

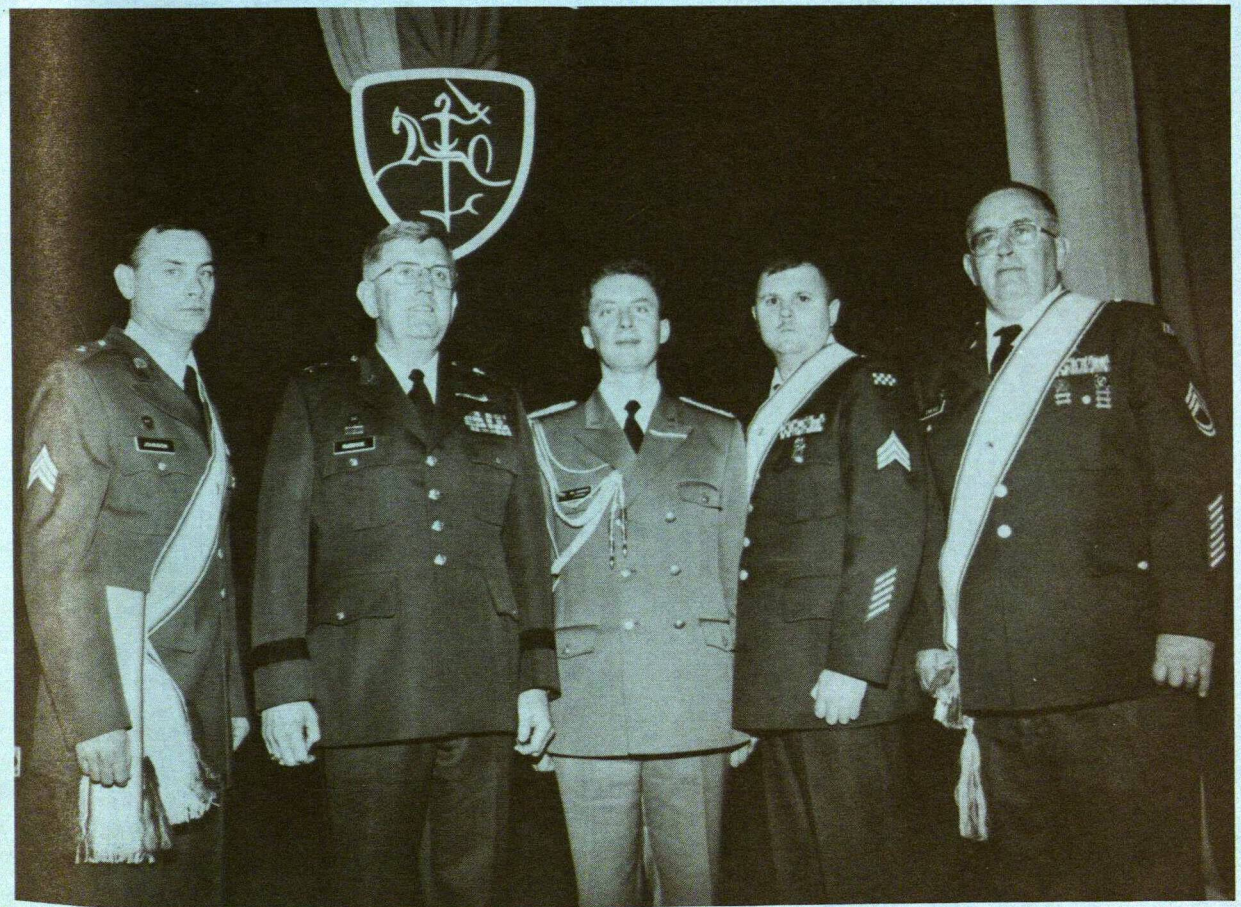
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BRIDGES

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Lithuania in the 21st Century...Romus Kalanta...Teaching in Lithuania

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

It really amazes me that after years of Holocaust education via the schools, television and films, some Americans find it abhorrent to intercede in another Holocaust, or media denoted, 'ethnic cleansing'.

I suppose the term 'ethnic cleansing' seems benign and even harmless. It almost conjures up this picture of cleaning off a part of your beliefs in exchange for fresher, more improved ones. I could almost guess that is precisely what many do think it means.

After many months of the Bosnian conflict reports and images followed closely by the Albanian reports, how can people still believe that this ethnic cleansing is not akin to a holocaust? How can we still be expected to stand idly by and allow it to happen? It amazes me when some people say that we should mind our own business. "Isn't Yugoslavia considered a democracy?" How interesting that under Tito's communist regime the Yugoslavian regions lived harmoniously together. There is a Lithuanian saying, "Some are tomatoes, some are radishes." Who's to say which leader showed their true colors.

It's also ironic that some American political groups who support the NRA, military might, and the moral democracy take a stand against NATO intervention because they simply dislike Pres. Clinton. They say anything — even to the implied support of ethnic cleansing — just to run contrary to the President.

A part of the Holocaust education received in schools is the motto, "Never again". Yet holocausts have occurred over and over again — in Cambodia and the African nations. We should feel proud to be able to finally support a solid military stand against the perpetuation of another holocaust. As Lithuanians, whose population was 'cleansed' a third by the Stalin purges, we salute the NATO troops for their perseverance in extending a compassionate hand to Milosevic's victims. NATO troops are living the Holocaust motto and we salute them without hesitation.

Rasa Ardys-Juška

Editor

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BRIDGES

- 4** Lithuania on the Threshold of the 21st Century
Gediminas Vagnorius
The Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania shares his vision for Lithuania.
- 6** The Young Man with the Mesmerizing Eyes
Jeanne Dorr
Why is Romas Kalanta important to Lithuania's youth?
- 11** Some Reflections on Teaching in Lithuania
John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.
A journey to Lithuania helps to create more understanding of a different culture.
- 14** Lithuania Redesigns its Circulating Coinage
Frank Passic
New coins replace paper banknotes.
- 15** Camp Neringa Through the Eyes of a Camping Mom
Marcy Couitt
A Heritage Family Camp helps campers discover Lithuanian culture and traditions.
- 16** Laisvė Comes to America
Albert J. Gustaff
Books for Lithuania continue their education-oriented work.
- DEPARTMENTS. . .**
- 2** PERSPECTIVES
- 18** CURRENT EVENTS
- News from Lithuania and the U.S. communities.
 - Trivia quiz
- 21** REFLECTIONS

"The Great" of Lithuania

Vytautas, who was the only Lithuanian leader to be dubbed "the Great", began a golden age in Lithuania in the late 1300s. He expanded his country's borders from the Baltic Sea southward to the Black Sea and from Poland eastward nearly to Moscow. During Vytautas' reign, Lithuania's military strength was unmatched in eastern Europe.

By the early 1400s, Lithuania was about four times bigger than Poland and included the lands of modern Ukraine and Belarus.

Vytautas' reign came to an end in 1430 with his death. An agreement between Jogaila and Vytautas allowed Poland to absorb Lithuania at that time.

Source: *Lithuania: Then and Now*. Edited by Mary M. Rodgers et al. Minneapolis, Minn.: Lerner Publications Co.: 1992.

On the cover:

Three U.S. Army sergeants were honored by the Philadelphia Lithuanian-American Community during their February 16th Independence Day celebration. Pictured are (from the left): Sgt. Johnson, Maj. Gen. Ruddock, Maj. Serapinas, Sgt. Bastian, and Sgt. Crego. Photo by Petras Vaškys.

Last month's cover photo was submitted by Mr. Narušis. We apologize for the omission of photo credit.

Lithuania on the Threshold of the 21st Century

On March 11, 1990 when the members of Lithuania's newly-elected parliament assembled to carry out their electoral mandate to restore the independence of Lithuania, we knew that our country faced the daunting task of catching up to the West. Ending Soviet rule would be less difficult than the effort the country faced in modernizing its economy and restoring normal societal relationships. Lithuania was going to have to leap the wide societal chasm that separated the democratic West and the communist East for 50 years.

During the last nine years, the people of Lithuania have worked hard to transform their economy from a command-style to a market economy hospitable to both native entrepreneurs and foreign investors. Our task has been both to disassemble the economic dinosaur left behind by Soviet planners and to prepare our citizens to successfully compete in a global economy. The country's economic and legal reforms are acknowledged as among the most successful throughout Central Europe. We believe that last year's economic indicators demonstrate that Lithuania is succeeding in making the transition.

GEDIMINAS VAGNORIUS is the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania.

There has been positive growth and expansion of the economy for the last four years, consistently reaching 4.5 to 5.0 percent each year. Nine years ago the private sector was nonexistent; it now generates 75 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Inflation has been tamed to 2.4 percent in 1998, as opposed to three digits seven years ago. The country's currency, the Litas, has remained stable since it was anchored to the U.S. dollar in early 1994 and foreign currency reserves continue to grow and exceed Lithuania's total foreign debt.

The banking crisis of late 1995, as painful as it was, served to reorganize the private banking sector on a sound footing. The legal system is rapidly developing to handle contract disputes and other business-related legal issues. Good infrastructure for transport exists both within the country in its modern highways and at the ice-free Baltic seaport at Klaipeda. The privatization of port facilities has led to a rapid modernization. In fact, the government's aggressive privatization program of state industries throughout the country is nearing completion with only a small percentage of former state companies still available for purchase.

Foreign investors noting the improved business climate in Lithuania have tripled their investments in the country over the last two years. American companies account for 17

percent of all foreign direct investment in the country. Investors such as *Coca-Cola*, *Philip Morris*, and *Motorola* were among the first to invest in Lithuania. Their presence has served as a stabilizing factor during some of the most difficult months of transition. Last October, the U.S.-based company *Williams International* became a strategic investor in the Lithuanian economy, acquiring a 33 percent interest and management control of the reorganized oil complex of Lithuania, which includes a new port dedicated only to oil shipments, the Mažeikiai oil refinery, and a crude oil pipeline.

Lithuania's formula for regaining its independence was peaceful protest and patience, coupled with international support. In our political fight to reestablish our democracy and statehood, we managed to remain on good terms with all our neighbors, including the successor state to the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation. There are no disputes between Russia and Lithuania concerning ethnic minorities, citizenship or border issues. We believe that Lithuania can serve a useful role as a bridge between Russia, and the European Union.

In an Agreement signed on July 29, 1991, the Russian Federation recognized Lithuania's right to seek its own security arrangements. This was a very important moment in Lithuanian-Russian relations because it demonstrated that democratic Russia is not a captive of its soviet legacy, or imperial history, and can have normal relations with its neighbors. Lithuania was one of the first countries of Central and Eastern Europe to apply for NATO membership in January 1994. We congratulate our neighbors in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic for finally achieving NATO member-

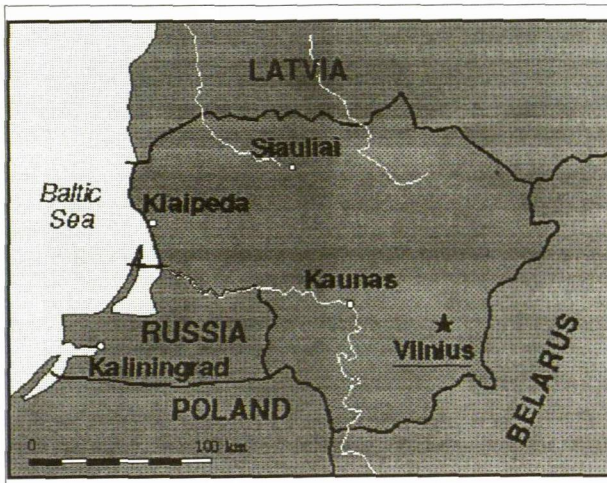
ship and hope to join them when NATO makes the decision for a next round of enlargement.

In Lithuania we understand that business needs a secure environment. Global marketplace competition creates many risks for investors already. To continue to attract foreign investment as well as keep working capital at home, it is essential that Lithuania, like the other states of Central Europe, guarantee an environment free of political and social instability as well as regional military threats. We take our responsibility to secure the lives and prosperity of our citizens very seriously and have devoted 1.5 percent of our GDP to building the nation's defense capability. By the year 2001, as our economy strengthens, we hope to be spending 2 percent of the GDP and complete

our goal of restructuring our defense forces to meet NATO standards of interoperability.

Lithuania's greatest resource is its people. With their resolute will they took their country back from foreign control. With their creativity and industriousness they are building a better life for themselves and their children.

They have demonstrated that they can be effective and reliable partners in business, as well as shouldering international security responsibilities. In Lithuania, we look to the 21st century with optimism and a commitment to build a more peaceful and prosperous world. When the people of the United States and other western democracies cross the threshold of the new millennium, we Lithuanians will also be ready to make our contribution. ◆



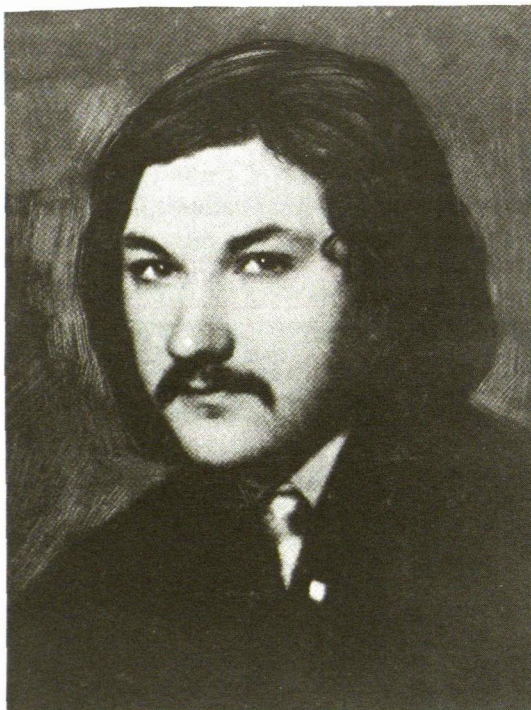
Jeanne Dorr

The Young Man with the Mesmerizing Eyes

Revolutionary? Hippie? Patriot? Psychotic? Who was Romas Kalanta? What was on his mind and what drove him to set himself on fire in front of the Music Theater in Kaunas on May 14th, 1972? What could possibly cause a 19-year-old such pain that he could no longer endure life? Was he a hippie on drugs, as the communist government quickly spread the word around Kaunas? Was he mentally disturbed as his mother was forced to sign a letter that was released to the newspapers? Or was he a young man who could no longer live under a system that denied him not only freedom of thought but freedom of spirit?

It dawned on me that many of us, who are second and third generation Lithuanians, have very large gaps in our knowledge of events that have taken place over the years in Lithuania. These spaces began to be filled in for me when I began attending St. Andrew's Lithuanian Church in Philadelphia.

Every May, a Mass was held in memory of a young man named Romas Kalanta. The only thing I



knew was that he set himself on fire in Kaunas. But as I sat at Mass, I found myself staring at his photograph, riveted by his eyes. Those eyes seemed to keep drawing me back to the photograph. The question would not leave my mind. Why? Why did he do this to himself and his family? Surely, he knew his family would also pay for his act of defiance. An opportunity to find some answers arose when I had the occasion to meet Gintautas Bukauskas in Kaunas.

Mr. Bukauskas is the president of **Lituanica**, an organization that plans to build a monument to honor Romas Kalanta. I knew the organization was having difficulty raising the money to complete the project. The monument was finished but they lacked funds to set it properly.

Mr. Bukauskas is a soft-spoken, well-educated young man. We spoke for more than an hour as he explained Lituanica and the project to me. Mr. Bukauskas was very young at the time of the tragedy and could only tell me what he read or heard from others. I explained to him that I could not do justice to his cause; all I had were cold facts. I had to meet

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

someone who personally knew Romas. I had to "live" with his family and "walk in their shoes". Could he find a friend of Romas' who would talk to me? Mr. Bukauskas was leaving on a business trip the next day and time was of the essence. I figured that was the end of the article before it ever got started.

Much to my surprise, I received a phone call from Gintautas later that evening. Would I like to speak to Romas' younger brother? Would this be acceptable? This was more than I ever hoped for. That evening Arvydas Kalanta telephoned me and agreed to speak to me at my cousin's apartment, which was a few blocks from where he lived. The next afternoon, I met Arvydas and his Jolanta.



Since independence, there has been a renewal of interest in Romas, and the family has been interviewed many times, even to the point that their privacy has been intruded upon. I told them the purpose of my article and that I felt there was something lacking in our knowledge of his brother's story. I wasn't interested in a lot of cold facts; I was interested in his brother as a human being.

We sat at the kitchen table with a pot of coffee between us and talked for several hours. It wasn't a sad or somber interview because the good times were remembered as well as the tragedy. The Kalanta family could have been considered average. It consisted of working parents and four sons. At this point, I asked Arvydas if the rumors I heard that his father was a communist were true. He answered they were; his father had joined the party. Although, his mother saw to it that her sons received their first communion.

The boys were typical boys, getting into usual boy mischief. Romas was next to the youngest and Arvydas was the baby, with five years between them. Romas was a quiet person and kept to himself when he was at home. He enjoyed playing his guitar and drawing. He and other young people would gather in Kaunas' Freedom Boulevard sitting in the park or in the coffeehouses and playing their music. The authorities frowned upon this. The students had long hair and wore bell-bottom pants. Their music was unacceptable because it was different. They were considered a public nuisance.

Yet, readers, keep in mind the time this was hap-

pening. There was an upheaval of traditions and protests were taking place all over the world. Although the changes were more subtle in the communist countries; nevertheless, they were happening through the long hair, the clothing and the music. According to Arvydas, this was their way to protest.

Romas was not an athlete, but played ball with his friends in the park. A gentle person, he would take his small nephew to visit his friends or for walks into town. He was an average student and he liked history. At one point, a teacher asked his mother why her children knew so much Lithuanian history. The curriculum was focused on Soviet history; Lithuanian history was to be ignored and not discussed at home. Although they did not know it at the time, an incident would occur in that school that would forever alter their lives.

When Romas was in the eleventh grade, a teacher gave an assignment to write about what they would like to do with their lives. Romas wrote that he wanted to enter the seminary and become a priest. He didn't realize what this answer would cost him. His parents were immediately called to the schools and admonished for permitting their son to have such foolish ideas. After that, the situation in school became extremely difficult and Romas dropped out. He decided to get a job in a factory and go to night school.

At night school he engaged in discussions with his history teacher. Eventually the factory job ended, and Romas seemed to be losing interest in night school. One of this teachers later told his family he appeared disinterested and had a faraway dreamy look about him.



Sunday, May 14th was no different that any other Sunday. Romas took a 3 liter glass bottle and told his mother he was going to buy a popular Lithuanian drink that was sold on the street corners. Instead, he went to a friend's house and asked for some gasoline. The friend asked what he was going to do with it, and Romas said he needed to clean something at home. Nothing out of the ordinary was taking place.

Romas went to the center of town and sat on a park bench with three or four other young people. The others got cold and left. Romas took off his jacket and left it on the bench. Inside his jacket

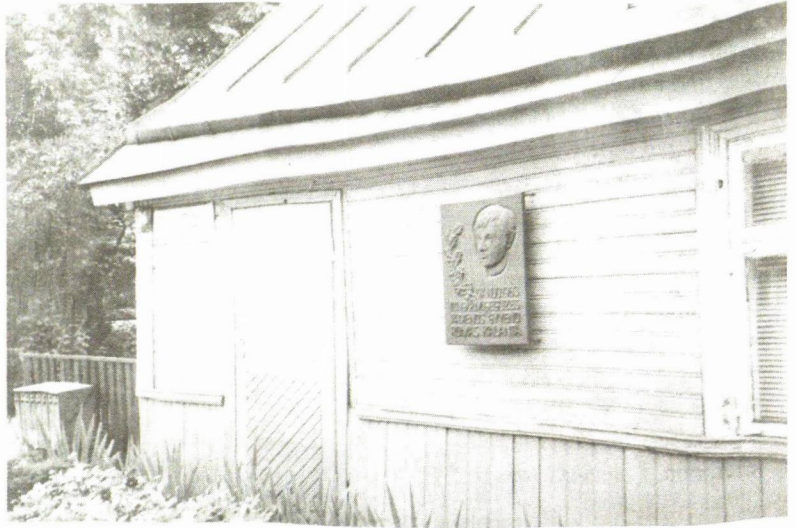
pocket was a note with his name and address. Then, he proceeded to douse himself with the gasoline. People were unable to believe what they were seeing with their own eyes. They started to scream and run. Eventually, the police and ambulance arrived, and Romas was taken to the hospital.

The police arrived at the Kalanta house and told Mrs. Kalanta her son was burned. At first she didn't understand the seriousness of the situation; she thought there was some kind of an accident. It was only when she got to the hospital did she see her son suffering an indescribable agony, his body covered with burns and tormented with pain. Romas' parents and older brother were the only people allowed to see him for a few minutes at a time.

The staff was doing everything in their power to keep him alive; he was not allowed to die. An example would be made of him, so that other young people would not think of doing anything crazy. He would not be permitted to die; for then, he would be a hero and a martyr to Lithuania's young people. He would be kept alive so he could be punished.

Can you imagine the anguish this family was suffering? Surely, their heart had to be ripped out at the sight of their son and brother. While the family was keeping their vigil at the hospital, the police were wasting no time in searching the house. They pulled apart everything looking for anything that would prove Romas was a troublemaker. They also turned everything upside down looking for drugs; they found none. Perhaps they could find anti-Soviet literature; there was nothing. Instead they took all of Romas' belongings – letters from friends, the music he loved so much, and the drawings he made which gave him so much pleasure.

Back at the hospital, the vigil continued until the next morning when Romas died. Now he would feel no more pain and would never again have to endure a system that drove him to this brutal act. Romas



The trim blue Kalanta house where Romas grew up. The plaque on the side of the house reads, "Here, from 1963 until 1972, May 14th, lived Romas Kalanta."

Photos: Jeanne Dorr



The inscribed rock originally intended as a monument for Romas' grave. It now stands in the Kalanta yard.

had found the peace and freedom for which he yearned; he would no longer have to sit at a desk in school and dream about it.

There was no time to grieve for the family. The parents were immediately taken to police headquarters for questioning. They were told to write a release for the newspapers saying that Romas was mentally ill. They would have to say this was not a political act, it was the act of a disturbed young man. They reminded the Kalantas that they had three other sons to consider. Mrs. Kalanta wrote five or six drafts but none suited the authorities. Finally, she put down the pen, either out of grief or exhaustion or both, and told the authorities to write a statement that she would sign. There was nothing more she could do for Romas, but she still had a family to protect.

Romas' body was brought back to his house for viewing. Two hours before the funeral was to take place; the authorities rushed in and said the funeral was to start immediately. The young people were told to leave the house. Mrs. Kalanta began to cry that all the relatives had not yet arrived, and neither had the photographer (is a Lithuanian custom to photograph the deceased). Arvydas said one of the officials looked his mother in the eye and said, "You should be grateful we are allowing you to bury him."

The authorities quickly sent for a police photographer and, using police vehicles took the body to the cemetery. They would not even permit the flowers to accompany the body. The cemetery was blocked off from mourners and spectators. Romas Kalanta was laid to rest in a section that was a little more than a garbage dump.

When the authorities began to realize that Romas Kalanta was now a hero to people all over the Baltics, they sealed off the city of Kaunas. Bus and train traffic was halted into the city. There was no public transportation from Latvia or Estonia. Young people with long hair wearing strange clothes were told to go home.

Before the funeral crowds of people from all through the Baltics who had arrived in Kaunas gathered in front of the Kalanta house. They began to shout, "Where is Romas?" When they heard what had happened, their anger and frustration began to grow. They linked arms and headed for police headquarters. Soon the militia appeared with their

whips and clubs.

The crowd would not disperse as ordered. They headed for Freedom Boulevard. More militia and more brutality met them. The crowd was now in front of a church that the communists had closed and turned into an art gallery. A young man climbed a pillar of the church and unfurled the forbidden Lithuanian tri-colored flag as the crowd sang the equally forbidden Lithuanian national anthem.

A friend told me that an elderly woman was standing next to her with what seemed to be a shopping bag of everyday necessities, but underneath it was filled with rocks. She told my friend she remembered the taste of freedom and this woman began to hurl rocks at the militia. Age made no difference – these were Lithuanians who wanted the freedom returned that had been stolen from them.

The demonstrations continued for several days not only in Kaunas and other Lithuanian cities, as well as in the other Baltic countries. Other people set themselves on fire, the fortunate ones died. The others were left to rot in jail cells. The seeds of freedom were planted in the hearts and minds of the young and old alike. It might take another eighteen years but Lithuanians would again raise their flag and sing their anthem without fear, whips or clubs.



Life continued for the Kalanta family. Things were normal except for the police that now took up their posts near the family's house. Security was especially tight around All Souls' Day and the anniversary of Romas' death. From the day Romas was buried until his health failed seventeen years later, Romas' father went to the cemetery every day. Even in the rain and snow, he would use a small broom to sweep the grave. His father could not even grieve in peace for there was always someone watching the grave. For eight years the family was not permitted to erect a monument. Instead there was a small piece of wood that marked the grave. Romas' grave could not become a shrine.

The years passed and life changed. Arvydas married Jolanta and she moved into the Kalanta house. Mrs. Kalanta died on May 13th 1982, one day shy of the anniversary of Romas' death. Several years later, Romas' father also died, as did one of the brothers. As independence became a reality, the police presence lessened in front of the house.

Immediately after independence was restored, a group of young people began to work on remembering Romas Kalanta.

Our interview ended and I felt I had a better understanding of the young man with the mesmerizing eyes. Before they left the apartment, Jolanta and Arvydas invited me to their home.

A week later, my husband and I walked the few blocks to the neat blue typically Lithuanian house where the Kalantas lived for so many years. There is a plaque on the front of the house, which was donated by a group of young people in memory of Romas.

There is also a huge rock bearing Romas' name on the side of the house. The rock was to be his monument but innumerable problems arose. The sculptor couldn't carve the letters correctly, the words weren't right, and the cross was not where it should have been. The sculptor was called to police headquarters and soon after told the family he would be unable to complete the job. He left Kaunas, and the family could not find the rock. It was only after independence that they, along with some young people, began the search for it. They finally located it, and it was brought to the Kalanta yard.

As thoughts of how to move to the cemetery were being considered, Mrs. Kalanta died, and the family realized there would be no room on the rock for the remaining family who would eventually follow their beloved Romas. Another more practical monument was purchased for the cemetery, and the rock remains in the Kalanta yard.

We walked through the door, which Romas walked through so many times during his short 19 years of life. They showed us the room where his body had been laid out and pointed to the house across the street from which the police watched their family for so many years. I felt I was living a part of history as they shared their family album with us – photos of Romas as a young boy and at family gatherings.

Arvydas told me stories of their youth, which brought a smile to my face. I touched Romas' notebooks that contained his drawings. The police actually missed some things in their initial search. The family donated most of his personal items to the museum at the Ninth Fort where an entire wall com-

memorates Romas' life.

What moved me to tears was an envelope, which Jolanta handed to me. Inside were small pieces of the Christmas wafer. Every year at the Christmas Eve dinner, Romas' mother broke a piece of the precious wafer and kept it for her beloved son. She did this until the year she died. She never let his spirit die. Not even the police sitting across the street could stop this mother from keeping her son's memory alive.

After all of these hours of interviews, I still don't have any answers. I have read other articles about this tragedy but Romas' brother who was 14 at that time, told the version I am sharing with you to me.

Was this a spur of the moment act? No, it wasn't. Before Romas set himself on fire he took off his jacket and left it on the side. Inside was a note with his name and address. Part of the note that he left said, "What should I live for? For this system to kill me? It would be better to kill myself at once..."

I would like to thank Snieguolė Jurskytė, formerly of Philadelphia and now of Kaunas, for starting me on the correct path to find some answers. My gratitude goes to Gintautas Bukauskas for his patience.

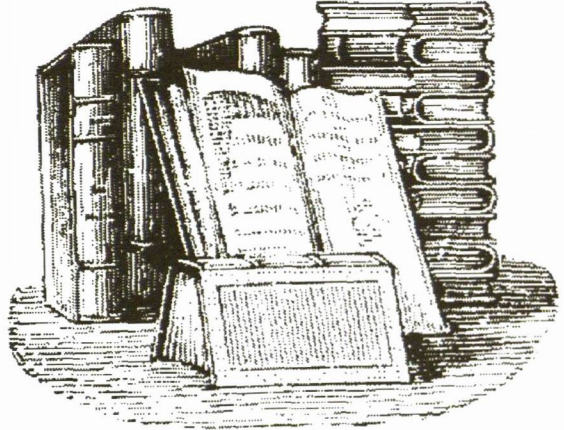
I owe so much to Jolanta and Arvydas Kalanta for not only opening their home to me but for opening their hearts and sharing their memories. The deepest debt of gratitude goes to Romas who brought Lithuanian's plight to the attention of the free world. May he rest in peace.

If you would like to make a donation to help with the monument in Romas' memory, please write your checks to "*Lituanica – Romo Kalantos Komitetas*" and mail to:

Lituanica
Kapsų 110
Kaunas 3005
Lithuania

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.

Some Reflections on Teaching in Lithuania



These are some impressions of the people of Lithuania, the Country, and the institution called Šiauliai University. As such, they are laced with emotional responses and perspectives or partial truths, so they have validity insofar as any one person's responses reflect truth. I loved the experience and would go back in an instant,

If there is such a thing as a national virtue, in Lithuania it is endurance. From the moment my plane from Berlin landed in Vilnius, it was clear that these were extraordinary people. Indeed, an inkling of that knowledge came while waiting in one of Berlin's airports. There were Lithuanian families making their way home. I knew their family language to be Lithuanian and they were turned inward, away from things German. They were going home and they possessed that tired but relieved look of those who know the next leg of the journey brings them

home. My journey, barely twenty-four hours long, was just beginning.

My luggage and I separated in Chicago. I went from Chicago to Munich, to Berlin, and to Vilnius; it went to Frankfurt, and then to Vilnius. The Customs officials at Vilnius Airport could not have been more helpful. There was little they could do but contact Lufthansa and Lithuanian Airlines to trace the progress of my luggage. We, the luggage and I, met up again after three days, in Šiauliai.

The first day in Šiauliai, Lithuania was quiet. Professor Milda Siničkienė, Vice-Dean of Humanities, met me at the train station with her husband. She was ill but made the trip anyway. This caliber of kindness and generosity marked my time at Šiauliai University. The scholar/teachers at Šiauliai University went beyond the norms of collegiality; they were generous to a remarkable degree. They made me comfortable in an unfamiliar teach-

ing situation, in an unfamiliar city.

Such experiences make me grateful for small, simple acts of kindness. In addition, the foreign contingent of teachers and students at Šiauliai University went out of their way to welcome me. Ingrid Brüderm teaches German at Šiauliai, Kathy Callaway, a Fulbright Scholar from Minnesota, teaches creative writing and English; Gerard Leahy, a Creighton grad, teaches English conversation; and Virginie Plan teaches French language and literature. There was a sprinkle of others. These people are remarkably talented and generous. We formed a small, intimate group of teacher/scholars who processed our experiences over late evening dinners and scullery duties.

There was little time for comradery during the day but in the late afternoon and evening we often shopped for groceries and cooked and cleaned together. Often, we prayed the Catholic mass

FR. JOHN FITZGIBBONS, S.J. was in Šiauliai, Lithuania as a part of Creighton's exchange program in Eastern Europe during fall of 1998.

together. Though not all of us were Catholic; it seemed a most appropriate and needed part of our pattern. *Ora et labora*, work and prayer; St. Benedict named something for all Christians, I think.

I taught approximately seventy students. I say I "taught" but it was unlike any teaching I have done in my eight years of college teaching. In some ways I was over-prepared; in other ways, I was completely unprepared for the needs of the students. I had prepared about fifty pages of lectures on the "Greats", such as Emerson, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Hawthorne, Melville, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. I brought copies of all the books I was eager to share with the students. Little did I understand the needs of the students to whom I was sent.

When Lithuanian college students study English, they study philology and comparative linguistics; there is little input or concentration on the study of literary artifacts as a key to culture. So my approach in the lectures, largely stressing the parallel ideas between the portraiture and landscape painting of the American romantic era (1798-1860) was somewhat new.

These students are very talented. They all seem to know four languages: Lithuanian (of course), Russian, German, and English. Indeed, I am sure many of them

know English grammar better than I do! Still, they were eager beyond my imagining to understand American culture through works of literary and fine art.

During one lecture when I showed thirty-five slides of American paintings and sculpture stretching from Neo-classicism through Romanticism to Realism, one could have heard a pin drop. The room was remarkably quiet for the ninety-minute lecture. About six faculty members came for the lecture as well. When, after nearly an hour of lecturing, I asked the students if they wanted a break, they resoundingly said "No!" I queried some faculty members afterward and they assured me that it is characteristic of the students to put up a brave front.

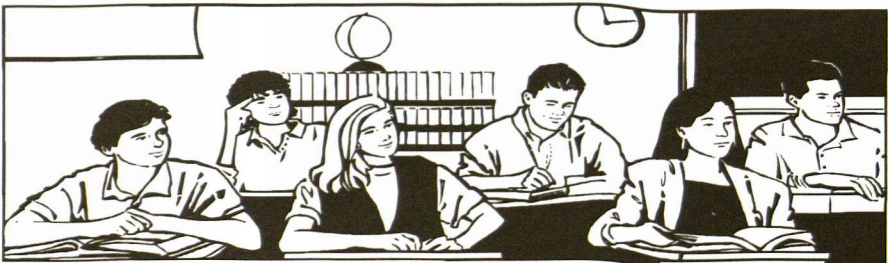
Culturally, it is impossible for the students to interrupt or challenge a professor in any obvious way. In addition, Professor Milda Siničkienė, the Vice-Dean who attended the lecture, stated that the students are ravenous for such input. They have never experienced the methods of interdisciplinary presentation before. In truth, Milda said the students found the paintings and sculpture very helpful in examining the themes of Romanticism in American literature.

These "texts", the slides, were by far the most effective means I had for getting across the themes of American democracy, individual-

ism, race relations, and gender construction. The literary texts I had chosen were far too long and far too many, I was forced to put the books I had on reserve but assign only small portions or chapters for the students each class. In turn, they were forced to photocopy these chapters and share them. They have no money to speak of and books are extraordinarily expensive. Were I to go to Siauliai again, I would be far more judicious in my choice of texts and the number of pages I would require.

The students have a grim determination about them. As a group, they work harder and more diligently than any other group of students I have ever known. Yet, compared to American students, these students have nothing. The University is a microcosm of the whole country. The young are restless and eager, brilliant and full of energy, but thwarted because of the crumbling infrastructure. This infrastructure, both physical and attitudinal, seems to be the sad legacy of the Soviet system.

The corpse of Soviet Realism can be seen everywhere: in the remarkably poor housing and crumbling (literally) academic buildings, in the lack of innovation in teaching methods, and in the desperation of the students to learn, change, and develop beyond whom



they are and what their parents have achieved

No one dares to make waves; students do not challenge teachers or the system. And professors are not innovative or *engaging*. Disagreements smolder but faculty and students rarely speak of them for fear of a very heavy price. To complain or advocate for a more just system is to commit professional suicide. Sadly, students rarely ask questions of their professors. They wait until the lecture's over and then crush the professor with detailed questions they would not dare ask in "public". Such public questioning of the professor is somehow "bad form".

While Lithuania seems patriarchal, it is quickly and quietly growing into a matriarchal society; though the hope among these women academics seems to be for a balanced, democratic society. Women carry what is a disproportionate burden in the culture and society. One observation that I made to several women faculty members and the members of our foreign teaching group was that when they are young, the women are stunningly attractive. But with the burdens and stresses of working, going to university, child-bearing, and persistent, grinding poverty, the women age very quickly.

There is little in the way of medical care in the sense that citizens here have it. Many relatively young women have lost their teeth and are broken physically. Young women in the University, if they become pregnant, often quit school and

marry prematurely or abort the fetus or keep the child and try to continue in school living in very poor university housing. This last option does not last long.

Young men, on the other hand, seem healthier, by and large, more assertive, and relatively carefree. Still, there are smoldering angers and dour dispositions seen in almost every face.

I was in Lithuania for nearly a month -- clearly not long enough to truly know the culture or society intimately. Yet, what I came to know, I love deeply. I cannot separate my experience of Lithuania from my person or my vocation as a Jesuit priest. I felt needed professionally and personally in Lithuania and that is a very rare experience for me as a Jesuit in-

volved in higher education in the United States at the close of the twentieth century.

Questions that remain in my prayer since I have come home include, "Why do the disadvantaged and the marginalized seem to attract me more than the advantaged and the privileged?" "What is holy about the stubborn endurance of the Lithuanian people, especially my students and the faculty I know?" "What kinds of innovations and professional and personal dreams are appropriate at Šiauliai University?" "What innovations and dreaming or planning would be inappropriate?" "How can I continue to be of service to my colleagues and friends in Šiauliai University?" ◆

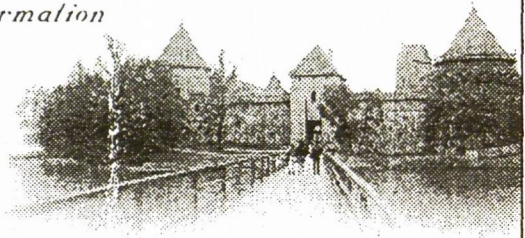
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Frank Passic



Lithuania Redesigns its Circulating Coinage



Lithuanians have seen the introduction of more "user-friendly" small change during the past two years. The original 1991-dated coins used for ordinary commerce transactions had proved to be confusing both in size and in value, and had proved to be unpopular in recent years.

The Bank of Lithuania issued new one, two, and five Litai coins into circulation, designed to replace the paper banknotes of the same denominations that had been used since 1993 on Monday December 22, 1998. When the Litas was originally reestablished in June 1993, one, two, and five Litai coins were issued. They were confused, however, with the 1991-dated aluminum 1, 2, and 5 'Centai' coins that were also circulating, and so they were withdrawn. Paper 1, 2, and 5 Litai banknotes were issued in 1993 and 1994 instead.

The new 1 Litas coin is made of cupro-nickel, and is 22.3 mm. in diameter. The 2 Litai is 25 mm. in diameter and is bimetallic with a brass outer ring and a copper-nickel core. The 5 Litai measures 27.5 mm. in diameter. It has a brass center with a cupro-nickel outer ring. This is the first time that Lithuania has issued bimetallic coinage, and it has attracted the fancy of bimetallic collectors from around the world.

The 1, 2, and 5 Litai paper banknotes had accounted for forty percent of all banknotes in circulation, and had a short life span compared to the coins. The new coins will last much longer and save the Bank of Lithuania money in the long run. The banknotes will be gradually replaced by the coins as the remaining notes wear out.

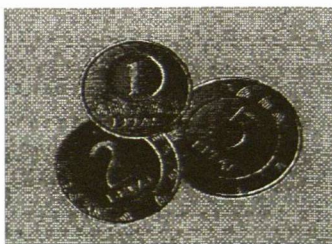
The new coins were designed by sculptors Arvydas Kazdailis and Antanas Žukauskas, and were

produced at the Mint of Lithuania in Vilnius. All bear the contemporary national emblem, Vytis. One Lithuanian Litas has a value of U.S. 25 cents.

In 1997 the Mint also produced new 10, 20, and 50 Centai coins. These brass coins measure 17, 20.5, and 23 mm. in diameter, respectively. These yellow-colored coins are about 2 mm. thick and replaced thinner and smaller copper 1991-dated coins of the same denominations. The 1, 2, and 5 Centai coins were dropped from circulation earlier due to their small values.

The new coins are available in the United States from this author, Frank Passic, 900 S. Eaton St., Albion, MI 49224. Write for a free price list. Anyone interested in the hobby of Lithuanian numismatics (coins, banknotes, medals, tokens, military medals and decorations, etc.) is invited to join the Lithuanian Numismatic Association, P.O. Box 22696, Baltimore, MD 21203. Membership is \$15 per year, and members receive its publication *The Knight* which is filled with interesting information about Lithuanian money and history. ♦

This 1 Litas banknote dated 1994 featuring legendary writer Žemaitė is one of three denominations being replaced by the new coins.



New 1, 2, and 5 Litai coins now circulating in Lithuania.

Photos: Frank Passic

*FRANK PASSIC is an active numismatic serving numismatic societies and the Balzekas Museum. He is also the editor of The Lithuanian Numismatic Association's publication **The Knight** since 1978.*

Marcy Couitt

Camp Neringa Through the Eyes of a Camping Mom

Labas! I am a second generation Lithuanian-American and I'd like to tell you a little about Camp Neringa's Heritage Family Camp. Every year Heritage Family Camp meets for an extended weekend at Neringa in Brattleboro, Vermont during the summer. It is a great way to learn, share, and experience Lithuanian culture and history.

For the past five years each weekend has focused on a different theme; Joninës (the feast of St. John and the summer solstice), Kūčios (Christmas Eve), Velykos (Easter), Užgavėnės (Shrove Tuesday) and the celebration of a Lithuanian wedding. Together, with all of the camping families, we learn how the particular traditions started, evolved, and how the holiday or event is still celebrated today.

A typical day is filled with fun, food and a variety of activities. Some activities are done separately by parents and children. There are blocks of time where the adults learn the traditions, origins, and crafts of a particular holiday; listen to a guest speaker about current events in Lithuania; or play a game of volleyball. At that time, the kids are divided into groups according to age and participate in sports, games, Lithuanian stories, and arts and crafts. Other activities are done together: family art projects, family games and dances, sing-a-longs and nature hikes. After lunch, which is buffet style with a Lithuanian flair, is "free time" -- a time for swimming in the "prūdas" (the

pond), naps for the toddlers, or maybe exploring nearby Brattleboro, which is an antique haven!

In the afternoon we share individual family customs and traditions: "Do you eat 7, 9 or 11 times on Užgavėnės (Shrove Tuesday)?" "Do you place straw under the tablecloth or throw shoes at the door during Kūčios (Christmas Eve)?" At this time we also plan and create our own "Neringa celebra-

tion" of the holiday that we have focused on and which we enjoy on the last night of family camp (which might mean celebrating Kūčios in August!)

These are just some of the things we've experienced, shared, and learned at Family Camp. Come join us this year as we celebrate Neringa's 30th birthday in true Lithuanian style and discover various tradi-

tions of the different regions of Lithuania.

For 30 years Camp Neringa has provided children and families of Lithuanian descent a summer full of camp sessions both in Lithuanian and in English. Programs are filled with cultural activities, opportunities for personal growth and of course lots of summer camp fun! 1999 sessions in English include a children's session for children 7-16 years old from August 8 to 21, and the family camp is from August 21 to 24. For more information regarding these sessions or sessions in Lithuanian, please contact Dana Grajauskaitė at 617-923-4583 or neringai@yahoo.com. ♦



It's a lot of fun at Camp Neringa!

Photo: D. Grajauskaitė

MARCY COUITT used to camp at the Neringa Children's Heritage Camp when she was a little girl. Now Marcy has returned to Neringa to camp with her children at Family Camp!

Albert J. Gustaff

Laisvė Comes to America

The elegant monument stands on *Laisvės Alėja* in the Garden of the War Museum in Kaunas. A tall white stone pedestal supports the bronze angel, which was first displayed on February 16th, 1928. She carries the Lithuanian flag over her right shoulder. Her right hand holds broken manacled chains as she strides forward with majestic gracefulness to celebrate freedom. She is the Lithuanian Statue of Liberty.

A beautiful engraving of this meaningful statue will be given as a gift to each person or group who donates \$100.00 or more to the project of the **Books for Lithuania**.

The life of *Laisvė* has been both tragic and triumphant. She has been tortured, mutilated, and almost, but not quite, demolished. The inhabitants of Lithuania would not permit her to disappear. With enormous courage and hidden strength they have sustained her to this day.

The eminent Lithuanian sculptor, J. Zikaras, designed the statue and pedestal to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the date independence was obtained from Czarist Russia.

The monument survived its first bloody occupation as a result of the enactment of the infamous German - Russian pact in 1939, when those two



The Laisvė statue in Kaunas.

Photo: A. Gustaff

countries divided Poland and the Baltic countries of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia between them. The bronze angel survived the German occupation in 1941. In 1944, after three years of fierce and deadly battles with the Germans, the Soviets reoccupied Lithuania once more.

In 1950, Communists ordered the statue to be destroyed. The pedestal was shattered beyond repair. Devoted Lithuanians managed to hide the statue and the original drawings of the sculptor in a museum in an inconspicuous corner of a small gallery, where it was undetected for thirty-nine years.

In 1988 winds of freedom began to blow in response to Mikhail Gorbachev's Perestroika. A large number of Lithuanians from many different walks

ALBERT J. GUSTAFF is a retired assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering. He and his wife, Leona, were in Šiauliai, Lithuania, teaching English as a Second language in 1992 at the invitation of the Prefect of Šiaulių Pedagoginis Institutas.

of life and a few Communists formed a movement, *Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sajūdis*, to consider a limited form of self-government. The movement, which became known as *Sajūdis*, was very popular because it began to make demands for full freedom. To win back support from the people the Communist party restored February 16, 1918 as Independence Day.

One year later, on February 16th, 1989, thousands of Lithuanians gathered in the War Museum Garden and cheered as *Laisvė* was unveiled and stunningly reappeared. Citizens, who have remained unknown throughout the years, had reconstructed the pedestal using the original notes of Juozas Zikaras, the designer.

By 1990 *Sajūdis* became sufficiently powerful to take control away from the Lithuanian Communist party. Vytautas Landsbergis was elected chairman of the Lithuanian Supreme Council. On March 12 he issued a proclamation of Independence, which led to serious threats and repression by the Soviet Union against the country. The Soviet Union became alarmed with the developments in Lithuania. It tried to reverse itself, but it was too late. They launched an unsuccessful coup d'état in Vilnius on January 12th and 13th, 1991 against unarmed civilians who were guarding the TV tower only with their bodies. Unfortunately, 15 Lithuanians gave up their lives and 500 were wounded.

Lithuanian-Americans in the United States of America did not stand idly by and watch. A concerned group marched to the Capitol in Washington D.C. to raise their voices in demonstration before the President, Congress, the world, and to fight for the emancipation that their mother country sought.

George Ward, an eminent engraver who has designed for the White House and the American Government, designed and executed a lovely gold engraved figure of *Laisvė* that was adopted by the Free Lithuania Committee as their symbol.

Today, Lithuania is free but it will take many

years for it to become a working democratic and prosperous nation. Many educated persons in government and business require knowledge in Economics, Political Science, Business Administration, Ethics, and International Trade. Those skills were either ignored or not taught in the Soviet educational system.

The engraver, George Ward, has again offered his beautiful work of art to Lithuanian-Americans and others who will support the **Books for Lithuania**, and donate \$100.00 or more to the success of its venture.

Books for Lithuania will provide English textbooks at all levels to teachers who will prepare the youth to gain future access to a world where the English language is utilized. It will help Lithuania to achieve democracy, prosperity, and the ability to hold on to the freedom gained through so much torture and bloodshed.

We are grateful for the enthusiastic response to our first request in **Bridges** (Issue 9/98) and to the many who have generously given to this worthy cause. To attain the goal of \$7,000 to send the 17,000 collected and packed books on their way to Lithuania, we are repeating our request.

The 12" by 18" gold engraving of *Laisvė*, the Lithuanian Statue of Liberty, will be given as a gift to those who donate \$100 or more. The artist signs each engraving. A donation of \$50.00 provides English books for about 18 classrooms, but any amount would be gratefully accepted.

Please help us pray for the success of **Books for Lithuania**. The English books collected would be of tremendous value to the youth and nation of Lithuania.



The engraving of the Laisvė statue is a unique reminder of your precious gift to help transport books to the Lithuanian youth.

Photos: A. Gustaff

Your donation is tax-exempt when you send it to;

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Re: Books for Lithuania/ B. Jasaitis
2711 West 71st. Street
Chicago, IL 60629

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

Landsbergis condemns serb actions in Kosovo

The Chairman of Seimas Parliament, Vytautas Landsbergis, spoke in favor of political protests and influence on Belgrade's government, at the same time lamenting that NATO actions were helpless to halt mass expulsion of Albanians and killings in Kosovo province.

In a statement Landsbergis, called the mass expulsion of people from Kosovo similar to the 1949 civilian deportations to the USSR from Lithuania. The 50th anniversary of this event was recently commemorated.

"This was done by a country that occupied Lithuania, which is qualified as a particular war crime. The political and military government of Soviet Union thus sought to crackdown the resistance of Lithuania and execute a genocide following its own methodology." The concept or terminology of 'ethnic cleansing' was not used yet according to Landsbergis.

The document also noted that "nowadays Russia and its political government so far have not assessed the crimes of the Soviet Union's past against conquered nations, and this circumstance influences the present. Today the incidences of war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and genocide are repeated in the Balkan region." ♦

Lithuania's Parliament sanctions peacekeepers in Bosnia

Up to 160 Lithuanian servicemen of the Baltic battalion are to join the NATO-led peace stabilizing operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina next month for a half-year period and make up part of the Danish battalion.

The peacekeepers are to replace another Lithuanian group that has remained in Bosnia since October. It included 40 Lithuanian servicemen with a combined number of Baltic peacekeepers at 202. The participation of Lithuanian servicemen in this international operation received Seimas' blessings on April 6th. Sixty lawmakers gave their votes in favor of the increase, with four being against and seventeen abstaining. ♦

Source for news from Lithuania — ELTA News Agency

Lithuania begins its first phase to shut down Ignalina

The Lithuanian government formed a commission for representing the nation in a joint working team of a Lithuania and European Commission. They will be setting both the date and costs of the planned Ignalina nuclear power plant's shut down. This is a necessary step before Lithuania can be considered for the European Union.

Its further task will be to produce information about the necessary financial support from the European Union or other international sources, the social and economic aftermath, and the environmental expenses.

In March, the head of the European Commission's (EC) delegation to Vilnius, Ambassador Henrik Schmiegelow rebuked the government for delaying the formation of the working team. According to the European diplomat, the EC planned to delegate to the group chiefs of directorate units. It has already chosen a candidate for leading the Commission's delegation.

Economy Vice-minister Viktoras Valentukevičius will guide the Lithuanian group. Among its members are officials and experts from the Energy Agency; Institutes for Energy, Economy and Labor, and Social Research; the European Committee; and finance, foreign and social ministries. ♦

Germany's support of Lithuania assured

The German government re-affirmed its support of Lithuania for the European Union (EU) talks scheduled for this fall. In a letter to German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder in February, Emanuelis Zingeris, the Chairman of Seimas Human Rights Committee, asked to confirm the historical commitment of Germany to the Baltic States.

The Lithuanian lawmaker referred to a speech by former German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel in Riga. He had declared that Germany "was historically responsible for the fate of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, regarded itself as an advocate of these countries, and felt political and moral duty to build their path back to Europe." ♦

Historical painting highlighted in Lithuania

The Polish painting "Bitwa pod Grunwaldem" (Battle of Tannenberg) by Jan Matejko started a tour from Warsaw to the Lithuanian capital in April, according to the director of the Lithuanian Art Museum Romualdas Budrys. The exhibition was inaugurated in Vilnius by the presidents of both Lithuania and Poland on April 14th.

The trip of the Polish masterpiece to Vilnius is only the fourth transportation abroad of this unique painting in a post-war period. Hidden by Polish culture patriots from invaders during World War II under ground for a few years, the painting was damaged significantly and needed extensive restoration.

The exhibition in Vilnius also includes valuable sets of weapons and flags from the Polish Army Museum, with part of a flag set including fifteen reconstructed flags of the German Order and its allies. These had been taken during the Battle of Tannenberg (1410) as trophies and stored in Krakow for years.

Fortunately, the flags had been painted in chronicles as the original ones disappeared later. Thus the drawings were of great use for reconstruction of crusaders' flags.

The other part of the flag set includes 15 reconstructed flags of Lithuanian, Polish, and allied troops that had fought in the Battle. The most valuable items in the weapons collection are an authentic shield of a German foot soldier, and the most dangerous firearm of that time -- an arbalast. (*a medieval cross bow with a steel bow* — *M.-Webster Dictionary*). ♦

A Battle of Tannenberg Trivia Quiz

On July 15, 1410 a decisive battle, one of the biggest in the history of the Middle Ages, permanently weakened the Teutonic Order. The two opposing armies met outside the village of Grunwald (also known as Tannenberg). On one side were the Teutonic Knights, with Western European mercenaries and on the other side were the Lithuanian-Polish-Ruthenian army supported by Czech and vassal Tartar contingents.

The question is: "How many Teutonic Knights including western European Mercenaries were killed at the Battle of Tannenberg-Grunwald?"

- a) 8,000
- b) 20,000
- c) 600

For answer, see page 22. ♦

Although this is not the Polish painting on tour, this is a 17th century engraving depicting the Battle.



First savings certificates hit Lithuania's financial market

The first issue of six-month savings certificates was released in early April to the Lithuanian financial market and will be on sale for a month.

Annual interest of the savings certificates stands at 10.5 percent. The government papers would be redeemed on October 28; although, all wishing might redeem them earlier. The nominal value of these government savings certificates is 100 litas or \$25 US.

The Finance Ministry hoped that the new type of government securities would be interesting to individual investors; especially those who do not want to keep their money in banks. Interest paid for a government savings certificate is higher as compared to that paid for bank deposits, currently averaging 6 percent. Although this is lower than that paid for treasury bills standing at 12 percent. The government guarantees the security of investments. ♦

Concert at Library of Congress

Chairman of Parliament Vytautas Landsbergis and his wife Gražina Ručytė-Landsbergis performed in a concert at the Coolidge Auditorium of the Library of Congress on March 5th, 1999. The concert was held to foster awareness, understanding and peace through the exchange of culture ideas.

The George Mason University Chamber Singers, under the direction of Dr. Stanley Engebretson, performed the opening numbers. The singers performed three songs including a Lithuanian folk song. Mrs. Landsbergis accompanied mezzo-soprano Patricia Miller.

Professor Landsbergis' selections were from the works of Lithuanian composer M. K. Čiurlionis. The songs were from his compact disc, "Born of the Human Soul" which is available on the EMI label. The concert was free of charge and opened to the public. Seated in the audience were Congressman Jon Shimkus of Illinois, and the Ambassadors of Poland, Iceland, and the Czech Republic. ♦

— Jeanne Dorr

New Jersey News

The second Sunday Lunch is in full swing at the LCC Club, 6 Davis Ave., Kearny, NJ from noon to 4:00 p.m. The May luncheon, which falls on Mother's Day, will feature concert pianist, Dr. Fran Covalesky, performing works of Čiurlionis and a program on his life and accomplishments. There is no admission fee. ♦

— The LCCC



Sen. William Roth is surrounded by (from left) Nerije Kasparienė, Audronė Pakštienė (LAC Wash. Office Dir.), Sen. Roth, Viktoras Nakas (LAC Wash. Chair.), Romas Kasparas, Dr. Danutė Tupikienė, and Darius Degutis (Lith Embassy Advisor).

Photo: A. Pakštienė

New York News

A concert featuring Andrius Mamontovas will be presented by the Versmė Chapter of the Lithuanian-American Community at the Lithuanian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, NY, on April 30, Friday, at 7:30 p.m. (starting time may change). You are invited for an evening of music and dancing. Additional details about this event will be provided at a later date. Admission is \$15.00. Please call either Donatas at 718-951-4111 or Jurgita at 718-739-8257 to receive updated information and to purchase tickets. ♦

— The LAC New York district

The only female sheriff in Maryland is Lithuanian

Baltimore County has the distinction of having the nation's only left-handed female sheriff of Lithuanian extraction, Anne Strasdauskas. She was elected during the fall 1998 elections and plans to improve the lot of deputy sheriffs.

According to the *Towson Times*, Strasdauskas, 44, remains energetic and still works out regularly to maintain the fitness she coveted as an ice speedskater who trained for the 1984 Olympic Games at Sarajevo until suffering a knee injury.

Strasdauskas shares a home with her parents Joseph and Evelyn in north country Freeland. ♦

— Submitted by Edward Budelis
Article from *The Towson Times*, Nov. 11, 1998

U.S. leaders recognized

The Central and East European Coalition recognized and honored Sen. Joseph Biden, Sen. William Roth, Rep. Sonny Callahan, and Rep. Nancy Pelosi for supporting Poland's, the Czech Republic's, and Hungary's admission into NATO at the Dirksen Senate Office Building on March 24th. In addition they continue their work by extending their support for Lithuania's entrance into NATO. ♦

— The LAC Washington office

Reflections

Sr. Margarita Bareikaitė

God is God for all Life

The ways we pray to God are indicators of how we think about God. If we are always asking for things, then God becomes a kind of giant slot machine. The more prayers we put in, the more things we hope to get out.

Is God, a God for everyone? The answer seems obvious, but there are times when we don't accept the obvious answer. We like to make God our own. He belongs to our race, our ethnic group, our church, religion, nation. In the same way, the Israelites believed God was leading them into battle, helping them slay the enemy.

Whenever a religion pictures God as leaning toward a certain group, then there could be problems. The Israelites were chosen people by God, which is true. However, God is God not only for the Israelites, but for their ene-



mies and nations as well. Often we overlook the message of Jonah. We turn instead to the message found in such places as the Psalms. The Psalms are prayers and songs, which relate much of the Israelites' history.

Religion should bring us together. God is God of all life. Religion is meant to

bring us closer to God, then it must bring us closer to all life. Religion has to do with achieving openness. If our religion closes us off to any section of humanity, or even any form of life, then it is unhealthy. What religion can do is help us see that life itself is the center stage.

God's love overwhelms us no matter where in our universe we might find ourselves. Religion should help our love to grow as wide and as deep as it can.

Everything living is special. All life is sacred. Religion should teach us this. Again we can use the concepts found in St. John's letters: God is light and love. God is bigger than we can imagine. He is found everywhere in our vast universe. God's love just keeps rolling like the proverbial river. Everything belongs to him. ♦

SR. MARGARITA BAREIKAITĖ belongs to the order of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a Lithuanian order in Putnam, Connecticut. She is also the Chairperson of the Religious Affairs Council for the Lithuanian-American Community, Inc.

Answer to Trivia Quiz

It depends on which version you want to believe.

a) Polish version: (<http://www.polandtour.org/histoty/1410.html>):

“The Teutonic Knights, with Western European mercenaries, supported by infantry and cannon, about 27,000 men in total was commanded by Grand Master Ulrich Von Jungingen. Polish-Lithuanian-Ruthenian army, supported by Czech and vassal Tartar contingents, of about 39,000 men was commanded by King Wladyslaw Jagiello himself. The battle lasted for several hours. King Jagiello, unlike his opponent, did not lead the army to battle, but coordinated the efforts from the nearby hill. The Polish and Lithuanian forces were instead led by the king's brother Witold, Grand Duke of Lithuania. By the end of the day, 8,000 Teutonic Knights were slain, including the Grand Master of the Order, and 14,000 prisoners were taken for ransom.”

b) Lithuanian version: (*Vytautas The Great, Grand Duke Of Lithuania* by Dr. Joseph B. Končius, 1964):

“The Teutonic Knights kept careful watch upon the Lithuanian army as it marched towards the river Narev. This army was composed of Aukštaičiai, Žemaičiai, several troops from Eastern provinces and about 3,000 Tartars. Soldiers were summoned from Trakai, Vilnius, Gardinas, Kaunas, Lyda, Smolensk, Polostsk, Vitebsk, Kiev, Briansk, Brasta, Drogochin, and other cities: the whole force numbered about 45,000 troops. All of these forces gathered at Gardinas on June 15, 1410.” “The Polish army numbered about 15,00 men.” “The Teutonic Knights gathered about 50,000 very well-armed men, and they concentrated their armies between Grunewald Forest and Tannenberg Village, just opposite the Polish-Lithuanian armies.” “In this battle the Teutonic Knights met decided disaster. In addition to the men who were killed (20,000), 3000 were taken captives. Their power was broken and the Polish and Lithuanian armies were left in undisputed possession of the whole territory of the Teutonic Knights.”

c) Teutonic Order version; (The Catholic Encyclopedia, <http://www.knight.org/advent/cathen/14541b.htm>):

“The number of Knights never exceeded a thousand, but the whole country was organized in a military manner, and with the constant arrival of new Crusaders, the order was able to hold its own among its neighbours, especially the inhabitants of Lithuania, who were of the same race as the natives of Prussia and like them, pagans. In the battle of Rudau (1307) the Lithuanians were driven back, and they were converted only some years later, with the Grand Duke, Jagellon, who embraced Christianity when he married the heiress of the kingdom of Poland (1386). With this event, which put an end to paganism in that section of Europe, the Teutonic Knights lost their *raison d'etre*. Thenceforth their history consists of incessant conflicts with the kings of Poland. Jagellon inflicted on them the defeat of Tannenberg (1410), which cost them 600 knights and ruined their finances. In order to repair, which the order was obliged to have recourse to exactions, this aroused the nobility and the towns and provided the Poles with an opportunity to interfere against the order.”

Which answer to the trivia question do you believe?

- a) 8,000 (Polish version)
- b) 20,000 (Lithuanian version)
- c) 600 (Teutonic Order version)

If you were to ask a wise old Lithuanian peasant for an answer to this question, he would probably answer, “Tik velnias žino!” (Only the devil knows!)♦

– Ed Shakalis

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