

BRIDGES

LITHUANIAN AMERICAN NEWS JOURNAL

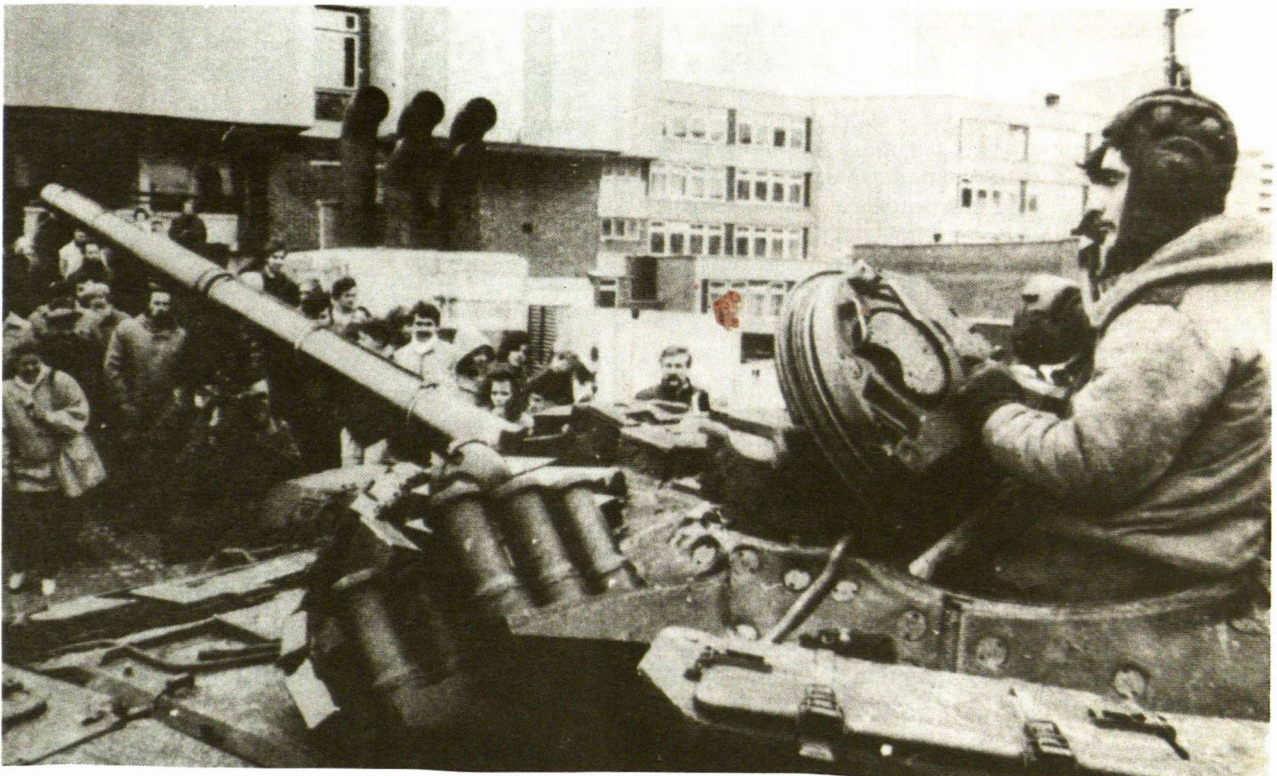
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A tank of the Motorized Rifle Regiment, part of the Soviet Army, facing a crowd at the press center in Vilnius. This happened before the massacre of January 13, 1991, known as "Bloody Sunday," when Gorbachev and the army of the Soviet Union tried to bring down Lithuania's democratically elected government.

TO OUR READERS:

It is a great honor to have been invited to serve as the new editor of BRIDGES magazine. I have long held this publication in high esteem and welcome the opportunity to be part of a major instrument of communication for Lithuanian-Americans.

At the same time, it is sobering to assume this responsibility on the fifth anniversary of the events of Bloody Sunday in Vilnius, January 13, 1991. I recall the words that one of our regular contributors, Paul Goble, had mentioned over dinner a few months before the tragedy occurred. "Blood will be shed", he said, "but Lithuania will be free within the year".

Not long after the tank attack upon civilians in Vilnius, I went to work several afternoons a week as a volunteer at the Lithuanian Embassy. My second child, Nida, had been born a month before and (the late) Mr. Lozoraitis needed assistance that I could give. By the time of the Medininkai massacre in July of 1991, I was working at the Embassy full time. Our staff grew considerably as Lithuania edged towards world recognition of its independence. It was one of the most fortunate experiences of my life to have worked with Ambassador Lozoraitis during this historic period. It was also my privilege to be part of his campaign team when he ran for president of Lithuania in 1993.


"Now the hard part begins", said Ambassador Lozoraitis, after Lithuania had finally won global recognition of its restored independence. And these past five years have certainly borne witness to that. They have also altered our perception of Lithuanians in Lithuania and their perception of Lithuanians abroad. Illusions have been shattered, human nature has flaunted its vagaries, and we have all been humbled by the enormity of the task Lithuania faces in reinventing itself.

As the new editor of BRIDGES, it is my intention to reach out to a broader readership, provide in-depth reporting on a wider variety of issues, and disseminate a greater amount of both fundamental and specific information. I will continue to depend upon the creative efforts of our core group of writers: Asta Banionis, Algis Rimas, Ramune Kubilius, Paul Goble and Jeanne Dorr, and on the willingness of our occasional contributors to keep producing. It is also my intention to introduce some new essayists whose points of view may be thought-provoking.

I hope you will join me in bringing BRIDGES to a new generation of readers. If you are reading this and do not yet subscribe, fill out a form for yourself and for a

friend. Order a subscription for your Senator and Representative. We hope to make BRIDGES a magazine you will not be able to do without.

Su viltim,



Diana Vidutis
Editor

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Paul A. Goble

REMEMBERING JANUARY 13

On January 13, Lithuanians, their fellow Balts and their friends around the world will pause to remember the brutal Soviet attack on the Vilnius television tower five years ago, the heroism of its defenders, and the duplicity of Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders in defending the indefensible and denying the obvious. They will also remember the ways in which this event galvanized the Baltic peoples and ultimately led to the recovery of Baltic independence and to the destruction of the Soviet Union. But the commemoration of these events will fail to be true to the memory of those who died at the television tower if we do not learn the three major lessons of that day: solidarity among the Baltic peoples always matters, Russian cooperation with the Baltic states always is a matter of tactics, and Western support for the Balts always will be limited by Western efforts to deal with Moscow.

The first lesson should be the easiest to learn: In 1991, Gorbachev's efforts to derail the Baltic drive to independence failed because he lost his nerve—he wasn't willing to spill "big blood" as the Russians say—but even more because the Baltic peoples were united and willing to die for their common cause. Perhaps the most inspiring aspect of the events of January 13 was that after the Soviet troops had fired into the crowd at the television tower, the Lithuanians did not retreat. Instead, they began singing an old Lithuanian hymn: "We shall be brothers again in heaven." And when Gorbachev's minions began talking about a shadowy "national salvation committee," the world dismissed the very idea of such a group in any Baltic country as an impossibility. When a people has that degree of unity and courage, it may be destroyed but it cannot be defeated, as the Chechens are showing today. Now, five years later, all three Baltic countries are divided among themselves and with each other over a variety of issues.

If these were now normal times and the Baltic countries lived in a normal neighborhood, such divisions would be normal and perhaps even a sign of health. But these are not normal times and the Balts cannot escape geography. There is still a threat to Baltic independence, and these divisions are being exploited by those in Moscow who do not wish the Balts well.

The second lesson is more difficult and bitter. On January 13, 1991, Boris Yeltsin flew to Tallinn to reaffirm

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his commitment to Baltic freedom and to call on Russian soldiers not to obey illegal and immoral orders to attack freely elected governments or unarmed civilians. Many Balts and their friends in the West at that time took this to be a reflection of a fundamental change of heart in Moscow, even the dawning of a new and better day. But five years later, we can see that we were wrong, that Yeltsin's actions in Tallinn were a tactical move in his struggle with Gorbachev rather than a permanent change in Russian thinking. Five years ago, Yeltsin angrily told Gorbachev that the Soviet leader was moving to the right, and Gorbachev replied that not he but rather Soviet society was shifting. Now, with a change in nomenclature, a similar charge could be levelled at Yeltsin and with even more justice. Under pressure from the Russian electorate and reflecting his own sense of Russian nationalism, Yeltsin has just fired Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev for being insufficiently tough in defending Russian interests and Russians abroad—even though that foreign minister more than once suggested that Moscow should have a veto over the expansion of NATO and has the right to use force to defend ethnic Russians abroad.

And the final lesson is still more bitter—although perhaps more bitter to me as an American than to many in the Baltic states: Western support for the Balts will always be limited by the desire of Western leaders to make deals with Moscow or at least to get Moscow to go along with what the West wants to do. In January 1991, President George Bush was unwilling to stand up to Gorbachev over Vilnius lest doing so would undermine the UN coalition against Iraq. (No one should forget that Gorbachev cleverly timed the attack on Vilnius and later Riga precisely because Operation Desert Storm was scheduled to begin January 15.) Now, five years later, the US and the West more generally are unwilling to stand up to Yeltsin lest Russia interfere with NATO's operation in Bosnia. Both then and now, there are voices in the West who excuse the supreme leader in Moscow for any outrage, blaming either the military or the nationalists, and who are prepared to make concessions to the current occupant of the Kremlin lest he be replaced by someone even worse. Thus, many now are saying that the West must promise not to expand NATO to include Eastern Europe and the Baltic states lest such a step undermine Yeltsin's reelection chances. Some even say that President Clinton has already promised Yeltsin as much.

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Anne Smith

COINCIDENCE THAT SHOULD SET OFF ALARMS

On the morning of January 13, 1991, the Soviet military and KGB attacked peaceful protesters at the Lithuanian television tower, killing 14. A week later, at least six were killed in Latvia. Glasnost lost its innocence. Many were shocked but no one in Washington should have been. One month earlier, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze resigned predicting the imminent use of violence.

Now, five years later a second foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, has resigned and been replaced by an anti-Western spy chief. Yevgeny Primakov's appointment comes just as anti-NATO and anti-Baltic statements have increased, underscored by a resurgent Communist Party. The coincidence should set off alarm bells in Washington.

Five years ago this week, Mr. Primakov was a candidate member of the Politburo and a member of the Presidential Council at the time orders were sent to the military and the KGB to begin the assault in Vilnius. As such, his appointment is particularly bad news for the Baltic States that already have been subjected to claims from the former foreign minister that they are in Russia's zone of interest.

Just days after winning the Duma election, Communist Party leader Gennady Zyuganov announced that the Baltic States better give up the idea of NATO if they want relations with Russia to be "normal and friendly". He added that the new Duma may renounce the treaty that dissolved the Soviet Union.

President Boris Yeltsin won the respect of the world partly for decrying the January violence in Vilnius. Yet, he presides over a hostile war in Chechnya, and his government has refused to repudiate the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 that paved the way for Soviet occupation of the Baltics. He may very well lose the presidential election in June. Should Gennady Zyuganov, Vladimir Zhirinovsky of the Liberal Democratic Party (who once threatened to blow nuclear

waste over the Baltic States) or Lt. Gen. Alexander Lebed (who when head of the 14th army assisted "Trans-Dniester" separatists in Moldova) become president in June, these threats may become actions. Vladimir Zhirinovsky has said that if he wins the presidency, Baltic nationalists should "get in their boats and start rowing".

The Bush administration's unwillingness to recognize the inevitable break-up of the Soviet Union (and the former Yugoslavia, for that matter) was fodder for the Clinton campaign, which capitalized on the fears of many ethnic American groups that their homelands would be sold down the river.

President Clinton's current policy of appeasement, led by the hopelessly romantic Strobe Talbott and which has included trading NATO enlargement for Russian quiescence on Bosnia, is similarly misguided. Even months before the attack in January 1991, it was obvious that blood could be shed in Vilnius. Yet, the words of those who presaged the attack, such as Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis and Lithuania's prescient late Ambassador to the United States, Stasys Lozoraitis, were dismissed as sensationalist. Given the apparent repetition today of the events leading up to the 1991 violence in the Baltic States, the United States would be well-advised to take another look at Russia's changing foreign policy and adjust its own policy accordingly.

First, Secretary of State Warren Christopher should institute a "neo-imperialist" alert at the State Department that would require the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and those in Foggy Bottom to respond to bellicose Russian government statements with appropriate diplomatic action. Mr. Primakov, who wrote the Communist Party's main ideological justification for the invasion of Afghanistan, should be watched particularly closely. At a minimum, the administration and Congress should reject unilateral Russian changes to the CFE (Conventional Forces in Europe) Treaty that sanction a heightened military presence near the Baltic border and in the Caucasus.

Second, NATO and European Union governments should not exclude any qualifying countries of Central
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Anne Smith is former deputy director of the European subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. She is now a government affairs analyst at a Washington law firm. This article previously appeared in The Washington Times, January 12, 1996.

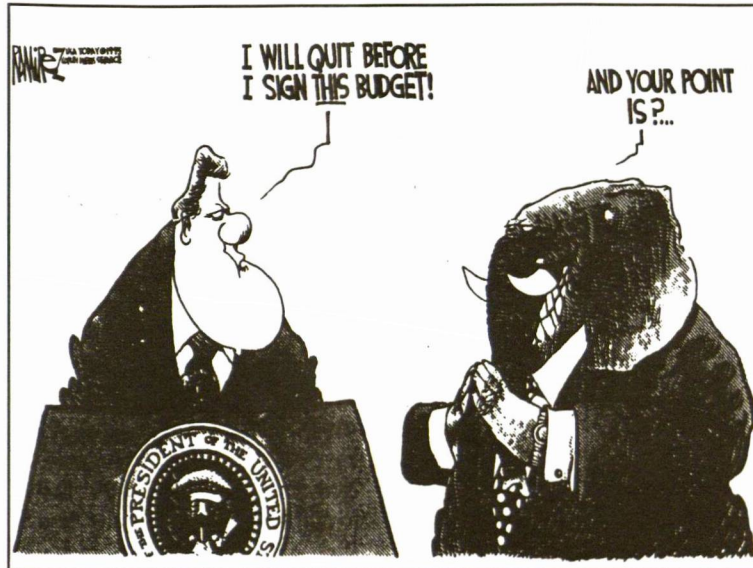
Asta Banionis

CHECKS AND BALANCES: IN WASHINGTON AND VILNIUS

When last we left the budget stand-off in Washington, DC, (in the October, 1995 issue of BRIDGES) the President had vetoed the ambitious 7-year "balanced" budget bill; six of the thirteen annual appropriations bills which fund the operations of the federal government had not been approved; and the Republican-controlled Congress had refused to increase the debt limit. As we go to print in January, 1996, the fourth month of the new fiscal year, we're pretty much at the same status. Although there have been some very entertaining interludes during these last four months.

With the Presidential campaign heating up, and Congressional fundraising in full gear, the Democratic and Republican camps are starting to show the "battle-fatigue" of the budget war whose first shots were fired over a year ago. Speaker Gingrich has even "punished" the first two freshmen Republicans (2 of 15) who failed to vote for his "compromise" continuing resolution which is funding the reopening of the government until January 26, 1996 by refusing to attend their campaign fundraisers. Of course, the continuing resolution would be funding the reopening of the government, if Washington, DC and its environs weren't digging out of the third deepest snowfall of the century (18 to 25 inches depending on which side of the Potomac you live).

The person drawing the most ire or applause these days (based on your political persuasion) is U.S. Treasury Secretary Rubin and his nimble team at the Treasury Department. They've used every creative bookkeeping trick known to man or computer to keep the U.S. government



within the current debt limit cap thereby preventing the government from defaulting on billions of dollars of treasury obligations. With Wall Street growing increasingly uneasy over the budget stand-off, House Budget Committee Chairman, John Kasich (R-OH) declared mid-month that the House Republicans will no longer hold the debt limit bill hostage to

the 7-year budget negotiations. As soon as the Congress is back to work, we can expect some progress on this one item. The budget bill process is growing increasingly irrelevant as the February deadline for the President's budget proposal for the 1997 fiscal year approaches. In an effort to slash federal government spending, the Republican House strategy will now shift to fund only those programs within the six unresolved appropriations bills that the Republicans approve of while waiting for the November, 1996 elections. And that spells trouble for the foreign affairs functions of the federal government.

Two of the six unresolved appropriations bills for fiscal year 1996 are the Commerce-State-Justice bill which funds all of the State Department's operations, and the Foreign Operations appropriations bill which funds all of the foreign aid the United States dispenses. In recent weeks, LAC, Inc. members have called our offices complaining that their relatives and friends can't get visas from the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius (the U.S. Embassy hasn't even been taking visa applications for weeks). My best advice is to call your Congressman and Senators (especially if they're Republicans) because one of the agencies furloughed because of the stalled appropriations bills is the State Department. The embassies around the world have had

to furlough employees and paperwork keeps stacking up. The U.S. Agency for International Development, whose staff is also furloughed, has no money to spend on foreign assistance, so thousands of private U.S. contractors who get hired to provide technical assistance to countries like Lithuania are sitting at home in the United States looking for work in the private sector. Even Israel and Egypt haven't received their checks for 1996 under the Camp David Accords.

The LAC, Inc. has written on numerous occasions during the last year to Members of the House and Senate, reminding them that foreign affairs and foreign policy is one of the few federal government functions you can not "privatize" or "block-grant" out to the states. As appealing as it would be for the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. to "bid" on setting U.S. policy towards Russia, our better judgement tells us that a great power must have an integrated and comprehensive foreign policy. But the current stalemate is producing foreign policy by default. A demoralized foreign service officer corps and a crippled bureaucracy is going to lead to a second-rate foreign policy establishment. This is no way to run the government of the last superpower!

But too many of the House freshmen Republicans don't give a hoot about U.S. foreign policy. It's not clear if they naively think that the U.S. will always have influence on world events (without working to gain influence or exercise influence), or they simply don't understand international events and aren't bothering to learn their responsibilities as United States Congressmen.

With Chairman Kasich's announcement that the Republicans will shift to funding only those departments that they like, we know foreign aid (except for Israel and Egypt) will be left unfunded, and a good portion of the State Department will be left unfunded (who knows, the Embassy in Vilnius might even be closed?) and certainly such agencies as the Voice of America are history. One freshman Republican who sits on the House International Relations Committee (from Kansas) suggested that Voice

of America be privatized (I suppose, sold off to Ted Turner and Jane Fonda). If Lithuanian-Americans were to speak up and call & write their Congressmen we could help turn things around. But, at this critical time for Lithuania's democracy and its security, you're all silent.

Constituent pressure works. For instance, the "strong Israel lobby" - which is made up of ordinary Americans like me and you - had 300 Jewish leaders from 30 cities meet with House Speaker Gingrich and other top Republicans to urge action on the foreign operations appropriations bill which has been bottled up due to the anti-abortion funding provisions insisted on by the Pro-Life Caucus in the House of Representatives. Congressman Christopher Smith (R-NJ), chairman of this informal

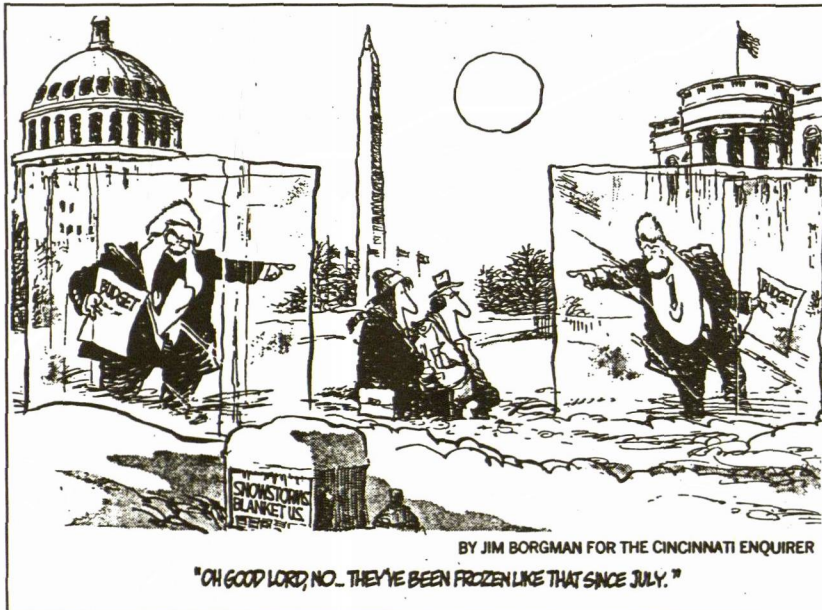
caucus and a senior member of the Republican House, told the Washington Post on December 19, 1995 that "he has recommended removing aid to Israel, Egypt and others involved in the Middle East process from the foreign aid bill. Then a separate appropriations measure could be written to cover their aid and be quickly enacted, he said." Why can't aid to

Lithuania and the rest of Central & Eastern Europe also be removed and funded under a separate bill? If we asked you, our BRIDGES readers to come to Washington, DC for the day to meet with your Congressman and Senators, would you come?

NATO membership for Lithuania is even more critical than the limited U.S. foreign assistance Lithuania receives (possibly as little as \$6 million in 1996, if the aid is ever approved). Would you come to insist upon early NATO membership for Lithuania and the other nations of Central and Eastern Europe? Only you can make this happen. Your voice counts.

MEANWHILE, IN VILNIUS

As exasperating as the current budget stalemate in Washington, DC may seem, it is proof that the constitutional architecture designed by our founding fathers, to prevent the tyranny of the majority or minority,



called “checks and balances”, does work. The new Republican majority in the Congress is attempting to engineer a fundamental change in the function of the federal government after 60 years, and the executive branch controlled by the Democrats is putting up quite a fight — thus assuring a thorough debate of the issues, as well as assuring that there will be a compromise, rather than a sudden shift of policy.

While in Vilnius, Lithuania, where the institutions of democracy are weak and democratic traditions have yet to develop, checks and balances are non-existent. The most recent domestic crises in that small nation have brought into focus the folly of the electorate when they handed control of the three branches of government over to but one party — the neo-communists, now named the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (LDLP). In October, 1992, the voters of Lithuania gave the LDLP a slim, but controlling, majority in parliament and followed up in February, 1993 by electing a President from the LDLP. Since the judiciary is still in its formative stages and the President appoints most of the judges, the people of Lithuania inadvertently bought themselves one party rule. Granted, there are numerous graduate papers written on the subject of “One Party Democracies”, but the resistance of the current government to change policy in response to these crises, demonstrates that the LDLP effectively controls decisionmaking and can contain crises without having to compromise with the opposition parties, or with institutions in the private sector of Lithuania.

There is even a danger that the unwillingness of the LDLP to compromise or adopt new, creative ideas from the opposition parties will doom Lithuania’s efforts to reintegrate with the West. Lithuania and its people will simply run out of time, and over the coming decade, be absorbed back into the Russian Empire. If the country manages to weather these current crises, the population has a critical choice to make this fall when parliamentary elections are expected to be held. Will they continue one-party rule, or will they allow checks and balances to develop by giving control of the legislative branch to another party?

SO, YOU ASK WHAT IS ALL THE RUCKUS ABOUT?

On Thursday, November 16, 1995 shortly before midnight, a bomb exploded at the offices of Lithuania’s largest independent daily newspaper, “Lietuvos Rytas”. The blast destroyed the nearly completed four-story addition and damaged the news and editorial offices based in the main building. Although, not the first, it was the most dramatic act of harassment to be perpetrated against the independent press and media in Lithuania since the assassination of “Respublika” deputy editor Vitas Lingys in October, 1993. A month earlier, on October 18, 1995 the editors and owners of independent press and media in Lithuania established a Free Speech Foundation “to fight

threats against free speech and free enterprise”. The resolution adopted by the members of the FSF stated that, “the Lithuanian parliament and government had reached a point with respect to their public media policy, we are a single step away from the crossroads dividing democracy from dictatorship.”

Mr. Vainauskas, editor-in-chief of “Lietuvos Rytas,” was one of the founders of the Free Speech Foundation and had actively pursued an editorial policy to expose organized crime and government corruption in Lithuania. He had been the most outspoken of the team during the press conference launching the existence of the Free Speech Foundation on October 18th. And although the solid reputation and sound financial base of “Lietuvos Rytas” seemed to have insulated it from earlier government and mafia harassment that had befallen smaller papers and media outlets, the bombing of the paper showed just how vulnerable the free press and media are in Lithuania.

After the bomb blast, the Saturday morning editions of Lithuania’s major dailies carried a statement by the members of the FSF which rejected as insincere the expressions of concern issued by government officials to the attack, charging that the government itself had promoted a climate hostile to the press and media in Lithuania. The independent daily “Respublika” went as far as publishing the photographs of five government officials and two reputed mafia bosses with an accompanying headline, “They urged getting even with the free press”. Who were those officials? President Brazauskas, Prime Minister Slezevicius, Interior Minister Vaitiekunas, Press Control Board Director Vipartas (yes, Lithuania has a press control board) and deputy head of the ruling LDLP Mr. Gediminas Kirkilas. The two reputed mafia bosses with substantial registered enterprises were: Mr. Konopliovas, president of Tauras Bank and Mr. Petrikas, president of EBSW (a holding company).

Almost two months after the blast, there has been no progress in finding the culprits who carried out or ordered the bombing. Prime Minister Slezevicius has publicly criticized the members of the Free Speech Foundation and accused the newspapers of “not paying their fair share of taxes”. The Interior Minister has boasted that he knows that for \$200 anyone can attend a two-week course in bomb-making in Lithuania, yet has never arrested any of these reputed bomb instructors. The Finance Ministry has sent out tax inspectors to aggressively follow-up “leads” that the newspapers and media are withholding their true financial records and sizeable amounts of cash. They actually froze the accounts of “Respublika” for a couple of weeks under the pretense of “checking the accounts”. President Brazauskas, after a two-week silence, summoned Mr. Vainauskas and the senior editors of “Lietuvos Rytas” to his office and spent a good portion of the conversation complaining that the reporting about

crime and government corruption in their paper was “too vague” and “it didn’t reveal the names of the people making the charges”. So much for the right of confidentiality and the right of the press to protect its sources.

We also haven’t seen any progress in having the parliament consider, let alone adopt, a new press and media law which would grant the press fundamental rights to function. Instead, the press is subject to harassment by the Press Control Board, and the government has an alternative bill drafted which would enshrine the principle that a reporter and editor can be held liable for “inaccurate information”. Note that this is not the Western understanding of libel, but a far broader and easily manipulated restriction on the press and media. Independent television is in a far more precarious position — with the independent station in Kaunas closed, and Tele-3 in Vilnius near collapse, there is only one viable independent television station left in Lithuania — assuring the government a virtual monopoly over this effective tool of communication. Will the radios be next?

The people of Lithuania are fortunate in that they still have enough independent reporters and editors willing to fight for the right of the public to be informed. These are gutsy newsmen who would make Thomas Jefferson proud. An independent press is one of the pillars of democracy, and a healthy free press can only enrich and strengthen Lithuania’s fledgling democracy. It deserves our support. Let’s hope the people of Lithuania understand that as well.

Just as the government seemed to be containing the fallout from the newspaper’s bombing, the Central Bank of Lithuania and the Interior Ministry moved to shut down two of the three largest private banks in Lithuania - Lithuanian Joint Stock Innovation Bank (LAIB) and Litimpeks. These two banks are the oldest private banks in the country and account for more than half of the private sector’s financial transactions and deposits. On December 18, 1995 five minutes before 17:00 (just before closing) a fax came into LAIB from the Bank of Lithuania ordering them to cease all operations because they were in violation of regulations dealing with a recent hard currency purchase LAIB had made on behalf of one of its clients (the Ignalina nuclear power plant). A few days later, on December 20, Prime Minister Slezevicius took to the television airwaves to reassure Lithuanians that he had taken measures to stabilize the banking system of Lithuania, and would



attempt to save LAIB. However, the Interior Ministry seized the second bank, Litimpeks and began arresting the presidents of both LAIB and Litimpeks. On the following day, both of these men were publicly charged with defrauding their banks of \$68 million and \$32 million respectively.

Overzealous government regulators run amuck? A collapse of the house of cards? Or a steely-nerved move to take out a good portion of the private banking sector? A delegation of banking experts from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank arrived in Vilnius on January 12, 1996 to evaluate the crisis and provide some advice to the Lithuanian government. The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. has urged that, whatever is done, there be “transparency” and “full accountability” by government regulators and other officials to help restore credibility and trust in the banking system of Lithuania.

International experts have been warning for some time that the banking system in Lithuania would face another shakeout. Since the bankruptcy of the Sekundes bank in Lithuania nearly two years ago, the Bank of Lithuania has intervened in at least 15 private sector banks. Some of them have been fully liquidated, but most are still in various stages of audit, evaluation and control by bank regulators of the Bank of Lithuania. Now, the Bank of Lithuania has taken responsibility for two of the three largest private sector banks in Lithuania. Quite a regulatory burden for the central bank’s bank supervision staff which numbers 12-20 persons depending on how you count them. It has been reported that foreign experts familiar with the condition of the banking system in Lithuania had advised the Bank of Lithuania that although the loan portfolios of LAIB and Litimpeks may be shaky due to all

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Paul A. Goble

RUSSIA(N) RETURNS: THE DECEMBER 1995 VOTE AND THE BALTIC STATES

The victory of the communists and nationalists in the December 1995 Russian parliamentary election will have a major impact on the Baltic states but not immediately and not in the way many Balts now expect. That conclusion reflects the peculiar state of the Russian political system and the indirect way in which popular preferences there are covered into policy. Understanding this process will not allow the Baltic states to escape its consequences, but it will permit them to parry the Russian thrusts that this election guarantees will be coming.

A Foreign Policy Election

Russian voters expressed their disgust with Moscow's current domestic and foreign policies—only one voter in nine backed the government and more than half voted for the communists and nationalists—but their views will not be immediately translated into government policy. Consequently, Russia is not about to “go Communist” or “go fascist” as some Western commentaries would have it. There are three reasons for this: First, most of those voting were voting against the government rather than for a particular program. Second, in the current Russian political system, the prime minister and his government do not need to reflect the views of the new majority. Unless Yeltsin decides to sack Chernomyrdin, the current prime minister and his cabinet can remain in place. And third, the Russian president can and will ignore the new parliament on many issues just as he has in the past. And unlike many Russian voters, Yeltsin knows that he cannot go too far in adopting the domestic programs of his opponents without putting at risk both his relationship with the West and his own reelection chances.

But if Russia is not going to change dramatically at home, it is likely to change its approach to foreign countries and to become even more assertive toward what Russians insist on calling “the near abroad”. If there is one thing that unites the Russian communists, the

Russian nationalists, and Boris Yeltsin, it is that Russia should stand tall as a great power. Unfortunately for Russians today, their country is not in a position to challenge the West on most issues, but it can seek to dominate the 11 former Soviet republics in the Commonwealth of Independent States and also, if to a lesser degree, the three Baltic countries. Consequently, as Yeltsin seeks to take the wind out of the sails of his opponents and thus to set himself up for reelection as president next year, he is almost certain to press harder for even greater Russian control of the former Soviet periphery even while he ignores or at least tempers demands for a retreat from privatization and market reform at home.

**Now, the Russian attacks
are more sophisticated but
potentially even more effective.**

There are several reasons for this strategy. First, Yeltsin's main supporters at home are the newly rich beneficiaries of nomenklatura privatization: they have no interest in seeing their own wealth divided with others or confiscated by the state, and they will back Yeltsin as long but only as long as he guarantees them that. Second, Yeltsin understands that he will only be reelected in June if he shows himself to be tough somewhere. His policy in the former Yugoslavia has collapsed, his approach in Chechnya has failed, and Yeltsin needs a victory. He is almost certain to seek it in the “near abroad” either directly through Russian pressure or indirectly by extracting some form of explicit Western recognition of Russia's “special” rights in this region. And third, Yeltsin has certainly received signals from the West that it wants him to stay in office and will show understanding toward a more offensive Russian policy if that is the price of keeping Yeltsin around. The only constraints are that Moscow must continue to justify its military adventures in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus

as “peacekeeping” and must not use direct military force in the former Soviet West.

The Balts Won't Be the First Target, But ...

Given these constraints, Yeltsin is likely to look to Central Asia and the Transcaucasus to make his point long before he turns to the Baltic countries and Ukraine. He can act more freely in those regions, and unless the Saudi king dies, he certainly recognizes that the West is not prepared to stand up to him on the question of the oil pipelines out of Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Indeed, precisely because this oil may be all that much more valuable in the event of a Saudi collapse, Yeltsin may already have decided to move more quickly in this region, to lock up Russian control and force these countries into what would likely be almost protectorate status.

Many in the Baltic states will breathe a sigh of relief that Moscow is not targeting them or at least not targeting them so brutally. But that is a mistake. For symbolic reasons and because most Russians still blame the Balts for helping to bring down the Soviet empire, Yeltsin must do something about them. I believe he will move in three main directions:

—First, Yeltsin is almost certain to seek an explicit American and Western commitment not to include the Baltic states in NATO at least in the first round. The Clinton Administration and the West Europeans will be reluctant to make such an explicit concession, but they are so worried about what might happen if Yeltsin passes from the scene, that the Russian president may be able to play on the incredible power of weakness one more time.

—Second, Yeltsin is going to put more pressure on the banking systems and the economies more generally of the three Baltic countries. As happened with Latvia's Baltija Bank, Moscow does not have to do much to undermine any weak banks that are around; and the Russian government will continue to play games with transit agreements, ports, and tariffs to seek to keep the Baltic states dependent on Moscow rather than tied to the West. And because such actions will look either “normal” or being sufficiently confusing to outside observers, the West is unlikely to blame Moscow for such activities.

—Third, Yeltsin will seek to use the tried and true method of raising the question of the “human rights” of ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia. This is especially likely if Communist leader Zyuganov seeks a rapprochement with nationalist-like General Lebed or even Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, something Zyuganov is almost certain to do if he wants to be in a position to defeat Yeltsin in June. Since Yeltsin certainly understands this, he will try to move first. Again, the West is likely to show “understanding” on this issue.

For symbolic reasons and because most Russians still blame the Balts for helping to bring down the Soviet empire, Yeltsin must do something about them.

Parrying the Russian Thrust

What can the Balts and Baltic Americans do? Unfortunately, there is no way to guarantee that Moscow will not succeed in its goals, but there are three obvious things the Baltic governments should do and three equally obvious things that Baltic Americans should consider. As for the Baltic governments, they should not overreact to Russian rhetoric but should be watching for Russian actions in the ostensibly “non-security” economic areas. They should also continue their active diplomacy in Europe and Washington to deepen Partnership for Peace and to extend the discussion of NATO expansion without any definite statements about membership being given. As long as the Balts are not told “no” to membership, they win and Moscow loses; once they are told “no”, Moscow is the big gainer. And the Baltic governments should seek the closest possible contacts with Ukraine, the Transcaucasian states and Kazakhstan both to monitor what is going on and to be in a position to communicate developments in those regions to the West.

Baltic Americans meanwhile should press for the fullest possible coverage of developments in all three countries in the American media and by the American government. They should keep up the pressure on the Clinton Administration not to say “no” to the Balts on NATO membership this year. 1996 is an election year in the U.S. as well. And they should do what they can to promote investment and democracy in the three Baltic states: both will promote Baltic integration into Europe and the West; the absence of either will be a godsend to the Russians.

Five years ago this month, the world watched as Vytautas Landsbergis and the Lithuanian people stood up to the crude Soviet attack on Baltic freedom. Now, the Russian attacks are more sophisticated but potentially even more effective. Will the Baltic countries and the West rise to the occasion again? Or will they fail precisely because the new attack won't be so obvious? It is a question we should all be asking ourselves.

Algis Rimas

BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT NEWS

Banking Crisis Hits Lithuania

The two largest commercial banks in Lithuania were closed by the country's central bank, the Bank of Lithuania, in mid-December. This followed another recent closure of a major commercial bank, the Western Bank of Klaipeda. According to the central bank, the two banks, **Lithuanian Joint-Stock Innovation Bank** and **Litimpeks**, were declared insolvent following allegations of management improprieties resulting in too many bad loans. The chairmen and presidents of both banks were taken into custody pending an investigation of their activities.

The privately held Lithuanian Joint-Stock Innovation Bank and Litimpeks accounted for some 20 percent of all bank deposits in Lithuania. Shortly before the central bank's action closed them, the boards of the two banks had decided to merge. This would have made the combined bank the largest one in Lithuania.

Critics of the closures quickly complained that the central bank acted hastily and irresponsibly, risking a national financial crisis. Some claimed that the two banks were singled out as scapegoats to avoid having the government and the central bank deal with more fundamental problems in the entire banking sector. The two main opposition political parties, the Christian Democrats led by Algirdas Saudargas and the Homeland Coalition Party led by prof. Vytautas Landsbergis, called on Lithuania's president, Algirdas Brazauskas, to take prompt steps to safeguard the banking system and depositors, deal with fraudulent loans, and remove from office culpable officials. In the case of the earlier mentioned closure of Western Bank of Klaipeda, there was no government rescue. Deposits continue to be frozen as the port city bank edges towards liquidation.

Pending a restructuring of the balance sheets of the Lithuanian Joint-Stock Innovation and Litimpeks banks, it is yet unclear if or when depositors will recover their money. Also unclear is how the central bank or the Lithuanian government plan to rescue the two banks. Kazys Ratkevicius, Governor of the Bank of Lithuania, said that a rescue package could be formulated within the next three

months to avert bankruptcy. Initial government statements, as well as those of the banking industry, attempted to downplay the event and its impact on the country's economy. One government spokesman indicated that the entire commercial banking sector accounted for only 20-30 percent of lending to industry. Observers from the International Monetary Fund and other international organizations reportedly have been assured that the situation is being handled responsibly.

In the wake of the closures, parliament (Seimas) rushed through a law insuring small deposits held in litas, the local currency, up to an equivalent of \$1,250. Unresolved as of this writing is whether the law will apply retroactively or only to future bank failures. Unsurprisingly, depositors of the two closed banks remain anxious. According to sources in the Lithuanian media, their number includes the Ignalina nuclear power plant, the Mazeikiai oil refinery, the port of Klaipeda, many foreign investors and joint-venture firms, opposition political parties and the Roman Catholic Church.

Lithuanian Government Bonds Floated on the Eurodollar Market

The Lithuanian government launched on December 11 in London a \$60 million bond issue with a two-year maturity and a 10 percent coupon. The Eurodollar bond was floated by the Japanese security house, Nomura. The issue has been fully subscribed. Nomura's spokesman, Daniel Jackson, said he was pleased with the acceptance of the bond issue by the capital markets. He attributed this confidence to "Lithuania's political stability and low debt burden as well as fiscal and monetary prudence..." among other reasons. The issue is intended to partly finance Lithuania's 1996 budget deficit which is projected to reach \$164 million. Further bond issues on the international and domestic markets are proposed.

According to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Lithuanian coincidentally attracted \$60 million of direct foreign investment in 1994. This amount was considerably less than the \$250 million invested during the same period in

Estonia. Part of the difference may be attributed to delays in privatizing state-owned industries in Lithuania. Yet unclear is the effect that the above mentioned bank crisis will have on foreign investor confidence.

More Taxes and Regulations Hit Business in Lithuania

Foreign investment is highly sought by Lithuania and most other countries. We are therefore surprised when the Lithuanian authorities themselves, through regulations or taxes, sometimes make the Lithuanian market less attractive to investors, both foreign and domestic. Here are four examples gleaned from the Lithuanian press.

Last November the government decreed, with little notice, **an end to private express courier services**. Henceforth, only the local post office could carry mail and documents. Lithuanian customs immediately impounded hundreds of courier packages being brought into the country by Federal Express DHL, UPS and similar companies. One Philadelphia company, bidding on an infrastructure communications project, could not meet the filing deadline when its bid documents were held up at Vilnius Airport under the new government decree. Following an outpouring of complaints the government quickly reversed its decision and suspended the rule. Courier mail is flowing again, but not in time to soothe the Philadelphia company which missed out on what could have been a \$20 million contract.

A second example is a government decree issued in December which rules that as of 1996 **one-half of all products sold at duty-free shops will have to be of Lithuanian manufacture**. The rule also levies a minimum tax on all alcoholic beverages sold in duty-free shops. Ben Gudelis, the manager of Fragrances International, Inc., a U.S.-Lithuanian joint venture which operates the duty-free at Vilnius Airport, pointed out that the rulemakers ignored the fact that Lithuania produces very few products, such as liquor and handicrafts, that could be sold to typical airport shoppers. It would also take time to obtain such goods in bulk. He thought perhaps he could comply with the new rules by obtaining 40,000 separate pieces of Lithuanian amber. Anyone for manufacturing perfume or watches in Lithuania to stock the duty-free?

A third example is a draft law before parliament that would **tax personal interest and dividend income**. Such income is currently untaxed. In phrases reminiscent of Republican Congressmen, critics of the measure claim it would dry-up investment as savings would be shifted to tax havens, including foreign bank accounts. Such income is also seen by them as being double-taxed, first, as corporate profits which is subject to a 29 percent tax, and secondly, as personal income if the proposed law were passed.

A fourth example is the application of the country's **18 percent value-added tax (VAT) to industrial imports**. Bronius Lubys, former prime minister and now director of Achema, a large fertilizer manufacturer, recently told the Vilnius daily newspaper, "Lietuvos Rytas", how his company was planning to improve its productivity by importing upgraded technology and equipment. A loan of \$100 million for the purchase reportedly was being lined-up. However, a major roadblock to carrying out the project is the insistence by the revenue service that all purchases by subject to the VAT. In this case, the struggling company would have to pay about \$18 million to the government before completing its investment program.

More Supermarkets and Better Hotels in Vilnius

During the past two months three new supermarkets opened their doors in Vilnius. The "Pas Juozapa" chain launched its third store aimed at the upscale end of the market. Competition for the well-heeled customer was joined by "Promenadas", now Vilnius' largest supermarket. Located next to the trade exhibition pavilion, LITEXPO, it boasts a parking lot for 200 cars. "Promenadas" is said to be owned by the investment branch of Hermes Bank. A third new supermarket, "Ekonomija", caters to discount shoppers. It claims to offer cut rate prices by marking up its prices no more than 10 percent above wholesale. This indicates that Lithuanian retailers generally enjoy fat margins compared to like businesses in Western economies.

The colorful **Vilnius Hotel**, once owned by the reputed mobster, Georgi Dekadnidze, has been bought by the New York based Baltic Fund and is undergoing a \$20 million facelift. According to Mindaugas Cerniauskas, the Baltic Fund's representative in Vilnius, the new owners intend to convert the now seedy structure into a five star hotel and office complex. The Vilnius World Trade Center which Cerniauskas also represents will offer the offices for short or long term leasing. Mr. Cerniauskas, who in addition is the president of the Lithuanian Chambers of Commerce Association, told the business magazine, "Verslo Zinios", that members of the Saudi royal family hold a stake in the Baltic Fund and that in the future the Fund may become an important funnel for Arab source investment in Lithuania.

Another Vilnius old-town landmark, the **Astoria Hotel**, has also changed owners. In February it too is slated to close for major renovations estimated to cost \$8 million. They would be financed by the hotel's new part-owner, a Swedish company, Doraberg AB. It bought out a Norwegian group of investors after they declared insolvency. The Astoria is now owned by a joint-venture whose partners are Doraberg AB and the Vilnius city government. According to news reports, Swedish and unidentified Dutch

interests wish to gain majority control of the joint venture and the City of Vilnius is expected to sell out. Vilnius needs the money. The city's 1996 budget of \$100 million is lower in real terms than what it had to spend in previous years.

The Irish Want More Beer

"Gubernija", brewers of beer for the city of Siauliai since 1786 are to be bought by Irish interests. The Ministry of Agriculture, which owns 49 percent of "Gubernija", reportedly agreed to sell its share to an unnamed Irish and Panamanian consortium. Sources in Siauliai indicate that the Irish-led group will seek majority ownership.

Address Correction:

In the November issue of BRIDGES we reported a job opportunity in Vilnius with the Swedish cosmetics firm, Ori-Flame. We subsequently learned that the firm had changed its fax number. The new number is (3702) 709-133. The complete address is: Ori-Flame, Vileisio g. 18, Vilnius 2055, Lithuania, tel: (3702) 709-147 or 148 or 149. The president of the company is Eva Valentinas.

LITEXPO

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Laisves pr. 5, Vilnius, Lithuania 2600
tel: (3702) 454-500; fax: 454-511

1996 SCHEDULE OF INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

- | | |
|---|--|
| February 7-10: "ADVERTISING '96" 2nd Exhibition of Advertising, Marketing and Advertising Articles | August 23-28: "BABY LAND '96" 2nd Exhibition "Everything for the Baby" |
| February 21-24: "BALT SHOP & BALT HOTEL '96" 3rd Exhibition of Hotel and Restaurant Supplies, Shop Design & Shop Fittings | September 10-13: "BALTIC TEXTILES & LEATHER '96" 5th Trade Fair for the Shoe and Textile Industries |
| March 7-10: "BUILDING & RENOVATION '96" 3rd Exhibition of Building Equipment and Goods of Maintenance Works | September 24-27: "BALTMEDICA/BALTFARMA/BALTDENT/BALTOPTIK '96" 4th Special Exhibition and Seminar Week in the Medical Fields |
| March 21-24: "CINDERELLA '96" 3rd Hairdresser's Equipment and Cosmetics Trade Fair | October 8-11: "BUILDING '96" 7th Exhibition of Building Equipment and New Technologies |
| April 9-12: "INTERNATIONAL FASHION FAIR" | October 23-26: "INFOBALT '96" Computer, Office Equipment and Telecommunications Show |
| April 18-20: "TRANSBALTICA '96" 2nd Exhibition of Transport, Technology, Services, Investment, Logistics | November 7-10: "HOUSEHOLD '96" 3rd Exhibition "Everything for Your Home, Garden and Leisure" |
| May 7-10: "AGROBALT '96" 5th Agricultural, Food and Packaging Industry Trade Fair | November 19-22: "SECURITY '96" 3rd Exhibition of Security and Safety Systems |
| May 20-22: "TECHBALTICA '96" 3rd Trade Fair of Electrical Engineering & Consumer Electronics & Industry Fair | December 12-15: "WINTER BOUQUET" Florists' Competition |
| June 11-14: "SPORT '96" Exhibition of Consumer Goods for Sports and Tourism | |

Jeanne Dorr

“LABAS”: THE LITHUANIAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

March of 1994 was the first column I submitted to BRIDGES which would appear on a monthly basis about humanitarian aid. Since that time, I have strayed from what humanitarian aid means to most people. To me, it means more than packages, medical supplies and books. It means helping the people in Lithuania acquire a standard of living comparable to the Western world. It means sanitary conditions, indoor plumbing, and telephones in the most remote villages. It means the establishment of businesses, an equitable tax system that works and a sound legal system. Most of us who work with humanitarian aid would like to see ourselves “put out of business”. It would mean Lithuania is finally standing on its own two feet.

I have written about helping the medical profession and the educational system. Now, I would like to tell you about the legal system. In the beginning of 1994, I wrote to several Lithuanian organizations and asked for information about their organizations for BRIDGES. Of all the letters I sent out only one organization responded,

and that was LABAS, the Lithuanian-American lawyers group. I have to admit that I have put off writing this article for more than a year because legal issues and terminology can be confusing and intimidating. Regina Narusis sent me information and we had a very long telephone conversation, and I was still lost. So, I decided to base this article on what I read in LABAS’ newsletter, “Lex Lituani”. I hope that the lawyers reading this article will keep in mind that I am a layperson writing to an audience of laypeople (my legal disclaimer).

A group of American attorneys saw the opportunity to help the Lithuanian legal system as it emerged from fifty years of Soviet domination. I use the term legal system rather loosely as it certainly was nothing like the Western systems. Just as the teachers and the doctors did not organize with the idea of going to Lithuania to revamp and take over the fields of education and medicine, neither did the lawyers. Instead, they determined that they would merely suggest and recommend, they would offer their

services where and when Lithuania needed them. Lithuania would need help re-establishing its legal profession, bringing its members up to world standards. The Lithuanian-American Bar Association, Inc., is comprised of lawyers from across the United States who are of Lithuanian-American descent and would like to be of assistance to Lithuania.

L A B A S determined that it would focus on four main areas. (1) It would establish professional relations with the Lithuanian legal community; (2) it would



Judge Thomas Griglun, LABAS board member (in center of group) and Mark Gervelis, LABAS board member (on far right) with Lithuanian attorneys during the First World Congress of Lithuanian Lawyers, May, 1992.

establish a referral system to handle requests originating from Lithuania for legal assistance; and (3) it would identify areas of collaboration between the U.S. and Lithuanian legal communities. But before these three areas could be dealt with effectively, the group would have a more immediate focus, they would have to (4) find and recruit Lithuanian-American lawyers in the United States.

In August, 1991, Regina Narusis met with members of the legal community in Vilnius, Lithuania to introduce LABAS and to start developing ties with their colleagues in Lithuania. In

October of the same year, Alexander Rimas Domanskis, an attorney in Illinois, coordinated the visit of Lithuanian parliamentarians for a legislative exchange with the Illinois General Assembly and the United States Congress. In October, 1991 and January, 1992, Ernest Raskauskas spent time in Lithuania meeting with government ministers, representatives of the Lithuanian Lawyers Association, government procurators and law school faculty to discuss LABAS and proposals for the future. During the 1992 trip Ernest also led an American Bar Association delegation of distinguished constitutional scholars that consulted with the Lithuanian Parliament regarding the draft of the new constitution.

Requests for legal advice started to pour in from Lithuania. Advice was asked about social security and tax matters as well as questions concerning American corporate law. The LABAS attorneys would review the questions and assign them to their members who specialize in those particular areas of law. In the beginning, the requests for advice were limited to the Lithuanian government and various organizations.

Not only the law, but also legal education was changing at such a swift pace that it was impossible for the Lithuanian legal community to keep up the rapid transformation. Vilnius University had the only law school in the country. It was there that lawyers, prosecutors, future judges, and law professors were trained. There were no textbooks written or published on any subject other than the now irrelevant Marxist law school curriculum. All instruction now had to be done through the lecture method



Standing from left to right: Constitutional Court of Lithuania Justice Stasys Sedbaras, Regina Narusis, Lithuanian Bar Association president Kestutis Stungys and Robert Kezelis. First World Congress of Lithuania Lawyers, May 1992.

with the students having only their notes for study. More over, one-third of the faculty left their positions to assume responsibilities in the new government. The faculty who remained, as well as Lithuania's lawyers throughout the country, would need additional training as Lithuania moved towards democracy and left behind the Soviet legal system. At this point the American Bar Association's Central and East European Law Initiative (CEELI) largely funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development had accepted the University of Vilnius into its Sister Law School Program. Vilnius Law School was matched with the law schools of Villanova University in Philadelphia, PA, the University of Baltimore in Baltimore, MD, and John Marshall Law School in Chicago, IL. Every law school in the United States was sent an invitation to participate in this program and these three schools requested a match with Lithuania's law school.

Lithuania would also need help in reorganizing its legal associations. Bar associations in the United States are typically organized by geographical region, usually a state, and include all members of the profession. In Lithuania, the members were organized according to legal speciality. The goal would be to bring together all the members of the legal profession.

Lithuanian lawyers began looking to foreign lawyers, especially those from the United States and Western Europe as they struggled to develop this new chapter in their budding legal system. A new group of lawyers in private practice began to appear in Lithuania after independence was re-established and those were the

business lawyers. Until this time, the Soviet system outlawed almost all business activity.

A unique event took place in Lithuania's legal history in late May of 1992. The event was called the First World Congress of Lithuanian Lawyers. Fifty years of foreign oppression had prevented this type of gathering. Through this congress, Lithuanian lawyers re-established contacts with their colleagues throughout the world legal community. The format of the congress was a combination of smaller sessions at the beginning and end of each day, with plenary sessions of distinguished panelists before and after the noon break. The presence and participation of LABAS lawyers provided moral support to Lithuania's lawyers who were trying to advance the rule of law and democracy in Lithuania. Friendships and camaraderie were firmly established between the Lithuanian and the LABAS lawyers.

Another outgrowth of the congress and the sister law school program was the signing of a cooperation agreement between the Law School of the University of Vilnius and John Marshall Law School in Chicago, IL. This agreement established an exchange program for students and faculty between the two schools.

As contacts with Lithuanian colleagues have matured, and diversified, LABAS has encouraged Lithuanian lawyers to begin public interest advocacy on behalf of the indigent, juveniles and the elderly—traditionally clients who can't pay healthy legal fees, but nonetheless need legal services and legal representation.

1996 will be a busy and exciting year for LABAS members. Plans for the upcoming Second World Congress of Lithuanian Lawyers are being formulated. Last summer, from June 30 - July 1, 1995 eight American lawyers and one American judge attended a planning session which was held in Vilnius. They met with Lithuanian Parliament and Cabinet members as well as Lithuanian judges, lawyers, deans, librarians and representatives of the Soros Open Society Fund and the CEELI program. They reviewed the work done at the First World Congress discussing what was most beneficial to the Lithuanians and those areas which could be omitted during the future session. It was agreed that matters such as lack of respect for judges and lawyers, standards of ethics, development of criminal procedure, constitutional, business and tax law would be addressed. A suggestion was made by the Lithuanians that a comparative study with European legal tradition and laws would be most beneficial. The Congress will take place in late May or early June. The Lithuanians offered suggestions on the many topics to be discussed at the Congress since they are the best judges of their needs and priorities.

If any Bridges readers have relatives or friends who are lawyers or are presently enrolled in a law school and are of Lithuanian descent, LABAS would like to hear from them. Their expertise is needed to help Lithuanian enter the 21st century. For more information, please contact LABAS president: Mrs. Regina Narusis, 213 West Lake Shore Drive, Cary, IL 60013.

Bridges would like to thank all the LABAS members, who in spite of their busy schedules, have donated their time and legal expertise to help their colleagues in Lithuania. This form of humanitarian aid helps the people of Lithuania to be more self-reliant and eases their entry into the next century.

My heart felt thanks to Regina Narusis for all her assistance, not only with this article, but for all the times she was asked to help in any way, and did. I have called on Regina for help over the years on a variety of topics that ranged from lawyers to dance groups. She was never too busy to be of assistance. John Zerr, of Philadelphia, PA, also offered invaluable advice with this article. This was a new experience for me and John walked me through it paragraph by paragraph. When John retires from the practice of law, he can always turn to the profession of journalism.

Bridges wishes LABAS and their Lithuanian colleagues a happy and successful 1996!



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Ramune Kubilius

SELECTED EXCERPTS FROM THE LITHUANIAN PRESS IN AMERICA

NEW BOOKS TO CONSIDER

Lithuania: The Nation That Would Be Free

Stephen Chicoine, a traveller and admirer of Lithuania, teamed up with Brent Ashabranner, an award winning author of books for young readers, in writing this 64 page book published by Cobblehill Books (a division of Penguin USA). Stephen Chicoine also served as photographer.

The book is divided into eight chapters, including "The Eternal Flame of Freedom", "Facing Off the Giant", "The Jews of Lithuania", "More Than Just a Game". Another section includes facts about Lithuania: its size, population, major cities, language, economy and government. The bibliography is an interesting combination of American newspaper articles and scholarly books dated 1943-1993. The authors spoke to a number of resource persons both in Lithuania and in the United States. The photographs are colorful, and cover both urban and rural life in Lithuania. The chapter on the influence of basketball on Lithuanian patriotism provides an interesting perspective.

There are some shortcomings, however. It is not clear what age group is the target audience. If it is for American junior high school students, some basic background facts seem to be lacking. There is no historical timeline. The "Additional Facts..." section on "Economy" is far too general, mentioning only that, "In 1991, the Lithuanian government embarked on a program to make the transition to a free-market economy...". Basic facts, such as the name and value of the local currency, the Litas, are missing. Reflecting the lack of adequate research for the book, the authors mention only a few Lithuanian-American organizations.

Lithuania: The Nation That Would Be Free is similar to a book published in 1992 aimed at the younger school-aged audience, entitled, *Lithuania: Then And Now*. However, the earlier book was prepared by the Geography

Department of Lerner Publications and was part of a series about countries of the former Soviet Union, and included sidebars and a glossary. A geography professor and a staffer of the Embassy of Lithuania were among those who checked facts in the earlier book. The Chicoine and Ashabranner book includes more personalized accounts and quotes conversations with various Lithuanians and Lithuanian-Americans.

While *Lithuania: The Nation That Would Be Free* has some shortcomings, we can still recommend it because it is attractive and highly readable. There is a shortage of books to be found in school and public libraries about Lithuania and both of the books mentioned here should be recommended or donated to libraries in order to fill the void.

GUIDE TO LITHUANIA

In 1990, a book was published by Inroads of Merrifield, VA entitled *A Guide to the Baltic States*. In 390 pages, all three Baltic countries were covered. The book was edited by Ingrida Kalnins; each section had authors and contributors. The introduction stated, "A trip to the Baltic States today is not just an opportunity to visit a long-neglected part of European cultural history, but rather an extraordinary opportunity to see modern history in the making..." The book contained practical advice, useful facts and addresses, and information about each country, including background for trips to the larger cities and various regions.

Guide to Lithuania, published in 1995, is a new guide which expands on the Lithuanian section of the 1990 book. Part One of the book includes background information on Lithuania, its history, people, and culture. Part Two describes Vilnius and its environs. Part Three describes trips which might be made to Dzukija, Aukstaitija, the city of Kaunas, Zemaitija and the Baltic coast. Appendices include useful Lithuanian language words and expressions, travel agents, a list of Lithuanian Embassies

and Consulates, as well as the addresses of foreign embassies located within Lithuania.

Travel books become dated quickly, but it is hoped that Bradt Publications will continue updating books in its series such as the one about Lithuania. At least one travel bookstore owner in Chicago remarked that Bradt was a new and popular travel series publisher. Books such as the ones mentioned here provide special expertise since they result from collaboration of native Lithuanians and Lithuanians from abroad, who work with foreign travel writers and publishers. This type of collaboration ensures insight and local knowledge which might not be found in other professional travel book publisher series.

ANOTHER MILESTONE CELEBRATED AT VILNIUS UNIVERSITY

The Vilnius University Library is 425 years old. The founders of the College (which later became the University) were the Jesuits, considered to be one of the most intellectual of the religious orders. They felt at the time it was more important to found a college with a library than a college with a chapel or church. The library was founded in 1570 (9 years earlier than its "relative", the university). September 25-26th, the Library celebrated its longevity, its collection of 5 million volumes, its 250 employees, its Library Director Birute Butkevicius and her 32 year career with the Library, 10 as its Director. The conference celebrating the Library's anniversary included 9 different exhibits at the University and a 10th at the Vilnius city government's rotunda. The celebration also included a series of 20 lectures by librarians from other countries: Latvia, Estonia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The University Rector, R. Pavilionis reminded everyone that in years past, a library often preceded the founding of a university, whereas now that would be uncommon. Now, the university is founded and given a name, and eventually a library is established.

Thirty-seven dedicated persons work in the Archives and Preservations Department of the university library; they preserve the rarities. A copy of the first Lithuanian book, published in Karaliaucius in 1547, the catechism by Martynas Mazvydas, is held by the Library. The first Lithuanian book, published in Vilnius in 1595, the catechism of Mikalojus Dauksa, is also housed at the university library.

There is also a major effort underway to make the library technologically advanced. Since 1993, the Library's online catalog can be searched through LITNET (for Lithuania's academic institutions) and now can also be reached through the INTERNET. Computers were donated by the Norwegians in 1992 and the German government donated 2 million marks for the acquisition of new literature. The Library is a depository library for

United Nations (UNESCO) materials. One great fortune has been the fact that financial worries have not troubled the Library; the university's administration and the government have understood the academic and cultural importance of the Library and have provided the financial support needed for its upkeep and collections. A projected plan for a new library building has been ready since 1993, and construction is scheduled to begin in 1997.

It is planned that the new Library will be built for the next millenium in the students' quarter in Sauletekis. The opening will mean the beginning of a new historical era for the old library.

(TEVISKES ZIBURIAI, 11/7/95, from an interview with the longtime Library Director Birute Butkevicius by Genovaite Gustas)

A MAN TO REMEMBER

On November 11th, a special commemoration took place at the Japanese American United Church of Manhattan. Former Japanese Ambassador (in 1940) to Lithuania, Ciunte Sugihara, and his wife Yukiko were remembered for their efforts at the beginning of World War II. They issued more than 6,000 visas to Jews escaping from Nazi-occupied Poland through Lithuania. The visas enabled Jews to escape safely to Japan. Sugihara issued the visas even though Japan had signed a pact with Germany, and the Japanese government did not want anything to endanger these good relations. Ciunte Sugihara decided to issue the visas thereby going against instructions from the Japanese Foreign Ministry. His words to his wife were that if he obeys his government, he will go against God. Having gotten the agreement of the Soviet Consulate that the Soviet government would allow the Jews to transit through Russia to Japan, Sugihara started issuing visas. He wrote from morning until night without stopping for meals, beginning July 29th of that year. His hand and arm would become numb at night and his wife gave him massages. The Japanese government issued instructions for him to move to Berlin, and Sugihara wrote the last visas while his train was leaving the station. He later said that he and his wife must have been born in order to have the job of saving thousands...

After the war, Sugihara was banished from the Japanese diplomatic corps and he had to look for odd jobs in order to support his family. He died 10 years ago in Japan. At the evening of commemoration, Lithuania's Consul General based in New York City, Petras Anusas, spoke. He mentioned that a street in Vilnius has been named in honor of Sugihara. In Kaunas, on the house where Sugihara lived with his family in 1940, a banner hangs with his name, and a monument has been built. Other persons who spoke at that evening included Yukiko Sugihara, their son Hiroki Sugihara, and the current

Japanese Consul. Film archive director (and filmmaker-editor's note-rk) Jonas Mekas read from his memoirs entitled, "As neturejau kur eiti" ("I Had Nowhere to Go") that evening. The audience had tears in their eyes as they heard his words about the meaning of life.

Yukiko Sugihara's Book "Visas for Life" was released on November 10, 1995.

(DARBININKAS, 11/24/95, from an article by Arunas Kulikauskas).

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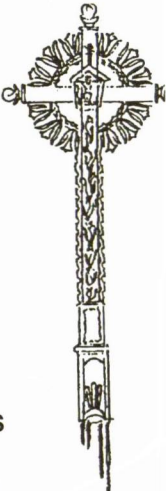
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TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS AND MEMBERS:

Despite the uncertainties of the economy, many Americans are blessed with abundant resources. If you've liked Bridges over the last year, and you approve of the work that the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. does, would you consider including us among your end-of-the-year donations? Since the LAC, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization under U.S. tax law, your contribution to LAC, Inc. is fully tax-deductible. Most corporations which have "Matching Grant" programs will include the LAC, Inc., so check with your personnel office to get the requisite forms and you can double your contribution by asking your employer to match your donation.

Make checks payable to: Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. The donation should be sent to: Mr. Ramas Pliura, Treasurer, Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. 1927 West Blvd., Racine, WI 53403.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nijole Pupiene

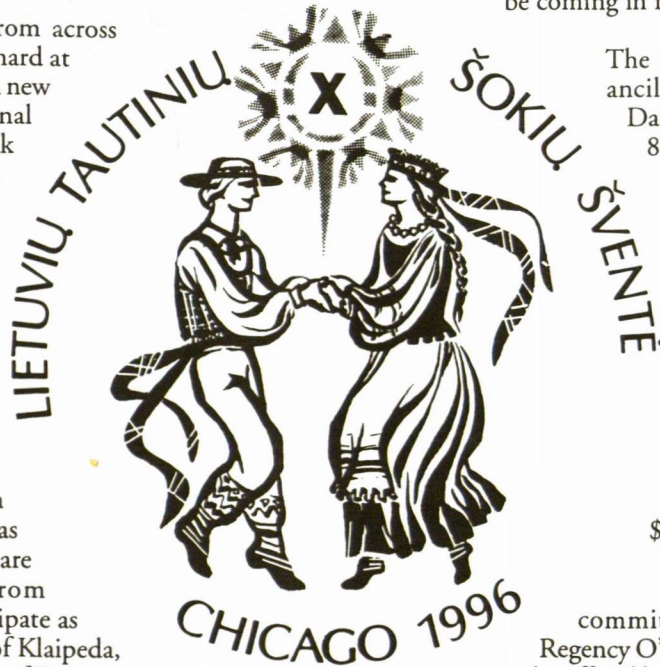
TENTH LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL

Every four years, the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. and its sister organization, the Canadian Lithuanian Community together with the Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute host a major Lithuanian cultural event: the "Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival". Many Bridges readers have attended this spectacular event in previous years, but this year's festival promises to be exceptional both in creativity and the scale of participation.

Folk dance groups from across the United States are already hard at work learning and rehearsing a new repertoire of folk and national dances. Such established folk dance groups with more than 30 years of performing experience are registered: Samburis of Boston, MA; Grandis of Chicago, IL; Gintaras of Toronto, Ont., Canada; Spindulyfs of Los Angeles, CA; and Grandinele of Cleveland, OH. Folk dance groups from a number of South American and European countries will be participating as they have in the past. There are two folk dance groups from Lithuania registered to participate as well: Vetrunge from the city of Klaipeda, and Grandinele from the city of Panevezys.

This year's festival, the Tenth, will be held on Saturday, July 6, 1996 at 1:00 pm at the Rosemont Horizon Hall in Rosemont, IL which is located northwest from Chicago, IL, not far from O'Hare International Airport. Since the Rosemont Horizon accommodates only 15,000 seats, we urge you to buy your tickets early. So make plans to spend part of your 1996 summer vacation, or at least your Fourth of July holiday in Chicago this year. Individual ticket prices for the festival: \$25, \$20 and \$15. For further information call the folk dance festival headquarters in Chicago, IL: tel: (312) 737-9504 or fax: (312) 436-6909.

The Tenth Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival Organizing Committee is also hard at work. The 26-member committee is headed by Mrs. Jurate Budrys, Chairperson. The chief artistic director of this year's festival is Mrs. Violeta Fabianovich, a longtime member of the folk dance institute. The organizing committee has many concerns from fundraising to publishing the program to providing housing for the various dancers who will be coming in for the festival weekend.



The folk dance festival includes ancillary events: a "Friendship Dance" on Friday, July 5, 1996, 8:00 pm in the Grand Ballroom at the Navy Pier (downtown Chicago, right on the lake front) tickets are \$20/person; and the "Festival Banquet" on Saturday, July 6, 1996, 7:00 pm in the Grand Ballroom of the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel, Rosemont, IL after the folk dance festival itself. The tickets to the banquet are: \$50/person.

The organizing committee has chosen the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel in Rosemont, IL as the official hotel of the folk dance festival. Rooms for the festival weekend can be reserved at a rate of: \$65/night for single or double occupancy. For reservations call the hotel: (708) 696-1234.

Come and join your fellow Lithuanian-Americans from around the country at this historic and unique event. Plan your family's next reunion for Chicago, IL at the Tenth Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival. Don't miss it; the next one will only come around in the year 2,000 and who knows where we will all be by then.



Caption: The Chicago, IL based Lithuanian folk dance group, "Grandis" will be performing at the X Lithuanian Folk Dance Festival on Saturday, July 6, 1996 in Rosemont, IL. But they also perform throughout the year.

LET US ENTERTAIN YOU!

"GRANDIS" of Chicago, IL, a Lithuanian folk dance ensemble, would like to perform for your function or festival. The Grandis Ensemble has a unique Lithuanian folkdance repertoire that is sure to delight audiences of all ages.

Grandis was founded in 1950 and has performed in Lithuania twice, South America, Australia, Canada and throughout the United States. Help with travel expenses (group of 25) is requested. For more information, please contact Mrs. Violeta Fabianovich at (312) 436-1624.

AN INVITATION

The Lithuanian American and Canadian Communities

together with the

Lithuanian Folk Dance Institute

cordially invite you to attend the

X LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL

Saturday, July 6, 1996, 1:00 P.M.

Rosemont Horizon, Rosemont, IL

and the other Festival events

FRIENDSHIP DANCE

Friday, July 5, 1996, 8:00 P.M.

Navy Pier, Grand Ballroom, Chicago, IL

FESTIVAL BANQUET

Saturday, July 6, 1996, 7:00 P.M.

Hyatt Regency O'Hare, Grand Ballroom, Rosemont, IL

Information:

X LITHUANIAN FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL

2715 West 71st Street

Chicago, IL 60629

tel.: (312) 737-9504

fax.: (312) 436-6909

continued from p. 3

We shall see.

To say all this is in no way to belittle what the Baltic states accomplished in 1991 and how much they have accomplished since that time. Nor is it to minimize how the world and even Russia has changed over the past five years. It is certainly more pleasant to be worrying about whether the Russian embassy will open polling places in Narva than whether the Russian army will use tanks in Riga or Vilnius. But if we fail to learn the real lessons of January 13—that the Baltic countries must remain united on the central questions of independence and democracy, that Russia has not changed as much as everyone had hoped, and that the West will not be coming to the aid of the Balts now or in the future—we will be doing a disservice to those who made the ultimate sacrifice five years ago and to ourselves and those who will come after us.

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Europe from membership in those organizations. Stating that only certain countries will become members tempts Russia's neo-imperialists into filling the resulting security vacuum. Priority should be given to those who have succeeded in the economic arena (Estonia, the Czech Republic and Slovenia) and those who practice democracy, borders notwithstanding.

Third, candidates for the Republican nomination should pledge that they will reverse the slavish Yeltsin-first policy of President Clinton. So far, Senator Bob Dole is the only candidate to support NATO enlargement and to recognize negative trends in Russia. The Senate majority leader was one of the few congressional leaders to reject the Gorbachev-first policy when he met with President Vytautas Landsbergis in 1990 and invited Boris Yeltsin to the United States in 1991, before the demise of the Soviet Union.

LAC, INC. CHAPTERS' CELEBRATIONS

Sunday, February 4, 1996

BRIGHTON PARK, IL

10:00 am Mass

11:00 am Convocation & Concert

Speaker: prof. Vitkus

Immaculate Conception Church

44th & S. California

Chicago, IL

DETROIT, MI

12:00 pm Convocation & Concert

Speaker: A. Vidunas

Mayor of Vilnius

Divine Providence Church

25335 West Nine Mile Road

Southfield, MI

Saturday, February 10, 1996

STATE OF WASHINGTON

5:30 pm Convocation

Speaker: Paul Goble, Ph.D.

Latvian Hall

11710 Third Avenue, NE

Seattle, WA

Sunday, February 11, 1996

PHOENIX, AZ

2:30 pm Convocation

9728 Palmeros Drive

Sun City, AZ

BOSTON, MA

12:30 pm Convocation

Lithuanian Church

369 West Broadway

South Boston, MA

LOS ANGELES, CA

10:30 am Mass

12:30 pm Convocation & Concert

Speaker: A. Vidunas

Mayor of Vilnius

St. Casimir's Church

2718 St. George Street

Los Angeles, CA

NEW BRITAIN, CT

11:00 am Mass

2:00 pm Convocation & Concert

St. Andrew's Church

396 Church Street

New Britain, CT

PORTLAND, OR

2:00 pm Convocation

Speaker: Mrs. Laima Andrikiene

Member of Parliament

Latvian Hall

5500 S.W. Dosch Road

Portland, OR

for more info: (503) 635-2078

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

11:00 am Mass

Convocation

Speaker: Paul Goble, Ph.D.

Old Cathedral of St. Mary

660 California Street

San Francisco, CA

Wednesday, February 14, 1996

SUNNY HILLS, FL

Mass & Convocation

Speaker: Gediminas Vagnorius

Member of Parliament

St. Theresa's Church

384 Sunny Hills Blvd

Sunny Hills, FL

Friday, February 16, 1996

GOLD COAST, FL

12:30 pm Convocation

Speaker: Gediminas Vagnorius

Member of Parliament

Lighthouse Point

4060 North Federal Highway

Pompano Beach, FL

SIOUX CITY, IA

for info: Mrs. Christopherson

(605) 232-4600

Saturday, February 17, 1996

ST. PETERSBURG, FL

2:00 pm Convocation & Concert

Speaker: Ms. Vaiva Vebraitė-Gust

St. Petersburg Lithuanian Club

4880 46th Avenue, North

St. Petersburg, FL

Note: Mass on Sunday, Feb. 18, 1996

1:00 pm Holy Name Parish

Gulfport, FL

Unless Washington policy-makers—both the Clinton administration and the Republican Congress—learn the lesson of January 13, 1991, they may be paving the way for a repeat in 1996 if Gennady Zyuganov, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy or Alexander Lebed seize the Russian presidency in the June presidential election.

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of their loans to the energy sector in Lithuania, the banks were more than salvageable. Why intervene in these banks in this method just a few days before Christmas leaving thousands of small businessmen and individual depositors stranded with no access to their deposits? The reason remains a mystery.

But the crisis has been aggravated by the admission of the Prime Minister and Interior Minister that they removed their own deposits from LAIB just before the bank's accounts were frozen. Prime Minister Slezevicius

had a term deposit of 135,000 litai bearing 30% (a good 10% higher than the average depositor); and Interior Minister Vaitiekunas had a smaller deposit of \$2,300 also earning above average interest. The Prime Minister has said that he admits to making a "moral and political mistake" and has offered to return his deposit to the bank when it is reopened, but he adamantly refuses to resign. After several days of indecision, the LDLP leadership including President Brazauskas have closed ranks and have called for Prime Minister Slezevicius to remain. President Brazauskas told a press conference on January 4, 1996, "If the Government resigns, then who will deal with the banking crisis?" Although the central bank director Kazimieras Ratkevicius has handed in his resignation, the President has tabled the matter for the time being, and the Speaker of the Parliament, Ceslovas Juršenas, has refused to schedule a vote of no confidence in the central bank director because "the President is taking care of it".

BRIDGES will continue to follow developments in the banking crisis as it unfolds.

OF LITHUANIA'S INDEPENDENCE DAY

Sunday, February 18, 1996

ATLANTA, GA
2:00 pm Convocation
4905 Roswell Road
Marietta, GA

BROCKTON, MA
3:00 pm Convocation
St. Casimir's Church
Ames & Sawtell Avenues
Brockton, MA

CLEVELAND, OH
4:00 pm Convocation
Mother of God Church
Neff Road
Cleveland, OH

LEMONT, IL
11:00 am Mass
12:30 pm Convocation & Concert
Speaker: Mrs. Regina Narusis
Lithuanian World Center
14911 127th Street
Lemont, IL

NEW YORK, NY (New York Region)
3:30 pm Convocation
Speaker: A. Vidunas
Mayor of Vilnius
Zidinys (Lithuanian Center)
341 Highland Blvd.
Brooklyn, NY

OMAHA, NE
11:00 am Convocation
Speaker: Mrs. Audrone Pakstys
St. Anthony's Church
32nd & T Streets
Omaha, NE

PALM BEACH, FL
3:00 pm Convocation
Speaker: Gediminas Vagnorius
Member of Parliament
Oceanview United Methodist Church
701 Ocean Drive
Juno Beach, FL

PHILADELPHIA, PA
2:00 pm Convocation
Lithuanian Music Hall
2715 East Allegheny Avenue
Philadelphia, PA

PROVIDENCE, RI
10:00 am Mass
11:30 am Convocation
St. Casimir's Church Hall
350 Smith Street
Providence, RI

ROCHESTER, NY
12:00 pm Convocation
Speaker: prof. Antanas Klimas
545 Hudson Street
Rochester, NY

WASHINGTON, DC
10:00 am Mass
St. Matthew's Cathedral
2:00 pm Convocation
Speaker: Mrs. Grazina Liautaud
Adult Education Center
University of Maryland

WATERBURY, CT
3:00 pm Convocation
Speaker: Mr. Kestutis Miklas
St. Joseph's Church
8 John Street
Waterbury, CT

Sunday, February 25, 1996

DAYTON, OH
9:30 am Mass
10:30 am Convocation
Holy Cross Church
1924 Leo Street
Dayton, OH

HARTFORD, CT
9:00 am Mass
10:00 am Convocation & Concert
Speaker: Mrs. Regina Narusis
Holy Trinity Church
53 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT

(if your city is not listed yet, it may be in the upcoming February issue)

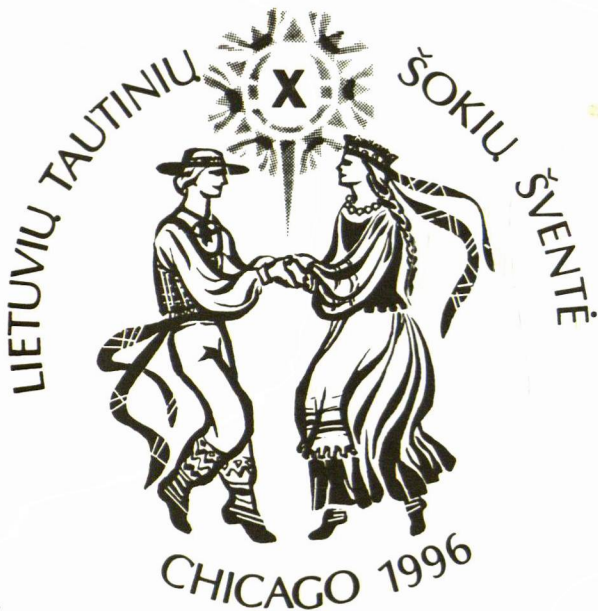
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