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School Year Begins...Glimpses of Summer...More on Lithuanian Products

P E R S P E C T I V E S

It's been said, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Yet I don't believe these astute people have ever been to Lithuania.

It's mind-boggling how one prepares for a trip to the land of one's forefathers. In my case, Lithuania is the land of my parents. So, I don't have to dig very deeply for sentiment, memories, and roots.

The only time I had made this trip was in 1983 – during the bad, old days. This was to be a trip to introduce my eldest son to an independent Lithuania. It also was to prove to him that learning the language was a worthwhile and useful endeavor in his life.

My son and I packed and planned fastidiously; conferring with everyone who had ever visited Lithuania for the last five years. That encompassed nearly 25 people – mostly family members and a few total strangers who overheard one of my conversations with a sister and insisted he had the best advice to give. Naturally I listened to everyone, and packed a container-like suitcase equipped with brass locks and two cameras, just in case. We were going totally prepared.

We arrived in Vilnius and our adventure began. We met many people, saw the tourist and non-tourist sights, and stowed away the suitcase in lieu of a backpack and a carry-on to travel around the country. Everywhere we went, our eyes and minds took in the awesome history of Lithuania.

The culmination of the trip – le pièce de résistance – took place on top of Gedimino Bokštas (Gedimino Tower). There, after the breathless climb, my son uttered, "Mama, I'd love to live here for a while. Wouldn't you? I feel at home here."

I wasn't exactly prepared for that kind of extreme reaction to our trip, but it was really neat to see him excited and in wonder of his heritage.

When we returned home, after we had told our families every detail of the trip, after we had sent out the film to be developed, we waited for the glorious, tangible evidence of our wonderful trip. The photos came. They were opened with shaking hands. My son and I looked at each other. He said, "We've got to go back. The photos just don't cut it." Whoever said that a picture is worth a thousand words really never went to Lithuania.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

B R I D G E S

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A Little About the Lithuanian Language...

Even though Lithuania is a small country, it is traditionally divided into four main ethnic regions based on dialects, traditions, and other cultural elements. The regions are Aukštaitija (east), Žemaitija (west), Dzūkija (southeast), and Suvalkija (southwest).

Dialectal speech expresses each ethnic region's individual psychology, and is much more animated than the standard language. The dialects of Dzūkija resemble singing, whereas those of Žemaitija remind one of refined yet rude mockery.

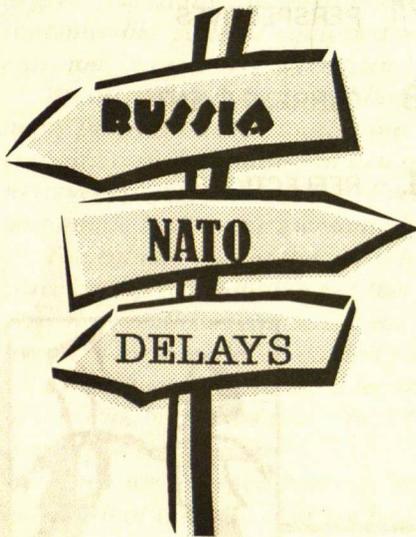
Source: Lithuanian Roots: An Overview of Lithuanian Traditional Culture

On the cover:

A "student" sits reading his book in time for the start of the school year. This woodcarving stands in front of a woodcarver's studio in the Vilnius old-city.

Regina Narušis

Winning the SECURITY AND PROTECTION of Regained Freedom



On July 15, 1998, the Subcommittee on European Affairs of the United States Senate commenced hearings on Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Such a display of interest in this region contributes to the security of that area, and gives hope and encouragement to the Baltic people to continue their steady and unwavering progress. The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. submitted their concerns and recommendations to the chairman of that subcommittee, Gordon H. Smith, on June 26th. What follows are the letter's contents to Mr. Smith.

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

The Honorable Gordon H. Smith
Chairman, Subcommittee on European Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Mr. Chairman,

The Lithuanian-American Community would like you to know how much we appreciate your taking the initiative in calling hearings on Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. We strongly believe that any display of interest in this region by the Congress, the Administration and the public contributes to the region's security. Furthermore, we believe that these hearings, followed by discussion, will help facilitate the formulation of a long-term United States policy regarding these countries.

The Lithuanian-American Community serves over one million Americans of Lithuanian heritage. We have chapters in 29 states and in the District of Columbia. We write today because we feel a responsibility to share with you and the members of your committee our concerns and recommendations.

It is understood that the enlargement of NATO will be a gradual, step-by-step process which may take several years. The first round will be completed in April, 1999 with the formal admission to the Alliance of Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic. In the ratification debate, voices were raised against any further enlargement of NATO. The Lithuanian-American Community will forever remember the names of the 59 Senators who rejected a proposal to deny any new members for the next three years. Here, our remarks address the concerns of those who oppose the admission of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

Without doubt, it is in the Baltic nations' best interest that Russia emerge from its present state a friendly, peaceful democratic partner of NATO and the European Union. For this reason, Lithuanians have supported the two-track policy of NATO enlargement linked to partnership and cooperation with Russia. However, the economic recovery of Russia will be beneficial to its neighbors only so long as it is not accompanied by the resurgence of the threat of Russian imperialism. At present, the Russian political elite has yet to be reconciled to the loss of its empire. Yeltsin and other Russian leaders have stated on the record that all territory formerly designated part of the Soviet Union should be considered part of an exclusive Russian sphere of influence, untouchable by NATO or anyone else.

Most important and significant of all is the politically and morally outrageous assertion made by the present Russian government that the incorporation of the Baltic states into the Soviet Union by Stalin in 1940 was a consequences of the freely expressed will of these nations. In effect, the present Russian government sanctions the partition of east central Europe between Hitler and Stalin. Furthermore, the attempt to suppress the Chechnya revolt, as well as Russian military intervention in Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Moldavia took place under Yeltsin, who is considered in the west as moderate. There remains uncertainty about the future of Russian leadership and the possibility of hard liners coming to power. In this context, Russian attempts to deny Baltic nations their right to choose their own allies must be considered a threat to their sovereignty.

The enlargement of NATO could make Russian imperialist ambitions unrealistic, thus prompting Moscow to accept its present borders as definitive, and to focus Russian attention and resources on internal recovery. A freeze on further NATO enlargement would have the opposite effect. It would mean another permanent division of central Europe into two spheres of influence: that of NATO and that of Russia. Furthermore, it could encourage the Russian imperialist dream of regaining its former control over its smaller neighbors, who have been deprived of the opportunity to join the defensive structures of the Atlantic community.

Opposition to any further NATO enlargement is based on three false contentions:

1. That the admission of Baltic countries would provoke Russia and may lead to preventive military measures.

NATO has been expanded three times in the past. In each case, Moscow tried to prevent the expansion with the threat of military and, at times, nuclear confrontation. The allies never wavered under pressure. The allies knew that yielding to the threats would inevitably lead to the dangerous escalation of military blackmail. Consequently, in each case, the allies called the Soviet bluff.

2. That NATO should respect Russian security interests.

Supporters of this contention argue that the silent recognition of "traditional spheres of Influence" fosters lasting cooperation and friendship between America and Russia. We remind the subcommittee that this reasoning led to the Yalta and Potsdam Agreements, which left all of Europe east of the Elbe River under Soviet domination. History shows that these treaties were unsuccessful and the Cold War followed.

Today, though the Soviet empire has disintegrated, the Russian elite's ambition to restore it is alive. The United States' efforts to maintain peace and to curb the proliferation of arms and state terrorism has been challenged by Russia all over the world. The United States should draw a lesson from past experience and never again give preference to Russia's security concerns at the expense of its neighbors.

3. That Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia are indefensible and could be crushed by Russia's military might in a matter of days.

West Berlin was also indefensible and was surrounded by East German and Soviet troops. One American battalion was there to signal that any attempt to occupy Berlin would trigger a war with NATO. Because of the allies' determination, free Berlin survived without a loss of one single Allied soldier.

Recommendations

1. The Senate should support the Administration's position that the "new NATO members will not be the last" (Madeleine Albright), and support a second round of enlargement. The Senate should offer support to President Clinton's statement that "the U.S. welcomes the aspirations and supports the efforts of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia to join NATO". We trust the Congress will preserve a place for the integration of these countries within NATO on the agenda of U.S. foreign policy.

2. The Congress should be absolutely clear in expressing its opposition to any attempt to intimidate Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia by threats of force. It should make it known that threats of this nature, as well as by economic pressures, would be unacceptable to the United States and prohibitively expensive to Moscow. Any ambiguity concerning the U.S.'s reaction could easily lead to fatal miscalculations.

3. As an interim security measure, the U.S. should implement the Baltic Charter and strengthen lateral military cooperation with Lithuania and the two other states under the Partnership for Peace.

Lithuania regained its independence in 1990, and its people successfully resisted a Soviet military onslaught on the Lithuanian parliament in Vilnius. This event in Lithuania's struggle for freedom inspired other Baltic countries and contributed greatly to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Since that time, Lithuanian democracy has taken deep roots. The State Department's Democracy and Human Rights Office reports that the country has been making steady progress in developing a market economy. Inflation is under control, and the GDP rose to 6.4 percent. Over 40 percent of state property has now been privatized.

Lithuania is steadily making great progress in meeting the military standards of NATO. There is a healthy respect for human rights, and efforts are being made to solve the remaining problems. Lithuania has no conflict or border disputes with any of its neighbors. Russians are offered access to all transit facilities; thus, allowing transport and communication with the Kaliningrad area. Lithuania and Poland are friends: closely cooperating and supporting each other. Additionally, a border treaty was recently signed with Belarus and Russia.

The Lithuanian people want to belong to the community of democratic nations, and to share the defense of our common values. Americans of Lithuanian heritage appeal to Congress, the Administration, and the American people: do not reject the aspirations of these small, but courageous nations who are striving so hard to win the security and protection of their regained freedom and democracy. Do not extinguish the light at the end of the tunnel. ♦



The first Senate hearings concerning the Baltic nations' request for NATO admission was held July 15th at 2:00 p.m. in the Dirksen Building, Washington, D.C. The Lithuanian delegation witnessing these first hearings were; (first row, from left) Audronė Pakštienė, (The Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. Washington, D.C. Office Director); Jurgis Razma; Irena Šaulienė; Birutė Visokavičienė; Liudvikas Sabutis; Dr. Algirdas Katkus; (all members of the Republic of Lithuania Parliament). In the second row; Donatas Skučas (LAC, Inc. Chairperson of the Board of Directors); Stasys Sakalauskas (Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania); Gintaras Šileikis; Jonas Šimėnas; Roma Dovydenaitė; Rimantas Vaitkus; and guides and translators.

Regina Kučas

Lithuanian- American Children Gear up for “Lithuanian” School



“Girl with Dove” by Domicelė Tarabildienė.

Forty-eight years ago, after the end of World War II, Lithuanian immigrants settled in the United States and began establishing Lithuanian schools to insure the younger generation with strong patriotic values through education. Since the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. (LAC) and therefore, the Lithuanian Educational Council (LEC) were not yet established, schools were being started by teachers and parents.

The LEC was founded February 21st, 1959, after the inception of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. The LEC de-

signed the Lithuanian school system and its programs, provided funds and educational tools, and prepared teachers for the eight primary grades and the four upper classes (high school) – a 12-year program. Eventually enrollment began to decline in the high school level by the early 1990's. On December 3rd, 1992, the LEC approved a 10-year educational system consisting of six primary grades and four high school classes, and a correspondence course. The LEC continuously reviews and revises curriculum programs upon requests from teachers.

A major concern of the LEC is finances. With no government funding, parents were burdened with the financial responsibility for school maintenance, renting costs, educational material preparation and printing, and teacher salaries. By 1965, the Lithuanian Foundation came to the rescue with generous donations enabling schools to operate professionally and with quality as a priority. The Foundation's donations are consistent even now. In 1988, the LEC established a yearly fall fund drive to further increase the quantity and quality of Lithuanian education

REGINA KUČAS is the president of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.'s Lithuanian Educational Council and the Lithuanian World Community's Education Commission.

in the United States.

Another major concern is the lack of educators. For the love of the Lithuanian language and country, parents are teaching at the schools. Because they lack certain teaching skills, new teaching materials are prepared to help them in the classrooms. In addition, the Educational Ministry of Lithuania assists Lithuanian-American schools with new primers, workbooks, storybooks, and supplementary materials.

The LEC pays great attention to preparing teachers in educating their students. Workshops are held annually in Chicago. Every summer, the Lithuanian Teachers' Camp operates in Camp Dainava, Michigan, with round table discussions, lectures, hands-on workshops, and seminars.

The LEC stresses the importance of the continuous usage of the Lithuanian language not only in school, but also at home, so that the child can benefit in the fluency of the language through proper use of grammar. The individual schools act as support communities for parents and their children as they nurture their child in their bilingual household. The levels of language proficiency vary greatly within the classroom and the home; from exceptionally fluent (newly-settled immigrants) to the minimally-speaking (2nd/3rd generation) students.

The LEC maintains an editorial in the *Pasaulio Lietuvis (World Lithuanian)* monthly magazine informing the Lithuanian-speaking public of its current programs, school reports, and future plans. This information section is prepared by Regina Kučienė. The LEC also publishes a children's magazine, *Eglutė (The Little Fir)*, which was originally published and edited by The Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Putnam, CT, from 1950 to the early 1990's. Its editor since 1995 is Regina Kučienė. The magazine is specifically designed for children and their interests. It is being used not only in Lithuanian-American schools but, also widely-read in Lithuania.

The LEC has shown considerable concern to those Americans of Lithuanian heritage seeking to learn about the country and language of their forefathers, and to the non-Lithuanians travelling to Lithuania for business purposes.

As Lithuanian-American children gear up for school this fall, they will also fill a separate book bag with textbooks inviting them to explore, understand, and become enthralled with their heritage and a small yet, fascinating country called Lithuania. ♦

A Look at the Lithuanian Educational Council's Busy Year

- The LEC sponsored the 10th annual competition for writing and drawing among Lithuanian school students in early spring. 219 students participated. Winners were presented with certificates of recognition and monetary awards. The Council is very grateful to their benefactor, Rev. Juozas Prunskis, for generously funding the awards.
- The LEC supported the A.P.P.L.E. teachers' seminars with five scholarships bestowed upon Lithuanian rural teachers enabling them to participate in the seminars.
- On the occasion of its 40th anniversary, the Lithuanian Institute for Advanced Studies received financial support and congratulations from the LEC.
- A conference for Lithuanian teachers to enhance their skills took place at the Lithuanian World Center on July 24th to the 26th with participants from Los Angeles, Detroit, Omaha, and local schools in Lemont and Chicago. A well-planned agenda and excellent lecturers contributed to its success. Mrs. Regina Kučienė, LEC president, introduced teachers to a catalogue of new books and manuals published in Lithuania and available to Lithuanian-American schools.
- The LEC's successful children's magazine, *Eglutė*, is available for \$15.00 a year in the U.S., and for \$20.00 abroad, including Lithuania.

For more information, please contact the Lithuanian Educational Council at the following address:

LEC/Mrs. Regina Kučas
13648 Kickapoo Trail
Lockport, IL 60441

Navy News Service

USNS Comfort

Offers a Future to a Young Boy

"I am writing to you in great hope." These are the opening words in a letter from Lithuanian resident Tatjana Tvardauskienė as she asks CAPT Kevin O'Connell, Commanding Officer of the medical treatment facility aboard USNS Comfort (TAH 20), to help her son, who has a rare birth defect.

USNS Comfort was at anchor off Klaipeda, Lithuania while participating in Baltic Challenge '98, an annual international military exercise involving eleven European nations and the United States.

In writing a letter concerning her 13-year old son, Vidmantas, Tatjana says, "My son was born Dec. 13, 1984, with a big tumor on the back of his head. Since that day, my family and myself have lived in hope that God will have mercy on us and will not deprive us of the child."

Comfort neurosurgeon CDR Ross Moquin said that Vidmantas had a lipomycolmingocele (osseous horn), a growth that started before Vidmantas was born. This growth pushed out of his skull and continued to grow under his scalp, giving him a horn-like protrusion. It caused a permanent tennis ball-sized hole in his skull and continued to grow in his brain, slowly creating internal pressure and pain.

This condition is rare, but left untreated can have

devastating and life-threatening effects. Tatjana's letter neither begs nor pleads, rather she starkly outlines what the entire family has done to seek help for their son. But between the lines a mother's love is abundantly clear, as is her heart-breaking and frustrating fight to save her son. Vidmantas has been hospitalized 14 times. At two and again at four years of age, surgery was attempted and some of the growth removed. But both times Russian surgeons had to turn back because Vidmantas was losing too much blood. Since then, doctors from Lithuania to Moscow have offered no encouragement and say they have done all they can.

The years of care, worry, and frustration have led to Tatjana's own failing health. Yet her letter ends with, "My son, Vidmantas, though his head is deformed and the defect is visible, lives a happy and cheerful life. We explained to him that the bump on his head is just like glasses, dentures, or other things. We taught him to ignore strange glances or words of other people. He still does not realize what is actually wrong with him, that his life is still in danger."

Tatjana said she dreamed every day of finding a way to get Vidmantas to America. It was just a dream, because going to America was out of the question – at first, because Lithuania was part of

JOSEPH BRAZAN (JOSEPH BRAZAUSKAS) sent us this touching and heartwarming story about the caring USNS Comfort's crew members. Americans have extended help and hope to many Lithuanians here and in Lithuania over the years. This is just one story that continues the American tradition of empathy, caring, and courage many have experienced.

Russia – then, after independence, it was just too costly.

Tatjana read a story in her local newspaper on July 20th, about the American hospital ship Comfort, anchored near Klaipėda. Afraid to hope, she contacted the reporter, asking for more information. After hearing Tatjana's story, the reporter thought it was worth asking the exercise press information center for assistance.

Tatjana was told Baltic Challenge was a training exercise and that military participants from the exercises had been sent to Comfort for treatment, but no civilians. She was, however, encouraged to call the U.S. Embassy in Vilnius. Again, there were no definite answers but she was asked to write a letter, fax it to the embassy, and they would forward it to the commanding officer of Comfort.

Tatjana wrote the letter just as she had written other letters in the past. She knew the wheels of government in the past had worked very slowly, if at all. The ship will be gone, she thought, before she would get an answer and so would her son's chance for a normal life. The embassy called July 23rd.

The embassy asked if she and Vidmantas could be in Klaipėda the next day. The ship was leaving July 25th, but the doctors would be able to see her son. Tatjana doesn't remember the frantic ride to Klaipėda, but she does remember the ride out to Comfort.

"On the way out, the little boat rocked so much, and the closer we got to the ship it got bigger and bigger," Tatjana said. "What a welcome sight."

Like any patient coming aboard Comfort, there was no time to prepare themselves for the fast pace of a modern trauma hospital. But for Tatjana and Vidmantas, they were hurled into what seemed like a maelstrom of activity. First stop was sick bay, where they met Ross Moquin. A quick external exam and medical history along with vital signs were done.

Moquin then requested permission to do a cat-scan. Tatjana agreed. The cat-scan took only a short while, and the results were fed into a state-of-the-art telemedicine computer where doctors could see a 3D image of Vidmantas' head in great detail. At the same time, these images were sent by satellite to the National Naval Medical Center, in Bethesda, where CDR John Stockel, neurosurgeon on duty, studied the same images and consulted with Moquin

and concurred with his diagnosis and surgical plan.

Moquin then spoke with Tatjana, explaining that he could operate and help Vidmantas. He then explained each step of the operation and the risks.

"Do you want me to operate?"

"When?" she asked.

"As soon as we can set it up...Now," he replied.

Within minutes she made her decision. "Yes. Please, yes," she said.

Tatjana's head whirled, for 13 years she had waited for this moment, only daring to dream that someday it might happen. Now this unknown American doctor, with warmth and confidence, said not only could he help Vidmantas, he wanted to help, and he wanted to do it now. While Tatjana tried to catch her breath and collect her wits, lab tests were ordered for Vidmantas.

There were many preparations to make. Moquin wanted a Lithuanian doctor to observe the operation because Vidmantas would need follow-up care and Moquin wanted the doctor to know the case from the beginning. Dr. Vytautas Gritkas, an American-trained neurosurgeon, was available in Klaipėda and readily agreed to help with the operation and perform the follow-up care. As soon as he could arrive, they would begin.

Vidmantas was understandably frightened. Tatjana stayed by his side, soothing him with her touch, and reassuring him in a low voice as only a mother can. Moquin and Gritkas bonded quickly and were ready to begin. It was a slow and painstaking surgery. Moquin was guided by views of Vidmantas' head on a computer monitor.

Growths of this kind have many blood vessels and each one must be sealed. Finally, all the growth was removed, leaving a hole that would fill as the boy's brain resumes its normal shape. Blood that had escaped during the operation was suctioned off, run through a machine that cleaned it, and returned it to his body. The entire procedure took seven hours, and the doctors were satisfied.

Saturday morning, Tatjana was again by her son's side. Moquin kept Vidmantas aboard Comfort for a couple of days, even though he said the danger had passed.

Meanwhile, Comfort set sail for Visby, Sweden, and a medical conference to be held there. Tatjana and Vidmantas traveled with the ship to Visby before returning to Lithuania. ◆

Dale Lukas, translated by Laima Šileikis-Hood

LITHUANIANS SING OUT FOR THE *Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Festival*



Marcinkonys Village Folk Ensemble performs at the "Subatvakaris" — a side event during the Folklife Festival.



Children visit the Lithuanian Village Table's wood carving exhibit and try on typical Shrove Tuesday masks.

Lithuanian folk artisans and performers were a great success at the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Festival, which occurred from June 24th to July 5th, on the Great Mall in Washington, D.C. About a million people attended the Festival. Many of them visited the Lithuanian pavilion where they watched demonstrations of the artisans and learned the traditions, songs, and dances of Lithuania.

In addition to the 50 participants from Lithuania (who were sponsored by Lithuania's Ministry of Culture), the "Sodauto" folk ensemble from Boston also performed songs and dances of the Lithuanian coal miners living in Pennsylvania in the early part of the 20th century.

The Lithuanian-American Community (JAV Lietuvių Bendruomenė) designated Laima Šileikis-Hood to represent Lithuanians in organizing the festival with the Smithsonian Institution, and she, in turn, asked Dale Lukas to form a committee in Washington, D.C. The Washington committee, comprised of Lithuanian-American Community members, was responsible for press releases, obtaining volunteers to host the performers and artisans in the evenings, and provide translators during the festival to explain the work of the artisans. The Lithuanian Embassy assisted in facilitating contracts between the Ministry of Culture

DALE LUKAS is a member of the Washington, D.C. Lithuanian-American Community. LAIMA ŠILEIKIS-HOOD is the chairperson of the Manhattan, New York, Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. Both women were instrumental in organizing the Lithuanian Village at the Folklife Festival. All photos courtesy of Laima Šileikis-Hood.

in Lithuanian and the Smithsonian Institution.

On June 27th, the Washington committee organized a real Lithuanian "Subatvakaris" or a traditional festive evening which was attended by guests from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and the D.C. area. Zita Kelmickaitė and Vida Satkauskienė led the Festival participants to be warmly welcomed by the Lithuanian-Americans. Dr. Petras Anusas, General Consul of Lithuania from New York, and Donatas Skučas, President of the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian-American Community, greeted the participants.

Guests at the Subatvakaris had an opportunity to obtain amber jewelry, "verbos" – intricately woven dried flower rods, straw ornaments, carvings, and books that the artisans brought from Lithuania to the Festival. Folk dancers, musicians, and singers provided the entertainment and encouraged everyone to join in the dancing.

The Washington committee provided refreshment, and the participants reciprocated by serving "skaidraja" (homemade brew) and Lithuanian candy. Everyone had a good time; singing and dancing late into the evening. To help make the evening a success, the Lithuanian Embassy donated ten cases of Lithuanian beer, and Mr. Andriulis sent 24 "Andriulis Farmer's Cheese".

During the two weeks the Festival participants were in Washington, they were invited to the homes of local Lithuanian-Americans where they had an opportunity to socialize on a more personal level.

Emilija Sakadolskis coordinated the translators and made sure that all artisans had someone there to answer questions. This enabled Americans to learn about the Lithuanian culture and traditions. Elenutė Bradūnas, Gita Kupčinskas, and Darius Sužiedelis were the official presenters and translators of the programs.

The Festival was a tremendous success because of volunteers as Laima Šileikis-Hood, Dale Lukas, Gita Kupčinskas, and the entire Washington-Baltimore Lithuanian-American Community (Lietuvių Bendruomenė). ◆



The Festival's participants hold gifts to be presented to the Ambassador of the Republic of Lithuania, Stasys Sakalauskas and his wife, during a reception at the Lithuanian Embassy.



At the Smithsonian Institution's reception...

Seated: Saulius Šaltenis, Minister of Culture of Lithuania; and Michael Heyman, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

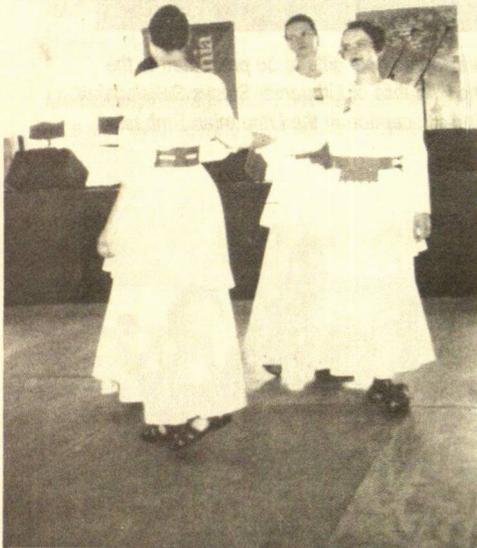
Standing: Marija Remienė, JAV LB Cultural Affairs Director; Birutė Jasaitienė, JAV LB Human Relations Director; Vida Pabarskaitė, Ministry of Culture; St. Sakalauskas, Lithuanian Ambassador to the U.S.; his wife Juratė; Laima Šileikis-Hood.



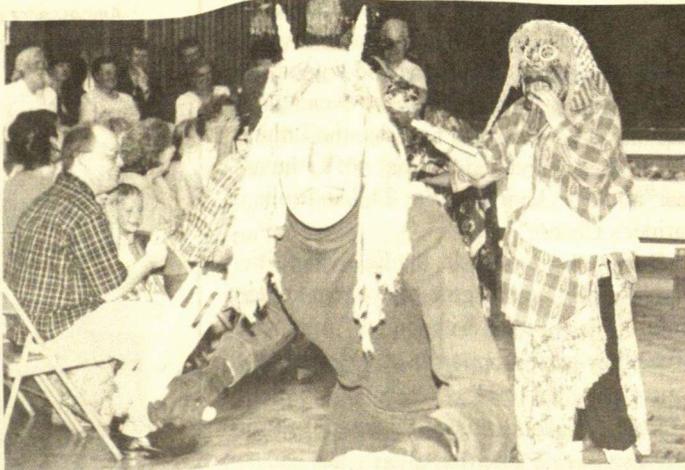
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Glimpses from the Smithsonian Institution's Folklife Festival capture the variety and uniqueness of the Lithuanian Village's exhibits, performances, and participants.

1. "Sutaras" band performed Lithuanian folk song and dance music at the Folklife Festival.
2. On July 4th, a Wayside Shrine, carved during the festival, was dedicated at the Lithuanian Pavilion. The Marcinkonys Village Folk Ensemble sang alongside the Shrine.
3. "Trys-Keturiose", polyphonic singers, performed ages-old songs with dance step accompaniments.
4. During the "Subatvakaris", Festival participants donned Shrove Tuesday masks and costumes demonstrating this lively tradition to the evening's audience members.

Irena Blekys

THE ROLE OF THE BALTIC SEA THROUGH THE AGES

*This is a summary of Professor David Kirby's lecture at the University of Washington on May 28th, 1998. Kirby, of the University of London, is the author of two books, **The Baltic World 1772-1993: Europe's Northern Periphery in an Age of Change**, and **Northern Europe in the Early Modern Period: The Baltic World 1492-1772**. Kirby is considered the preeminent authority on the Baltic area.*

Professor David Kirby's lecture describing the Baltic countries from the perspective of northern Europe and examining the role of the Baltic Sea brought to light interesting historical facts which help explain the current interest of the Scandinavian countries in Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, in part as a continuation of the past.

The Baltic Sea has played a crucial role in integrating the Baltic Sea along its eastern shore (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia) into the Western European mainstream. The sea provided access over the centuries by putting peoples together from around the Baltic. For example, the rich mix of similar architectural styles of Riga and Copenhagen points to past interaction of these peoples. Interestingly, the Baltic Sea has served as both barrier and window. In the former case, producing an isolationist

mentality; while in the latter case, viewing an avenue to the West during the Soviet period.

By focusing on trade and seafaring in the Baltic Sea, Kirby painted a cyclic pattern of prosperity and poverty in the Baltic area from the north, represented by the Scandinavian countries to the southern Baltic countries of Poland and Germany.

Before the Middle Ages, the Vikings of northern Europe were masters of the sea and dominated Europe. Although they left behind an enduring legacy in the West, Viking forays into the Eastern Slavic lands are less well known. Archeological evidence shows early-Nordic-Slavic interaction and trade routes to the Arabic countries via the Rus River.

In the Middle Ages, the balance of political power shifted to the southern Baltic, where the Germanic peoples dominated trade through their access to capital and organization. In the 12th century, the Hanseatic League established trade routes throughout the Baltic countries where German hegemony reigned.

Dutch and English trade dominated the Baltic Sea starting in the 16th century. Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, countries of the eastern Baltic, were primarily exploited as resources for raw materials, such as wax, grain, timber, and tar. In exchange, salt, cheap cloth,

*IRENA BLEKYS is on the University of Washington Scandinavian Department Advisory Board and is a regular contributor to **Tulpé Times**, the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.'s Washington State Chapter's Newsletter. Permission was received to reprint this article in **BRIDGES**.*

and pickled herring were imported. An exception to this rule was the 17th century Duchy of Courland (modern-day Riga) whose sizeable merchant fleet traded as far south as the colonies of West Africa.

The establishment in the late 17th and 18th centuries of the American colonies with their rich sources for tar and timber, started the decline of eastern Baltic trade importance to Europeans. The Baltic countries became a backwater for trade and were slow to industrialize. Marginalized at the periphery of Europe, Baltic coastal and inter-regional trade became crucial to the dissemination of culture and ideas.

In the northern Baltic, countries which appeared poor and impoverished to outsiders held reservoirs of their own peoples' talent potential. Once seeming to offer nothing more than a fate of inescapable poverty, in this century these countries are among the wealthiest European nations.

In the southern Baltic, a different experience existed in the lands settled by German colonizers and those under Polish, and later, Russian domination. Here serfdom extended longer than in the northern Baltics, and consequently, the people's enterprise and endeavor were stifled. (Serfdom was abolished in Lithuania as recently as 1860.) The southern Baltic lands were plagued by war and famine, with bonds of servitude shackling the mentality of Baltic people up to the late 19th century. Here, modernization in the 20th century was accompanied by the destructive political and cultural changes of the Soviet period. It is interesting to note that the quest for national identity in 1918 for Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia is currently serving these countries in adapting after the fall of the Soviet Union, an adjustment easier for them than, for example, Russia.

This lecture was supported by the following programs at the University of Washington: Russian, East European and Central Asian Studies Program; the Center for West European Studies; the Department of Scandinavian Studies; the Department of History; and the Baltic Studies Program. Thanks to the presence of the Baltic program at the University of Washington, the audience was able to hear and meet notable scholars of the Baltic area.

Regina Narušis

Lithuanian Carpets Capture Attention

In the small town of Lentvaris, Lithuania, some 12 miles outside Vilnius, is a factory that weaves beautiful carpets. The factory's name is, appropriately, **Kilimai**.

The first loom was installed in 1957 in an ancient castle (Tiškevičiaus Rūmai). Since then, the loom and rug weaving have been moved to other buildings constructed nearby; while, the administrative offices remain in the castle. The company was privatized in 1992 and employs over 200 employees.

Even though the loom is over 40 years old, the experience and dedication of the employees produce carpets and runners of high quality, various designs, and many sizes. The carpets are made of wool or wool blends, with cotton and linen yarn backings. The large quantity of natural turf controls electric static and has good hygiene properties.

The carpets have been, since in-

ception, designed by Lithuanian artists. You will find Lithuanian designs as well as modern and classical patterns. There has been a total of nearly 1200 designs created since 1957. Typically 15 to 20 new designs are created annually with varying color schemes.

Some of the current artists are Stasė Černevienė who created "Visita", "Lašas" (a round rug), and "Austė"; Olga Ochmanienė who created "Pajuris", "Karuselė" (an eight-sided rug), and "Kovas"; and Rima Viliunienė who created "Galaktika" and "Jubiliejinis". "Jubiliejinis" won the prize for being one of the best Lithuanian products this year at the Lithuanian Products Exhibit.

Kilimai carpets and runners can be found gracing the floors of the Presidential Palace, the Minister's offices, the embassies, banks, hotels, restaurants, and business offices. They are truly very lovely and complement their surroundings.

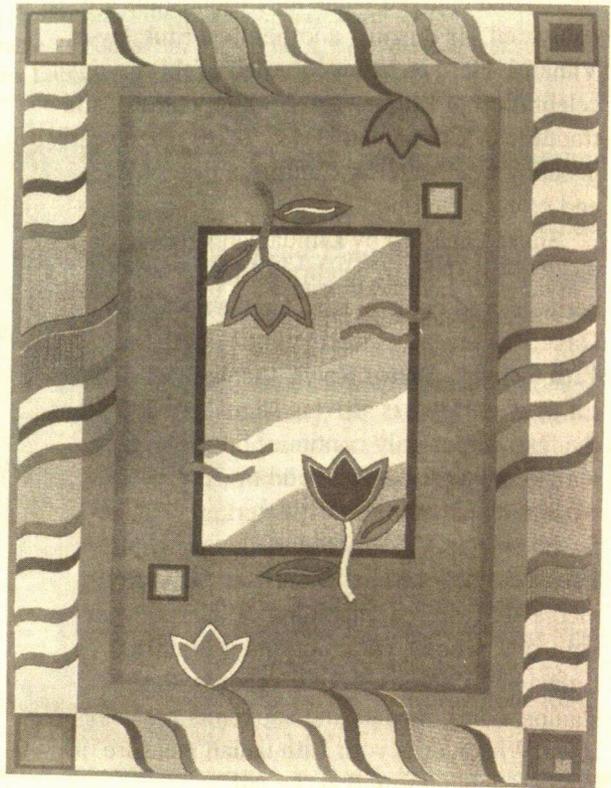
Products from **Kilimai** are sold to Latvia, Estonia, Russia, the Ukraine, France, England, Hungary, Sweden, and even the United States. A company in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, bought a quantity of them. Last year, **Kilimai** manufactured and sold 67,500 square meters of carpet to Lithuanians.

By the way, Lithuanian carpets are woven only in Lentvaris. Further expansion is somewhat limited at Lentvaris by the old loom. It is the company's hope to acquire a new loom to increase their productivity, and expand the size and design capabilities.

Kilimai has stiff competition from rugs made and imported from Belgium, Estonia, Poland, France, and Russia. Seventy-three percent of the imports come from Belgium. Exports to Russia

are hampered by a high import duty: making the Lithuanian carpets too expensive for the Russians. According to **Kilimai**, there is no import duty placed on foreign rugs in Lithuania at this time.

Kilimai carpets are available at the factory in Lentvaris at Klevų Alėja 46 and their store in Vilnius at V. Kudirkos gatvė 3. They are also available in many furniture and department stores in Lithuania. The trip to the factory in Lentvaris not only presents a warehouse of beautiful and intricate carpetry, but also a stately castle surrounded by lakes and forests.



Kovas carpet featuring the tulip motif in blues, reds, greens, and yellows.

CURRENT EVENTS

A CELEBRATION OF LITHUANIAN PRIDE MIXED WITH SUNSHINE

from the Lithuanian Days Committee, Los Angeles, CA



The delicious aroma of kugelis baking, the music of laughter and a familiar folk song fill the air. Beautiful vast displays of amber, ethnic art, and an array of homemade baked goods are tempting every imagination. Smiles upon native costumed singers and dancers are seen as spontaneous singing and dancing take place throughout. Old relationships are renewed and enjoyed while new friendships are cultivated. Is this just another beautiful day in Vilnius? Hard to believe that all of this joyous celebration of Lithuanian heritage, culture, and traditions, "Lithuanian Days", takes place yearly in sunny Los Angeles, California the first weekend of each October.

Started in 1986 by Lithuanian native, Edvardas Kulikauskas, to celebrate Lithuanian pride, heritage, and culture, Los Angeles Lithuanian Days are currently anticipating a successful 12th festival. Victor Ralys, the director of the Lithuanian Days, is striving to make certain that the festival not only continues but flourishes with yearly variation and additions.

Lithuanian culture, art, entertainment, refreshments and history are readily available. Each year new Lithuanian artisans of various media are featured, including: folk arts, weavings, oils, woods, ceramics and sculptures. Lithuanian fashions, books, records, tapes, stamps, coins, medals and souvenirs are available. Whatever is your Lithuanian pleasure, it can certainly be found at the fair.

All traditional Lithuanian foods and drinks are available and enjoyed. One can eat with friends at the fair and even take home a snack or two for future indulgence. One can never get enough kugelis, which is the breakfast of Lithuanian champions and our very own soul

food. Margučiai (the art of Lithuanian Easter egg dyeing) is featured each year and is very popular with the adults as well as the children.

The culture and entertainment portion of the fair presents a wide array of musical, singing, and dancing talent from around the world. In the past, singers and dancers of all ages from Lithuania, Canada, and various U.S. cities have graced the festival stage to share their ethnic pride and talents. Lithuanians worldwide have attended the fair including several members of Lithuanian communities from Australia, Canada and Europe.

This year's fair, to be held October 3rd and 4th, will feature the talents of folk dancers from Canada, a theatrical children's group from Lithuania, the Knights of Lithuania Choir based in Chicago, as well as Los Angeles host talents: the St. Casimir's Church Choir, the Los Angeles Men's Quartet and Spindulys Dance Ensemble. A Saturday night dance (Subatvakaris) will feature the energetic rock band Žaibas from Chicago.

This year, in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Knights of Lithuania's Los Angeles council, the organization will be honored as the theme of this year's fair. Concurrently with the fair, the Knights of Lithuania Mid-America District members will be holding their district meeting, the first meeting to be held in the western states. Faustas Strolia and Al Brazis will be the honored grand marshals. If you have any questions regarding the Los Angeles Lithuanian Days Fair, please do not hesitate to contact Maryté Sepikas at (818) 782-1248. ◆

READING, WRITING, and 'RITHMETIC...

SEPTEMBER IS EDUCATION MONTH

Governor Jim Edgar, of Illinois, sponsored a reception in honor of Ethnic Language Schools at the James R. Thompson Center. Over 100 schools, representing 30 ethnic communities, received the Governor's award for their dedication and commitment as an Ethnic Language School. Pictured left to right: Donna Mulcahy Fitts, Executive Director - Office of the Governor; Ruta Mockus, Chicago Lithuanian Cultural School; Pat Michalski, Assistant to the Governor for Ethnic Affairs.



See "Lithuanian-American Children Gear up for Lithuanian School" on page 8 for a more detailed look at the Lithuanian schools in the United States.



Laura Lynn Ryan, wife of Illinois Secretary of State George H. Ryan, and Ms. Darlene Kelly, Director of Recreational Therapy at Shriners Hospital in Chicago, accept books from Lithuanian children representing the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. Mrs. Ryan visited patients at Shriners Hospital and read a book to the parents and children representing 21 countries who also donated books to the hospital in their native languages. Pictured left to right: (front row) Adomas Jonavičius, Aleksas Siliunas, Daiva Siliunas, Jadvyga Jonavičius; (back row) Ms. Kelly, Mrs. Ryan.

SOCIETY'S EFFORTS HONORED

The former president of Lithuania, Vytautas Landsbergis, Parliament members, Bishop Juozas Žemaitis and other Lithuanian dignitaries honored 23 members and friends of the Lithuanian Citizens' Society of Western Pennsylvania during their visit to Lithuania from July 9th to the 23rd. They took part

in the consecration of the new Cathedral of the Visitation of Mary in Vilkaviškis.

The Society was responsible for shipping the Stations of The Cross and the pipe organ from St. Casimir's Catholic Church (which recently closed) from Pittsburgh to Lithuania.

CROSSROADS '98

by Birutė Vindašienė

Lithuanian Mercy Lift (LML) is at a crossroads now in its eighth year of commitment. LML has held a firm resolve in its goals of providing medical supplies to hospitals in Lithuania. This year's fundraiser – **Crossroads '98** – will help continue this work.

In a country struggling to sustain its health care system while rebuilding itself after 50 years of communism, it is also challenged with the epidemic of tuberculosis, drug and alcohol addiction, as well as raising awareness of the deadly AIDS virus. The profit from **Crossroads '98** will fund the Lithuanian Mercy Lift war on tuberculosis by supplying drugs to treat every TB patient in Lithuania!

LML faces these health crises with optimism. Their supporters share this commitment and have been able to help ship a total of \$75 million worth of medical supplies – a total of 305 containers – to Lithuania. Every patient who has recovered with their supporters help thank them and LML thanks them, too.

This year, the **Crossroads '98** fundraiser will be held September 12th at the historic Chicago Cultural Center in downtown Chicago. Lithuania's First Lady, Mrs. Alma Adamkus, will be attending the event. In addition, LML is offering exciting raffle prizes: two round-trip airline tickets from Chicago to Vilnius donated by American Travel Service and Scandinavian Airlines; a three-night Caribbean cruise for two; \$1,000 cash; and \$250 cash. Those interested in further information regarding reservations or LML, please call (708) 442-8297 or (630) 257-6777. ◆

NEWS FROM LITHUANIA...

VĖTRA RETURNS HOME

Vėtra, the first ship of Lithuania's navy to sail across the Atlantic Ocean, returned to Klaipėda navy port's quay on August 18th after sailing to Boston to join the 200th anniversary festivities of the U.S. sailing vessel *Constitution*.

Vėtra's, crew, under Captain Lieutenant Vytautas Mogenis' command, regarded this experience as important because the crew acquired knowledge that would be of use in joint exercises of the Baltic marine squadron (BALTRON). The boat itself was fit for sailing under any weather conditions – carrying rescue, navigation and radio communications means.

Beside some 50 servicemen, the crew also included mechanics, navigation, and geography students from the Seafaring Institute of Klaipėda and Vilnius universities.

During the pre-World War II period, no Lithuanian warship had sailed across the Atlantic Ocean. Since 1994, the farthest itinerary of warships was the Northern Sea. ◆

WILLIAMS OFFICIALS VISIT LITHUANIA

A delegation of the U.S.-based Williams company headed by the company vice president Steve Hunkus visited Mažeikių oil refinery on August 27th. Williams representatives met top refinery officials and trade union leaders, presented investment plans to the Lithuanian oil sector, and discussed future job problems.

Hunkus also visited Butingė oil terminal, where he inspected con-

struction and met terminal authorities to exchange information. He also met Conservative Party and Center faction representatives and presented the company's plans for Lithuania.

This autumn Seimas (Parliament) is to decide whether to approve the letter of intent signed between the Lithuanian government and Williams company at the end of July. ◆

RUSSIAN FINANCIAL CRISIS WILL NOT AFFECT LITHUANIA

PPrime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius dismissed fears that the financial crisis in Russia could spill over into Lithuania, all national dailies reported on August 28th.

"There are no economic reasons for the Russian financial crisis spilling over into Lithuania", Vagnorius said in a news conference. What the premier is worried about is "sensational statements" and "scare stories about a crisis" by "some politicians or politicking experts" who want to make the best of the situation.

Vagnorius said the government started gearing up for possible turmoil on the Russian financial market when the first signs of a crisis showed up in spring. First of all, it began accumulating financial reserves. Lithuanian foreign currency reserves rose by 600 million US dollars in the first seven months of this year and the reserve exceeds the total foreign debt including all guarantees, according to Vagnorius. Also "we have accumulated a reserve of budgetary funds and cash, and may use the money any time." Vagnorius was quoted.

Source: ELTA News Agency ◆

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BRIDGES/Rasa Ardys-Juška, 1212 Mohegan Rd., Manasquan, NJ 08736 or talk to us on www.javlb.org.

REFLECTIONS

Msgr. Jonas Kučinskas-Kučingis

Memories of a War-Torn School Year

*This excerpt is taken from a book, **Along The Paths of My Life**, by Msgr. Jonas Kučinskas-Kučingis. Msgr. Kučingis tells about his life from boyhood in Lithuania through the Russian and German invasions to fleeing to the United States. He was instrumental and the key in the organization and the growth of St. Casimir's Roman Catholic parish in Los Angeles.*

To mark September as the month for children to return to schools, the following excerpt describes a school and its students and teachers during war time circumstances (1940 to 1944), after the young Msgr. Kučingis had been appointed chaplain of Telšiai high school.

The Telšiai gimnazija [high school] was not a stranger to me. I knew several teachers from before. After getting settled in the apartment, I went to present myself to the principal of the gimnazija, Mr. Rubazevičius. He made a very good, fatherly impression on me. He was quiet and tactful. The Bolshevik time had not affected him. Even under difficult circumstance, he was capable to do the work of a preceptor and educator.

The work of the chaplain was difficult. There were several parallel classes. Almost every day I had several lessons. There was a shortage of textbooks. I had to provide written notes. Besides teaching religion, I was appointed, almost every year, the ethics teacher of the 8th (graduating) class. All teachers were favorably disposed toward the chaplain's work. During the second recollections, they participated in the conferences together with the students. That beautiful example affected the students. Almost half of them were children of the town people, the others were country boys and girls. The most trouble was with the town-dwellers, the children of the so-called intelligentsia. However, the

overall impression was good.

The work of the school was made very much more difficult by the economy: the school had to provide wood for heating in winter and everyone had to live on ration cards; which, during the war, were ridiculously small. The students also felt this lack, especially the poor ones. Because of this, after consulting the Principal, we organized a small dining room for needy students.

The school let us use a large hall in the cellar of the school, where the dining room was established. With the consent of the school, we distributed sign-up sheets for collecting donations during school vacations. We used to collect even up to 10,000 marks, for which we bought pigs and, after they were butchered secretly, took them from the country to an appointed place in town. The Germans had forbidden the slaughter of pigs without their permission. They bought them more cheaply for the army. The farmers were cunning. Instead of a fattened pig, they used to leave a small piglet in order to be able to show the inspector that the number of their pigs had not changed.

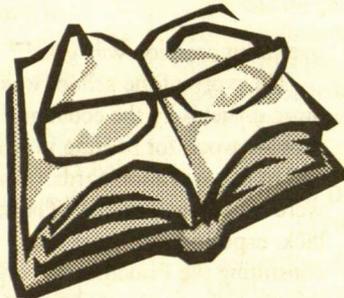
In addition, we used to buy potatoes, peas, beans, and other vegetables, and mixing in large pieces of meat, used to cook country soup. And thus we helped the poor students. Our dining room became so popular, that some of the teachers used to come during the long midday intermission to eat the tasty and nutritious soup.

During the time of Lithuania's independence, teachers were forbidden to accept any kind of help from students. However, during the war this turned out to be impractical. Some teachers who had to live from the meager rations they got on the cards, were practically starving. Among them were my sister, Elena, and I. Our home farm was far away and difficult to reach. We had to be satisfied with what we could buy. The Ministry of Education was appealed to and this order, not to take help from the students, was changed. After the parents of the students were notified, the situation improved. My sister and I got so much help that we could help other teachers. Dambrauskai, from Luokė, and the Raudžiai family especially supported us. Later, after finding this out, Bishop Borisevičius used to send us a goose, or a duck through his sisters.

The proverb says:

"One trouble is no trouble..." The Germans began to meddle in the affairs of the school. They bothered and tried to recruit older boys to join the army. In Marijampolė, they organized a school, supposedly for cadets. The German officers would come, make speeches, and urge students to enlist in the army. Their speeches were translated by teacher Purvinas. The students began to ask during classes what they should do. My advice to them was that without parents' permission they should not do anything. The eighth class students were being promised that, if they enlisted in the army, they would receive a graduation certificate without exams. Of the whole-gimnazija, only one volunteer left for Marijampolė to the cadet school.

One day, German soldiers came, surrounded the cadet school, caught almost all of them, and took them to Germany. Only a few managed to escape.



The student from Telšiai returned, injured with a bandaged arm, and came to me to apologize for not listening to my advice.

That was not enough. The German Security, finding out about my attitude, probably informed by one of the teachers, sent two SS men to my apartment, accompanied by a Lithuanian interpreter, and began to question me. I told them that I was not against students joining the army and only counseled them that before making this decision, they should consult their parents. They believed me and left me in peace.

The 1943-44 school year became even more difficult. The army requisitioned the school house and told us to move. We huddled together in a former Bernardine school, next to the cathedral and a second group moved to the house of Mr. Sidabras. The whole gimnazija could not fit in those quarters. We had to work in two shifts – one before lunch, the other after lunch. That meant working from 8 a.m. to almost 9 p.m. I used to come home so exhausted that it seemed my head was going to burst from the pain.

It was especially bad in the former Bernardine premises. It was a building sunk into the earth, with thick stone walls and damp. When it was being heated, it was full of vapors, but if we opened the windows, it was cold. It was a real torture.

And so, with much difficulty, we finished the school year. The eastern front, like a horrible storm, was creeping toward Lithuania. At night, Russian planes were growling, destroying towns, and killing people.

I spent the summer vacation at my parents' home and journeyed to Palanga (a famous Lithuanian resort on the shores of the Baltic Sea). There were few people there. It was not like old times, when the beach was full of summer visitors. The approaching front affected this place also.

In the middle of August, I went to Telšiai to start the new school year. It was supposed to begin September 1st. A small group of teachers gathered with the Principal. Because the front was changing almost weekly, we decided not to start the new school year. After saying our good-byes, we all dispersed. Now the question remained, what future plan should we choose, where to go? ◆

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