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Adamkus in New York...Lithuania's Potential for NATO...A Countryside Visit

PERSPECTIVES

It was very interesting to read Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus' remarks concerning his recent five-day visit to New York. In fact it was what he said upon arriving in Vilnius that elicited the double-take and knowing smile that did it. He had stated that he was "particularly pleased and surprised to see how much attention was shown to Lithuania in New York."

Now why would this affect me in any way except by reacting, "Finally!". I suppose it has to do with the historical significance of 'ethnic identification' in the United States. During the Cold War, not only was Lithuania "buried" by information nondisclosure, it did not exist as a known ethnic group in most social circles.

During most occasions when I stated I was Lithuanian, the following popular responses were heard:

"Is that a religion or a cult?"

"Is that 'Lewthuranian' or 'Lewthuwaynian'?"

"Oh yeah, you guys are somewhere in Asia, right?"

My sixth grade teacher went as far as convincing me for that whole school year that my name was Rosa, not Rasa — implying that I was perpetually misspelling my name. She almost had me convinced.

One day in May, she asked to speak to me in private. She held in her hands my personal school file. This wise teacher looked at me and said, "Never, and I mean never, allow someone else to tell you who you are, no matter who that person thinks he or she is. You are Rasa Ardys, not Rosa."

Naturally, I was stunned and speechless. She finally got it, in a weird way. But so did I. From that day on I correct people when they mispronounce my name. I also give them a mini-geography lesson when 'Lithuania' leaves them confused.

Lithuania's Pres. Adamkus had every right to be pleased with New York's response. In fact, New York's behavior may have improved my opinion about the fair city.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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The Environment Still Remains Lithuania's Focus

"A Lithuanian farmer's crops and livestock were an integral part of his life. They were treated with respect, love, and dedication. They were not merely things to be used to assuage hunger and cover the body. For the Lithuanian, the soil and everything that grew, propagated, and lived in it was an inseparable part of his soul."

This excerpt from *Lithuanian Customs and Traditions* by Danute Brazyte Bindokiene underlines why Lithuanians, as Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, focus on the environment as a chief concern.



On the cover:

Albina Makūnaitė's "The Song of Flax" portrays the field work in autumn.

Edited by Rasa Ardys-Juška
Source: ELTA News Agency

Lithuania's President Visits New York

"I was particularly pleased and surprised to see how much attention was shown to Lithuania in New York," were President Valdas Adamkus' remarks upon arriving home to Vilnius after his five-day visit to New York. The Lithuanian President visited the United Nations, colleagues from other countries, American businesses, and the Jewish community from September 19th to the 24th.

Pres. Valdas Adamkus addressed the participants of the United Nations General Assembly's 53rd session on Tuesday, Sept. 22nd. He expressed concern about the worsening ecological status in the world, and urged the UN to pay more heed to tackling these issues.

"Today we all face the challenges of the contemporary world, which have been caused by rapidly developing technologies and negligent human activities. These challenges, although not as evident as open military conflicts, are no less threatening. A devastated and deteriorating environment may cause conflicts of a scale unknown before," Adamkus said.

Once an American environmental expert, the Lithuanian leader insisted that ecology should top the agenda for the United Nations.

"Lithuania will support every initiative to preserve and conserve natural resources," he said.

Pres. Adamkus signed onto the Kyoto pro-

ocol of the UN General Convention on climate changes aimed to temper emission of gas causing the so-called greenhouse effect. He also hailed a recent signing of the PIC Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, hailing it as "a remarkable example of prospective activities of the United Nations system."

He continued with the assertion that each human being was entitled to live in a clean and healthy environment, reminding the audience of the 50th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly. The president pointed to the sphere of human rights as craving wider attention.

"We likewise welcome the ongoing institutional reforms of human rights protection and propose to employ, with greater effectiveness, the experience and intellectual potential of such regional bodies as the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe."

Adamkus greeted the passage of the regulations of International Criminal Court, and measures taken to curb international crime and terrorism as a great accomplishment. He also voiced criticism of nuclear tests seen in India and Pakistan.

The Lithuanian leader spoke indirectly for admission of Germany and Japan in the UN Security Council; saying he stood for increasing Council member numbers.

Regarding Lithuania's desire for NATO membership, Adamkus stated, "The security of the individual will be best ensured, if the state he lives in is secure. Good neighborly relations and close regional co-operation are prerequisite conditions of peaceful coexistence of nations to which all the peoples of the world aspire." He added that Lithuanian security would be ensured by entry to NATO.

Pres. Adamkus also met with U.S. President Bill Clinton confirming plans to meet on October 19th for a discussion of issues pertinent to both countries. When an American reporter asked Adamkus to comment on the White House sex-and-perjury scandal, he replied that the international community was satisfied with Clinton, adding that a distinction should be drawn between his policies and his private life.

During this New York stay, the Lithuanian president also met with Japanese Premier Keizo Obuchi to discuss Lithuania's decision to set up its embassy in Tokyo. Needed funds for this project will be earmarked in next year's budget. Obuchi remarked that the Lithuanian diplomatic mission would add up to enhancing bilateral political, economic, and cultural ties.

During a meeting with managers of Lehman Brothers, an investment company, the managers praised Lithuania for the headway made to stabilize the financial market. They sounded very positive about the 1998 figures and the promising forecast for 1999. In the context of the world market, Lehman portrayed Lithuania as having a stable currency and pursuing a strict monetary policy. This

would help Lithuania dodge the after-effects of the Russian crisis.

Following an interview with members of the American Jewish Committee, the president had lunch with representatives of the J.P. Morgan investment company. They had acquired Lithuanian Eurobonds worth 200 million litas (\$50 million U.S. dollars). Following this meeting, Adamkus went to Wall Street, New York's Stock Exchange, where he was given a tour of the hall and handed a sculpture representing the symbols of the exchange – a bull and bear. At 4:00 p.m., Adamkus rang the bell announcing a closed trade session.

Overall, President Adamkus expressed that he was very satisfied with the meetings he had,

***"Good neighborly relations
and close regional co-
operation are prerequisite
conditions of peaceful
coexistence of nations to
which all peoples
of the world aspire."***

— Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus

and felt that this will facilitate co-operation with businesses and open up opportunities to draw investments.

Mrs. Alma Adamkienė did not accompany her husband back to Vilnius. She headed from New York to Chicago, where she stayed to nurse her 92 year-old mother. ♦

Zbigniew Brzezinski

NATO: The Dilemmas of Expansion

The fiftieth anniversary of NATO, which falls next April, will mark the conclusion of the first enlargement of the Alliance undertaken since the peaceful end of the Cold War. It is also certain to give rise to a new debate as to whether the Alliance should continue to expand. It is therefore not too early to ponder the several ramifications of that issue. They involve such broad geostrategic matters as the nature of the long-term relationship of American to Europe, the proper scope of the Euroatlantic alliance, its connection to the outgoing expansion of the European Union, the relationship of Russia to the expanded Euroatlantic and European structures – as well as the more immediate policy choices that may need to be made regarding the specific timing of any further expansion, its geographical direction, and its depth.

In brief, *whether*, and if so, *why*, *when*, *where*, and *how much* next to expand, and eventually where to stop, are the questions that need to be addressed and aired.

Europe is Unfinished Business

The basic lesson of the last five decades is that European security is the basis for European reconciliation. Without NATO, France would not have felt secure enough to reconcile with Germany, and both France and Britain

would have even more actively opposed Germany's reunification. It is enough to recall here the last-ditch maneuvers by both Thatcher and Mitterand to delay (and thus prevent) the reunification of Germany in order to appreciate the extent to which NATO has helped pacify the persisting European fears of a powerful and potentially dominant Germany, its good democratic and European postwar record notwithstanding.

Moreover, without NATO, it is most unlikely – for the same reasons – that the EC and now the EU would have ever come into being. Similarly, the ongoing reconciliation between Germany and Poland would not have been possible without the American presence in Germany and the related sense of security that Poland's prospective membership in NATO has fostered into Poland. The same is true of the Czech Republic and Germany, Hungary and Romania, Romania and Ukraine; and the desire to get into NATO is also having a similar influence on Slovenia's attitude toward Italy and Lithuania's toward Poland.

In the foreseeable future, the evolving reconciliation between Poland and Russia is also likely to become more marked. The Poles, once in NATO, will fear less that a fraternal embrace by their more powerful neighbor will become again a stifling yoke. And once the Russians realize that Central Europe is no

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longer a geopolitical vacuum, their definition of their sphere of influence will become less ambitious. Given the fact that all of Russia's western neighbors – rightly or wrongly – fear its aspirations, greater regional security thus will be to the benefit of all of Europe, Russia included.

This point – that security breeds reconciliation – deserves reiteration, given the recent debates over NATO's expansion. Even a cursory review of the arguments made by the principal opponents of that expansion indicates how dramatically wrong have been their diagnoses. In fact, it would be positively unkind to list serially and identify all the apocalyptic predictions made by various scholars, ex-ambassadors, and editorialists regarding Russia's likely behavior in the wake of NATO's expansion. They simply failed to draw the most elementary lessons from Europe's recent history.

Moreover, the construction and expansion both of the EU and of NATO are clearly long-term historical processes that are still far from finished. Even at this stage it may be premature to draw a demarcating line – and perhaps it should *never* be drawn with any degree of finality, given the contingent nature of historical processes – it is certainly evident that neither the EU nor NATO can be viewed as having reached its ultimate limits. Both institutions are committed publicly to further expansion, and even a glance at a map indicates why their present scope cannot be considered as final.

The expansion of the EU and of NATO are also mutually reinforcing processes. Each tends to facilitate the other, and the overlap between the two creates also the reality of greater political interdependence. That enhances the sense of shared security and even further binds Europe and America together. The two processes also leapfrog each other. At any point in time, expansion of each one may be ahead of the other. Poland will be in NATO before it is in the EU. Estonia is likely to be in the EU before it is in NATO. But the overlap between most of the EU and most of NATO creates a sense of common geopolitical space that collec-

tively reassures all involved in the two frameworks.

For NATO, however, the commitment to expansion does raise the more specific and fundamental question of the degree to which the organization should remain primarily an integrated political-military alliance and to what degree it should evolve into a regional security system. In the former case, collective defense has to be the central concern; in the latter, more emphasis can be assigned to peacekeeping. Again, in the former case, additional members should be judged primarily by the degree to which they may enhance the Alliance's political-military potential; in the latter, by the extent to which they increase the scope of political stability. The former argues for greater selectivity in admission; the latter for less discrimination.

Ultimately, neither formula can be seen as iron-clad, and expansion cannot be guided mechanically by either criterion. Nonetheless, the distinction should be kept in mind, in order to make certain that any additional expansion does contribute tangibly to collective security, and that it does not produce a watered-down NATO that gradually loses its political-military cohesion and its capacity for united and effective action. Concern for the preservation of the primacy of collective defense should also guide – and restrain any excessive enthusiasm in codifying – the formulation of NATO's new strategic doctrine and the assumption by NATO of new "out-of-area" roles and mission. By seeking to take on too much, one could run the risk of undermining the magnetic core of the Alliance.

Hence, gradual and measured expansion – one that provides time for the integration of new members, one that carefully meets the objective criteria of membership, and one that is derived from the subjectively voluntary desire of a given nation to join – is both desirable and even necessary. Halting the process would be arbitrary, demoralizing for those left out, and pernicious to Europe's security. A significant gap between the eventual scope of the EU and

of NATO could create tensions in the American-European connection, breed misunderstandings, and perhaps in some cases even tempt external challenges. A proclaimed or even de facto halt in NATO's expansion would also be a denial of everything that has been affirmed by all the top NATO leaders. It would thus fundamentally damage Euroatlantic credibility while perhaps unintentionally signaling that what is beyond NATO may be up for grabs.

When, Where, and How Much?

The three new members – Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary – will be admitted early in 1999, either before or during the alliance's fiftieth anniversary. At that point, some overt confirmation of the Alliance's oft-stated commitment to a continuing process ("open door policy") will be necessary, lest the impression be created that the first enlargement has been the last. One can anticipate that Russia will pursue that objective and might even condition President Yeltsin's attendance at the Washington fête – presumably much desired by the Clinton administration and justified by the existence of the NATO-Russia Council – on a promise that the issue of enlargement be ignored or muted, and that formal enlargement not even take place on that occasion.

Yet silence and inaction on the issue could prove as counterproductive as excessive emphasis on immediate and substantial follow-on enlargement. The Alliance is hardly ready to take on promptly a large second wave of members. It must absorb the newly admitted members, while Russia must accustom itself to the non-threatening reality of a gradually expanding alliance. That will require several years, and it is no betrayal to acknowledge this reality. But silence or only a token enlargement limited to a single geopolitically insignificant and thus non-controversial new candidate would be tanta-

mount to a message that further expansion has been relegated to *ad calendas graecas*. For reasons already stated, such a price should not be paid, even for a spectacular American-Russian public relations success at the 1999 NATO summit.

Accordingly, given these conflicting considerations, the best course of action should involve coupling a ceremonious welcome to the new members in April with a collective statement that the foreign and defense ministers of the Alliance are being charged with the task of identifying at a December 1999 ministerial the next potential candidates for membership. Negotiations with these candidates regarding the matter could subsequently begin, pointing perhaps to eventual admission a year or so later, depending on their respective states of readiness. This would give everyone concerned time to learn that gradual expansion enhances European reconciliation, while avoiding an ego contest at the April 1999 summit among the heads of state regarding the selection of any new candidates.

The foregoing would thus reconfirm that expansion is a continuing historical process, related to the construction of a new Europe and the progressive redefinition of the scope and role of the Euroatlantic alliance. But doing so would necessitate also making a prudent choice regarding the direction and the depth of the second wave of enlargement. Expansion to the southeast of Europe would pose fewer problems with Russia, and probably hardly any if it were limited to Slovenia; expansion to the northeast, namely the Baltic states, would involve a wide crossing of Russia's declared "red line" and thus reignite the controversies that took place during the first enlargement. The southeast involves an area of greater instability but lesser external threat; the opposite is the case with the northeast. What follows from that fact in so far as NATO's interests are involved?

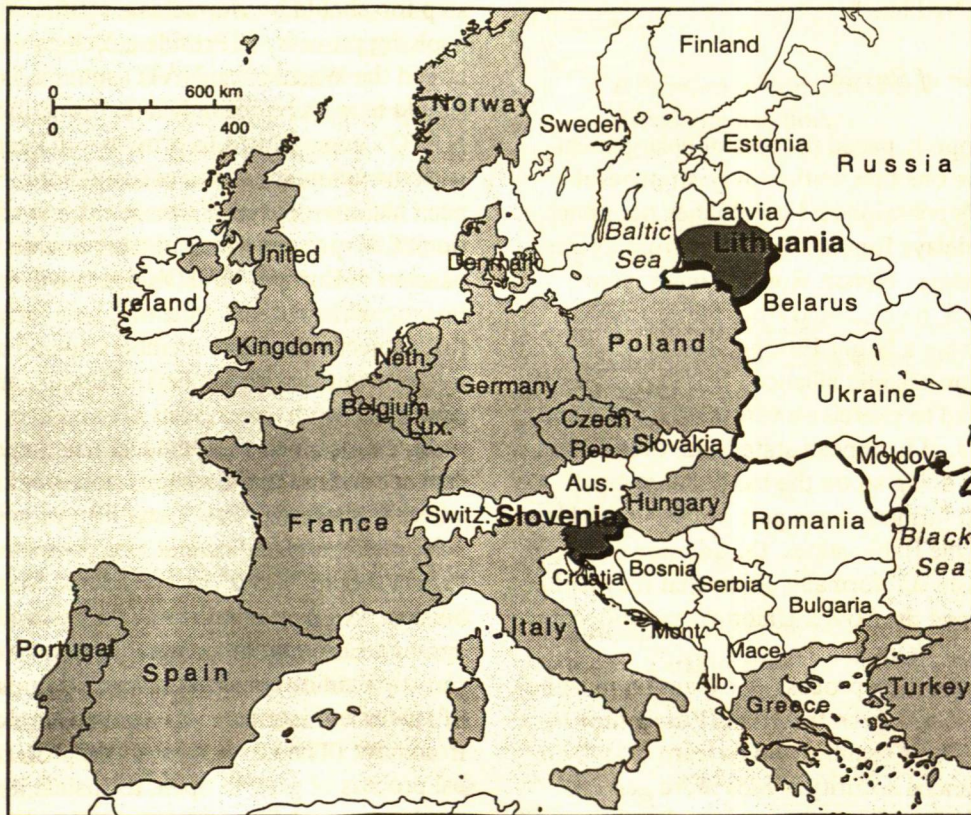
It has already been noted that expansion confined to only one and very non-

controversial state would be more an act of evasion than of fidelity to oft-stated commitments. Yet selecting several states in one direction only could also prompt complications. To pick the Baltic states in one bite would be, indeed, to invite a quarrel with Russia that could be divisive both for Europe and for the Alliance itself. Yet to go deep exclusively in the southeast direction runs the risk, not only of selecting candidates who might not be quite ready for membership and thus actually weakening the Alliance's cohesion, but also of legitimating through the passage of time Russia's unilaterally drawn "red line."

Perhaps the best choice would be to remain faithful to three principles: first, that only qualified candidates who truly desire and are ready for membership should be considered; second,

that in keeping with the solemn declaration of Madrid, no qualified European state can be excluded by Moscow's unilateral "red line"; and third, that there are no automatic linkages or clusters of states that have to be admitted together, either in the southeast or the northeast. Just as the EU did not hesitate to select Estonia ahead of the other Baltic states, so NATO should not feel compelled to consider states in some special clusters.

Accordingly, it might be appropriate and constructive to examine the possibility of a limited expansion *both* to the southeast and to the northeast, involving no more than two or so states, depending on the degree to which they satisfy respectively the criteria of membership, and demonstrating thereby – but on a prudent basis – that no democratic state of Europe can



----- the border of the old Soviet Union (the "red line")

be arbitrarily blackballed by a non-member from participation in the Euroatlantic alliance.

At the present time, in the southeast, Slovenia and perhaps also Romania seem to be most advanced in their preparation; and in the northeast that is the case with Lithuania. A decision in favor of Slovenia and Lithuania would have the advantage of enhancing the Alliance's geographical cohesion (and of establishing a direct land connection with Hungary), and both Italy and Denmark would be especially gratified. In the event that Lithuania were to be the northeastern choice, and given Estonia's advanced status in negotiations with the EU, it might also be wise to make concurrent efforts to facilitate Latvia's entrance into the WTO and to open a NATO information office in Riga (such offices exist in Moscow and Kyiv), in order to reassure Latvia that it was not being permanently left behind the "red line."

The Issue of Russia

A properly paced process of enlargement should be one that neither over-stretches the Alliance's cohesion and capabilities nor unnecessarily delays Russia's liberation from its imperial nostalgia. Hence, Russia cannot, and should not, be excluded from the process of constructing a larger Europe securely embraced by the Euroatlantic alliance. But Russia cannot be allowed to exercise a veto on the free choice of individual European states and, even worse, to justify doing so on the basis that some of them had formerly been part of the Soviet Union. To the Baltic states, the additional fact that Russia still formally insists that they had in 1940 joined the Soviet Union *voluntarily* only adds insult to insecurity.

However, the process of expansion must be pursued in a fashion that gives Russia time to digest the new realities and to learn from them that enhanced security breeds more genuine reconciliation. That process has already started in Russian-Polish relations. It is important that it be matched by reconciliation with the Baltic

states and also with Ukraine. At some point, Ukraine too might opt for a closer link with NATO, and NATO certainly cannot *a priori* exclude Ukraine simply because Moscow might disapprove. Moreover, Russia, if it is to be a truly European national state and not a nostalgic craver of empire, must accept the fact that democratic European states do wish to coalesce in a joint security framework with America, and that sovereign right cannot be denied them. Lines drawn on the basis of the old Stalinist empire can only serve to separate Russia from Europe.

By the same token, Russia cannot be asked to accept expansion of NATO if it is at the same time seen as excluded forever from a deepening association with it. The creation of the Joint NATO-Russian Council is a good beginning in forging a new relationship, and that step too should be viewed as a continuing and evolving process. If President Yeltsin were to attend the Washington NATO summit, he should hear there not only a reaffirmation of NATO's commitment to growth – in keeping with the voluntary desire of democratic European nations – but also a more explicit affirmation of the principle that, in tandem with the expansion of Europe, NATO's doors will remain open to all European states – Russia included – that subjectively desire membership and objectively meet the requirements of that membership.

In politics, one should never use the words "never" or "end". One simply does not know where Europe will "end", say, fifty years from now, and hence one cannot also postulate that Russia should "never" be considered for membership. No one ever dreamed a hundred years ago of a Euroatlantic community and no one can stipulate categorically what that community of values and interests will encompass a century from now. The key issue is to keep the historical process of growth open, to sustain it with prudence and deliberation, and to be clear-headed about the shared values it implies. ♦

From LITEXPO

LITEXPO -

Exhibition Center Highlights the Best Lithuanian Products

What better place to see what Lithuania's manufacturers and industries produce each year for its own consumption and for export than at an exhibition center — LITEXPO, suitably located at the geographical center of Europe in Vilnius, Lithuania.

LITEXPO produces more than 30 exhibitions a year, 25 of which are international in scope. These exhibit shows not only highlight consumer and industrial products, and service businesses, but also stimulate economic growth for the country.

More than 300,000 people visit the over 2,000 exhibitors in the course of the 150 trade days per year. The hall, one of the largest centers in the Baltics, offers about 70,000 square feet of space with conference facilities, a business service center, and refreshment and parking areas.

In addition to trade shows at the center, this enterprising group also coordinates Lithuanian companies for appearances in exhibitions throughout Europe. Its management is located at LITEXPO, Laisvės Ave. 5, 2600 Vilnius, Lithuania. ♦

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

STATYBA - BUILDING '98
October 6 to 9

Autumn exhibition of construction and building technologies.

INFOBALT '98
October 20 to 23

Exhibition of computers and telecommunications.

JŪSŪ NAMAI - HOUSEHOLD '98
November 5 to 8

International exhibition of household, furniture, interior accessories, and garden tools.

LIETUVIŠKI BALDAI -
LITHUANIAN FURNITURE '98
November 19 to 22

Specialized exhibition of furniture and interior accessories.



Lietuviški baldai
Lithuanian furniture

APSAUGA – SECURITY '98
December 2 to 5

Exhibition of security and safety systems.

ŽIEMOS PUOKŠTĖ – WINTER BOUQUET
December 11 to 14

Competition of florists.

LITHUANIAN FURNITURE IN KOLN
January 19 to 25

Exposition of Lithuanian companies at international furniture trade fair in Koln.

LITHUANIAN COMPANIES IN FRANKFURT
February 14 to 18

Exposition of Lithuanian companies at international trade fair in Frankfurt

PELENĖ – CINDERELLA
February 19 to 22



Exhibition of cosmetics, perfumery, hairdresser's equipment and fashion accessories.



Medical Exhibition Garners Attention

Around thirty thousand specialists and visitors came to see the 6th International Medical Exhibition, titled "Baltmedica/Baltfarma/Baltlabor/Baltent/Baltoptik," in Litexpo from September 22nd to the 25th.

It featured the products of 896 manufacturers who demonstrated innovations in the fields of medical and laboratory equipment, pharmacy, stomatology, optics, and dentistry. German-made items dominated the exhibition with 205 firms from Germany. One hundred and eighty companies represented Lithuania.

The Litexpo Center press service told ELTA that such traditional exhibitions were regarded as the most prestigious demonstrations of the latest medical equipment and information in the Baltic states. They came to be highly popular due to the seminars held for doctors.

This year, the exhibition organized a roundtable discussion for medical workers and industrialists who concluded that medical supplies produced in Lithuania were not inferior to those made abroad. However, a cumbersome, production-discouraging tax system boosted their price.

Local manufacturers complained about being neglected. They also stated that they needed a more favorable environment for selling their equipment and other articles as priority goods through tenders.

Organizers said the exhibition smoothed the way to numerous new contacts. ♦

— Source: The ELTA News Agency

Jeanne Dorr

A COUNTRYSIDE

Visit

I know many *BRIDGES* readers visited Lithuania this summer, some for the first time. I met people in the Vilnius Airport who were delighted with their first trip to Lithuania and couldn't wait to return again. I was thrilled to hear of their adventures. But Lithuania is not just Vilnius, Kaunas and the Baltic Sea. It is not only castles, churches, and song festivals.

There is another Lithuania; one where the tourist buses won't take you. It is the Lithuania of the small villages, the Lithuania of the friendliest and warmest people you will ever meet. It is also the Lithuania of the greatest poverty – the destination of my first trip sponsored by Countryside Children.

It was a typical day weather-wise – dreary and raining. Two vans left Vilnius around 8 a.m. bound for Charity Day in Varniai in the region of Telšiai. One van was filled to the brim with bags of clothing and other necessary items. The other was filled with people. Both vans were being driven by those who had volunteered their vacation days without compensation.

In our van was Regina Švoba, director of Countryside Children; Teresė Landsbergis, member of

the Lithuanian Orphan Care Committee and the Lithuanian Scouts residing in Maryland; Gintarė Ivaška, member of the Knights of Lithuania in Bridgeport, Connecticut; and Bernardas Šaknys, correspondent for *Valstiečių Laikraštis* (the newspaper which sponsors Countryside Children's Fund). Two other members of the Fund, Danutė and Irena, also joined us on this trip.

As you can well imagine, we had a full van. Every inch of extra space was crammed with packages to be given to the families. Now I know how a sardine in a can must feel. Despite the sweater weather, the rain, and the cramped quarters, the mood was high because we were all doing what we enjoyed most – we were visiting Lithuania's children. It was a long trip, about three and a half hours. But I wish I could have taken each and every one of you with me in that van.

The fields looked like they were carpeted with plush yellow wall to wall carpeting. Further along the

way the carpeting turned from yellow to white; the yellow flowers were replaced by white daisies. Scattered throughout the fields were windmills and haystacks. Along the way, we passed people working in the fields, and many horse-drawn wagons filled with hay. Sounds idyllic, doesn't it? Keep in mind we are about to enter the 21st century, and still most of the countryside lacks indoor plumbing.

At the Varniai local town hall, we were met by the social workers. They invited 31 families to participate in the Charity Day. The usual number of families is 25, but this is a very poor area of Lithuania. The soil is not suitable for farming, and there are very few jobs.

Before we left for Vilnius, Countryside Children prepared huge bags according to the ages of each family member. These particular bags were filled with clothing and shoes from a recent shipment donated by the parishioners

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.

of St. Andrew's Parish in Philadelphia and the Lithuanian Scouts in the Washington D.C. area. For Teresè and me, it was a special moment to see our local charity put to such good use.

The first speaker was Regina who defined the program to the assembled people. She praised Lithuanian Orphan Care, and explained that without the charity of strangers across the ocean there would be no help for them. We were not there to give them a handout, we were there to give them a helping hand. They in turn were obligated to help their neighbors when they could stand on their own two feet. We were not there to give them a fish; our goal was to teach them to fish for themselves. As simple as this may sound, it has to be repeated over and over to people in Lithuania. The spirit of helping one another was destroyed by communism. They grew up with the idea of "trust no one", "take of yourself", and "don't worry about anyone else".

Regina instructed the women that they must take care of the clothes they would be given; they must wash them and hang them up. All listened solemnly nodding their heads in agreement. As I continued to look around the room, I never ceased to be amazed at the behavior of the country children. There was no squirming, whining, or running around. All sat either next to their mothers or on their laps – but they sat silently.

Regina continued to explain other services available, such as Lithuanian Children's Hope which helps children with severe medical problems. She thanked the American medical teams, especially the



*A mother and son in Varniai stop to talk with Lithuanian Orphan Care representatives.
Photo: Jeanne Dorr*

Shriners, for helping Lithuania. Included in her praise was Lithuanian Mercy Lift, which has provided transportation for tons and tons of supplies. But the message was always clear – if there were any problems, mothers must not be afraid to contact Lithuanian Orphan Care. We exist to help Lithuanian children and their families. Usually it is those who need the most help who don't know where to turn.

The mothers were told to encourage their children to stay in school and get an education. Lithuanian Orphan Care provides student stipends for higher education, including technical training. Parents were urged to watch their children for signs of tuberculosis. Again, if they needed medical help or any other kind of help, they were encouraged to call the fund in Vilnius.

Then came the part I was dreading, but knew was inevitable, we

had to discuss it openly in every village – Alcoholism. This is the scourge of the countryside people. We were not there to point fingers or to criticize them. As easy as it is for us to sit in our comfortable homes and shake our heads in disgust, remember that many of these people have no jobs and no hope. Communism provided everything they needed. What it took from them was the ability to think and reason. Also keep in mind that no family receives a cent of Orphan Care money where the parents are alcoholics. Instead we find someone else to handle this money: a grandmother, a priest, or a teacher. The children of these alcoholics are the ones who need you the most. These are the children we have to help break the cycle of alcoholism and poverty.

Both Gintarè and Teresè spoke about social problems. They asked the women to try to meet at

least once a month to share their problems and not hold them inside. There is a tremendous need for women's shelters in the villages; places where abused women and children could escape the violence of a drunken husband at least for a night or two. And the same message was spoken over and over – don't be afraid to ask for help.

I spoke briefly on your behalf, the *BRIDGES* readers. I explained that even though we are American citizens, our blood and roots are Lithuanian. Just because there is an ocean between us, that doesn't mean that their problems are not our problems. If they hurt, we hurt. I told them of your generosity and the sacrifices many of you have to make so that you can give their children the gift of hope.

The people in this area are rather reserved; they did not share their problems readily in front of each other. Most met for the first time at this meeting. It was after the meeting when we went outside to distribute the bags that we spoke privately with the women. This was when the tears began to flow and there was nothing we could do but listen. The stories were mostly the same – alcohol and violence fueled by poverty. The alcoholism and the poverty feed off each other, they breed from one another. Much of the liquor is cheap homemade stuff that sometimes causes illness and even death.

One woman told us how she and her husband and three children live in one room with her mother-in-law. She loved her husband dearly but his mother never lets them forget for a moment in whose house they live. The situation puts a terrible strain on the marriage.

All we could do was listen and tell her we understood. That's all she wanted from us, she asked for nothing else.

Tears were dried, and the children and their mothers received their bags. To say they were thrilled would be an understatement. Their eyes were wide in amazement that strangers so far away across a huge ocean would be so good to care about them and their children. Now they knew they were no longer alone. Most of the mothers carried their bags home tied to their bicycles. As they left, their thanks could be heard until they disappeared from our sight.

Because this work was so emotionally draining, we needed some peaceful moments before we took the long ride back to Vilnius. We made our way to a lake to relax. Along the way, we made one "house call". There was a young girl taking care of four siblings. Her mother was an alcoholic and abandoned

the family. Her father also drank, but he wasn't nearly as mean as her mother -- so they were glad to be with him. The wonderful news was the father had found a job and things were getting better for all of them. We were also told he wasn't drinking as much. We left them with several bags of supplies. As we hugged them all and drove away, they waved and blew kisses; that is everyone except one little sister who held onto her precious pet kitten. I never saw such love radiating from a child's eyes.

Later, as we walked around the lake, I couldn't help wondering how such a beautiful country on the outside could have so many people living in turmoil on the inside. Yet hope turns to change for many of these Lithuanian people, just as a child's eyes can reflect love for her kitten as she stands surrounded by the daily struggle for a normal life.



"Love radiates from a child's eyes...." Several children in Varniai. Photo: Jeanne Dorr

Jeanne Dorr

"You Cannot Do a Kindness Too
Soon, For You Never Know When it
Will be Too Late"

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

I can't tell you how happy I am to be able to share my Lithuanian journeys with you in the upcoming issues of *BRIDGES*. You, *BRIDGES* readers, are an integral part of Lithuanian Orphan Care. Without you, many families would not have sponsors and many children would be left without the gift of hope for the future. Their tomorrows would be no different than their todays, there would be nothing to wish for, nothing to hope for, and no reason to dream.

Who and what is Lithuanian Orphan Care? We are a division of the Human Services Council of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. We are volunteers, and our expenses are held to a bare bones minimum. We do not have an 800 phone number or a plush office. In fact, we're lucky we can find the one desk we do have. We spend no money advertising. Our goal is to give virtually every cent we collect to our families.

In Lithuania, we work with Countryside Children's Fund, as well as Gražina Landsbergis and her children's fund. We also work with poor schools, several priests, and small group homes. Many of our children are not technically orphans but, they are raised by single parents or grandparents. Many are living in small group homes where there is both a "mother and father". With this type of home, they are taught to be members of a family, and we encourage higher education, as well as technical training. We provide some student stipends to students.

If you would like to sponsor a child, you will receive the name, address, birth date, and any infor-

mation we have about the child. The cost to sponsor a child is \$150 dollars a year, but ANY size donation is welcome.

It is up to the sponsor to contact the child if he or she wishes. I know that some people in the past have been disappointed because their families did not respond. We cannot guarantee you will hear from the family, although we encourage them to write. Please remember that many of our older grandparents are unable to write, and many of our families are unschooled in the social graces. We do all in our power to encourage them to write and many of our families have loving relationships with their sponsors. For us to guarantee a letter a month, would mean that we would have to hire many people in Lithuania to go from house to house to sit with these families. At this point the cost would be too high and the families would have very little financial help from us. If you have encountered such a situation in the past, we would be happy to change your family when the year is over. So we ask for your patience and understanding.

If you can't sponsor a child, I would like to offer some "creative" financing that has proven successful. The holidays will be here soon. How about a few family members getting together and sponsoring a child in someone's name? Better yet, ask your family to sponsor a child for you in your name.

Those of you who belong to organizations might ask your group to sponsor a child. It doesn't have to be a Lithuanian organization; we have American scout groups, as well as Rotary sponsors. I re-

ceived a very heart-warming letter from a woman in Washington who wrote that a couple from Maine had been very good to her. She wanted to let them know how much she appreciated them, so she sponsored a child in their name. The same woman also requested that her friends to buy her birthday gifts – she asked that checks be sent to Lithuanian Orphan Care.

How about a Christmas party for Lithuania's children or a pollyanna for Orphan Care? Do you really want to spend \$10 dollars on something the person will never use? Save yourself some time and send the check to Orphan Care instead. Much of our sponsor gifts come from tributes in the names of departed loved ones. How about remembering your mother or grandmother who instilled that love for Lithuania in you so many years ago?

I'm sure you can come up with ways I never dreamed possible. Whatever method you use, it will be the right one for the right reason – for the forgotten children.

I want to thank the staff of Countryside Children and especially Regina Švoba, who spent so many hours with me in Lithuania. Birutė Jasaitis, president of Lithuanian Orphan Care, spends hour after hour keeping the program afloat. Sincere thanks to the many volunteers who do the filing, and man the phones and computer.

But the greatest thanks goes to YOU, **BRIDGES** readers, who have opened not only your wallets, but your hearts to Lithuania's forgotten children. You have made Lithuania's children *your* children. Without you, many of the children would not have a future. You have given them the most precious gift of all – **hope**.

For more information and to send your tax-deductible gifts, contact;

Lithuanian Orphan Care
2711 W. 71st St.
Chicago, IL 60629

(Please note **BRIDGES** in your correspondence.)



The Landsbergis Fund Focuses on Infant Care

The Vytautas Landsbergis Fund donated an "iron lung respirator" to the natal division of the Red Cross University Hospital in Vilnius in July, 1998, and was officially presented in early September.

The presentation of the new device also included Seimas' leader Vytautas Landsbergis and his wife Gražina. "It is our duty to aid those who cannot take care of themselves," said vice-chairperson of the Landsbergis Fund, Dr. Vanda Vainauskienė.

The device, already being used by the hospital since July, was instrumental in saving the lives of two newly born babies. The hospital's director, Gediminas Degutis stated that of 1,500 babies born here, nearly 100 needed these "artificial lungs."

The natal division head, Nijolė Amsiejūtė, demonstrated a 22-year-old device which was frequently out of order. Doctors usually used mechanical means to help the newborns keep breathing; thus saving their lives.

At the presentation, doctors voiced criticism of some health reform novelties, and informed Landsbergis about the strange strides of newly-founded patient funds. "It turns out that a newborn is not a human being, since not a cent has been earmarked to his (her) care in the hospital," said the head of obstetrics division, Nijolė Raguckienė.

The doctor said she was stunned that, according to a new price list, a childbirth ranked markedly lower than a simple appendicitis operation.

— Source: *The ELTA News Agency*

From the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc....

Audronė Pakštys

The Public Affairs Office Celebrates its Ten Years of Service

For the last ten years, Lithuania's remarkable changes and growth have been supported and aided by the Lithuanian-American Community's (LAC) Public Affairs Office in Washington, D.C. In addition, the Office has acted as liaison between the LAC chapters, districts, and individuals; Lithuania's many organizations and governmental agencies; and the American governmental institutions. All of which have brought forth Lithuanian-Americans and Lithuania to national attention.

From the Office's first days until January 1998, Asta Banionis acted as director of the Public Affairs Office. Audronė Pakštys was named director in January 1998, and has continued the vital information-gathering and dissemination needed for effective LAC and Lithuanian governmental decision-making.

The Public Affairs Office established strong ties with the Senate and Senate staff members, the Pentagon, government agencies, not-for-profit foundations, "think tanks", and ethnic organizations. Information that would affect Lithuania and Lithuanian-Americans is quickly disseminated to the Lithuanian-American Community and Lithuania.

The Office also acts as an information center for the LAC's members and the general public. Ms. Pakštys often participates in meetings and conferences where she represents the LAC's position, together with Lithuania's stance.

The Public Affairs Office has a vital relationship with the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington. Both offices work together to maintain beneficial representation of Lithuania's people and country, and

America's Lithuanian population.

The Office is staffed Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. During the other days, an answering machine remains active for all who seek information. As of Nov. 1st, the Public Affairs Office can be reached at:

**11250 Roger Bacon Dr. , Suite 17C
Reston, VA 20191-5202**

By phone, call 703-524-0698 or fax 703-524-0947. The e-mail address is lacinc@erols.com. ♦



Through Lithuanian Orphan Care, Mrs. Pakštys visited her "foster" child, Kristina, in Lithuania.

AUDRONĖ PAKŠTYS is the Director of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. Public Affairs Office.

Marija Remienė

Cultural Identity Preserved for the Future

The mission of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.'s (LAC's) Cultural Council is to help Lithuanian-Americans maintain their unique cultural identity in the 90's. Lithuanians living in the United States recognize that they are different from the Lithuanians of Lithuania, and have to live and work within their own cultural context by creating their own traditions, their own cultural forms with their appropriate expression.

The new nine-member Cultural Council was formed January 1st, 1998. It includes the following members: Marija Remienė – president; Violeta Drupaitė – secretary; Dalia Anysienė – treasurer; and members Regina Jautokaitė, Dalia Šlenienė, Loreta Venclauskienė, as well as Laima Petrauskaitė-Vanderstoop and Laima Šileikytė-Hood for special projects.

Cultural Events for 1998

The following highlight some of the cultural events that the Cultural Council was instrumental in arranging during the first part of 1998.

- January 11: a very successful concert was organized and took place at the Lithuanian World Center in Lemont, Illinois. It featured local musicians from the Chicago area: soloist Praurimė Regienė and violinist

Linda Veleckytė, accompanied by Alvydas Vasaitis. This was in commemoration of those who lost their lives during the tragic events of January 13th, 1991 in Vilnius.

- February 22: a literary program in honor of the late poet Henrikas Nagys was held in the art gallery of the Lithuanian World Center. A recording of the poet's own voice, along with the voices of his wife Birutė and his sister Liūnė Sutema, also a poet, as well as that of Audrė Budrytė who recited his words, brought him to life once again. A musical interlude was given by Alvydas and Valdas Vasaitis. Eglė Juodvalkė presented an analysis of the poet's work.
- April 15: saw the first of four concerts in the Chicago area by the group, "Klumpė" (The Wooden Shoe) from Punska, Poland. This 19-member Lithuanian capella also performed in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Cleveland, and in several Canadian cities. This project was launched and financed by the Cultural Council.
- May 22-23: the revival of the traditional spring Poetry Days was greeted with enthusiasm. Poetry readings were given by Bernardas Brazdžionis, Julius Keleris, Daiva Karužaitė, and Vainius Aleksas.
- September 19: a book of poems written by

MARIJA REMIENĖ is the Director of the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc. Cultural Council.



The LAC Cultural Council: seated from left — Regina Jautokaitė, Marija Remienė, Violeta Drupaitė; standing from left — Loreta Venclauskienė, Dalia Anysienė, Dalia Šlenienė. Missing from photo: Juozas Žygas.

Dr. Antanas Lipskis from Lithuania and an exhibit of his pictures were presented at the art gallery at the Lithuanian World Center in Lemont.

The Cultural Council has been instrumental and active in many events throughout the year. Mrs. Remienė attended the signing of the Charter of Partnership between the United States and the Baltic States along with the other members of LAC's Executive Council, met with the Archbishop of Kaunas, Sigitas Tamkevičius, concerning Christianity in Lithuania, and, along with Laima Šileikytė-Hood, attended the Folklife Festival's opening ceremonies in Washington, D.C. Ms. Šileikytė-Hood helped to organize Lithuania's exhibit for this Festival.

Along with sponsoring and organizing events, the Cultural Council aids other groups and organizations with cultural matters. The Lithuanian Embassy in Washington and Camp Dainava have solicited the Cultural Council's help in the past. Lithuania's Minister of Cul-

ture, Saulius Šaltenis, and the Cultural Council have exchanged information and continue to work to present cultural events in association with Lithuania's writers, artists, and performers.

Information for Local LAC Chapters

A seven-page circular dated February 10 was sent out to local chapters of the Lithuanian-American Community listing persons of note, such as artists, poets, soloists, musicians, lecturers, etc to help organize cultural events at the local level. A video of Pres. Valdas Adamkus's electoral campaign was made available, and 65 historical photographs were also provided and promptly made use of by the Phoenix, Arizona and Elizabeth, New Jersey chapters.

A second circular was sent out July 5th asking local chapters to send information about events in their area, such as concerts and other literary and commemorative gatherings which could then be printed in the newspaper *Draugas's* cultural events column.

Two new videos are available – "Klumpė's" program and Bernardas Brazdžionis's poetry reading of "The Poet Returns".

The year 1999 will mark the 100th anniversary of the death of Vincas Kudirka, author of the Lithuanian National Anthem. The Minister of Culture, Saulius Šaltenis, has promised to send two or three people to the U.S. to lecture and/or recite in commemoration of this anniversary.

On-Going Cultural Projects and Upcoming Events

The Lithuanian press is highlighted in September through the end of the year for its contributions to preserve Lithuanian-American culture via the print media. To help boost subscriptions, all new subscribers will receive a discount and the difference will be covered by the Lithuanian Fund. In addition to supporting the

Lithuanian press, the Lithuanian Fund, based in Chicago assist individuals chapters who sponsor cultural events, such as Philadelphia, Cleveland, and Dayton.

Other projects include the recording of an oral history with Laima Petrauskaitė-Vanderstoop as coordinator. On November 28th, five awards for outstanding cultural contributions will be presented at a ceremony held in Cleveland, Ohio. Five categories have been designated with a committee to judge each: outstanding musician, journalist, artist, educator, and radio broadcaster. The awards will be financed by the Lithuanian Fund. On November 29th, a dramatic production by the Telšiai, Lithuania drama group will be performed at the Jesuit Youth Center in Chicago, Illinois. ◆



Participants during the Poetry Evening were, from left — Poet Bernardas Braždžionis, LAC President Regina Narušis, LAC Cultural Council President Marija Remienė, and LAC Human Services Council President Birutė Jasaitis.



A Bonus to New Subscribers

The LAC Cultural Council is sponsoring a reduction of subscription rates for new subscribers of Lithuanian magazines and newspapers. This offer is available until the end of 1998. Those magazines and newspapers with their rates are:

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CURRENT EVENTS

DOLPHINS TAKE CENTER STAGE

Sharon Erli, 445th Airlift Wing Public Affairs writer, reported on a very special journey to Lithuania. The following excerpt from her article appeared in the July 31st, 1998 Airlift Wing newsletter.

Tacoma and Wenatchee spent hours talking to each other. Their high-pitched musical chatter was heard most of the night.

"They're reassuring each other, letting each know there's a friend close by," explained Spc. Cheryl Short, an Army veterinary technician.

Tacoma, Wenatchee and three other dolphins – Cinder, Spetsnaz, and Punane – flew approximately 14 hours July 9 on board an Air Force Reserve Command C-141 Starlifter to participate in Baltic Challenge '98, a joint land, sea and air exercise conducted in the spirit of the Partnership for Peace program in Lithuania.

The "teenagers", as they were fondly referred to by some of their handlers, are Mark Seven Marine Mammal System bottle-nosed dolphins from the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Three based in Coronado, Calif.

The C-141 crew from Wright-Patterson's 445th Airlift Wing flew to Naval Air Station

North Island, Calif., July 8 to pick up the dolphins, their handlers and veterinarians.

After a refueling stop the next day in Bangor, Maine, the flight continued nonstop to Palanga International Airport, Lithuania, where the mammals participated in a military exercise involving the United States and 11 European nations.

During the exercise, the dolphins located and marked mines on the floor of the Baltic Sea, either resting on the sea bed or buried in the sediment. This was the first time the dolphins had an opportunity to find live ordnance, which may have been left behind from World War II.

Capt. Steve Griffin, 356th Airlift Squadron, and a 356th AS crew returned to Lithuania July 19 to fly the dolphins back home to California the next day.



In the Lithuanian Marine Museum's dolphinarium in Klaipėda, two dolphins – Gabi and Gloria – gave birth to dolphin kids in mid-September. The kids are closely watched because only 30 percent of captive dolphins survive. With the attentive watch and excellent living conditions, it is hopeful that the new dolphin kids will thrive in Lithuania. ♦

BRAZAUSKAS ABOUT TO AUTHOR BOOK

Lithuania's former president, Algirdas Brazauskas, announced that he was writing a book about his presidency, according to Lithuanian newspaper *Respublika*.

Brazauskas said he believed that those five years in the presidential post had not been spent in vain – either for the state or for the president himself.

"I want to write a book with the help of others. I am not a professional writer. The work has been started. I am writing some parts about my presidency myself," said the former president.

Asked about his future plans, Brazauskas stated that he planned to go to Oxford University in mid-November. ♦

LITHUANIA COMES TO KALININGRAD'S AID

The Russian crisis has started to affect Kaliningrad (Karaliaučiai) enclave's hospitals and medical institutions.

Although Lithuania's neighbor claims their situation is under control, they are highly dependent on imports to be truly prepared for the winter. The first area affected by the crisis has been with medicines and medical supplies.

In response to several requests for humanitarian aid from Kaliningrad hospitals and institutions, Lithuania sent its diplomats on a humanitarian aid mission to ascertain the reality of the situation. The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry's Policy Dept. Director, Vygaudas Usackas, said they were motivated by the fact that Kaliningrad is a close neighbor and, as a nation presiding over the Baltic Sea States Council, to maintain stability in the whole region.

Aid consisting of antibiotics, anti-tuberculosis and anti-inflammation medicines, solutions for intravenous infusion, syringes and dressing materials was delivered first. Another aid consignment will be made up as soon as Kaliningrad's Health Board and Doctors' Association submits a more precise list of what is most needed. The Lithuania-based mission, Berlin Chemie Menarini Baltic Co. prepared the package in association with the Lithuanian government. ◆

LITHUANIA AIMS FOR A BALANCED BUDGET

The Lithuanian government started discussions about next year's budget plan. It was decided that Lithuania should save about one billion litas (\$250 million U.S.) or ten percent of the national budget expenditure if it wants to have a balanced budget.

State expenditures would be severely restricted next year, according to Lithuanian Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius. He continued that the state would start to save by "freezing" its own expenditures, which are to be reduced to 2.9 percent of the total budget expenditures next year, down from 3.1 percent this year.

The 1999 budget plan foresees the national budget income to grow by 14 percent as compared to this year. Revenues of municipal budgets should soar by 29 percent; while, the state budget income is to grow by six percent. The primary budget draft plans for higher defense expenditures by 27 percent.

Although the official 1999 budget draft is to be announced in detail by October, the Prime Minister already stressed that next year's budget expenditures should be better-grounded instead of being based on the previous year's experience. ◆

LITHUANIA AT WORLD HEALTH SESSION

A Lithuanian delegation participated in the European region's 48th session of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Copenhagen from Sept. 14th to the 18th. Lithuania acceded to the World Health Organization as a full member on November 25th, 1991. Fifty nations, among them Lithuania, belong to the WHO European region.

The Lithuanian team was represented by Health Minister Mindaugas Stankevičius, Vice-Minister Prof. Vytautas Basys, and the Rector of Kaunas Medical Academy Vilius Grabauskas.

The 48th session elected Prof. Grabauskas, chairman of the European region's standing committee, as the session's president. The Lithuanian scientist was the first representative from any post-Communist country to undertake these presidential duties at a WHO European region's session.

"Health for everybody in the 21st century", was a major topic for discussion which became confirmed for strategy and policy initiation. ◆

— Source for Current Events articles:
The ELTA News Agency

BEGINNINGS...

In the spring of 1918, with World War I not yet concluded, Blessed George Matulaitis arrived in Marijampolė from Warsaw (where he spent most of the war years). He was concerned with the rebuilding of the Marian monastery, next to the parish church. Overwhelmed with work as he was, Fr. Matulaitis also wanted to realize a long nurtured plan – to found a Lithuanian religious Community for women. On May 1st, he gave his first conference on religious life to a small group of candidates.

The beginnings of this new Community were housed at the girls' agricultural school headed by Petronelė Uogintaitė. She had been received as a postulant and would soon be appointed the first superior of the Community.

Despite his heavy workload, Fr. Matulaitis was busy drafting a Constitution for the new Community and a set of instructions called "The Guiding Thought and Spirit". He had named this new Community – The Sisters of the Poor of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

On All Saints Day, November 1st, he re-

On October 15th, the Sisters of Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary celebrated the eightieth anniversary of its foundation in Marijampolė, Lithuania. The following is a brief excerpt from an account of the community's beginnings written by one of the sisters in Lithuania.

ceived the little group of postulants, as well as several others who had arrived from St. Petersburg, into the novitiate. He also conducted a retreat for them.

Sister Ursula Novickaitė (the second superior) remembered those first days, "Whenever Fr. George Matulaitis came to instruct us about the spiritual life and to acquaint us with the new Constitution, his face was always very pleasant, although lined with care, yet still smiling as if our little religious family were his only concern and consolation. He did not want to burden us with his problems... The sisters were like little children who had no idea of the heavy crosses he had to bear, nor of the future, when he would no longer be there to guide them."

As long as Fr. Matulaitis remained in Marijampolė, he himself guided the sisters in the spiritual life. He taught and formed the sisters.

But those happy days were short. Soon he was appointed Bishop of Vilnius. Before leaving at the end of November, 1918, he designated Father Casimir Reklaitis spiritual director for the sisters.

This former professor at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy was an energetic, enthusiastic, and very spiritual person. He was concerned both with the spiritual and material welfare of the new Community, and also with the spiritual and cultural formation of each sister.

At first the religious family was very small. The whole group of ten sisters lived in the little apartment owned by Sister Petronelė. It had no indoor plumbing. Soon it was time to move to larger quarters.

A house was bought, but it needed repairs. A third floor was added, as well as a shed in the yard. Two more small houses were bought, and these facilities housed not only the sisters but, also the school, a kindergarten, and a small

printing press.

All these material concerns had fallen upon the shoulders of Sister Petronelė. She had to provide for all under her care. A tireless and resourceful worker, she placed all her talents at the service of the fledgling Community.

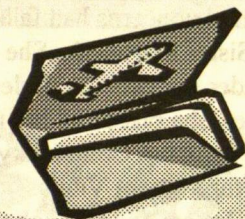
The Founder, far away in Vilnius, kept in touch by frequent letters and through various people who stopped by. On December 27th, 1919, he wrote to Sister Petronelė, "Keep on working and educating yourselves, love God and people. Value your candidates and do not dismiss them, and you will see that those sisters will gradually change for the better and become more perfect."



The Order's first Superior, appointed by Blessed George Matulaitis was Sister Petronelė Uogintaitė, from 1918 to 1926.



From 1926, Sister Ursula Novickaitė was chosen by Blessed George Matulaitis to become the second Superior for the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



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Service Authorization Customer is selecting Qwest® as its sole long distance carrier, except where customer may select an additional long distance carrier, and hereby authorizes Qwest to act on its behalf to coordinate conversion of Customer's service to Qwest, with the local exchange carrier (LEC). Qwest Communications is the long distance carrier setting Customer's rates. However, Qwest may elect to provide service via resale, in which event another carrier's name may appear on Customer's bill. There may be a one-time charge to the LEC for conversion to Qwest. Customer represents that the person signing below is qualified to authorize this long distance carrier change and that the information provided by Customer is accurate. Qwest service is provided subject to and in accordance with applicable federal and state tariffs and/or price list. Not all services are available in all states.

Customer's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please send completed order form to:

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Houston, Texas 77060
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