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# BRIDGES

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Foto: Bernard Narutis

*The grave of Dr. Vincas Kudirka. Dr. Kudirka not only wrote the words and music of the hymn which became independent Lithuania's national anthem, but was one of the Founding Fathers of Lithuania's rebirth as a modern nation-state. He died on November 16, 1899 just shy of his 41st birthday.*

## To Our Readers:

The October issue of BRIDGES finds us without the clear eye and steady hand of Audrone Gulbinas, an extraordinary lady who gave us so much of her time and creative spirit for the last year as Editor of the magazine.

Long-time BRIDGES readers know that she was the driving force behind the improved magazine long before she was officially named editor. As such she invested 1,000's of hours of volunteer time so that we could all stay informed and entertained. Thank you, Audrone. Many thanks to your husband and children, too, because editing Bridges took time away from them.

We hope to name a new editor soon, but during this interim our staff at the main LAC, Inc. office is here to assist you and answer your questions. The fact that we're late with the October issue however is already an indication of how vital Audrone was to the operation. Apologies to all of our readers and subscribers. We hope to be back on track with the November issue. In keeping with Veterans' Day, it is devoted to the Lithuanian Army, past and present.

This October issue has some great articles from our regular contributors as well as some new faces. We've also introduced a new section to feature the work of our members in their chapters around the country.

Thanks for your patience and continued support.



Regina Narusis, J.D.  
President  
Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

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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 who want to assist Lithuania's integration into the community of democratically governed, free market economic system, nations of the world. **BRIDGES** – The Official Publication of the Lithuanian American Community, Inc.

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Asta Banionis



# Vėlinės - All Souls' Day

Reaching back to prehistoric times, Lithuanians have believed in the afterlife - first as pagans and since the late 14th century as Christians. In the pre-Christian heaven or "dausos", the souls of the dead continued their lives in a different plane. These souls were first known as "vėlės" and they could inhabit the trees, the flowers, the birds and even the butterflies. Heaven was just beyond the horizon on a high hill. Because the vėlė continued its life after death, it was provided with its tools, clothing, dishes, adornments and weapons by placing these items

ancient Lithuanian pagan tradition holds that the vėlės suffer most from the cold. This may explain why the ritual of cremation took root in Lithuania.

Grand Duke Algirdas and his brother Grand Duke Kęstutis were the last of Lithuania's leaders to be cremated in accordance with Lithuania's pagan rites. Dr. Marija Gimbutas in her 1963 book, *The Balts*, includes a description of the grand funeral with excerpts of the crusader knights chronicles:

"Algirdas was cremated with 18 horses in 1377 in the forest north of Vilnius. 'He was cremated with the best horses, clothes, resplendent in gold and girdled with a gilded silver belt and was covered with a gown woven of beads and gems.' Algirdas' brother Kęstutis was buried in a similar manner in 1382, 'and splendidly could be seen a deep pit in man's length full of ashes ... and nothing there escaped death: horses, clothes, weapons, etc., all were cremated; hunting birds and dogs were cremated with him.'

Dr. Jonas Balys in his book *Lietuvių Tautosakos Skaitymai* (*Readings from Lithuanian Folklore*) published in 1948 in Tübingen, Germany writes that the ritual of cremation sprang up in Lithuania in the 10th century B.C. but it came in and out of favor over the subsequent centuries. One of the chronicles of the crusader knights dated 1261 records a Lithuanian legend which tells the story of one "Sovijus" who buried his dead father, but was haunted in his dreams by his father's complaint, "That the worms are gnawing at me", which led to Sovijus digging up his father's body and placing it in the branches of the tallest tree. Still his father's lament continued, "I am persecuted by the mosquitos". Finally, Sovijus burned his father's body. The grateful father thanked his son and left him in peace with these words, "I now sleep contentedly as a baby in its cradle."

The Anglo-Saxon traveller of the late 9th century A.D., Wulfstan, wrote in his chronicle that the Prussians (the baltic tribe which lived in the lands which are known as Lithuania Minor) kept their dead unburied for a few months, particularly in the winter time. They appeared to have some secret of embalming which preserved the body from decay even in the middle of summer. During this long period of "mourning", the deceased was praised and celebrated. A later traveller to Lithuania, Praetorius, found the Lithuanians in 1690 holding a wake that included a range of human emotion. During the "būdynės" (to be on watch) there was the singing of church hymns and then drinking and eating, followed by



Foto: A. Banionis

*Petrasiunu kapines in Kaunas, Lithuania.*

in the grave. This was done to keep the soul from suffering any hardship in the afterlife so that it would not take revenge or harm on the living. Unlike the Christian tradition which teaches that the worst that can happen to the soul is for it to be damned to the fires of hell, the

the playing of games and then followed again by the singing of “raudos” (songs of mourning or lamentation). During the drinking, a close friend of the deceased would pray for his friend’s soul while holding a mug of beer. He then poured some beer on the ground while reciting,



Foto: A. Banionis

*Scene of the Petrasiunu Kapines (a cemetery) in Kaunas, Lithuania. People come to the cemetery more often in Lithuania than in the United States not only because they tend the graves themselves, but because the site is so naturally beautiful.*

“Žemynėle, būk linksma ir priimk šią dušėlę gerai ir kavok!” (Mother Earth be of good cheer and be good to this soul and hide it well.)

In the region of Vilkaviškis it is said that if one does not mourn the deceased and sing the raudos, he/she will haunt their family and friends.

To the folklorist, the “raudos” which have survived into the modern era contain a wealth of information about the beliefs and the funeral rites of the ancient Lithuanians. One rauda written down in the village of Trakas in the county of Panevėžys tells the story of how the soul of the deceased wandered the countryside for seven days before finding rest in heaven.

“The soul lamented leaving its body, where will I sleep the first night?

In the window between the two beams, will I sleep the first night.

The second night the soul sleeps in its grave between two boards. The third night, under the gate between two supports. The fourth night, in the middle of a field between two rocks. The fifth night, in the glen between two fir trees. The sixth night, at the edge of heaven between two stars and finally the seventh night the soul finds its rest in the middle of heaven between two angels.”

In the region of Veliuona the raudos contain images of the “vėlių varteliai” (the gate of souls) and the “vėlių suoloelis” (the souls’ bench). The relatives who have died earlier are asked in the song (the rauda) to welcome the newcomer by opening the “vėlių dureles (the souls’ door) and taking the unblemished hand of the deceased and guiding them to their new life. (“paimtų juos už baltų rankelių, pasodintų į vėlių suoloelį”).

There are raudos that remind the bereaved that their loved ones may still dwell among them in the sacred trees. “Išauk, močiutė, aukštam kalnely baltu liepelė” (Take root dearest mother on the high hill as a white linden) or “Mano vėlių martele kokiais žiedeliais pražydėsi, kokiais lapeliais laposi?” (My spirit bride in what flower will you bloom, which leaves will you bear?)

Visitors to Lithuania should note that many cemeteries in Lithuania are located on hills and that the cemeteries are heavily wooded. This harkens back to this ancient belief that heaven begins on a distant hill and that the vėlės sometimes take up residence in the trees. As Dr. Gimbutas writes in *The Balts*: “Men’s spirits entered oaks, birches and ash trees, while women’s souls entered the linden or spruce trees. The oak and linden are basic trees in Lithuanian folklore. (Editor’s note: If you’re of Lithuanian heritage, your father may have planted a tree in your yard to honor your birth.) In olden days, at the time of one’s birth, a specific tree was assigned to the person, and it would grow imbued with the same life forces as its human counterpart. If the tree was cut down, the person would die. Trees growing in the old cemeteries of Lithuania are never touched by a pruner’s hand, for there is an adage saying that to cut a cemetery tree is to do evil to the deceased.”

To the pagan Lithuanians, the goddess of death was “Giltinė”, a woman draped in a long white garment. She travels the road asking directions to the homes of persons taken ill. Since dogs can sense who she is they bark at her trying to warn people not to give her directions. There are many Lithuanian folksayings giving advice as to how to outwit Giltinė. One piece of advice is that since Giltinė can’t cross over water, she should be directed towards the closest stream or lake, so as to foil her reaching the home of a sick person. Once having entered the home of a patient, she will become invisible and speed the soul’s departure.

The folksayings of Lithuanians, as an agricultural and conservative society, reveal an acceptance of death as

part of the natural life-cycle. It is said that, “Giltinė neveizdi į dantis” (Giltinė doesn’t pay attention to the condition of your teeth), in other words, death strikes both the old and young. “Su Saule negyvensi” (You can’t live with the Sun), don’t seek great treasure because you won’t be able to hold on to it. The folk also find some humor in this ritual of passage which no man or woman can escape. For example, it is recorded in the village of Seirijai that the daughters of a deceased woman were quite distraught at their mother’s wake, they cried and wailed and would not be comforted. So, their poor dead mother, not being able to rest in peace, sat up in her coffin and turning to her daughters told them to please quiet down. She then promptly fell back dead a second time. (Editor’s note: if you don’t believe me, check the archives of Dr. Balys.)

We all remember our loved ones on the anniversary of their death; some of us prefer to honor their memory by remembering their birthday. Lithuanian traditions also demand that the dead be remembered at Christmas during the *Kučios* dinner (Christmas Eve) by setting a place at the table for the deceased. At Easter time, “*margučiai*” (decorated Easter eggs) are placed on the graves along with flowers. But the day that we collectively, as a society, remember our dead is *Vėlinės*, all Soul’s Day.

The historian Dlugosz wrote in the mid-15th century that the *žemaičiai* (Lithuanians of *Žemaitija*) in October held a feast at the graves of their family members. Food was left behind at the gravesite for the *vėlės* to eat after the living had gone home. In the village of *Keturvalkiai* they brought a pudding of scrambled eggs; in the village of *Tverėčius* the ritual feast included sprinkling “*grucės*” or “*grikės*” (buckwheat) on the graves.

In the Christian era this day of collective mourning was transferred to *Vėlinės*. Actually the observance of *Vėlinės* begins as the sun sets on All Saints Day (November 1). At this hour all of the souls in Purgatory are released to Earth so they can roam free for one day. They visit their family and friends, places that they lived and frequented. The living can’t see them unless they have the gift of second sight. It is said that a child born on *Vėlinės* will have such powers.

Because the air is filled with spirits on *Vėlinės*, it is forbidden to sweep outside or throw ashes or spent water outside. You may inadvertently throw them on a spirit

and that wouldn’t be very wise. Even if the spirit didn’t take his revenge, it was certainly a sign of disrespect. So, people generally stayed out of the way by staying indoors at home, praying and remembering their dead. In the region of *Aukštadvaris*, people did not let out their cows and horses to pasture from November 1 through 2, because the animals could become lost among the spirits or harmed by an angry spirit.

At midnight, the souls assemble in church where the spirit of a dead priest conducts mass and all of the candles are ablaze and the organ plays. Souls come to the churches in part to look for prayers that might release them from their suffering. As Danute Bindokiene writes in her book published in 1989, *Lithuanian Customs and Traditions*: “On All Souls’ Day everyone made an effort to visit the church as many times as possible. It was believed that every church visit, prayer said (adding “Rest in Peace”) or candle lit freed one soul from Purgatory. Some churches in Lithuania set out special trays or boxes into which the faithful deposited a small block of wood or inserted a candle after praying for the dead. These items symbolized the soul allowed entry into heaven by the prayers. This custom appealed to children who kept running to church on All Souls’ Day to pray and insert a candle; later they rejoiced at the number of souls they had saved from Purgatory.”



*Scene of the Petrasiu Kapines in Kaunas, Lithuania. This heavily wooded cemetery provides a peaceful, park-like setting that makes the cemetery a less forbidding place for young and old.*

Foto: A. Baniotis

On All Souls’ Eve (or just before All Souls’ Day) all graves were spruced up, decorated with fall flowers and wreaths; in the evening a candle was lit on every grave and left to burn through the night. Even neglected

graves were decorated and candles lit on them. On All Souls' night all cemeteries flickered with tiny flames reminding that our dead will never be forgotten."

Vėlinės has some beautiful traditions which should be revived in our communities here in the United States. The local chapters of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. should organize memorial services in the cemeteries where Lithuanian-Americans are buried. Maybe next year, you'll be the person that brings this tradition back to life in your community. No soul should go unnoticed on Vėlinės.

## AN INSPIRING WAYSIDE SHRINE

### Never Forget

In the city of Chicago, Illinois this past summer Julius and Prane Pakalkai (Pakalka) gave the Lithuanian National Cemetery (Tautines Kapines) a wonderful gift of remembrance - an 18-foot high memorial cross, better known as a wayside cross, (koplytstulpis). The cross was erected in the cemetery to remember and honor the Lithuanians deported by the Soviets and their collaborators between June, 1940 and 1953.

More than 300,000 Lithuanians were rounded up over those years in successive waves of terror and sent off in cattle-cars to the desolate plains of Siberia. Men, women and their children, even the grandparents were shipped out on these trains to work as slave labor in the mines and the forests of the Soviet Union's industrial complex. Many did not survive because families were usually broken up and if the elderly could not work, they starved to death isolated from the younger people who could have helped them survive. Why did the Soviets do this? The definitive answer may still lie buried in the soviet archives, but it is clear that the deportations served both to get rid of Lithuanians that the Soviets did not particularly care for, and made way for Russians to be resettled on historic Lithuanian territory.

If it wasn't Soviet perpetrated genocide of a neighboring nation that drove the soviets to such heinous acts, then surely the more sanitized modern term of "ethnic cleansing" does apply to the deportations of 1940-1953. It is particularly disturbing to find revisionist voices being raised in Lithuania today trying to "explain" the deportations. There can be no justification and there is no explanation for such barbarism by the late great Soviet Union and its collaborators. That is why the wayside shrine created and donated by Julius and Prane Pakalka is even more important today than it would have been a few short years

ago. We need to remember, and our children need to be taught to remember our fellow Lithuanians who suffered and died just because they were Lithuanians.

The wayside cross stands 18-feet, is made of steel and weighs two tons. Mr. Pakalka designed it himself to the very last detail. Although the main pole was made by a metal-working shop, all of the ornamentation from the figurines to the little rooftops were hand-crafted by Mr.

*continued p. 14*



Foto: Vanda Gasperas

*Wayside shrine (koplytstulpis) designed and built by Julius Pakalka. He and his wife Prane donated the shrine to the Lithuanian National Cemetery outside of Chicago, Illinois.*

Jeanne Dorr

## An Unusual School Year - Part II

This month I would like to continue the story of Jurate Krokys Stirbys and her three children who spent the 1992-1993 school year living and working in Lithuania. Last month I told you about the move to Vilnius, the period of settling into their new life, and the arrival of Christmas. Now I would like to take you with the family through the rest of the winter, spring and their return to Philadelphia.

Christmas was over and Jurate's husband, Rimantas, returned to America. The winter was frightfully cold and as depressing as we in America tend to think of January and February's bone-piercing winds and slate grey skies. Jurate and the children were not without problems. Rasa, who was in the sixth grade at the time, became very ill with bronchial problems. Since she suffers from asthma this was even more worrisome. The other children also became sick. Gaja suffered from ear-aches and at one point Jurate considered sending the children back to America. They begged her to let them stay in Lithuania. With the help of her relatives in Vilnius, she was able to nurse everyone back to health.

Jurate's primary goal was to educate the educators, those who teach children with disabilities. She gave lectures, seminars and in-service discussions. One of her jobs was to work with psychology students. Her usual work day started at 9:00 am and ended at 3:00 pm or 4:00 pm unless she was giving a seminar. Then the day was extended. She was also very involved in working with the parents of these children.

The mindset of the Lithuanian people toward children with any kind of handicap was that of Americans 20 or 30 years ago. The parents also needed to be educated. A parents association was established which also served as a support group. All parents want what is best for their children and more quality services must be made available for both parents and children. She especially tried to work with parents who lived outside of Vilnius. Parents had to be made to understand that if a child had a cognitive impairment it would not go away with vitamins or surgery. Also, the myth that the parents were being punished for some past deed that was done also had to be dispelled. Many parents suffered hardships and ridicule because they chose to keep their handicapped children at home. There was pressure from all sides to institutionalize the children. It was not too many years ago that soviet administrators would be paid according to how many children they had in their institutions. Some people believed that children with special needs

did not have feelings. She wanted not only the parents and teachers, but also the children to understand that within each person there is something special.

One of the problems was the special education system itself. Under soviet-rule anyone "different" was sent away to a special school. Some teachers used this as a way to get rid of discipline problems. It didn't matter if a child had a limp, a lisp, a hearing problem or cerebral palsy, everyone ended up in the same "handicapped" school. Children were "labeled" and once they were placed in these schools they rarely were returned to regular schools.

Jurate visited one school where she listened to many children who were there because of speech difficulties. Of all the children she listened to she could not find one who could not have attended a regular school, going out



*Rasa studying her lessons and preparing her homework during her school year in Lithuania.*

only for special help in speech therapy or physical coordination skills. These kinds of differences do not warrant attending a special school especially if the children are separated from their families. The one thing they need more than anything is the love of their families and self-esteem. They don't need to be treated like they are on exhibit.

In educating the teachers, Jurate was careful never to impose the American way of solving a problem. She always started her lectures by telling those present that she was offering them options or different ways they might consider solving their problems. She never said this is the right way or the only way. She urged both teachers and parents to work toward a teacher-parent relationship. This was discouraged during the days of Soviet occupation in Lithuania. She spoke of the wonderful teachers she met who, despite meager resources, gave love to their students. She spoke of their creativity including refurbishing a classroom with almost nothing. She praised the many teachers who in the days of communism managed in their own way to minimize the flow of indoctrination which they were required to teach in order to maintain their jobs. They put on a good show while they worked around the system.

Even the regular schools had some customs that would send American teachers and parents into a fainting spell. She attended a general meeting of parents and teachers at her daughters' school. At one point the teacher called out each student's name and grades. She proceeded to add a comment after the names of those who were good students and those who were not; those who were well-behaved and those who were not. Common sense would tell you if you know your child will be publicly ridiculed you will not be at the meeting and that is exactly what happened. The parents who needed to be there and to be more involved in the education of their children were nowhere in sight. When Jurate tried to speak to the teacher privately after the meeting the teacher simply stated that was the way things were done. Any suggestions were lost on her.

The Stirbys children had opportunities to do things in Lithuania which they could not do in America. In addition to their regular schooling there was a music school which provided instruction in folk dancing, art and music. Rasa had an art teacher. She also continued here piano lessons which she started in Philadelphia. A piano was rented so that she could practice at home.

The weekends were a special time because the family would all be together. They visited friends or entertained. During this time there were many educators from different countries trying to offer Lithuania help in repairing its educational system which for 50 years endured the dictates of communism. Among the visitors were A.P.P.L.E. educators and Jurate was always glad to welcome them. The family also enjoyed exploring Vilnius, all the places that are not in the guide books. They wandered through the old city streets and the new

shops that were cropping up all over the city. It was a time to get reacquainted with nature and culture. They enjoyed the different seasons and became masters at building snowmen. The children went to operas, concerts, sporting events and art shows. Tickets were within an affordable price range. Many of the events they attended were outdoors. It was a time to explore other parts of Lithuania including the area of the beautiful Baltic Sea. But most of all it was the people they met that would linger in their memories. They learned to put a greater value on the richness of friendship and culture.

Jurate had an advantage that the average Lithuanian teacher did not have. She was able to shop in the stores that sold products only for foreign currency. (Editor's note: Since the reintroduction of the litas, there are no longer any "foreign currency stores".) Although she did not make a practice of doing this there were times she frequented the French or the Finnish stores. It was there you could buy fresh vegetables in the winter and other "delicacies". She talked about buying a tomato one weekend. By Lithuanian standards it was quite expensive. When she brought it home, they all seemed mesmerized by the fact they had a fresh tomato while there was snow on the ground. Nobody wanted to cut it and when it finally came under the knife, the lone tomato lasted for two days.

One of the delights of the family were the packages sent from home. The boxes that Jurate's mother packed were enough to keep them glowing for a week. They included such marvelous items as grated cheese and Bisquick. Now they could make pizzas. Sausage was expensive so they had to improvise with different pizza toppings. Actually they used whatever they had available in the house. The children's appetites increased since they spent much of their time outdoors. I asked them if they missed American "junk food". They replied that at first they had a craving now and then, but since they did not eat a lot of this kind of food at home it was not too big of an adjustment. I also wondered about the lack of American television. Again, this was not a major problem because there were a few stations, but mainly they were too busy with other activities to be concerned about cartoons.

This article is not meant to be a glowing endorsement of life in Lithuania. Everyday life in Lithuania was difficult and still is today. I asked Jurate if she ever had any doubts and she answered truthfully that she had. One of her most painful days was when her sister, Rasa, was married in Philadelphia. Jurate and her children were thousands of miles from her sister on the most important day of her life. There were other times when one or more of them would become homesick, or things did not go according to plan in Lithuania. She said that in spite of how bad things were they always tried to focus on the positive things and not dwell on the negative. And, yes, there were negatives. She no longer had a car at her disposal. She took a salary cut by coming to



Lithuania and lost a year of seniority in the Philadelphia school system. But most difficult was the time away from her family.

She wanted to make clear that the positives far outweighed the negatives. Although she was close to her children, they became even closer during this year away from home. They learned to appreciate nature and realized there are many material things they thought were important in their lives that they could do without. When they returned home they were all less wasteful. Out of habit they found themselves tearing paper napkins in half before they used them.

I asked her if she would do it again and she did not hesitate to reply, "In a minute". She told me before she left Lithuania she started to see a difference in the educational system because of the many influences from other countries. Schools were starting to "mainstream" students (keeping children with certain problems in a regular class and sending them out for extra help). Parents groups were forming to help each other as well as to demand equality in education for their children. But again she stressed that she was there only to offer suggestions and an alternative way of dealing with classroom situations. She never imposed her way or ideas on the people she was training. The people who are doing the training must have respect for the Lithuanian teachers and students and understand their history, always keeping in mind that before independence was restored, the soviet culture considered everyone an enemy. This thinking is changing, but it still will be years before some Lithuanians will learn to trust outsiders.

As we came to the end of the photo album the family was packing to return to Philadelphia. The children left behind their clothes and other personal items. Jurate left many of her books, but one thing she insisted on shipping home was a table made for her by students in a special education class. She told me every time she sits at her

table all the memories come back. Not a day goes by when she and the children don't talk about their unforgettable year in Lithuania. Jurate is once again teaching in Philadelphia and is working toward her doctorate degree. The children are all doing well in school. As Jurate was leaving she told me it was therapeutic for her to talk about the year she and the children spent in



*A little girl from Jurbarkas who needs your help. She is the youngest in a very large and impoverished family in Lithuania.*

Lithuania. I felt I was definitely the winner in this case. The afternoon spent with the photo album made me a member of their family, even if only in my imagination. Thank you Jurate, Rasa, Gintautas and Gaja for giving to Lithuania and the people you came in contact with, the highest form of humanitarian aid - yourselves. Perhaps Gintautas summed it up best when he said, "Next time we go back to Lithuania I hope it will be for two years instead of one."

With Christmas just around the corner, we urge our readers to participate in the Lithuanian-American Community's humanitarian aid program to help Lithuania's orphans, particularly the forgotten children in the rural areas of the country. Your tax-deductible contribution will provide loving foster care for a child (\$150 for the year), rather than having this child sent away to a government institution. Unlike other aid programs, 90 percent of the contribution goes directly to the support of the child. Thanks to the generous support

of readers like yourself, over 400 children in Lithuania participate in the program.

Please Remember the "FORGOTTEN CHILDREN" by sending a tax-deductible check to:  
Lithuanian Orphan Care  
2711 West 71st Street  
Chicago, IL 60629

We are delighted to find Bridges readers around the world. And as the following letter demonstrates, Americans carry with them their spirit of volunteerism and generosity. Thanks to the girl scouts of Cadette Troop #283 based in Heidelberg, Germany for making the life of one of Lithuania's orphans a little easier and brighter.

HQ USAREUR  
CMR 420 Box 1675  
APO AE 09063

July 5, 1995

Lithuanian Orphan Care  
Countryside Children's Fund  
2711 West 71st Street  
Chicago, IL 60629

Dear Sir/Madam:

We are a Girl Scout troop (Cadette Troop #283) located in Heidelberg, Germany. We read about your program in a publication called Bridges: Lithuanian-American News Journal, and we wanted to help, so we are sending a check for \$150 for the care of a Lithuanian child. The girls are excited about the possibility of getting involved on a more personal level. Would it be

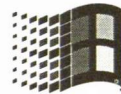
appropriate for us to send a small stuffed animal and troop photos to the child we adopt? Since we are in Europe, we hoped to get an address so we could mail these items directly. We have also in our troop, a parent who travels to Lithuania and a co-worker of one of the leaders who has family in Lithuania, so contact through one of these intermediaries would also be a possibility. Please send us guidelines, and information about the child we will be helping.

Yours truly,  
Pam Barnabee  
Troop Leader

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Zita Petkus

# Baltic Studies at the University of Washington

Exciting developments are underway at the University of Washington (UW). New courses were added for the second annual Baltic Studies Summer Institute (BALSSI) which was held again at UW in 1995, prior to the program's scheduled rotation in 1996 to the University of Illinois in Chicago. As in 1994, the focus was on intensive Lithuanian language study, with supplemental courses in Baltic history, folklore, culture and international relations. Eleven students from all over the United States were enrolled in the Lithuanian language classes which were taught by Karile Vaitkute of the University of Illinois/Chicago, and Professor Guntis Smidchens of the University of Washington Scandinavian Department.

Conceived and developed at the University of Washington, the BALSSI will rotate every two years within a consortium of sponsoring universities which include the University of Washington, the University of Illinois/Chicago, the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Indiana University, and the University of Michigan.

On hand for the 1995 opening of the Institute was H.E. Toomas Ilves, Ambassador of Estonia to the United States. In his remarks Amb. Ilves described the BALSSI program as "...a major step in the long overdue return to normalcy in an area of American academic endeavor, from which, by dint of history, the Baltic States simply

have been left out." Amb. Ilves, who, incidently, was educated in North America, categorized the majority of Baltic Studies in the post World War II era as "folklorisation". That is, thanks to the ideological vigilance of the Soviet regime and its politics, as long as academic research was limited to dancing and singing peasants in folk costumes, there was no problem. But as



*At the University of Washington, Seattle, for the opening of the second annual Baltic Studies Summer Institute. Left to right: Lithuanian-American Community Washington State Chapter president Rasa Rašys; Intensive Lithuanian language instructors Karile Vaitkute and Guntis Smidchens, and program initiator, Prof. Daniel Waugh, Chair of the Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Program at the Henry Jackson School of International Studies, UW.*

soon as one began to examine the history, politics and economies of the region, when one actually treated the Baltic States as real countries, the scholar either had to follow a carefully pre- and proscribed ideological line—clearly impossible for serious scholarship—or be denied access to the Soviet-controlled archives, written materials, as well as people who are the source of all scholarship.

Ambassador Ilves concluded, "Without the kind of program instituted here, American university level study

of this (Baltic) region would be non-existent... Just as independence, a return to market economics and parliamentary democracy are the hallmarks of a return to normalcy for the political and economic life of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, so too is the establishment of a Baltic Studies program with the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature one more sign of a return to normalcy of these three countries in the world of scholarship and academic discourse."

Introductory courses for all three Baltic languages were offered at the University of Washington during the 1994-95 academic year. Although funding is insufficient, the courses will be offered again this year thanks to the enthusiasm and dedication of language instructor Guntis Smidchens who has voluntarily taken a salary cut.

Despite these difficulties, the founders of the Baltic Studies program at UW have developed a preliminary proposal for a Baltic-Nordic Research and Language Center at the University of Washington. The driving force is Dr. Daniel Waugh, Chair of the Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Program at UW who has recruited professors from the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literature to help. The proposal addresses the need for the United States to increase its national capacity and infrastructure in the area of Baltic Studies.

Creating a Baltic-Nordic resource center would help reverse the serious attrition in Baltic language instruction nationwide due to faculty retirements, institutional contraction and the aging of the ethnic communities in the U.S. Without institutions for teaching future American leaders the languages of the Baltic, the U.S. will eventually be forced to derive political and economic policies from secondary sources and translations, or on the advice and research of persons who are not American citizens. Not speaking the country's language means that a reporter may grasp the main story but will miss the subtleties and background of the situation. Particularly, in a region such as the Baltics, a heavy reliance on Russian news reports can skew perceptions of tense political situations and events. A community of Americans knowledgeable in the region's languages, cultures and politics provides the strongest safeguard against misinformation or biased reporting.

Language deficiency and a lack of cultural awareness have already affected American business' ability to export successfully in the Baltics. A humorous example involves the Snickers candy bar. Whoever prepared the advertisement for this popular American product in Latvian missed the nuances of their word choices for the translation; instead of simple "satisfaction" with every bite, the ad promised "sexual gratification". A second illustration: the Kellogg Corporation recently placed a large ad for cornflakes on the facade of the Latvian National Theater, the site of the signing of the Latvian Declaration of Independence in 1918. The ad's location

provoked hostile complaints from potential customers. Such inadequacy in preparation has even greater impact for the United States when government agencies or representatives are involved.

Further evidence of this problem was provided by Valdas Adamkus, the Midwest Regional Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency during his recent visit to Seattle to participate in a University of Washington sponsored Symposium on Environmental Problems of the Baltic Region. Adamkus, who speaks five languages fluently, cited examples from personal experience when he had cause to question the translation provided by the official interpreter. Adamkus feels it is vital for Americans to learn Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian if they are to function successfully in the Baltics and has strongly endorsed the Baltic Studies Program at UW.

The current Baltic-Nordic program at UW has attracted 16 undergraduate and graduate students pursuing combinations of Nordic and Baltic studies. An additional seven undergraduate and graduate students are combining Baltic and Russian studies. The demand for these courses continues to grow. The university believes that students like these will help bridge the intellectual divides that currently fragment American understanding of European culture, politics and Europe's economy.

Although the idea for the Baltic Studies program at the University of Washington arose from the academic community itself, the Seattle Lithuanian-American Community has played a key role from the concept's genesis, including brainstorming with the initiators, providing "interested observer" input, offering cultural tie-ins with the local community, marshalling support, publicizing the program nationwide and pursuing grants from various Lithuanian American sources. In 1994, a grant of \$4,000 from the Lithuanian World Community Foundation gave the project a shot in the arm as well as demonstrated Lithuanian-American Community support. In 1995, the Vyduenas Youth Fund made a donation of \$1,200.

During its 1995 Celebration of Lithuanian Independence, the Seattle Lithuanian-American Community recognized several extraordinary individuals at the University of Washington for their contributions to the life of the community and to Lithuania's future. Receiving these special awards and the thanks of the Lithuanian-American Community for their vision and tenacious work leading to the establishment of both the Baltic Studies Summer Institute and the Baltic Studies Program at the University of Washington were professors Daniel Waugh, Tom Dubois and Guntis Smidchens.

Can we actually bring to life a Baltic-Nordic Research and Language Center with an endowed Baltic Studies program? It will surely depend on the level of support we receive from our fellow Lithuanian-Americans across the country. At the local level we have

formed an Advisory Council which serves as the coordinating body for the three ethnic communities in Seattle with the University of Washington. The Advisory Council meets on a regular basis. The Lithuanian-Americans on the Council are all former presidents of the LAC, Inc. Washington Region (based in Seattle) chapter: Ina Bray, Irena Blekys and Jurate Mazeika Harrison. The current president Rasa Raisys is also a member and we hope to keep on board, Lithuanian basketball superstar Sarunas Marciulionis.

After attending the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations festivities in NYC, President Lennart Meri of Estonia flew to Seattle to kick-off the intensive two-year fundraising drive for the Baltic-Nordic Research Center. The goal is to raise \$775,000 by the fall of 1998 to create an endowment for the planned Center. We in the Seattle Community believe in the Center and its potential to become a premier research facility not only be-

cause of the strength of the academic talent associated with the Baltic program, but also because the renowned Henry Jackson School of International Studies is based at the University of Washington.

As with any significant project in its infancy, financial support from the grass roots is very important. No matter how modest, your tax-deductible contribution will strengthen the project and move it forward. If you can help, checks should be made out to: University of Washington Foundation - Baltic Program Fund (be sure to include the Baltic Program Fund designation). Mail the contribution to: Baltic Program Fund, Scandinavian Department, Box 353420, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195. Professor Tom Du Bois can respond to your inquiries at (206) 543-0645; Fax (206) 685-9179. Or you can direct your questions to the Lithuanian-American Community contact: Ina Bertulyte Bray at (206) 523-1620.

## Omaha, Nebraska Chapter of the LAC, Inc. Hosts A Town Hall Meeting With Congressman Doug Bereuter

by Dr. Gediminas Murauskas

U.S. Representative Doug Bereuter (R) representing Nebraska's 1st Congressional District, held a Town Hall meeting with members of Omaha's Lithuanian-American Community on April 2, 1995. This meeting allowed members of the Lithuanian-American Community to brief Congressman Bereuter prior to his trip to the Baltics during the Easter recess of the U.S. Congress. Rep. Bereuter is the Chairman of the Asia and the Pacific Subcommittee of the House Committee on Inter-

national Relations and a ranking member of the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services. The purpose of the Congressman's trip to the Baltics was to evaluate the help which had been given to all three parliaments by the U.S. House of Representatives between 1992-94. Speaker of the House, Rep. Newt Gingrich officially delegated Rep. Bereuter to visit Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia on behalf of the U.S. House of Representatives and meet with the parliaments and other government officials in each respective country.

Given the substantial number of Latvian-Americans in his Lincoln-based Congressional district, Rep. Bereuter



Rep. Doug Bereuter (R-NE) poses with members of Omaha's Lithuanian-American Community after their April 2nd Town Hall meeting. Rep. Bereuter is standing in the center of the 2nd visible row.

has kept close ties to his Baltic constituents and has generally maintained a good voting record on Baltic issues in the U.S. House of Representatives over the years. Bridges readers may find it interesting that Karlis Ulmanis, President of Latvia during the inter-war independence period, lived in Lincoln, NE prior to 1918. He studied agronomy at the University of Nebraska. The Arbor Day tradition in Latvia is a legacy of Ulmanis' student days in Nebraska. Indeed, after WWII, many Latvian immigrants headed for Lincoln knowing that President Ulmanis had once lived and studied there.

Lithuanian-Americans in Omaha successfully used this forum to discuss security issues facing Lithuania (including the question of pending NATO membership), the level and quality of technical assistance to Lithuania (particularly to local governments), as well as crime and other social problems confronting contemporary Lithuania. Congressman Bereuter was pleased to hear that members of the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDLP) generally fared poorly in the Spring elections for local governments in Lithuania. The Lithuanian-American Community also informed Rep. Bereuter about the progress made in attempting to establish a "Sister City" relationship between Omaha, NE and Siauliai, Lithuania, as well as about current international student exchange programs between Nebraska universities and universities in Lithuania and Latvia. Congressman Bereuter pledged his full support to the Siauliai Sister City initiative. At the invitation of Omaha's Lithuanian-American Community, Rep. Bereuter agreed to meet with Alfredas Lankauskas, the newly elected Mayor and Chair of the City Council in Siauliai.

Participants in this Town Hall meeting were pleased and impressed with the Congressman's attentiveness and prior knowledge regarding Baltic affairs and developments. At the conclusion of the meeting, Rep. Bereuter accepted the Omaha Lithuanian-American Community's invitation for a return engagement upon his return from Lithuania. The Omaha group welcomed Congressman Bereuter to visit his neighbors in Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District more often.

*Editors' Note: Congressman Bereuter did come back for a follow-up meeting after his return from the Baltics. He has continued to stay in touch with the Omaha chapter to assist them in promoting the establishment of the Omaha-Siauliai Sister City program which is bogged down in this era of budget-cutting. More chapters should invite their Congressmen to "town meetings" with their members. You may find that you genuinely like your Congressman or Congresswoman and that "not all politicians are alike". If you need any help just call our Public Affairs Office at 703-524-0698.*

## WAYSIDE SHRINE

*continued from p. 6*



Foto: Vanda Gasperas

*Plaque dedicating the wayside shrine donated by Julius and Prane Pakalka to the victims of Soviet aggression in Lithuania. Lithuanian National Cemetery.*

Pakalka in bronze. It took him 2-1/2 years, but the effort was well worth it. The cross was erected in late 1994 at the cemetery, but it was blessed by Bishop Baltakis in a ceremony held on June 12, 1995. As Bishop Baltakis said that day, "the cross is a symbol of triumph over evil". And though we mourn the people who suffered and died, we know that their sacrifice was not in vain because the Soviet Empire did finally crumble.

While visiting in Chicago (and we all know that all Lithuanian-Americans eventually make a pilgrimage to this Lithuanian mecca) take some time to visit the Lithuanian National Cemetery located in the south Chicago suburb of Justice, Illinois and pay your respects at the wayside shrine built by Mr. and Mrs. Pakalka. Share your visit with your children and grandchildren, because we all need to remember. It could happen again, unless we all remain vigilant. There aren't that many Lithuanians left in the world. We must never forget and we shouldn't allow others to forget.

Algirdas Rimas

# Business News

## Can Lithuania Pay Its Way?

Lithuania's net foreign debt has risen to over \$1.1 billion, according to the latest statistics published there. Interest payments this year are estimated to be \$23 million, equivalent to about four days worth of gross average daily export earnings. Foreign currency and gold reserves amount to about \$600 million. Lithuania's main creditors are international lending agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

One problem has been the use of foreign loans to fund current consumption rather than finance investment projects which later could generate money to pay back the loans. However, the government appears to have changed this policy as of late. In 1995, ninety percent of foreign loans have been earmarked for investment in infrastructure development projects, such as improvements in energy, telecommunications and transportation.

Another problem, perhaps a more difficult one for the prospects of the economy, is that Lithuanians appear to be saving very little money, at least in terms of deposits with domestic savings institutions. Data is scant, but according to one observer, Ramunas Janusauskas, writing in the business periodical *Verslo Zinios*, to the extent there is household savings, most of it seems to be squirreled away under family mattresses, in cookie jars or diverted to foreign banks. In the eyes of potential customers, domestic financial institutions suffer from perceived negative real interest rates (for the past several years annual rates of inflation have been higher than interest rates paid on savings deposits) and the lack of confidence due to the absence of deposit insurance. There is also the added shock to depositor confidence left after a string of financial companies were declared bankrupt in the past year after allegedly having engaged in pyramid investment schemes at the expense of their depositors.

Some business leaders are urging the government to attract more investment from both domestic savings and foreign sources by simply adopting a more open, pro-competitive industrial policy. Instead of attempting to

jump-start the economy by subsidizing industries that are considered by government managers to have the best prospects, government is urged to encourage entrepreneurial activity across the board. Lower taxes, coherent regulation and a transparent, law-abiding business environment are being sought. The result would be a more vibrant economy that would earn its way and even repay the growing foreign debt.

## Interest Rates On Savings Deposits Peak-Out

Medium and long term nominal interest rates paid to depositors by a cross-section of seven Lithuanian commercial banks have peaked-out. Nominal yields on short term, 3-month certificates of deposit (CDs) are still creeping upward. A table comparing average annual rates for term deposits offered in July with rates offered during the second quarter of 1995 is as follows:

	U.S. \$ denominated deposits		Litas deposits	
	2nd quarter	July	2nd quarter	July
3 mo. CDs	13.8	14.9	19.8	20.4
6 mo. CDs	15.8	15.7	21.8	20.0
12 mo. CDs	14.6	14.2	none	none

Lithuania's annual rate of inflation in 1995 is estimated to be between 25 and 30 percent, less than the above interest rates. The inflation rate for the month of July, 1995 jumped by 2.7 percent following a one percent monthly increase in June.

## More Hotels and Restaurants in Vilnius

"Mano Liza", a modern luxury guest house at Ligonines 5, Vilnius (tel: 370-2-222-225 or 222-545, FAX: 222-608) opened its doors recently in the scenic old town area. Daily rates range from \$70 for a single or double to \$160 for a two room suite. The restaurant serves breakfast, lunch and dinner. Visa, Mastercard and Eurocard are accepted.

The owner is a resettled Lithuanian-American lawyer, Marius Jakulis Jason, who also offers legal services (his specialty is patent, trademark and copyright law and

he is licensed to practice in Lithuania) and real estate property services through his company, AAA Baltic Service Company, Rudininku 18/2-12, Vilnius 2001, tel: 370-2-613-232, FAX 220-422.

"Amadeus", a three-floor luxury hotel located adjacent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, reportedly includes hair dryers, fax machines and steam irons together with the more conventional fixtures in its well-appointed rooms. The furnishings come from Denmark, as does the hotel operator, former foreign assistance adviser Frans Hesse. The daily rate is \$90. Sorry, but we have no further information on Amadeus.

McDonald's has announced that next Spring it will open two of its chain restaurants in Vilnius. The Austrian branch of the U.S. multinational is actually managing the Vilnius project. One restaurant is to be located in the city's center and the other in the suburb of Seskines. The project reportedly is a joint venture between McDonald's of Austria and the Norwegian state oil company Statoil. The Seskines golden arches will be built along-side a new Statoil gas station.

### More on Major Government Projects

Lithuanian railroads has announced a public tender inviting potential suppliers to bid for a contract to upgrade the rail lines between Klaipeda and points east. The contract is worth approximately \$19 million and financing is available from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the Japanese Export-Import Bank. According to Lithuanian press reports, some 40 companies, including American ones, have already submitted proposals.

Lithuanian Airlines has purchased a second used Boeing 737-200 from Delta Airlines. The \$8.4 million price tag reportedly was financed in part by the U.S. Export-Import Bank. The first aircraft was delivered in May and is used intensively on routes to Western Europe. The two Boeings are named respectively Steponas Darius and Stasys Girenas in honor of the two Lithuanian-American flyers who perished in their attempt to compete the first direct air crossing between the U.S. and Lithuania.

### Baltic-American Enterprise Fund Opens For Business in Lithuania

Michael Diedring, the Fund's representative in Lithuania, is currently accepting applications for business financing in Lithuania. The Fund's office is located at Maironio 1-319, Vilnius 2600. The telephone numbers are: 370-2-627-488 or 627-471, FAX: 614-690.

The Fund will lend, invest and issue guarantees to small and medium-sized, private sector businesses. Most transactions are expected to range from \$100,000 to \$200,000. However, there are no set maximums nor minimum limits established for projects. All loans will be in U.S. dollars with borrowers assuming all currency

exchange risk. Terms will vary from two to five years. Interest rates will be a few points above the U.S. prime lending rate.

Funding requests of more than \$50,000 will be considered for loan and investment combinations. Requests of less than \$50,000 generally will be considered for business loans only. Commitments above the \$200,000 threshold will be considered if the projects are of a high standard and involve a U.S. joint venture partner or hold an extraordinary prospect for success. Such commitments also may be considered for projects co-financed with compatible funding sources such as the World Bank, EBRD, and other international lending agencies.

Priority sectors will include tourism, light manufacturing, food processing, wood processing, transport, warehousing and electronics. Initial applications should be made with the Vilnius office. All project applications will be evaluated by the Fund's Vilnius staff. They will conduct on-site inspections and look at company books and business plans. Final decisions on loans and investments would be made by the Fund's executive committee in Washington, DC.

Not offered are revolving credit lines or loans secured solely by accounts receivable. For application forms and detailed information on financing projects in Lithuania, we recommend that the Lithuanian company or partner of a U.S. joint venture contact Mr. Diedring and his staff in Vilnius.

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Asta Banionis

# Budget Cutting: The Anguishing Process Continues

Dear readers of Bridges, when you remain silent and don't make those phone calls to your Congressmen and Senators, the temperature here in Washington, DC turns down right frigid for issues involving the Baltic states. Although the final budget figures and appropriations bills for fiscal year 1996 are not yet law, the numbers and policies written into those bills at this moment are grim for countries like Lithuania.

Now, our only hope is that President Clinton really will veto the budget bill and the two appropriations bills that affect Lithuania most: the foreign operations appropriations bill and the appropriations bill for Commerce, State and Justice Departments -- because this would give you a second chance to change the outcome.

As the stand-off between the Republican-controlled Congress and President Clinton continues on the "big picture" budget bill, the House and Senate conferees on the foreign aid bill did finally meet to iron out their differences on H.R. 1868 (appropriations for foreign operations). They met on October 24, 1995 at 2:00 pm and did not finish their work until after midnight (with no break for dinner). This year, the House members "hosted" the conference. That means that Congressman Sonny Callahan (R-AL), Chairman of the House subcommittee on foreign operations chaired the full meeting of the House and Senate conferees and got to choose the room which would accommodate the meeting.

Bridges readers who are fans of the Republican revolution should note that the House Republicans far from being "responsive to the people", carried on the House Democrat tradition of restricting public access to the conference. This correspondent finally got into the meeting room after 8:00 pm, when most people who had been standing out in the hallway gave up and went home. The last ten of us, who were allowed to squeeze into the relatively small meeting room, stood for the next 4 hours up against the wall. Earlier in the evening when I had good-naturedly asked Republican committee staff why the House Republicans had picked such a small room which couldn't accommodate the public, the response was swift and curt, "There are no representatives of the public in this hallway, you're all special interests." Well, my dear Bridges readers, how does it feel to be called a special interest, just because, you as a taxpayer want to find out how your money is going to be spent and how your security is going to be impacted by the decisions the 15 policy-makers sitting in the conference make.

What is most important is that there are no roll-call votes in conference, only the number of total votes is recorded, but rarely shared with the public. There is no written record, except for the final conferenced bill. When observers of American politics complain about backroom deals, they in part have in mind these conferences, where only a handful of delegated Congressmen and Senators get to cut deals. This process is helpful in the sense that it provides the legislative process a legitimate setting in which to find compromise formulas and compromise solutions, but because so much of the proceeding is never recorded, it allows members of the House and Senate to "hide" their votes.

In fact, not a single member of the public got inside the conference room until after 6:00 pm. Meanwhile the State Department and other government agencies were allowed to pack the little free space with tens of lobbyists from their legislative and public affairs staffs. The levels of East European assistance and NATO policy issues were decided with most of us standing outside in the hallway. What I provide you now, is based on two "public witness" accounts of people who managed to get into the conference after 6:00 pm.

Although both public witnesses claimed that the conferees had decided that the "House would recede to the Senate on Eastern European Assistance levels" (which means the House agrees to the Senate proposal), the conference report which was printed in the Congressional Record on October 31, 1995 showed the lower House number of \$324 million, rather than the Senate number of \$335 million. So, either, two independent observers heard wrong, or committee staffs were seeing and recording proceedings differently than these public witnesses. For those of you who remember the "compromise" over the issue of aid to the Baltics and Gorbachev's U.S.S.R. in fall, 1990 (involving Senator Byrd and Congressman Obey in the conference on FY 1991 foreign aid); this lower published figure for Eastern European assistance for FY 1996 was unsettling.

Therefore, aid to Lithuania is bound to be curtailed severely because the Eastern European aid account was cut by 20% which is the average for most of the aid programs. The Eastern European assistance account (SEED) is likely to face even more severe pressure if a peace settlement is reached for the Bosnian war, because

*continued p. 19*

Aldona Abizaid Ristaniemi

# Mozart and Don Juan

## WHAT DO LITHUANIANS DO IN FINLAND?

Why, they go to theaters and watch Lithuanian drama troupes from Vilnius perform! It isn't just the Estonians who have a lock on Finnish hearts. Lithuanians have managed to build vibrant communities all over the world. Aldona Abizaid Ristaniemi writes to *Bridges from Finland* to report that: yes, "there is an active community of Lithuanians here ..." Aldona also says that the wife of the Lithuanian Ambassador to Finland has relatives in Chicago, Illinois.

Her article which follows this brief introduction, is about the Lithuanian actor Algirdas Latenas and his views on the theater and his long collaboration with the director Eimuntas Nekrosius. She had a chance to interview Mr. Latenas when he recently played the lead role in the Vilnius Life Troupe production of "Don Juan" performed at the Savoy Theater in Helsinki, Finland. Aldona is a past contributor to *Bridges* writing on the arts.

Algirdas Latenas Directs, Teaches and Studies - Life. What is there in common among Pushkin's Mozart, Don Juan and the "Three Sisters"? Lieutenant-Commander Versinin? The same actor, Algirdas Latenas, of Vilnius' Life Troupe, takes part in both the Pushkin Trilogy and Chekhov's plays. He happened to be the Vilnius Conservatory classmate of well-known Lithuanian director Eimuntas Nekrosius in the actors studio. Latenas graduated in 1975. During that time, Nekrosius had departed for Moscow, as an aspiring director, rather than actor. The men got together again when Nekrosius came back to Lithuania and took over the Vilnius Youth Theater. After that, they were a solid and inseparable team. Whenever Nekrosius directed, Latenas acted in the play.

When the Director departed the Vilnius Youth Theater a couple of years ago, Latenas followed. He is a permanent fixture with his favorite director, just like the plays of Nekrosius - Pirozman, Uncle Vanya, Baron Tuzenbach and

Vladas Bagdonas who plays Salieri. Latenas needs only one word of direction, he assures me, and sometimes not even that. Actually, that's only for the best, since Nekrosius, as a director, is definitely on the quiet side. "We might be at his home, talking, inventing, thinking. The longer the night goes on, the more dramatic scenes are worked out", Latenas explains.

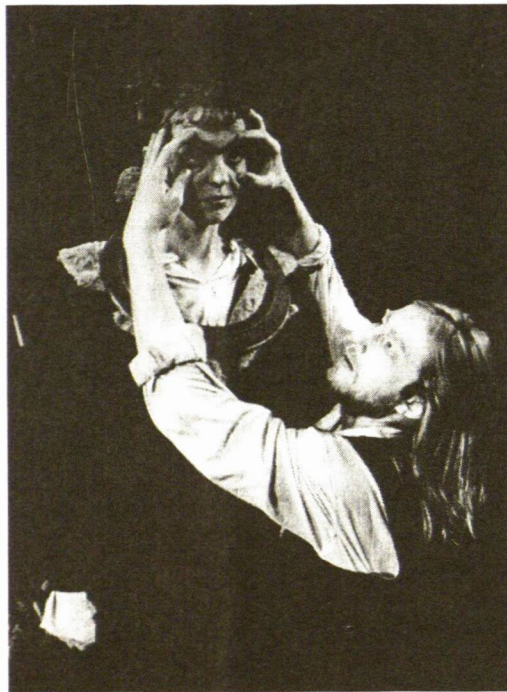
Nekrosius never starts working on a play by reading it. A working group analyzes the material, seeks out significant points, revelations of people's character and situations.

The group moves on to the stage and goes over individual scenes, improvising and bringing out new ideas. Often, it turns out that there is so much material, it has to be trimmed down mercilessly. That's precisely what happened with "Three Sisters", which was initially twice the length of the final stage production. One word can inspire the creation of a whole scene. When Irina, for example, talks about her desire to work, the nearby officers shriek shrilly the same word, "work", over and over, thus making a parody of the socialist portrait of the "heroic worker".

Latenas explained to me that "Don Juan" reflects Pushkin's own life, as well as Mozart's tragic physical pain. "We wanted to see him in a positive light, since even the Requiem has an upbeat feel. Research discovered a complicated, challenging Pushkin, rather than the pathetic, boring statue taught in school." Latenas brings out how Chekhov's "Three Sisters" had also been produced in Russia according

to a standard plan. When "Three Sisters" had its premiere at the turn of the century, directed by Konstantin Stanislavski, it started and still continues the Russian romantic tradition. It's difficult to change the cliches of an officer in love, but more action could be added and less lengthy monologues.

The legendary dramatic coach, Dalia Tamuleviciute, taught theater arts to both Nekrosius and Latenas, and she is still the leading dramatic teacher. Tamuleviciute has taught many generations of Lithuanian actors and Latenas



Algirdas Latenas plays Don Juan to Rimante Valiukaite's Dona Anna in the Vilnius Life Troupe's production of "Don Juan" performed in Helsinki, Finland. Summer, 1995.



Algirdas Latenas and Rimante Valiukaite performing in "Don Juan" at the Savoy Theater in Helsinki, Finland this past summer. Vilnius Life Troupe production.

theater needs new genres, nothing is black or white, but tragedy and comedy blend together. New colorful combinations develop. The most important role of the dramatics coach is to emphasize that a role has to be played naturally and with flexibility, not mechanically or too literally. A truly satisfying performance has to be fluid and smooth.

is taking over her work, now head instructor in the dramatics courses. "We don't seek out just one method of acting, though Stanislavski is our basic guide, but just as well, our inspiration can be from Vahtangov or Brecht."

Latenas

believes

## POLITICS

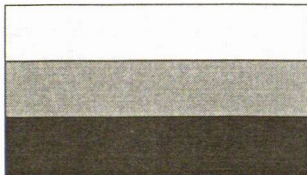
*continued from p. 17*

the projected \$80 million for "reconstruction aid" will come from the SEED account.

The inside story on the NATO provisions in the Senate version of H.R. 1868 is even more interesting. The House conferees would only accept a watered-down version of the Senate's language on NATO policy (authored by Senator Brown, R-CO). The final language is an endorsement of what I would call "a narrow interpretation" of current Clinton Administration NATO pro-expansion policy. During the conferees only two people spoke on the NATO provision: Congressman David Obey (D-WI) who launched a strident attack against any NATO expansion to the east. This was a shock because Mr. Obey is known as an advocate for Poland, and yet he argued for no new NATO members, not even Poland. The second person was Chairman of the Foreign Operations Subcommittee, Congressman Sonny Callahan (R-AL) who gave the perfunctory argument, that the conference "should not tie the hands of the President". Then the thirteen House conferees present voted against accepting the original Senate NATO provision. What were the Senators doing? Only two were present at the time NATO was being discussed, Senate subcommittee on foreign operations Chairman Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT). Where were all the rest of the Senate conferees like: Senator Specter (R-PA), Senator Mack (R-FL), Senator Lautenberg (D-NJ), Senator Mikulski (D-MD), Senator Murray (D-WA)? They weren't there, "hide nor hair of them", to defend NATO expansion and Senator Brown's language. In fairness, to the Senators one can argue that since this was a Senate provision, it stood to reason that they supported the provision, and it was merely up to the House conferees to decide if the House of Representatives could accept the language. But, one still wonders what might have been if someone on the Senate side would have spoken up in defense of the Senate NATO provision and if the Senate conferees would have been willing to "face down the House members".

Just in case you missed it, here are the names of the thirteen House conferees who voted against the NATO expansion provisions: Republicans: Chairman Sonny Callahan (AL) 202-225-4931; John Edward Porter (IL) 202-225-4835; Bob Livingston (LA) 202-225-3015; Jim Lightfoot (IA) 202-225-3806; Frank Wolf (VA) 202-225-5136; Ron Packard (CA) 202-225-3906; Michael Forbes (NY) 202-225-3826; Joe Knollenberg (MI) 202-225-5802; Jim Bunn (OR) 202-225-5711; Democrats: David Obey (WI) 202-225-3365; Charles Wilson (TX) 202-225-2401; Nancy Pelosi (CA) 202-225-4965; and Esteban Torres (CA) 202-225-5256. Don't you think you deserve an explanation?

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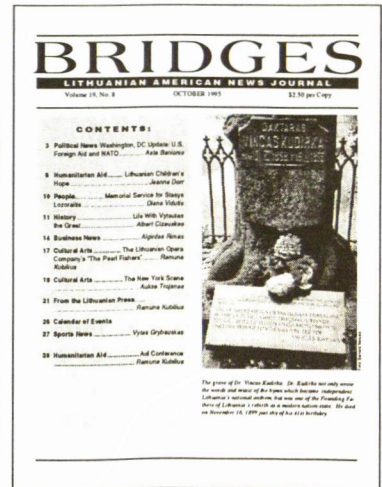
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