

# BRIDGES

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*Investing in Lithuania...Tribute to Mothers...History Lessons for the Future*



## PERSPECTIVES

*Every year before Mother's Day, my family asks how I would like to celebrate. They suggest restaurants, day trips, and movies. My response is the usual, "Let me think about it." Inevitably the day arrives, and I'm still "thinking about it".*

*Due to my indecisiveness, we wind up doing what we would normally do on a regular weekend: spending quiet time together. The only little extra is that the potential arguments are quickly silenced by "It's Mother's Day!"*

*I suppose I've never really taken Mother's Day very personally because I've felt that it was my mother and mother-in-law who deserved that special thank you. They're the ones who mastered motherhood. They're the ones who inspired us with heroic stories, comforted us when our names were ridiculed, and educated us to be bicultural as well as bilingual. Such accomplishments seem phenomenal compared to breaking up the fights, rushing to the hospital with an hysterical child bleeding from a split chin, or reminding the kids that tomorrow is a school night and 11:00 p.m. is not an appropriate time for bed. This entire normalcy seems too ordinary for celebration.*

*I picture myself on Mother's Day beguiling my grandchildren with wonderful Lithuanian folk tales when I'm older, grayer, and wiser...much wiser. I'm not ready to be feted as being "extra special", even for one day a year.*

*Yet, after reading about Our Lady of Šiluva (p. 9) and "Mother's Day Remembered" (p. 13), I find myself thinking how lucky and blessed to have the opportunity to experience motherhood and all the runny noses, first smiles, and moments of realization that go with raising children. When I watch my children interact with their grandparents in the Lithuanian language, I see the connection between generations begun and instilled by our mothers. How truly fulfilled and unique my life has become with the sons my husband and I are raising. And how differently I would see the world without them.*

*I still don't feel "extra special". But this year, I have a definite answer to the perennial question of, "How would you like to celebrate Mother's Day?" I think we're going to do what the kids want to do, and create more memories to recall when I'm older, grayer and much wiser.*

*Rasa Ardys-Juška*

Editor

## BRIDGES

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### LITHUANIA IS GEARING UP FOR SUMMER!

Lithuania's summer schedule includes the 1998 World Lithuanian Song Festival. Five days filled with song, dance, and folklore will be attracting many tourists from around the world. More on page 21.

On the cover:  
"Field Flowers"  
by Vytautas Klemka



Regina Narušis

# An American Firm Invests in Lithuania



**T**he Lithuanian government selected Williams International Group to invest and operate three oil infrastructure projects with an opportunity to participate in additional energy projects on March 17<sup>th</sup>. This agreement was signed by Williams and the Minister of Economy, Vincas Babilius, and subsequently approved by the parliament of Lithuania (Seimas). Such United States trade and investment in Lithuania are a crucial means to ensure Lithuania's integration into the west and western alliances, such as NATO.



Williams is known in the U.S. as a solid, experienced and reputable American business. It is a \$16.3 billion dollar energy, communications, and infrastructure projects company with headquarters in Tulsa, Oklahoma. This firm operates not only in the U.S., but also in 20 different countries from Latin America to Australia, throughout Europe, Asia and to the Pacific Rim. Williams provides a full range of traditional and leading-edge energy and communication services employing over 20,000 people worldwide. Williams's 1997 revenues were \$4.4 billion dollars, resulting in a net income of \$271 million dollars.

Initially, two Williams brothers began a construction business in 1908. Later, it grew into a

world leading pipeline engineering and construction firm. Then, in 1957, the firm went public under the name of Williams Brothers with a net worth of about \$8 million dollars. In 1985, the company entered into the communications business, turning the idle pipelines into conduit for fiber-optic cable. It is the nation's fourth largest fiber-optic network. Even though the company sold its long distance portion of the telecommunications business in 1995, it stayed involved in multimedia applications, such as video, the Internet, and customer premise equipment.

In 1995, Williams acquired Transco Energy, a major natural gas pipeline company. This made Williams the largest volume transporter of natural gas in the United States. In March of 1998, it then acquired MAPCO, Inc. with its natural gas liquid pipelines, refining, propane marketing and distribution, as well as a chain of more than 250 convenience stores and travel centers. Williams is the fifth largest retail propane marketer in the United States.



Williams expects to acquire 33 percent ownership of the following Lithuanian projects: the Biržai pipeline system, the Mažeikių Oil Refinery, and the Butingė Terminal Project. The Lithuanian government will retain 34 percent ownership. The balance will remain owned by the Russian oil companies using the facilities. Williams is expected to complete construction

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*REGINA NARUŠIS, a practicing attorney in Illinois, is the President of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.*





*Williams International Group representatives met with representatives of the Lithuanian-American Community and members of Lithuania's Parliament at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C. on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. The above photo includes Audronė Pakštys (Director of LAC Public Affairs Office), Debbie Lawrence (Vice President of Government Affairs, Williams Co.), Glenn Jackson (Director of Legislative Affairs, Williams Co.), and Dr. Michael Pakštys (SAIC).*

*Photo: Ramūnas Astrauskas*

of the terminal and an offshore oil export facility at Butingė, and then operate all of the facilities. A planned offshore pipeline will deliver oil and other petroleum products to a single point mooring buoy located 10 kilometers offshore Butingė.

The agreement by Williams with the Lithuanian government has won praise by United States government officials. Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott, and Commerce Secretary, William Daley, have both hailed the selection of Williams for this project. They also expressed confidence that the climate for long-term investment in Lithuania by U.S. companies will continue.

Don Wiruth, managing director of Williams

international group said, "We are extremely excited about the opportunity to assist in developing these energy assets. The Butingė project represents a major economic development for Lithuania. We look forward to the opportunity to become part of the Lithuanian community."

✎

We expect Williams will be mindful of the views and concerns of the Lithuanian people. This type of investment creates a U.S. presence that not only is expected to contribute to Lithuania's prosperity but also to bring with it significant political and security benefits. We look forward to a success story for both Lithuania and Williams.



*Tomas A. Michalskis, Ph.D.*

# Book Delves Into Lithuania's Past For Lithuania's Future

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*Lithuania in European Politics –  
The Years of the First Republic,  
1918 to 1940*

*By Alfonsas Eidintas, Vytautas Žalys  
and Alfred Erich Senn*

*Edited by Edvardas Tuskenis*

*Published by St. Martin's Press,*

*New York, 1998.*

*241 pages including map and  
photographs*

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**T**he authorship of this book is in itself remarkable. It is a solid blend of the best American and Lithuanian scholarship presented in a passionately dispassionate diplomatic manner.

Alfonsas Eidintas and Vytautas Žalys are accomplished Lithuanian historians and members of the Lithuanian Foreign Service. Both held high positions as Ambassador and First-Secretary at the reactivated Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C.. Alfonsas Eidintas is now the Lithuanian Ambassador to Canada. Vytautas Žalys has returned to the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry in Vilnius.

Alfred Erich Senn is a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, and is an internationally recognized American authority on Lithuanian history and politics. His

publications are required reading for anyone seriously interested in modern Lithuania. Edvardas Tuskenis is an American-Lithuanian who has brought considerable editorial skills to this volume.



After an introduction by Mr. Senn, the evolution of the modern Lithuanian national movement at the start of the twentieth century is described juxtaposing the demands of a modern nation state against the romantic legacy of a multi-ethnic and culturally diverse medieval Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Two directions were clearly possible; the reestablishment of the Grand Duchy in some sort of relationship with Poland, Russia or Germany, or a modern ethno-centric Lithuanian national republic.

Although Lithuania chose the latter course, the undertow of the Grand Duchy's historical baggage during the period of the First Republic weighed heavily upon

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*Reviewed by TOMAS A. MICHALSKIS, Ph.D. Dr. Michalskis has written for BRIDGES as associate editor, and served as Secretary and Director of the Chancery at the Lithuanian Embassy, Washington, D.C. in the past.*



the country. While neighboring Latvia and Estonia began their modern statehood comparatively unencumbered by their history, Lithuania was shackled in the grip of its past.

The dispute over Vilnius was much more than a territorial issue. It was waged over possession of the historic soul of Lithuanian statehood. The tension over Vilnius between Lithuania, Poland and Belarus was based on two diametrically opposite visions of what modern Lithuania should be. The bitter friction poisoned Lithuanian relations with Poland and negatively affected ties with neighboring Latvia and Estonia. It was used as bait, together with Klaipėda, by both Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia to entice Lithuania into their spheres of influence.

The ensuing acrimony earned Lithuania the disdain of Great Britain, and the wrath and anger of France. Washington would have been content to leave Lithuania within the Russian orbit or appended in some way to a greater Poland had it not been for the vociferous and successful lobbying efforts of the Lithuanian-American community. Vytautas Žalys describes these events artfully and diplomatically.

Alfonas Eidintas directs most of his attention to the creation of the modern Lithuanian state. He presents much new information based upon hitherto inaccessible archival sources and research. Much of this research can be found in his Lithuanian language study entitled *Aleksandras Stulginskis, Lietuvos Prezidentas – Gulago Kalinys [Aleksandras Stulginskis, President of Lithuania – Prisoner of the Gulag]*

published in Vilnius in 1995.

During the period of Soviet occupation, every effort was made to wipe the period of independence from the collective Lithuanian subconscious and the pages of history. What is now called the First Republic was defamed as "bourgeois" and "fascist". Lithuanian homeland historians who attempted to objectively delve

into this period did so at great personal risk. The subject was ideologically and politically taboo in Lithuania.

Alfonas Eidintas is among the first post-Soviet Lithuanian historians to approach the complex life and times of Antanas Smetona in a scholarly and rational way.

Little was written about the presidential regime of Antanas Smetona by Lithuanians abroad but for very different reasons. The failures and mistakes of his administration were still too fresh and painful to be examined actively by émigré historians and publicists.

Antanas Smetona simply did not fit into the hallowed pantheon of past Lithuanian rulers, such as Vytautas the Great, Gediminas, Kestutis, Mindaugas or even Jogaila.

Many thought Smetona was a weak and pusillanimous leader who had brought the country to ruin, a frocked former employee of a Polish bank in Vilnius who deserted his country in a time of tribulation, and died ignobly allegedly trying

to retrieve his wife's fur coat from a Cleveland fire. The perceived anti-clerical measures of his administration lessened his popularity

"Modern Lithuanian history is deeply enmeshed in the complex tangle of competing Central European national aspirations. This volume ably conveys both the determined character of the Lithuanian quest for national independence and the tragic consequences of Lithuania's vulnerability."  
--Zbigniew Brzezinski,  
internationally reknown American expert on international relations currently associated with the Center for Strategic and International Studies,  
Washington, D.C.

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even more among Lithuanian Catholics.

Eidintas also covers such topics as the governmental structures of the First Republic, constitutional issues, internal party squabbles and conflicts, economic development, land reform, the role of minorities -- especially the Jews and Polish speaking Lithuanian citizens, and the remarkable achievements in all areas of life in that time.

Although such topics may not seem particularly exciting to the average reader, those interested in contemporary Lithuanian history and politics will find Eidintas's presentation invaluable in understanding the internal and foreign policies of Lithuania today. Those same policies, though rooted to some degree in the past, must be addressed again by a new generation.

As in every work, there are shortcomings which in no way unfavorably impact on the validity of the study. Most are of a stylistic or technical nature. Some Lithuanians will find fault with the use of English rather than Lithuanian by the authors. The choice of English, the international language of our time, will make this volume available to readers throughout the world. Others will criticize the selection of topics, but every author edits and limits his own work.

However, the index of personal and place names could have been more comprehensive for the more focused reader. A complete and separate bibliography would have been most welcome.

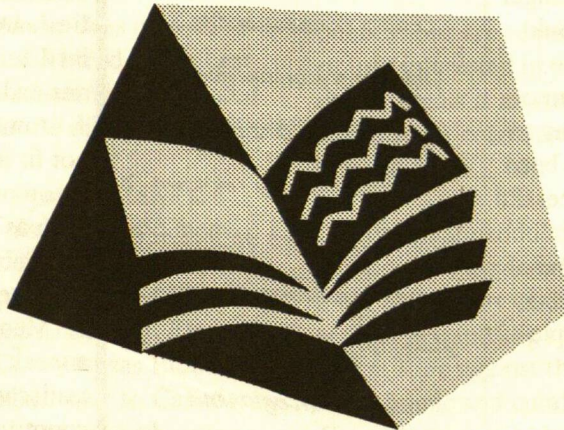
There are some discrepancies in the style of footnoting. In some instances the American system is used, in others the Lithuanian. Certain phrases and abbreviations, readily understood by Lithuanian readers as well as terminol-

ogy in German, Polish, Russian and French, should have been translated into English, such as "Nationalists" for "tautininkai". One would have expected more in the way of Polish, German and Russian primary sources.

Some commentary on the rather striking and even disconcerting appendices would have been illuminating. For example, 21 Lithuanian governments between November 11, 1918 and November 21, 1939 are listed within a time frame of some 21 years without an explanation. Other issues first touched upon by Konstantinas Rackauskas, the father of Lithuanian constitutional legal studies in his pioneering work entitled *Lietuvos Konstitucinės Teisės Klausimais [Questions of Lithuanian Constitutional Law]*, published in New York in 1967, invite further research.

*Lithuania in European Politics* is a very important and much needed study. The history presented is not only timely but, extremely useable in understanding the perennial internal and international problems facing Lithuania today. Unless more creative and effective solutions are found to longstanding issues, a real danger exists that many mistakes of the First Republic will be unwittingly repeated.

The continued existence of an essentially flawed, dysfunctional, mixed parliamentary-presidential political system, pursuing less than clear foreign policy objectives rather than realistic, practical assessments of international realities, could again lead to what Zbigniew Brzezinski describes as "tragic consequences" for Lithuania.





Father Stasys Yla

# The First Apparition of the Mother of God in Europe

## Our Lady of Šiluva



The Shrine of Our Lady of Šiluva  
Photo: The Immaculate Conception Convent

The late FATHER STASYS YLA wrote a detailed chronicle and history of Our Lady of Šiluva in the Lithuanian language. The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Putnam, Connecticut, published this English-language excerpt from the book in 1958.

Down through the centuries, the Mother of God has demonstrated that She is deeply concerned about the faithful who were entrusted to Her by Her Crucified Son on Mount Calvary. From time to time she has appeared in

different places throughout the world to impart a message of hope and salvation to troubled mankind. In the early part of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 1608, She appeared in Lithuania at a time when Lithuania was experiencing one of her darkest hours. The place was Šiluva. (pronounced Shi-lu-vā)

Šiluva was a small town in central Lithuania whose 2,000 or so inhabitants were for the most part poor farmers. The land was very sandy, quite barren, and overgrown with pine trees. In the Lithuanian language, a pine tree forest is known as *šilas*. Hence, the name of the town, Šiluva.

It was here that in 1608 Our Lady appeared to some small children almost under the same circumstances as She did in Lourdes 250 years later. That is why Šiluva has been called, somewhat inappropriately, the Lourdes of Lithuania.

### The First Catholic Church in Šiluva

Lithuania first accepted Catholicism in 1251 when her king, Mindaugas, was baptized in the Catholic faith. Because of

the continual attacks and pillaging upon the country by the Teutonic Knights, the faith was not able to spread until after 1410 — when the Knights were decisively defeated by Vytautas, the Great. A pious noble who was a close advisor to Vytautas, Petras Giedgaudas, built the first church in Šiluva in 1457 in honor of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin.

Giedgaudas endowed the church with many rich gifts. It soon became for the people a place of fervent devotion to Our Lady. On each September 8<sup>th</sup>, people from all over Lithuania flocked to the church to commemorate the feast of the Nativity of Our Lady. The church burned down some 40 years later.

In 1500, a new church was built on the site of the old one by Andrius Zavisa who inherited the Giedgaudas fortune. Influenced by the wave of Protestantism then sweeping Europe, his successor, John Zavisa, together with a number of Lithuanian nobles, accepted the Lutheran faith in 1532. Although he took possession of the church's lands, it seems that he did not take over the Catholic Church. He built a Lutheran chapel a short distance away.

Lutheranism was strong in Šiluva until 1550, when it gave way to Calvinism. In 1551, Melchior Zavisa, brother to John, took over the estates and the church of Šiluva.

In 1591, Melchior sold the church and its property to a staunch Calvinist widow, Sofija Vnuckienė. She in turn deeded

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them to the Calvinists on the condition that they build a brick church in Šiluva, a seminary for training Calvinist pastors, catechists and teachers, and a home for the needy.

The conditions were fulfilled a year or two later. The seminary, the only Calvinist one serving Lithuania, was open and functioning at the time of the apparitions in 1608. After the apparitions, it began to lose its influence and effectiveness, and ceased to function about 1625.

#### **Catholic Church Closed**

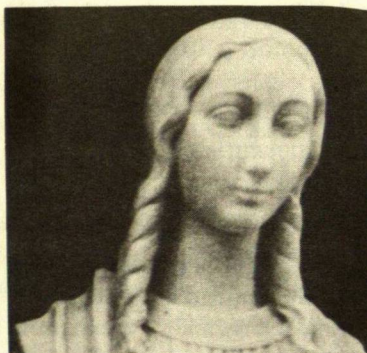
It is not certain just when the Catholic church closed its doors. It is definitely known that services were still being held in 1550. It must be remembered that while the nobles and higher class of people accepted Lutheranism and later Calvinism, the peasants and the poor farmers remained faithful to Catholicism.

In 1550, when the Calvinists became strong enough, they began to use extreme means to force the people to accept Calvinism. Many Catholic churches were burned, while others, together with their treasures, were taken over and used by the Calvinists for their own services and devotions. Thus the Catholics suffered a crippling blow. The Catholic church in Šiluva, it seems, ceased to function about 1570. It either was torn down or burned.

#### **Treasures Buried**

Fortunately, the last pastor saw fit to take the treasured image of the Madonna and Child

which held a most reverend place in the Šiluva church, a number of ecclesiastical vestments cherished by the people, and some of



the official documents, and placed them in a metal-covered oak chest. He secretly buried the chest in the ground near a huge rock about a half mile from the church. Not being able to stay any longer, the pastor left and this seemed the end of Catholicism in Šiluva.

However, in 1588, a statute was passed in Lithuania giving Catholics the right to repossess the churches and property unjustly taken from them some years before.

The Bishop of Žemaitija, The Most Reverend Merkelis Giedraitis, started legal proceedings to reclaim all the Catholic churches and their property. A member of his staff, Rev. Jonas Kazakevičius, was successful in reclaiming the church in Kelme. He knew about the church in Šiluva and sought to obtain the documents that would prove that Petras Giedgaudas had given the land and the church to the Catholic Church. His efforts proved fruitless. Nowhere could he find the necessary documents. The case looked hopeless and in all probability would have re-

mained so unless heaven had not intervened.

#### **The Apparition**

In Šiluva, the people, being poor, simple farmers, eked out a living by tilling the soil. Their older children tended the flocks while the younger ones were accustomed to play around a huge rock that was nearby.

One hot summer day in 1608, while they were playing, the children suddenly saw a Woman with beautiful, long hair and pretty, loose-fitting garments on the rock. She held a Child in her arms. Tears flowed from her eyes. The children became frightened and not one dared to say a word to Her. One boy ran to the Calvinist catechist to relate what they had seen.

Word of this spread rapidly, and next day, a large number of people went to the place where the Woman appeared. The Calvinist catechist was also present together with the rector of the Calvinist seminary, Saliamonas Gročius. The catechist upbraided the people for listening to what he called the tales of the children. He tried to explain that, if someone did appear, it was the devil himself who was attempting to draw them away from the Calvinist faith.

As he was speaking, the Woman again appeared on the rock as She did the day before, very sorrowful with tears in her eyes holding a Child in her arms. She appeared just as the children had related the day before. The assembled people became very frightened and not one dared to say a word. The Catechist himself, frightened as he was, got



enough courage to ask, "Why are you crying?" The Woman, in a very sorrowful tone, answered, "Formerly in this place, my Son was honored and adored, but now all that the people do is seed and cultivate the land." Having said this, the Woman disappeared in the sight of everyone present.

The apparition was seen by many people, so it was useless for the Calvinist leaders to deny it. They tried to explain that it was nothing but the work and trickery of the devil.

#### ***Aid of a Blind Man***

The people were dumb-founded and many of them didn't know what to say or believe. To them, a very old blind man gave this explanation: "Think what you will but I say to you that on the rock appeared not the devil as the Calvinists would have us believe, but the Most Blessed Virgin with Her Son in Whose honor once stood the old Catholic church which was destroyed many years before." This old man was adamant in his belief that an apparition had taken place.

#### ***News Spreads***

News of this strange event spread throughout the land. The local bishop became interested and sent his representative, Father Kazakevičius, to investigate. Apparently he and the bishop were satisfied with the testimony received, for the Chancery issued no statement denying the fact of the apparition or forbidding the faithful to make known the event. Tradition proves that the faithful were convinced of the apparition.

#### ***Buried Treasures Found***

The important thing was to get the documents which would help the Catholics to reclaim the property now held by the Calvinist. Having heard that the documents were needed, the blind old man mentioned that he knew something about them.

The old man related how there once was a Catholic church in Šiluva, how the church was destroyed, and how the last Catholic pastor had buried the image, vestments and the documents. Father Kazakevičius asked him if he could show him the place. He replied that he could. When the old man was led to the spot next to the rock on which the Blessed Virgin appeared, his blindness left him and he began to see. This was the first miracle recorded after the apparitions.

The old man fell on his knees, kissed the ground, and thanked God for the grace granted him. He then pointed out the place where to dig.



#### ***Documents Found***

The metal-covered oaken chest with the treasures and the documents was found. Fortified with the documents, Father Kazakevičius legally demanded that the Calvinists return all the property and treasures of the Catholic church in 1612. The judges were for the most part Protestant and the legal battle for the church land lasted over ten years. In 1622, the Tribunal at Vilnius decided in favor of the Catholics.

#### ***First Pastor After The Apparitions***

Father Kazakevičius was appointed pastor of the Catholic people in Šiluva. In 1624, he built a small wooden church which soon proved much too small for the many pilgrims who visited the place.

The pilgrims had heard of the apparitions and of the finding of the cherished image which was now placed above the main altar of the church. People from all over Lithuania flocked to Šiluva to visit the little church and pay homage to the Mother of God.

According to Bishop M. Valančius, who wrote a study of Šiluva's history, the place was so popular that in 1629, during the annual ceremonies held on the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, more than 11,000 faithful received Holy Communion.

A much larger church was built in 1641. Consecrated ten years later in 1651, it served the many pilgrims for almost 140 years. During this time, offerings continued to come in, and on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1786, a new renaissance-style church was solemnly consecrated.

#### ***Chapel Built***

The number of pilgrims to Šiluva steadily increased and more of them experienced extraordinary graces from Almighty God.

Miracles happened and the faithful were wont to visit the rock on which Our Lady appeared, touch it, place flowers on it, kneel before it, and pray fervently to the Mother of God.

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This increasing devotion prompted the Ordinary, Bishop Aleksandras Sapiega, to build a small wooden chapel around the rock in 1663. It served the faithful until 1818, when a more spacious one was built by Bishop Simonas Giedraitis. In 1912, a larger, more elaborate chapel was begun. Because of the war, it was not completed until 1924. The altar itself was built over the rock on which the Blessed Virgin appeared. Pilgrims were accustomed to go on their knees around the altar and kiss the rock which remained visible.

#### **Miraculous Image**

One of the items hidden in the buried chest was the Miraculous Image of the Madonna and Child. Where it originally came from is not known but, it is possible that it was brought from Rome and given as a gift by Vytautas, the Great, to Petras Giedgaudas, who built the first church in Šiluva.

The image is a replica of the famous St. Luke pictures of Mary and similar to the image of Mary, now in the Church of Maria Maggiore in Rome and known as "Salus Populi Romani" (Salvation of the Roman People). It shows the Madonna in royal robes holding the Divine Child, also arrayed in royal garments.

When it was found in the hidden chest soon after the apparitions, it was intact and once again placed in the church. So many gold and silver votives were attached to it that in 1671, they were melted and the gold and silver were used to decorate the picture. Gold leaf and pre-

cious stones were added to enhance its rich beauty.

#### **A Marble Statue**

Sometime between 1770 and 1775, the bishop at that time, the Most Reverend Jonas Lapačinskas, had a marble statue of the Blessed Virgin made in London. It was placed in the chapel on the rock itself. It was publicly crowned on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1886 by Bishop Mečislovas Paliulionis. It carried the title "Health of the Sick". The faithful prayed before it and many of them experienced renewed health of the body and the soul.

Some years later, a new statue replaced the old one. The old one, together with the altar that was built over the rock, has been preserved in the closed chapel in the church.

#### **Papal Approval Given**

All the bishops in the Šiluvadiocese approved of the devotion on the part of the faithful to Our Lady of Šiluva. This great devotion and the number of miracles prompted the ecclesiastical authorities to seek papal approval of the public devotion.

After extensive investigations by the local bishop, Pope Pius VI approved of the cult to Our Lady of Šiluva with enriched indulgences. Another privilege granted the church was that its pastors became "infulati" i.e. they could wear episcopal vestments on certain occasions during the liturgical year. The first "infulatus" was Father Tadas Bukota who built the new shrine-church at Šiluva. He later was appointed auxiliary Bishop of Žemaitija.

On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1786, with permission of the Chapter of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the Miraculous Image was solemnly crowned with a pure gold crown in the presence of four bishops, a few senators, many noblemen, and over 30,000 people. The entire coronation ceremony was under the direction of the Most Reverend Steponas Giedraitis, then Bishop of Žemaitija.

#### **Our Lady of Šiluva Reigns**

It may be asked why these apparitions are not better known in the Catholic world. In 1795, at the time of the Great Partition, Lithuania was taken over by Russia. Until 1904, Russia ruled her with a very heavy hand. It was forbidden to teach the language, the press and religious book printings were suppressed, and travel was limited. Such restrictions stymied the apparition's story to be told.

During the independent years between 1918 and 1940, knowledge of the apparition spread through Europe and devotions increased. Under Soviet occupation, devotions continued in a very subdued yet, constant state.

Presently, renewed interest in Catholicism's history in Lithuania has heightened devotions to Our Lady of Šiluva. Pope John Paul's visit in 1993 allowed the world to view this remarkable site. As the Mother of God appeared to and fortified Lithuanians in their darkest hour in 1608, She again blesses the people of Lithuania with freedom of faith.



Jeanne Dorr

# A MOTHER'S DAY REMEMBERED



Jeanne Dorr (third from left) sits with the Sereikas (right), Regina Svoba (extreme left) with some of the Sereika children.

Photo: Jeanne Dorr

At least once a year, usually as we approach Mother's Day, I try to write an article about a Lithuanian mother. In my opinion all mothers, or those who assume the role of mother, are extraordinary people.

Yet, can you imagine being a mother to 28 or 29 children? The count varies as to how many live at home at any given time for this special couple. Please join me on my journey to Gapšiu village in the Raseiniai region where you will meet Aldona and Stasys Sereika. This is the story of another of my trips with Regina Svoba, Countryside Children's Fund administrator.

Regina asked me to be ready early – when this woman says early, she means early. The horn honked right on schedule, and I ran down five flights of steps, a piece of black bread between my teeth, a chink of cheese in one hand, and my shoes in the other. A bag containing a tape recorder, notebook and everything else a woman can't leave home without was swinging from my neck. Sounds like a relaxing day, doesn't it?

As I jumped into the car, I barely had time to slam the door before Regina started telling me that this was the place she visited to relax when she felt

overwhelmed with her work. From the look on my face I'm sure she could have read my thoughts. Honestly, who in their right mind would go to a house with 29 children to relax? Surely this Orphan Care work was making her take leave of her senses.

Regina just smiled and said, "Wait, you'll see."

At this point, I was struggling to get my shoes on my feet while brushing cheese and bread crumbs from my skirt. I had the feeling this day was going to leave much to be desired. But then I always rush to quick judgements, and I'm usually wrong. You would think I'd learn by now.

Because Regina and I are non-stop talkers, the trip from Vilnius to Raseiniai seemed to go quickly. As we pulled into the yard, we saw the entire family at work – and I do mean the entire family was working. Some were chopping wood, others were weeding, even the smallest ones were gathering sticks and twigs and putting them in a pile. There was no whining or complaining but smiles and laughter.

The Sereikas are farmers working their seven hectares of land. There are five cows, 10 pigs, and 30 chickens. Everyone has to pull their weight. Aldona was working in a field with her pants rolled up to her knees, while Stasys was trying to fix a piece of machinery.

A great burden was eased with the help of the Daughters of Lithuania from Chicago, who pur-

(con't on page 16)

JEANNE DORR is a member of the Board of Directors of Lithuanian Orphan Care, a branch of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. She is also a Social Studies teacher in New Jersey.



## Through The Eyes of a Child...

### The Sereika Children

#### Jurgita, the oldest

The oldest Sereika child is Jurgita, who is in her final year of high school. She hopes to enroll in the Police Academy.

Jurgita was being raised by her grandmother, when she was raped by a married man. Her teacher brought her to the Sereika house hoping a normal life would dispel her nightmares and return her confidence.

#### Tomas and Kazys

Four year-old Tomas and 2 year-old Kazys were brothers who were brought to the home by the authorities. They had no father and their mother was in jail. When she was released, she came to claim her children. If she took them back,

she would be entitled to help from the government.

Kazys refused to go; he remembered what life was like before he came to the Sereikas. Tomas accompanied his mother home. Within a few weeks, the authorities were at the door with Tomas. His mother had neglected him; he had to be deloused and woke up screaming with nightmares.

#### The First Two Brothers

These two brothers seemed to have come from a good family at first. Their parents worked hard but alcohol began to take over their lives. The brothers were sent to sit and watch the cemetery. They would watch people light candles on the graves and wait for them to

leave. Then they would run up to the graves and steal the candles. The parents sold the candles for drinking money. Eventually the children were caught stealing and, when the story came out, they were removed from their home.

#### Little Antanas

This little boy also needed to be placed in the home but, there was no birth certificate for him. *Valstiečių Laikraštis* put a journalist on the case full time. She checked every village and city until she found the certificate and the mother. When she asked the mother's permission to place Antanas with the Sereikas, the mother's response was, "Don't just take him, take all my kids."

#### Linutė and her siblings

Then there are Linutė and her siblings. They have the same alcoholic mother but three different fathers. The mother's latest boyfriend also had a drinking problem. Linutė, the oldest, was often chained. The children were made to sit on the couch while the boyfriend threw knives at their bare feet.

One night, when it became unbearable, Linutė shoved her siblings out the window. They dared not open the door in case someone woke up; the punishment would be severe. It was a bitter cold night but, Linutė led her sister by the hand while she carried the youngest one in her arms to the safety of the Sereika's house. She banged on the door and, begged Aldona and Stasys to take them into their home. She didn't need to beg. They were welcomed with open arms. Linutė is traumatized and suffers from depression from which she is slowly recovering.



Lina holds little Jurgita.

Photo: *Valstiečių Laikraštis*

#### The Younger Jurgita

Three year-old Jurgita was in the hospital during my visit. They gave me her photograph: she had a face of an angel. She was also abandoned at birth. At the age of 15 months, she had not learned to stand. When Aldona brought her home, the doctors told her not to waste her time. She would never stand, let alone walk.

Aldona had a mother's heart and a mother's determination. Several times a day, she worked with Jurgita giving her leg massages, encouragement and lots of love. Before long, Jurgita was able to stand and, later, took those first precious steps. Jurgita was in a clinic where she is carefully monitored for tuberculosis. So far, so good – no signs of the disease.



### The Twins

The twins' parents also had led the good life under the Soviet system. Their father, a fisherman, had visited foreign ports and returned with coveted goods. Their mother was a teacher. Again, alcoholism reared its ugly head and destroyed another family. The mother began to drink more and more, the father stayed away longer and longer. Eventually he abandoned the family altogether.

To make ends meet, the mother brought home a variety of men, while the children witnessed the events. When some of the men became abusive, the twins were placed with the Sereikas.

The mother insisted on phoning the children day and night. When she visited, she made her daughter listen to all the intimate details of her life against the child's wishes. When the Sereikas could no longer reason with the woman, they obtained a court order stating that the mother could only visit in the Sereikas' presence.

### The Second Set of Brothers

These two brothers were abandoned in the hospital by their mother. When the mother realized she could collect money from the state for them, she returned to reclaim them. Yet over and over she would leave them in stores, on the streets, and anywhere else she could get rid of them. Eventually the authorities removed them from her custody.

### Antanas

Antanas was a real sweet-heart. He was three years old. Aldona told me how his grandparents brought him to her when he was a year old. His grandparents cried and cried. They were quite elderly and sickly, and could not physically care for him.

Can you, readers who are grandparents, imagine yourselves ever having to go through this heart-wrenching scene with your own grandchild?



Photo: Jeanne Dorr

### Marius and Sonata

When Marius arrived at the Sereikas, he was a seven year-old, full-time smoker. He is now 14, no longer smokes, but has lung problems and spends time in the hospital.

Marius's parents were alcoholics with a loving sister, Sonata. When Sonata visited Marius and saw this improvement, she also began to long for a normal life. Once again the family opened its arms and invited her to stay with them.

Sonata eventually married and now she, her husband, and baby daughter live with Aldona and Stasys. Their help is very much needed with the children and house. Because of Sonata and her husband, the Sereikas are proud grandparents.



Sonata and her daughter.  
Photo: Jeanne Dorr

### Petras

Finally, I would like to tell you about five year-old Petras. His mother was dead, his father and he were homeless. They walked the streets during the day, and the father took any odd jobs he could in exchange for food. The worst part came at night. There was no bed or roof over their heads.

In desperation, the father walked into the *Valstiečių Laikraštis* offices and asked for help for his son. He loved his child dearly but, there was no way he could provide a home for him. The father had no skills and unemployment was high.

The Svobas were concerned that this five year-old might not get into the car with them to go to Raseiniai. Would he be hysterical with fear? Would he scream for his father? The bottom line was that he needed a home, and Aldona and Stasys were waiting for him.

For the entire trip, Petras stared out the window. Eventually he murmured just one sentence, "I guess I'll never return home again." Imagine what this little boy had lived through by the age of five. Although home was not a house, it was his father and a village.

Regina was close to tears when she left him with Aldona. She returned to Vilnius, and could not eat or sleep with worry. Five days later, she went back to Raseiniai to see how Petras was adjusting. When he saw the car, he ran away and hid. He was terrified that she had come to take him away from his new family.

Later Regina asked him if he would like to visit with his father. They drove the father to visit his son, but it seemed there was little to say to each other. Still later, Petras was asked if he would like to go back to his village. His response was, "If it's only to look."



(con't from p. 13)

chased a tractor for the family. The couple explained that they would also be thankful to the *Valstiečių Laikraštis*, the Vilnius-based newspaper whose editor is Jonas Svoba, Regina's husband.

The Sereika's story was engrossing. Aldona and Stasys always loved children, and although they had four of their own, they felt they had enough love and energy to make some less fortunate children happy. As they looked around their small village, they saw so many children who needed a loving family to care for them. They wanted to open a small group home and figured ten children would be ideal.

They petitioned the local authorities to let them have an abandoned school. The authorities wanted to sell the building but found no takers. While this was going on, everyone and his brother was helping himself to the abandoned building. Doors, windows, fixtures, and anything that could be carried off was disappearing.

The family kept asking for the building to provide a home for local children, and they received one rejection after another. I'm not even going to attempt to describe the Lithuanian bureaucracy. After total frustration set in, the Sereikas telephoned the newspaper to enlist their aid. There's nothing like the power of the press. Once the Svobas and *Valstiečių Laikraštis* became involved, the Sereikas had their house. Although the building was in terrible condition, in about two months everything was cleaned up.

As we entered the house, the rooms were neat and orderly, and yet they had a lived-in look. I was fascinated by the rows and rows of little beds, all neatly made with colorful bedspreads. Another room held the cribs. Wherever we went, we were greeted by well-behaved, mannerly children. I watched this middle-aged couple with their family as they spoke to the children in soft tones.

I had the feeling of wall to wall children when Aldona remarked that the house seemed almost empty. Empty?! There were only 11 children at home! Fourteen children were at a church camp for 10 days and three of them were in the hospital where they have to return periodically for a few days each year to monitor medical problems.

I think I might have missed a child or two in this count but I really couldn't keep track. Thank goodness I only raised two of my own. I could never ac-

count for 29!

We continued our tour when I realized I was standing on a unique rug. I went back and looked in the other rooms. Sure enough, they were all the same. All the rugs had a picture of Lenin's face in the center. When the family moved into their house, they had no money for rugs. The floors were cold, and someone offered to give them wall covers which were left from the days before independence. Certainly there would be no more market for Lenin wall hangings. So they might as well be put to good use. The house still isn't completely finished, but the family works on it as time and money permits.

We finished our tour and relaxed in the living room. The children were a delight. I had one on each side of me and another on my lap.

Although we brought sweets and other small treats, not one child touched the table or asked for anything. I was watching from the corner of my eye as they looked at the gifts longingly. It was only when Aldona indicated permission did each child take one piece of candy. They didn't have to be told not to take seconds. Even the youngest seemed to understand that when you have such a large family, you must be considerate of others. Not once was our conversation interrupted by a child seeking attention.

I asked their philosophy of raising this large family. Aldona told me she considers Stasys to be the anchor of the family. He, in turn, smiled and gave all the credit to his wife. The bottom line was that they considered themselves a team. As Aldona put it, "Neither of us is the boss."

They insist that each child stay in school and work to the best of his or her ability. This is a deeply religious family who have great faith that God will take care of them and their children.

At this point, one child was napping with his head on my shoulder, while the other was asleep in my arms. I asked Aldona what life was like with such a large family. She laughed and said I should have been there in the beginning. At the onset, twelve of the children were wetting their beds and she never had her hands out of the washtub. Now, she has 22 in school and breakfast is eaten in four shifts. Those who have to leave earliest, eat first. They try to gather as much of the family as possible for supper.

It was time for me to lay my two little friends on



the sofa, when we were called to lunch. Lunch was prepared by the older girls and consisted of freshly baked bread, homemade cheese, and vegetables from the family's garden, as well as fresh honey which a neighbor had delivered that morning. During the lunch, a woman from a meat-packing house arrived with left over meat for the family.

While we ate, Stasys told me how Aldona had been very ill the winter before. She kept saying she was fine because she didn't want to go to the doctor. She knew he could order her to the hospital and she would have to leave her children. Eventually she collapsed with a lung condition. Stasys was panic stricken when the illness reached a point where Aldona might not survive. He brought photographs of all the children and they were placed under her pillow.

Aldona needed medicine which was available only in Germany. Again, a hastily made call was made to the newspaper. They were able to obtain the much needed medicine. After a few days, Stasys arrived at the hospital to see Aldona lying in bed with her children's photos in her hand. She simply refused to die: she could not abandon Stasys or the children. There was too much work that had to be done.

As is traditional in Lithuania, we lingered at the table a long time. By this time, my new little friends were waking up and ready for their lunch. Their older sisters tended to them while we returned to the

living room.

Aldona and Stasys spent much time telling me about their children; their backgrounds and how they had come to live with them (*on pages 14 and 15*). It's difficult being a parent but, the Sereikas have a unique family; some of their children are physically scarred, while others still live with the terrors of earlier days. One of the children became hysterical each time he entered the elevator on visits to the *Valstiečių Laikraštis* office. Eventually the truth came out. His drunken parents had locked him in a confined space without food or water. Hence the fear of the small elevator.

This is a family with many everyday problems. It is also a family who believes that with faith, love and patience, they can overcome many problems. So far the formula seems to be working.

As we rode back to Vilnius, I had to admit I was wrong again because I jumped to conclusions. When Regina began to laugh, I thought she was going to make me eat my words. She had just remembered that it was her 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. That was O.K. She was doing what she wanted to do most: she was spending the day with her favorite family.

Thank you for joining me on my journey to Raseiniai, and allowing me to share my memories with you. This was truly one Mother's Day memory I will always cherish.

**Readers, please understand that the majority of Lithuanian parents love their children and provide for them. But there are also the parents I wrote about. They do exist and we cannot stick our heads in the sand and pretend that all is well. It isn't.**

**With people like the Sereikas and you, BRIDGES readers, these children are given the gift of a better future. All of the Sereika children have sponsors and many of them are BRIDGES readers.**

**One of the reasons I wrote this article was to show you one of the many ways your donations are being used. We are providing for more than 700 children and have a waiting list of children who still need your help. It is only through your generosity that Lithuanian Orphan Care has come this far.**

**The cost to support a child is \$150 a year but, ANY donation is gratefully accepted. If you sponsor a child, you will receive the name, address, birthday, and any other details we receive from Lithuania about the child. Please send your tax deductible checks to:**

**LITHUANIAN ORPHAN CARE**

**2711 W. 71<sup>st</sup> St.**

**Chicago, IL 60629**



Rimas Gedeika

## With Wings on her Feet

*In the January/February issue of BRIDGES, I introduced you to Lithuania's best women's 800 meter runner, Jurga Marcinkevičiūtė, and recounted the various challenges which she has encountered on her journey to the Summer Olympic Games in Sydney, Australia – in the year 2000. In this issue I am writing about a very similar journey undertaken by her very good friend and fellow runner, Agnė Visockaitė.*

**I**n many respects Agnė Visockaitė's journey to Sydney parallels very closely to that of Jurga Marcinkevičiūtė's. Like Jurga, Agnė was born in Kaunas, Lithuania 19 years ago. She also started running at an early age. By the time she reached her 13th birthday, she was already one of Lithuania's finest junior sprinters. She participated with several national teams that competed throughout Europe. She ran sprint races ranging from 60 meters through 300 meters.

Although Agnė had achieved notable success before 1996, the year 1996 was a major turning point in her young running career. It was in Sydney, Australia, at the World Junior Championships, that she gained international recognition. Representing Lithuania, running against the world's best junior 200 meter women sprinters, she took fourth place with a time of 23.75 seconds. This was quite an achievement for an 18 year old. What was even more noteworthy was that she accomplished this on the same track on which the track events will take place during the Olympic Games.

While 1996 was a breakthrough year, 1997 was an outstanding, record setting year! Agnė began the year by establishing a new Lithuanian women's (junior and senior) 200 meter indoor record with a time of 23.89 seconds. That summer, running in Europe's Junior Outdoor Championships, she won

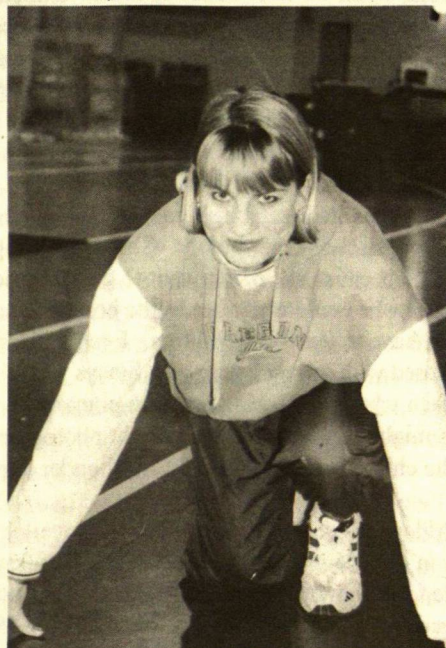


Photo: Rimas Gedeika

second place in the 100 meter dash with a time of 11.42 seconds. This broke the existing Lithuanian women's record. With this, Agnė became Lithuania's fastest women's runner.

In the same championships, Agnė also ran the 200 meters -- placing fourth with a time of 23.55 seconds. This was only .08 seconds off her personal best time of 23.47seconds.

No one was surprised when shortly thereafter, Agne started to receive scholarship offers from various American universities. After evaluating all of her options, she, like Jurga, said, why not! If you want to be the best that you can be, train and compete with the best! She accepted an offer from Iowa State University becoming the second Lithuanian runner to receive a running scholarship from an American university.

In the fall of 1997, Agne packed her running shoes and flew to McKendree College in Lebanon, Illinois. There, she is currently enhancing her English language skills so that she will pass the language requirements to enter Iowa State in the fall. She is also competing for McKendree's track team.

During one of our conversations, I asked Agne

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(con't from WINGS)

whether there were any differences between the Lithuanian training techniques and the American training techniques. She stated, "In both Lithuania and America, the coaches have morning and afternoon training sessions. Yet in Lithuania, both sessions are very intense. However, in America only the afternoon session is intense, and even that is not as hard as the PM sessions in Lithuania. Which is better? Time will tell."

In January 1998, Lithuania's Track and Field Association voted Agnė's 1997 record setting performance as the fifth best performance achieved by anyone of its track and field athletes. In addition, Lithuania's Sporting Federation voted Agnė's achievements as being the 10<sup>th</sup> best athletic performance of 1997.

When asked about her future plans, Agnė stated the following as being her top three goals:

- to represent Lithuania in this summer's European Track and Field Championships in both the 100 and 200 meters,
- to successfully complete her journey to Sydney, thus qualifying to represent Lithuania in the 100 and 200 meters,
- to complete her education obtaining a degree in sports management and exercise, and pursue a career in coaching.

Over the next two years each one of us will be able to follow and to cheer Agnė along as she moves closer to Sydney to compete for Lithuania in the world's greatest track and field arena -- the Olympic Games.

## CURRENT EVENTS



### Intern Search

from the Lithuanian  
American Youth Association

The office of Congressman John Shimkus (20<sup>th</sup> District, Illinois) is seeking college students to serve as interns on a full-time basis for the Fall 1998 semester.

Responsibilities include: assisting with mail, giving tours of the Capitol, writing one-minute speeches, and serving as a general office intern. The internship is unpaid. The deadline for application is June 30, 1998.

To apply, submit your resumé, one letter of recommendation, and one writing sample explaining why you want to serve as an intern in Congressman Shimkus' office to:

*Saralynn Tucker*

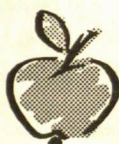
*513 Cannon*

*Washington, D.C. 20515*

*(202) 225-5271*

### Change the Life of a Lithuanian Teacher

From  
A.P.P.L.E.



The American Professional Partnership for Lithuanian Education's (A.P.P.L.E.) Teacher Seminars assist in the reformation of Lithuania's educational system as she is reborn in democracy and

freedom. The unfortunate reality is that the cost of transportation and lodging for the attending Lithuanian teachers is a real—but unnecessary—obstacle to participation.

A.P.P.L.E.'s members and supporters have helped sponsor Lithuanian teachers in the past. In return, those who received scholarships wrote personal letters to their sponsors, providing firsthand accounts of the influence that the Seminar experience had on their lives and professional development.

To continue to provide a scholarship to every participant this year, A.P.P.L.E. asks you to consider donating \$30.00 to sponsor one teacher. You will be making a difference in many Lithuanian teachers' and their students' lives. Please send scholarship donations to A.P.P.L.E., Box 617, Durham, CT 06422.



Vilnius University

### Vilnius University Offers Summer Courses

The Department of Lithuanian Studies at Vilnius University offers several types of courses for foreigners. A variety of courses covers different aspects and levels of the Lithuanian language: grammar, basic vocabulary, reading and writing,

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## CURRENT EVENTS

development of communication skills, history of Lithuanian literature, analysis of classical literary texts, and political and social life of Lithuania.

Main courses offered each year are:

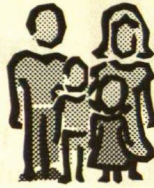
- **Course A:** a two-term course, 15 weeks each (300-330 academic hours) Terms start on September 10<sup>th</sup> and February 10<sup>th</sup>.
- **Course B:** a four-week summer course (110 academic hours) at the end of June through July.
- **Course C:** a two-week summer course (50 academic hours) at the end of June through July.
- **Course D:** a two-week winter course (50 academic hours) in January.

Each year Vilnius University offers courses at three levels: beginners, intermediate, and advanced. Groups consist of 10 to 12 students and, if required, offer one-on-one instruction. The language of instruction is Lithuanian, except when necessary for comments in English, German, Russian or French for beginners.

Course participants can choose from a varied cultural program which includes tours to other cities, walking tours of national parks, folk music events, and meetings with Lithuanian artists, politicians and businessmen.

For more information, contact Dept. of Lithuanian Studies, Vilnius University, Universiteto 3, 2734 Vilnius, Lithuania or on the web at <http://www.vu.lt/menu/student/lskinf.html>

### Words of Thanks



By Jeanne Dorr

On behalf of Bishop Hans Dumpys and the Vilnius Evangelical Lutheran Church, please accept our deepest gratitude for your generous donations to feed the people of Vilnius.

*BRIDGES* readers once again opened not only their hearts but their wallets to help their less fortunate brothers and sisters in Lithuania. Some readers wrote to tell me that they have sent a second check.

If you have not made a contribution or would like to send another gift, please write your checks to *Vilniaus Sandaros*. You can either mail them to:

*The Reverend Hans Dumpys*  
704 South Clarence Ave.  
Oak Park, IL 60304-1306

or they may be sent to me. I will be in Lithuania for the summer and will be happy to deliver the checks when I visit the people in charge of the program. Again, be sure the checks are written to *Vilniaus Sandaros*. They must reach me before June 18<sup>th</sup>.

Jeanne Dorr  
4 Shrewsbury Yard  
Riverton, NJ 08077

Your dollars go a long way in

feeding the hungry. God bless you for your generosity.

### Highlights From Lithuania

Source: ELTA News Agency at [www.elta.lt](http://www.elta.lt)

### U.S. Accounts for 25% Direct Foreign Investments in Lithuania

The total sum of direct foreign investments in Lithuania amounted to 4.203 billion litas (\$1.05 billion) at the beginning of this year, according to the Lithuanian Statistics Department.

United States took the largest share - 25.9 percent - of the total foreign investments in Lithuania. Other major investors were Sweden (12.3%), Germany (11.5%), United Kingdom (7.8%) and Denmark (6.1%).

The Lithuanian Developmental Agency (LDA) surveyed 63 companies investing in Lithuania and received answers from 55 companies. The surveyed companies gave three main reasons for choosing Lithuania: great market potential, a qualified and economical working force, and a favorable geographical position. Political stability, good infrastructure, and transport routes were mentioned as additional draws to the country.



# The World Lithuanian Folk Song Festival of 1998



The richest cultural heritage of the Lithuanian people are the folk songs (liaudies dainos) and folk dances (tautiniai šokiai). The songs express the love of the homeland, the joys and hardships of life, love, youth, family, war, old age, and yes, even death. They were sung hundreds and even a thousand years ago. The earliest record of the folk dances can be found in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century writings.

The first official Song Festival was held on July 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 1924 in Kaunas when 2,800 singers and 86 choruses performed 44 songs. The 1994 World Lithuanian Song Festival was the first since the forced and unlawful incorporation of Lithuania into the Soviet Union, when a multitude of 13,000 singers took the stage.

On July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1998, over 10,000 singers and choir directors are expected to perform at the 15<sup>th</sup> Song Day concert at Vingio Park in Vilnius. Most of us have never heard such a multitude of voices sing together. It is truly an unbelievable experience.

Even though the event is called a "Song Festival", it is much more than that. It is also a dance festival. The very first Folk Dance Festival was held in Kaunas in 1937. Traditionally, every dance festival is a production with its very own theme. This 1998 dance festival theme is bread. Bread, being the staff of life, has been the subject of many customs and ceremonies. You need to taste Lithuanian breads to know its magical powers and characteristics.

During the World Lithuanian Song Festival, the audience will be dazzled beyond belief as they watch over 10,000 dancers, young and old, in the most colorful and unique national costumes from all parts of Lithuania as well as from various countries of the world where Lithuanians live. They can expect to see a number of Lithuanian-American dance and song groups perform together with Lithuania's groups as part of one integrated nation.

The Festival actually starts July 2<sup>nd</sup> with an

evening of Lithuanian music at 6:00 p.m. A Concert at the Ministry of Interior Affairs Palace of Culture and Sports will provide the setting where audiences can hear and see performers who live outside Lithuania. At 8:00 p.m., a concert highlighting the Lithuanian musical instrument "kanklės" will take place in the courtyard of the "Teacher's House".

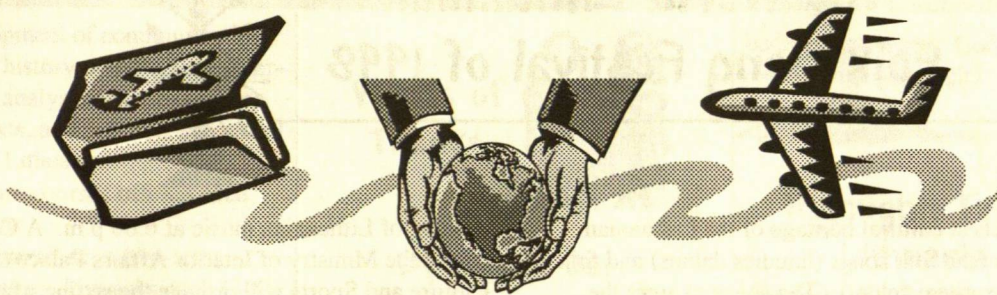
July 3<sup>rd</sup> is the designated Folklore Day in Vilnius's Old Town and Sereikiškių Park. This is a "hands-on" experience of the cultural activities from all regions. Attendees can join in with the dancers or sing along or hum if they wish with the singing groups. Others can join some games, throw a clay pot on the wheel, and whittle a reed then pipe a tune on it. Food abounds during this day – Lithuanian cheeses, buns, breads, beers, and sausages. Over 200 craftsmen will demonstrate their weaving, carving, and cooking. What a wonderful way to learn your heritage!

The Lithuanian Folk Dance Exhibition links generations with its displays of over 2,000 works by some 800 of the best artists. The exhibits include national costumes, bedspreads, towels, hangers, needlework, furniture, musical instruments, pottery, amber and metal ornaments, horns, leather, straw, dyed eggs, and last but not least, Palm Sunday flowers "verbos".

On July 4<sup>th</sup>, the "Ensemble Night" at Kalnų Park in Kaunas provides visitors with a chance to hear and see not only the old Lithuanian songs and dances, but also some contemporary ones – many of which were written by Lithuanian-Americans. About 2,000 performers contribute to this musical evening.

If you wish to visit Lithuania this summer, this Festival will surely be a highlight of your trip! During the first week of July, The World Lithuanian Song Festival will provide music, song, dance, crafts, food, sights, and hospitable people.





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*June 27-July 12*

**SONG AND DANCE FESTIVAL**

**Talinn 2 nights, Riga 2 nights, Kaunas 1 night,  
Vilnius 4 nights, Palanga 2 nights, Kaunas 2 nights,  
Copenhagen 1 night.**

**From Seattle \$2925  
From Chicago \$2795  
From New York \$2745  
(Single supplement — \$275)**

**DISCOVER LITHUANIA — 12-DAY TOUR**

*July 1-12*

**SONG AND DANCE FESTIVAL**

**Kaunas 1 night, Vilnius 4 nights, Palanga 2 nights,  
Kaunas 2 nights, Copenhagen 1 night.**

**From Seattle \$2455  
From Chicago \$2325  
From New York \$2275  
(Single supplement — \$225)**

**TASTE OF LITHUANIA — 11-DAY TOUR**

*August 1-11*

**Vilnius 3 nights, Palanga 2 nights, Kaunas 3 nights,  
Copenhagen 1 night.**

**From Seattle \$2375  
From Chicago \$2245  
From New York \$2195  
(Single supplement — \$200)**

**TASTE OF LITHUANIA — 11-DAY TOUR**

*September 2-12*

**Vilnius 3 nights, Palanga 2 nights, Kaunas 3 nights,  
Copenhagen 1 night.**

**From Seattle \$2225  
From Chicago \$2095  
From New York \$2045  
(Single supplement — \$200)**

**NOTE: Tours are based on 10 or more people traveling together.  
If there are less than 10 people in a group, there is a surcharge of 20% per person.**

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**FAX: 708-422-3163**



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Address _____	Estimated Monthly Usage: \$ _____ (average monthly usage)	
City _____ State _____ Zip _____	Secondary Numbers: _____ County: _____	
Phone: Day _____ Evening _____	<b>Additional Services</b>	
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# BRIDGES

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