching them the silly bonfire songs that carry so much inner meaning. Friends smiled, and laughed, and whispered to each other, creating

continued on next page



The room has been swept clean, and everything put away. I see the songbooks stacked neatly on the shelves on the far wall. The songs, sung year after year, fill the air with life and happiness that is heard far into the woods. Sister Igne sits on a bench wearing her blue skirt, flip-flops, and a silver cross from



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memories to last a lifetime, although they did not know it yet. Simas tells the story of the Eskimos in Alaska. It is a tale the campers have heard a thousand times before, yet they sit in silent wonderment, embracing each precious word. The warmth did not radiate from the fire, but rather from the love and understanding shared among all.

After the campers are sent to their cabins, I notice that two counselors remain by the fire. They are modestly dressed, and they lie on their stomachs with their chins propped up on their hands. Their friendship runs deep, and together they watch the flames turn blue as the fire dies down. Another counselor sits on a bench and begins to play a tune on the guitar. Ever so softly the melody drifts towards the girls, like a gentle snowfall on a crisp winter's eve. They lie silently, their faces warmed by the fire, absorbing and listening to the sounds around them. They look at each other and smile; a smile so full of love that they need not speak a word. They know...

I am suddenly struck by the banner hanging above the mantle. I have looked at it so often; green felt with the words "I Believe" cut out in yellow felt and pasted on. There are red felt flowers on each side. The banner is situated in the center of the room and all are drawn to it. It serves as a focal point and

we look up to read its message. "I Believe." Arunas explains it best. He has been coming to camp for about twenty years now, and he represents all that Neringa is. With his kind blue eyes and sincere heart, there is a comfort in merely coming in contact with him. I recall how he would sit on the edge of my stage, leaning against my post, with one leg extended and the other bent close to his chest. His hands are folded and he looks upward. The campers and counselors alike listen to him give the evening prayer. They are all holding each others hands, some with their heads bowed, others with their eyes closed, feeling the warmth of another's touch. They listen and they are strengthened by God's love. "I Believe." Yes, I do. I believe in the hope, the courage, the strength, and the love this message expresses.

Love. That is what it all comes down to. The nails, wood, and cement that form the structure of this camp, would be nothing without the foundation of love which unites everything within it.

I hear the leaves rustling in the wind, reminding me that autumn has arrived.

I will rest now, and dream of a special summer camp called Neringa.

Readers Respond

To The Editor:

The efforts of the people of Lithuania, to break away from the yoke of the Soviet Union, are drawing a considerable amount of, mostly favorable, media attention. That's encouraging.

What's most discouraging, however, is that the Lithuanian peoples' historic struggle appears to be getting not even a single, specific, word of official support from the government of the United States. The official silence, some political analysts and State Department officials say, is prudent, at this time; because any support for a free and independent Lithuania would undermine Gorbachev's current, "precarious" position.

Is such a line of reasoning logical, moral, prudent, comforting - a line of reasoning we should support? Of course not; yet it appears that just such reasoning is ruling the day in America's foreign policy relative to the hopes and efforts of the people of Lithuania.

According to the current, official US position (a position which hasn't really changed in over 40 years), Lithuania was forcibly, unlawfully drawn into the communist morass. Now, after all these years, Lithuania again has a chance to experience freedom. Yet, instead of encouraging, fostering that hope, the government of the United States chooses to stay silent!

The same US government which continually goes out of its way to promote (and even, in some cases, forcibly enforce) the protection of "human rights" in various regions/countries of

the world, is saying nothing; at a moment in history when a grave wrong, which has affected (for 50 years!)/continues to affect millions of people in Lithuania, could probably be easily righted, with nothing more than a little bit of verbal encouragement (diplomacy).

Such a silence is disappointing; it's wrong; and, we, the citizens, should express our outrage over this apparent "official" position of OUR government.

We should be writing our congressmen; and we should be writing to editors of newspapers. The various "Lithuanian Organizations" in the United States should be mounting aggressive efforts to reach the media; to explain this obvious flaw in our government's current foreign policy as relates to the efforts of the people of Lithuania.

Gorbachev, a single man, like any single man, is simply not so important that we should be willing to tolerate the continued oppression of millions of people. So what if Gorbachev might be in a personally "precarious" position? MILLIONS of Lithuanians are in precarious positions as well; and they and their ancestors have had to live that way for 50 years!

We, people who have the ability to speak out, should be doing just that, as loud and wide as we possibly can. If we choose to remain silent, then our silence is a form of approval of this misguided US policy towards Lithuania; and is a grave injustice to millions of people who deserve far better treatment.

Please join me in this effort to encourage our government to officially speak out for a free Lithuania. I think a good approach would be to seek out/ask the various "Lithuanian Organizations" to ORGANIZE this effort, through the pages of Bridges. For example, Bridges could print the names and mailing addresses of potentially influential (on this particular issue) government officials and congressmen; so that we, your readers, would know exactly how to reach these people. And, the various "Lithuanian Organizations" could provide a list of key issues which should be addressed in these letters that we, your readers, should be writing to these influential people.

Those are just two, simple, inexpensive, yet very powerful tools which can at least begin to "change the tide". Yet, they're just a simple beginning. Why can't a future issue of Bridges include a simple "Media Kit" (prepared by one, or all of the, "Lithuanian Organizations") that your readers could pull out and pass on (or even copy and distribute) to local newspapers, civic groups, radio and TV stations?

There has never been a better time to "seize the opportunity"; and the burden of that effort rests on us. Nobody else is going to do it for us - unfortunately, not even the US government!

Sincerely yours,

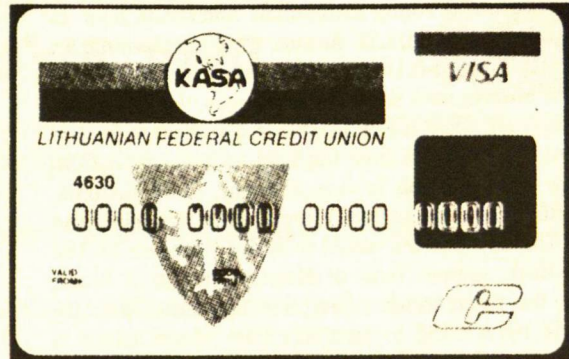
Joseph (Joe) Arlauskas
Gloucester, Virginia



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Community with a Capital "C"

The Association of Young Lithuanian Americans held its annual meeting during its IV Annual Political Seminar in Washington D.C. May 4-6. During the meeting, the Association elected new officers who subsequently began their one year term. The new president is Sigutė Šnipas, a student at Boston College. Other officers are from the Boston area, one is from New Jersey: Regina Kulbis is vice-president, Gailė Rastonis, treasurer, Rūta Kalvaitis, secretary, members V. Sruoginis and N. Veitas. The new officers vowed to actively prepare for the Gorbachev-Bush summit (end of May/beginning of June); strengthen the three region concept of the Association (to better begin networking to members from whom action is needed) and to prepare its membership for the upcoming VII Lithuanian World Youth Congress in South America (to take place the end of 1991/beginning of 1992). The Washington D.C. chapter of the Association will continue to organize the popular annual political seminars. The outgoing officers will complete the political internship program for which they received funding from the Lithuanian Foundation.

The IV Annual Political Seminar was attended by about 120 persons on Friday, the number grew to about 250 by Saturday. Participants included young people from the West Coast, Canada, southern states, but especially the Midwest and East Coast. Also, about a half dozen students from Lithuania presently studying at American universities found out about the seminar and were able to find transportation. The seminar included listening to Senators Simon and Dixon of Illinois, visits to Congressmen by participants, an interesting talk on Lithuania's legal position (in its declaration of independence from the Soviet Union — re-establishment of its rights in the international community) by attorney Bill Hough who has visited Lithuania. A visit to the State Department featured short presentations by J. Curtis Streuble, Office of Soviet Affairs. Professors Lawrence Summers (Harvard University) and Feliksas Palubinskas (Purdue University) shed some light on Lithuania's economic reform and other realities. Danele Bieliauskas-Vidutis (University of Maryland, College Park) spoke about academic exchanges with Lithuania. A visit by one of present-day Lithuania, Kazimiera Prunskienė was certainly a highlight of the meeting. Short though it was, it presented the attendees with an opportunity to hear from the Prime Minister that which she had been telling U.S. politicians and media during her visit first in Lithuania, then through a translator (for the benefit of news media in attendance). The Honorable Stasys Lozoraitis, Charge D'Affaires for the Republic of Lithuania in Washington, D.C. and the Holy See on the next day reminded the seminar attendees that the efforts of Lithuanian-Americans are appreciated, but that parallel efforts could be counter-productive (he most likely had in mind the almost duplicating funds which have been established in recent days and also the collections for medical relief when he knew of some European countries could send such relief at a smaller or no charge). The political seminar

provided the attendees with networking opportunities to discuss what their communities were already doing in the way of information dissemination (hotlines and the like), what young Lithuanian-American students could do to help (send college textbooks and college catalogs, take appropriate courses and examinations to be certified/registered English as a second language teachers and translators.) The seminar included some opportunities to socialize and dance. A visit to the Lithuanian Legation included a piano concert by Justas Dvarionas from Lithuania, whose North American tour is being sponsored by the World Lithuanian Youth Association.

The Lithuanian-American Community National Executive Committee has again undergone some changes. Ramona Steponavicius, vice-president for youth affairs has stepped down. The Public Affairs Council has been enlarged and re-directed. On April 22 a special meeting was held in Chicago to discuss the priorities of upcoming months for the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. The new committee was formed by mandate of the National Executive Committee. It is composed of the President of the Public Affairs Council, Arvydas Barzdukas and other National Executive Committee members Rimantas Dirvonis and Linas Norusis. The chairman of the committee will be Bronius Nainys (who is the "World Lithuanian" editor), active Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. member Dr. Petras Kisielius, and Dr. Tomas Remeikis, a political science professor and author of several books and many articles; he also is editor of the brochure "Lietuva/Lithuania." Active Lithuanian-American Community members in Philadelphia have stepped in to form a Communications Center. The Center will assist the political committee in informing chapters of urgent action needed. The Lithuanian-American Community members in Philadelphia have stepped in to form a Communications Center. The Center will assist the political committee in informing chapters of urgent action needed. The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. National Executive Committee office in Chicago, the Government Affairs office in Washington D.C., and the Communication Center will stay in active contact by telephone and FAX in order to provide a united front. Focus in May — preparation for a massive demonstration to be held in Washington D.C. June 1-2 which is being sponsored by the National Executive Committee with local organization and preparation by the Washington D.C. chapter, specifically by a 20 person committee to work with permits, and events to occur before and after the actual demonstration which will only be several hours long.

National Executive Committee members have not ignored their networking opportunities with other ethnic groups and with local opportunities near the Chicago office in Chicago. The "home" building of the office (also known as "Seklyčia") was the site of a presentation by the Deputy Minister of Health in Lithuania, Dr. Algimantas Blažys. Also, National Executive Committee members have participated in short ad hoc meetings

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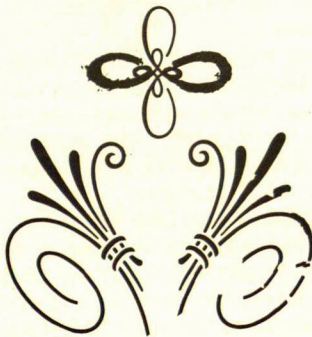
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with staff of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, the Institute for American Pluralism. The Human Services Council, through its president Birutė Jasaitis once again has received a grant from Catholic Charities to support its service to the Lithuanian elderly and other social work

(News items summarized by Ramunė Kubilius, of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. National Executive Committee)



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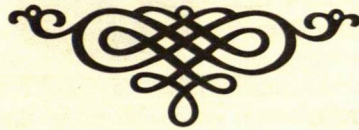
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Poland's Leaders Praise Lithuania — A New Beginning?

Poland's Solidarity lead Government, which began the unraveling of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe voiced approval of Lithuania's Declaration of Independence immediately after the declaration was made. Lech Walesa and other Solidarity leaders said they were delighted.

"The government of the Polish Republic supports self-determination leading to separate statehood," said a statement issued after the Council of Ministers met for several hours. "Poles are interested in good relations with the nation of Lithuania."

Walesa's Message to Landsbergis

"I would like to express my delight that Lithuanian independence has been restored," Mr. Walesa said in a message sent to Vytautas Landsbergis, the newly elected President of Lithuania.

"I wish for you that the future process of re-establishing democracy will be as peaceful as it has been until now," Mr. Walesa said.

Warsaw newspapers gave big front page play to the Lithuanian story, all prominently displaying the same picture of demonstrators carrying a sign, saying "B'ye b'ye U.S.S.R." The sign replaced the two S's in the lettering of "U.S.S.R." with the double-lightning-bolt insignia of the Nazi SS.

"Joy, this is the first feeling," a long time dissident and Solidarity leader, Adam Michnik wrote in a front-page editorial in his Solidarity newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*. "Here's to you Lithuanian brothers."

A "Test" for Gorbachev

Mr. Michnik added that the decision "is a test for the

policy of democratic reconstruction proclaimed by Mikhail Gorbachev."

"Farewell Hammer & Sickle" wrote the Government newspaper *Rzeczpospolita*. In addition to the text of the declaration, the newspaper's front page carried the Vytis or Knight, the ancient symbol of Lithuanian statehood antedating the union with Poland.

Lithuanians Hear Solidarity

Two Polish Solidarity legislators, Tadeusz Kloptowski and Henryk Wujec, spoke to bursts of applause at the Lithuanian Seimas or Parliament. They were there to urge Polish-speaking Lithuanians to support the move for independence and democratization of Lithuania and not to allow themselves to fall victims to Soviet efforts to "divide and conquer" Lithuanian and Polish-speaking Lithuanians in their efforts to obtain their freedom.

Sajūdis Replies

Sajūdis leaders welcomed Poland's support of a free independent and democratic Lithuania with Vilnius as the Lithuanian capital within safe and secure borders. Both sides expressed the hope that the mistakes of the past would be avoided and a new era of understanding between Poland and Lithuania had begun.

Poland, Land Route to the West

It is to be noted that Polish support for Lithuanian independence is not only diplomatically desirable but vital to Lithuania's access by land to the rest of Europe. Lithuania is bordered to the north by Latvia, still a Soviet Republic and to the east and west by Russia and the Russianized area of Lithuania Minor, forcibly incorporated into Russian Proper after World War II. **TAM**

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3 eggs
4 1/2 cups flour (sifted before measuring)

Break yeast into small pieces. Mix with sugar until liquefied. Scald milk, pour over butter. When melted, add salt and beaten eggs. When lukewarm, add yeast, then sifted flour. Let rise in warm place until double in size — about 2 hours. Beat vigorously with spoon. Let rise a second time about 1 hour. Place all of dough on well-floured board. Divide dough into four pieces. Roll each section of dough about 1/4 inch thick, into a round about the size of a plate or pie. Brush dough with melted butter. Cut dough into 8 triangular sections as you do a pie. Sprinkle dough with chopped cooked or baked ham or crumble fried bacon. Roll each triangle carefully from the wide end to the narrow point. Curve each roll into a crescent shape. Place on greased tin with open end down. Brush with egg yolk beaten with 1 teaspoon milk. Let rise until very light, about 1 hour. Bake in 400-425° oven about 20 minutes. Recipe makes 32 medium rolls.

Above recipe (omitting ham) can be used as a basic recipe for plain rolls, Dutch apple cake or coffee cakes.

MUSHROOM SOUP GRYBŲ SRIUBA

12-15 dried mushrooms or 1 pt. canned mushrooms
6 cups water
1 onion
1 potato
1 carrot
2 bay leaves
1 cup sour cream

Soak, wash and pre-cook dried mushrooms. Canned mushrooms — drain and rinse in cold water. Slice mushrooms, dice vegetables. Simmer in water with bay-leaves and salt until vegetables are done. Remove from heat. Stir a ladleful of cooled soup into cream, blend thoroughly, then pour back into soup. Keep hot but do not boil.

COOKIE SLICES SAUSAINIAI

6 eggs
1 1/2 cup sugar
1 cup butter
7 cups flour
3 tps. baking powder
1 tsp. vanilla
1 cup chopped nuts
1/2 tsp. ground cardamon

Cream butter and sugar, add eggs one at a time. Beat well. Sift in flour and baking powder. Add vanilla, cardamon and nuts. Divide dough into four sections. Shape each one into a roll about 2 inches in diameter. Bake about 1/2 hour in 400° oven. Remove from pan. While still warm, cut into 1/2 inch slices. Reduce heat to 250°. Place slices on cookie sheet, continue baking until dry and light brown.

RICH CHEESE SŪRIS

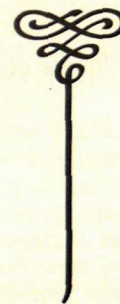
2 qts. soured milk
3 tbsps. sour cream
1 cup milk
1 tsp. salt
1 tbsp. caraway seeds

Heat sour milk, 2 tbsps. cream, and sweet milk — do not boil. Pour into triangular cloth bag. Allow to drain. Turn into bowl, add salt, caraway seeds and 1 tbsp. sour cream. Mix well. Replace in bag, press between boards, under weight for 2 days. Remove from bag.

CABBAGE - BEEF BIRDS KOPUSTŲ ZRAZAI

1/2 head cabbage
2-3 lbs. beef
1 onion
1 egg, salt, pepper bouillon or water

Prepare beef as for beef birds. Parboil cabbage, drain, chop fine. Add salt, egg, and minced onion sauteed in butter. Mix well. Place a spoonful on each slice of beef. Roll up. Tie or fasten each roll. Place in pot, pour on hot bouillon or water to cover rolls. Cover pot tightly. Simmer till done (1 to 1 1/2 hours).



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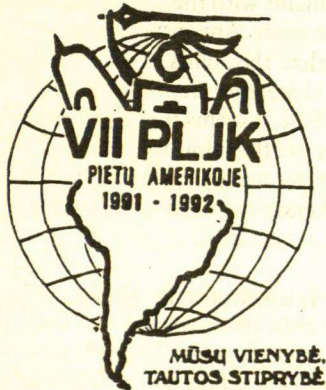
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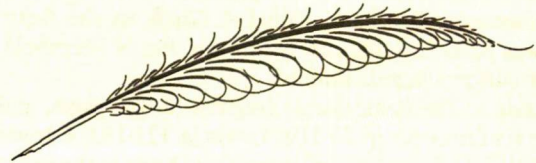
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Representatives of the Lithuanian World Community, the Lithuanian World Youth Association, the Lithuanian Communities of the U.S. and Canada met in Camp Dainava on April 20-22 with two members of the organizing committee of the 7th Lithuanian World Youth Congress. Ariana Rastauskas of Buenos Aires, Argentina, chair of the organizers, and treasurer Alfedas Ruplėnas presented the latest plans and the budget for the event to take place from December 18, 1991 to January 8, 1992 in Buenos Aires, Montevideo/Uruguay/ and Sao Paulo/ Brazil/.

For the first time representatives from Lithuania are expected to take part in such a congress, a tradition begun in 1966, and the fund-raising committee based in the U.S. under the chairmanship of Vytautas Kamantas will raise about 75,000 dollars to finance participants from Lithuania. The program of the congress includes study days, a camp-type program, talent nights, Christmas and New Year's celebrations, elections of the LWYA executives and planning for future activities.

The organizing committee, headed in Brazil by Arnaldas Zizas and Uruguay by Robertas Ibarra, has selected the logo and the motto of the congress /Our unity is Lithuania's strength/. The congress is the official meeting of 120 delegates from a dozen countries. About 150 other youth, ages 16 to 35, and about 100 Lithuanian tourists from various countries are planned for.



Political Action Fund Established

Political Action to ensure and hasten the Recognition of the Lithuanian Republic and its Declaration of Restoration of Independence by the United States is in desperate need of your financial support. A fund has been established by the Lithuania Federal Credit Union **TAUPA** of South Boston to help defray these costs. All contributions to this effort should be mailed to:

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So. Boston, MA 02127**

Time is of the essence. Let's all do our part.
EVM

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Hopefully with fresh winds blowing in the Baltic, the travel bug will strike travellers from around and draw them in that direction. For if they do, a recently published book will be of some assistance. The book, called *A Guide to the Baltic States*, was published this year by Inroads, Inc. of Merrifield, VA. The editor is Ingrida Kalninš.

A Guide to the Baltic States consists of 309 pages, and sections for Lithuania (p. 15-119); Latvia (p. 121-152); Estonia (p.253-309). The "Introduction" states that "A trip to the Baltic States today is not just an opportunity to visit a long-neglected part of European cultural history, but rather an extraordinary opportunity to see modern history in the making." That is what the authors and contributors of each section tried to relay. Lithuania declared the reinstatement of its independence on March 11, 1990; Latvia is scheduled to do so any day now. A book like the *Guide* can by no means have the most updated news—the introduction alluded to that.

The *Guide* in most respects resembles a travel guide to other countries of the world. There are useful facts about time, clothing, metric conversion charts and the like. The section on Lithuania includes a map, geography, recent history, art, music. Included also are maps and information about Vilnius, Kaunas, and other parts of Lithuania ("Day Trips"), and ends with useful words and expressions. Only someone who travels frequently to Lithuania or who lives

there can spot any potential problems with the walking tour of Old Vilnius or any part of the guide. Anyone who knows Lithuanian will spot the fact that the "birds" (diacritical marks) and similar Lithuanian characters are missing from some of the words, but on the whole, it seems that particular attention was paid to the accuracy of the information in each section. The Lithuanian section, for example, was authored by Rasa Avižienis, and 8 North American (mostly Lithuanian-American) contributors as well as unnamed contributors in Lithuania.

The appearance of the *Guide* is a welcome addition to the world's collection of books in this genre, and it is a vast improvement on any English-language guides published by the Soviet regime on these countries. It is hoped that the book will attract world travellers who have already seen the Far East, Africa, Australia, and the like, who would like to see the Baltic spread its wings to join the other European nations once again.

by Ramunė Kubilius

Inroads, Inc., P.O. Box 3197, Merrifield, VA 22116-3197
(The book is available also from various Lithuanian book-sellers in Chicago and elsewhere and is probably going to be distributed by travel bookstores as well).