
BRIDGES

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Commemorations...Joint Commission Productivity...The Lithuanian Air Force

P e r s p e c t i v e s

It was during the cold days of January and February that our Lithuanian Saturday School teachers would assign the annual composition assignment which would cause our ordinary lives to enter a time period none of us had ever experienced. Our prime sources were our textbooks, and our parents' and teachers' reminiscences.

We were to write about the meaning of February 16th. The assignment varied only in perspective. Sometimes we were to analyze its significance on the Lithuanian people; or reiterate historic events; or look forward into the future and speculate how freedom could once more be won.

Either way we looked at it, we were about to write the best essay of the year about a subject we could never have imagined experiencing ourselves. We managed somehow. We used the words and thoughts that had been part of our schooling. We reflected what we had learned and had assimilated into our beliefs. I suppose being descriptive and grammatically correct earned the most points. Afterward, we breathed a sigh of relief and life went on as usual.

It wasn't until January 13th, 1991, did any of us realize what February 16th or, for that matter, independence for Lithuania really meant. The wonder of television brought the January 13th tragedy into our homes and our lives. We sat transfixed and numb as each report came in.

The words we had written about independence during our childhood hit us straight in the face. During those short horrific hours "independence" was the only thing we understood. It was the only need ...hope ...thirst ...we felt for Lithuania's people and their country. And it was the first time we truly understood the meaning of February 16th.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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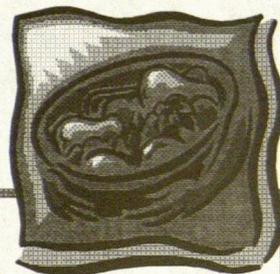
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Shrove Tuesday Traditions

The last day before the start of Lent is called Shrove Tuesday (*Užgavėnės*). The main dish for Shrove Tuesday is pancakes or skindžiai, usually made with yeast, apples, berries or plain.

Some regions made donuts or pončkos; while, in Samogitia (*Žemaitija*) it was customary to feast on pease-pudding or šilupinys. The šilupinys is made from rye flour, barley, peas, and bacon with various spices. A pig's tail is cooked in it and then stuck in the middle of the bowl. Sometimes the tail is concealed. The person who gets it in his or her dish will be most lucky all that year.

Source: *Lithuanian Customs and Traditions* by Danutė Brąznytė-Bindokienė

On the cover:

A Lithuanian soldier stands sentry duty as the flag flutters above Lithuania's people.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

We January 13, 1991

“On Sunday night, January 13, 1991, beginning at 1:35 a.m. local time, Soviet special forces using tanks and armored personnel carriers attacked the radio and television transmission tower in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. In the course of the action, fourteen innocent people were killed and over 500 injured by Soviet storm-troopers. They were defending the freedom and independence of Lithuania, which was reasserted by the democratically elected parliament on March 11, 1990. Soviet president Gorbachev as well as the Soviet legislature recognized Stalin’s seizure of Lithuania in 1940 as a criminal consequence of the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939. But in January of 1991, Gorbachev spun around and seized Lithuania himself.”

-- Excerpt from *The Gift of Vilnius*,
edited by Arūnas Liulevičius and Thomas Remeikis,
published by the Public Affairs Council of the
Lithuanian American Community, Inc.



Above: A cross bearing the victims' photos in front of the Radio and Television Tower in Karoliniškės, a residential area in Vilnius.

At right: A monument in honor of the victims of the January 13th massacre stands in the Soldiers' Cemetery in Antakalnis, Vilnius.

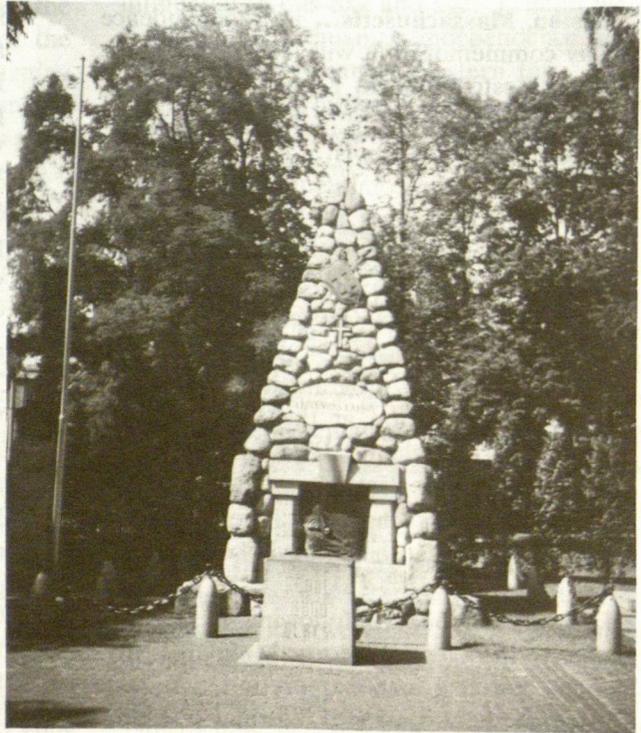


Commemorate. . .

February 16, 1918

“After the last partition of the United Polish-Lithuanian State in 1795, Lithuania was subjugated by the Russian Empire and ruled by it until 1915. At the end of World War I, while Lithuania was occupied by Germany, independence was restored through the Declaration of Independence proclaimed by the Council of Lithuania on February 16, 1918 in Vilnius. All twenty members of the Council who had convened for that purpose in the great assembly hall of the Lithuanian Committee for the Relief of War Victims on Grand Street (Didžioji gatvė) in Vilnius signed the Declaration. [When] Soviet Russia occupied Lithuania during World War II, commemorating February 16 [was] prohibited; nevertheless this important day [was] remembered by the people and [revived] the hopes for freedom.”

-- From *Encyclopedia Lituanica*,
Volume II pages 45 and 46.



Above: The monument dedicated to those who died for Lithuania's freedom containing the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier stands nearby the Museum of War in Kaunas. Wayside crosses and other monuments surround it. Stones used to construct this pyramidal monument were taken from the Lithuanian fields where the bloody battles for independence were fought. This monument was desecrated during the Soviet occupation. Newly independent Lithuania renewed this sentimental area on the Museum grounds.

All photos from Rasa Ardys-Juška

...Together

Throughout The United States, Lithuanian American Communities will be commemorating Lithuania's Independence. Here is a partial listing of events, which may be in your area.

- **Anchorage, Alaska...** planned event to take place on Feb. 13th. More information available from Mindaugas Kuzminskas, minkuz@sinbad.net or by calling 907-245-1136.
- **Baltimore, Maryland...** Donatas Skučas will speak at the commemoration in the Baltimore Lithuanian Home, 851 Hollins St., Baltimore at 2:00 p.m. on Feb. 14th.
- **Boston, Massachusetts...** an Independence Day commemoration will take place at the South Boston Piliečių Klubas, at 1:00 p.m. on Feb. 21st.
- **Brighton Park, Illinois...** P. Vaičekauskas will speak at the commemoration following the 10:30 a.m. Mass at Holy Mary's Immaculate Conception Church on Feb. 7th.
- **Brooklyn, New York...** after 11:00 a.m. Mass at Apreiškimas Church, 259 North 5th St., Brooklyn, speaker Dr. Vytautas Volertas and a cultural program will round out the commemoration at the Lith. Cultural Center, 341 Highland Blvd., Brooklyn, at 2:30 p.m. on Feb. 21st.
- **Cape Cod, Massachusetts...** events will begin at 1:00 p.m. at the Craigville Conference Center on Feb. 16th.
- **Lemont, Illinois...** following 11:00 a.m. mass at the Blessed George Matulaitis Mission Church a commemoration will take place at the Lithuanian World Center, at 12:30 p.m., on Feb. 14th.
- **Melrose Park, Illinois...** Commemoration with speech and poetry readings at the Eagles Hall, 145-147 Broadway, Melrose Park on Feb. 28th.
- **New Britain, Connecticut...** following 11:00 a.m. Mass in St. Andrew's Church, 396 Church St., New Britain, the St. Andrew's Senior Choir will be part of the program in the Church Hall at 2:00 p.m. on Feb. 7th.
- **Palm Beach, Florida...** at the Oceanview Methodist Church Hall, a commemoration with "Dainos" choir performance takes place at 2:00 p.m. on Feb. 21st.
- **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania...** speakers and a cultural program at the Lithuanian Music Hall, 2715 E. Allegheny Ave., 2:00 p.m., Feb. 21st.
- **Portland, Oregon...** the area's Lithuanian folk dancers will perform at the commemoration at the Latvian Hall, 5500 South West Dosh Rd., Portland, on Feb. 13th.
- **Putnam, Connecticut...** Prof. Dr. Rimas Vaičaitis and a cultural program will be part of the commemoration at the Immaculate Conception Convent, 600 Liberty Hwy., Putnam at 2:00 p.m. on Feb. 21st.
- **Sunny Hills, Florida...** following Mass at St. Theresa's Church in Sunny Hills, a program will take place in the Church Hall at 3:00 p.m. on Feb. 14th.
- **Washington, D.C....** After 10:00 a.m. Mass at St. Matthew's Cathedral, Washington, the commemoration will take place at the Latvian Hall, Rockville, Maryland at 2:00 p.m. on Feb. 7th. A symposium will also take place on the topic of "Lithuania in the 21st Century."
- **Waterbury, Connecticut...** Independence Day commemoration will take place at St. Joseph's Church Hall, 8 John St., at 3:00 p.m. on Feb. 15th. The Hartford Men's Trio - Jurgis Petkritis, Vytautas Zdanys, and Alfonsas Zdanys -- will perform.
- **Waukegan/Lake County, Illinois...** commemoration to be held at the Libertyville Civic Center, Libertyville, IL, at 1:30 p.m., on Feb. 14th. ◆

Liuda Rugienius

Commission's Results Provide *GROWTH* Opportunities

At the World Lithuanian Community Conference on July 1st in Vilnius, the Board of Directors, Presidents of each of the representative countries, World Lithuanian Community Council Chairs, and other invited representatives from various organizations listened to Lithuania's Parliament Chairman's, Vytautas Landsbergis', words. He described Lithuania's relationship with Lithuanians living outside Lithuania. He stated that "...We have succeeded in developing cooperative ties with the World Lithuanian Community, or as I call it 'lietuvija' -- with the community that ended up in the West under various circumstances and conditions and the one that ended up in the East by force."

Mr. Landsbergis went on to say that he was pleased with the World Lithuanian Community's representative to the Lithuanian Parliament. "This (to date) solution is satisfactory and fruitful depending on the representative's degree of involvement, the possibilities of cooperation, and the subsistence of ties. I believe that the current *representative* – Gabrielius Žemkalnis – is very competent in this position."

Regarding the Lithuanian American Community's (LAC's) Joint Parliamentary Commission, Mr. Landsbergis stated, "Looking at it from a practical standpoint, it's good that there is such a committee that can be worked with

and function in that country which is the most influential in this day and age. [There] we see [support] for Lithuania's independence and future even more than in Western Europe...The USA has much more of a firm and consistent position. We feel we get that very important support for the sovereignty of the Republic of Lithuania."

Mr. Landsbergis noted a few very important things. Firstly, it seems that Lithuania is pleased with the way the Lithuanian Community is presently organized with the two institutions in Lithuania: The World Lithuanian Community's Representative to the Parliament and the LAC Inc.'s Joint Parliamentary Commission. Secondly, as Mr. Landsbergis strongly emphasized, having strong ties between Lithuanian and the US is very important because it is with these ties the Lithuania feels the strongest support for its sovereignty. It is because these ties are so important that an exceptional bond was formed with the LAC Inc. It is also important to note that the LAC is the most productive, and many other Lithuanian Communities depend on its activity and staying power. This exceptional position held by the LAC was highly accentuated by the LAC Inc.'s founder and Honorary Chairman Stasys Barzdukas.

The strength of the Joint Parliamentary

LIUDA RUGIENIUS is a member of the Lithuanian American Community Inc.'s Board of Directors and the Chairwoman of the Joint Parliamentary Commission of the LAC Inc. The article was an excerpt from a speech given to the LAC Inc. XV Council Session, on October 10, 1998 in Cleveland, Ohio. RĒDA ARDYS-PLIŪRA translated it into English.

Commission is that it is formed as a union of five LAC Inc.'s elected council members and five of the Lithuanian Parliament's primary party's representatives: the Lithuanian Conservatives (The Country's Union), the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party, the Lithuanian Central Union, the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, and the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party. The Commission works with all parties, seeking to achieve a common goal benefiting Lithuania and her people. The Commission's purpose is clearly outlined in its articles in the "Integral Nation": a document signed by nine members of fractions of Parliament working with the Commission on September 2, 1996.

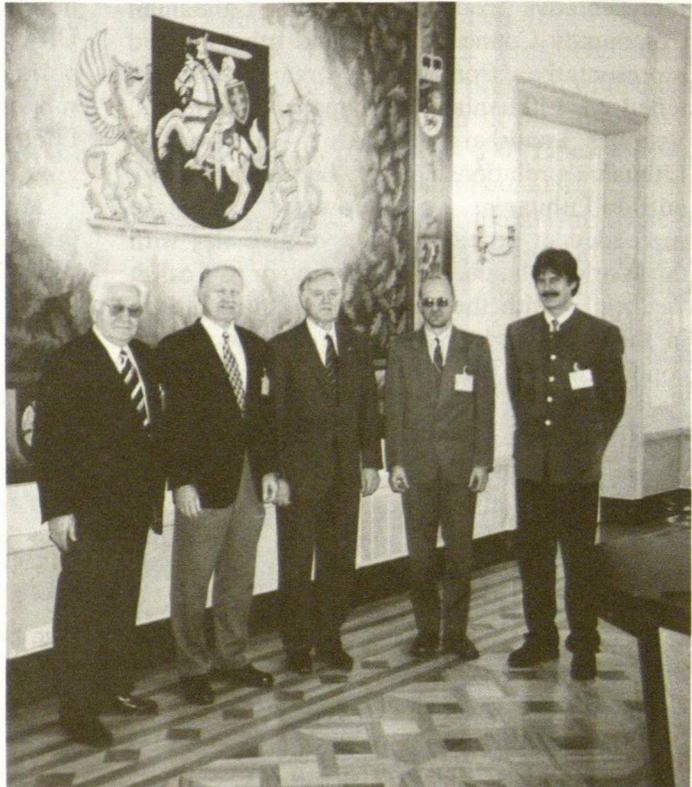
The Commission accepts resolutions by way of total agreement. We've been working in a friendly and productive atmosphere up to and including the present. The atmosphere during our meetings is positive and all questions and agenda items are discussed in a serious and effective manner.

We only have five days for meetings. Often times the Parliament members have plenary meetings, various committee and fraction meetings, and sometimes even tours of duty which were planned well in advance. The representatives from Parliament to our Commission are all high level officials: Feliksas Palubinskas and Romualdas Ozolas, Deputy Prime Ministers; Jurgis Razma, Parliamentary Chancellor; and Aloyzas Sakalas and Česlovas Juršėnas, party chairmen. To find time for our Commission sessions where we can meet with these representatives at a time when they are not so busy is quite difficult. (The fall meeting was scheduled from November 2nd to the 6th.)

The LAC Inc. members of the Joint Parliamentary Commission are: Regina Narušis, the LAC Inc. President; Dalia Puškorius, presidium member; Joseph J. Ardys, Vytautas Maciūnas and myself, members of the LAC Board of Directors.

How do we pick our causes? First of all, we try to consider those items which are most important to us: cultural affairs, education, sports, youth organizational affairs, genocide of our nation, relocation, and some social issues as citizenship, health insurance, and taxes. Some of these items are very current, as the question of membership to NATO. Because membership into NATO is dependent upon U.S. acceptance, this item is closely followed during our discussion. We work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defense.

Another very important issue deals with Lithuania's southeastern region's educational system. In this region there is a dearth of



In the President's Hall, President Valdas Adamkus meets with the "Information Center's" staff. From left: Vincas Augustinavičius, Australian Lithuanian representative; Edmundas Kulikauskas, LAC Inc. representative; Pres. Adamkus; unidentified Information Center representative; Dr. Žilvinas Bielauskas.

Photo from Regina Narušis

Lithuanian speaking schools, and children wanting to learn Lithuanian are discriminated against. A group of people who live in this region are seeking autonomy and the situation here is very complicated. This very sensitive issue has begun to be introduced to the Commission. Reports and interviews have helped us to understand the situation better.

We also had an opportunity to meet with the Lithuanian-speaking schools' principals and to listen to their opinions and concerns so that when resolutions are written, all information is parlayed correctly.

"Vilnijos" association is doing a tremendous job in that region; however, the government hasn't paid much attention to their requests. Letters sent to the government are not answered, and the association feels that if only one request was addressed, they would be very happy. We are very happy that Lithuanian Americans are sentimental to the plight of this region and are trying to help. The Lithuanian Foundation (headquartered in Lemont, IL) has previously granted funds to this region's school-teachers and had just recently granted additional funding. The Detroit Chapter of the LAC has "adopted" the Lithuanian school in Turgeliai. Representatives from the chapter visit the school frequently and often give gifts of money. The Cleveland LAC Chapter has sent out over 60 packages. The Tautos Foundation has even pledged to build a school. It would be a great idea if many more chapters would "adopt" a school. We will continue investigating the issues concerning the southeastern region's Lithuania-speaking schools.

One of the projects we have successfully realized is "The Information Center", which concerns itself with those people who are interested in relocating to Lithuania. Its address in Vilnius is Gedimino Prospektas 24. A joint coordination committee was formed to set up the center. This committee worked extremely hard so that the concept of the center, as well as the center itself, would see the light of day. The way the center will continue to operate will de-

pend on the committee's supervision and proposals. I believe we will continue having great influence over the center's operations.

Today, one of the most sensitive issues facing us is that of genocide. This issue never gets the important governmental attention that it so rightly deserves. Information is being gathered. The Lithuanian Genocide and Resistance Investigative Center are doing the cataloging very efficiently.

A program called "Living Memory" is headed by the Center and is made up of three parts. The first part entails videotaping and/or audiotaping memories of historical events, and filling out questionnaires. The second part encompasses photodocumenting information from museums, archives, private collections, diaries, logs, and periodicals. Additionally trips to the areas of exile would be included. Finally, the actual historical places would be photodocumented and mapped out. These places are places of battle; areas where resistance fighters were slaughtered; commandposts; bunkers and lagers; and places of exile.

Because this investigative center had a small staff, it had been focusing on those events that happened in Lithuania from Eastern sources, not from witnesses displaced in the West. Dalia Kuodytė, the Center's director, has said that she was motivated by the Committee meetings to put together questionnaires, for those in Lithuania, as well as those displaced in the West, that include the following: dissident activity, those who have been victimized, and acts against humanity committed in Lithuania.

Ms. Kuodytė said, "We do know that many of those displaced in the West participated in anti-Nazi movements, participated in the 1941 uprising, and were members of organizations whose goal was to free Lithuania. This data is extremely valuable and needed." This is a very important subject that needs to be expanded.

Our Commission is trying to focus special attention on the Soviet occupation and its acts of genocide because when it coincides or is compared to the Nazi acts of genocide, it is

never seen in its full light. As far as I know, in schools in Lithuania, the subject of the Holocaust is taught; however, what happened to our nation during and after World War II and the ensuing genocide is not.

Working together in the areas of culture and education are of extreme importance. Following the example of "The First Book" (exhibition which toured the U.S. focusing on the first book, catechism, written in the Lithuanian language by Martynas Mažvydas) celebrations, we thought that it would be very important to form joint work groups with Lithuania. The representatives from Lithuania feel the same way because as we work together, we get to know each other better, we find new projects to work on, and new ideas multiply. For a nation spread all over the world such as us, these joint work moments are a must.

We proposed a number of work groups into which a number of persons would be drawn into; for example, archive preservation, education, academia, genocide research, and a coordinating group for those wanting to return to their homeland. Some of the work groups are

already a success. Lithuania forms these work groups quickly, but our work in the States plods along because it isn't easy to find actively involved people with time on their hands. For example, when we raised the problems of the youth organizations, the Ministry of Education and Academia formed a work group on the spot to oversee youth organizations. Because of the change in ministers, it is unclear if this work will continue, but we will request that it does.

As you can see from the aforementioned subjects, coming up with topics for our meetings is not a problem for our Commission. During our fall meeting, economics will be highlighted. The Lithuanians had asked us to bring along an expert who would summarize the economic well being of Lithuania. We will be bringing along Valdas Samonis from Canada. He is a well-known expert in this area who has lectured all over the world on this subject.

We will also be looking for proposals from you as to which subjects would be important for Lithuania to explore and resolutions to vote on. We represent you, your opinions, and requests to the Lithuanian Parliament. ◆



The Time is NOW!

Contact your representatives in Congress to ALERT
them to SUPPORT Lithuania's admission into NATO!

In April, the U.S. will be a deciding factor
for Lithuania's future.

Help your representatives make the RIGHT choice.



Dr. Vytautas Bieliauskas

NATO Supports Environmental Research in Lithuania

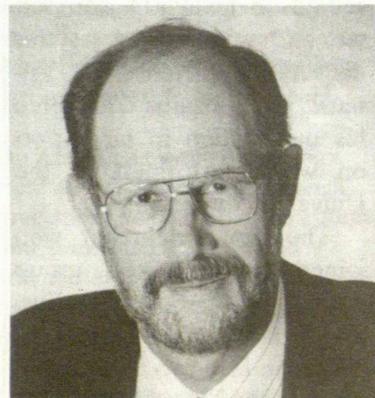
The Scientific and Environmental Affairs Division of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Brussels, Belgium, awarded a "Linkage Grant" to Dr. Klaus Willeke, Professor of Environmental Health at the University of Cincinnati. The grant was intended for collaboration between his Aerosol Research and Exposure Assessment Laboratory and the Fizikos Institutas (Physics Institute) and the Botanikos Institutas (Botanical Institute) in Vilnius. The cooperation partner in Lithuanian is Dr. Arvydas Juozaitis, head of the Aplinkos Fizikos ir Chemijos Laboratorija (Environmental Physics and Chemistry Laboratory) at the Fizikos Institutas.

The collaborating partners, in support of the project "Relationship between Air and Waterborne Microorganisms in Baltic Waters", will spend the award of \$24,000 on international travel. In addition, the funds enabled four Lithuanian scientists to travel

to the University of Cincinnati and four scientists from Dr. Willeke's group to travel to Lithuania to collaborate on this project.

The objective of the research project is to measure the concentration and viability of microorganisms in the water on both sides of the Kuronian split (Neringa), both of which are highly polluted, but by different sources. These measurements will be related to similar microbial measurements in the air above and near these waters, and a relationship will be sought between the sources, transport, and survival of these microorganisms. The findings will be useful for environmental pollution monitoring and control.

Dr. Arvydas Juozaitis, Dr. Saulius Trakumas, Dr. Albinas Lugauskas, and Ph.D. Student Laima Šveistytė have already visited Cincinnati. A Lithuanian Ph.D. student in Professor Willeke's research group, Gediminas Mainelis, will travel to Vilnius this year; while, Dr. Willeke will visit



Prof. Klaus Willeke

Lithuania in July for further project coordination.

Dr. Willeke has been supporting and training Lithuanian scientists long before he received the NATO grant. He first visited Lithuania in 1969, and has returned there several times. His wife, Audronė Barūnaitė Willeke, professor of German at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, has taught him to speak some Lithuanian.

The first Lithuanian scientist to work in his laboratory at the University of Cincinnati (which also includes scientists from many other nations) was Dr. Juozaitis who was there

DR. VYTAUTAS BIELIAUSKAS is the vice president of the Lithuanian American Community Inc. and the chairman of LAC's Public Affairs Council.

from 1991 to 1993. Dr. Willeke brought him and his family to the U.S. before the collapse of the Soviet Union when such arrangements were still difficult to make. When Dr. Juozaitis returned to the Fizikos Institutas, he became one of the first scientists to receive a Ph.D. in independent Lithuania. Dr. Willeke served on his Ph.D. committee and was present at this dissertation defense in Vilnius. Dr. Juozaitis completed his dissertation in large part on work performed at the University of Cincinnati.

The next researcher who joined Dr. Willeke's group was Dr. Vidmantas Ulevičius, also from the Fizikos Institutas, spending two and a half years in the U.S. The Lithuanian community of Cincinnati has warmly welcomed these scientists and their families. Their children adapted to the new environment quickly, and did exceptionally well in school. Building on their experience in the West, Drs. Juozaitis and Ulevičius have now several research projects with Western partners, and are models for their colleagues in Lithuania.

Through efforts such as those by Dr. Willeke, a number of Lithuanian scientists have become familiar and competitive with Western science. It is hoped that more Western scientists will dedicate their time toward this aim.

Marija Remienė

Awards...

The Culture Council of the Lithuanian American Community presented awards for outstanding cultural contributions in five different fields: art, music, journalism, radio broadcasting, and education. A committee of experts who evaluated and voted for each nominee represented each field.

The winners were announced and their awards presented at a ceremony held in Cleveland on November 28, 1998. The Culture Council president, Marija Remienė, gave the presentation speech.

Outstanding artist award was given to Eleonora Marčiūlionienė of Chicago. Her distinctive ceramic sculptures have been appreciated by many over the years. She began her artistic career in Lithuania between the wars. At the World's Fair in Paris in 1937, she received an honors diploma for her work. During her many years in Chicago, she continued to create a uniquely Lithuanian ceramic art form. Due to age and failing health, she was unable to come to Cleveland, and received her award in Chicago.

Outstanding musician award was given to pianist Manigirdas Motekaitis of Chicago. Born in Kaunas, Lithuania, he began taking music lessons in Germany with composer Vladas Jakubėnas. In Chicago, he continued his study of music. At De Paul University, he was chosen to be the piano soloist with the University symphony orchestra. His musical career actually began at the age of seven, and he has appeared as concert pianist and accompanist before both Lithuanian and American audiences.

Outstanding journalist was duly merited by Antanas Dundzila. Although an engineer by profession, he has also made use of his journalistic talent as editor and contributor to many and varied Lithuanian periodicals. He is also a talented writer of short stories and has won awards for his work. He has also contributed articles to the Lithuanian Encyclopedia published in Boston, a standard Lithuanian reference work.

Outstanding radio broadcast award went to the "Margutis" radio program broadcast from Chicago. This is the oldest daily Lithuanian radio program, begun by Antanas Vanagaitis on April 11, 1932. Vanagaitis started it for Lithuanians living in the Chicago area and it has continued regularly until the present, even though its founder has passed away.

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

Cultural Contributions '98

"Margutis" has been especially creative in its presentation of news items from Lithuania and the U.S., and also known for its cultural and entertainment value. Under various directors, the program has flourished and continues to the most-liked and listened to broadcast by Lithuanians in the Chicago area.

Outstanding education award was given to the St. Casimir Lithuanian Saturday School operating in Los Angeles with Marytė Newsom as its able principal. This school has been in operation for fifty years. Under the management of Marytė Newsom, who is herself an outstanding educator, the school is not only known for creative teaching and helping its students assimilate their dual culture, but is also noted for good parent-teacher relations.

We can truly express our gratitude to God, the Creator, for gifting these talented members of our Lithuanian nation as they shine like points of light in a dark sky. Our Lithuanian diaspora has been able to survive and to continue as a creative and productive community because of its fund of talent. We can give our best to the newly emerging independent Lithuania of the new millennium by offering her the cultural achievements of her children overseas. America has been good to us by allowing us to preserve and continue to create our distinctive Lithuanian culture.

The cultural life of our Lithuanian diaspora encompasses almost all forms of cultural expression. In previous years, the Culture Council of the Lithuanian American Community has

presented these awards fifteen times. The awards are financed by the Lithuanian Fund, based in Chicago. Understandably, this is simply a way of encouraging creative endeavor and of acknowledging the value of what has been achieved. These things will remain as a lasting bequest to future generations.

The Lithuanian American Community is very proud of our current award winners, and through this token of appreciation, we commend the efforts of all who are doing something to preserve our Lithuanian cultural heritage. We hope that this, our humble recognition of their achievements, will give others the courage to explore new frontiers of cultural expression.

Our hope is that the Lithuanian word and all the varied artistic expressions of the Lithuanian spirit grounded in our love for the land of our fathers will continue to burn brightly as the source of these recipients' work and of all our concerted efforts this side of the Atlantic.



Winners and honorary guests of the evening. From left: Mrs. Narušis, LAC Inc. Pres.; Dalia Puškorius, Lith. Foundation rep.; Marija Remienė, Cultural Council Chair.; Dr. Raimundas Šilkaitis, Cleveland LAC co-Chair.; Stasys Sakalauskas, Ambassador to Lithuania; Marytė Newsom, L.A. Saturday School director; Manigirdas Motekaitis, pianist; Dr. Darius Degesys; Ingrida Bublėnė, Lithuania's Honorary Consul; Antanas Dundzila, journalist; and Rita Kljoriėnė, music director.

Photo from Marija Remienė

Edward Baranauskas

The Lithuanian Air Force Base: Preserving Freedom

I had the opportunity to visit two Lithuanian Army bases in 1996, and had the pleasure of getting acquainted with Major Arūnas Alonderis and Dr. Nijolė Janulaitienė, both of whom are stationed at the Army's main headquarters in Vilnius. When I visited Lithuania this past summer, Major Alonderis made it possible for me to visit the Lithuanian Air Force base not far from Panevėžys, one of two such military installations in Lithuania.

Everything worked out fine. I was visiting my relatives in Panevėžys, and called Lt. Col. Kaminskas, the base commander, as Major Alonderis had instructed me. He invited me to come, and said that a tour of the base would be arranged. I was elated. Aviation has been in my blood since the flight of my childhood heroes, Darius and Girėnas. I served with the Marines in World War II as an aircraft mechanic, and later with the airlines in New York. I was anxious to see the progress made by the Lithuanian Air Force since the Soviets left Lithuania and its air bases.

After arriving at the base, the sentry told us that we were given permission to drive to the Administration Building where Lt. Col. Kaminskas was waiting for us. After our introductions, Saulius Ramanauskas, our guide, invited us to his office. He gave us a brief history of the field and its primary function; and he was more than happy to answer any of our questions.

Air Force bases in Lithuania, unlike those in the United States, are not named after any

prominent person in history or a military hero. Perhaps, this could change in the future. This base, located near Panevėžys at a place called Pajuostis, is named Lietuvos Karinių Oro Pajėgų Antroji Aviacijos Bazė – translated, it is the Lithuanian Air Force Second Air Base.

Every nation has an insignia painted on the fuselage and wings of its military aircraft for purposes of identification. Lithuania has one of its own, and it is what some Lithuanians call “Jogailos Kryžius” or Jogaila’s Cross*.

When the decision was made to construct an air base at Pajuostis in the early 1930s, the exact location of the main runway had to be made first. Technicians collected data for quite some time to determine the most favorable wind direction, and it was decided that only one runway would be needed because very rarely were there any crosswinds. Work on the project was started in 1935, and when it was completed in January of 1939, two air reconnaissance squadrons were stationed here.

After the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania, many improvements were made to the air base. With the collapse of the Empire, it became apparent that Lithuania would regain it, but the question arose as to its future use. The Lithuanian government decided to operate Pajuostis as an air force base. On March 9, 1993, Lt. Col. Juozas Rutkevičius became its first commanding officer with the first military aircraft arriving shortly thereafter from nearby Šiauliai. The withdrawal of all Soviet forces was completed almost six months later on August 31, but be-

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fore leaving, they took everything possible leaving all buildings in terrible condition.

Major Algirdas Arlauskas was the base's second commanding officer, and Lt. Col. Artūras Kaminškas succeeded four years later.

The runway at present is 2,000 meters long (about 6,500 feet), and 60 meters wide (about 197 feet), of which the center is 40 meters concrete with 10 meters of paved asphalt on each side. Plans are being made to extend the runway another 500 meters (about 1,650 feet). The airport is 576 hectares in size, or about 1,423 acres. To get a better idea of how this compares in relation to other

airports, Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn, New York, as an example, has 1,200 acres. (Note: This is where Darius and Girėnas began their attempted non-stop flight to Kaunas in 1933.)

All present Lithuanian Air Force pilots are graduates of the former USSR higher aviation school. The squadron tasks vary, such as paratrooper and cargo drops, medical evacuation, search and rescue, reconnaissance, and working in close cooperation with the police by helping them in many ways. Six helicopters were given to Lithuania as a gift from Poland; five of them are based here while the sixth was transferred to Kaunas.

The squadron is ready to fly day or night. When night flights are planned, readily movable lights are temporarily used to illuminate the runway until a permanent lighting system, which is now being planned, is installed. Denmark is giving a big helping hand in upgrading the airfield.

All flight plans are submitted to air traffic controllers in Vilnius for approval: stating the time, altitude, and routes. In addition to training flights, the squadron has transported NATO peacekeepers to Bosnia, including "BALBAT" (Baltic Battalions) forces from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Since English is the language of NATO, classes are held in Eng-



Ed Baranauskas stands in front of a helicopter with Lithuanian Air Force markings.

All Photos from Ed Baranauskas

lish. Some pilots go elsewhere to learn, even to Canada. Knowledge of English is mandatory if one wants to advance in rank. This must be quite a change for everyone involved; it seems to me, from the Soviet days when everybody had to learn Russian.

I was surprised to learn that an American Air Force C-130 Hercules cargo transport recently landed at this field.

After our discussion period ended, Saulius escorted us outside where I had the pleasure of meeting two Air Force officers, Viktoras Krivobokas and Juozas Petrulaitis. The color of their uniforms was royal blue, somewhat similar to the United States Air Force. Lt. Col. Kaminškas then drove the other two officers and me in his vehicle to where the airplanes and helicopters were parked. My relatives followed us in their car, together with Saulius Ramanauskas. I was then introduced to another pilot, Olegas Zaborskij, who was dressed in a much darker blue uniform. He and Saulius were our guides to see the airplanes and the rest of the base complex. The colonel and the other officers then left.

When I think of the years gone by, I never thought I would ever live to see the day Lithuania regain her independence, let alone having her own air force. But, here I was, walking into

the cabin of an AN-26 transport plane, going into the cockpit, and climbing into the pilot's seat. All instructions were in Russian, as far as I noticed.

The nearby building was not a barracks, as I had at first thought, but a school to train mechanics in maintenance, and to sharpen the flying skills of pilots using an enclosed cockpit similar, I thought, to our Link trainer. I was surprised to learn that all military personnel do not live on the base, but in their own apartments elsewhere, as there is no housing available for them here.

I found it rather unusual that there are no hangars on the field, and I can imagine the discomfort to say the least, the mechanics have to go through to do any repairs on the aircraft in the inclement weather. The Soviets did enlarge the field by creating additional taxiways and constructing 32 revetments needed to park their cargo and transport aircraft. When it became evident to the Soviets that they would eventually have to abandon this base, the field was completely neglected, at least this part of it. Tall grass now grows between the concrete slabs of the taxiways leading to, and including, the parking area of the revetments themselves. I was disappointed at not having more time to visit the control tower, and taking a look at the runway.

As I was leaving to return to Vilnius, Saulius Ramanauskas invited me to come again, and I promised him that I would make every effort to do so the next time I visit Lithuania.

I was very impressed and deeply moved with what I saw. Lithuania strove so hard to regain her independence after fifty years of hopelessness. I was heartened to see young men who love their homeland and are dedicating their lives to preserve the freedom that was once lost. I salute each and every one of them!



Notice the Lithuanian insignias on the tail and the left underside of the left wing.



Saulius Ramanauskas, Edward Baranauskas, Lt. Col. Arturas Kaminskas (Base Commander), and pilot Olegas Zaborskij stand in front of an AN-26 troop transport aircraft.

**Jogaila's Cross: The emblem of the Lithuanian nation is the Vytautas (Knight). It depicts a knight riding on horseback with a sword in his right hand held high above his head, and his left arm carrying a triangular shield with a two-barred or a six-pointed cross on it. The origin of this type of cross is still obscure, and it was found for the first time on a seal of Jogaila in 1388. (Perhaps that is why some Lithuanians call it "Jogailos Kryžius".) It is known that Vytautas the Great struck coins with this same design of cross, possibly to show that it was connected to an independent Lithuania. (Ref.: Encyclopedia Lituanica, Vol. VI, p 223-224)*

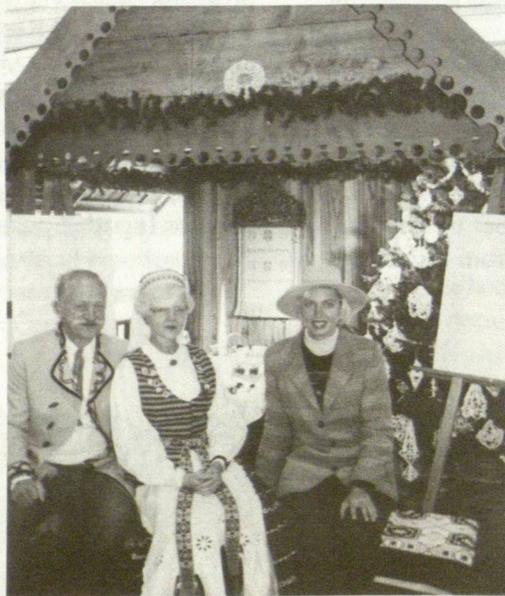
Laima Šalčius

At Milwaukee's Holiday Folk Fair

This is the 42nd year in which Lithuanians have participated in the 55 year-old Holiday Folk Fair of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Organized by the International Institute of Wisconsin, the fair is one of the oldest and largest international festivals in the U.S.

This year's theme, "Coming to Wisconsin: Where the World Meets", a celebration of the state's racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity, was to commemorate Wisconsin's sesquicentennial. On November 20th, 21st, and 22nd of this year, the **Henry Maier Festival Grounds** on the shores of Lake Michigan were turned into a field of white tents which housed the programs and cultural exhibits of the Fair's many participants.

Over the past 18 years, **Klumpė**, the Lithuanian folk dance group with members from southeastern Wisconsin and northeastern Illinois, has been the dominant Lithuanian force at



Gediminas and Sigita Damašius sit with Laima Šalčius at the Lithuanian cottage constructed for the 1998 Milwaukee Holiday Folk Fair.

the Fair. Within the last several years, **Spindulys**, the folk dance troupe directed by Rasa Poskočimas of Lemont, Illinois, has been a part of the program also. In addition, Madison and Milwaukee area families of Lithuanian heritage have consistently participated in the fair by manning the cultural booths.

Klumpė and **Spindulys** performed several times each day. The former danced "Spacierius", a fox-trot-like dance choreographed for veteran dancers. The latter, a group of young adults, danced a series of vignettes from a number of folk dances.

Bernice Milas, of Hawthorn Woods, Illinois, and her family organized the cultural exhibit. The men of **Klumpė** constructed a cottage in which a Christmas tree decorated with Lithuanian straw ornaments graced one corner. Along the side of the cottage, a table was set up with a traditional Lithuanian Christmas Eve dinner or "Kūčios". What was unique about this dinner

LAIMA ŠALČIUS is an active member of the Wisconsin Lithuanian American Community.

was that the food was made of homemade play dough. Neither shape nor color would have given away the food's faux character. Bernice, a pharmacist by profession, was responsible for this artwork.

During the opening day of the Fair, a local television station filmed the Lithuanian exhibit and presented the filmstrip on the evening news. Saturday afternoon, the Lithuanian exhibit received a blue ribbon and was awarded "Best Cultural Depiction" of the theme "Coming to Wisconsin". This was a feather in Bernice's cap!

Sigita and Gediminas Damašius, of Libertyville, Illinois, organized the booth in which various art and craft objects were for sale. Sigita's mother, who lives in Palos Park, Illinois, made all of the straw ornaments. Sigita herself made the brass and amber trees. All of the other goods were brought from Lithuania;

amongst those which claimed attention were the miniature clay candle houses, amber jewelry, wooden whistles, and clay dwarfs. The Fair's visitors purchased most of the items as Christmas gifts.

A treat for all the members of **Klumpė** was the participation of Giedrė and Stasys Milašius of San Diego. Directors of **Klumpė** for many years, they relocated to California a year ago, but came back for the Holiday Folk Fair and participated as masters-of-ceremony during the program.

The officers of **Klumpė** are president Vilija Sužiedelis of Spring Grove, Illinois; vice presidents Gediminas Damašius of Libertyville, Illinois and Vytas Janušonis of Dousman, Wisconsin; secretary Bernice Milas of Hawthorn Woods, Illinois; treasurer Steve Gust; and art director Ingrida Špokas of Woodstock, Illinois. ◆



Klumpė dances at the Folk Fair.

All photos from Regina Narušis

C u r r e n t E v e n t s



“Books to Note”

Showdown: *The Lithuanian Rebellion and the Breakup of the Soviet Empire* by Richard J. Krickus; March 1997; Brasseys Publishing Inc.; Hardcover -\$24.95.

According to [Booklist's](#) review on [www.amazon.com](#), “political scientist Krickus argues that Lithuania’s secession from the Soviet Union in 1991 was a key (if usually ignored) element in President Gorbachev’s ouster and the demise of the Soviet Union. ... Krickus was in Lithuania during 1991, acting as elections monitor, and his firsthand experiences, plus the book’s clean, vigorous prose, make this a compelling read.” (Brian McCombie)

Lithuanian Diaspora: *Konigsberg to Chicago* by Antanas J. Van Reenan; 1992; 356 pages; University Press of America, Inc.; Hardcover-\$53.00; Paperback-\$29.50.

“Van Reenan traces the development of a Lithuanian sense of peoplehood and unravels their invisible configuration of values. By analyzing the dynamics of their diaspora mentality, the work presents a picture of people armed with an ideology that enable them to nonviolently confront the first principles of American nationality.” *University Press of America, Inc.*

Lonely Planet *Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania (Serial)* by John Noble, Nicola Williams (Contributor) and Robin Gaudie (Contributor); August 1997; 440 pages with 60 maps; Lonely Planet; \$19.95.

This “Travel Survival Kit” covers the Baltic States and Kaliningrad which information on post-independence history, what to see and do according to all budgets, tips on dining and accommodations, and a section on the Baltic languages and Russian.

Lithuania Against Soviet and Nazi Aggression by Dr. Adolfas Damušis; 1998; 342 pages illustrated; The American Foundation for Lithuanian Research, Inc., 12690 Archer Ave. Lemont, IL 60439; Hardcover-\$15.00.

This recently released and long-awaited book contains compiled and illustrated records documenting Lithuania’s fight against two aggressors.

Among the books released for children, grades five and six, detailing historical time periods and events, *The History of Emigration from Eastern Europe* by Sarah Horrell, was a great disappointment.

According to Ina Bertulytė-Bray, librarian in Seattle, WA, “this meager book attempts to cover a complex history of the migration of peoples, dating back centuries. The book suffers from major omissions. The author disregards the fact that the Soviet Union and its brutal political repression were the major factor in one of the greatest population shifts in the history of Europe. She fails to mention that during World War II, nearly one million Eastern European refugees (except Jews) fled west, almost exclusively into Germany, the far lesser of the two evils. The Baltic countries of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia are either completely overlooked or misrepresented. It was Lithuania, not Poland, which in the Middle Ages, rules over vast areas of Europe. Already in 1940, the Soviet Union annexed and devastated these three independent countries.

Other historical mistakes in a book intended for children ages 10 to 13, make this book a very poor reference.

Polish Americans work to Support Lithuania's NATO Efforts

The Polish American Congress adopted a resolution supporting Lithuania's NATO candidacy on October 31st, 1998. The resolution's wording stated that the Congress "expresses its strong support for the admission of Lithuania to NATO at the next stage of the Alliance enlargement".

Mrs. Regina Narušis, LAC Inc. president, responded in a letter to the Congress's president, Edward J. Moskal, that "it is reassuring to know that we will now have such able allies as the Polish American Congress supporting our efforts with the same enthusiasm we displayed in fighting for your NATO membership".

In addition, former Radio Free Europe Polish language editor, Jan Nowak-Jezioranski was awarded the Didžiojo Lietuvos Kunigaikščio Gedimino Ordinas (a Lithuanian medal of honor) for his intensive work concerning Lithuanian-Polish relations. Nowak-Jezioranski stated that the 19th century Lithuanian-Polish Nation's motto, "Freedom for you and us!" rings true to the support Poland felt from Lithuania and the support Poland has promised for Lithuania. ◆



At the awards ceremony in the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., Jan Nowak-Jezioranski is surrounded by (from left) Regina Narušis (LAC Inc. president), Audronė Pakštytė (LAC Inc. Washington Office director), Mrs. Alma Adamkus, and the Republic of Lithuania's President Valdas Adamkus.

Photo from LAC Inc. Washington Office

A Year 2000 Countdown

A new electronic clock is to be installed on Vilnius's city hall tower showing the number of days, hours, minutes and seconds remaining to the year 2000. New Year's Eve celebrations for meeting the year 2000 as an independent country are already being planned. ◆

Source for news from Lithuania: ELTA News Service.

Lithuanian-Americans to Hold Governmental Posts

As of mid-January, the incumbent defense vice-minister, Lithuanian-American Jonas Kronkaitis, is very likely to become the new leader of Lithuania's national army, ELTA sources reported.

A possible nomination of Kronkaitis to the seat of Commander-In-Chief was placed for consideration during the first week of January 1999 during a conference between Seimas Chairman Vytautas Landsbergis and President Valdas Adamkus.

Kronkaitis, who will be 64 soon, is a military equipment's expert and has a record as a high-ranking administration officer in the U.S. missile industry. Kronkaitis had served for 27 years in the American army, including two years in the Vietnam War.

Before being appointed to vice-minister's seat in 1997, Kronkaitis had belonged to a group of U.S.-based Lithuanian officers who had worked up plans for the national defense of Lithuania: outlining ways how to build up effective military forces in line with NATO norms. The candidate holds a rank of Colonel and is a U.S. citizen.

Adamkus promised to confirm Kronkaitis's nomination to the post of Commander-In-Chief only when agreement is reached on a nominee for the position of deputy in charge of Infantry Troops. This was still being discussed by a trilateral meeting of presidency, Seimas, and government officials.

Lithuanian-American Skirmantė Kondratienė, a senior research associate at a Washington urban de-

velopment institute, has undertaken the duties of consultant for social issues in the President's office.

Holding Master's degrees in history and business administration, the new presidential consultant is an experienced analyst of social policy and a program manager working in social care policy, poverty and social development areas.

Earlier, she had taken part in projects for technical aid to nations forming their social care policies. Her other jobs were that of vice-minister at the U.S. Urban Development Department and manager of the national food program in the Agriculture Department.

In 1992, Kondratienė won an award, the "Golden Eagle" from the U.S. Urban Development Department for merits in streamlining programs for the homeless. Currently, the consultant holds a position of senior research associate at the project, "Evaluation of New Federalism", aimed to measure changing commitments made by U.S. federal, state, and local authorities to social programs and their influence on low-income families.

A recent decree by Adamkus delegated her to committee for implementation of a Copenhagen social declaration: drawing up the State Poverty Eradication Program. Here, Kondratienė will act as mediator between the committee and presidency.

She agreed to work for the presidential office on public grounds, without being paid, like other advisors of the country's leader -- Lithuanian-Americans Raimundas Mieželis and Julius Šmulkštys. ◆

Parliament Alarmed by Russia's Attitude Towards Lithuania

Lithuanian Seimas addressed the State Duma of Russia on January 7th in efforts to express friendly feelings towards the Russian nation and the parliament it elected, and congratulate it on the Orthodox Christmas and New Year.

"Let the spirit of mutual understanding and good neighborly relations between us grow stronger," said a statement drawn up by Parliament leader Vytautas Landsbergis. It gained support of fifty-four Lithuanian Ministers: with none being against and just eight abstained.

The statement also voiced concern for Russian diplomats' sharpening line, without a just cause, towards an ever friendly Lithuania. There were also critical remarks about the formation of fighting units, called "In the Baltic direction," by Russia.

"Attempts to create of us a bogus "image of foe" has no grounds," said the parliament. It expressed the belief that the Duma would modify a 1993 law on social guarantees for Russian servicemen to be involved in armed conflicts in the Baltics.

"There is no need to project such conflicts. We can and will do our best to build up a friendly and secure climate for the nations to live and work," added the parliament statement.

Referring to the October 2, 1998 letter from the Duma, Seimas lamented that it carried errors. Therefore, Seimas repeatedly explained that the Russian-speaking population in Lithuania was entitled to citizenship and all social guarantees, irrespective of a person's nationality or political beliefs. ◆

An Anniversary for Lithuania's Flag

The Lithuanian flag celebrated 80 years from the first time it was raised atop the Gedimino Pilis (Gediminas Castle Tower) in Vilnius on January 1st, 1999. The country's officials and the public attended the solemn ceremony.

On January 1st, 1919, the flag was first raised. As ten military volunteers, led by Commandant Kazys Skirpa, helped raise the flag, people sang the national anthem. Six of the volunteers stayed behind as the first honor guards of the flag. On January 4th, extra guards were called to protect the Pilis due to Russian Bolshevik

armed protests, the withdrawal of German soldiers, and the rage of Polish Legionaries. The Bolsheviks successfully broke through the guarded entrance on January 6th, and tore the flag's yellow and green stripes leaving behind the red stripe to flutter on the flagpole.

The second time Lithuanians raised the flag was on August 26th, 1920 when the Lithuanian army returned to Vilnius. Yet, the same year on October 9th, when the Polish army occupied the capital, the flag was removed. Later, in 1928, the flag was secretly raised for February 16th with a black ribbon running through it as a symbol of the castle's and the capital's occupied status.

On October 29th, 1939, the flag was ceremoniously raised atop the Gedimino Pilis. By special directive four flags were raised: the large ceremony flag, the large flag intended for holidays, the medium-sized flag for weekdays, and the small flag used during rainy days. Resistance fighters raised the yellow, green and red flag twice during wartime: on June 23rd, 1941 and then on April 6th, 1944.

When Lithuanians raised the flag on October 7th, 1988, the seventh time in all, this marked the end to the Soviet rule. Its presence on Gedimino Pilis remains a symbol of the 80-year quest for independence.



Lithuania Records GDP Growth

The preliminary figures from Lithuania's Statistics Department revealed that in the first nine months of 1998 Lithuania's GDP soared 5.7 percent compared to the same interval in 1997 -- totaling 31.66 billion litas (\$7.9 billion) based on existing prices.

In the third quarter of 1998, Lithuania's GDP made up 11.5 billion litas (\$2.87 billion); posting a growth of 3.2 percent. Such a GDP increase was due to higher volumes of construction, trade, relations, other business production, and real estate. ◆

U.S.-Baltic Charter Discussed

Implementation of the U.S.-Baltic Charter, which was sealed in Washington last January, was a subject of discussion between President Valdas Adamkus and U.S. Ambassador to Vilnius Keith Smith on January 5th.

Among the items discussed were guidelines for 1999 mutual co-operation. Adamkus expressed belief that the NATO summit in Washington, in April, would pass a ruling that would boost chances of Lithuania to join the alliance.

The meeting with the U.S. diplomat kicked off a series of working meetings to be held by the Lithuanian country leader with foreign envoys based in Vilnius this year. ◆

Exhibition of Currencies

The Lithuanian Central Bank sponsored a three-day exhibition of Euro and European Union (EU) currencies during the first week of January enabling Lithuanians to get acquainted with the EU currencies.

Visitors of the exhibition saw the Irish punt, Austrian shilling, Belgium francs, Spanish pesetas, Italian liras, Luxembourg francs, Portuguese escudos, French francs, Finnish markkas, German marks -- all national currencies of the 11 Euroland states joining EMU. It also introduced the common European currencies.

A separate exposition was arranged to show visitors currencies of EU states that decided to join EMU later -- Greek drachmas, British pounds, Danish and Swedish crowns.

Books and publications of EU currencies, technical characteristics of the banknotes and coins, and their security features were also presented. ◆

European Union Applauds Cancellation Of Death Penalty

The European Union (EU) hailed Lithuanian parliament's decision to repeal the death penalty. "This stride reinforces a commitment of Lithuania to ensure human rights," according to a statement released by the Foreign Minister of the EU, Wolfgang Schuessel.

The amendments to the Criminal Code of Lithuania that provide for commuting capital punishment to life imprisonment were adopted by the Parliament on December 21st, 1998. President Valdas Adamkus introduced the amendment after the Constitutional Court outlawed the death penalty.

The Parliament's press service said, in a statement, the EU had heartened Lithuania to be quick to accede to the 6th protocol of European human rights and fundamental freedoms' convention, which nullifies the death penalty.

Meanwhile, Croatia, Moldova, Romania and Macedonia had ratified this document earlier; although, their accession to the Council occurred later than that of Lithuania. ◆

TV Dominates the Cultural Life Of Lithuanians

The Culture and Art Institute of Lithuania conducted a survey, "Cultural Life in Lithuania '98", which polled some 1,400 respondents with the purpose of assessing the public's cultural and art awareness.

It disclosed that only 10 percent of pollsters showed a huge interest for culture and art. A so-so interest was recorded among 42 percent of respondents; while, 16 percent appeared to be quite indifferent.

A majority rated the cultural life in Lithuania as mediocre; although, 49 percent maintained they had observed improvement over the recent two years.

When asked whether the government was right in sponsoring art and culture, 48 percent answered in the affirmative. Nine percent of those polled disapproved of such assistance, and 43 percent spoke for support to individual artists by both the State and private sponsors.

Those polled also enjoyed theater, music, literature (fiction rather than poetry), painting, and ballet. Lithuanian films appealed to 34 percent of the local population.

Nonetheless, television viewing topped the survey results by scoring 82 percent of the votes. ◆

The Man of the Year Title Goes to...

At the end of 1998 all the Lithuanian dailies took various public opinion polls and selected the most popular or famous figures, events, and state institutions.

President Valdas Adamkus, in addition to the title of most elegant man in Lithuania, was also the winner of the Man of the Year title of 1998, a survey of **Baltijos Tyrimai** (pollsters) revealed.

Other people appearing in *Kauno Diena* newspaper's top influential people list were Cardinal Vincentas Sladkevičius, basketball star Arvydas Sabonis, and ex-President Algirdas Brazauskas.

Other **Baltijos Tyrimai** results indicated the mass media had the highest confidence of the people with 71 percent; the presidential service -- 65 percent; and the Church -- 62 percent. But the tax inspection and commercial banks could hardly enjoy such public trust, by scoring a meager 15 and 12 percent respectively.

A survey of **Veidas** ("Face") weekly magazine readers placed cyclist Diana Ziliutė, 1998 winner of the global women's cycling race, as the luckiest person of 1998. Jonas Kazlauskas, the head coach of the national basketball team and Žalgiris club, came in second. Others on the luckiest people list were:

- the former Chairman of Supreme Court, Pranas Kuris; the first Lithuanian judge to get a post in the International Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg,
- Prime Minister Gediminas Vagnorius; described by the Magazine as managing "to finish the hard year, marked by crises and ordeals, triumphantly."
- The five officers of The Organized Crime Investigation Service, Vilnius zone, had exposed the largest killer gang in Lithuania this century.
- The Board Chairman of Lifosa Fertilizer factor, Danas Tvarijonavičius, whose company earned 44 million litas profit.
- Businessman Viktoras Grodis; was lucky to escape from Chechen captivity right before the close of the year.

The list also included scientists at the Vilnius University laser center, authors of the historical TV broadcast "Būtovės Slepiniai" ("Mysteries of Being"), and private Vilnius Bankas Board Chairman Julius Niedvaras.

Listeners of Vilnius radio studio chose the Mayor of Vilnius, Rolandas Pakšas, as the most popular Vilnius resident of 1998. ◆

 R e f l e c t i o n s

Sr. Margarita Bareika

The CHURCH and People's Realities

Being an ecclesial Christian, my interest is to focus on some aspects of realities in this modern world that we live in and relate them to teachings of the Church. Simultaneously, how teachings of the Church relate to modern-day living also stir certain thoughts.

We saw that our Church had three epochs of Church history: the original Judeo-Christian, then Greco-Roman, and subsequently European world. Now we are entering the time of the World Church. We have not really understood all that was involved in the shift from the first to the second period. So, we are not clear about what is entailed in the birth of the World Church. The question is placed; will the Church see and recognize these essential differences of the other cultures into which it has to enter as a World Church, and accept with "Pauline" boldness the necessary consequences of this recognition, or will it remain a Western Church?

We see that ministry is not just an historical reality, but it has its own specific sacramental meaning in our Church. Historical research teaches that, on the basis of the sacramental reality of the community of God, theological ministerial offices in the Church have experienced changing forces. At the same time, we see that

during different periods of history, various forms of ministry became rigid and were no longer suitable for changed situations.

Changes in forms of ministry never seem to come first, but are the results of social changes in the Church and world. Though a newly developed spirituality changed visions of the church, society and world; such changes may be necessary for the evangelical life of modern Christian communities, too.

It is fair to say that only recently have Catholics begun to recover, in any significant way, a sense of the enormous dignity associated with being baptized a member of the body of Christ. A certain priority to the Church as the people of God and as the sacrament of the world salvation is attributed to all baptized in Vatican 11's "Lumen Gentium".

Recently, feminists have argued that the objective norms of the traditional theology are inadequate to the contemporary experience. When one examines some of these theologies, there result some striking parallels. Far from being the best, our only perspective from which to order our human experience, the scientific view values some expressions and devalues, or even ignores, other expressions of human experience because they are not adequate to its es-

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established criteria. For example, some feminists argue that the theology of original sin, as interpreted by theologians from Augustine on, has been based upon the male experience of excessive pride and aggressiveness. These traits are not characteristic of woman's sinfulness as much as man's is.

No language, no cultural expression is neutral. Nor can any theological statement claim neutrality or objectivity; since, it is always culturally bound. Rituals and symbols indeed express human limitations, have the power to stir the imagination, and arouse us out of our stagnation. Symbols transform the way we see reality.

All of our recent attempts at reform have involved some recognition of the incompleteness of our traditional expressions. To revive and to reform our sacramental practice is not a question of simply substituting new and updated symbols and rituals. Rather, the orientation of our thought needs to shift direction. We come to recognize the importance of continuity between our thinking and practice. We need to reexamine each sacrament for its expression of the human condition: what does this sacrament say about human life? How does it relate to the Lord? What constitutes involvement of the priestly people with this sacrament? What constitutes an honest and truthful expression of this sacrament in a baptized person?

The Church must preach the gospel to the people who exist in the real world today. Therefore, She must not only come to understand the gospel in the light of today's world; she must also understand today's world. She must also understand today's people who are called to live the gospel in terms of the present historical conditions. So, in her teaching, the Church must ever be challenging and prophetic calling us to change our minds and hearts, to change our way of living, to struggle to grow.



The teachings of the Church concentrate on what ought to be and how people ought to live - all things being equal. In the flesh and blood reality of people's daily lives and situations, often all things are not equal. Thus, the translation of Church teaching into the lived reality of people's lives is an extremely important and necessary stage which the teaching itself cannot accomplish.

Theologians, by the very nature of their work, keep in touch with scriptures, tradition, the lived experience of people, the findings of philosophy, and the behavioral sciences. For the step towards the birth of a World Church, theologians will have to interpret the Church's teachings to reconcile people with the Church. This will allow people to feel the all-encompassing power

of the word of the Lord applicable for not only times past, but for future generations living in their "realities".



The Church announced the coming of Paschal Season: The Forty Days of Lent with February 17th being Ash Wednesday.

The days between the Baptism of the Lord and Ash Wednesday are known throughout the western world as Carnival, merry-making before the Lent begins. We are invited by the Church to enjoy these days between the feast and the fast, and look for Paschal Mission to guide us through the days of Lent and Easter.

Pope John Paul II has asked that Catholics view the time leading up to the year 2000 "of the presence of Jesus Christ in human history and not as an apocalyptic time, but two thousand years as the time for self-examination, expectation and intense prayer."



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