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The Lithuanian Embassy
Washington, D.C.

To our readers:

The world has truly changed since our last issue to you. Who would/could have imagined that events would move so quickly/so favorably for Lithuania.

We went from fear and anxiety, to guarded optimism, to euphoria, in just the space of weeks. If what has happened had been the plot of a fiction novel, we would probably have dismissed that plot as far too "unbelievable"/preposterous.

The long, painful struggle for freedom from the Soviet Union has finally - mostly - been won by the people of Lithuania - our brothers and sisters.

The word "mostly" is used because we need to remember that Soviet tanks and troops still desecrate Lithuania's soil; and there is still no "timetable" for withdrawal of those forces of evil and instability.

Furthermore, Lithuania now faces a myriad of even different challenges: economic, political and social. Enormous challenges to people who have been suppressed for so long/who have not been allowed to practice, or even learn, many of the economic, political and social ideas we call "common knowledge".

Institutions have to be developed, relationships have to be formed. People have to learn, and accept, the way "the rest of the world" successfully carries on day to day economic activity.

We take for granted (or don't even consider) many of those things, many times, every single day, which will be "new" to our brothers and sisters.

So, Lithuania still needs our help, in many, many ways. And, we, all of us, are capable of helping in varied, and unique - depending on our situation - ways.

For example, if we have any college/prep school/university ties, we can encourage student exchange programs. We can promote Lithuania in our work environment, so that should the company we work for be considering investment/plants in Europe, that Lithuania be a possible site for such activity. We can support/encourage/facilitate Lithuania's entry into international technical, trade, cultural, scientific, social and educational organizations with which we are associated/with which we have contact. We can encourage groups in the United States to consider Lithuania when they are looking for countries to which to bring their expertise, assistance, etc. We can promote tourism to Lithuania. We can keep right on encouraging our Senators and Representatives to support Lithuania in technical assistance and trade legislation. (For example, President Bush has indicated that Peace Corps representatives will be sent to Lithuania. Let's press the issue - get them over there, now; and get them over there in numbers which can make a difference.) And, we can continue to promote Lithuania, and her interests, here in the United States. (Of course, we need to "fight off" her detractors, as

well; as one item in this issue clearly shows is necessary.)

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A significant portion of this issue is devoted to items relating to the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. (In fact, some may feel that there is TOO MUCH on this subject!) We've done what we've done, in this issue, for two reasons: 1.) A leadership change - after 3 years - is now taking place; and new leaders, who will govern LAC activities over the next 3 years are being installed. So, like any election period in any organization, this is a time for reflection, a time for looking forward, and a time for reinvigoration.

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BRIDGES: Lithuanian-American News Journal serves as a link between Lithuanian Americans and their Lithuanian heritage (as well as a source of information for those interested in Lithuania and/or the activities/goals/background of Lithuanian Americans), by presenting items on Lithuanian culture, history, conditions in Lithuania, Lithuanian related events and personalities in America; and serves the aspirations of those whose goal is to see Lithuania as a free and democratic nation, once again.

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Looking Back

As The Leadership Of The Lithuanian American Community, Inc. Gets Ready To Change, A Time Of Reflection.

by **Ramune Kubilius**

As the present Lithuanian American Community, Inc. National Executive Committee members hand over their duties and responsibilities, there is time to reflect on past accomplishments and hopes for the future. During their terms of office, the National Executive Committee members weathered high expectations from fellow Lithuanian Americans and increased responsibilities and projects necessitated by historic changes in Lithuania. All of this was done in each person's "spare" time at no salary, while trying to maintain a career and have a family and social life as well.

The following are excerpted comments, thoughts expressed by Dr. Antanas Razma, President of the LAC, Bronius Juodelis, Secretary (and formerly Vice-president for Finance); Rev. Antanas Saulaitis, S.J., President of the Religious Affairs Council; Birute Jasaitis, President of the Human Services Council (since Feb. 1990) and Vice-President for Organizational Affairs; Regina Kucas, President of the Educational Council; Kostas Dockus, Vice-President for Financial Affairs. (Executive Vice-president Linas Norusis wrote more extensive comments separately.)

What were your expectations when you took on these duties?

○ When the Lithuanian Reform Movement "Sajudis" was formed in the summer of 1988, that was the appearance of the first star of freedom - I saw that it would be necessary to organize all-around assistance for our reviving nation. I hoped that the Lithuanian diaspora would join into that aid mission wholeheartedly and that I would be helpful leading the LAC National Executive Committee. (Dr. A. Razma)

○ I wanted to help in the upkeep of Lithuanian culture in the U.S. and to help Lithuania. (B. Juodelis)

○ To serve as a channel of communication between the LAC National Executive Committee and Bishop Baltakis' Pastoral Council, to provide information or

opinions regarding religious issues, to assist in coordinating religious programs and aid to the Church in Lithuania. (A. Saulaitis, S.J.)

○ I expected and felt that it would be more technical work coordinating the complicated financial books of the LAC's National Executive Committee. I found it to be much more complicated than expected. (K. Dockus)

○ I never expected that so much work was required to perform my duties in the National Executive Committee, especially after the situation changed in Lithuania and the scope of our work changed. As far as the chapters go, they revived, we were joined by new young people and by some people who had previously been doubtful about any Lithuanian American projects... (B. Jasaitis)

○ When I took on the duties in the Educational Council, I vowed to look for new roads, new methods, so that students would better understand the subjects being taught in school. Until then, Lithuanian language schools had been taught in the outdated methodology used over the last 40 years. Changes are essential since we are working with new students, with a new generation of parents and teachers. (R. Kucas)

What were you hoping to attain during the term of office? What projects did you plan on undertaking?

○ I hoped to help activate LAC work and help reviving Lithuania financially, politically, culturally, through (positive) propaganda, morally, psychologically. (Dr. A. Razma)

○ I very much wanted to see Lithuanian independence recognized in the West and the end of Moscow's occupation. Sadly, that was not achieved. As for my primary duties (in the LAC), I feel I attained those. (B. Juodelis)

○ I attempted to accomplish the duties I undertook ➡

both in an orderly and a timely manner. The term of office is ending and I feel I will be able to honor my commitments. (K. Dockus)

○ Other than the contact between the LAC National Executive Committee and the Pastoral Council, the projects developed as contacts with Lithuania expanded, such as collaboration with the U.S. Catholic Conference Refugee and Migrant Office, with the Human Services Council of the LAC project for care of handicapped children, etc. One great project which really was dropped due to the difficulty of coordinating it with various Lithuanian organizations in the U.S. was organized assistance to new immigrants and to visitors from Lithuania and possible preparation for a larger immigration (for which the European countries are certainly preparing themselves) from Lithuania to the U.S. with the same spirit with which the older generation (pre-World War II) received the post-war newcomers and helped them get started. This is a true disappointment. (A. Saulaitis, S.J.)

○ When I took on my duties, I hoped to keep in close contact with the chapters and to form a few new ones. Not everything happened quite that way, the chapters revived themselves, looked to us for information which we did not always do as quickly as they wanted. We were not ready for Lithuania's declaration of the re-establishment of its independence. That's probably why all sorts of hotlines and other groups were established. Everyone's attention was and is turned to Lithuania - to help its people politically and economically. We often forget our own affairs and see only Lithuania. That should not be, because if we are not here, there won't be anyone to help Lithuania. We should devote more attention to our young people, the upkeep of our educational and cultural institutions, otherwise we will disappear into oblivion. Some chapters, especially where more young people are active, speak ("conduct their business" - rk) in English. Some newly formed chapters also use only English. If we want to be effective, we should use both languages in communicating with our chapters. That is a reality of life. Am I am satisfied with my accomplishments? I don't know, since there are many projects which very much need to be done, but because of a shortage of time and energy, not everything can be accomplished. I took on the duties in the Human Services Council by accident. When no one wanted to save the sinking ship, someone had to dare take on this necessary Council and save its center ("the building itself" - rk). I didn't have the educational background for the duties involved, but when needed, one can learn anything. I am a microbiologist, I spend part of the day in the laboratory, and the other part of the day working with people. (B. Jasaitis) (Note: Mrs. Jasaitis and a few other persons who work with the Human Services Council were featured in a front page August article in

Chicago's Southwest News- Herald newspaper.)

○ Since I have taught in a Lithuanian language school for many years, I noticed that the capabilities of the students has weakened over the years. It was necessary to find new methodologies, to prepare audiovisual programs, to make lesson plans which are more interesting and more easily understood. I vowed to visit the schools, to establish closer ties with teachers; and to see if there was anything in particular which was needed at this school or another. (R. Kucas)

Do you feel that you achieved your goals?

○ It's hard to say, because the needs of the Lithuanian nation and the Lithuanian diaspora are gigantic and the possibilities are limited. However, the LAC, with active work of the National Executive Committee attained a lot in the diaspora's activities and with help to Lithuania. (Dr. A. Razma)

○ I believe so, with the exception mentioned. We did well in sifting out some aid to Lithuania - which is to be referred to Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid, to the Educational Council of the LAC (such as religious textbooks), to the Human Services Council, etc. regarding scholarships, medical aid, funds for religious education. We are so happy about the USCC grants to catechetics in Lithuania and scholarships to seminarians from Lithuania who are beginning studies in Rome this fall while living at St. Casimir's College. (A. Saulaitis, S.J.)

○ I believe I achieved the goals set. In the three year time period, new unforeseen projects arose, which have been successfully set in motion. (R. Kucas)

○ Yes, I would hope so. (K. Dockus)

○ Yes and no. The work with chapters did not decrease, they are performing actively. Four chapters are in a stage of formation. I helped other National Executive Committee members in organizing various programs and fund-raisers which succeeded not too badly. The elections went by quite well, most importantly, that among the new Directors are many new, competent young people. The Human Services Council seems to be on a straight path. Many debts have been paid off, people believe in the Council again, we help Lithuanian Americans and people arriving from Lithuania, we help those in need. Some new committees have been established. (B. Jasaitis)

Are there any achievements in particular of which you are proud? ➡

○ Yes: 1) \$50,000 as a gift for Lithuania, which was able to reprint the Lithuanian history written by Sapoka (about 300,000 copies) given to Lithuania's schools, libraries, the press and individuals. 2) Through the "Dovana Lietuvai" fund, over \$400,000 was collected and various projects were realized in Lithuania: computers were sent the universities, Lithuania's Parliament, the press; support was provided for former exiles to Siberia, youth organizations, hospitals, persons seeking further education abroad. 3) Through the Washington office of LAC (and its Director Asta Banionis) close contacts were maintained with Congress, the press and in part with the White House. 4) The successful visit in May 1991 of Pres. Vytautas Landsbergis to Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles was under the care of the LAC National Executive Committee. 5) The very well-run Lithuanian Music Festival in Chicago in May 1991, which was coordinated by the LAC National Executive Committee - invited Stasys Baras and his committee. 6) Each LAC National Executive Committee member's and each Council's achievements are something of which to be proud. (Dr. A. Razma)

○ Brochures which I prepared for February 16th (Lithuanian Independence Day) LAC fund-raising in the three past years helped surpass previous records. (B. Juodelis)

○ Yes, there are. All fund-raising events were quite successful. The Lithuanian American public, it seems, quite positively values the accomplishments of the LAC. (K. Dockus)

○ Among the special successes achieved in which I have satisfaction: 1) An increase in ethnic pride in high schoolers. All Lithuanian language school students were urged to participate in demonstrations for Lithuania, to write letters to the President, to Congressmen, to Senators, to the media. They did just that. 2) Lithuanian language schools organized a drive to collect medicines for Lithuania. The second container we sent was particularly successful. A 20 ton container successfully reached the Lithuanian Republic's Education Ministry. We received good feedback for that. Now another container is almost ready, with twice as many school supplies. (R. Kucas)

○ I am proud that each National Executive Committee member worked with solidarity during one of the hardest times in LAC history. Our Committee was successful in collecting quite a bit in the way of funds, and the fundraisers which I coordinated were successful: a fundraiser for the Lithuanian Symposium on the Arts and Sciences (in 1989) collected over \$90,000, one for the Lithuanian Music Festival collected about \$140,000. Some people became experts in fundraising, and I am thankful for their assistance. During Pres. Landsbergis'

visit to Chicago, I was chair of the committee coordinating meetings with Lithuanian Americans: at the airport, Holy Mass (at the parish church), luncheons at Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture and Seklycia Restaurant, and preparing a memorial book of organizational greetings. I also coordinated meetings and visits with Lithuanian Americans for various visitors from Lithuania, and also for Pres. Landsbergis during his first visit to Chicago (as chair of "Sajudis" reform movement). I organized two excursions to Washington, D.C. for demonstrations: one involved 8 buses, another 10 buses (and included arrangements for lodgings as well). That was a difficult task. The fact that the Human Services Council in one and a half years pulled itself out of considerable debt and some legal problems was an accomplishment. The founding of the Lithuanian Children's Hope committee was a satisfactory project. Much of my spare time is devoted to LAC activities. Much of the Human Services Council's work is to help those in trouble, especially those from Lithuania, so those tasks are difficult but necessary. (B. Jasaitis)

If you had the opportunity to visit Lithuania during your term of office, did you have a chance to raise LAC or Lithuanian American issues?

○ I visited Lithuania in 1990 during the February 16th Lithuanian Independence celebration week; (during ceremonies) at the Statue of Liberty in Kaunas, I had the opportunity to convey greetings from the LAC. I also had spoke on television and radio, always mentioning LAC work and achieved projects. During question and answer sessions with the press, I mentioned LAC achieved projects in the diaspora for the upkeep of Lithuanian culture and for Lithuania. (Dr. A. Razma)

○ Very much so. One issue remaining is religious assistance from Lithuania to our parishes in the U.S. and to summer camps in which pastoral service is so vital. It will take time for Lithuania's clergy and leadership to understand the religious situation in the world and the Church after Vatican II, and we need to learn from the 50 years of difficult living of the faith in Lithuania. Bishops are hesitant about sending priests out even for short periods to assist us or for study, fearing that "the West" will upset the faith so courageously preserved, and we are concerned that world culture will come to Lithuania, like it or not, and that it has to be faced with different attitudes and projects than in times of overt persecution. We do need priests to help in our parishes and in other activities, since the age range of current Lithuanian pastors and priests is "up there", and the need for services in the Lithuanian language is greater than those who can supply it. (A. Saulaitis, S.J.) ➡

○ This summer I visited Lithuania. At that time, I met with some people from Lithuania's Education Minister (Darius Kuolys - rk), one meeting with his assistant, and many hours discussing various matters with various experts. I visited schools and orphanages. After this visit, I became convinced that help for the reviving ethnic school program (tautine mokykla) is very important. (R. Kucas)

○ In 1989, I visited Lithuania, staying there all of July. As LAC Vice-president for Finance, I attended the meeting of "Sajudzio" (Reform Movement) representatives, and meetings of its Kaunas and Vilnius chapters, the former deported persons' committee (Tremtiniu Draugija), the Lithuanian Academy meeting regarding the re-establishment of Vytautas Magnus University. I visited Vilnius University and Vilnius Pedagogical Institute administrative offices. On behalf of the LAC, I greeted the World Lithuanian Youth Congress in Vilnius. I spoke in interviews on TV, radio and an interview was even published in "Bendrija". (B. Juodelis)

○ I have visited Lithuania a total of 11 times (since WW II - rk). Since 1989, I have not been to Lithuania, mostly because of other personal commitments. (K. Dockus)

○ I didn't have a chance to go to Lithuania. In 1989, I wanted to go, but wasn't granted a visa. Now I cannot find the time. (B. Jasaitis)

What kind of future do you see for the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.?

○ I see a good future because entering leadership roles in the LAC are young, educated, idealist Lithuanian Americans who want to maintain the Lithuanian American spirit alive in the diaspora, and who want to help our fellow Lithuanians in Lithuania. LAC is the largest and most capable Lithuanian organization in the diaspora. It provides leadership in various areas: education, cultural, in the area of public affairs-political, religious, sports, social, to youth through the Lithuanian American Youth Association, and help for Lithuania especially through the "Dovana Lietuvai" fund. At this time just by having work and projects through LAC, we will help upkeep Lithuanian spirit alive in the diaspora and will help Lithuania. The future of LAC is bright. (Dr. A. Razma)

○ The future is in a delicate balance of taking care of the needs of Lithuanian Americans and aiding Lithuania, and not just in terms of funds - people are most American in that they/we are very generous - but in terms of attention by the National Executive Committee to issues and a vision, of better coordination

among the various chapters and with other significant Lithuanian organizations such as the Knights of Lithuania - the two together would be an even more effective agent in U.S. political life nationally and locally, were such action and projects more coordinated, and also in religious terms such as fostering adhesion to parishes (Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed). (A. Saulaitis, S.J.)

○ A time has come that many older Lithuanian Americans are pulling back from active involvement. The incoming new cadre brings new ideas and shows a big desire to work in the LAC and on behalf of re-emerging Lithuania. The involvement of young people clearly shows that the LAC is on firm ground. (R. Kucas)

○ The future of the LAC depends on its leaders' activeness and the continuity of its work. Its importance will increase in the areas of the upkeep of Lithuanian culture in the U.S. and in help for Lithuania. (B. Juodelis)

○ In the future, Lithuanian American life and work will be under the umbrella of the LAC. (B. Jasaitis)

○ LAC is the only institution in the Lithuanian diaspora to which all can belong, with no restrictions as to religion, politics, anyone who considers himself/herself a Lithuanian. The Lithuanian Community is organized in a democratic manner and operates in countries around the world where there are Lithuanians. That is the only institution of the diaspora whose future is bright, especially now when ties are so active with re-awakening Lithuania. (K. Dockus)

What hopes, wishes, and advice would you offer the new LAC National Executive Committee? To the person who takes on your duties?

○ In the new LAC National Executive Committee I hope there will be people who will have commitment, who will wholeheartedly work during the next three years, because there are many tasks and it will require much time, enthusiasm, and patience on the part of each member. It doesn't seem that the work of the National Executive Committee are evaluated positively, there is much advice, criticism, and there didn't seem to many offers of help, especially from those who were among the critics. Having achieved an LAC project or job, there is much satisfaction, because you feel, that you are living at a time that you are an active part of the Lithuanian nation. I extend wishes to the new LAC president that in the next three years he/she display much inventiveness, enthusiasm, patience, and an ability of coordinating activities of the National Executive Committee with other organizations. The ➡

Lithuanian American public supported the LAC National Executive Committee's work astonishingly both financially and by participation in its activities. (Dr. A. Razma)

○ I would like to wish them strength. Because the work will not decrease, but will increase. It will be necessary to finish up earlier commitments and look for new roads and means to raise funds, to unite Lithuanian Americans, and help Lithuania and Lithuanians. (B. Jasaitis)

○ This will depend on the new people. For example, National Executive Committee meetings took place generally on Saturdays and Sundays which are the principal days of work for clergypersons. I believe that a layperson can better be the coordinator, having clergy as consultants for specific issues or questions. (A. Saulaitis, S.J.)

○ I extend my wishes to the new National Executive Committee, that it work in an organized, well-planned manner, becoming actively involved in the nation's political life, in attempting to influence the Congress and Senate and the White House to recognize the democratically elected Lithuanian government. (K. Dockus)

○ I would like to wish that they form a good collective, that work be delegated, and to watch that promised projects are accomplished. Coordinate work with other Lithuanian organizations on projects for Lithuania, if the goals don't mesh, to work independently of them. (B. Juodelis)

○ To the new National Executive Committee, and especially the Educational Council, I wish that the members continue to look for more modern, more easily understood teaching methods. For the person who takes on my duties, I suggest that ties continue to be maintained and cooperation sought with the Lithuanian Republic's Education Ministry and "Vytury's" Publishing Co., to acquire from Lithuania the newest textbooks and fiction. I suggest that we send high schoolers to summer camps in Lithuania which are organized by Lithuania's Education Ministry. I also promise that I will provide total cooperation to the incoming LAC Education Council president. (R. Kucas)

What are your future plans in the Lithuanian American Community, Inc. or generally in the Lithuanian American community?

○ In 1960, when I was a 38 year old physician, I was involved in the organizing of the Lithuanian Foundation (the LAC has representation in the Foundation - rk),

which, through the support of others, has reached the capital sum of \$5 million and which has distributed about \$300,000 for Lithuanian projects both here and in Lithuania. Besides that, this year the Lithuanian Foundation set aside \$1 million which will support various projects in Lithuania. Even now I am active in the Lithuanian Foundation which now seeks to reach \$10 million, so that each year it would be able to financially support Lithuanian projects in the diaspora and help the Republic of Lithuania as well. There's so much work, and so few workers. Having more free time, I will be able to write more in Lithuanian language newspapers. Moving away from my duties as president of the LAC, I will be active. (Dr. A. Razma)

○ I don't think I'll leave my participation in Lithuanian American life. I will work where I feel it's needed and I am capable, to help Lithuania and Lithuanians. I already have made a commitment to work on the organizing committee of the Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival of 1992. (B. Jasaitis)

○ I have experience in and knowledge of how Lithuanian American organizations work, and I would like to continue to donate my time to the LAC and on behalf of Lithuania. (B. Juodelis)

○ Not having even finished my duties, I have already committed myself to coordinate the financial affairs of the upcoming Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival. (K. Dockus)

○ After 3 years of intensive work, a rest period will be very much appreciated. (R. Kucas)

I thank all of the National Executive Committee members for their candor. During the past three years there was plenty of evidence of the time, efforts, loyalty, and commitment which they devoted to their duties in the Lithuanian-American Community, and to the Councils over which they presided. There may be an opportunity to read of Lithuanian American and Lithuanian-American Community-related projects of these and other outgoing National Executive Committee members in the future as well. We can all only wish the same energy for the incoming National Executive Committee.

(Editor's Note: Ms. Kubilius, author of this article, has, like those quoted in this article, also served in an official capacity over these past three years, as Vice President, Information, for the National Executive Committee, Lithuanian American Community, Inc. The LAC is publisher of BRIDGES; and Ms. Kubilius has provided invaluable assistance to this editor over the period that this editor has been involved with this publication.) □

A.P.P.L.E. Travels To Lithuania

*One Participant's Account Of Her Experiences,
This Past Summer, In Lithuania, With The A.P.P.L.E. Program*

by Susan Andersen

Editor's Note: Regular readers of this publication are aware of the A.P.P.L.E. project; and read, here, of A.P.P.L.E.'s plans to have American teachers travel to Lithuania, this past summer, in order to participate in several programs which were organized by A.P.P.L.E., in Lithuania. "Vaiva" and "Jurate", referred to in this article, are Ms. Vaiva Vebra and Ms. Jurate Krokys, Director and Associate Director, respectively, of A.P.P.L.E. (American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education). If you would like to support the A.P.P.L.E. project, or participate, directly, in future A.P.P.L.E. activities, please write to A.P.P.L.E., Post Office Box 1370, West Hartford, Connecticut 06107.

My colleagues in the United States responded with skepticism when I told them about my plans to lecture in Lithuania this summer. One professor in my own department posed some pointed questions which caused me to reevaluate my decision: What can an educator from the U.S. share with a society which is emerging from generations of oppression, and academic censorship? How can communication education methods, which rely so heavily upon access to the media and other technologies, be integrated into the curriculum of schools with limited technical resources? Why is Lithuania looking to the U.S. for advice in charting educational reform when America's educational system is in disarray?

It was impossible at the time to answer my friend's questions. However uncertain I was about Lithuanian teachers' desire or need for the information I had to share, at a more fundamental level I knew that I must go -- at least to learn what I could contribute.

There is a manifest rightness in the mission statement of A.P.P.L.E., that freedom for Lithuania is predicated upon educational freedom for all children and academic freedom for all educators. If we could do no more than to share with our Lithuanian colleagues what we believe to be the best curriculum theory and methodology practiced in our fields, to discuss the day-to-day workings of our schools, to point out the failings and successes of American education, and to consider with our hosts how they might spot flaws and advantages in their own system of value.

The night before I left home, I worried aloud to my husband, "Will we be able to relate to each other? Will we find common ground?"

Doubts about the relevance of carrying American education to Lithuania evaporated upon our first meeting with our hosts, the ministers of Culture and Education and the Director of the Teachers' Qualification-Raising Institute. We were welcomed as colleagues and friends. We were reassured that the purpose of the seminars was to open a free exchange of ideas among professionals who by the forces of arbitrary tyranny had been too long separated. We learned that Lithuanian educational reform had been informed by the systematic and critical evaluation of many nations' education systems, not just that of the U.S. We heard the Ministry's plans for reapportioning resources to make quality education available to all Lithuanian children. We explored the challenges of creating a uniquely Lithuanian curriculum within schools formerly dominated by Soviet ideology. We discussed the merits of the Ministry's plans for teacher qualification-raising and applauded the wisdom of instituting a voluntary, professional development model.

Who could have planned the strength of the bond which formed...where...teachers met each other...as fellow architects of Lithuanian freedom?

But it was not until we met with the 500+ Lithuanian educators (who voluntarily devoted two weeks of their summer vacations to attend the seminars) that we were to realize the true purpose of our coming. Until we were all together in that marvelous Institute building, no one -- neither Vaiva, nor Jurate, nor the Institute Director, not the Ministry, nor the "curators" nor the teachers, American or Lithuanian -- no one knew exactly what would happen.

Who could have expected the American teachers to have shared surprisingly similar educational philosophies, and to consistently reinforce each other's ideas in individually prepared lectures? Who would ➔

have believed that a heated, frank criticism of curriculum and instruction methods under the Soviet regime would spontaneously erupt during a workshop session, and continue until each teacher there had spoken his or her peace? Who could have planned the strength of the bond which formed in a "cross strand" discussion group where Lithuanian kindergarten teachers, high school language teachers and school Directors met each others not as unrelated "specialists" but as fellow architects of Lithuanian freedom?

If we each had our personal reasons at the outset, I am certain we now share a common understanding of our mission.

Early in the first week, one of the teachers revealed to me that she had come to the seminar to "see what Americans look like." I suppose that if I were fully

honest I would have to admit that a good portion of my impetus to travel to Lithuania was a curiosity for my lost heritage -- I wanted to see what Lithuanians look like.

If we each had our personal reasons at the outset, I am certain we now share a common understanding of our mission. This summer, A.P.P.L.E. worked to help make manifest one promise of Lithuania's educational reform movement: that Lithuanian educators may enjoy full collegiality with educators worldwide.

What I brought to Lithuania was modest: a few new ideas, some fresh supplies and resources, and a faint affinity for the culture and values of Lithuania, enkindled in childhood by a grandmother who forever loved her lost homeland. A Lithuanian teacher asked me what I would take home after the visit. Except for dear memories of faces and words which touched me at times in profound and inexpressible ways, I hope that I have taken little away from Lithuania. Instead, my new friends have agreed to hold my Lithuanian treasure in trust for me until I can return to take up again the course of our discoveries and companionship. □

The Baltics in Buffalo Baltic Council of Western New York

Baltic Council of Western New York (BACOWNY) carried out an active, successful information campaign during the two weeks following the August 19 coup attempt and leading to Baltic independence.

A celebration of the Independence Declaration, the Council sponsored a champagne reception and press conference for Buffalo area media people. The event was reported on all three TV channels and interviews were aired on several radio stations. The Buffalo News published a photograph and an article on the first page, as well as a series of "human interest" stories. The reception took place at the residence of Latvian Council member Valdemars Innus, University of Buffalo Vice-president. Throughout the entire period, radio and television reporters were briefed by council members and conducted numerous interviews with Valdemars Innus and professor Julius Slavenas. Slavenas and Innus had just returned from the Baltics several days before the Coup. Two Council members were in the Baltics during the Coup: Professors Antanas Musteikis and Juris Neimanis. Neimanis is economic advisor at the University of Riga. Musteikis will teach at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas in the spring semester.

Mr. Innus was instrumental in founding an exchange program between the University of Buffalo's School of Management and the University of Riga. Another exchange program is planned with the Riga Academy of Art. Plans are made to expand the exchange program to include Estonian and Lithuanian Universities.

The Council was formed in the aftermath of the January 1991 massacres in Vilnius and Riga; and has coordinated letter writing campaigns, issued press releases, and established contacts with the media, Congressmen and Senators. In the future it plans to penetrate the business community.

On June 15, 1991, the Council sponsored Ecumenical Services in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the June 14 deportations. Services were held at Lutheran Trinity Church by clergy from all three nationalities: Father Jonas Staskus from Toronto represented Lithuanians, Archbishop Udo Pedersoo, Estonians and Rev. Gaide, Latvians.

The next event is a town meeting scheduled for October 26, with Senator D'Amato as guest of honor and Linas Kojelis as the main speaker. Mr. Kojelis, who served on President Reagan's staff, is presently president and co-founder of the U.S. Baltic Foundation. The theme of the town meeting will be "The U.S. and Baltic Reconstruction."

the Council consists of a Board and three co-chairs. Valdemars Kirss represents Estonians, Andris Borkmanis the Latvians and Antanas Musteikis the Lithuanians. Other Lithuanian members are professors Julius Slavenas, Grazina Slavenas and Jurgis Karuza. - M.G. Slavenas

Knights Of Lithuania

The Outgoing President Reminisces About Her Organization's Proud History And Her Involvement In The K of L.

by John E. Usalis

Anna Klizas Wargo of Saint Clair, Pa., began her involvement in preserving Lithuanian traditions as a young girl in a local ethnic Lithuanian group. This year she completed her third year as national president of the Knights of Lithuania.

She has definitely come a long way!

In a recent interview with Anna at her home, she spoke of her beginnings in the local Knights organization and her work in the national organization, always with a measure of pride for her Lithuanian heritage and a determination to do what she can in Lithuania's struggle for freedom.

Wargo's beginnings in the Knights stems from her involvement in the local Lithuanian Women's Club, of which she was a member as a little girl.

After a brief discussion about how Lithuanians seemed to become prominent in the business community, and how so many of them owned saloons (Shenandoah, with a population over 20,000 in 1943 had 31 bars owned by Lithuanians alone), she said, "When I joined the Lithuanian Women's Club when I was just a young girl in the 1950's, my brother used to say to me, 'What the hell do you want to belong to that saloon keepers' club?'"

Laughing, she added, "I would say that 50 percent of the members were saloon keepers. Lithuanians were pretty good drinkers, and I think the Lithuanians were more the business people.

Anna looks back at those Lithuanians that came to Schuylkill County with much admiration, considering how so many worked in the local coal mines, going in before the sun came up and coming out after the sun went down, and after all the back-breaking work, built their houses of worship in the little spare time they had.

"When you look back and think of how they built their churches, it's amazing. Our church (Saint Casimir's in Saint Clair) was built from railroad boxcars. There used to be a railroad roundhouse near where the Saint Clair Industrial Park is now, and the workers used to just destroy the boxcars that were old. A lot of houses in that section of Saint Clair are built from the wood

of railroad boxcars. They gave the people the wood. It was either that or burn it.

"And this is what our church was originally built from. These miners would come home from work and built the church. They wanted their own church," she said.

As to the origins of Knights of Columbus Anthracite Council 144, Anna gave a brief history of how the group formed.

"It goes back to about 1974, when Father Al Bartkus started having the Lithuanian Mass on one Sunday a month in Saint Casimir Church here," she said. "Bernice Mikatavage of Minersville called me and said, 'Why don't we try to get a group together of women and men who are interested in doing something for the Lithuanian cause?'"

"So, we talked to Msgr. Bartkus and we formed an organization called the 'Lithuanian Ethnic Heritage Club.' We started out with about 30 people."

The group became a little more prominent in 1975 with an entry in a parade in the Schuylkill County city of Pottsville and it went on from there.

"In 1975, we designed a float for the Pottsville Winter Carnival parade, and we won the Queen's Trophy for it. We worked for months on that. In 1976, we built another float. At that time, we called ourselves the Lithuanian Bicentennial Committee.

"During this time, a fellow by the name of Joe Yanalitis, who was originally from New Philadelphia (Pa.) but was living in Philadelphia, and was active in the Knights of Lithuania, began coming to our meetings and telling us about the Knights," Anna explained. "Joe kept asking us, 'Why don't you join the Knights of Lithuania? It's a national organization. You'll get more out of it.'"

It was in 1977 that the decision was made to have the local group become part of the Knights organization. Wargo said that the group had 45 members and was organized by Father (now Rev. Msgr.) Algimantas A. Bartkus, who is presently assigned to the Pontificio Collegio Lituano in Rome.

"The first meeting was held in January of that year," said Wargo, "and the election of officers was held on March 4 (Saint Casimir's feast day)," with ➡

Mikatavage being elected the first president, and Wargo was chosen as secretary.

"Going back to the 1930s, a lot of the Lithuanian churches in the region belonged to the Knights of Lithuania. Saint Clair formerly had a council. We could have taken their number, but Msgr. Joseph A. Neverauskas, who was also very active and one of our co-founders along with Father Al and Father Matthew Jarasunas, said, 'Since you're a county group, why don't you take the name of Anthracite Council, and take a new number?' So we did and we became the 144th council in the Knights of Lithuania," Wargo explained.

"When Msgr. Bartkus left Saint Clair and went to Frackville, we moved our meeting place to Frackville. Msgr. Bartkus was then sent to Rome, and Father Joseph Shelonis became our spiritual advisor. "After he died two years later at the age of 38, Father Jarasunas became our spiritual advisor, and we've been going to Maizeville ever since. Father Jarasunas had continued our Lithuanian Masses after Msgr. Bartkus left, and we been having them ever since," she said.

The Lithuanian Masses are celebrated on the last Sunday of every month at Our Lady of Siluva Church in Maizeville, which is marking the 25th anniversary of its groundbreaking this year.

One of the biggest traditions in Northeast Pennsylvania has been Lithuanian Day, held in August. While the tradition of Lithuanian Day is still observed on a much smaller scale, many years ago it seemed the entire anthracite region of Pennsylvania became Lithuanian on one Sunday in August with the celebration held at Lakewood Park in Barnesville, Pa. When the park closed, the celebration was moved to Rocky Glen Park in Moosic, Pa. until that park shut its gates.

Presently, the tradition continues as a two-day festival in the Schuylkill Mall in Frackville, this year being held on August 17-18.

"Back in 1974 we were already involved in Lithuanian Day, which was held at Lakewood. Prior to that, the Lithuanian Priests' League were responsible for the whole thing, but as the amount of priests started to decline and get older, they asked us if we could help. And in 1977, when we became Knights, they asked us if we would take over completely, which we did," said Wargo.

Wargo explained that monies raised during the Lithuanian Day celebrations were donated to various Lithuanian groups, such as Lithuanian Catholic Religious Aid and others.

"In this council, whatever we earn generally goes out to Lithuanian causes, mentioning that proceeds from the Lithuania Day celebrations go to Saint Casimir's College in Rome," she said.

How is the local Knight's chapter doing in membership? "We now have 236 members in Schuylkill County and we have some members from Mount Carmel in Northumberland County," she said. There are

almost 20,000 Lithuanians in Schuylkill County. "We have one of the larger councils. Most of them run 60 to 75 members," she said. Ages of Anthracite Council members range from 30 to 80.

The Knights of Lithuania has 5,000 members in the United States. Chicago has the biggest concentration of members, with New York also being very large. There is a council in Kansas City, a small council in Los Angeles, and three in Florida.

"We have 10 Lithuanian churches in Schuylkill County, with 10 pastors that are either fully or partly Lithuanian, and most are fairly young. Going around the country the way I have, most of the Lithuanian parishes have older priests. Most of them are close to retirement age. We are very fortunate in this area. We are also very fortunate to have Bishop Thomas J. Welsh as such a friend to Lithuanians. He's been good to us as Knights of Lithuania.

"When I had Sister Nijole Sadunaite stay with me here for three days on her visit to the U.S. last year, I called Bishop Welsh to see if I could get him to come and visit with her. We just couldn't seem to get together on a time. I nearly died when he came up from Allentown for breakfast to talk to her. He was very impressed with her," she said, showing her great respect for the priesthood. Bishop Welsh is pastoral leader of the Diocese of Allentown, which has 13 Lithuanian parishes overall.

Her pastor also helps to pass on the heritage of Lithuania to his parishioners. "We have a really good church bulletin, and Father Ron Jankaitis has something Lithuanian in there every week. I supply him with some of the information, or else he'll take it from some other source. It's good. It would be good if all these priests would do the same."

Wargo said that the cost to join the Knights is minimal.

"Members pay \$10 a year dues," she explained, "but that \$10 just pays for VYTIS magazine," which is published 10 times a year by the Knights.

"We actually have no local dues of any kind. What money we make is used for a cultural affair every year, and we put a good bit into the cultural center in Frackville. That I'm proud of too," she said. "We have some nice old things in there, including old books and copies of an old Lithuanian newspaper that was printed in Mahanoy City. The copies were found in a garage.

"We also have some very good English reference books on Lithuania in the cultural center. We've had students go in there for information to write a thesis or report," she said.

After talking with Anna, there can be no doubt for her love of Lithuania and the Knights. No doubt at all.

"We're still interested in people joining the Knights. Our motto is 'For God and Country.' We're American citizens first, but we want to remember our Lithuanian heritage," said Anna. *(Editor's Note: In our next issue, we will have a continuation of this interview.)* □

Community With A Capital "C"

*A Report From The National Executive Committee Of
The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.*

by **Ramune Kubilius**

Chapters and Regions:

The new regional chairman in the Midwest is Kazys Laukaitis. He replaces Birute Vindasius who had served several terms in that capacity.

Florida also has a new regional LAC chairperson - Janina Gerdvilas who replaces Povilas Jancauskas in those duties.

The newly formed Minnesota LAC Chapter has been busy becoming familiar with the rules for electing the Board of Directors, has sent a delegation to meet newly elected Senator Paul Wellstone, and has hosted several Lithuanian agricultural exchange students at local Minnesota Lithuanian events. (What do the Lithuanian students miss most? Reading the periodical press in their native language, so the Minnesota Lithuanians planned on rectifying that.) The *International Institute* of Minnesota was happy that for the first time in its 59th international festival, Lithuanians were represented, thanks to the efforts of the Minnesota LAC chapter members.

The Buffalo, NY chapter was one of many which held solemn commemoration ceremonies on the 50th anniversary of the massive deportations of Lithuanians (and others) to Siberia.

The Florida Region and the Los Angeles chapter have been particularly generous to the "Gift for Lithuania" (*Dovana Lietuvai*) fund: Los Angeles, during the recent visit of Lithuania's Pres. Vytautas Landsbergis, Florida during its regular spring meeting.

National Executive Committee Members:

Public Affairs Council president Dr. Tomas Remeikis was in Geneva July 1 - 19 for the *Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)*. He was a Public Member on the U.S. Delegation to the Geneva CSCE Experts' Meeting on National Minorities. As a Public Member, he was fully accredited to the meeting and had the opportunity to participate in its sessions and the activities of the U.S. delegation. His trip was financially supported by the *LAC National Executive Committee*.

In early August Dr. Tomas Remeikis and *National Executive Committee* secretary Bronius Juodelis represented the LAC and its president Dr. Antanas Razma at a meeting of Lithuanian Community presidents which took place before the annual *European Lithuanian Study Days* in Lampertheim, Germany.

Dr. Antanas Razma (President, LAC), Rimas Dirvonis (Vice-President for Sports), Regina Kucas (President of the *LAC's Educational Council*), Dalia Kucenas (President of the *LAC's Cultural Council*) were among the many visitors to Lithuania this summer. Along with visits with family friends and relatives, the *National Executive Committee* members had an opportunity to attend various cultural and sports events as well as meet in their *LAC National Executive Committee* capacities with Lithuania's government representatives.

Congratulations to Birute Jasaitis (President of the *LAC's Human Services Council*) and Zina Dreslius, Director of Subscriptions for **BRIDGES**, and Eduardas Meilus Jr., former editor of **BRIDGES**, who were again elected for terms of office on the *LAC's Board of Directors*.

Human Services Council Forms A New Committee:

The *Human Services Council* has been busy with the formation of the *Lithuanian Children's Hope (Lietuvos Vaiku Viltis)* and has prepared containers to be sent to Lithuania, together with the Educational and Religious Council members. A new committee which is being formed will serve as a resource committee to help investigate and facilitate the adoption of Lithuanian orphans by Lithuanian American families. The committee will consist of *Human Services Council* members as well as consultant attorneys and other experts.

New Textbooks For Lithuania:

There has been a proliferation of newsprint in Lithuania: numerous organizations and societies publish their own newspapers and newsletters. Yet, due to the lack of funds (or a possibly questionable difference ➡

in priorities), Lithuania's schoolchildren are still using textbooks from the former Communist regime. The *LAC's Educational Council* has been contacted by a number of sources in Lithuania: government education officials as well as potential authors and editors about financial support for the revision of children's educational materials. The Council has also received samples of textbooks, some of which have been tested and used in Lithuanian language schools here in the U.S. The Council is presently evaluating what kind of role it can play. It is planned that a fundraiser for this purpose will be conducted this fall.

Gift For Lithuania:

The "*Gift for Lithuania*" (*Dovana Lietuvai*) fund was established in the fall of 1988 at the beginning of this *National Executive Committee's* term of office. In three years, over \$400,000 was collected from generous Lithuanian Americans (and others): in 1989 \$150,000 was collected, the same amount was collected again in 1990. The funds were distributed for various projects, which it was felt, help with the rebirth of Lithuania: in the areas of publication, Lithuanian representation at professional meetings, help for Lithuania's academic and public libraries, help in sending containers of books, clothing and medicines to Lithuania, etc. In June, the present *LAC National Executive Committee* made some of its last decisions about the dispersion of "*Gift for Lithuania*" funds - \$40,000, only partially being able to satisfy the multitude of requests. *A.P.P.L.E.'s* special education and other workshops in Lithuania this summer, for example, received support from this latest dispersion. Additional funds recently dispersed included financial help in transporting a Steinway piano to Lithuania (needed for an upcoming worldwide *Konstantinas Mykalojus Ciurlionis Piano Competition*); a high speed modem for communication from Lithuania's Parliament, support for the news releases of the Lithuanian Information Center, etc. The remainder of the fund will be handed over to the new *National Executive Committee* when it takes office. The present *National Executive Committee* will strongly recommend that this be one of the projects the new Committee should continue.

Government Affairs Office In Summer:

The *LAC's Government Affairs Office* continued its work during the summer. Two examples: 1) On behalf of the *LAC National Executive Committee*, the *Government Affairs Office* again called on President Bush to extend diplomatic recognition to Lithuania's democratically-elected government. 2) The *Government Affairs Office* was kept very busy keeping track of Congressional activity as the budget was being discussed for Fiscal Year 1992. The Foreign Assistance bill debate, for example, became bogged down with 150 proposed amendments: one was the "Baltic Amendment" sponsored by Congressman Richard

Durbin. The *LAC* region and chapter officers were informed via frequent *Government Affairs Office* issued "Legislative Updates".

Events And Sports:

The second Legislative Seminar for *LAC* chapters and other participants is scheduled for the weekend of September 20 - 22, 1991 in Washington, D.C. In 1990, organization of the event was coordinated by the *LAC's Public Affairs Council* (especially by its member Regina Narusis) and the *Government Affairs Office*.

The *9th Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival* is scheduled to take place over the July 4th holiday in 1992, but not in the Auditorium (the site mentioned in the July-August issue of **BRIDGES** would have presented logistic physical plant problems). It was recently announced that the Festival would take place in *Rosemont Horizon* (located near *O'Hare Airport*), with an audience capacity of 14,000. The *Festival Organizing Committee* Chairman is Dr. Petras Kisielius (a member of the *LAC's Public Affairs Council* and a Director as well). The Chairperson of the *Program Committee* (Artistic Director) will be Dalia Dzikas. (Mrs. Dzikas was also named the chief choreographer of the Festival.) Special preparatory courses for Lithuanian folk dancing instructors took place August 18-25 at *Camp Dainava* in Michigan.

Lithuanian American Youth Association officers relayed to the *LAC National Executive Committee* a request for financial support of one Lithuanian representative's trip to the *7th World Lithuanian Youth Congress*, scheduled for several weeks spanning the end of 1991 to the beginning of 1992. The *LAC National Executive Committee* designated \$3,000.00 for this purpose and urge that other countries' Lithuanian Communities, and other Lithuanian American organizations consider doing the same - it is hoped that up to 20 representative young Lithuanians may be able to join their peers in South America.

Lithuanian Seminars and Courses:

The 25th Lithuanian Language Teachers' seminar took place near *Camp Dainava*, Michigan, during the period August 11 - 18th. Of the 112 attendees, 22 are actively teaching Lithuanian language school teachers. Others are retired teachers, supporters of the schools, 26 young children who accompanied their parents (taken care of by 6 Lithuanian Pedagogical Institute students), and almost two dozen attendees of the Lithuanian language courses which run at the same time. Along with the more formal lectures, one hour each day was devoted to brainstorming and discussion of various problems encountered by the Lithuanian language schools. The seminar is sponsored annually by the *LAC's Educational Council*.

The 17th Lithuanian Language seminar took place from August 4 to 18, near Plano, Illinois. In spite of the efforts of the dedicated organizing committee ➡

and its lecturers (professors from North American colleges and universities and visiting faculty from Lithuania as well), unlike the past when nearly 50 students used to register and attend the "total immersion" type seminar, in recent years it has not been able to draw even a dozen registrants. After the 1991 seminar, it is expected that the organizing committee (which includes representatives from the World, Canadian and American Lithuanian Communities) including its chair Vida Kuprys, will seriously evaluate the duration, location, content, and timing of the seminar. Some feel that the seminar should be joined with another similar event, should be shortened to one week, or be moved to a different location or time of the year. Others say that the weakness in their Lithuanian language knowledge deters many attendees. However, over the years, a number of attendees have returned again and again to this "retreat", to this little Lithuania in the U.S., including a number of young Canadian Lithuanians whose Lithuanian Community and other organizations pay for their participation. Other attendees were able to acquire college credits (from Kent State University) in the past.

The attendees of the 1991 seminar were treated to insightful history lectures by Vilnius University History Department chairman Professor Alfredas Bumblauskas. Sticky grammar and stylistic Lithuanian language rules were conveyed by retired Rochester University linguistics professor Antanas Klimas (co-author of *Introduction to Modern Lithuanian*) and Lithuanian language affectionado Rev. Juozas Prunskis, S.J. Insights into Lithuanian American immigrant history were conveyed by anthropology and sociology professor Aleksandras Gedmintas of State University of New York. Prof. Vytautas Kavolis (of Dickinson College, Pennsylvania) lectured on cultural history. Professor Ilona Maziliauskas (of Ahuntsic College, Montreal, Canada) and Professor Viktorija Skrupskelis (of Oberlin College, Ohio) involved attendees in analysis of Lithuanian short stories and poetry respectively. It will be interesting to see what the future of the seminar holds.

Looking Ahead:

Since this may be the last "*Community with a Capital 'C'*" column edited by this *National Executive Committee* member, best wishes are extended to the new *LAC National Executive Committee*, and to the present editor of **BRIDGES**. It is hoped that **BRIDGES** will continue to feature news about and by members of the *Lithuanian American Community, Inc.* It is also hoped that the *Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.* will not rest on its laurels, but will forge ahead in its goals and in doing so motivating all Lithuanian Americans to become more involved.

(*Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. National Executive Committee, 2713 West 71st Street, Chicago, IL 60629.*) □

"To Our Readers" (Continued from Page 2)

2.) This editor feels that there simply hasn't been enough information, in the past, about this organization to which we belong, which is the publisher of this publication, which represents us, etc. The more we know about the organization, the stronger we can make it.

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I've gotten many complaints from subscribers concerning issues they haven't received/issues they've received late. Yes, we've had a problem - a computer problem. Ms. Dreslius, the Director of Subscriptions, assures me that the problem is being resolved; but she needs your assistance in order to insure that the problem is completely resolved. So, if you, or someone you know, is not receiving issues, regularly - or at all, please drop a note to Ms. Dreslius; and give her complete information about the problem. She has been working hard to resolve the situation/she will resolve the situation, with your kind assistance. (The leadership of the LAC has just made a long term commitment to solution of this problem - they have authorized the purchase of a computer specifically for the purpose of keeping subscription information; and Ms. Dreslius will no longer have to rely on "borrowing time" on a computer owned by someone else.)

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This editor is absolutely convinced that probably the fastest, most effective way to give Lithuania a "quick economic boost" is through tourism. After all, tourists bring "hard currency" to their destination. They spend that "hard currency" across the entire spectrum of the economy - allowing even the lowliest entrepreneur to share in the bounty. With such activity, they encourage the development of an infrastructure capable of accomodating even more tourists (and, especially in a former "command economy" environment, they encourage ordinary people to learn/practice the ways of commerce; whether it be the conversion of a "spare room" into a tourist "guest room", or the hiring out of a car as a "taxi", etc.). But tourists, in this writer's opinion, bring even more - they bring news of the outside world. They set an example of what is possible/what can be achieved. And, of course, certain tourists are also potential business partners in a myriad of other ventures. How better for someone to be in a position to eventually consider Lithuania, for a future investment venture than someone who has visited Lithuania/has fallen "in love" with Lithuania? Let's, all of us, promote travel to Lithuania!



Joseph Arlauskas
Editor

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Touring The Countryside

A Third Trip Back To Lithuania Yields An Unforgettable Time - Culturally, Historically, Emotionally.

by Kay A. Yankoski

In May of 1987, my mother and I toured our Lithuanian homeland and I knew then that I would return. So, in May of 1989, I went on my second trip, this time alone on a private visit which was a real adventure since my friends were eager to show me the "real" Lithuania, not the one that tourists see.

This past July 1 I left Dulles Airport for my third trip to Lithuania, this time entering through East Berlin and in a way, simplifying my journey by avoiding the hassle of Moscow. Again my journey was charmed--delightful, funny seatmates to London, the first leg. On to Berlin where I arrived in time for the first sunny weather in days. I had the good fortune to stay with the Estonian friend of a friend in a beautiful old world flat, have a fabulous dinner in East Berlin and to see only an asphalt trace of where The Wall used to be. Ten glorious hours of sleep and off to the airport in East Berlin; the Communist airline of course flies out of the Communist airport in what used to be the Communist sector.

A short hop (less than 2 hours) and I was touching down in Vilnius. I sat in the first seat, next to a young British journalist who was stationed in the Baltics, and thus was first off the plane. It was with amusement and delight that I saw Pruneskiene with a limousine at the foot of the stairs from my aircraft. Alas, some Bavarian Ministers were on the same plane; she was not there to pick up me!

The Fourth of July -- my first full day in Lithuania! The irony of spending my Independence Day in a country that yearned for independence. A friend who was a member of the Lithuanian-American Society volunteered my speaking services at their celebration honoring American visitors. I wore my American flag t-shirt and felt a little homesick when we stopped in a park to listen to some student musicians (from Copenhagen) playing New York, New York. I ad libbed a few remarks at the gathering as did "a representative from the West Coast" but I was most proud of the young Americans there who were giving of themselves much like Peace Corps volunteers.

I spent my second day with a fellow whom my mother calls Mr. Lithuania because he is tireless in



Three Maidens at Sventoja

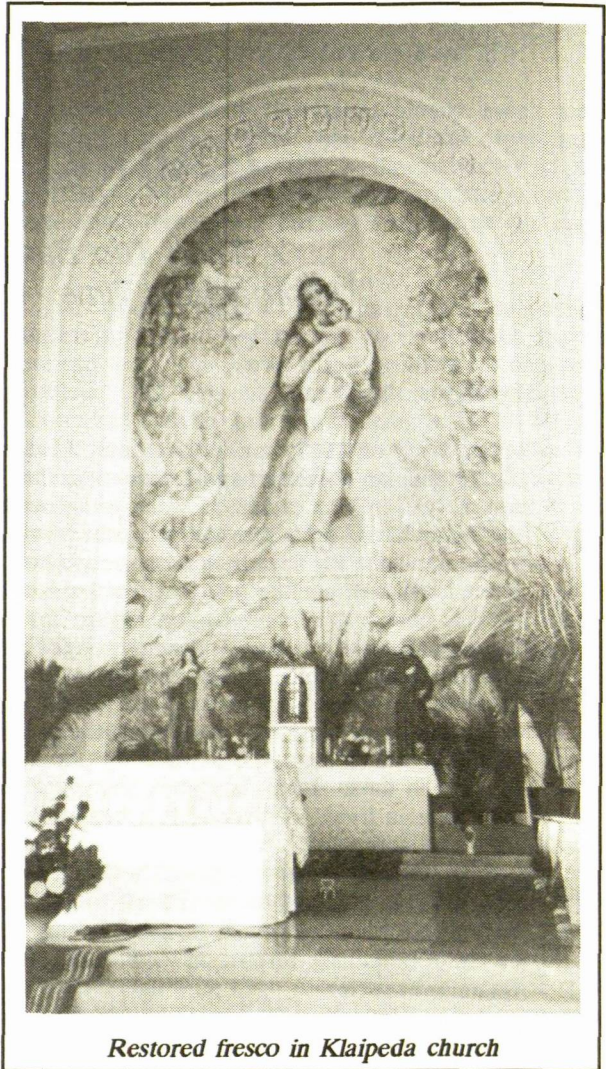
preserving the past and recording the present. He takes me to places where no one else goes -- to digs of old palaces and to the archaeologists' offices to see actual plans; he knows everyone and everyone knows him. We took pictures in a museum sculpture garden and stopped for a cold drink. Then a stroll by the river to the Parliament Building that was still blockaded, a trench had been dug so as to prevent enemy tanks from getting any closer; since it was summer time, roses grew through the barbed wire that surround the building and young men sat in shifts to protect the building. When we passed the statue of Lenin in the square (since toppled), my friend ➡

remarked that his upraised hand used to point to KGB Headquarters across the street, but since the independence movement, he is really pointing to the Conservatory on the right and saying, That is where the trouble [Lansbergis] is.

Saturday was spent seeking an "almost" relative in the Kupiskis Region. We had no street or telephone number, only the village name, Adomyne. When we arrived in the village, my hostess's husband became the detective and soon discovered that "she" had moved back home one month previously to take care of her mother who had broken her back. In the region we stopped to admire the church (standard procedure) and to view the wooden crosses in the churchyard along with a memorial to Siberian deportees (a pile of stones, each with the name of the victim on it). The church was large and lovely; large because when plans were drawn, a vicar secretly came in the night and moved the markers 2 meters out, and, a second vicar came later, doing the same. So, the church is capable of holding 10,000 (more standing than sitting). We stopped to see Puntukas Anykschiai (the stone commemorating the flight of Darius and Garenas) and to cook our own shashlik from a stand in the park across the street.

On Sunday Mr. Lithuania and a friend (a surgeon who tried to save the victims of the January violence) with a car picked up another friend and me and we went to a celebration at Medininkai where everyone named Mindaugas was honored in the ruins of his castle. There was a weight lifting contest (the weight was a metal ball with a handle on it) and young and old participated. I thought I heard someone speaking English urging a young girl to also try. I chimed in, telling her to show them what a Lithuanian-American girl can do. Imagine our surprise when we found out that we attend the same church and the same mass in Alexandria, VA! A quick stop at the well of the local farmer for a cool drink, then off to the nearby Juozapine (the highest point) to attend a ceremony at a rock on the hilltop, where we all joined hands and sang songs as we circled the rock. On to the border crossing into Byelorussia, where we decided "to go abroad for a short time" and had lunch in Byelorussia. [NOTE: It was this same border station at which the guards were massacred at the end of July.] After lunch, Mr. Lithuania said, Well, they haven't murdered us yet, the flies are still alive! I was struck by the beauty of lubinas, great masses of this lovely purple wildflower similar to (the same as) lupines as we drove through the countryside.

Back to my "shabby flat" for coffee (a treat for most Lithuanians)) and a decision to go to the surgeon's garden to pick strawberries for our dessert. We stopped on the way to see the TV tower that was still occupied by the Soviets (also the printing facility). It was surrounded by a high chain link fence that was heavily greased so as to deter people from getting too



Restored fresco in Klaipeda church

close and was patrolled by Russian soldiers carrying machine guns. There are two shrines here marking the deaths on that black day in January; one for the victims and another at the place where the enemy tanks made huge ruts in the ground as they made their way to the tower. There are wayside crosses at each one.

Off to the Baltic for a week, via Tytuvėnai for a visit with friends. On the way we saw a line of Soviet tanks more than I could count on the other side of the divided highway. It was an ominous sight for me. We picked and ate black currants and small peapods from the garden, then walked to the magnificent old church and monastery and a nearby lake. Back to the house for supper, a swim in another nearby lake, then stayed the night.

We rose early and proceeded to Palanga in a light rain. We left Vilnius in a heatwave which continued until we reached the Baltic where we needed a sweater all the time. The brisk wind blew so much sand in our faces that we could not walk out onto the pier on ➡

the first evening and had to content ourselves with a promenade along Vytauto Gatve instead. While my hostess and her daughter swam in the sea every morning, I was reluctant to submerge more than my feet in the cold water. We spent our beach time at the Moteru Plages, the women's nude beach. The nudity is optional, of course, but is the norm. Young (toddlers) and old (ancients) basked in the sun and surf; some mahogany brown, others beet red and still others, like us, palefaces. It was a new (nude?) experience and certainly beats trying to fit into or look good in a bathing suit. Your birthday suit always fits!

Lithuania is a nation of walkers and it was indeed walking weather here. We logged miles every morning and evening, sometimes walking on the beach one way and returning inland. Inasmuch as we were very far north, it was possible to read a newspaper on the street until almost 11 p.m.

The Baltic is the source of amber or "gold" from the sea. Each morning and evening as the tides come in, the "pickers" are on the beach looking for amber. Storms wash up big pieces, but we amateurs were content to find tiny "crumbs" that would sometimes even cling to our ankles as we walked in the water. The

palace of a Polish nobleman has

become the Amber Museum which is set in a lovely park here. The adjoining private chapel has been restored and opened now; it is tiny and lovely with many wonderful old family photos.

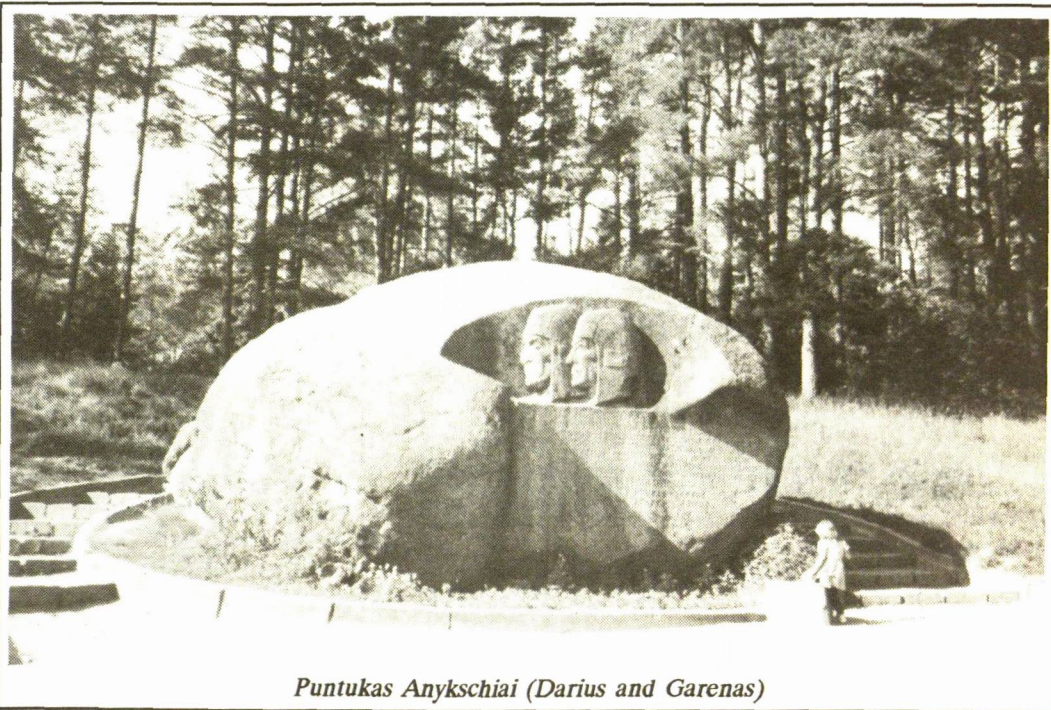
In fact, all of Palanga is glorious and with a little imagination, one can picture its former grandeur. There are wonderful sculptures in the parks depicting characters from folk tales such as Egle, Birute and Jurate and Kestutis.

It was here in Palanga that I found a "rupintojelis" (a seated Christ looking somewhat like Rodin's *The Thinker* and sometimes called *The Sorrowful Christ*) in a gallery. This was the one handicraft that I really wanted to bring back and I was thrilled to find a magnificent one carved of dark wood with a lovely gold

metal crown.

While in Palanga, we visited a nun, the sister of a woman friend in Virginia, who told us that "they" (the nuns in Lithuania) are still underground. She gave me seeds for the pale violet poppies that I admired and hadn't seen before. They are considered wildflowers in Lithuania and "grow like weeds." She also gave me some seeds for her sister. These were "hemp" seeds, another "weed," whose Lithuanian name is "canapis". I saw some of this weed growing in her garden and recognized it as marijuana. Imagine Customs checking my baggage and discovering seeds which are illegal to bring into the US anyway and then my trying to explain that they were from a 70-year-old nun!

A friend who knew I loved wildflowers suggested a side trip to Svventoja while we were in Palanga.



Puntukas Anykschiai (Darius and Garenas)

Because there are new restrictions and taxes for driving/parking cars, we took the bus one afternoon. When we arrived, we asked the first couple we saw where the wildflowers were and the man pointed us off to the left. As we meandered, nothing resembling wildflowers or a garden appeared, so we asked another person. She knew nothing about any gardens, nor did the numerous other people we asked. And, it became abundantly clear that there were in fact no "natives" of Svventoja, all seemed to be summer help only and even they laughed, saying, nobody lived there! As we headed toward the beach, we met an acquaintance of my hostess who summered there often and he didn't know of any flower gardens either, however, he did take us to one point of interest: a sculpture of three ➡



Wayside Cross in churchyard

maidens in the dunes. Because they are black, the local joke is that they were caught in an oil spill! Other than stopping to have our lunch in the pines, thus ended our wildflower excursion to Svetoja!

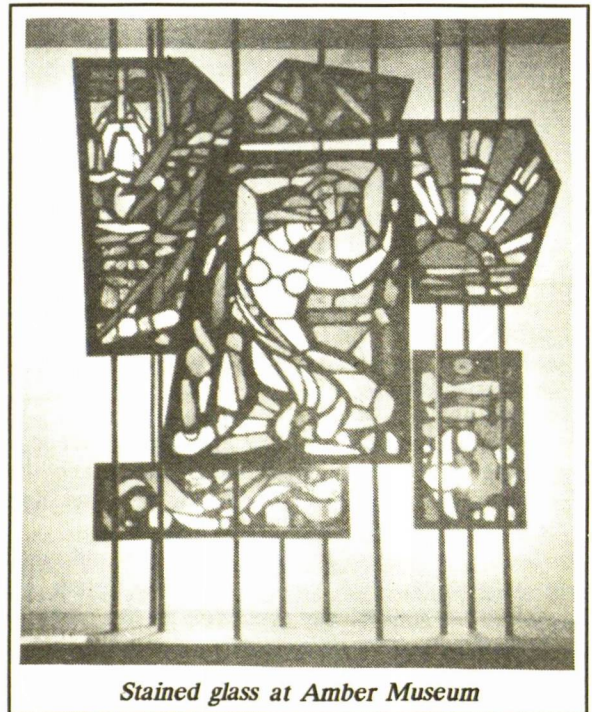
The days at the beach flew by and we were all too soon on our way back to Vilnius, stopping for shasklik in the seaport of Kleipeda and to see the renovations of a church that was in ruins two years ago when I saw it. The fresco over the altar was originally done by an artist friend of mine. The Russians whitewashed it when they destroyed the interior of the church and also painted "Kill the Lithuanians" in Russian on the outside walls. The new fresco of St. Mary is magnificent (my friend thought the artist painted his daughter's face) and the church has been restored beautifully inside and out.

Next stop Girdziai to see my "almost" relatives. We were unexpected guests but Lithuanian hospitality is not on a time clock. We were welcomed with hugs and

kisses and mint tea, homemade cheese (my hostess and her daughter ate half the dinner plate size cheese as a testimony to its freshness and flavor), sausage, cucumbers and bread. While they worked hard, they laughed and smiled and they made me proud.

Back to Vilnius and last visits with friends. In these uncertain times Mr. Lithuania feels that this may be the last year of his life; he has been attacked on the street while filming provocative "incidents" and has been followed by a knife-wielding thug who was disarmed by other friends who saw him being followed; but times have changed greatly with the coup since that time. Friends from his region have suggested that he become their MP and he may have a new role in these changing times. Another elderly friend died since my last visit and other elderly acquaintances will be gone if and when I return.

I am always happy to leave; I am unused to the hardships -- no hot water in my flat for a week, no gas to make coffee for my guests on the last day, obsolete plumbing, very little fresh fruits or vegetables, ever present food lines in the shops and daily trips for bread and milk -- none of the wretched excess that we Americans know and love and come to expect. I leave with mixed feelings and a heavy heart; to quote myself, "I weep on arriving and I weep on departing." □



Stained glass at Amber Museum

Editor's Note: All photographs are by, and furnished courtesy of, the author. Is there still any question as to why so many smart people are predicting that Lithuania will soon experience an incredible tourism boom?



The Other (Accurate) Side Of The Story

A correspondent from The New York Times, Stephen Kinzer, recently wrote a series of dispatches which distort facts about Lithuania's internal/external affairs; and which talk about active, voluminous efforts underway in Lithuania to "pardon" individuals who had been "convicted" of involvement in the killing of Jews during World War II. Mr. Kinzer's stories have received considerable attention; and have prompted the release of equally inaccurate comments, statements from others. The following Lithuanian Government and Lithuanian Information Center news releases, (as well as a copy of a letter written to The New York Times, in response to Mr. Kinzer's allegations, by Ms. Ginte Damusis, Director of the Lithuanian Information Center), all furnished courtesy of the Lithuanian Information Center (New York and Washington, D.C. Bureaus), are re-printed below. You might want to consider passing them around, as appropriate; because the publicity, thus far, on this issue, has been slanted, one-sided and profoundly inaccurate.

LITHUANIAN INFORMATION CENTER
351 Highland Blvd, Brooklyn NY 11207

September 4, 1991

Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Publisher
The New York Times
229 W. 43rd St.
New York NY 10036

Dear Mr. Sulzberger,

Stephen Kinzer's reports from Vilnius are so replete with unsubstantiated assertions and outright distortions that I and my colleagues at Lithuanian Information Center openly question his professional ethics.

Some cases in point:

-- In "Militant Lithuanian Now Gives Pause" (August 31, 1991), Kinzer alleges that "when moderate politicians here suggested that Mr. Landsbergis open contacts with dissidents in the Soviet Communist Party, he at first refused, asserting that there was no such thing as a reformed Communist. Only last month did he agree to establish ties with Boris N. Yeltsin, the Russian President, and other Moscow liberals."

Fact: Landsbergis met with newly-elected RSFSR President Yeltsin in Moscow over a year ago, on June 1, 1990. In response to Bloody Sunday, Yeltsin and all three Baltic leaders held an emergency meeting on January 13, 1991 in Tallinn. Landsbergis and Yeltsin signed a Lithuanian-Russian friendship treaty on July 29 in Moscow.

-- In "Lithuania Disappointed by U.S. Timing," Kinzer writes that Kazimiera Prunskiene was dismissed

as Lithuania's Prime Minister in January "after Mr. Landsbergis concluded her anti-Sovietism was not militant enough."

Fact: Prunskiene resigned when the Parliament overturned her sweeping price increases, which she announced without having a program of compensation for low income residents in place. This elicited a backlash of opposition, from both non-ethnic Lithuanian residents and a majority of Parliament deputies. Prunskiene herself cited conflicts with the Parliament over economic reform as reason for her resignation.

-- In the same article, Kinzer quotes Prunskiene as saying that the Landsbergis administration advocates cutting ties "with Russia and other Soviet republics. There is a view here that it is better to have nothing to eat and to ride horses and bicycles than to have anything to do with the former Soviet Union."

Fact: Lithuania has not severed ties with Moscow or the republics and has not expressed any intention of doing so. Even during times of crisis, i.e. the Soviet economic blockade, Lithuania made barter deals with other republics. Landsbergis' government has propounded Lithuania's desire to maintain friendly ties with its neighbors and its willingness to negotiate economic agreements with other republics. Since its March 11, 1990 declaration of independence, Lithuania repeatedly sought to initiate negotiations with Moscow.

Everyone has a right to their point of view, but I find Kinzer's reports objectionable because of their biased nature. Is he in Vilnius to present a balanced picture of events and developments, or to simply act as a mouthpiece for a handful of disgruntled has-beens? Some of the sources he cites are notoriously unreliable or self-interested parties.

The New York Times has an obligation to make sure that the expressed opinions are based on some ➡

semblance of fact and not just fiction. As things stand now, Kinzer's reports are marred by serious inaccuracies.

Sincerely yours,
(signed)
Ms. Ginte Damusis
Director

cc: Allen M. Siegal, Assistant Managing Editor
Jack Rosenthal, Editorial Page Editor

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Rehabilitation of Lithuanians Convicted by Nazi and Soviet Regimes

(New York, September 5, 1991. LIC) Today's New York Times carried a story by correspondent Stephen Kinzer "Lithuania Starts to Wipe Out Convictions for War Crimes," which states that the Lithuanian government "has begun issuing certificates of exoneration for thousands of people who had been condemned as Nazi war criminals by Soviet courts."

A law passed by the Lithuanian Parliament on May 2, 1990 provides for the restoration of civil rights to inhabitants of Lithuania who suffered repression for resisting the Nazi and soviet occupation regimes in Lithuania. As Mr. Kinzer points out, this law "specifically exempted those guilty of genocide and the murder of civilians" from eligibility for rehabilitation.

LIC's translation of the May 2 law follows.

LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA ON THE RESTORATION OF RIGHTS TO INDIVIDUALS REPRESSED FOR RESISTING REGIMES OF OCCUPATION

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania, stating that resistance by inhabitants of Lithuania to aggression and regimes of occupation did not contradict national and international law; noting that repressions of these individuals were implemented by judicial and extrajudicial organs of the USSR, courts of the land and Hitlerite Germany, as well as courts of the former Lithuanian SSR; seeking to eliminate the consequences of these repressions and to restore justice, decides:

1. To declare that inhabitants of Lithuania who were convicted or imprisoned through extrajudicial procedures or whose freedom was otherwise restricted, either in Lithuania or outside its borders, according to the RSFSR criminal code (1926), other USSR republics' criminal laws, Hitlerite Germany's criminal statutes or local laws (1941-1944). for resistance to aggression and regimes of occupation, as well as those who were

deported from Lithuania in the years 1940-1953 and those convicted according to the former Lithuanian SSR criminal code's articles 62, 63, 66-68, 70, 73, 79-82, 88, 89, 199.1, 210, 211, are not guilty before the Republic of Lithuania and all their civil rights are restored.

The Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania considers the struggle of those who participated in the resistance to have been an expression of the nation's right to self defense.

2. The provisions of the first article of this law do not apply to individuals who participated in crimes of genocide or in torture and murder of unarmed civilians.

3. Those individuals to whom the first article of this law applies are to be issued certificates about the period of their conviction, imprisonment, exile or other restriction of their freedom as follows:

a) by the Supreme Court of the Republic of Lithuania -- to individuals repressed by judicial bodies;

b) by the Procuracy of the Republic of Lithuania - to individuals repressed through extrajudicial proceedings;

c) by the Ministry of Interior of the Republic to Lithuania -- to individuals who were deported.

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Supreme Council Of The Republic Of Lithuania Bureau Of Information

Bulletin: Presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania issues a statement

Today, September 9, 1991, the presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania issued a statement concerning joint working groups between the Republic of Lithuania and the state of Israel.

Text follows:

Recently, it has been observed that great concern has been shown in the foreign press and in reports from information agencies claiming that from among those individuals being rehabilitated in Lithuania, from amongst the deportees of the Stalinist era and those who participated in the resistance movement against the Soviet occupation, there may be persons who committed crimes against humanity and participated in the executions of Jews during the period of Nazi occupation.

The presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania states that by the law of the Republic of Lithuania of 2 May 1990, rehabilitation of such persons is prohibited. Not one person who can be proven guilty of actions of genocide of Jews or the massacre of unarmed civilians can be rehabilitated. In keeping with this principal and law nearly 500 ➡

requests for rehabilitation have been rejected. However, isolated cases may have occurred where law enforcement officials gave insufficient attention to the proposals of citizens willing to provide newly incriminating evidence, or questions relative to this issue received from abroad were not answered in due time. Mistakes may have been made because the office of the procurator general of the Republic of Lithuania based its conclusions exclusively on material it had at its disposition -- material provided by the USSR KGB -- and irresponsibly relied upon it. Upon its demand, opinions may differ as to the confirmation of the material of old KGB interrogations -- including evidence given by the accused against themselves. All such cases require especially sensitive attention, thorough examination, and repeated investigation of questionable cases. Lack of such an attitude must be condemned. No less severely must be condemned the misinformation spread by the Tass Information Agency on September 1991, alleging that 35,000 people, convicted by the Soviets as "Nazi war criminals," have been rehabilitated in Lithuania since 1988.

The presidium of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Lithuania is of the opinion that the formation of a joint working group of the Parliaments of Israel and Lithuania, which would carry out repeated investigation of each questionable case, could make it possible to avoid mistakes concerning rehabilitation and groundless rumors as well as accusations of the whole Republic of Lithuania.

The proposal to cooperate with the US Department of Justice expressed by seven US Congressman in a September 1991 letter to Lithuania, Vytautas Landsbergis, is also acceptable. We are striving only for justice.

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Lithuanian Court Responds To Charges Nazis are Being Rehabilitated

(New York, September 6, 1991. LIC) The Supreme Court of the Republic of Lithuania issued a statement today responding to a September 5 New York Times article stating that the Lithuanian government "has begun issuing certificates of exoneration for thousands of people who had been condemned as Nazi war criminals by Soviet courts."

A translation of the statement signed by Mindaugas Losys, the chairman of the Supreme Court, is published below.

Supreme Court of the Republic of Lithuania

A report alleging that Nazi criminals are being rehabilitated in the Republic of Lithuania was published

in the US press. This allegation is completely divorced from reality.

Indeed, quite an extensive process of rehabilitation of deportees and political prisoners repressed during the years of Soviet occupation is taking place in Lithuania. The basis and terms of this rehabilitation are established by the Republic of Lithuania Law "On the Restoration of Rights of Persons Repressed for Resistance to Occupying Regimes" of 2 May 1990. The title of the Law itself proves that subject to rehabilitation in Lithuania are persons who resisted the occupying regimes, both Soviet and Nazi, and, consequently, persons who collaborated with these regimes cannot be rehabilitated. Besides, Article 2 of this Law prescribes that persons who took part in the massacre and torturing of unarmed people, as well as in the acts of genocide, shall not be rehabilitated.

Which residents of Lithuania repressed during the Soviet occupation have been rehabilitated? First of all, the deportees who were deported only because they had some property in the independent Lithuanian state or held some official post, or were members of public organizations, as well as their family members. Also among those rehabilitated are persons imprisoned by military tribunals of the Extraordinary meeting, or by the courts of the former Lithuania SSR for participation in the resistance struggle against the Soviet occupying regime, provided their activity was not connected with the massacre and torturing of unarmed people, and persons convicted for the so-called anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.

Persons convicted for collaboration with the Nazis, i.e. participation in punitive units or in the massacre of Jewish people, appeal to the Procuracy of the Republic of Lithuania with requests for rehabilitation. In such instances their criminal cases are carefully checked, and, when necessary, the procuracy carries out additional investigation. Only if their criminal cases and the results of additional investigation do not prove that these persons collaborated with the Nazis or committed acts of genocide, are these persons issued certificates testifying to the restoration of their rights. Persons who collaborated with the Nazis in the massacre or torturing of unarmed people, or in committing acts of genocide, are not liable to be rehabilitated. It should be noted that the legal bodies determine whether a person participated in acts of genocide pursuant to the provisions of the Geneva Convention on Genocide.

The Procuracy and the Supreme Court of the Republic of Lithuania refused to issue certificates testifying to the restoration of their rights to approximately 2 percent of the applicants. The main reason for refusal was their collaboration with the Nazis, or participation in acts of genocide.

M. Losys
Chairman

□

Letters From Lithuania

The following are excerpts from/a sampling of letters which have been received, over the past couple of years, at the National Executive Committee office of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. (LAC). (All have been acknowledged.) (Selected/Translated by Ms. Ramune Kubilius)

The art of letter writing seems to be alive and well in Lithuania. Writing messages between the lines, quoting (and creating) poetry is seen in letters written by people in Lithuania, creating an intimacy and showing an openness even if the person on the other end is not a relative or friend, but a penpal one has never met. Sometimes it is hard to translate some of that letter-writing style into English, although some Lithuanians apparently are adept at writing beautiful letters in English and other languages as well. An attempt is made here to translate the words of some women as they write about their jobs and their lives.

X You wrote that you would like to find out about Lithuanian young people. The Soviet system smothered quite a few young people in a moral and physical sense. My brother's generation was probably the luckiest. Hippies were not passive: they wrote proclamations, they published forbidden Soviet authors' works. Each year on Lithuanian Independence Day (February 16th), on Gediminas hill, the tricolor Lithuanian flag flew (in those days it was forbidden), and it was removed as quickly as possible. My generation is the "passive" generation. Many gave in to apathy, had their heads swimming with narcotics. Some became alcoholics. Lithuania's hippies hoped that they would be able to change something, but my generation's youth saw, that until the whole nation is willing to arise, nothing would be accomplished. That feeling of hopelessness could drive you out of your mind. Just so you don't think, you want to forget. Another group of my counterparts spit at all that and reached for material goods, climbed the career "stairs", climbing over other people's heads. Clear thinkers and those unaffected by the Soviet system-there are few of those. When the Lithuanian Reform Movement "Sajudis" began, a lot changed. Young people joined the fight against the Soviet occupiers. Now it is hard to find a young person who doesn't believe that Lithuania will be free.

You wrote that Lithuanians will become bored with all of the Lithuanian Americans who visit. Not true. We are happy with each guest, and these are our countrymen! (*Rasa, from Vilnius*)

X A bit more about myself. In college I studied in the linguistics department (my specialty was Russian language and literature). For some time, I worked in a nursery school, as a Russian language and literature

teacher in a middle school...Before the refreshing winds of the Lithuanian Reform Movement in Lithuania, I left to work as a translator, My work in schools went well, since I got along with my charges...However, only recently have we begun talking of folk schools, the need for spiritual values, but then it was different. In a word, it got to me to speak to the children about truths which I myself didn't believe...I needed to make a decision, and it wasn't easy to do that, since I really love children and feel myself a kindred spirit to them. Therefore, at this time, I am a translator (of the written word). I translate from Russian, from Polish, sometimes even from Czech. It's going not too badly. I often have to deal with medical literature even though I personally prefer literature, but it's not always possible to be choosy.

I very much like to read. When I was a child, they couldn't pull me away from my books: through them I was even able to forget not only about lunch, but also about friends and other amusements. Now I can't afford to devote as much time to books, even though it saddens me. You know, sometimes it's too bad there are only 24 hours in a day! Aside from books, in my free time I keep myself busy with women's tasks: I knit, I "create" something in the kitchen (I've been interested in culinary matters for quite some time). I still have to devote time to the papers, television, concerts, theater...Also-friends. I don't like crowds, I feel best in the company of similarly thinking friends. (*Laima, from a town near Kaunas / 1989*)

X (After a visit to relatives in Germany and subsequent trip to Switzerland...) That week seemed unreal to me, as if it had happened, as if it hadn't. I just returned and dived into my life's everyday realities, just at night, when the children were asleep, I would live in my memories and dreams. Upon my return, I found that my mother and children were all well, happy and waiting. I didn't close my mouth for three days until I told them everything. However, telling them doesn't replace what I actually saw. And now in school, various teachers invite me to their classes to tell about Germany and Switzerland. They listen open-mouthed and jealous. It makes me happy to expand the horizons of the local, regular people. I still feel very rested. The world which I visited is very different from our's. I felt like Cinderella who lived in a story. With regret, I remember those warm days, ➡

because now by us it's raining and cold. (*Vilija, from a village near Kaunas / 1990*)

X We celebrated our wedding in a simple fashion. We were blockaders, that's what our friends called us. We went on our honeymoon to a place not far from Vilnius, to his family's cottage. It wasn't possible to go further, because there wasn't any gasoline. We would have liked to go to the sea. Also, this summer was not pleasant-it was very cold. My husband lives with me since at his parents' there's not enough room. To be truthful, there's not much room here either. We have a separate room and that's it. Not long ago we danced at our bridal party members'- witnesses' wedding: my cousin and my friend's. People say that we had a good hand in this.

At work, everything's as it was in the past. In our library building, they've begun archeological diggings. It's thought that this building is from the 17th century. If this version is verified, then we would have to move, it's said they might even close the library, since even now in Vilnius there are too many, and we don't bring in a profit, we usurp the budget. Those are the perspectives for our future. If they don't close us down, they will reduce the number of positions.

Now about happier things. This week we received a gift from the Republic of Poland for our children's department-over 300 Polish books for children. (*Laima, Vilnius / 1990*)

X It's been very cold. No one's remembered such a cold May. Cold north winds are blowing. We're walking around all wrapped up. The apple trees and cherry trees froze. It will be a bad year. June began but the weather is very cold. It looks like there won't be a summer. How's everything going for you?

At work, similar to your experience, hot water spilled on our books, a water main broke, since above us are apartments, and the building is very old and dilapidated. We had to destroy over 5000 water-damaged volumes, other books are also in a sorry state.

In this respect, I got out of the repair work. As of May, I've left work for an extended vacation. If everything goes well, around June 25th my family will grow larger. Therefore, I now have a lot of free time, it's just too bad that it's cold, because usually in Lithuania, May is the most beautiful time of year. Everything is in bloom, smells pretty, but when it's cold you don't notice the beauty as you walk huddled over and you wish for some warmth.

The political situation in Lithuania is not good. Soldiers are still here, over the radio we here frequent broadcasts, meetings and keeping watch are scheduled. But through all of the work, there isn't time to worry. What is amazing, is people's ability to adjust to all situations. Our everyday life is hard. And now, it seems to me, you could seat someone on an atomic

bomb and there he'd regain his personality and habits.

And what about the economic situation. It's better not to think about it. One visitor who's here in Lithuania now said: I don't understand - the stores are empty, but the tables are full of food. It's been hard for families with children, especially for those with several children, and those who don't have apartments, for those the costs are so high that they would have to work four lifetimes. So that's the background in which we work.

When food costs went up, many people began to work in their gardens. My uncle who is 72 years old and lives alone also has a garden. I spend time helping him. That is the only optimistic news I have to report.

We live with optimism. For those of you observing from afar, everything may seem worse. As long as January 13th doesn't repeat itself. We can endure everything else easily. The Soviet Union is in chaos. The conservatives are using Lithuania as an example to all, what happens when there is democracy. It's just as well they can't see their own future, plan work, their downfall (even though by us a lot is unbelievable). There's a partial miracle which gives us hope and energy. (*Laima, Vilnius / 1991*) □

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You may not agree with some, or any, of the ideas, views or opinions presented in this section. Yet, hopefully, this section will give you a "window" to some thoughts of others; and perhaps it may serve to stimulate/expand thoughts on overall issues, as well.

The Lithuanian - American Community, Inc. What Is It?

An incredibly timely question, and discussion; in view of the completely changed environment in which we now find ourselves. Will it be "business as usual"?

by **Linas Norusis**

(Editor's Note: Mr. Norusis is Executive Vice President of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. Mr. Norusis has had direct oversight responsibility for this publication. This editor felt it appropriate to place Mr. Norusis' comments in the context of an "Op-Ed" piece; because the views expressed herein are his personal views/are not, necessarily, the official views of the current leadership. Mr. Norusis' term expires this year. He can be reached through the National Executive Committee offices of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc., 2713 West 71st Street, Chicago, Illinois 60629.

The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. is organized along democratic lines, with the Board of Directors, or Taryba, elected by the membership at large. Balanced along regional lines, the Taryba meets annually to set the broad guidelines for the Community's activity for the coming year.

Additionally, the Taryba is empowered to elect the President of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. for a three-year term. The Taryba also acts to confirm the President's appointments to the Executive Committee, which is charged with the implementation of Taryba lines, as well as other activity which may be required. In practice, the President of the Executive Committee serves to set the policies, guidelines and activities of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. between annual sessions of the Taryba.

In previous years, the President of the LAC has primarily served as a caretaker of the goals and ideals of the LAC, as set forth forty years ago, when the organization was founded in 1951. Originally founded to promote cultural, social and educational activities within the post-World War II emigre community, the LAC, with several notable exceptions, has been content to fill this role.

The emergence of the LAC as an organization involved in the political support for Lithuanian-American causes arose during the presidency of Mr. Bronius Nainys, in the late 1960's. Mr. Nainys, expressing an extreme dissatisfaction with the relative impotence and ineffectual activities of existing Lithuanian-American political groups (ALT'as, VLIK'as), formed the Public Affairs Council within the LAC, authorizing the Council to act in an informational

role in American political circles, representing the membership of the LAC.

The Public Affairs Council was subsequently expanded and strengthened by the outgoing president of the LAC, Dr. Antanas Razma. Recognizing the need for increased representation in Washington, D.C., Dr. Razma opened the professionally-staffed Government Affairs Office which has acted to represent our views to governmental bodies. In addition, the people of Lithuania have made active use of this office, both before independence, to help individual members of Sajudis to present their case, and after independence, assisting the Lithuanian Legation.

The primary strength of the LAC rises from the membership at large. Without a firm foundation of support within the community at large, the LAC cannot pretend to represent Lithuanian-Americans.

It must be emphasized, that although both Mr. Nainys and Dr. Razma acted to strengthen the political presence of the LAC, both recognized that the primary strength of the LAC rises from the membership at large. Without a firm foundation of support within the community at large, the LAC cannot pretend to represent Lithuanian-Americans.

The reality of Lithuanian-American life is that, on a day-to-day basis, we are more concerned with our educational, social and cultural activities than with political affairs in either Washington, or far-off Lithuania. The community at-large can be moved to political action during short spurts, but on-going activity is inevitably centered around Saturday schools, church and other social groups, and cultural groups such as dance ensembles or choirs. Individual members ➡

interested in such affairs form the backbone of the community and the cultivation and satisfaction of these members is vital to the existence of the LAC.

It is only by feeding and caring for this strong base of "cultural, educational and social junkies" that the political strength of the LAC can be realized. As an example, in May, 1991, approximately 10,000 Lithuanian-Americans gathered in Chicago for the International Lithuanian Music Festival. Similarly, nearly 10,000 Lithuanian-Americans and Lithuanian-Canadians gathered for the International Lithuanian Dance Festival in Hamilton, Ontario in the summer of 1988. By contrast, fewer than 3,000 Lithuanian-Americans journeyed to Washington for political "mass" demonstrations in May, 1990 when Mikhail Gorbachev met with President Bush.

The current Taryba, meeting in October 1991, in Philadelphia, has the responsibility of electing a new President of the LAC.

Much has been said and written about the need to expand the "grass-roots" of the LAC in terms of political action. Committees have arisen with the sole purpose of organizing congressional activities and disseminating information to these grass roots for further action. Unfortunately, these groups have consistently ignored the realities and strengths of the community that they purport to serve, and as a result, have nothing to show for their efforts. This basic lack of understanding of the LAC and its members has resulted in wasted hours of volunteer labor and countless donated dollars spent on cross-country phone calls, all ending in a common refrain of "Why can't we get people motivated?" The only successful groups are those which were formed by people who had previously had either social, cultural or professional bonds.

The current Taryba, meeting in October, 1991 in Philadelphia, has the responsibility of electing a new President of the LAC. As a result, extensive lobbying and posturing by candidates and potential candidates has reached a peak. Several candidates have appeared, decrying the "ineffectual" and "incompetent" activities of the current National Executive Committee, promising wholesale changes and reorganization. Charges have been leveled at the Public Affairs Council and Government Affairs Office, frequently crossing the line between criticism and slanderous character assassination.

Members of the current Taryba, in evaluating candidates for the President, must look beyond the flowery rhetoric espoused in prepared speeches. They

must peer into the hearts and minds of the candidates, and seek the historical and practical understanding that is necessary to lead this organization. A single-issue candidate will inevitably fall short of the leadership necessary to guide the LAC through today's maze of issues and problems.

The new president must recognize that the structures which have served the LAC through the last 40 years can form the basis for the expansion of community activists necessary for effective political action. Creating these activists in a vacuum, as attempted by political-based groups, will result in activists who are not representative of the community at large, and therefore, cannot motivate the community into united action. It is only by strengthening the existing Chapter and Regional structures of the LAC that an effective grass roots campaign can be waged.

A candidate without an understanding of the mechanics and requirements of the educational, social and cultural aspects of the LAC will be likely to short-change them in terms of attention and available financial resources. By focusing all on politics and political action, the very members who form the backbone of the LAC will be ignored and shunted aside in favor of "shining stars" whose sole qualifications are their public relations capabilities and photogeneity. Although this may be beneficial in the short term, it will ultimately result in the erosion of public support necessary to represent the Lithuanian-American community as a whole.

...the LAC was founded in 1951...to promote cultural, social and educational activities within the post-World War II emigre community...

Without the backbone of cultural, educational and social activity, the LAC will degenerate into the ineffectual activities of their politics-only brethren, ALT'as and VLIK'as. This Taryba must feel an obligation to evaluate the candidates on both their professional and ethnic activities, selecting as president one who demonstrates the ability to build coalitions without destroying dissent. Our community is neither large enough, nor strong enough to allow ourselves the luxury of considering candidates whose sole campaign issues are the perceived shortcoming of the existing National Executive Committee. We must look for people who have the understanding of our community which is necessary to build from within. □

⇒ Updates ⇐

Bringing you "up to date" on activities, projects, initiatives which are underway; and which have been previously reported/about which you've probably heard; so that you know "where things stand".

Baltia Airlines:

(Editor's Note: In a recent issue we had an article about Baltia; in which we noted that service to Riga, Latvia was scheduled to begin in September of 1991. The following news release, issued by Baltia, notes that the service inauguration date has been postponed; but is still scheduled to begin/that delay has been authorized.)

The United States Department of Transportation (DOT) authorized *Baltia Air Lines* to inaugurate its commercial air service between New York JFK airport and Riga, Latvia (with express bus connections to Vilnius) and St. Petersburg (formerly Leningrad), Russia, on a date of its choosing prior to April 1, 1992. Prior to this Order, *Baltia* was required to commence its operations no later than October 9, 1991.

Baltia requested the extension on the second day of the attempted coup of the Soviet government, the impact of which has delayed *Baltia's* operational financing. Although *Baltia* had previously secured commitments for financing of its aircraft, operational financing has not yet been finalized.

Baltia had expected to finalize its financing arrangements during the very week of the coup, but was advised that the transfer of certain funds was suspended in light of the political uncertainties. At this time, final negotiations with the potential investors have recommenced.

In light of the favorable developments in Latvia and in the U.S.S.R., and in the other emerging independent republics, *Baltia* expects to commence its service prior to the new year. Although the delay granted by the DOT will enable *Baltia* to obtain more favorable terms for its financing, as well as to schedule its inaugural flights to best coordinate its crew training schedules and aircraft delivery dates, *Baltia* intends to achieve its full service non-stop schedule from New York to Riga and St. Petersburg (two flights, five days per week) at the earliest possible date. In addition, *Baltia* is currently studying the advisability of augmenting its connecting service via Riga to Minsk (one flight, three days per week), Kiev (one flight, five days per week), and Tbilisi (one flight, two days per week) in accordance with cargo and passenger demand.

Representatives from *Baltia* will be departing in early October to meet with *Baltia* European staff and to inspect the station preparations in each of the cities to

be initially served, ie. Riga, St. Petersburg, Minsk, Kiev, and Tbilisi.



Balzekas Museum:

The Balzekas Museum of Lithuanian Culture, in Chicago, continues with ever changing exhibits and activities.

In the middle of September, the Museum of Lithuanian Culture opened an exhibition of the latest paintings and drawings by Chicago artist Mary Strasevicius.

Strasevicius was born in Reutlingen, West Germany. She has a B.A. and a M.F.A. from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois.

The artist has had nine one-person shows since 1982, including the Jan Cicero Gallery (Chicago 1984) and Gallery Jarman (Toronto 1984). She has participated in over 25 group exhibitions (Minneapolis Institute of Art 1981; C.A. Wustum Museum, Racine WI 1983; Burpee Art Museum, Rockford IL 1983; Randolph Street Gallery, Chicago 1984; Artemisia Gallery, Chicago 1987; Nancy Lurie Gallery, Chicago 1988, and others).

Strasevicius is a recipient of the Arts Midwest Fellowship for 1990-91. Her works are in several corporate collections including Prudential Insurance; Continental Illinois Corporation; Environ, Inc.; Gardner, Carton and Douglas and others.

An opening reception was held in the Museum's Art Gallery, 6500 S. Pulaski Rd., Chicago, IL 60629. The exhibition will run through October 13. Exhibition hours: Seven days a week 10 AM to 4 PM. For additional information, call Val Ramonis, the exhibition's curator at 312/582-6500.

What critics say about Mary Strasevicius' work: "Mary Strasevicius weaves color and figurative elements into fetching 'abstract landscapes' like the animated 'Parachute Spread', with its delightfully quiltlike surface". James Auer, *The Milwaukee Journal* (1983) "Mary Strasevicius' large crayon drawings are virtually exploding with forms that the viewer can almost, but not quite, connect to the literal world". Dean Jensen, *Milwaukee Sentinel* (1983) □

“ Bits & Pieces ”

Information which might be of interest to you; gathered from near and far; as well as provided by readers like you. We look forward to having you share information with us for future issues.

New Holiday:

On July 6th, Lithuania celebrated a new national holiday - National Day, which commemorated the crowning of Mindaugas as King of Lithuania in 1253. The purpose of the new holiday is to remind people, that Lithuania already joined Western Europe 700 years ago.
- Draugas, July 10, 1991



Parish Anniversary:

Los Angeles' St. Casimir Lithuanian Roman Catholic Parish celebrated its 50th anniversary June 1st. The parish, located at 2511 Third Avenue, was the first Lithuanian parish in Los Angeles. Earlier efforts to found a parish had not been as successful. The founding pastor was (Prelate) Julius Maciejauskas who had retired from his parish in Lithuania and came for a longer visit to the U.S. in 1938, and remained when WWII broke out in Europe. The parish changed locations, a school was founded, and the parish exists to this day.
- Draugas, July 11, 1991



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(Source: *Baltic Independent* Vol. 2 No. 63 June 13 1991)

Note that there are no specific electronic mail facilities listed. However if you belong to one of the major Electronic message services such as GEONET GmbH (to my certain knowledge - other services such as COMPUSERVE may have this facility) you can send an electronic mail message which will be treated as a FAX or telex message at the other end - and receive messages originating as FAX or TELEX in your electronic mailbox.

- Edis Bevan, BALT-L



Publication:

The *Estonian Independent* has now completed its transformation into the *Baltic Independent*. It bills itself as the English Language weekly of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. As part of its expanded service the paper is carrying a regular Baltics Business page. For subscriptions, write to BI Overseas Subscription Department, Wyverm House, 150 Cranbrook Road, Poole, Dorset BH12 3JB, Great Britain. International subscriptions can be made via FAX +44 (202) 715066

- Edis Bevan, BALT-L



Prodigy:

Vilius Cipinskas, 14 year old Lithuanian violinist "wunderkind" has been accepted to Julliard beginning fall 1991. The Kaunas native played at the United Nations Concert on September 17th, hosted by Pavarotti. On September 29th he will play at a ➡

"Margutis" concert in Chicago.



Lithuanian Music:

Spreading the word: Five Lithuanians living in Australia are doing their part to propagate Lithuanian music. As the hosts for a local FM Melbourne radio show one hour a week called "Lithuanian Contemporary Music Program", they play B. Kutavicius, O. Balakauskas, F. Bajoras, J. Juzeliunas, A. Martinaitis and others. (Some of these composers use classical elements, some are considered avant garde). One of the hosts has expressed regret that few of Lithuania's musicians and music groups will come to Australia, but he has thought about trying to work something out for an upcoming Adelaide Festival, which is considered one of Australia's best music festivals.

Other Lithuanian musicians such as popular folk musician Vytautas Kernagis have toured North America, Germany, and Australia. The rock group "Foje" recently toured some U.S. cities and has released a music video, made in Poland. They played largely for Lithuanian American audiences, but in Detroit they did have an opportunity to play at a local club as well. Word has it, that the rock group "Bix" will soon be coming to the United States.

Classical pianist Justas Dvarionis toured North America two years ago at the invitation of the World Lithuanian Youth Association. The proceeds of his concerts went towards the WLYC organized Congress, scheduled for the end of 1991.

President Vytautas Landsbergis, of course, has often been described as the music professor president, and almost anywhere he has travelled, he has played the music of Ciurlionis privately or to small groups.

- Ramune Kubilius



New Testament On Tape:

The Hosanna Enterprises of Albuquerque, New Mexico have been making tapes of the New Testament in English and various other languages, including Lithuanian. The English set has 12 cassettes and the Lithuanian has 16. A gift for a person who has eyesight problems or for listening while driving both here and in Lithuania? Write: Hosanna Enterprises, 2421 Aztec Rd. NE Albuquerque, NM 87107-4224. Cost \$25.

- From *Nativity B.V.M. Parish, Chicago, IL, newsletter, July 7, 1991*



Youth Congress:

The Lithuanian World Community and Lithuanian World Youth Association are planning and sponsoring

the 7th Lithuanian World Youth Congress which will take place between December 18, 1991 and January 8, 1992 in South America (Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil). 400 youth representatives from Lithuania and the world will discuss their future plans and goals. Lithuania's President Vytautas Landsbergis is pleased with this Congress and hopes for its success. And this Youth Congress needs YOUR support for its success.

An Organizing Committee consisting of Lithuanian youth from South America and their supporters are responsible for the planning and organizing of the 7th Lithuanian World Youth Congress. Chairing this Committee is a very capable and energetic young lady Miss Ariana Rastauskas assisted by her financial director Alfredas Ruplenas, both from Buenos Aires, Argentina. A Fund Raising and Support Committee responsible for financial backing, all travel arrangements and other assistance is made up of alumni of earlier Youth Congresses and young assistants (Vytautas Kamantas - chairman, Henrikas Antanaitis (Australia), Tomas Bartusevicius (Germany), Arune Taunyte-Digutiene (Lithuania), Grazina Kamantas, Joseph Lukas, Vincent O'Brien (England), Arunas Pabedinskas (Canada), Rev. Antanas Saulaitis SJ, John Treska, and Peter Treska. All donations are solicited thru the Lithuanian World Community Foundation (directors are Vytautas Kamantas, Dr. Petras Kisielius, Kazys Laukaitis, Dr. Edmundas Lenkauskas, Joseph Lukas, Dr. Antanas Razma and Horatio Zibas).

For more information please contact the *Lithuanian World Community Foundation*, 1851 Skyview Drive, Sparta, MI 49345.



U.S. - Baltic Foundation:

The U.S. - Baltic Foundation has announced an office relocation/address change. The Foundation's new address, still in Washington, DC, is: 1717 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20036. □

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